FOURTH EDITION

The Humanities

Culture, Continuity & Change

Henry M. Sayre

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PREHISTORY TO 1600 | VOLUME I

Pearson

HENRY M. SAYRE

In memory of my good friend Bud Therien, art publisher and editor par excellence

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Printer/Binder: LSC Kendallville
Cover Printer: Lehigh Phoenix Color

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Cover and title page image : Cai Guo-Qiang, *Project to Extend the Great Wall of China by 10,000 Meters: Project for Extraterrestrials, No. 10*, 1993. Commissioned by P3 art and environment, Tokyo.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Sayre, Henry M., 1948- author.
Title: Humanities : culture, continuity & change / Henry M. Sayre.
Description: Fourth edition. | Boston : Pearson, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017029582 | ISBN 9780134739816 (volume 1 : student edition) | ISBN 0134739817 (volume 1 : student edition) | ISBN 9780134739823 (volume 2 : student edition) | ISBN 0134739825 (volume 2 : student edition)
Subjects: LCSH: Civilization--History. | Humanities--History. | Social change--History.
Classification: LCC CB69 .S29 2019 | DDC 001.3--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017029582

Volume I

Rental Edition ISBN 10: 0-13-473981-7
Rental Edition ISBN 13: 978-0-13-473981-6

A la Carte ISBN 10: 0-13-474139-0
A la Carte ISBN 13: 978-0-13-474139-0

Instructor's Review Copy ISBN 10: 0-13-478951-2
Instructor's Review Copy ISBN 13: 978-0-13-478951-4

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CONTENTS

DEAR READER,

It has been nearly 20 years since I first sat down to write this book, and now, with the publication of this fourth edition, I'd like to take the opportunity to reflect a moment on the humanistic enterprise as, in its new Revel edition, this book fully enters the digital age.

But first, you might well ask, what is the humanistic enterprise exactly? At the most superficial level, a Humanities course is designed to help you identify the significant works of art, architecture, music, theater, philosophy, and literature of distinct cultures and times, and to recognize how these different expressions of the human spirit respond to and reflect their historical contexts. More broadly, you should arrive at some understanding of the creative process and how what we—and others—have made and continue to value reflects what we all think it means to be human. But in studying other cultures—entering into what the British-born, Ghanian-American philosopher and novelist Kwame Anthony Appiah has described as a "conversation between people from different ways of life"—we learn even more. We turn to other cultures because to empathize with others, to willingly engage in discourse with ideas strange to ourselves, is perhaps the fundamental goal of the humanities. The humanities are, above all, disciplines of openness, inclusion, and respectful interaction. What we see reflected in other cultures is usually something of ourselves, the objects of beauty that delight us, the weapons and the wars that threaten us, the melodies and harmonies that soothe us, the sometimes troubling but often penetrating thoughts that we encounter in the ether of our increasingly digital globe. Through the humanities we learn to seek common ground.

Today, digital media—epitomized by Revel—give us the means to open this world to you in ever-increasingly interactive ways. Architectural panoramas of major monuments such as Chartres Cathedral, or Angkor Wat in Cambodia, or Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater allow you to stand at multiple points in the spaces and turn around a full 360 degrees, as if you were actually there. And in these spaces, you can zoom in to see details, as in fact you can with nearly every image in the book. Videos take you on detailed tours of great works of art. Recordings of the music discussed in the book are embedded in the text, usually with listening guides for those of you less than musically literate. If you'd like, you can listen to an audio of the entire text (a helpful guide to pronunciation of foreign-language names), even as you study the images. And there are untold study resources, including everything from highlighting and note-taking tools, to self tests and shared writing prompts. The digital book is designed, in other words, to immerse you in the humanisitic enterprise. I hope you enjoy it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henry M. Sayre is Distinguished Professor of Art History Emeritus at Oregon State University. He earned his Ph.D. in American Literature from the University of Washington. He is producer and creator of the ten-part television series, *A World of Art: Works in Progress*, aired on PBS in the Fall of 1997; and author of seven books, including *A World of Art*, *The Visual Text of William Carlos Williams*, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970*; and an art history book for children, *Cave Paintings to Picasso*.

What's New

THIS NEW EDITION ENHANCES THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS:

To facilitate student learning and understanding of the humanities, this fourth edition is centered on **Learning Objectives** that introduce each chapter. These learning objectives are tailored to the subject matter of the key chapter topics so that the student will be continually reminded of the goals and objectives of study as they progress through each chapter.

The chapter learning objectives are repeated in a **Chapter Review** that poses critical-thinking questions as well as reviewing the material covered in the chapter.

NEW TO THE PRINT EDITION OF *THE HUMANITIES*

- **Continuing Presence of the Past**, a feature designed to underscore the book's emphasis on continuity and change by connecting an artwork in each chapter to a contemporary artwork, helps students understand how the art of the past remains relevant today. Included only in the digital version of the last edition, the **Continuing Presence of the Past** is now featured in each chapter on its own page in close proximity to the artwork to which it refers. New additions to the feature include works by Paul Kos, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Carrie Mae Weems, Daniel Buren, Arthur Amiotte, and Roy Lichtenstein.
- More than 300 **images have been updated** whenever new and improved images were available or works of art have been cleaned or restored.
- Whenever **new scholarship** has provided us with new insights and understandings, that scholarship has been included in the text. Examples include discussion of the earliest musical instruments—from prehistoric flutes to the development of the organ in Greece and Rome—continuing research at Stonehenge, medical scans of Akhenaten's mummy, new archaeological findings at Teotihuacán, and the workings of the Dutch East India Company in Indonesia.
- In Chapter 10, the discussion of **feudalism** has been refined, and the *Closer Look* on **Krak des Chevaliers** has been restored.
- In Chapter 26, the discussion of **Alexander Hamilton** and the *Federalist* papers has been greatly expanded in order to provide perspective on the current popularity of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical*.
- In response to readers' requests, **many new works of art have been added**, including the Göbekli Tepe archaeological site, a Tang tomb figure of a horse, the Inca Twelve-Angle Stone in Cuzco, the *Pitcairn Flight into Egypt* from Saint-Denis, Michelangelo's design for the facade of St. Peter's, Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, Bronzino's *Saint Sebastian*, Degas's *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, Picasso's *Guitar Player* of summer 1910, and Balla's *Speeding Automobile*.
- The last half of **Chapter 40 on contemporary art** has been thoroughly reconceived, with many new images, to address issues of postcolonialism, the global marketplace and the commodification of culture, and the plural self in the Americas—Latino, African American, and Native American—as well as the impact of new media.

New to the Revel edition of *The Humanities*

All of the new material cited in "What's New" on page xii is included in the Revel edition as well, but Revel's cross-platform digital environment allows us to offer many more aids to student learning in an interactive, engaging way.

Revel™ Education technology designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn

When students are engaged deeply, they learn more effectively and perform better in their courses. This simple fact inspired the creation of Revel: an interactive learning experience designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn. Built in collaboration with educators and students nationwide, Revel is a fully digital and highly engaging way to deliver respected Pearson content.

Revel enlivens course content with media interactives and assessments—integrated directly within the authors' narrative that provide opportunities for students to read, practice, and study in one continuous experience. This interactive educational technology boosts student engagement, which leads to better understanding of concepts and improved performance throughout the course.

- **Pan/zooms** appear with a simple click for almost all of the figures, allowing students to zoom in and examine details with stunning clarity and resolution, and then return to the overall view of the work of art, so they can relate these details to the whole.
- The pan/zooms' **scale feature** opens a window where works of art appear next to a scaled human figure (or for small works, a scaled human hand), giving students an instant sense of the size of what they are studying.
- **3D animations of architectural and art-historical techniques** depict and explain processes and methods that are difficult for students to grasp simply through narrative text.
- **Panoramas from global sites** have been integrated into the design, bringing students into the setting, both inside and out, of major buildings and monuments such as the Taj Mahal, Great Zimbabwe, the Paris Opera House, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater.
- **Each and every Closer Look and Continuing Presence of the Past** has been transformed into a Revel video presentation, where students are guided through a detailed examination of the work.
- **Listening Guides with Streaming Audio** for most of the music selections in the book are embedded in the platform, which allow students to follow along as they listen to the selection.
- The entire text is available on **streaming audio**, much of it read by the author himself.

In addition, a variety of self-tests, review features, and writing opportunities have been built into the platform. These are all designed to ensure the student's mastery of the material.

- **Multiple-choice self-tests**, at the conclusion of each major section of a chapter, allow the student to assess quickly how well they have absorbed the material at hand.
- **Interactive learning tools**, in a variety of formats, review key terms and ideas, help the student in analyzing literary works, and make use of flashcards to test student retention.
- Each chapter contains three kinds of **writing prompts**. All are keyed to specific works of visual art, literature, or music and appear in conjunction with figures that illustrate the works. **Journaling** prompts focus on building skills of visual analysis; **Shared Writing** responses relate the material in the chapter to today's world; and **Writing Space** prompts encourage students to engage in cross-cultural thinking, often across chapters.

Learn more about Revel www.pearsonhighered.com/revel

Developing *The Humanities*

The Humanities: Culture, Continuity & Change is the result of an extensive development process involving the contributions of over 100 instructors and their students. We are grateful to all who participated in shaping the content, clarity, and design of this text. Manuscript reviewers and focus group participants include:

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Acknowledgments

No project of this scope could ever come into being without the hard work and perseverance of many more people than its author. In fact, this author has been humbled by the teams at Pearson and Laurence King Publishing, who never wavered in their confidence in my ability to finish this fourth edition of what remains an enormous undertaking. At Laurence King, I am especially grateful to Senior Editor and project editor Chelsea Edwards for the exceptional care she has taken in moving the project forward, a task made doubly difficult by our working simultaneously in print and digital formats. I also want to thank Julia Ruxton, Picture Manager, and Peter Kent, who researched picture permissions, for their sometimes miraculous work at finding images, often providing me with a wealth of choices. Rachel Thorne has handled the always difficult task of securing literature permissions with aplomb and good humor. Emily Asquith and Rosie Lewis made this a far better book by their scrupulous copy editing, and Simon Walsh oversaw matters of production with his usual mastery. The overwhelming task of indexing the book has been borne by Vicki Robinson. Allan Sommerville has patiently worked with me to get the page design as close to perfect as we could manage, and I have come to very much appreciate his eye and sense of style. Finally, all of these great people at Laurence King are overseen by the inestimable Kara Hattersley-Smith.

At Pearson, Rich Barnes has helped coordinate Revel production with the good people at Ohlinger Publishing Services and, particularly, their program manager, Laura Bidwa. For her help with the Closer Look and Continuing Presence of the Past videos, I'd like to thank Cynthia Ward. It is always a pleasure to work with her. And I have been especially pleased with Kelly Donahue-Wallace's work on the learning modules for each chapter in Revel. On the marketing side at Pearson, Wendy Albert and Nick Bolt have helped us all to understand just what students want and need. Much of what is good about this book I owe to Sarah Touborg's great editorial advice while she was at Pearson, and to the late Bud Therien, who envisioned this project and saw it through to the first edition. I am forever grateful for the support, encouragement, and, above all, friendship of both.

No one has been more important in seeing this fourth edition through to production than Helen Ronan. She has no official title, but without her negotiating the intricacies of development between Ohlinger Publishing's work on the Revel edition, Laurence King's work on the print edition, and Pearson as a whole, this edition would today be mired somewhere—I hesitate to think where. With all my thanks, I hereby appoint her Liaison-in-Chief.

Finally, I want to thank, with all my love, my beautiful wife, Sandy Brooke, who has always supported this project in every way. I have said this before, but it continues to be true: She has continued to teach, paint, and write, while urging me on, listening to my struggles, humoring me when I didn't deserve it, and being a far better wife than I was a husband. She was, is, and will continue to be, I trust, the source of my strength.

PART ONE

The Ancient World and the Classical Past

PREHISTORY TO 200 CE

***Nebamun Hunting Birds*, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, Egypt (detail). ca. 1400 BCE (see Fig 3.2).**

The history of human beings on this planet is, geologically speaking, very short. The history of their coming together in groups for their common good is even shorter, covering a span of perhaps 25,000 to 50,000 years on a planet that scientists estimate to be between 4 and 5 billion years old. We call these groups, as they become more and more sophisticated, civilizations. A **civilization** is a social, economic, and political entity distinguished by the ability to express itself through images and written language. Civilizations develop when the environment of a region can support a large and productive population. It is no accident that the first civilizations arose in fertile river valleys, where agriculture could take hold: the Tigris and the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the Nile in Egypt, the Indus on the Indian subcontinent, and the Yellow in China. Civilizations require technologies capable of supporting the

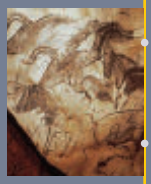
principal economy. In the ancient world, agriculture was supported by the technologies related to irrigation.

With the rise of agriculture, and with irrigation, human nature began to assert itself over and against nature as a whole. People increasingly thought of themselves as masters of their own destiny. At the same time, different and dispersed populations began to come into contact with one another as trade developed from the need for raw materials not native to a particular region. Organizing this level of trade and production also required an administrative elite to form and establish cultural priorities. The existence of such an elite is another characteristic of civilization. Finally, as the history of cultures around the world makes abundantly clear, one of the major ways in which societies have acquired the goods they want and simultaneously organized themselves is by means of war.

If a civilization is a system of organization, a **culture** is the set of common values—religious, social, and/or political—that govern that system. Out of such cultures arise scientific and artistic achievements by which we characterize different cultures. Before the invention of writing sometime around the fourth millennium BCE, these cultures created myths and legends that explained their origins and relation to the world. As we do today, ancient peoples experienced the great uncontrollable, and sometimes violent, forces of nature—floods, droughts, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Prehistoric cultures understood these forces as the work of the invisible gods, who could not be approached directly but only through the mediating agency of shamans and priests, or kings and heroes. As cultures became increasingly self-assertive, in the islands between mainland Greece and Asia Minor, in Egypt, in China, on the Indian subcontinent, and on the Greek mainland, these gods seemed increasingly knowable. The gods could still intervene in human affairs, but now they did so in ways that were recognizable. It was suddenly possible to believe that if people could come to understand themselves, they might also understand the gods. The study of the natural world might well shed light on the unknown, on the truth of things.

It is to this moment—it was a long "moment," extending for centuries—that the beginnings of scientific inquiry can be traced. **Humanism**, the study of the human mind and its moral and ethical dimensions, was born. In India, the emperor Ashoka established Buddhism as the official state religion and built great monuments to celebrate the Buddha's teaching. In Mesopotamia and Greece, the presentation of a human character working things out (or not) in the face of adversity was the subject of epic and dramatic literature. In Greece, it was also the subject of philosophy—literally, "love of wisdom"—the practice of reasoning that followed from the Greek philosopher Socrates' famous dictum, "Know thyself." Visual artists strove to discover the perfections of human form and thought. By the time of the rise of the Roman Empire, at the end of the first millennium BCE, these traditions were carried on in more practical ways, as the Romans attempted to engineer a society embodying the values they had inherited from the Greeks.

