Civilizations Past & Present

Thirteenth Edition

Combined Volume

Robert R. Edgar
Neil J. Hackett
George F. Jewsbury
Barbara A. Molony
Matthew S. Gordon

Civilizations

Past & Present

Thirteenth Edition

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Preface

The thirteenth edition of *Civilizations Past & Present* continues to present a survey of world history, treating the development and growth of civilization as a global phenomenon involving the interaction of all of the world's cultures. This new edition, like its predecessors, includes all the elements of history—social, economic, political, military, religious, aesthetic, legal, and technological—to illustrate this global interaction.

Because economic and political events that happen in even the most remote corners of the earth affect each of us individually, an appreciation for the civilizations of the world must be an essential aim of education. Thus, the thirteenth edition of *Civilizations Past & Present* emphasizes world trends and carefully avoids placing these trends within a Western conceptual basis.

New to This Edition

The thirteenth edition maintains the many strengths that have made *Civilizations Past & Present* a highly respected textbook throughout its many editions. As the authors revised the text, they relied on the latest historical scholarship and profited from suggestions from the book's users and reviewers. Throughout, they have sought to maintain the fluid writing style and consistent level of presentation—traits often lacking in multiauthored texts.

The most substantial change in the new edition is the restructuring of *Civilizations Past & Present* into 32 chapters. The primary purpose of the reorganization was to provide a more concise, more affordable textbook. In order to accomplish this goal, the chapters dealing with European history have been consolidated and reorganized. Details about this reorganization can be found in the chapter-by-chapter revision list that follows.

Chapter-by-Chapter Revision List

Chapter 1: "Stone Age Societies and the Earliest Civilizations of the Near East" provides coverage of human prehistory, Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations, and the contributions of regional states and empires. This chapter includes updated information on the Neolithic Revolution, the beginnings of agriculture, and migration in the Bronze Age Near East.

Chapter 2: Reorganization of the material on the Qin and Han dynasties to draw out the economic and social developments during those centuries; additional material on women.

Chapter 3: Expansion of material on trade between the Indus valley cities and Mesopotamia; discussion of recent genetic studies that analyze the origins of the subcontinent's people.

Chapter 4: "The Greeks: Politics, Culture, Philosophy, and Science from the Mediterranean to the Indus River" includes new thinking about migration in the Bronze Age and the impact of the sea peoples. The chapter also reviews the most recent speculation on the evolution of democracy in Athens.

Chapter 5: More succinct coverage of the Conflict of the Orders and the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, and expanded material on the third-century crisis.

Chapter 6: The revised chapter adds new insights into the relationship of the Arab/Islamic Empire with the histories of previous Near Eastern empires and more detail on the early Abbasid state.

Chapter 7: Important revisions include expanded coverage of the political and cultural history of the Islamic world following the early imperial period. It draws particular attention to Islamic Spain and Mamluk Egypt.

Chapter 8: The revised chapter offers new interpretations of Bantu migrations to central, eastern, and southern Africa and the role of Islam in the Kingdom of Mali.

Chapter 9: Additional discussion on the Aztec nobility, *capulli* (city wards) and the warrior class, Incan engineering and the road network and the military, the Iroquois of the northeast woodlands, and the Anasazi of the American Southwest.

Chapter 10: This chapter has been reorganized to describe the organization, ascendance, and challenges to both the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Christian churches. The chapter also features Byzantium and its impact, the emergence of Russia, and the significance of the states of eastern and southeastern Europe.

Chapter 11: Major revisions include recasting and expansion of material on Korea.

Chapter 13: Major revisions include expansion of material on women in Korea in the Choson dynasty.

Chapter 14: This chapter has been significantly recast. It now covers significant cultural, religious, and intellectual developments from the "waning of the middle ages" to the development of European nation-states.

Chapter 15: The chapter includes new discussion of the impact of Christopher Columbus's voyages on indigenous people and the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and Incas.

Chapter 16: This chapter has been significantly recast. It shows how, from 1500 to 1815, modern European economics and politics produced the powerful nation-states that harnessed their nation's resources and skills in a continual competition. The nations' creativity outran the structures imposed by the various states that culminated in social and political revolutions.

Chapter 20: Significantly revised, this chapter shows how Europe achieved its highest peak of global influence in the nineteenth century based on the industrial, scientific, and economic advances coming first from the United Kingdom and spreading across the Continent. Unfortunately, the political and diplomatic wisdom of the European nation-states did not match their attainments in other arenas.

Chapter 22: This chapter features expansion of material on the US war in the Philippines, expansion of coverage of the Second Opium War (also called the Arrow War), significant expansion of mid-nineteenth-century rebellions in China, additional material on foreign policy of China in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 23: Additional discussion of Mexican President Benito Juarez's *La Reforma*, the Mexican constitution of 1917, and the Brazilian samba is now provided in the chapter.

Chapter 24: This chapter has been significantly recast. It shows how European nation-states formed alliances and stumbled into the suicidal First World War that saw their economic domination pass to the United States. The vengeful peace treaties and economic disequilibria emerging from that war led to 20 years of democratic weakness.

Chapter 25: This chapter has been significantly recast. It shows how the Liberal-Democratic model emerging from the nineteenth century weakened after 1918, as Japan, Italy, Germany, and Russia abandoned their shallow democratic roots and embraced militaristic and authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 27: Includes a new discussion of pro-independence movements in colonial Korea as precursors to the ideological splits between North and South Korea after World War II.

Chapter 28: This chapter features additional discussion of decolonization in Portugal's Africa colonies and freedom movements in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Chapter 30: This chapter features added discussions on the African refugee crisis, China in Africa, diseases such as HIV-AIDS and Ebola, and updated country profiles.

Chapter 31: This chapter's major revisions include a new section on narcoeconomics and updated country profiles.

Chapter 32: This chapter has been significantly revised. In the discussion of China, it features revised material on liberalization of the economy since the 1980s, Special Economic Zones; women's status and rights, human rights, gay rights; and material on Taiwan. In the discussion of Japan, it features updating on the status of women, the feminist movement, and natural disasters. The section on Korea is updated to include legal changes concerning women's rights and a discussion of the "Korean Wave." Discussions of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Philippines, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have all been updated.

Features and Pedagogy

The text has been developed with the dual purpose of helping students acquire a solid knowledge of past events and, equally important, of helping them think more constructively about the significance of those events for the complex times in which we now live. A number of pedagogical features will assist students in achieving these goals.

Pronunciation Guide

This feature helps students correctly pronounce key foreign words and names. Pronunciations appear in parentheses immediately after the first use of a key foreign term or name in the text.

Glossary

This feature provides students with concise definitions of key historical terms. Glossary definitions appear at the end of the chapter. In the Revel version of *Civilizations Past & Present*, definitions appear as pop-ups when the reader rolls over the term in question.

Chapter Opening Pages

Newly designed chapter opening pages feature an illustration and accompanying caption, a chapter outline, and a short chapter introduction. The introduction previews the chapter's themes. Chapter opening images reflect a wide range of genres, including sculpture, painting, mosaics, tapestries, and illuminated manuscripts.

Chapter Chronology

Each chapter includes an easy-to-read chronology of the chapter's key political, social, religious, and cultural events. The chronology sets the chapter's major topics within a framework that is easy for students to comprehend at a glance.

Chronology Tables

Brief chronology tables throughout each chapter highlight the major events occurring within a text section. Whether focusing on broad movements, as does "African Societies and European Imperialism" (Chapter 21), or on a single country, as does "Qing China" (Chapter 18), the

chronology tables give the student an immediate summary view of a topic, at its point of discussion.

Discovery Through Maps

This special feature focusing on primary maps offers a unique historical view—local, urban, civilizational, global, or imagined—of the way a particular culture looked at the world at a particular time. For example, students tend to take the orientation of a map for granted; however, "An Islamic Map of the World" (Chapter 7) makes clear that not all peoples make the same assumptions. The world map of the famous Arab cartographer al-Idrisi is oriented, as was common at the time, with south at the top. Review questions help students better understand the concepts presented by the maps.

Maps

All maps in the new edition have been redrawn and updated to make them more informative and more accurate. Of the more than 100 maps in the text, some make clear the nature of a single distinctive event, while others illustrate larger trends. For example, Map 2.2 "Trade and Cultural Interchange," c. 50 B.C.E. (Chapter 2) makes clear that an interconnected world economy existed long before the advent of modern communication and technology. The specific focus of the "The Persian Gulf Region, c. 1900" (Chapter 21) foretells some of today's complexities in this area of the world. A caption accompanying each map highlights the significance of the map and its relevance to a specific text topic. Many of the maps have been revised, updated, and/or increased in size. Most of the maps also include insets that show where their territory fits within a larger hemisphere or the globe.

Suggestions for Reading

The suggested additional readings have been updated and carefully trimmed of dated entries. Students can consult these general interpretations, monographs, and collections of traditional source materials to expand their understanding of a particular topic or to prepare reports and papers.