PART ONE TIMELINE



30,000 BCE
Art created in the Chauvet Cave

10,000–8000 BCE
Emergence of agricultural civilizations in Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, China

3200–2000 BCE
Development of pictographic writing systems in Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, China

2500 BCE
Pyramids in Egypt

1792–1750 BCE
Hammurabi's Law Code

1500–322 BCE
Vedic period in India; origins of Hinduism

1300 BCE
Emergence of Olmec culture in Mesoamerica

1200 BCE
Mesopotamia: *Epic of Gilgamesh*

1200 BCE
Earliest use of Phoenician phonetic alphabet

1000 BCE
King David reigns in Israel

800 BCE
Akropolis (citadel) and agora (market)
Homeric epics: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

800–600 BCE
Etruria: Origins of Roman culture

563–483 BCE
Lifetime of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) in India

551–479 BCE
Lifetime of Confucius in Zhou dynasty China

461–429 BCE
Perikles, Socrates, Sophocles
Parthenon on Athens's Akropolis

469–399 BCE
Lifetime of Socrates, Greek philosopher

27 BCE
Octavian becomes Emperor Augustus

20 BCE
Augustus of Primaporta

1 The Rise of Culture

From Forest to Farm

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Discuss the ways in which cave art and small sculptural figurines in the Paleolithic era have been interpreted.

1.2 Explain how the art and architecture of the Neolithic era reflect changing cultural concerns.

1.3 Understand the function of myth in prehistoric culture.

1.4 Describe the role of sacred sites in prehistoric culture.

On a cold December afternoon in 1994, Jean-Marie Chauvet and two friends were exploring the caves in the steep cliffs along the Ardèche River gorge in southern France. After descending into a series of narrow passages, they entered a large chamber. There, beams from their headlamps lit up a group of drawings that would astonish the three explorers—and the world (Fig. **1.1**).

Since the late nineteenth century, we have known that **prehistoric** peoples, peoples who lived before the time of writing and so of recorded history, drew on the walls of caves. Twenty-seven such caves had already been discovered in the cliffs along the 17 miles of the Ardèche gorge (Map **1.1**). But the cave found by Chauvet and his friends transformed our thinking about prehistoric peoples. Where previously discovered cave paintings had appeared to modern eyes as childlike, this cave contained drawings comparable to those a contemporary artist might have done. We can only speculate that other comparable artworks were produced in prehistoric times but have not survived, perhaps because they were made of wood or other perishable materials. It is even possible that art may have been made earlier than 30,000 years ago, perhaps as people began to inhabit the Near East, between 90,000 and 100,000 years ago.

From almost the moment of Chauvet's discovery, scientists realized that their own presence in the cave—let alone the prospect of an enthralled public visiting the site—threatened its survival. The lesson had been learned at Lascaux Cave in the Dordogne region of southern France to the west of the Ardèche. After its discovery in 1940, as many as 1,200 visitors a week were admitted to the site, until authorities realized that the carbon dioxide from their breath was contributing to the growth of bacteria and mold that was destroying its wall paintings. The cave was closed in 1963, and a replica of the site opened in 1983,

Map 1.1 Major Paleolithic caves in France and Spain.

◀ **Fig. 1.1 Wall painting with horses, Chauvet Cave, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, Ardèche gorge, France, ca. 30,000 BCE.** Paint on limestone, height approx. 6'. Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles de Rhône-Alpes. Service Régional de l'Archéologie. In the center of this wall are four horses, each behind the other in a startlingly realistic space.

Fig. 1.2 Chauvet Cave replica, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, Ardèche gorge, France, 2015. This full-size replica of the Chauvet Cave opened to the public in 2015, making the cave accessible to some 300,000–400,000 visitors a year.

but its paintings are largely beyond repair. To avoid just such a disaster, in 2007 authorities began recreating Chauvet some 3 miles from the actual cave at a cost of some 56 million euros (approximately $60 million) (Fig. **1.2**). Using hi-tech scans and 3D-modeling, the cave's limestone walls were reproduced in concrete and its stalagmites and stalactites in resin. Digital reproductions of the original art were then projected onto the surfaces and painted with pigments mimicking the earth tones of the original artists. The result is a stunningly realistic experience for the contemporary visitor. Even the temperature of the original cave—53.6° Fahrenheit (12° Celsius)—is maintained.

To visit the replica of the Chauvet Cave is to come as close as we can imagine to what it must have been like to live during the Paleolithic era, or "Old Stone Age," from the Greek *palaios*, "old," and *lithos*, "stone." The cultures of the era sustained themselves on wild plants and game (the bones of which were scattered across Chauvet's floor and are reproduced in plastic for the replica). The cultures themselves were small, scattered, and nomadic, though evidence suggests some interaction among the various groups. We begin this book, then, with the cultures of prehistoric times, evidence of which survives in wall paintings in caves and in small sculptures dating back more than 25,000 years.

THE BEGINNINGS OF CULTURE IN THE PALEOLITHIC ERA

In what ways has the role of art in Paleolithic culture been interpreted?

A **culture** encompasses the values and behaviors shared by a group of people, developed over time, and passed down from one generation to the next. Culture manifests itself in the laws, customs, ritual behavior, and artistic production common to the group. The cave paintings at Chauvet suggest that, as early as 30,000 years ago, the Ardèche gorge was a *center of culture*, a focal point of group living in which the values of a community find expression. There were others like it. In northern Spain, the first decorated cave was discovered in 1879 at Altamira. We have already mentioned Lascaux, discovered by schoolchildren in 1940 when their dog disappeared down a hole. In 1991, along the French Mediterranean coast, a diver discovered the entrance to the beautifully decorated Cosquer Cave below the waterline near Marseille. And there are many other Paleolithic caves in the region, as shown on Map 1.1.

Agency and Ritual: Cave Art

Ever since cave paintings were first discovered, scholars have marveled at the skill of the people who produced them, but we have been equally fascinated by their very existence. Why were these paintings made? Most scholars believe that they possessed some sort of **agency**—that is, they were created to exert some power or authority over the world of those who came into contact with them. Until recently, it was generally accepted that such works were associated with the hunt. Perhaps the hunter, seeking game in times of scarcity, hoped to conjure it up by depicting it on cave walls. Or perhaps such drawings were magic charms meant to ensure a successful hunt. But at Chauvet, fully 60 percent of the animals painted on its walls were never, or rarely, hunted—such animals as lions, rhinoceroses, bears, panthers, and woolly mammoths. One drawing depicts two rhinoceroses fighting horn-to-horn beneath four horses that appear to be looking on (see Fig. 1.1).

What role, then, did these drawings play in the daily lives of the people who created them? The caves may have served as some sort of **ritual** space. A ritual is a rite or ceremony habitually practiced by a group, often in religious or

quasi-religious contexts. The caves might be, for instance, understood as gateways to the underworld and death, as symbols of the womb and birth, or as pathways to the world of dreams experienced in the dark of night, and rites connected with such passage might have been conducted in them. The general arrangement of the animals in the paintings by species or gender, often in distinct chambers of the caves, suggests to some that the paintings may have served as lunar calendars for predicting the seasonal migration of the animals. Whatever the case, surviving human footprints indicate that these caves were ritual gathering places and in some way were intended to serve the common good.

At Chauvet, the use of color suggests that the paintings served some sacred or symbolic function. For instance, almost all of the paintings near the entrance to the cave are painted with natural red pigments derived from ores rich in iron oxide. Deeper in the cave, in areas more difficult to reach, the vast majority of the animals are painted in black pigments derived from ores rich in manganese dioxide. This shift in color appears to be intentional, but we can only guess at its meaning.

The skillfully drawn images at Chauvet raise even more important questions. The artists seem to have understood and practiced a kind of illusionism—that is, they were able to convey a sense of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. In the painting reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, several horses appear to stand one behind the other (see Fig. 1.1). The head of the top horse overlaps a black line, as if peering over a branch or the back of another animal. In no other cave art yet discovered do drawings show the use of shading, or **modeling**, so that the animal or person depicted seems to have volume and dimension. And yet these cave paintings, rendered over 30,000 years ago, predate other cave paintings by at least 10,000 years, and in some cases by as much as 20,000 years.

One of the few cave paintings that depicts a human figure is found at Lascaux. What appears to be a male wearing a bird's-head mask lies in front of a disemboweled bison (Fig. **1.3**). Below him is a bird-headed spear thrower, a device that enabled hunters to throw a spear farther and with greater force. (Several examples of spear throwers have survived.) In the Lascaux painting, the hunter's spear has pierced the bison's hindquarters, and a rhinoceros charges off to the left. We have no way of knowing whether this was an actual event or an imagined scene. One of the painting's most interesting and inexplicable features is the discrepancy between the relatively naturalistic representation of the animals and the highly stylized, almost abstract realization of the human figure. Was the sticklike man added later by a different, less talented artist? Or does this image suggest that man and beast are different orders of being?

Before the discovery of Chauvet, historians divided the history of cave painting into a series of successive styles, each progressively more realistic. But Chauvet's paintings, by far the oldest known, are also the most advanced in their realism, suggesting the artists' conscious quest for visual **naturalism**, that is, for representations that imitate the actual appearance of the animals. Not only were both red and black animals outlined, their shapes were also modeled by spreading paint, either with the hand or a tool, in gradual gradations of color. Such modeling is extremely rare or unknown elsewhere. In addition, the artists further defined many of the animals' contours by scraping the wall behind so that the beasts seem to stand out against a deeper white ground. Three handprints in the cave were evidently made by spitting paint at a hand placed on the cave wall, resulting in a stenciled image.

Art, the Chauvet drawings suggest, does not necessarily evolve in a linear progression from awkward beginnings to more sophisticated representations. On the contrary, already in the earliest artworks, people obtained a very high degree of sophistication. Apparently, even from the earliest times, human beings could choose to represent the world naturalistically or not, and the choice not to represent the

Fig. 1.3 Wall painting with bird-headed man and bison, Lascaux Cave, Dordogne, France, ca. 15,000–13,000 BCE. Paint on limestone, length approx. 9'. In 1963, Lascaux was closed to the public so that conservators could fight a fungus attacking the paintings. Most likely, the fungus was caused by carbon dioxide exhaled by visitors. An exact replica called Lascaux II was built and can be visited.

Fig. 1.4 Bone flute from Hohle Fels Cave, Germany, ca. 40,000 BCE. The flute is nearly 1 foot long, and its mere existence points to a culture of reasonable musical sophistication.

world in naturalistic terms should not necessarily be attributed to lack of skill or sophistication but to other, culturally driven factors.

Paleolithic Culture and Its Artifacts

Footprints discovered in South Africa in 2000 and fossilized remains uncovered in the forest of Ethiopia in 2001 suggest that, about 5.7 million years ago, the earliest upright humans, or hominins (as distinct from the larger classification of **hominids**, which includes great apes and chimpanzees as well as humans), roamed the continent of Africa. Ethiopian excavations further indicate that sometime around 2.5 or 2.6 million years ago, hominid populations began to make rudimentary stone tools, though long before, between 14 million and 19 million years ago, the *Kenyapithecus* ("Kenyan ape"), a hominin, made stone tools in east central Africa. Nevertheless, the earliest evidence of a culture coming into being are the stone artifacts of *Homo sapiens* (Latin for "one who knows"). *Homo sapiens* evolved about 100,000–120,000 years ago and can be distinguished from earlier hominids by the lighter build of their skeletal structure and larger brain. A 2009 study of genetic diversity among Africans found the San people of Zimbabwe to be the most diverse, suggesting that they are the most likely origin of modern humans from which others gradually spread out of Africa, across Asia, into Europe, and finally to Australia and the Americas.

Homo sapiens were **hunter-gatherers**, whose survival depended on the animals they could kill and the foods they could gather, primarily nuts, berries, roots, and other edible plants. The tools they developed were far more sophisticated than those of their ancestors. They included cleavers, chisels, grinders, hand axes, and arrow- and spearheads made of flint, a material that also provided the spark to create an equally important tool—fire. In 2004, Israeli archaeologists working at a site on the banks of the Jordan River reported the earliest evidence yet found of controlled fire created by hominids—cracked and blackened flint chips, presumably used to light a fire, and bits of charcoal dating from 790,000 years ago. Also at the campsite were the bones of elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, and small species, demonstrating that these early hominids cut their meat with flint tools and ate steaks and marrow. *Homo sapiens* cooked with fire, wore animal skins as clothing, and used tools as a matter of course. They buried their dead in ritual ceremonies, often laying them to rest accompanied by stone tools and weapons.

The Paleolithic era is the period of *Homo sapiens*' ascendancy. These people carved stone tools and weapons that helped them survive in an inhospitable climate. They also made music. The five-holed flute illustrated here (Fig. **1.4**) was found in the summer of 2008 in Hohle Fels Cave in the Ach Valley of the Swabian Alps near the city of Ulm, Germany. Made from the naturally hollow wing-bone of a griffon vulture, its five holes produce a pentatonic scale (five notes per octave, and still the most common scale used in blues, pop, and rock music today). In 2012, a team of scientists from Oxford and Tübingen universities unearthed flutes made from mammoths' ivory and bird bones, carbon-dated to between 43,000 and 42,000 BCE at nearby Geißenklösterle Cave. Of course, we do not know what sort of music these very ancient peoples played (just as we cannot know what any music sounded like until musical notation systems were first introduced in about 1450 CE, long after written language). However, University of Paris researchers discovered in 2008 that Chauvet's paintings are concentrated at the points of greatest resonance within the cave. Did these instruments play an important role in prehistoric ritual? We can only guess, but we can be sure that, as today, people gathered to hear them be played.

These prehistoric peoples carved small sculptural objects as well, which, along with the cave paintings we have already seen, appear to be the first instances of what we have come to call "art" (see *Materials & Techniques*, page 8). Among the most remarkable of these sculptural artifacts are a large number of female figures, found at various archaeological sites across Europe. The most famous of these is *Woman*, the limestone statuette of a woman found at Willendorf, in present-day Austria (Fig. **1.5**), dating from between 25,000 and 20,000 BCE and sometimes called the *Venus of Willendorf*. Markings on *Woman* and other similar figures indicate that they were originally colored, but what these small sculptures meant and what they were used for remains unclear. Most are 4 to 5 inches high and fit neatly into a person's hand. This suggests that they may have had a ritual purpose. Their exaggerated breasts and bellies and their clearly delineated genitals support a connection to fertility and childbearing. These figures suggest that what was most valued about the body in prehistoric times was its ability to sustain itself for some period of time without food, and its ability to nourish a child at the same time. We know, too, that the Willendorf *Woman* was originally painted in red ocher, suggestive of menses. And, her navel is not carved; rather, it is a natural indentation in the stone. Whoever carved her seems to have recognized, in the raw stone, a connection to the origins of life. But such figures may have served other purposes as well. Archaeologist Clive Gamble has recently argued that such sculptures served as a form of nonverbal communication among groups of ancient peoples scattered widely across what is today the European continent. He suggests that, whenever groups of these hunter-gatherers met—as they must occasionally have done when tracking game, these easily portable female statues served as signs suggesting the amicability of the hunters bearing them (it is doubtful that many, if any, of these groups shared a common language). These figurines, in other words, might have been used to communicate commonly held ideas of "femaleness" across widespread groups. They therefore may have encoded a system of shared values and ideals.

Indeed, female figurines vastly outnumber representations of males in the Paleolithic era, which suggests that women played a central role in Paleolithic culture. Most likely, they had considerable religious and spiritual influence, and their preponderance in the imagery of the era suggests that Paleolithic culture may have been *matrilineal* (in which descent is determined through the female line) and *matrilocal* (in which residence is in the female's tribe or household). Such traditions exist in many primal societies today.

The peoples of the Upper Paleolithic period followed herds northward in summer, though temperatures during the Ice Age rarely exceeded 60 degrees Fahrenheit (16 degrees Celsius). Then, as winter approached, they retreated southward into the cave regions of northern Spain and southern France.

Fig. 1.5 *Woman* (*Venus of Willendorf*), found at Willendorf, Austria, ca. 25,000–20,000 BCE. Limestone, height 4". Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna. For many years, modern scholars called this small statue the *Venus of Willendorf*. They assumed that its carvers attributed to it an ideal of female beauty comparable to the Roman ideal of beauty implied by the name Venus.

THE RISE OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY IN THE NEOLITHIC ERA

How do Neolithic art and architecture reflect the era's changing cultural concerns?

As the ice covering the Northern Hemisphere began to recede around 10,000 BCE, the seas rose, covering, for instance, the cave entrance at Cosquer in southern France (see Map 1.1), filling what is now the North Sea and English Channel with water, and inundating the land bridge that had connected Asia and North America. Agriculture began to replace hunting and gathering, and with it, a nomadic lifestyle gave way to a more sedentary way of life. The consequences of this shift were enormous, and ushered in the Neolithic era, or "New Stone Age."

For 2,000 years, from 10,000 to 8000 BCE, the ice covering the Northern Hemisphere receded farther and farther northward. As temperatures warmed, life gradually changed. During this period of transition, areas once covered by vast regions of ice and snow developed into grassy

Materials & Techniques

Methods of Carving

Carving is the act of cutting or incising stone, bone, wood, or another material into a desired form. Surviving artifacts of the Paleolithic era were carved from stone or bone. The artist probably held a sharp instrument, such as a stone knife or a chisel, in one hand and drove it into the stone or bone with another stone held in the other hand to remove excess material and realize the figure. Finer details could be scratched into the material with a pointed stone instrument. Artists can carve into any material softer than the instrument they are using. Harder varieties of stone can cut into softer stone as well as bone. The work was probably painstakingly slow.

There are basically two types of sculpture: sculpture-in-the-round and relief sculpture. **Sculpture-in-the-round** is fully three-dimensional; it occupies 360 degrees of space. The Willendorf statuette (see Fig. 1.5) was carved from stone and is an example of sculpture-in-the-round. **Relief sculpture** is carved out of a flat background surface; it has a distinct front and no back. Not all relief sculptures are alike. In *high-relief* sculpture, the figure extends more than 180 degrees from the background surface. *Woman Holding an Animal Horn*, found at Laussel, in the Dordogne region of France, is carved in high relief and is one of the earliest relief sculptures known. This sculpture was originally part of a great stone block that stood in front of a Paleolithic rock shelter. In *low* or *bas relief*, the figure extends less than 180 degrees from the surface. In *sunken relief*, the image is carved, or incised, into the surface, so that the image recedes below it. When light falls on relief sculptures at an angle, the relief casts a shadow. The higher the relief, the larger the shadows and the greater the sense of the figure's three-dimensionality.

***Woman Holding an Animal Horn*, Laussel, Dordogne, France, ca. 30,000–15,000 BCE.** Limestone, height 17⅜". Musée des Antiquites Nationales, Saint Germain-en-Laye, France.

Map 1.2 The great river valley civilizations, ca. 2000 BCE. Agriculture thrived in the great river valleys throughout the Neolithic era, but by the end of the period, urban life had developed there as well, and civilization as we know it had emerged.

plains and abundant forests. Hunters developed the bow and arrow, which were easier to use at longer range on the open plains. They fashioned dugout boats out of logs to facilitate fishing, which became a major food source. They domesticated dogs to help with the hunt as early as 11,000 BCE, and soon other animals as well—goats and cattle particularly. Perhaps most important, people began to cultivate the more edible grasses. Along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, they harvested wheat; in Asia, they cultivated millet and rice; and in the Americas, they grew squash, beans, and corn. Gradually, farming replaced hunting as the primary means of sustaining life. A culture of the fields developed—an agriculture, from the Latin *ager*, "farm," "field," or "productive land."

Agricultural production seems to have originated about 10,000 BCE in the Fertile Crescent, an area arching from southwest Iran, across the foothills of the Taurus Mountains in southeastern Turkey, then southward into Lebanon. By about 8000 BCE, Neolithic agricultural societies began to concentrate in the great river valleys of the Middle East and Asia (Map **1.2**). Here, distinct centers of people involved in a common pursuit began to form. A **civilization** is a social, economic, and political entity distinguished by the ability to express itself through images and written language. Civilizations develop when the environment of a region can support a large and productive population. An increasing population, in turn, requires increased production of food and other goods, not only to support itself, but to trade for other commodities.

Gradually, as the climate warmed, Neolithic culture spread across Europe. By about 5000 BCE, the valleys of Spain and southern France supported agriculture, but there is no evidence of farming in the northern reaches of the European continent and England dating back any earlier than about 4000 BCE. The Neolithic era did not end in these colder climates until about 2000 BCE, and continued in more remote regions, such as Africa and the Americas, well into the second millennia.

Neolithic Communities

The great rivers of the Middle East and Asia provided a consistent and predictable source of water, and people soon developed irrigation techniques that fostered organized agriculture and animal husbandry. As production outgrew necessity, members of the community were freed to occupy themselves in other endeavors—complex food preparation (bread, cheese, and so on), construction, military affairs, and religion. What is believed to be one of the earliest of all religious sites is Göbekli Tepe, which sits atop a mountain ridge in southeastern Turkey (Fig. **1.6**). In 1995, a research team headed by German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt uncovered a ring of standing pillars, then a second, then a third—today at least 20 such rings have been discovered. Some of the tallest of the pillars in these rings stand 18 feet high and weigh 16 tons. The surfaces of many are covered in a myriad of *bas-relief* carvings of animals—including lions, bulls, boars, foxes, gazelles, and donkeys—as well as snakes and other reptiles, insects and spiders, and also birds, vultures in particular. The pillar illustrated here is decorated with a predatory animal, perhaps a leopard, realized in the round. The pillars are all made of limestone, shaped like giant spikes or capital Ts, and are connected by low stone walls. Perhaps the most surprising thing about Göbekli Tepe is that evidently the people who built it did not live there—yet it must have required hundreds of people to build each of the rings. Archaeologists estimate that it would have taken at least 500 people to move the pillars from local quarries. From Schmidt's point of view, Göbekli Tepe was comparable to what, in later ages, would come to be known as a pilgrimage site—visited periodically by people coming from every direction. In many ways, it may have served the same purpose as a Paleolithic cave—a place reserved for the ritual practices of the surrounding peoples. It also suggests that the development of Neolithic culture was religiously motivated. In Schmidt's words: "First came the temple, then the city."

Fig. 1.6 A predatory animal on a pillar at Göbekli Tepe, Turkey, ca. 9130–8800 BCE. To date, only about one-tenth of the site has been excavated.

Çatalhöyük Nearly 2,000 years later, cities were beginning to thrive. Sometime around 7400 BCE, at Çatalhöyük (also known as Chatal Huyuk) in central Turkey, a permanent village began to take shape that would flourish for nearly 1,200 years. At one point or another, as many as 3,000 people lived in close proximity to one another in rectangular houses made of mud bricks held together with plaster. These houses stood side by side, one wall abutting the next, with entrances through the roof and down a ladder. There were no windows in the houses, and the only natural light in the interior came from the entry way. The roof appears to have served as the primary social space, especially in the summer months. Domed ovens were placed both on the roof and in the interior.

The people of Çatalhöyük were apparently traders, principally of obsidian, a black, volcanic, and glasslike stone that can be carved into sharp blades and arrowheads, which they mined at Hasan Dag, a volcano visible from the village. The rows of windowless houses that composed the village, the walls of which rose to as high as 16 feet, must have served a defensive purpose, but they also contained what archaeologists have come to view as an extraordinary sense of communal history. Their interior walls and floors were plastered and replastered, then painted and repainted with a white lime-based paint, again and again over hundreds of years. Beneath the floors of some—but not all—of the houses were burials, averaging about six per house, but sometimes rising to between 30 and 62 bodies. For reasons that are not entirely clear, from time to time, these bodies were exhumed, and the skulls of long-deceased ancestors were removed. The skulls were then reburied in new graves or in the foundations of new houses as they were built and rebuilt. Whatever the rationale for such ceremonies, they could not have helped but create a sense of historical continuity in the community.

Çatalhöyük was first extensively excavated from 1958 by Sir James Mellaart, who concluded that the village's culture was matrilineal, based in no small part on his discovery of a number of female figurines including a clay sculpture of a seated woman (Fig. **1.7**), who represented, he believed, a fertility or mother goddess. Found in a grain bin—evidence of the community's growing agricultural sophistication—she sits enthroned between two felines, perhaps in the process of giving birth. But Ian Hodder of Cambridge University, who took up excavations of the site in 1993, after a nearly 30-year hiatus, has recently concluded that she is something other than a fertility goddess. In 2005, he wrote:

> There are full breasts on which the hands rest and the stomach is extended in the central part. There is a hole in the top for the head which is missing. As one turns the figurine around one notices that the arms are very thin, and then on the back of the figurine one sees a depiction of either a skeleton or the bones of a very thin and depleted human. The ribs and vertebrae are clear, as are the scapulae and the main pelvic bones. The figurine can be interpreted in a number of ways—as a woman turning into an ancestor, as a woman associated with death, or as death and life conjoined. … Perhaps the importance of female imagery was related to some special role of the female in relation to death as much as to the roles of mother and nurturer.

Fig. 1.7 Woman seated between two felines, Çatalhöyük, Turkey, ca. 6850–6300 BCE. Terra cotta, height 4⅝". Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. The woman's head in this sculpture is a modern addition.

Supporting Hodder's theories is a burial of a deceased woman who holds in her arms the plastered and painted skull of a male.

Similarly, Mellaart believed that many of the rooms that contained large numbers of bodies were shrines or temples (Fig. **1.8**). The walls of these rooms were decorated with the skulls of cows and the heads and horns of bulls. Found under the floors of some houses were boar tusks, vulture skulls, and fox and weasel teeth. But Hodder has found evidence that these houses—he calls them "history houses"—were not shrines at all, but more or less continually occupied, suggesting that art and decoration were integral to the daily lives of the community's residents. Numerous wall paintings reinforce this idea. In one painting (Fig. **1.9**), small human beings surround a large horned animal, probably a deer, in what has been interpreted as a dangerous game of baiting wild animals. One man appears to be pulling the deer's tongue out of its mouth, while others jump and run around it. The deer itself is depicted with a large erect penis, suggesting that male

Fig. 1.8 Reconstruction of a "shrine," Çatalhöyük, Turkey, ca. 6850–6300 BCE. Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. The relief sculpture below the arch in the center of the room appears to be a decapitated animal or, possibly, human form.

virility is at least in part at stake in the game. All of this suggests that, by the Neolithic era, the religious and spiritual prominence of the female in Paleolithic culture was gradually diminishing.

Like so many prehistoric sites, Çatalhöyük continues to excite the human imagination. The contemporary artist Frank Stella was particularly moved by Mellaart's discoveries. His artistic response is reflected in his own work entitled, *Çatal Hüyük* (see *The Continuing Presence of the Past*, page 12).

Skara Brae Preserved in the cold northern climate of the Orkney Islands off the northeastern coast of Scotland is Skara Brae. Some 4,000 years younger than Çatalhöyük, Skara Brae is a Neolithic village dating from between 3100 and 2600 BCE. The seaside village was apparently buried long ago beneath a layer of sand during a massive storm, and then, in 1850, uncovered when another storm swept the sand away.

The houses of Skara Brae are made entirely of stone—virtually the only building material on the treeless

Fig. 1.9 Wall painting showing the capturing or baiting of a deer, Çatalhöyük, Turkey, ca. 6850–6300 BCE. Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. The painting, along with many others like it, suggests that the hunt played a significant role in Neolithic culture, as it did in Paleolithic times.

Frank Stella's *Çatal Hüyük*

Frank Stella, *Çatal Hüyük (level VI B) Shrine VI B.1*, 2001. Two views. Aluminum pipe and cast aluminum, 97" x 126¾" x 91".

(Below) Frank Stella, *Pagosa Springs*, 1960. Copper paint and pencil on canvas, 99⅜" x 99¼".

In 1999, American artist Frank Stella undertook a series of large, three-dimensional works named after the various excavation sites at Çatalhöyük. He referred to the first of these works, rather surprisingly, as "easel paintings" since he had poured molten aluminum onto solid, easel-like armatures. Visiting the Lascaux caves in the Dordogne region of France in the summer of 1999, he had been impressed, he said, by "how well the drawing and painting of the animal figures conforms to and/or follows the topography of the cave's faces." He understood, in other words, that his supports, or easels, did not need to be flat surfaces, and that, in his words, by "pouring molten metal over a loose improvised structure . . . the pieces seem to function more as a kind of fluid assemblage, an almost metallic collage, rather than as a conventionally structured relief."

Indeed, seen from the front, the piece does look like a relief. Its true depth—over 7½ feet—is masked by the density of its coils, lattices, arcs, and spirals. Seen from the side, however, its spaces open up into a more fluid and loose composition. Perhaps most surprising to viewers who know Stella's early work from the 1960s and 70s is how different these later works seem from the paintings of his early career.

Typical of this early work is *Pagosa Springs*, composed simply of copper parallel lines painted carefully between visible pencil marks on an H-shaped canvas. Its austere geometry and lack of expressive technique seem light years away from *Çatal Hüyük*. But what the two share is an interest in shape and space—and the way that art serves to define the space it is in. Asked about his move from painting to three-dimensional forms (in an interview opening the catalogue to a retrospective of his works from 1958 to 2012 in Germany), Stella referred directly to Çatalhöyük. That movement from painting to three-dimensional forms, he said, "is also something that can be found in history. In Anatolia [i.e., central Turkey], people lived in houses that they entered from the top. They painted directly on the walls. The furnishings were completely integrated into the art. It was three-dimensional pictorial work and at the same time people lived in it as well."