Revel Features

For the first time, *Civilizations Past & Present* will be available in the Revel platform. Revel is Pearson's newest way of delivering our respected content. Fully digital and highly engaging, Revel offers an immersive learning experience designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn. Enlivening course content with media interactives and assessments, Revel empowers educators to increase engagement with the course and to better connect with students.

Civilizations Past & Present, thirteenth edition, features many of the dynamic interactive elements that make Revel unique. In addition to the rich narrative content, *Civilizations Past & Present* includes the following elements to support instruction and enhance student learning.

Global Perspectives Map Slide Shows

Each chapter introduction features a Global Perspectives map slide show. These slide shows highlight key developments in the chapter to come, linking those developments to geography and to concurrent developments around the world. They give students an opportunity to make connections between regional and global history at the same time as they build their geographical knowledge.

Videos

Every chapter features selections from an exciting new series of videos. The series "Artifacts as Evidence" explores the connections between individual artifacts and historical developments. *Civilizations Past & Present* uses more than 50 videos from the series. The featured artifacts are from the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, the British Museum, and the Imperial War Museum in London. The artifacts were selected for the light they shed on diverse aspects of historical experience and include an ancient Persian chariot model, a West African bronze head, and a Soviet shock worker's badge.

Civilizations Past & Present for Revel also features more than 50 "History 360" experiences. "History 360" experiences allow students to learn through the exploration of historical sites. Each immersive experience combines 360-degree photographs and videos with sound, images, and text to help bring the past to life. Students will have the opportunity to explore the Yungang Grottos in China, Elmina Castle in Ghana, and Little India in modern-day Singapore, as well as dozens of other exciting locations around the world.

Primary Source Documents

Each chapter features its own primary document source collection. These excerpts include explanatory introductions to help provide students with necessary context, as well as questions for reflection. With the retention of many of the documents from the twelfth edition and the addition of more than 200 new primary source documents, images, and videos, students and instructors have access to a robust source collection to support and enhance the learning experience.

Interactive Maps

Civilizations Past & Present provides a rich and engaging map program with over 140 maps. Many offer interactive elements that allow students to explore the maps in greater detail.

Quick Reviews

Each chapter features Quick Review activities. These interactive elements function as reading "speed bumps," prompting students to slow down and make sure that they are absorbing and retaining what they read.

Integrated Writing Opportunities

To help students connect chapter content with personal meaning, each chapter offers three varieties of writing prompts: the Journal prompt, eliciting free-form topic-specific responses addressing subjects at the module level; the Shared Writing prompt, which encourages students to share and respond to each other's brief response to high-interest topics in the chapter; and Chapter Essays drawn from primary source documents.

Assessments

Multiple-choice end-of-module and end-of-chapter quizzes test students' knowledge of the chapter content, including dates, concepts, and major events.

Chapter Review

The Chapter Review contains a timeline, key term flashcards, an image gallery, a video gallery, and suggested readings.

Supplements

Pearson is pleased to offer the following resources to qualified adopters of *Civilizations Past & Present*. Several of these supplements are available to instantly download from Revel or the Instructor Resource Center (IRC); please visit the IRC at **www.pearsonhighered.com/irc** to register for access.

Instructor's Resource Manual. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, the Instructor's Resource Manual includes chapter learning objectives/focus questions, chapter outlines, discussion questions with sample answers, critical thinking exercises, and a chapter-by-chapter list of Revel videos and interactive elements.

Test Bank. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, the Test Bank contains more than 1,600 multiple-choice and essay test questions.

PowerPoint Presentations. Strong PowerPoint presentations make lectures more engaging for students. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, the PowerPoints contain chapter outlines and full-color images of maps and art. All PowerPoints are ADA compliant.

MyTest Test Bank. Available at www.pearsonmytest.com, MyTest is a powerful assessment generation program that helps instructors easily create and print quizzes and exams. Questions and tests can be authored online, allowing instructors ultimate flexibility and the ability to efficiently manage assessments anytime, anywhere! Instructors can easily access existing questions and edit, create, and store using simple drag-and-drop and Word-like controls.

About the Authors

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Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Stone Age Societies and the Earliest Civilizations of the Near East

HEAD OF HATSHEPSUT After Thutmose I died in 1479 BCE, Queen Hatshepsut ruled Egypt for 20 years as regent until Thutmose III ascended the throne. During her rule, Queen Hatshepsut sponsored an ambitious building program of palaces and temples, especially at Thebes, and promoted trade with Nubia and Punt in the Horn of Africa. Following her death, Thutmose II waged a campaign to erase her name from public view and destroyed or defaced statues of her.

A Rey/Moment/Getty Images

Contents and Focus Questions

This chapter begins with an overview of the evolution of humankind on the African continent and examines the longest period of human life on the planet, when our earliest ancestors invented the basic tools and social structures on which all succeeding cultures would build. The skills necessary for survival were mastered over many hundred millennia as humans spread around the world, culminating in the breakthrough to farming with the domestication of plants and animals, and a settled life in villages.

Over the passage of many thousands of years, human societies located throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas continued to develop distinct cultural and technological patterns of life, but change in the patterns of everyday life was something most of the earth's early cultures avoided as frightening and disruptive. Profound change, even if extremely slow in comparison to social change in our modern world, seems to have taken place first in southwestern Asia and northeastern Africa (the Near East), where social developments were accelerated especially by the development of farming and the domestication of animals. There, along the banks of great rivers, villages evolved into towns and cities, and after the fourth millennium BCE, the complexity and sophistication of those cultures led experts to label them as the world's earliest civilizations. The study of these earliest civilizations should furnish us with insights into the nature of some of humankind's most ancient institutions and oldest cultural legacies.

1.1 The Origins of Humankind

What role did the African environment play in the evolution of Homo sapiens?

Who are we? Where do we come from? Human beings have probably asked these questions ever since they have had the ability to communicate through language. For thousands of years, humans turned to religion to answer such questions. Indeed, it has only been within the past 150 years that science has put forth the theory that the human species evolved out of lower life forms as far back as two and a half million years ago. For the past century, paleontologists (scientists who study fossil remains to understand the life of past geological periods) have been analyzing fossilized bones, stone tools, and genetic evidence to reconstruct how humankind evolved.

According to the theory of evolution, humans belong to the Primate order, which also includes lemurs, tarsiers, monkeys, and apes. A crucial development occurred when the ape family split into branches: tree-dwelling apes and ground-dwelling apes known as *hominids* ("prehumans" or "protohumans"). Over time and in response to environmental pressures, the hominids learned to walk upright, their legs grew longer than their arms, and their hands—no longer required for locomotion—became more dexterous. Most important, the prehuman head gradually shifted toward a more upright position, rendering superfluous much of the muscle at the back of the neck. This favored expansion of the brain, which ultimately led to modern *Homo sapiens* ("thinking humans"), the only survivor of the many-branched hominid tree.

All of the fossil remains of the earliest ancestors of *Homo sapiens* that have been discovered so far have been found in Africa. Later and more advanced species included *Homo ergaster,* which emerged perhaps as long as 2.3 million years ago in Africa. This species was labeled *Homo erectus* in Asia and is more widely known by that name. *H. erectus* had an upright posture, a physique very similar to modern humans, and a brain size of about 1,000 cubic centimeters. *H. erectus* learned to control and use fire—a major step in cooking food and eating a far wider selection of foods for nutrition, fending off wild animals, and extending human habitation into colder latitudes. *H. erectus* also perfected the first major standardized all-purpose tool, the Acheulean hand ax. Dubbed the Paleolithic "Swiss army knife" because it could be used for cutting, scraping, chopping, and digging, this ax remained a favorite tool long

OLDUVAI GORGE Arial view of Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, the site of findings by Mary Leakey and Louis S. B. Leakey, including the first representative fossils of the genus *Homo.*

Historic Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

after the extinction of the species. *H. erectus* was the first species to live its life primarily on the ground rather than in the trees and to demonstrate the ability to adapt to varied environments.

Around 1.6 million BCE, this species took the bold step of migrating out of Africa, into the Near East and Asia and eventually to the colder climate of Europe. From about 200,000 to 40,000 years ago, during the last ice age, a subspecies of *H. erectus,* the Neanderthals, were the principal inhabitants of Europe and spread to adjacent parts of Asia and Africa. Named for the Neander valley in western Germany where their remains were unearthed in 1856 (*tal* is the German word for "valley"), Neanderthals were slightly taller than 5 feet and had sloping foreheads, with prominent brow ridges and thickset bodies. They were especially suited to coping with the colder climes of Europe. The inventors of many specialized tools, they were able hunters and adapted to extreme cold by using fire, wearing clothes, and living in caves. Though they shared a common ancestor, the Neanderthals were not a subspecies of *sapiens.*

The culminating phase of the development of the genus *Homo* occurred around 150,000 to 100,000 years ago with the gradual emergence of *H. sapiens.* Up until a few years ago, scientists were engaged in a vigorous debate between the proponents of the "Out of Africa" school, who contend that *H. sapiens* originated exclusively in Africa and spread from there to other continents, and the multiregionalists, who argue that *H. sapiens* evolved independently in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Recent testing of mitochondrial DNA, however, strongly supports the argument for an African origin for *H. sapiens.* Mitochondrial DNA is passed on only through a mother to her offspring. By comparing DNA samples from individuals around the world and calculating the rate of mutations, geneticists have traced our human ancestors back to a hypothetical "Eve" whom they believe lived in eastern Africa some 200,000 years ago.