Stella's *Çatal Hüyük (level VI B) Shrine VI B.1* hangs on the wall in the same way the skulls of cows and the heads and horns of bulls hung at Çatalhöyük, completing what Stella has called the "Perfect Arc" of art history from the earliest moment when people painted on walls they themselves had constructed to the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Fig. 1.10 House interior, Skara Brae, Orkney Islands, Scotland, ca. 3100–2600 BCE. This is a view of the interior of house 7 in Fig. 1.11. In this and other houses, archaeologists have found stone cooking pots; mortars for grinding grains, including barley and wheat; carved stone balls; bone tools used for fishing and sewing; and pottery. In this view, the corbeled walls are just beginning to curve inward.

Orkney Islands. The walls are made by **corbeling**, a construction technique (see *Materials & Techniques*, page 17), in which layers of flat stones are piled one upon the other, with each layer projecting slightly inward as the wall rises. As the walls curve inward, they are braced, or supported, on the outside by earth. Nothing of the roofs at Skara Brae has survived, suggesting that they were constructed of organic matter such as straw thatch or seaweed (seaweed remained a common roofing material in the Orkney Islands into the twentieth century). Furniture was built into the walls—in the house shown here, rectangular stone beds at either side of a central hearth, and a stone bench along the back wall (Fig. **1.10**). The bed frames would have been filled with organic materials such as heather or straw, and covered with furs. Storage spaces have been fashioned into the walls above the beds and in the back left corner. The only light in the house would have come from the smoke hole above the hearth.

The houses in the village were connected by a series of narrow walkways that were probably covered (Fig. **1.11**). Each of the houses is more or less square, with rounded corners. They are relatively spacious, ranging in size from 12 by 14 feet to 20 by 21 feet. That Skara Brae was continually inhabited for 500 years suggests that life in the village was relatively comfortable despite the harsh climate.

Neolithic Pottery Across Cultures

The transition from cultures based on hunting and fishing to cultures based on agriculture led to the increased use of pottery vessels. Ceramic vessels are fragile, so hunter-gatherers would not have found them practical for carrying food, but people living in the more permanent Neolithic settlements could have used them to carry and store water, and to prepare and store certain types of food.

As early as 10,000 BCE, Japanese artisans were making clay pots capable of storing, transporting, and cooking food and water. Over the course of the Neolithic era, called the Jomon period in Japan (12,000–300 BCE), their work became increasingly decorative. *Jomon* means "cord markings" and refers to the fact that potters decorated many of their wares by pressing cord into the damp clay. As in most Neolithic societies, women made Jomon pottery; their connection to fertility and the life cycle may have become even more important to Neolithic cultures

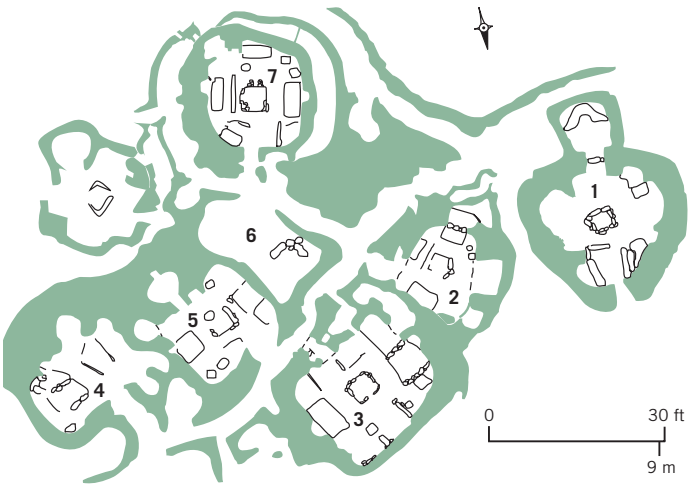


Fig. 1.11 Plan, village of Skara Brae, Orkney Islands, Scotland, ca. 3100–2600 BCE. The numbers refer to individual houses.

Fig. 1.12 Deep bowl with sculptural rim, late Middle Jomon period (ca. 2500–1600 BCE), Japan, ca. 2000 BCE. Terra cotta, 14½" × 12⅓". Musée des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris. The motifs incised on this pot may have had some meaning, but most interesting is the potter's freedom of expression. The design of the pot's flamelike rim is anything but practical.

Fig. 1.13 Basin (*pen*), Majiayao culture, Majiayao phase, Gansu Province, China, ca. 3200–2700 BCE. Earthenware with painted decoration, diameter 11". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Anonymous loan (L.1996.55.6). The designs on this bowl are examples of the kind of markings that would eventually develop into writing.

in the transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural food production. Jomon women built their pots up from the bottom with coil upon coil of soft clay. They mixed the clay with a variety of adhesive materials, including mica, lead, fibers, and crushed shells. After forming the vessel, they employed tools to smooth both the outer and interior surfaces. Finally, they decorated the outside with cord markings and fired the pot in an outdoor bonfire at a temperature of about 1,650 degrees Fahrenheit (900 degrees Celsius). By the Middle Jomon period, potters had begun to decorate the normal flat-bottomed, straight-sided jars with elaborately ornate and flamelike rims (Fig. **1.12**), distinguished by their asymmetry and their unique characteristics. These rims suggest animal forms, but their significance remains a mystery.

The Neolithic cultures that flourished along the banks of the Yellow River in China beginning in about 5000 BCE also produced pottery. These cultures were based on growing rice and millet (grains from the Near East would not be introduced for another 3,000 years), and this agricultural emphasis spawned towns and villages, such as Jiangzhai, the largest Neolithic site that has been excavated in China. The Jiangzhai community, near present-day Xi'an, in Shaanxi Province, dates to about 4000 BCE and consisted of about 100 dwellings. At its center was a communal gathering place, a cemetery, and, most important, a **kiln**, an oven specifically designed to achieve the high temperatures necessary for firing clay. Indeed, the site yielded many pottery fragments. Farther to the east, in Gansu Province, Neolithic potters began to add painted decoration to their work (Fig. **1.13**). The flowing, curvilinear forms painted on the shallow basin illustrated here include "hand" motifs on the outside, and round, almost eyelike forms that flow into each other on the inside.

Some of the most remarkable Neolithic painted pottery comes from Susa, on the Iranian plateau. The patterns on one particular beaker (Fig. **1.14**) from around 5000 to 4000 BCE are highly stylized animals. The largest of these is an ibex, a popular decorative feature of prehistoric ceramics from Iran. Associated with the hunt, the ibex may have been a symbol of plenty. The front and hind legs of the ibex are rendered by two triangles, the tail hangs behind it like a feather, the head is oddly disconnected from the body, and the horns rise in a large, exaggerated arc to encircle a decorative circular form. Hounds race around the band above the ibex, and wading birds form a decorative band across the beaker's top.

In Europe, the production of pottery apparently developed some time later, around 3000 BCE. Early pots were made either by molding clay over a round stone or by coiling long ropes of clay on top of one another and then smoothing the seams between them. Then the pots were fired at temperatures high enough to make them watertight—above 700 degrees Fahrenheit (370 degrees Celsius).

Fig. 1.14 Beaker with ibex, dogs, and long-necked birds, from Susa, southwestern Iran, ca. 5000–4000 BCE. Baked clay with painted decoration, height 11¼". Musée du Louvre, Paris. The ibex was the most widely hunted game in the ancient Middle East, which probably accounts for its centrality in this design.

By this time, however, artisans in Egypt had begun using the potter's wheel, a revolving platter for forming vessels from clay with the fingers. It allowed artisans to produce a uniformly shaped vessel in a very short time. By 3000 BCE, the potter's wheel was in use in the Middle East as well as China. Because it is a machine created expressly to produce goods, it is in many ways the first mechanical and technological breakthrough in history. As skilled individuals specialized in making and decorating pottery, and traded their wares for other goods and services, the first elemental forms of manufacturing began to emerge.

Neolithic Ceramic Figures

It is a simple step from forming clay pots and firing them to modeling clay sculptural figures and submitting them to the same firing process. Examples of clay modeling can be found in some of the earliest Paleolithic cave sites where, at Altamira, for instance, in Spain, an artist added clay to an existing rock outcropping in order to underscore the rock's natural resemblance to an animal form. At Le Tuc d'Audoubert, south of Lascaux in France, an artist shaped two clay bison, each 2 feet long, as if they were leaning against a rock ridge.

But these Paleolithic sculptures were never fired. Some of the most interesting examples of Neolithic fired clay figurines were the work of the so-called Nok people who lived in what is now Nigeria. We do not know what they called themselves—they are identified instead by the name of the place where their artifacts were discovered. In fact, we know almost nothing about the Nok. We do not know how their culture was organized, what their lives were like, or what they believed. But while most Neolithic peoples in Africa worked in materials that were not permanent, the Nok fired clay figures of animals and humans that were approximately life-size.

These figures were first unearthed early in the twentieth century by miners over an area of about 40 square miles. Carbon-14 and other forms of dating revealed that some of these objects had been made as early as 800 BCE and others as late as 600 CE. Little more than the hollow heads have survived intact, revealing an artistry based on abstract geometrical shapes (Fig. **1.15**). In some cases, the heads are represented as ovals, and in others, as cones, cylinders, or spheres. Facial features are combinations of ovals, triangles, graceful arches, and straight lines. These heads were probably shaped with wet clay and then, after firing, finished by carving details into

Fig. 1.15 Nok head, ca. 500 BCE–200 CE. Terra cotta, height 14³⁄₁₆". This slightly larger-than-life-size head was probably part of a complete body, and shows the Nok people's interest in abstract geometrical representations of facial features and head shape. Holes in the eyes and nose were probably used to control temperature during firing.

Fig. 1.16 Neolithic menhir alignments at Ménec, Carnac, Brittany, France, ca. 4250–3750 BCE. According to an ancient legend, the Carnac menhirs came into being when a retreating army was driven to the sea. Finding no ships to aid their escape, they turned to face their enemy and were transformed into stone.

the hardened clay. Some scholars have argued that the technical and artistic sophistication of works by the Nok and other roughly contemporaneous groups suggests that it is likely there are older artistic traditions in West Africa that have not as yet been discovered. Certainly, farther to the east, in the sub-Saharan regions of the Sudan, Egyptian culture had exerted considerable influence for centuries, and it may well be that Egyptian technological sophistication had worked its way westward.

The Neolithic Megaliths of Northern Europe

A distinctive kind of monumental stone architecture appears late in the Neolithic period, particularly in what is now Britain and France. Known as **megaliths**, or "big stones," these works were constructed without the use of mortar and represent the most basic form of architectural construction. Sometimes, they consisted merely of posts—upright stones stuck into the ground—called **menhirs**, from the Celtic words *men*, "stone," and *hir*, "long." These single stones occur in isolation or in groups. The largest of the groups is at Carnac, in Brittany (Fig. **1.16**), where some 3,000 menhirs arranged east to west in 13 straight rows, called *alignments*, cover a 2-mile stretch of plain. At the east end, the stones stand about 3 feet tall and gradually get larger and larger until, at the west end, they attain a height of 13 feet. This east–west alignment suggests a connection to the rising and setting of the sun and to fertility rites. Scholars disagree about their significance; some speculate that the stones may have marked out a ritual procession route; others think they symbolized the body and the process of growth and maturation. But there can be no doubt that megaliths were designed to be permanent structures, whereas domestic architecture was not. Quite possibly the megaliths stood in tribute to the strength of the leaders responsible for assembling and maintaining the considerable labor force required to construct them.

Another megalithic structure, the **dolmen**, consists of two posts roofed with a capstone, or **lintel**. Because it is composed of three stones, the dolmen is a **trilithon**, from Greek *tri*, "three," and *lithos*, "rock," and it formed the basic unit of architectural structure for thousands of years. Today, we call this kind of construction **post-and-lintel** (see *Materials & Techniques*, page 17). Megaliths such as the dolmen in County Clare, Ireland (Fig. **1.17**), were probably once

Fig. 1.17 Poulnabrone Dolmen, a Neolithic dolmen on the Burren limestone plateau, County Clare, Ireland, ca. 2500 BCE. A mound of earth probably once covered this structure, an ancient burial chamber.

covered with earth to form a fully enclosed burial chamber, or **cairn**.

A third type of megalithic structure is the **cromlech**, from the Celtic *crom*, "circle," and *lech*, "place." Without doubt, the most famous megalithic structure in the world is the cromlech known as Stonehenge (Fig. **1.18**), on Salisbury Plain, about 100 miles west of present-day London. A henge is a special type of cromlech, a circle surrounded by a ditch with built-up embankments, presumably for fortification purposes.

The site at Stonehenge reflects four major building periods, extending from about 2750 to 1500 BCE. By about 2100 BCE, most of the elements visible today were in place. In the middle was a U-shaped arrangement of five post-and-lintel trilithons. The one at the bottom of the U stands taller than the rest, rising to a height of 24 feet, with a 15-foot lintel 3 feet thick. A continuous circle of sandstone posts, each weighing up to 50 tons and all standing 20 feet high, surrounded the five trilithons. Across their top was a continuous lintel 106 feet in diameter. This is the Sarsen Circle. Just inside the Sarsen Circle was once another circle, made of bluestone—a bluish dolerite—found only in the mountains of southern Wales, some 120 miles away (see *Closer Look*, pages 18–19.)

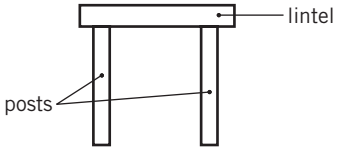
Recently, the Stonehenge Hidden Landscapes Project, headed by British archaeologist Vincent Gaffney, surveyed the area surrounding Stonehenge—some 4 square miles about which almost nothing was known—by means of GPS-guided magnetometers and

Fig. 1.18 Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England, ca. 2750–1500 BCE. Probably no Neolithic site has received, and continues to receive, more scrutiny—yet its purpose still remains largely a matter of speculation.

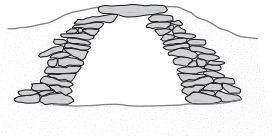
Materials & Techniques

Post-and-Lintel and Corbel Construction

Post-and-lintel is the most basic technique for spanning space. In this form of construction two **posts**, or pieces fixed firmly in an upright position, support a lintel, or horizontal span. Two posts and a single lintel, as seen in County Clare and at Stonehenge (see Figs. 1.17, 1.18), constitute a trilithon (from the Greek *tri*, "three," and *lithos*, "rock"). The houses at Skara Brae (see Fig. 1.10) are examples of corbel construction. In corbeling, layers of rock are laid with the edge of each row projecting inward beyond the row below it until the walls almost meet at the top. The rows are buttressed, or supported, by earth piled on the outside. A roof of organic material can cover the top, or a stone can be set over the top to completely enclose the space (to create a tomb, for instance).