There is also a lively debate about the interaction between *H. sapiens* and the species of *H. erectus.* In Europe, the Cro-Magnons—*H. sapiens* named after a locality in southern France where their bones were unearthed in 1868—and Neanderthals coexisted for 50,000 years. Around 40,000 years ago, however, the Neanderthals died out, leaving the Cro-Magnons as the only hominids in Europe. Scientists continue to debate whether Cro-Magnons interbred with or replaced Neanderthals. Perhaps Cro-Magnons' superior brainpower and communications skills ultimately gave them a decisive advantage over Neanderthals in controlling and using food resources. We don't know for certain, but paleontologists have established that Cro-Magnon skeletons are virtually indistinguishable from those of modern humans. Skillfully made

flint and bone tools and polychrome paintings found on cave walls indicate that the Cro-Magnons possessed an advanced culture. By 20,000 BCE, Cro-Magnons and other representatives of *H. sapiens* inhabited Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia and had moved into the Americas by migrating across the Bering Strait on foot or by traveling in small boats along the Pacific coast. And by 10,000 BCE, there was but one existing species left of the genus *Homo*.

1.2 Preliterate Cultures

What distinguishes Paleolithic from Neolithic culture?

In many respects, we humans are eclipsed in physical endowments by numerous other creatures. We cannot compete with the strength of the elephant or the speed of the antelope on land, or with any number of marine creatures. Our ability to defy gravity is dwarfed by insects that can jump higher and farther relative to their size, to say nothing of birds, whose specialized structures enable them to fly and soar. Yet a number of attributes functioning in concert allowed our species to forge ahead of all others. These attributes include erect posture, an opposable thumb ideal for fashioning tools, stereoscopic and color vision capable of close visual attention, and a brain whose size and cognitive skills have enabled it to be termed the "organ of civilization."

Like other creatures, humans possess a practical intelligence for making meaningful responses to the environment. In addition, we are capable of thinking and communicating symbolically through language. The principle of symbolism gives everything a name and makes its functioning universally applicable, rather than restricting it to particular cases. By means of this capability to engage in symbolic thought and communicate prodigious amounts of information—especially social information—to other humans, humankind has created patterns of behavior and learning that can be termed *culture.* Unlike other creatures, we live also in a symbolic universe that draws on language, myth, art, and religion to express aspects of human experience.

1.2.1 Paleolithic Culture

The ability to make and use tools provides the first evidence of humankind's ability to employ reason to solve problems. Stone implements were the most distinctive feature of early human culture; thus, this stage is known as the **Paleolithic** or Old Stone Age. Our earliest ancestors made use of *eoliths* ("dawn stones"), bits of stone picked up to perform an immediate job. This simple utilization of what lay at hand was the first major step in toolmaking. The second step consisted of *fashioning,* the haphazard preparation of a tool as need arose. The third step was *standardization,* making implements according to certain set parameters. It is with this third stage that we see the importance of symbolic thought in creating patterns of learning and behavior, transmitted in turn from one generation to the next.

In later Paleolithic cultures, toolmaking became progressively sophisticated and efficient. It was marked by a wide range of specialized tools and weapons, including implements whose primary purpose was to make other tools. The fashioning of small, specialized flints, known as *microliths,* represents a compact use of materials—indeed, the ancestor of present-day technological miniaturization. In late Paleolithic cultures, too, our ancestors applied mechanical principles to the movement of weapons. Throwers to launch spears worked on the lever principle to increase the propelling power of a hunter's arm. The bow was also invented to concentrate muscular energy to propel an arrow; it was soon also used to provide a means of twirling a stick, and this led to the invention of the rotary drill. Strictly speaking, *Paleolithic* is a cultural and not a chronological term. In fact, much of our knowledge of Paleolithic culture comes from groups surviving into modern times—for example, indigenous peoples in the rain forests of Brazil and the Kalahari desert in southern Africa. From an economic standpoint, the Paleolithic is also a food-gathering stage, when humans hunted, fished, and collected wild foodstuff in small bands ranging in size from several dozen to several hundred people who regularly migrated around an area. Labor was divided according to sex. Men hunted, fished, and protected the groups. Women picked wild plants, fruits, and nuts, and prepared the food for eating; they also processed animal hides and wood into household objects and cared for the children. Men and women shared such tasks as building dwellings, making ornaments and tools, and training children for adult life.

During the Old Stone Age, our ancestors' toolmaking capability advanced from reliance on simple implements—such as the standardized, all-purpose hand ax—to ever more sophisticated tools and techniques of operation. This technological evolution enabled *Homo sapiens* to move into and adapt to different environments around the world. By the time of the last glacial phase, our forebears had spread over most of the world.

A special achievement of late Paleolithic cultures around the world was their art. For instance, animated, realistic paintings of bison, reindeer, primitive horses, and other animals, colored in shades of black, red, yellow, and brown, have been found in more than a hundred Cro-Magnon caves in Spain and France dating from about 28,000 to 10,000 BCE. Cave art rivals that of civilized artists not only stylistically but also as an expression of significant human experiences. Universal in appeal, the pictures reflect the Paleolithic dependence on an abundance of

PALEOLITHIC CAVE PAINTING Discovered by three boys in the 1940s, the Lascaux Cave in southwestern France features hundreds of wall paintings of animals drawn by early humans sometime between 17,000 and 15,000 BCE.

Ruth Hofshi/Alamy Stock Photo

game animals and success in hunting them. In addition, the artists may have believed that they could wield a magical power over the spirits of animals to ensure their availability. Paleolithic artists also chiseled pictures on rock and bone and modeled figures out of clay.

1.2.2 The Neolithic Revolution and the Beginnings of Agriculture

Around 11,000 years ago, some people began domesticating selected wild animals and plants. They found that producing crops yielded more food and contributed to food surpluses, which they stored for later use. They found they could feed more herders and farmers than small bands of hunters and gatherers and that they did not need to migrate regularly to search for food. Domesticating animals such as cows, horses, water buffalo, and yaks provided meat and milk products such as butter, cheese, and yogurt; provided manure for fertilizing fields and muscle power for pulling plows and transporting goods; and yielded hides and wool for clothes. They also developed new technologies for food production such as sickles with wooden or bone handles, grinding stones, baskets for carrying crops, and storage pits.

The transition from reliance on hunting and food gathering first took place in the ancient Near East. The shift to agriculture was not abrupt. People continued to collect wild foods at the same time as they experimented with cultivation. Even after people became more reliant on crops, some peoples who took up food production reverted to hunting and gathering for sustenance in months where they needed more food. In some cases, a people would adopt food production and then abandon it before resuming farming. For thousands of years, many people maintained their hunting and gathering lifestyles, but eventually agriculture won out.

The transition from reliance on hunting and food gathering to food producing took place in the ancient Near East. There, on the flanks of the mountains bordering the **Fertile Crescent**, adequate rainfall nourished wild forms of wheat and barley and provided grass for wild sheep, goats, and pigs. By 7000 BCE, people in that region had domesticated these grains and animals and lived in villages near their fields and herds. This momentous change ushered in the **Neolithic** or New Stone Age. The best-preserved Neolithic village so far uncovered is Çatal Hüyük (chah-tahl HOO-yook; "forked mound") in southern Turkey. This 32-acre site, occupied from around 6500 to 5400 BCE, contains some of the most advanced features of Neolithic culture: pottery, woven textiles, mud-brick houses, shrines honoring a mother goddess, and plastered walls decorated with murals and carved reliefs. The most recent archaeological excavations at the site have raised questions about whether settled village life happened at the same time as the domestication of agriculture and whether the community had a political and religious elite.

Neolithic artisans ground and polished stones to produce axes, adzes, and chisels with sharp cutting edges. They devised methods for drilling holes in stone, used boulders for grinding grain, and made stone bowls for storage. Skilled in their earlier role as wild food gatherers, both men and women were responsible for cultivating the prepared fields. They also made clay pots—decorated with geometric designs—and spun and wove textiles from cultivated flax and animal wool. This Neolithic revolution, with its "migration of skills," spread to the Balkan Peninsula by 5000 BCE, Egypt and Central Europe by 4000 BCE, and Britain and northwest India by 3000 BCE. The Neolithic cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Mesoamerica, and the Andes all developed independently from the Neolithic culture of the Fertile Crescent.

1.3 Preliterate Society and Religion

What were the characteristics of religious beliefs among the earliest human societies?

How can we know about those features of early cultures that are not apparent from the remains of tools and other objects? In addition to our being able to observe cultures similar to Paleolithic and Neolithic that still exist, the myths of Stone Age peoples throw light on their beliefs and customs. Like modern humans, our Stone Age ancestors sought to account for the origin of the universe and

Discovery Through Maps

The Oldest Known Map: Çatal Hüyük

This wall painting is perhaps the oldest known map. It is also, for modern viewers, one of the most easily understood ancient maps. It is a city plan painted on two walls of a room in a Neolithic community in south-central Asia Minor, near what is still the major land route in Turkey between Europe and the Near East. Radiocarbon dating has placed the image around 6200 BCE. It is a very large figure, nearly 9 feet wide.

By the 1960s, archaeologists had uncovered 139 rooms in the complex and decided that at least 40 were used for special rites, probably of a religious nature. One of these special rooms, whose walls had been replastered often, contained this large image featuring rows of boxlike shapes. Archaeologists were amazed at the similarity between their own carefully drawn site maps and the painting on the wall. It soon became apparent that the Neolithic image was a map of the community, or perhaps of the town that immediately preceded the one that the dig was uncovering.

Experts are able to glean a great deal of information from this map:

- The town site was on a slope, with rows of houses or buildings set on graded terraces.
- The rectangular buildings and the streets set at right angles provide a gridiron look that has characterized much town planning throughout history.
- The elongated, or linear, pattern of the settlement may reflect an orientation to a major road.
- The large figure that looks like a mountain with two peaks beyond the town is, no doubt, Hasan Dag, a volcano that was active until about 2000 BCE. The volcano was the source of the obsidian that was the basis of the settlement's wealth. The glassy, volcanic rock was used for making cutting tools, knives, scrapers, weapons, jewelry, ornaments, and a variety of other artifacts.

The complete map contains about 80 rooms or buildings, somewhat fewer structures than were found in the actual town that was excavated. Since the wall was replastered several times, perhaps the map was "updated." Or it may have served a ceremonial purpose for which the absolute accuracy of a civic map was unnecessary.

This map, certainly the oldest example of landscape art in addition to its function as a map, has perplexed experts since its excavation in the 1960s. The painting certainly depicts an urban landscape, 2,000 years earlier than archaeologists expected such a settlement in the area. Further excavation revealed that the town was very large by contemporary standards—perhaps home to a population exceeding 6,000. A settlement of that size could not have grown enough food to support itself while accomplishing all the other tasks that Çatal Hüyük's residents did. Trade and an extensive commercial network had to be present, but there is no archaeological evidence from the site of specialized tools. Yet there is very clear proof that Çatal Hüyük possessed good pottery, well-fashioned textiles, and outstanding artwork. Some experts have speculated that the city may have served primarily as a religious center for an extensive area. In one section of the excavated town, an area of about one acre, archaeologists believe that as many as one of every three buildings may have served as a religious shrine or cult center of some sort.

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Questions to Consider

1. What do you think may have been the purpose of the artist or artists who painted this map? Do you think it was intended to impart information?
2. Could the map have been constructed for a religious or ceremonial reason?
3. Why does the volcano play such a dominant part in this landscape? Could its depiction have a ceremonial or religious significance?

the meaning of existence. In often ascribing the behavior of natural phenomena to supernatural causes, Stone Age mythmakers were nonetheless seeking to make sense of what was familiar in their own lives—such as thunder and lightning and the cycle of the seasons.

1.3.1 Social Organization

Among all ancient societies, the basic social unit appears to have been the *elementary family*—parents and their offspring. In early human societies, the *extended family* was an individual family together with a circle of related persons who usually traced their descent through their mothers and were bound together by mutual loyalty. The extended family strengthened the elementary unit in obtaining food and protecting its members against other groups. Land was communally owned but allocated to separate families. A *clan* was a group of extended families that believed that they had a common ancestor. Many peoples identified their clans by a **totem**—an animal or other natural object that was revered.

A fourth grouping, the *tribe,* was composed of a number of clans. Such a community was characterized by a common speech or distinctive dialect, common cultural heritage, specific inhabited territory, and tribal chief. No community could exist or hold together unless rules governing relations among its members were recognized as binding upon all. Such rules crystallized into precedent or customary law, often attributed to a divine origin.

Correct behavior in preliterate societies consisted of not violating custom. Justice in a group acted to maintain equilibrium. Because theft disturbed economic equilibrium, justice was achieved by a settlement between the injured person and the thief. Murder and wounding were also private matters, to be avenged by the next of kin on the principle of "an eye for an eye." Certain acts, however, such as treason, witchcraft, and incest, were considered dangerous to the whole group and required punishment by the entire community—if need be, by death.

As a general rule, government in these early societies was of a democratic character. Older men—the council of elders—played a dominant role in decision-making because of their greater experience and knowledge of the group's customs and folklore. Serious decisions, such as going to war or electing a chief, required the consent of a general assembly of all adult men. The elected chief was pledged to rule in accordance with custom and in consultation with the council of elders.

Undoubtedly, the strongest single force in the life of preliterate peoples was religion. Religious sensibilities apparently originated as our ancestors became conscious of the universe about them. Awe and wonder led to the belief, usually called **animism**, that life exists in everything in nature—winds, stones, animals, and humans. A natural extension was belief in the existence of spirits separable from material bodies.

Late Paleolithic people revered the spirits of the animals they hunted as well as the spirit of fertility upon which human and animal life depended. The worship of a fertility deity was associated in particular with Neolithic cultures. This Earth Mother (or Mother Goddess) is known to us from many carved female figures with exaggerated sexual features. Fertility figurines have been excavated from Neolithic sites all over the world.

Closely associated with ancient religion was the practice of magic. In addition to revering spirits, people wanted to move them to provide favorable outcomes. For this purpose, they employed magic and turned to shamans to ward off droughts, famines, floods, and plagues through what they believed to be magic powers of communication with the spirits.

1.4 Mesopotamia: The First Civilization

What factors contributed to the development of civilization in Mesopotamia?

Historians do not agree on how best to define the term *civilization.* But most would accept the view that a civilization is a culture that has attained a degree of complexity, characterized by urban life and the interdependence of its urban residents. In other words, a civilization is a culture capable of sustaining a great number of specialists to furnish the economic, social, political, and religious needs of a large social unit. Other components of a civilization are a system of writing (originating from the need to keep records); monumental, permanent architecture in place of simple buildings; and art that is not merely decorative, like that on Neolithic pottery, but representative of people and their activities. All these characteristics of civilization first appeared together in the southern part of Mesopotamia, which came to be called Sumer.

Around 6000 BCE, after the agricultural revolution had begun to spread from its place of origin on the northern edge of the Fertile Crescent, Neolithic farmers began making their homes in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers themselves. Although the broad plain created by these rivers received insufficient regular rainfall to support agriculture, the eastern section was able to benefit from both rivers as sources of irrigation. Known to the Greeks as Mesopotamia (Greek for "between the rivers"), the lower sections of this plain, beginning near the point where the two rivers nearly converge, was called Babylonia. Babylonia included two geographical areas—Akkad in the north and Sumer, the delta of this river system, in the south. (See Map 1.1.)

Sumer had tremendous agricultural potential as long as its natural environmental challenges could be addressed. The rivers sometimes flooded in uncontrollable torrents; spring and summer storms were often severe. The

Map 1.1 THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The earliest of humankind's great civilizations developed in the area that came to be called the Fertile Crescent—where rainfall was adequate to nourish wild forms of grain, and grazing animals could find sufficient food.

valley was exposed on all sides to potential invaders, with no formidable natural boundaries to reduce the possibility of invasion. From the very beginning of habitation, cooperation was necessary for life to succeed. Inhabitants had to drain the swamps, dig canals to bring water to remote fields, and construct safeguards against flooding. These and many other related problems were solved by cooperative efforts. But the Mesopotamians continued to live in awe of their gods, whose whims might at any time bring destruction down on them.

In spite of the unpredictable nature of their gods, the Sumerians struggled to bring stability to their society. Sumerian metal workers discovered that copper, when combined with tin, produced an alloy, bronze, which was harder than copper and provided a sharper edge. The beginning of civilization in Sumer is associated with the beginning of this Bronze Age, and the new technology soon spread to Egypt, and later to Europe and Asia. Between 3500 and 3100 BCE, the foundations were established for a complex economy and a social order more sophisticated than any previously developed. This far more complex culture, based on large urban centers populated by interdependent and specialized workers, fits the definition of a civilization.

Since the Mesopotamian plain had no stone, no metals, and no timber except its soft palm trees, these materials had to be imported, most often from the north. Water transport down the Tigris and Euphrates aided in this process. Soon after 3500 BCE, wheeled vehicles appeared in the form of

war chariots drawn by donkeys. Another important invention during this period was the potter's wheel.

1.4.1 The Protoliterate Period in Sumer, c. 3200–2800 BCE

By 3200 BCE, the urban centers in the region known as Sumer had developed the majority of the characteristics needed to be classified as a civilization. Because these included the first evidence of writing, this first phase of Sumerian civilization, to about 2800 BCE, is called the **Protoliterate** period—the time during which the earliest form of writing was used.