Post-and-lintel construction

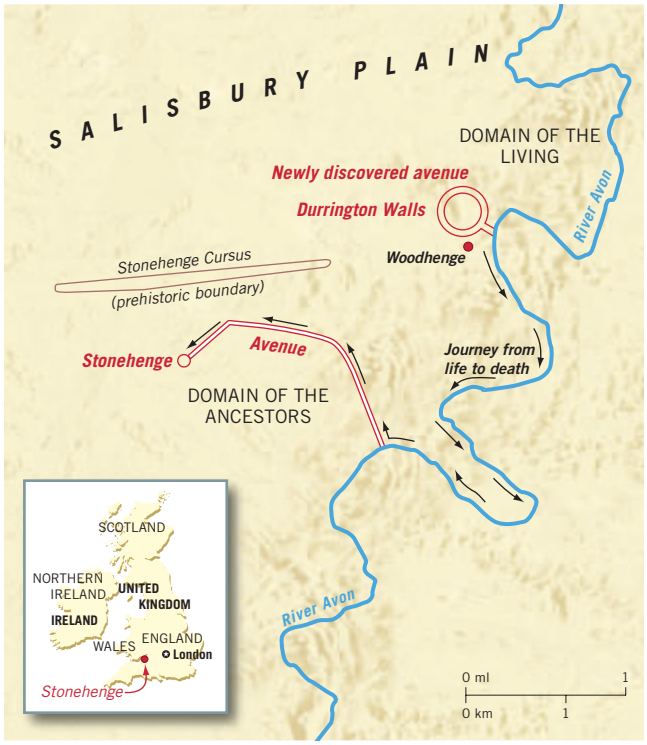


Corbel construction

CLOSER LOOK

How the Neolithic peoples of Britain constructed Stonehenge is uncertain. Scholars believe that the giant stones of the Sarsen Circle, which weigh up to 50 tons, were transported from the Marlborough Downs, roughly 20 miles to the north, by rolling them on logs. Most of the way, the going is relatively easy, but at the steepest part of the route, at Redhorn Hill, modern work studies estimate that it would have taken at least 600 men to push the stones up the hill. A relatively sophisticated understanding of basic physics—the operation of levers and pulleys—was needed to lift the stones, and their lintels, into place.

In 2004, archaeologists at Stonehenge uncovered a second cromlech-like circle at Durrington Walls, about 2 miles north of the stone megalith, consisting of a circular ditch surrounding a ring of postholes out of which very large timber posts would have risen. The circle was the center of a village consisting of as many as 300 houses. The site is comparable in scale to Stonehenge itself. These discoveries—together with the ability to carbon-date human remains found at Stonehenge with increased accuracy—suggest that Stonehenge was itself a burial ground. Archaeologist Mike Parker-Pearson of the University of Sheffield speculates that villagers would have transported their dead down an avenue leading to the River Avon, then journeyed downstream, in a ritual symbolizing the passage to the afterlife, finally arriving at an avenue leading up to Stonehenge from the river. "Stonehenge wasn't set in isolation," Parker-Pearson says, "but was actually one half of this monument complex. We are looking at a pairing—one in timber to represent the transience of life, the other in stone marking the eternity of the ancestral dead."



Durrington Walls in relation to Stonehenge.

The sarsen stone is raised with a long lever. Logs are placed under the stone, and then it is rolled into place.

One by one, layers of timber are placed under the lever, both raising the stone and dropping it into the prepared pit.

As many as 200 men pull the stone upright on ropes as timbers support it from behind.

The pit around the stone is filled with stones and chalk to pack it into place.

The lintel is raised on successive layers of a timber platform.

Once the platform reaches the top of the posts, the lintel is levered onto the posts.

Finally, the platform is removed, and the trilithon is complete.

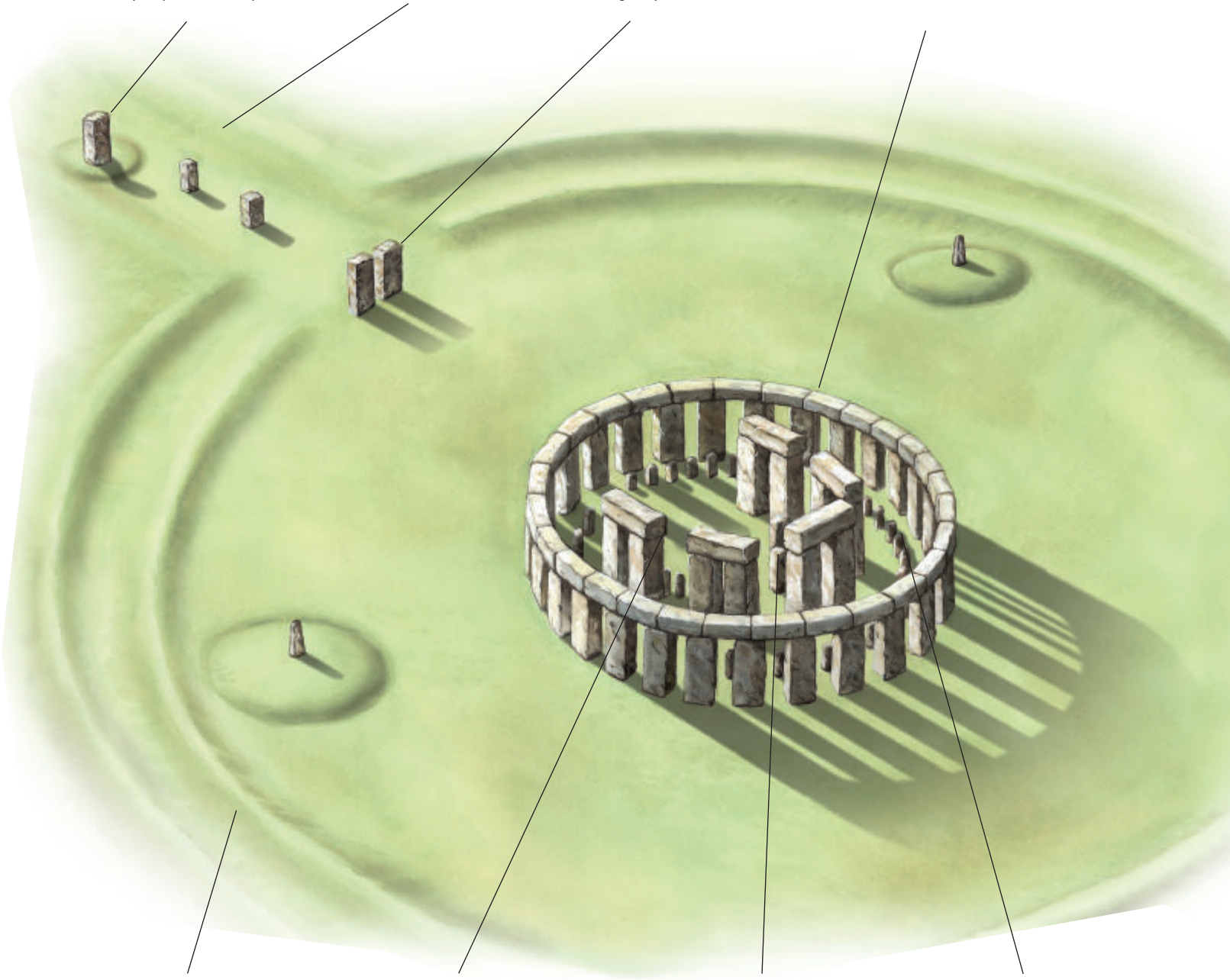
The Design and Making of Stonehenge

The Heel Stone
On Midsummer's Eve, this casts a shadow directly into the circle. The stone stands 16 feet high and weighs 35 tons. It was brought from a quarry 23 miles away.

The Avenue
The shadow cast by the Heel Stone on Midsummer's Eve would extend directly down this ceremonial approach.

The Slaughter Stone
It was once believed that humans were sacrificed on this stone, which now lies flat on the ground, but was originally part of a great portal.

The Sarsen Circle
Erected about 1500 BCE, the circle is capped by lintel stones held in place by mortise-and-tenon joints, similar to those used by woodworkers. The end of the post is narrowed and slotted into a hole in the lintel.



The Outer Bank
This ditch, 330 feet in diameter, is the oldest construction at the site, originally exposing the white limestone beneath the surface soil to form a giant circle.

Five Massive Trilithons
Inside the outer circle stood a horseshoe of trilithons, two on each side and the largest at the closed end at the southwest. Only one of the largest trilithons still stands. It rises 22 feet above ground, with 8 feet more below ground level. Each stone weighs about 50 tons.

The Altar Stone
One of the most distinct stones in Stonehenge, the so-called Altar Stone is a 16-foot block of smoothed green sandstone located near the center of the complex.

The Bluestone Circle
This circle of 80 smallish slabs was built in about 2000 BCE from stone quarried in South Wales.

ground-penetrating radar capable of detecting objects, even variations in long-buried topography, several yards below the surface. They discovered some 15 previously unknown or largely ignored Neolithic monuments—henges, burial mounds, and pits, including two very large pits, 0.92 and 0.68 miles respectively from the Heel Stone, and one near each end of the Cursus, the 1½-mile-long set of parallel ditches, closed at either end, that are believed to mark the northern boundary of the site. Remarkably, these pits align with the midsummer sunrise and the midsummer solstice as seen from the Heel Stone itself. In 2015, Gaffney's team discovered what they call a "super-henge," consisting of up to 90 standing stones buried beneath what had been believed to be a large bank-and-ditch enclosure surrounding nearby Durrington Walls.

Why Stonehenge, its outlying pits, and the newly discovered "super-henge" were constructed remains a mystery, although it seems clear that orientation toward the rising sun at the summer solstice connects it to planting and the harvest. Stonehenge embodies, in fact, the growing importance of agricultural production in the northern reaches of Europe sometime after 3500 BCE. Perhaps great rituals celebrating the earth's plenty took place here. Together with other megalithic structures of the era, it suggests that the late Neolithic peoples who built it were extremely social beings, capable of great cooperation. They worked together not only to find the giant stones that stand at the site, but also to quarry, transport, and raise them. In other words, theirs was a culture of some magnitude and no small skill. It was a culture capable of both solving great problems and organizing itself in the name of creating a great social center. For Stonehenge is, above all, a center of culture. Its fascination for us today lies in the fact that we know so little of the culture that left it behind.

THE ROLE OF MYTH IN CULTURAL LIFE

What is the function of myth in prehistoric culture?

Much of our understanding of prehistoric cultures comes from stories that have survived in cultures around the world that developed without writing—that is, **oral cultures**—such as the San cultures of Zimbabwe, and the Oceanic peoples of Tahiti in the South Pacific. These cultures have passed down their myths and histories over the centuries, from generation to generation, by word of mouth. Although, chronologically speaking, many of these cultures are contemporaneous with the medieval, Renaissance, and even modern cultures of the West, they are actually closer to the Neolithic cultures in terms of social practice and organization. Especially in terms of myths and the rituals associated with them, they can help us to understand the outlook of actual Neolithic peoples.

A **myth** is a story that a culture assumes is true. It also embodies the culture's views and beliefs about its world, often serving to explain otherwise mysterious natural phenomena. Myths stand apart from scientific explanations of the nature of reality, but as a mode of understanding and explanation, myth has been one of the most important forces driving the development of culture. Although myths are speculative, they are not pure fantasy. They are grounded in observed experience. They serve to rationalize the unknown and to explain to people the nature of the universe and their place within it.

Fig. 1.19 Wall painting with giraffes, zebra, eland, and abstract shapes, San people, Inanke, Matobo National Park, Zimbabwe, before 1000 CE. The animals across the bottom are eland, the largest of the antelope species, resembling cattle.

Both nineteenth-century and more recent anthropological work among the San people suggests that their belief systems can be traced back for thousands of years. As a result, the meaning of their rock art that survives in open-air caves below the overhanging stone cliffs atop the hills of what is now Matobo National Park in Zimbabwe (Fig. **1.19**), some of which dates back as far as 5,000 to 10,000 years ago, is not entirely lost. A giraffe stands above a group of smaller giraffes crossing a series of large, white, lozenge-shaped forms with brown rectangular centers, many of them overlapping one another. To the right, six humanlike figures are joined hand in hand, probably in a trance dance. For the San people, prolonged dancing activates *num*, a concept of personal energy or potency that the entire community can acquire. Led by a **shaman**, a person thought to have special ability to communicate with the spirit world, the dance encourages the *num* to heat up until it boils over and rises up through the spine to explode, causing the dancers to enter into a trance. Sweating and trembling, the dancers variously convulse or become rigid. They might run, jump, or fall. The San believe that in many instances, the dancer's spirit leaves the body, traveling far away, where it might enter into battle with supernatural forces. At any event, the trance imbues the dancer with almost supernatural agency. The dancers' *num* is capable of curing illnesses, managing game, or controlling the weather.

Myth in the Native American Cultures of the Southwest

Seventeen thousand years ago, about the time that the hunter-gatherers at Lascaux painted its caves, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans were more than 300 feet below present-day levels, exposing a low-lying continental shelf that extended from northeastern Asia to North America. It was a landscape of grasslands and marshes, home to the woolly mammoth, the steppe bison, wild horses, caribou, and antelope. Although recent research has found evidence of migration into North America as early as 25,000 years ago, at some point around 15,000 BCE, large numbers of hunter-gatherers in northeastern Asia followed these animals across the grasslands land bridge into the Americas. By 12,000 BCE, prehistoric hunters had settled across North America and begun to move farther south, through Mesoamerica (the region extending from central Mexico to northern Central America), and on into South America, reaching the southern end of Chile no later than 11,000 BCE.

Around 9000 BCE, for reasons that are still hotly debated—perhaps a combination of overhunting and climatic change—the peoples of the Americas developed agricultural societies. They domesticated animals—turkeys, guinea pigs, dogs, and llamas, though never a beast of burden, as in the rest of the world—and they cultivated a whole new range of plants, including maize and corn (domesticated in the Valley of Mexico by 8000 BCE), beans, squash, tomatoes, avocados, potatoes, tobacco, and cacao, the source of chocolate. The wheel remained unknown to them, though they learned to adapt to almost every conceivable climate and landscape. A **creation myth**, or story of a people's origin, told by the Maidu tribe of California, characterizes this early time: "For a long time everyone spoke the same language, but suddenly people began to speak in different tongues. Kulsu (the Creator), however, could speak all languages, so he called his people together and told them the names of the animals in their own language, taught them to get food, and gave them their laws and rituals. Then he sent each tribe to a different place to live."

The Anasazi and the Role of Myth The Anasazi people thrived in the American Southwest from about 900 to 1300 CE, a time roughly contemporaneous with the late Middle Ages in Europe. They left us no written record of their culture, only ruins and artifacts. As William M. Ferguson and Arthur H. Rohn, two prominent scholars of the Anasazi, have described them: "They were a Neolithic people without a beast of burden, the wheel, metal, or a written language, yet they constructed magnificent masonry housing and ceremonial structures, irrigation works, and water impoundments." At Mesa Verde, in what is today southwestern Colorado, their cliff dwellings (Fig. **1.20**) resemble many of the Neolithic cities of the Middle East, such as Ain Ghazal ("spring of the gazelles"), just outside what is now Amman, Jordan. Although Ain Ghazal flourished from about 7200 to 5000 BCE, thousands of years before the Mesa Verde community, both complexes were constructed with stone walls sealed with a layer of mud plaster. Their roofs were made of wooden beams cross-layered with smaller twigs and branches and sealed with mud. Like other Neolithic cultures, the Anasazi were accomplished in pottery making, decorating their creations with elaborately abstract, largely geometric shapes and patterns.