The Sumerian language is not related to **Semitic** or **Indo-European**, the major language families that appear later in the Near East. The original home of the Semitic-speaking peoples was most likely the Arabian peninsula, and the Indo-Europeans probably migrated from regions around the Black and Caspian seas. A third, much smaller language family, sometimes called Hamitic, included the Egyptians and other peoples of northeastern Africa. But the origin of the Sumerians remains a subject of speculation: some suggest that migration from the Indus River valley might account for their arrival.

A number of the inventions and innovations of protoliterate Sumer, including wheeled vehicles and the potter's wheel, eventually made their way to both the Nile and the Indus valleys, most likely through trade and commercial contacts. The discovery in Egypt of cylinder seals similar in shape to those used in Sumer attests to contact between the two cultures at least as early as 3100 BCE. Certain early Egyptian art themes and architectural forms also are thought to be of Sumerian origin. And it is probable that the example of Sumerian writing stimulated the Egyptians to develop a script of their own.

The symbols on the oldest Sumerian clay tablets, the world's first writing, were pictures of concrete things such as a person's face, a sheep, a star, or a measure of grain. Some of these pictographs also represented ideas; for example, the picture of a foot was used to represent the idea of walking, and a picture of a mouth joined to that for water meant "to drink." This early pictographic writing developed into phonetic (or syllabic) writing when the scribes realized that a sign could represent a sound as well as an object or idea. Thus, the personal name Kuraka could be written by combining the pictographs for mountain (*kur*), water (*a*), and mouth (*ka*). By 2800 BCE, the use of syllabic writing had reduced the number of Sumerian signs from nearly 2,000 to 600.

When writing, Mesopotamian scribes used a reed stylus to make wedge-shaped impressions in soft clay tablets. This *cuneiform* (kyu-NI-ah-form) system of writing (from the Latin *cuneus,* "wedge") was adopted by many other peoples of the Near East, including the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Hittites, and the Persians.

1.4.2 The Old Sumerian Period, c. 2800–2300 BCE

By 2800 BCE, the Sumerian cities had fully emerged into complex civilizations. This age, called the Old Sumerian period, was characterized by constant warfare as each city attempted to protect or enlarge its land and guarantee its access to water and irrigation. Each city-state was a theocracy, a state in which the chief local god was believed to be the actual ruler. The god's earthly representative was the *ensi,* the high priest and city governor, who acted as the god's caretaker in both religious and civil functions. Though given the power to act for the god by virtue of being the human agent of the divine ruler, the *ensi* was not himself considered a divine being.

The *ensis* were powerful and sometimes autocratic rulers. Most famous is the semilegendary Gilgamesh, ruler of Uruk about 2700 BCE, who is known from several epic tales. Although Gilgamesh is portrayed as an extremely powerful ruler, the epic poem also shows that Sumerian rulers could be questioned, even opposed, by some of the nobles who served as advisers in the city's council.

Early Sumerian society was highly stratified, with priests and officials of the city god and lesser deities assuming great authority. Each temple administered extensive land holdings; that land served as the god's estate on earth. In addition to the temple lands, a considerable part of a city's territory originally consisted of land collectively owned by clans, kinship groups comprising a number of extended families. By 2600 BCE, these clan lands were becoming the private property of great landowners called *lugals* (literally, "great men"). These private estates were worked by dependent laborers whose lives were regulated by the temple authorities.

In time, priests, administrators, and *ensis* began confiscating temple land and other property and asserting their authority over the common people. Their ambitions frequently led to the rise of autocratic leaders who came to power on a wave of popular discontent. Since these despots were usually *lugals,* the term *lugal* became a political title and is now generally translated as "king."

The Sumerians, like their Mesopotamian successors, made extensive use of the institution of slavery, and slaves are recorded to have worked in many capacities—as farm and urban laborers, as servants in homes and temples, and in civic positions, such as in public administration. In some cities, slaves accounted for 40 to 50 percent of the population. Slaves in Mesopotamia were not without rights, and in many cases they were treated with care. Slavery was not based on racial characteristics or cultural differences; people of the same culture became enslaved through conquest or to pay off debt. Perhaps because of the possibility that any city-state might be overtaken and its residents enslaved at the pleasure of the gods, the treatment of

slaves in Mesopotamia seems to have been generally more humane than at other times and places in human history.

Sumerian women were able to attain high social prominence, usually depending on the rank of their own or their husbands' families. Men were given the greater authority than their wives in economic and legal matters, and only the husband could initiate divorce proceedings against his wife. Children were under the complete control of their parents until 20 or 21 years of age.

1.4.3 The Akkadian Period, c. 2300–2150 BCE

To the immediate north of Sumer was the region of Akkad, inhabited by Semites who had adopted much of Sumerian culture. Appearing late in the fourth millennium BCE, the Akkadians were among the earliest of the Semitic peoples who migrated into Mesopotamia from the Arabian peninsula. Sargon I (2370–2315 BCE), the first Akkadian ruler, conquered Sumer and went on to establish an empire that extended from the Persian Gulf almost to the Mediterranean Sea—the first true empire in history.

STELE OF KING NARAM-SIN This stele (stone memorial slab) commemorates the Akkadian king Naram-Sin's victory over enemy mountain peoples. The stele dates to c. 2250 BCE, and was intended to portray the king as being on equal footing with the gods.

INTERFOTO/Fine Arts/Alamy Stock Photo

Early Sumer and Akkad

c. 3200–2800 BCE	Protoliterate period in Sumer
c. 2800–2300 BCE	Old Sumerian period
c. 2370–2315 BCE	Reign of Sargon of Akkad
c. 2300–2150 BCE	Akkadian dominance
c. 2150–2000 BCE	Neo-Sumerian period
c. 2000–1600 BCE	Old Babylonian period
c. 1792–1750 BCE	Reign of Hammurabi
c. 1595 BCE	Sack of Babylon by Hittites

Very proud of his lower-class origins, Sargon boasted that his humble, unwed mother had been forced to abandon him, placing him in a reed basket and floating the basket down the river. Rescued and brought up by a gardener, Sargon rose to power through the army. As *lugal,* Sargon claimed to look after the welfare of the lower classes and to aid the rising class of private merchants. At the merchants' request, he once sent his army to far-off Asia Minor to protect a colony of them from interference by a local ruler. Sargon reputedly was a tireless worker on behalf of his people's prosperity and expanded his influence in neighboring lands through almost unending campaigns of conquest.

Sargon's successors, however, were unable either to repel the attacks of hostile mountain peoples or to overcome the desire for independence of the priest-dominated Sumerian cities. As a result, the dynasty founded by Sargon collapsed about 2150 BCE.

1.4.4 The Neo-Sumerian Period, c. 2150–2000 BCE

After the fall of Sargon's dynasty, order and prosperity were restored by the *lugals* of the powerful Sumerian city of Ur. By creating a highly centralized administration in Sumer and Akkad, these rulers solved the problem of internal rebellion that had been of great concern for Sargon and his successors. The formerly temple-dominated cities became provinces administered by closely regulated governors. Religion became an arm of the state: the high priests were state appointees, and careful oversight and regulation by temple officials gave protection to a newly developing free enterprise economy that Sargon had encouraged. At the head of this bureaucratic state stood the *lugal* of Ur, now considered a living god and celebrated as a heaven-sent authority who brought order and security to the people, who were considered to be his servants.

The *lugals* of Ur, who called themselves the "vigilant shepherds" of their people, presided over a highly centralized and efficient administration. Thousands of records have been preserved from this period, detailing the meticulous regulation of commerce, agriculture, and social standards

by the powerful overlords of the city. In addition, Sumerian literature and culture flourished under their direction. But the greatness of Ur lasted for little more than 100 years.

Disaster struck Ur about 2000 BCE, when Elamites from what is now Iran destroyed the city. The Sumerians were never again a dominant force politically, but their cultural influence continued to resonate throughout all subsequent civilizations in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. The Sumerians themselves disappeared as a people, but the Sumerian language continued to be written and to serve as the language of scholarship and religious ritual.

For more than two centuries following the destruction of Ur, disunity and warfare again plagued Mesopotamia, along with economic stress, a lack of security, and acute hardship for the lower classes. Many merchants, however, used the absence of state controls to become aggressive capitalists who amassed fortunes that they invested in banking operations and land. The stronger local rulers of the period attempted to assert their authority by seizing access to water resources and working toward the establishment of dynastic control.

1.5 The Babylonian Empire, c. 2000–1600 BCE

What distinguished the Babylonians from their Sumerian predecessors?

Semitic Amorites (from the Akkadian word *Amurru*, meaning "west"), produced one dynasty that based its power on its control of the city of Babylon. This new Babylonian family of rulers defeated its rivals and began to build their city into a capital that would dominate most of Mesopotamia for the next 300 years. The most outstanding of the kings of this Old Babylonian Empire was Hammurabi (c. 1792–1750 BCE), an extremely successful warrior who succeeded in expanding and securing Babylon's military power north into Assyria, south into Sumer, and east into Elam.

Although he was a tireless warrior, Hammurabi is best known for the code of nearly 300 laws that were given by the king "in order to prevent the powerful from oppressing the weak, in order to give justice to the orphans and widows, in order to give my land fair decisions and to give rights to the oppressed. . . ." (Bottero, 1992). The Code of Hammurabi is a compilation of laws covering a wide variety of topics, such as property disputes, adultery, slavery, prostitution, inheritance, and public order. The collection was not exhaustive, but most likely served as a guidepost for judges, as well as educated subjects, in their attempts to administer or anticipate the law. Such compilations of law date back to Sumerian codes 1,400 years before Hammurabi's time, and much of the king's code echoes ancient Sumerian precedent. Hammurabi's Code made wide use of corporal punishment for offenses: it was based on the "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" principle of dispensing justice. In many cases, Babylonian law was harsher in its administration of mutilation or death as fitting punishment for crime than were Sumerian judges, who often levied fines instead of corporal punishment. Babylonian law also made clear the privileged status of the upper classes, who suffered less severe penalties for their offenses than did common citizens, and far less severe punishments than those administered to slaves.

Despite the severity of much of Hammurabi's Code, and the disparities in treatment it imposed on the lower classes and slaves, Hammurabi's Code shows an attempt to reduce abusive interest rates and prices, limit slavery for debt to three years, and provide more care for widows and orphans. Minimum wages were established. Other laws protected wives and children, but a wife who had neglected to care for her household or husband could be divorced without alimony, or the husband could take another wife and force the first to remain as a servant. Women were expected to marry and raise a family, and to be cared for, but also governed, by their husbands. Hammurabi's Code permitted a woman to defend herself against unjust charges from her husband, and, if found to be guiltless, to return to her father's house. But children were always under the strict control of their fathers. Unless a son committed some grave offense, his father could not disinherit him. If the state failed to maintain law and order, the victim of that failure received compensation from the state: the value of the property stolen, or a payment of silver to the relatives of a murder victim.

In the conclusion to the Code, Hammurabi eloquently summed up his efforts to provide social justice for his people:

> *Let any oppressed man, who has a cause, come before my image as king of righteousness! Let him read the inscription on my monument! Let him give heed to my weighty words! And may my monument enlighten him as to his cause and may he understand his case! May he set his heart at ease! (and he will exclaim): Hammurabi indeed is a ruler who is like a real father to his people. . . .*
> Bottero, 1992

1.5.1 Mathematics and Science

Building on the work of the Sumerians, the Babylonians made advances in arithmetic, geometry, and algebra. For ease in working with both whole numbers and fractions, they compiled tables for multiplication and division and for square and cube roots. They knew how to solve linear and quadratic equations,

Credit
The Code of Hammurabi, Reverse Side, xxiv: 43–48, quoted in Jean Bottero, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

and their knowledge of geometry included the theorem later formulated by the Greek philosopher Pythagoras: the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. They used the Sumerian system of counting based on the unit 60 (sexagesimal) rather than that based on the number 10 (decimal). The remnants of this sexagesimal system are found today in computing divisions of time—60-minute hours and the 360-degree circle. They also adopted the Sumerian principle of place-value notation that gave numbers a value according to their position in a series. To represent zero, they employed the character for "not," which is the same as our "naught," still used colloquially for "nothing."

The Babylonians achieved little that today can be called pure science. They were most concerned with observing the natural world so that the future could be predicted. They did observe nature and collect data, the first requirement of the scientific method; but to explain natural phenomena, they were satisfied with the formulation of myths that defined things in terms of the unpredictable actions of the gods. They thought the sun, moon, and five visible planets to be gods who were able to influence human lives; accordingly, their movements were watched, recorded, and interpreted—more the study of astrology than the science of astronomy. But through their study of the world around them in an effort to predict the future, the Mesopotamians were attempting to impose order on what they found to be a chaotic universe. If they could read the signs given by the gods properly, they believed that some stability in the world might be achieved.

1.5.2 Literature and Religion

The Babylonians borrowed from the Sumerians a body of literature ranging from heroic epics that compare in scope and themes with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to wisdom writings that have their counterparts in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament of the Christian Bible). The Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* records the great adventures of the heroic ruler of Uruk who supposedly lived about 2700 BCE. The epic poem reflects the values of a heroic age, in which great heroes seek to earn undying fame and glory. The supreme value is the eternal reputation achieved through the performance of heroic deeds. After Gilgamesh slays the fierce Bull of Heaven, he stops to proclaim his victory:

> *What man is most impressive now:*
> *Who is finest, firmest, and most fair?*
> *Isn't Gilgamesh that man above men…?*
> *Who is most glorious among men?*
> Speiser, 1978

What Gilgamesh fears most is death, which, in the Mesopotamian viewpoint, replaces a glorious life on earth with a dismal existence in the House of Dust. The epic's central theme is Gilgamesh's search for everlasting life. He seeks out and questions Utnapishtim (oot-nah-PISH-tim), who was granted eternal life because he saved all living creatures from a great flood; Utnapishtim's story has many similarities with the Hebrew account of Noah and the flood. But Gilgamesh's search in not successful, and he finally concludes that he must die like all other mortals:

> *There is darkness which lets no person*
> *again see the light of day;*
> *There is a road leading away from*
> *bright and lively life. There dwell those who eat dry dust*
> *and have no cooling water to quench their awful thirst.*
> *As I stood there I saw all those who've died*
> *and even kings among those darkened souls*
> *have none of their remote and former glory.*
> Speiser, 1978

The ancient Mesopotamians never moved far beyond this early view that immortality was reserved for the gods, and that life after death, if it existed at all, was a gloomy and terrible existence in which spirits haunted the world in a continual search for food and water. Unlike the Egyptians, they did not develop an expectation of an attractive life after death as a reward for good behavior on earth. They did come to believe in divine rewards for moral conduct, but these were rewards to be enjoyed in this life—increased worldly goods, numerous offspring, long life.

The ethical content of Babylonian religion was never well developed. Numerous priesthoods—more than 30 different types of priests and priestesses are known—became preoccupied with an elaborate set of rituals, particularly those designed to ward off evil demons and predict the future through observing omens and portents. Good deeds, the priests insisted, could not protect a person from demons that have the power to make their part-human and part-animal bodies invisible. Only the proper spells, incantations, and offerings could ward off evil.

One large class of priests provided amulets inscribed with incantations and magic formulas to expel demons, and another group dealt with predicting the future. Almost anything could be viewed as an omen, but most popular were dreams, the movements of birds, the internal organs of sacrificed animals, the shape taken by oil poured on the surface of water, the casting of dice, and astronomical phenomena. Such practices, called superstitions in the modern world, were in reality attempts by the Mesopotamians to obtain some semblance of control and predictability over a world ruled by chaotic and seemingly random forces.

1.5.3 Collapse and Disorder, c. 1600–1200 BCE

Disunity and warfare, all too familiar in Mesopotamia, contributed to the fall of the Babylonian Empire soon after Hammurabi's death. In 1595 BCE, the Hittites, an Indo-European people who had established control in Asia Minor, mounted a daring raid down the Euphrates, sacking Babylon and destroying the weakened dynasty of Hammurabi. The swift success of the Hittite raid was made possible by a new means of waging war: the use of swift, lightweight chariots drawn by horses instead of donkeys or oxen. The next five centuries in Mesopotamia were years of disorder about which little is known; political unity dissolved, yet the cultural foundations of Mesopotamian society, and the debt that culture owed to the Sumerians, continued to influence the character of later Mesopotamian societies.

The beginnings of civilization in Egypt, and the continuous development of that great early civilization, took place for the most part contemporary with the origins and development of civilization in Mesopotamia. Yet the circumstances under which Egyptian culture took shape, and the very nature of the Egyptian civilization, stands in sharp contrast to the Mesopotamian experience.

1.6 Egypt: Gift of the Nile

What effect did the waters of the Nile have on ancient Egyptian political and religious institutions?

Egypt, one of Africa's earliest civilizations, is literally "the gift of the [Nile] river," as the ancient Greek historian Herodotus observed. The Nile River stretches for 4,100 miles, but it is its last valley, extending 750 miles from the First **Cataract** to the Nile delta, that was the heartland of Egyptian civilization. Egyptians called the Nile valley *Kemet* ("the black land") because its soils were nourished annually by the rich black silt deposited by the floodwaters of the Blue Nile and the Apara, rivers descending from the Ethiopian highlands. Unlike the unpredictable floods of Mesopotamia, the Nile's floods rose and fell with unusual precision, reaching Aswan (ahs-WAHN) by late June and peaking in September before beginning to subside. The perennial key to successful farming was controlling the Nile by diverting its floodwaters along the 10- to 20-mile-wide floodplain for irrigation. Egyptian farmers achieved this by building an elaborate network of dikes and canals and diverting the water into fields to start the growing season. However, if the annual flood was too low, it brought famine; and if it was too high, it washed away homes and crops.