The Anasazi abandoned their communities in the late thirteenth century, perhaps because of a great drought that lasted from about 1276 to 1299. Their descendants may be the Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest today. (*Anasazi* is in fact a Navajo word meaning "enemy ancestors"—we do not know what the Anasazi called themselves.) What is remarkable about the Pueblo peoples, who despite the fact that they speak several different languages share a remarkably common culture, is that many aspects of their culture have survived and are practiced today much as they were in ancient times. For all Pueblo peoples, the village is not

Fig. 1.20 Spruce Tree House, Mesa Verde, Colorado, Anasazi culture, ca. 1200–1300 CE. The courtyard was formed by the restoration of the roofs over two underground kivas.

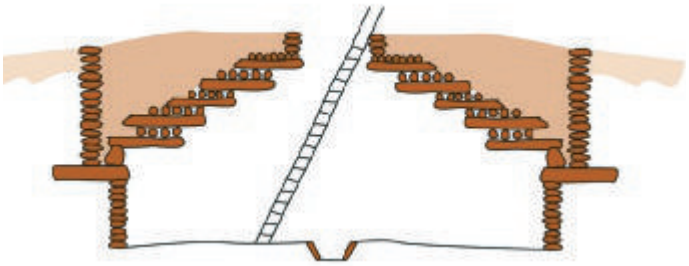


Fig. 1.21 Roof construction of a kiva. After a National Park Service pamphlet.

just the center of culture but the very center of the world. And the cultural center of village life is the **kiva** (Fig. **1.21** above), two of which have been restored at Spruce Tree House to form the plaza visible in Fig. 1.20. They are constructed of horizontally laid logs built up to form a dome with an access hole. The roof area thus created is used as a common area. Down below, in the enclosed kiva floor, was a *sipapu*, a small, round hole symbolic of the Anasazi creation myth, which told of the emergence of the Anasazi's ancestors from the depths of the earth. In the parched Southwestern desert country, it is equally true that water, like life itself, also seeps out of small fissures in the earth. Thus, it is as if the Anasazi community itself, and everything necessary to its survival, had emerged from Mother Earth.

Zuni Pueblo Emergence Tales The Pueblos have maintained the active practice of their ancient religious rites and ceremonies, which they have chosen not to share with outsiders. Most do not allow their ceremonial dances to be photographed. These dance performances tell stories that relate to the experiences of the Pueblo peoples, from planting, hunting, and fishing in daily life to the larger experiences of birth, puberty, maturity, and death. Still other stories explain the origin of the world, the emergence of a particular Pueblo people into the world, and their history. Most Pueblo people believe that they originated in the womb of Mother Earth and, like seeds sprouting from the soil in the springtime, were called out into the daylight by their Sun Father. This belief about origins is embodied in a type of narrative known as an **emergence tale**, a form of creation myth (**Reading 1.1**):

READING 1.1

Zuni emergence tale: *Talk Concerning the First Beginning*

Yes, indeed. In this world there was no one at all. Always the sun came up; always he went in. No one in the morning gave him sacred meal; no one gave him prayer sticks; it was very lonely. He said to his two children: "You will go into the fourth womb. Your fathers, your mothers, kä-eto·we, tcu-eto·we, mu-eto·we, le-eto·we, all the society priests, society pekwins, society bow priests, you will bring out yonder into the light of your sun father."

So begins this emergence tale, which embodies the fundamental principles of Zuni religious society. The Zuni, or "Sun People," are organized into groups, each responsible for a particular aspect of the community's well-being, and each group is represented by a particular *-eto·we*, or fetish, connecting it to its spiritual foundation in Earth's womb. The pekwins mentioned here are sun priests, who control the ritual calendar. Bow priests oversee warfare and social behavior. In return for corn and breath given them by the Sun Father, the Zuni offer him cornmeal and downy feathers attached to painted prayer sticks symbolizing both clouds—the source of rain—and breath itself. Later in the tale, the two children of the Sun Father bring everyone out into the daylight for the first time:

Into the daylight of their sun father they came forth standing. Just as early dawn they came forth. After they came forth there they set down their sacred possessions in a row. The two said, "Now after a little while when your sun father comes forth standing to his sacred place you will see him face to face. Do not close your eyes." Thus he said to them. After a little while the sun came out. When he came out they looked at him. From their eyes the tears rolled down. After they had looked at him, in a little while their eyes became strong. "Alas!" Thus they said. They were covered all over with slime. With slimy tails and slimy horns, with webbed fingers, they saw one another. "Oh dear! is this what we look like?" Thus they said.

Then they could not tell which was which of their sacred possessions.

From this point on in the tale, the people and priests, led by the two children, seek to find the sacred "middle place," where things are balanced and orderly. Halona-Itiwana it is called, the sacred name of the Zuni Pueblo, "the Middle Ant Hill of the World." In the process, they are transformed from indeterminate, salamander-like creatures into their ultimate human form, and their world is transformed from chaos to order.

At the heart of the Zuni emergence tale is a moment when, to the dismay of their parents, many children are transformed into water-creatures—turtles, frogs, and the like—and the Hero Twins instruct the parents to throw these children back into the river. Here they become *kachinas* or *katcinas*, deified spirits, who explain:

May you go happily. You will tell our parents, "Do not worry." We have not perished. In order to remain thus forever we stay here. To Itiwana but one day's travel remains. Therefore we stay nearby. … Whenever the waters are exhausted and the seeds are exhausted you will send us prayer sticks. Yonder at the place of our first beginning with them we shall bend over to speak to them. Thus there will not fail to be waters. Therefore we shall stay quietly nearby.

The Pueblo believe that kachina spirits, not unlike the *num* of the San people of Africa, manifest themselves in performance and dance. Masked male dancers impersonate the kachinas, taking on their likeness as well as their supernatural character. Through these dance visits the kachinas, although always "nearby," can exercise their powers for the good of the people. The nearly 250 kachina personalities embody clouds, rain, crops, animals, and even ideas such as growth and fertility. Although kachina figurines (Fig. **1.22**) are made for sale as art objects, particularly by the Hopi, the actual masks worn in ceremonies are not considered art objects by the Pueblo people. Rather, they are thought of as active agents in the transfer of power and knowledge between the gods and the men who wear them in dance. In fact, kachina dolls made for sale are considered empty of any ritual power or significance.

Pueblo emergence tales, and the ritual practices that accompany them, reflect the general beliefs of most Neolithic peoples. These include the following:

- belief that the forces of nature are inhabited by living spirits, which we call **animism**;
- belief that nature's behavior can be compared to human behavior (we call the practice of investing plants, animals, and natural phenomena with human form or attributes **anthropomorphism**), thus explaining what otherwise would remain inexplicable;
- belief that humans can communicate with the spirits of nature, and that, in return for a sacrificial offering or a prayer, the gods might intercede on their behalf.

Fig. 1.22 Kachina doll (Maalo), Hopi culture, late 19th century. Wood, pigment, feathers, fiber, and string, height 11½". Brooklyn Museum of Art. Museum Expedition 1904, Museum Collection Fund, 04.297.5604. The kachina is probably Maalo, an old-style traditional kachina who appears during Angi'wa (a series of Night Dances), and whose dance portrays a prayer for rain and good crop yield.

Japan and the Role of Myth in the Shinto Religion

A culture's religion—that is, its understanding of the divine—is thus closely tied to and penetrated by mythical elements. Its beliefs, as embodied in its religion, stories, and myths, have always been closely tied to seasonal celebrations and agricultural production—planting and harvest in particular, as well as rain—the success of which was understood to be inextricably linked to the well-being of the community. In a fundamental sense, myths reflect the community's ideals, its history (hence, the preponderance of creation myths in both ancient societies and contemporary religions), and its aspirations. Myths also tend to mirror the culture's moral and political systems, its social organization, and its most fundamental beliefs.

A profound example is the indigenous Japanese religion of Shinto. Before 200 CE, Japan was fragmented; its various regions were separated by sea and mountain, and ruled by numerous competing and often warring states. The *Records of Three Kingdoms*, a classic Chinese text dating from about 297 CE, states that in the first half of the third century CE, many or most of these states were unified under the rule of Queen Himiko. According to the *Records*: "The country formerly had a man as ruler. For some seventy or eighty years after that there were disturbances and warfare. Thereupon the people agreed upon a woman for their ruler. Her name was Himiko." After her rule, Japan was more or less united under the Yamato emperors, who modeled their rule after the Chinese, and whose imperial court ruled from present-day Nara Prefecture, then known as Yamato Province. Its peoples shared a mythology that was finally collected near the end of the Yamato period, in about 700 CE, in a work called the *Kojiki* or *Chronicles of Japan*. (See **Reading 1.2**, page 29.) According to the *Kojiki*, the islands that constitute Japan were formed by two *kami*, or gods—Izanagi and his consort Izanami. Among their offspring was the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, from whom the Japanese imperial line later claimed to have descended. In other words, Japanese emperors could claim not merely to have been put in position by the gods; they could claim to be direct descendants of the gods, and hence divine themselves.

Amaterasu is the principal goddess of the early indigenous religious practices that came to be known as Shinto. She is housed in a shrine complex at Ise, a sacred site from prehistoric times. In many respects, Shinto shares much with Pueblo religions. In Shinto, trees, rocks, water, and mountains—especially Mount Fuji, the volcano just outside Tokyo which is said to look over the country as its protector—are all manifestations of the *kami*, which, like

kachinas, are the spirits that are embodied in the natural world. Even the natural materials with which artists work, such as clay, wood, and stone, are imbued with the *kami* and are to be treated with the respect and reverence due to a god. The *kami* are revered in *matsuri*, festivals that usually occur on an annual basis in which, it is believed, past and present merge into one, everyday reality fades away, and people come face to face with their gods. The *matsuri* serve to purify the territory and community associated with the *kami*, restoring them from the degradation inevitably worked upon them by the passing of time. During the festival, people partake of the original energies of the cosmos, which they will need to restore order to their world. Offerings such as fish, rice, and vegetables, as well as music and dancing, are presented to the *kami*, and the offerings of food are later eaten.

The main sanctuary, or *shoden*, at Ise consists of undecorated wooden beams and a thatched roof (Fig. **1.23**). Ise is exceptional in its use of these plain and simple materials, which not only embody the basic tenet of Shinto—reverence for the natural world—but also the continuity and renewal of a tradition where wood, rather than stone, has always been the principal building material. The most prominent festival at Ise is the *shikinen-sengu* ceremony, which involves the installation of the deity in a new shrine in a celebration of ritual renewal held every 20 years. The shrine buildings are rebuilt on empty ground adjacent to the older shrine, the deity is transferred to the new shrine, and the older shrine is razed, creating empty ground where the next shrine will be erected. The empty site is strewn with large white stones and is left totally bare except for a small wooden hut containing a sacred wooden pole, a practice that scholars believe dates back to very ancient times. This cycle of destruction and renewal connects the past to the present, the human community to its gods and their original energies.

The three sacred treasures of Shinto—a sword, a mirror, and a jewel necklace—were said to be given by Amaterasu to the first emperor, and they are traditionally handed down from emperor to emperor in the enthronement ceremony. The mirror is housed at Ise, the sword at the Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya, and the jewel necklace at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. These imperial regalia are not considered mere symbols of the divine but "deity-bodies" in which the powers of the gods reside, specifically wisdom in the mirror, valor in the sword, and benevolence in the jewel necklace. To this day, millions of Japanese continue to practice Shinto, and they undertake pilgrimages to Ise each year.

SACRED SITES: THE EXAMPLE OF THE AMERICAS

What role do sacred sites play in prehistoric culture?

In some prehistoric cultures, priests or priestesses were principally responsible for mediating between the human and the divine. In others, as in Shinto, the ruler was the representative of the divine world on earth. But in almost all prehistoric cultures, communication with the spiritual world was conducted in special precincts or places such as Ise. Many scholars believe that caves served this purpose in Paleolithic times. In Neolithic culture, sites such as Stonehenge and the Anasazi kiva served this function.

Fig. 1.23 Naiku (Inner) Shrine housing Amaterasu, Ise, Japan, late 5th–early 6th century CE.
Although the site has been sacred to Shinto since prehistoric times, beginning in the reign of the emperor Temmu (r. 673–86 CE), the Shinto shrine at Ise has been rebuilt by the Japanese ruling family, with some inevitable lapses, every 20 years. The most recent reconstruction occurred in 2013 and will occur again in 2033.

The Olmec

As early as 1300 BCE, a preliterate group known as the Olmec came to inhabit the area located between Veracruz and Tabasco on the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico (see Map **1.3**), where they built huge ceremonial precincts in the middle of their communities. Many of the characteristic features of later Mesoamerican culture, such as pyramids, ball courts, mirror-making, and the calendar system, originated in the lowland agricultural zones that the Olmec inhabited.

The Olmec built their cities on great earthen platforms, probably designed to protect their ceremonial centers from rain and flood. On these platforms, they erected giant pyramidal mounds, where an elite group of ruler-priests lived, supported by the general population who farmed the rich, sometimes swampy land that surrounded them. These pyramids may have been an architectural reference to the volcanoes that dominate Mexico, or they may have been tombs. Excavations may eventually tell us. At La Venta, very near the present-day city of Villahermosa, three colossal stone heads stood guard over the ceremonial center on the south end of the platform (Fig. **1.24**), and a fourth guarded the north end by itself. Each head weighs between 11 and 24 tons, and each bears a unique emblem on its headgear, which is similar to old-style American leather football helmets. At other Olmec sites—San Lorenzo, for instance—as many as eight of these heads have been found, some up to 12 feet high. They are carved of basalt, although the nearest basalt quarry is 50 miles to the south in the Tuxtla Mountains. They were evidently at least partially carved at the quarry, then loaded onto rafts and floated downriver to the Gulf of Mexico before going back upriver to their final resting places. The stone heads are generally believed to be portraits of Olmec rulers, and they all share the same facial features, including wide, flat noses and thick lips. They suggest that the ruler was the culture's principal mediator with the gods, literally larger than life.

Fig. 1.24 Colossal head, La Venta, Mexico, Olmec culture, ca. 900–500 BCE. Basalt, height 7'5". La Venta Park, Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico. Giant heads such as this one faced out from the ceremonial center and evidently served to guard it.

Map 1.3 Olmec civilization sites. The Olmec inhabited most of the area that we now refer to as Mesoamerica from 1300 to 400 BCE.

The Mound Builders

Sometime between 1800 and 500 BCE, at about the same time that the Olmec were building the La Venta mound cluster in Mexico, Neolithic hunter-gatherers in eastern North America began building huge ceremonial centers of their own, consisting of large-scale embankments and burial mounds. These people, who probably had arrived in North America sometime between 14,000 and 10,000 BCE, are known as the Woodlands peoples because the area where they lived, stretching from the Mississippi River basin in the west to the Atlantic Ocean in the east, was originally forested.