1.6.1 Predynastic Egypt

The regions east and west of the Nile were savannah grasslands where hunting and gathering groups followed wild cattle for their protein-rich blood and milk and hunted game such as gazelle, rabbits, and ostriches. Around 5500 BCE, rainfall became less reliable, and over several thousand years, the grasslands east and west of the Nile began to dry out and turn into desert. People began settling in the Nile valley, and by 4800 BCE, the earliest farming communities began to appear in the western Nile delta as they added farming and herding techniques from southwestern Asia, which spread to the rest of Egypt over the next eight centuries. Recognizing the advantages of creating larger social groupings and the need to cushion themselves from the impact of droughts, floods, and plagues, farming communities started banding together to form regional chiefdoms, each with their own gods, in Lower Egypt, the area comprising the broad Nile delta north of Memphis, and Upper Egypt, which extended southward along the narrow Nile valley as far as the First Cataract at Aswan. A kingdom emerged in Upper Egypt, while Lower Egypt was divided into a number of districts (later called *nomes*) that had formerly been ruled by independent chieftains.

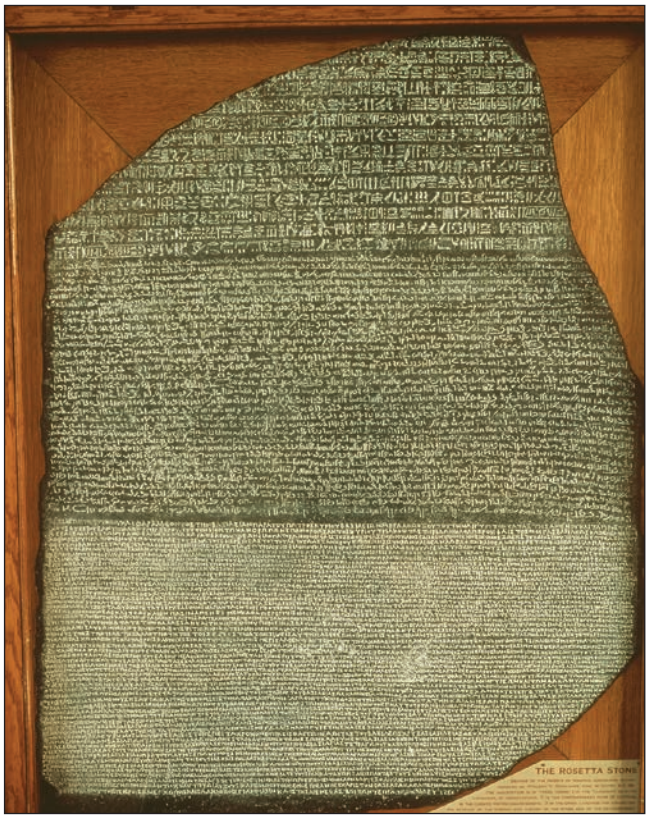
The Predynastic period ended soon after 3100 BCE when King Menes (also known as *Narmer*) united Upper Egypt and started gradually incorporating Lower Egypt into a new kingdom with its capital at Memphis. This period has become known as the First **Dynasty**, and it marks the beginning of one of the longest-lasting civilizations in history, lasting for 3,000 years.

Ancient Egypt

c. 3100 BCE	Menes unites Upper Egypt
c. 2700 BCE	Construction of Step Pyramid
c. 1720 BCE	Hyksos conquer Egypt
c. 1600 BCE	Oldest medical text
c. 1479–1458 BCE	Regency of Queen Hatshepsut
c. 1458–1436 BCE	Reign of Thutmose III
c. 1363–1347 BCE	Reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton)
c. 1279–1212 BCE	Reign of Ramses II
c. 700s BCE	Conquest of Egypt by Kush

1.6.2 The Old Kingdom, c. 2700–2200 BCE

The kings of the Third through Sixth Dynasties—the period called the Old Kingdom or Pyramid Age—firmly established order and stability, as well as the basic elements of Egyptian civilization. The nobility lost its independence, and all power was centered in the king, or *pharaoh* (*per-ao*, "great house," originally signified the royal palace, but during the New Kingdom began to be used to refer to the king). The king had a character both divine and human. When the pharaoh sat on the throne, the spirit of the god Horus entered his soul and he became a god on earth. The pharaoh



ROSETTA STONE Discovered in 1799 in the Nile delta and taken to the British Museum a few years later, the Rosetta Stone contains a decree of King Ptolemy V written in two types of Ancient Egyptian script and in Ancient Greek. The stone allowed linguists to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Fotosearch/Getty Images

also represented humans before the gods. He had the responsibility to maintain ***ma'at***—that is, truth, justice, and order—and to protect society against the forces of chaos.

The king, along with his relatives, owned extensive tracts of land (from which he made frequent grants to temples, royal funerary cults, and private persons) and received the surplus from the crops produced by farmers on the huge royal estates as well as customs duties from traders for imports and exports and tribute from foreign areas under their dominance. The pharaoh's power and legitimacy were based on his ability to offer protection and to sustain prosperity through abundant harvests in good times and to store the surplus in granaries for the lean times. In return, his subjects gave their absolute devotion to the god-king, and Egyptians generally felt a sense of security that was rare in Mesopotamia.

This surplus supported a large corps of specialists—administrators, priests, scribes, artists, artisans, and merchants—who labored in the pharaoh's service. The most senior official was the **vizier**, who oversaw high-ranking officials, maintained records of people and their landholdings for taxation, supervised the census of crop production, and was responsible for maintaining and mobilizing troops. Literacy was limited to a small elite who relied on a system of writing called **hieroglyphics** ("sacred carvings"), which allowed state officials to keep records of crop production, to calculate taxes, and to write official correspondence and reports. Their preferred writing material was papyrus, made from the stem of the papyrus plant (the word *paper* is derived from the Greek *papyros*).

The belief that the pharaoh was divine led to the construction of colossal tombs—pyramids—on the west side of the Nile to preserve each pharaoh's embalmed body. The ritual of mummification was believed to restore vigor and activity to the dead pharaoh; it was his passport to eternity. The pyramid tombs, especially those of the Fourth Dynasty at Giza near Memphis, which are the most celebrated of all ancient monuments, reflect the great power and wealth of the Old Kingdom pharaohs. They were part of a large funerary complex that featured temples devoted to the pharaoh's religious cult.

Security and prosperity came to an end late in the Sixth Dynasty. The burden of building and maintaining pyramid tombs for each new king exhausted the state. The Nile floods failed, and famines ensued. As the state and its god-king lost credibility, provincial rulers assumed the prerogatives of the pharaohs, including the claim to immortality, and districts became independent. For about a century and a half, a span known as the First Intermediate Period (c. 2200–2050 BCE), the pharaoh's central authority weakened as civil war raged among contenders for the throne and local rulers reasserted themselves. Outsiders raided and infiltrated the land. The lot of the common people became unbearable as they faced famine, robbery, and oppression. "All happiness has vanished," related a Middle Kingdom commentary on this troubled era. "I show you the land in turmoil.... Each man's heart is for himself.... A man sits with his back turned, while one slays another" (Lichtheim, 1980).

1.6.3 The Middle Kingdom, c. 2050–1800 BCE

Stability was restored by the pharaohs of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties, who reunited the kingdom. Stressing their role as watchful shepherds of the people, the Middle Kingdom pharaohs promoted the welfare of the downtrodden. One of them claimed, "I gave to the beggar and brought up the orphan. I gave success to the poor as to the wealthy,"(Wilson, 1951). The pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty revived the building of pyramids as well as the construction of public works. The largest of these, a

drainage and irrigation project in the marshy Fayum (fai-YOOM) district south of Memphis, involved constructing a 30-mile canal that channeled waters from the Nile, thereby reclaiming thousands of acres of arable land.

During the Thirteenth Dynasty, the Hyksos (HIK-sohs; "foreign rulers"), a Semitic people from western Asia, assumed power over much of Egypt. The Hyksos are often portrayed as invaders who conquered Egypt around 1720 BCE, but now it is understood that the Hyksos migrated into Lower Egypt during the Middle Kingdom and expanded trading networks with Palestine and Cyprus. During the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1800–1570 BCE), they took advantage of weaknesses in the Egyptian state, gradually took control over all of Lower Egypt and many parts of Upper Egypt, and formed an alliance with Nubia. The Hyksos did not sweep aside Egyptian institutions and culture. They adapted to existing Egyptian government structures, copied architectural styles and hieroglyphics, and incorporated Egyptian cults into their religious pantheon. The Hyksos army also introduced new weaponry to the Egyptians: the horse-drawn chariot and bronze weapons such as the curved sword and body armor and helmets.

1.6.4 The New Kingdom or Empire, c. 1570–1090 BCE

Hyksos rule over Egypt lasted several centuries before a resurgent Egyptian dynasty based at Thebes challenged it. Adopting the new weapons introduced by their rulers, the Egyptians under Ahmose expelled the Hyksos and pursued them northward into Phoenicia. The pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who reunited Egypt and founded the New Kingdom, made Phoenicia the nucleus of an Egyptian empire in western Asia and conquered Nubia to the south.