One of these Woodlands peoples, the Hopewell culture in southern Ohio, enveloped the corpses of what we presume were their highest-ranking leaders from head to toe in freshwater pearls, weighted them down with plates of beaten copper, and then surrounded them with jewelry, sculpture, and pottery. These burials give us a fair idea of the extent of Woodlands trade. Their copper came from the Great Lakes, decorative shell from the Gulf coast, alligator and shark teeth from Florida, and mica from the Appalachian Mountains. There are even examples of obsidian that can be traced to what is now Yellowstone National Park, and grizzly bear teeth from the Rocky Mountains.

Fig. 1.25 Great Serpent Mound, Adams County, Ohio, possibly Fort Ancient culture, ca. 1000 BCE–1650 CE. Length approx. 1,254'. Recently, archaeologists have carbon-dated an artifact found at the Great Serpent Mound as late as 1070 CE. Because of this, the mound is believed to be the product of the Fort Ancient people, who were descended from the Hopewell. The late date of the artifact also suggests that the mound may be related to Halley's Comet, which passed by the earth in 1066.

The most intriguing of the Woodlands mounds is the Great Serpent Mound, near Locust Grove, Ohio (Fig. **1.25**). Nearly a quarter of a mile long, it contains no burial sites. Its "head" consists of an oval enclosure that may have served some ceremonial purpose, and its tail is a spiral. The spiral would, in fact, become a favorite decorative form of the Mississippian culture, which developed out of the Woodlands-era cultures and raised ritual mound building to a new level of achievement.

The great mound at Cahokia (Fig. **1.26**), near the juncture of the Illinois, Missouri, and Mississippi rivers at present-day East St. Louis, Illinois, required the moving of over 22 million cubic feet of earth and took probably three centuries to construct, beginning about 900 CE. It was the focal point of a ritual center that contained as many as 120 mounds, some of which were aligned with the position of the sun at the equinoxes, as well as nearly 400 other platforms, wooden enclosures, and houses. Evidence suggests that the Mississippians worshiped the sun: The Natchez people, one of the Mississippian peoples who survived contact with European culture, called their chief the Great Sun, and their highest social class the Suns.

The Mississippian culture sustained itself primarily by the cultivation of corn, suggesting close connections to Mexico, where the cultivation of corn was originally perfected. As many as 4 million people may have lived in the Mississippi Valley. Cahokia itself thrived, with a population of around 20,000 people within its 6-square-mile area, until just before 1500, when the site was mysteriously abandoned.

Fig. 1.26 Monks Mound, the centerpiece of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Illinois, Mississippian culture, ca. 1150 CE. East–west length approx. 3 miles; north–south length approx. 2¼ miles; base of great mound, 1,037' × 790'; height approx. 100'. A stockade, or fence, surrounded the mound and a large area in front of it, suggesting that warfare probably played an important role in Mississippian life.

Representing the Power of the Animal World

The two images shown here in some sense bracket the six parts of *The Humanities*. The first (Fig. **1.27**), from the Chauvet Cave, is one of the earliest known drawings of a horse. The second (Fig. **1.28**), a drawing by contemporary American painter Susan Rothenberg (1945–), also represents a horse, though in many ways less realistically than the cave drawing. The body of Rothenberg's horse seems to have disappeared and, eyeless, as if blinded, it leans forward, its mouth open, choking or gagging or gasping for air.

In his catalog essay for a 1993 retrospective exhibition of Rothenberg's painting, Michael Auping, then chief curator at the Albright-Knox Museum in Buffalo, New York, described Rothenberg's kind of drawing: "Relatively spontaneous, the drawings are Rothenberg's psychic energy made imminent. … [They] uncover realms of the psyche that are perhaps not yet fully explicable." The same could be said of the cave drawing executed by a nameless hunter-gatherer more than 30,000 years ago. That artist's work must have seemed just as strange as Rothenberg's, lit by flickering firelight in the dark recesses of the cave, its body disappearing, too, into the darkness that surrounded it.

It seems certain that in some measure both drawings were the expression of a psychic need on the part of the artist—whether derived from the energy of the hunt or of nature itself—to fix upon a surface an image of the power and vulnerability of the animal world. That drive, which we will see in the art of the Bronze Age of the Middle East—for instance, in the haunting image of a dying lion in the palace complex of an Assyrian king at Nineveh (see Fig. 2.12)—remains constant from the beginnings of art to the present day. It is the compulsion to express the inexpressible, to visualize the mind as well as the world. ■

Fig. 1.27 Horse. Detail from the Chauvet Cave, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, Ardèche gorge, France (Fig. 1.1), ca. 30,000 BCE. Note the realistic shading that defines the volume of the horse's head. It is a realism that artists throughout history have sometimes sought to achieve, and sometimes ignored, in their efforts to express the forces that drive them.

Fig. 1.28 Susan Rothenberg, Untitled, 1978. Acrylic, flashe, and pencil on paper, 20" × 20". Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1979. © 2017 Susan Rothenberg/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Part of the eeriness of this image comes from Rothenberg's use of flashe, a French vinyl-based color paint that is clear and so creates a misty, ghostlike surface.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1.1 Discuss the ways in which cave art and small sculptural figurines in the Paleolithic era have been interpreted.

The widespread use of stone tools and weapons by *Homo sapiens*, the hominid species that evolved around 120,000 to 100,000 years ago, gives rise to the name of the earliest era of human development, the Paleolithic era. The peoples of the Paleolithic era made objects and images that we can identify today as works of art. Musicians crafted flutes out of bird's wings. Carvers fashioned stone figures, both in the round and in relief. In cave paintings, such as those discovered at Chauvet Cave, the artists' great skill in rendering animals helps us to understand that the ability to represent the world with naturalistic fidelity is an inherent human skill, unrelated to cultural sophistication. If *culture* can be defined as a way of living—religious, social, and/or political—formed by a group of people and passed on from one generation to the next, what can these earliest works of art tell us about the first human cultures? What questions remain a mystery?

1.2 Explain how the art and architecture of the Neolithic era reflect changing cultural concerns.

As the ice that covered the Northern Hemisphere slowly melted, people began cultivating edible grasses and domesticating animals. Gradually, farming supplanted hunting as the primary means of sustaining life, especially in the great river valleys where water was abundant. The rise of agriculture is the chief characteristic of the Neolithic age, but the prehistoric site of Göbekli Tepe suggests that religion played a paramount role in bringing people together as well. Permanent villages such as Çatalhöyük and Skara Brae began to appear. What do these villages suggest about the changing nature of cultural life? What does the appearance of fire-baked pottery tell us about life in Neolithic culture?

During the fifth millennium BCE, Neolithic peoples began constructing monumental stone architecture, or megaliths, in France and England. Upright, single stone posts called menhirs were placed in the ground, either individually or in groups, as at Carnac in Brittany. Elementary post-and-lintel construction was employed to create dolmens, two posts roofed with a capstone. The most famous of the third type of monumental construction, the circular cromlech, is Stonehenge, in England. What does the enormous amount of human labor required for the construction of these megaliths suggest about the societies that built them?

1.3 Understand the function of myth in prehistoric culture.

Neolithic culture in the Americas lasted well into the second millennium CE. Much of our understanding of the role of myth in prehistoric cultures derives from the surviving traditions of contemporary Native American tribes such as the Hopi and Zuni, who are the direct descendants of the Anasazi. Their legends, such as the Zuni emergence tale, encapsulate the fundamental religious principles of the culture. Such stories, and the ritual practices that accompany them, reflect the general beliefs of most Neolithic peoples. Can you describe some of these beliefs? What do the myths of the Pueblo peoples have in common with Japanese Shinto mythology?

1.4 Describe the role of sacred sites in prehistoric culture.

In almost all prehistoric cultures, communication with the spiritual world was conducted in special precincts or places. The main sanctuary at Ise in Japan is one example. So are sites such as Stonehenge and the kivas in Anasazi culture. What do the colossal stone heads at La Venta suggest about the ceremonial centers over which they stand guard? Can you speculate, in a general way, about the role of mounds in Woodlands and Mississippian culture?

READING

READING 1.2

The Japanese creation myth: *The Kojiki*

The following is the beginning of a modern retelling of the *Kojiki* or *Chronicles of Japan*, the oldest surviving account of ancient Japanese history. This creation myth details the origins of Japan and the sacred spirits, or *kami*, which are objects of worship for the indigenous religion of Japan, Shinto.

Before the heavens and the earth came into existence, all was a chaos, unimaginably limitless and without definite shape or form. Eon followed eon: then, lo! out of this boundless, shapeless mass something light and transparent rose up and formed the heaven. This was the Plain of High Heaven, in which materialized a deity called Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi-no-Mikoto (the Deity-of-the-August-Center-of-Heaven). Next the heavens gave birth to a deity named Takami-Musubi-no-Mikoto (the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity), followed by a third called Kammi-Musubi-no-Mikoto (the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity). These three divine beings are called the Three Creating Deities.

In the meantime what was heavy and opaque in the void gradually precipitated and became the earth, but it had taken an immeasurably long time before it condensed sufficiently to form solid ground. In its earliest stages, for millions and millions of years, the earth may be said to have resembled oil floating, medusa-like, upon the face of the waters. Suddenly like the sprouting up of a reed, a pair of immortals were born from its bosom. … Many gods were thus born in succession, and so they increased in number, but as long as the world remained in a chaotic state, there was nothing for them to do. Whereupon, all the Heavenly deities summoned the two divine beings, Izanagi and Izanami, and bade them descend to the nebulous place, and by helping each other, to consolidate it into terra firma. [The heavenly deities] handed them a spear called Ama-no-Nuboko, embellished with costly gems. The divine couple received respectfully and ceremoniously the sacred weapon and then withdrew from the presence of the deities, ready to perform their august commission. Proceeding forthwith to the Floating Bridge of Heaven, which lay between the heaven and the earth, they stood awhile to gaze on that which lay below. What they beheld was a world not yet condensed, but looking like a sea of filmy fog floating to and fro in the air, exhaling the while an inexpressibly fragrant odor. They were, at first, perplexed just how and where to start, but at length Izanagi suggested to his companion that they should try the effect of stirring up the brine with their spear. So saying he pushed down the jeweled shaft and found that it touched something. Then drawing it up, he examined it and observed that the great drops which fell from it almost immediately coagulated into an island, which is, to this day, the Island of Onokoro. Delighted at the result, the two deities descended forthwith from the Floating Bridge to reach the miraculously created island. In this island they thenceforth dwelt and made it the basis of their subsequent task of creating a country. … First, the island of Awaji was born, next, Shikoku, then, the island of Oki, followed by Kyushu; after that, the island Tsushima came into being, and lastly, Honshu, the main island of Japan. The name of Oyashi-ma-kuni (the Country of the Eight Great Islands) was given to these eight islands.

2 The Ancient Near East

Power and Social Order

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 Describe the relationship between the gods and the peoples of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Assyria.

2.2 Explain how surviving literature from Mesopotamia, especially the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* reflects the relationship between the gods and the people.

2.3 Distinguish between the culture of the Hebrews and the other cultures of the ancient Near East.

2.4 Discuss how the art and architecture of Neo-Babylonia and Persia reflect the ambitions of their leaders.

In September 1922, British archaeologist C. Leonard Woolley boarded a steamer, beginning a journey that would take him to southern Iraq. There, Woolley and his team would discover one of the richest treasure troves in the history of archaeology in the ruins of the ancient city of Ur. Woolley concentrated his energies on the burial grounds surrounding the city's central **ziggurat**, a pyramidal temple structure consisting of successive platforms with outside staircases and a shrine at the top (Fig. **2.1**). Digging there in the winter of 1927, he unearthed a series of tombs with several rooms, many bodies, and masses of golden objects (Fig. **2.2**)—vessels, crowns, necklaces, statues, and weapons—as well as jewelry and lyres made of electrum and the deep-blue semiprecious stone lapis lazuli. With the same sense of excitement that was felt by Jean-Marie Chauvet and his companions when they first saw the paintings on the wall of Chauvet Cave, Woolley was careful to keep what he called the "royal tombs" secret. On January 4, 1928, Woolley telegrammed his colleagues in Latin. Translated to English, it read:

> *I found the intact tomb, stone built, and vaulted over with bricks of queen Shubad [later known as Puabi] adorned with a dress in which gems, flower crowns and animal figures are woven. Tomb magnificent with jewels and golden cups.*
>
> —Woolley

◀ **Fig. 2.1 The ziggurat at Ur (present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq), ca. 2100 BCE.** The best preserved and most fully restored of the ancient Sumerian temples, this ziggurat was the center of the city of Ur, in the lower plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Fig. 2.2 Vessel in the shape of an ostrich egg, from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, ca. 2550 BCE. Gold, lapis lazuli, red limestone, shell, and bitumen, hammered from a single sheet of gold and with geometric mosaics at the top and bottom of the egg. Height 5¾", diameter 5⅛". University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia. Museum object #152071. The array of materials came from trade with neighbors in Afghanistan, Iran, Anatolia, and perhaps Egypt and Nubia.

When Woolley's discovery was made public, it remained worldwide news for years.

Archaeologists and historians were especially excited by Woolley's discoveries, because they opened a window onto the larger region we call Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Ur was one of 30 or 40 cities that arose in Sumer, the southern portion of Mesopotamia (Map **2.1**). In fact, its people abandoned the city more than 2,000 years ago, when the Euphrates changed its course away from the city.

Over the centuries other cultures would vie for control of the region, chief among them the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. By 612 BCE, the Assyrian Empire would fall to Nabopolassar, first king of Babylonia, and a second Neo-Babylonian culture would arise, only to fall, in turn, to the Persians. Throughout almost the entire era, a very different culture, that of the Hebrews, coexisted with the major Mesopotamian powers, sometimes peacefully, often not. This chapter outlines the social and political forces that came to define these Mesopotamian cultures.

THE CULTURES OF MESOPOTAMIA, 3200–612 BCE

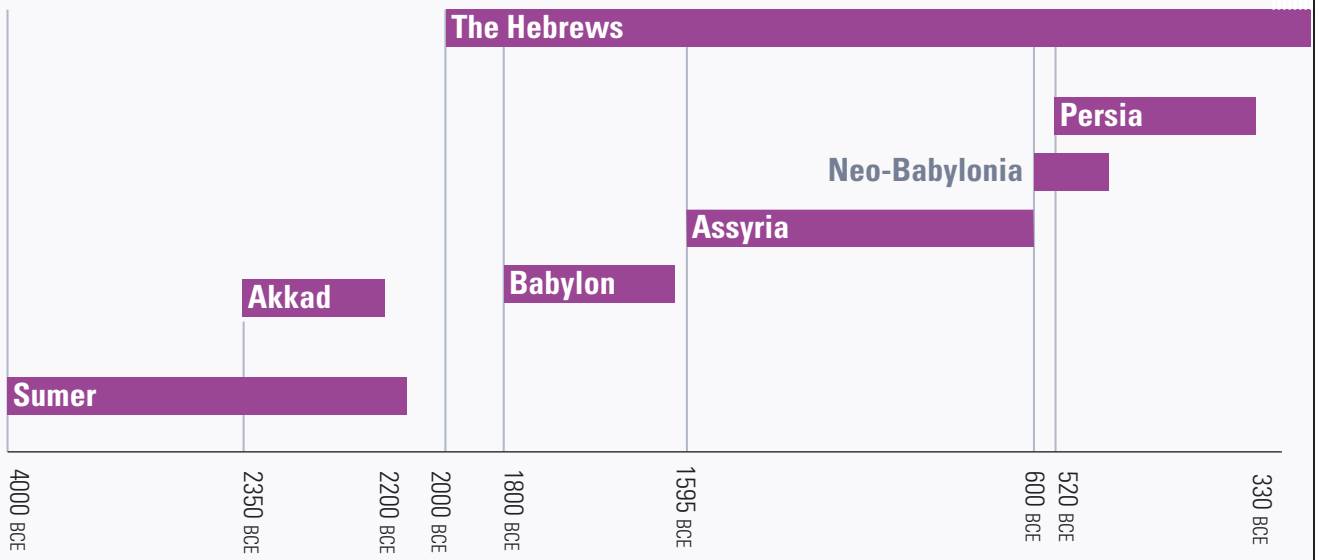
What was the nature of the relationship between the gods and the peoples of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Assyria?

The peoples of Mesopotamia were almost totally dependent on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for their livelihoods. By irrigating the lands just outside the marshes on the riverbanks, the conditions necessary for extensive and elaborate communities such as Ur began to arise. A number of factors, happening more or less simultaneously, served to promote the growth of these larger, more urban centers. People dug canals and ditches and cooperated in regulating the flow of water in them, which eventually resulted in crops that exceeded the needs of the local population. These excess crops could be transformed into foodstuffs of a more elaborate kind, including beer. Evidence indicates that over

Map 2.1 Major Mesopotamian capitals, ca. 2600–500 BCE.

CONTEXT

Timeline of Ancient Near Eastern Empires and Cultures



half of each grain harvest went into producing beer. Excess crops were also traded by boat with nearby communities or sent up the great rivers to the north, where stone, wood, and metals were available in exchange. Cities such as Ur became hubs of important trading networks. With trade came exposure to new ideas, which were incorporated into local custom and in turn spawned newer and better ideas. Out of the exchange of goods and ideas, the conditions were in place for great cultures to arise.

After agriculture, first among these was **metallurgy**, the science of separating metals from their ores and then working or treating them to create objects. The technology probably originated in the Fertile Crescent to the north about 4000 BCE, but as it spread southward, the peoples of Mesopotamia adopted it as well.

This new technology would change the region's social organization, inaugurating what we have come to call the Bronze Age. Metallurgy required the mining of ores, specialized technological training, and skilled artisans. Although the metallurgical properties of copper were widely understood, technicians discovered that by alloying it with tin they could create bronze, a material of enormous strength and durability. Bronze weapons would transform the military and the nature of warfare. Power consolidated around the control and mastery of weaponry, and thus bronze created a new military elite of soldiers dedicated to protecting the Sumerian **city-states** from one another as they vied for control of produce and trade. The city-states, in turn, spawned governments ruled by **priest-kings**, who exercised power as intermediaries between the gods and the people. In their secular role, the priest-kings established laws that contributed to the social order necessary for maintaining successful agricultural societies. The arts developed largely as celebrations of the priest-kings' powers. In order to keep track of the production and distribution of goods, the costs of equipping the military, and records relating to enforcing laws and regulations, writing—perhaps the greatest innovation of the Bronze Age—developed. If agricultural production served to stimulate the creation of urban centers, metallurgy made possible the new military cultures of the city-states. The arts served to celebrate these new centers of power, and writing, which arose out of the necessity of tracking the workings of the state, would come to celebrate the state in a literature of its own.

Sumerian Ur

Ur is not the oldest city to occupy the southern plains of Mesopotamia, the region known as Sumer. That distinction belongs to Uruk, just to the north, which by around 3200 BCE was probably the largest settlement in the world. But the temple structure at Ur is of particular note because it is the most fully preserved and restored. It was most likely designed to evoke the mountains to the north, in Anatolia, which were the source of the water that flowed through the two rivers and, so, the source of life. Topped by a sanctuary, the ziggurat might also have symbolized a bridge between

Fig. 2.3 Reconstruction drawing of the ziggurat at Ur (present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq), ca. 2100 BCE. British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley undertook reconstruction of the ziggurat in the 1930s (see Fig. 2.1). In his reconstruction, a temple on top, which was the home of the patron deity of the city, crowned the three-tiered platform, the base of which measures 140 by 200 feet. The entire structure rose to a height of 85 feet. Woolley's reconstruction was halted before the second and third platforms had been completed.

heaven and earth. Woolley, who supervised the reconstruction of the first platform and stairway of the ziggurat at Ur (Fig. **2.3**), speculated that the platforms of the temple were originally not paved but covered with soil and planted with trees, an idea that modern archaeologists no longer accept.

Visitors—almost certainly limited to members of the priesthood—would climb up the stairs to the temple on top. They might bring an offering of food or an animal to be sacrificed to the resident god—at Ur, it was Nanna or Sin, god of the moon. Visitors often placed in the temple a statue that represented themselves in an attitude of perpetual prayer. We know this from the inscriptions on many of the statues. One, dedicated to the goddess Tarsirsir, protector of Girsu, a city-state across the Tigris and not far upstream from Ur, reads:

> To Bau, gracious lady, daughter of An, queen of the holy city, her mistress, for the life of Nammahani … has dedicated as an offering this statue of the protective goddess of Tarsirsir which she has introduced to the courtyard of Bau. May the statue, to which let my mistress turn her ear, speak my prayers.

Fig. 2.4 Nine of twelve dedicatory statues, from the Abu Temple, Tell Asmar, Iraq, ca. 2900–2700 BCE. Marble, alabaster, and gypsum, height of tallest figure, approx. 30". Excavated by the Iraq Expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, February 13, 1934. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The wide-eyed appearance of these figures is probably meant to suggest they are gazing in perpetual awe at the deity.

A group of such statues, found in 1934 in the shrine room of a temple at Tell Asmar, near present-day Baghdad, includes seven men and two women (Fig. **2.4**). The men wear belted, fringed skirts. They have huge eyes, inlaid with lapis lazuli or shell set in bitumen. The single arching eyebrow and crimped beard (only the figure at the right is beardless) are typical of Sumerian sculpture. The two women wear robes. All figures clasp their hands in front of them, suggestive of prayer when empty and of making an offering when holding a cup. Some scholars believe that the tallest man represents Abu, god of vegetation, due to his especially large eyes, but all of the figures are probably worshipers.

Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia Although power struggles among the various city-states dominate Mesopotamian history, with one civilization succeeding another, and with each city-state or empire claiming its own particular divinity as chief among the Mesopotamian gods, the nature of Mesopotamian religion remained relatively constant across the centuries. With the exception of the Hebrews, the religion of the Mesopotamian peoples was polytheistic, consisting of multiple gods and goddesses connected to the forces of nature—sun and sky, water and storm, earth and its fertility (see *Context*, page 36). We know many of these gods and goddesses by two names, one in Sumerian and the other in the Semitic language of the later, more powerful Akkadians. A famous Akkadian **cylinder seal** (Fig. **2.5**), an engraved cylinder used as a signature by rolling it into a wet clay tablet in order to confirm receipt of goods or to identify ownership, represents many of the gods. The figures are recognizably gods because they wear pointed headdresses with multiple horns, though the figure on the left, beside the lion and holding a bow, has not been definitively identified. The figure with two wings standing atop the scaly mountain is Ishtar, goddess of love and war. Weapons rise from her shoulders, and she holds a bunch of dates in her hand, a symbol of fertility. Beneath her, cutting his way through the mountain so that he can rise at dawn, is the sun god, Shamash. Standing with his foot on the mountain at the right, streams of water with fish in them flowing from his shoulders, is Ea, god of water, wisdom, magic, and art. Behind him is his vizier, or "burden-carrier."

To the Mesopotamians, human society was merely part of the larger society of the universe governed by these gods and a reflection of it. Anu, father of the gods, represents the authority, which the ruler emulates as lawmaker and -giver. Enlil, god of the air—the calming breeze as well as the violent storm—is equally powerful, but he represents force, which the ruler emulates in his role as military leader. The active principles of fertility, birth, and agricultural plenty are those of the goddess Belitili, while water, the life force itself, the creative element, is embodied in the god Ea, or Enki, who is also god of the arts. Both Belitili and Ea are subject to the authority of Anu. Ishtar is subject to Enlil, ruled by his breezes (in the case of love) and by his storm (in the case of war). A host of lesser gods represented natural phenomena, or, in some cases, abstract ideas, such as truth and justice.

The Mesopotamian ruler, often represented as a priest-king, and often believed to possess divine attributes, acts as the intermediary between the gods and humankind. His ultimate responsibility is the behavior of the gods—whether Ea blesses the crops with rains, Ishtar his armies with victory, and so on.

The Royal Tombs of Ur Religion was central to the people of Ur, and the cemetery discovered by Woolley tells us a great deal about the nature of their beliefs. Woolley unearthed some 1,840 graves, most dating from between 2600 and 2000 BCE. The greatest number of graves were individual burials of rich and poor alike. However, some included a

Fig. 2.5 Cylinder seal impression and the Seal of Adda, Akkadian, ca. 2200–2159 BCE. Greenstone, height 1½". © The Trustees of the British Museum. The two-line inscription at the left identifies the seal's owner as Adda, a scribe.

CONTEXT

Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses

Name	Symbol	Role
An/Anu	 horned cap	Father of the gods, god of the sky
Enlil	 horned cap	God of the air and storm; later replaces Anu as father of the gods
Utu/Shamash	 solar disc	Sun god, lord of truth and justice
Inanna/Ishtar	 star	Goddess of love and war
Ninhursag /Belitili	 "omega" symbol	Mother Earth
Enki/Ea	 goat-fish	God of water, lord of wisdom, magic, art
Marduk	 spade	Chief god of Babylon

Fig. 2.6 Soundbox panel front of the lyre from Tomb 789 (alternatively identified as the unknown king's or Puabi's tomb), from the cemetery at Ur (present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq), ca. 2600 BCE. Wood with inlaid gold, lapis lazuli, and shell, height approx. 12¼". University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia. Museum object #B17694 (image #150848). The meaning of the scenes on the front of this lyre has always puzzled scholars. On the bottom, a goat holding two cups attends a man with a scorpion's body. Above that, a donkey plays a bull-headed lyre held by a bear, while a seated jackal plays a small percussion instrument. On the third level, animals walking on their hind legs carry food and drink for a feast. In the top panel, a man with long hair and a beard, naked but for his belt, holds two human-headed bulls by the shoulders.

built burial chamber rather than just a coffin and contained more than one body, in some cases as many as 80. These multiple burials, and the evidence of elaborate burial rituals, suggest that members of a king or queen's court accompanied the ruler to the grave. The two richest burial sites, built one behind the other, are now identified as royal tombs, one belonging to Queen Puabi, the other to an unknown king (but it is not that of her husband, King Meskalamdug, who is buried in a different grave).

In the grave of either the unknown king or Queen Puabi (records are confusing on this point) were two lyres, one of which today is housed in Philadelphia (Fig. **2.6**), the other in London (Fig. **2.7**). Both are decorated with bull's heads

and are fronted by a panel of **narrative scenes**—that is, scenes representing a story or event. Although originally made of wood, which rots over time, these objects were able to be saved in their original form due to an innovation of Woolley's during the excavation. He ordered his workers to tell him whenever they came upon an area that sounded hollow. He would fill such hollows (where the original wood had long since rotted away) with wax or plaster, thus preserving, in place, the decorative effects on the object's outside. It seems likely that the mix of animal and human forms that decorate these lyres represents a funerary banquet in the realm of the dead. They are related, at least thematically, to events in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which we will discuss later in the chapter. This suggests that virtually every element of the culture—from its music and literature to its religion and politics—was tied in some way to every other. The women whose bodies were found under the two lyres may have been singers and musicians, and the placement of the lyres over them would indicate that the lyres were put there after the celebrants died.

Such magnificent musical instruments indicate that music was important in Mesopotamian society. Surviving documents tell us that music and song were part of the funeral ritual, and music played a role in worship at the temple, as well as in banquets and festivals. Indeed, a fragment of a poem from the middle of the third millennium BCE found at Lagash (see Map **2.1**) indicates that Sumerian music was anything but funereal. It is music's duty, the poet says,

> To fill with joy the Temple court
> And chase the city's gloom away
> The heart to still, the passions calm,
> Of weeping eyes the tears to stay.

One of Woolley's most important discoveries in the Royal Cemetery was the so-called *Royal Standard of Ur* (Fig. **2.8**). Music plays a large part here, too. The main panels of this rectangular box of unknown function are called "War" and "Peace," because they illustrate, on one side, a military victory and, on the other, the subsequent banquet celebrating the event, or perhaps a cult ritual. Each panel is composed of three **registers**, or self-contained horizontal bands, within which the figures stand on a **ground line**, or baseline.

At the right side of the top register of the "Peace" panel (the lower half of Fig. 2.8), a musician plays a lyre, and behind him another, apparently female, sings. The king, at the left end, is recognizable because he is taller than the others and wears a tufted skirt, his head breaking the register line on top. In this convention, known as **social perspective**, or **hieratic scale** (hierarchy of scale), the most important figures are represented as larger than the others. In other registers on the "Peace" side of the *Standard*, servants bring cattle, goats, sheep, and fish to the celebration. These represent the bounty of the land and perhaps even delicacies from lands to the north. (Notice that the costumes and hairstyles of the figures carrying sacks in the lowest register are different from those in the other two.) This display of consumption and the distribution of food may have been intended to dramatize the power of the king by showing his ability to control trade routes.

On the "War" side of the *Standard*, the king stands in the middle of the top register. War chariots trample the enemy on the bottom register. (Note that the chariots have solid wheels; spoked wheels were not invented until

Fig. 2.7 Lyre from Tomb 789 (alternatively identified as the unknown king's or Puabi's tomb), from the cemetery at Ur (present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq), ca. 2600 BCE. Gold leaf and lapis lazuli over a wood core, height 44½". Restored 1971–72. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 2.8 ***Royal Standard of Ur*, front ("War") and back ("Peace") sides, from Tomb 779, cemetery at Ur (present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq), ca. 2600 BCE.** Shell, lapis lazuli, and red limestone, originally on a wooden framework, height 8", length 19". © The Trustees of the British Museum.

For all its complexity of design, this object is not much bigger than a sheet of legal paper. Its function remains a mystery, though it may have served as a pillow or headrest. Woolley's designation of it as a standard was purely conjectural.

approximately 1800 BCE.) In the middle register, soldiers wearing leather cloaks and bronze helmets lead naked, bound prisoners to the king in the top register, who will presumably decide their fate. Many of the bodies found in the royal tombs were wearing similar military garments. The importance of the *Royal Standard of Ur* is not simply as documentary evidence of Sumerian life but as one of the earliest examples we have of historical narrative.