EGYPTIAN ROYAL BOAT The Royal Ship of King Khufu, 150 feet in length and made of cedars from Lebanon, was found in a pit of the pyramid complex and carefully reconstructed over several decades.

Images & Stories/Alamy Stock Photo

The outstanding representative of this aggressive state was Thutmose III. When the union of Thutmose II and his half-sister, Hatshepsut (hat-SHEP-soot), failed to produce a male heir, Thutmose II fathered Thutmose III with a concubine. When Thutmose II died in 1479 BCE, Thutmose III was still a child, and Hatshepsut acted as regent. When he came of age, she and Thutmose ruled as co-regents. Mindful of the Egyptian ideal that a son inherited the throne from the pharaoh, she legitimized her succession by claiming that she was the designated successor of Thutmose I. She also stated that she had a divine origin as a daughter of Amon and had an oracle proclaim that Amon had chosen her to become king. She oversaw the construction of many monuments and temples dedicated to Amon and her links to him. She adopted all the customary royal titles; and in many of her statues and helmets, she was even depicted sporting the royal beard.

Thutmose III waited for more than two decades before he assumed the throne on his own after Hatshepsut's death in 1458 BCE. Toward the end of his reign, he ordered her name and inscriptions erased, her reliefs effaced, and her statues broken and thrown into a quarry. Historians still speculate whether he was expressing his anger at Hatshepsut, establishing his legitimacy as a ruler, or promoting his own accomplishments. Thutmose III is most noted for leading his army on 17 campaigns as far as Syria, where he set up his boundary markers on the banks of the Euphrates, called by the Egyptians "the river that runs backwards." Under his influence, Thutmose III allowed the existing rulers of conquered states to remain on their thrones, but their sons were taken as hostages to Egypt, where they were brought up, thoroughly Egyptianized, and eventually sent home to succeed their fathers as loyal vassals of Egyptian rule. Thutmose III erected *obelisks*—tall, pointed shafts of stone—to commemorate his reign and to record his wish that "his name might endure throughout the future forever and ever." The Egyptian Empire reached its peak under Amenhotep III (c. 1402–1363 BCE). The restored capital at Thebes, with its temples built for the sun-god Amon east of the Nile at Luxor and Karnak, became the most magnificent city in the world. Tribute flowed in from conquered lands, and relations were expanded with Asia and the Mediterranean. To improve ties, the kings of Mitanni and Babylonia offered daughters in marriage to Amenhotep III in return for gold.

During the reign of the succeeding pharaoh, Amenhotep IV (c. 1363–1347 BCE), however, the empire went into a sharp decline as the result of an internal struggle between the pharaoh and the powerful and wealthy priests of Amon, "king of the gods." The pharaoh undertook to revolutionize Egypt's religion by proclaiming the worship of the sun's disk, Aton, in place of Amon and all the other deities. Often called the first monotheist (although,

as Aton's son, the pharaoh was also a god and he, not Aton, was worshipped by the Egyptians), Amenhotep changed his name to Akhenaton (akh-NAHT-in; "he who is effective for the Aton"), left Amon's city to found a new capital (Akhetaton, "horizon of Aton"), and concentrated on religious reform. By demoting Amon to a lesser status, taxing his temples, chiseling his name off monuments and obelisks, and abolishing religious festivals in his name, Akhenaton provoked strong opposition from Amon's priesthood. Most of Egypt's tributary princes in Asia defected when their appeals for aid against invaders went unheeded.

Akhenaton's monotheism was not accepted by most Egyptians, and it did not survive his reign. When Akhenaton died, his 9-year-old son by a minor wife, Tutankhamen (tu-tan-KAHM-in; "King Tut," c. 1347–1338 BCE)—now best remembered for his small but richly furnished tomb, discovered in 1922—was crowned king. But the Amon priesthood seized the opportunity to influence the boy king. He changed his name from Tutankhaten to Tutankhamen, and he agreed to renounce Aten and resume the worship of Amon. The capital was returned to Memphis. The priests gained revenge as Tutankhamen and his successors destroyed Akhenaton's statues and tried to erase all memory of him. When Tutankhamen died in his late teens with no heir, one of his advisers, Horemheb, a general from the Nile delta region, founded the Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1305–1200 BCE).

Horemheb appointed his vizier, Paramessu, as his heir. Taking the name Ramses, Paramessu sought to reestablish Egyptian control over Palestine and Syria. The result was a long struggle with the Hittites, who had recently pushed south from Asia Minor into Syria. This struggle reached a climax in the reign of Ramses II (c. 1279–1212 BCE), who regained Palestine. However, when he failed to dislodge the Hittites from Syria, he agreed to a treaty. Its strikingly modern character is revealed in clauses providing for nonaggression, mutual assistance, and extradition of fugitives.

The long reign of Ramses II was one of Egypt's last periods of national grandeur. The number and size of Ramses's monuments rival those of the Pyramid Age. Outstanding among them are the great Hypostyle Hall, built for Amon at Karnak, and the temple at Abu Simbel in Nubia, with its four colossal statues of Ramses, which was raised in the 1960s to save it from inundation by the waters of the High Dam at Aswan. After Ramses II, royal authority gradually decayed as the power of the priests of Amon rose.

1.6.5 Third Intermediate Period, 1090–332 BCE

The Third Intermediate Period was another period of transition, during which the Amon priesthood at Thebes became so strong that the high priest was able to found his own dynasty and to rule over Upper Egypt. At the same time, merchant princes set up a dynasty of their own in the Nile delta. Libyans from the west moved into central Egypt, where in 940 BCE they established a dynasty whose founder, Shoshenq, was a contemporary of King Solomon of Israel. Two centuries later, Egypt was conquered by the rulers of the kingdom of Kush, who established the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty. Kush's rule came to an end around 670 BCE, when the Assyrians of Mesopotamia made Egypt a province of their empire.

Egypt enjoyed a brief reprise of revived glory during the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (c. 663–525 BCE), which expelled the Assyrians with the aid of Greek mercenaries. The revival of ancient artistic and literary forms made this one of the most creative periods in Egyptian history. After attempts to expand into Syria were blocked by Nebuchadnezzar's (neh-boo-kad-NE-zahr) Babylonians, Egypt's rulers concentrated on expanding their commercial linkages throughout the region. To achieve this end, Pharaoh Necho II (c. 610–595 BCE) created the first Egyptian navy. He encouraged the Greeks to establish trading colonies in the Nile delta, he put 12,000 laborers to work digging a canal between the mouth of the Nile and the Red Sea (it was completed later by the Persians), and he commissioned a Phoenician expedition to search for new African trade routes.

Egypt came under Persian rule in 525 BCE but was able to regain its independence in 404 BCE. After three brief dynasties, Egypt again fell under Persian rule before coming within the domain of Alexander the Great (see Chapter 4).

1.6.6 Nubia and the Kingdom of Kush

Egypt's most enduring relationship was with its neighbor to the south, Nubia (NOO-bee-ah; derived from *nub*, the Egyptian word for gold), an area that stretches almost 900 miles from the town of Aswan to Khartoum, the point where the Blue and White Niles converge. The Nile gave Nubian civilization a distinctive character that was in ways different from that of Egypt. As the Nile flows northward, its course is interrupted six times by cataracts that served as barriers to river traffic and Nubia's commercial contacts with Egypt. Like Egypt, many parts of Nubia east and west of the Nile are barren, so Nubian agricultural production depended on the Nile's 2-mile-wide floodplain.

Emerging around 4000 BCE, the earliest Nubian culture was made up of hunters, fishermen, farmers, and seminomadic pastoralists. This culture was distinguished for its highly skilled sculptures, ceramics, and clay figurines. Nubia also developed a healthy trade with Egypt. After a centralized state emerged in Egypt, Egyptian dynasties regarded Nubia as a source of slaves and raw materials such as gold, timber, and ivory and made several attempts to colonize Nubia. This state of hostility did not prevent Nubians from marrying into Egyptian royal families and the Egyptian state and army from recruiting Nubian administrators and archers.

KUSH PYRAMIDS The image shown here is of the pyramids built by Kush's rulers at their capital, Meroe, between the third and fourth centuries BCE. They used as models the small brick pyramids of the New Kingdom, rather than the monumental stone pyramids of the Old Kingdom.

Michael Freeman/Photodisc/Getty Images

Centered in a fertile area of the Nile around the Third Cataract, the Kingdom of Kush emerged around 1600 BCE. Its capital was at Kerma, an urban center renowned for its sophisticated temples and palaces. Kush prospered most when Egypt's fortunes declined. Although the basis of Kush's society was agriculture and animal husbandry, Kush engaged in extensive trade with Egypt to the north and African societies to the south and east.

After expelling the Hyksos, Egyptian forces reasserted their dominion over northern Nubia as far south as the Fourth Cataract, including Kerma. For the next four centuries, Egyptian administrators exploited Nubian gold to finance military campaigns in Asia and created an Egyptianized Nubian elite who spoke the Egyptian language; incorporated Egyptian art in its statues and temples; and adopted Egyptian deities such as Amon and ritual and burial practices, including erecting pyramids for its rulers.

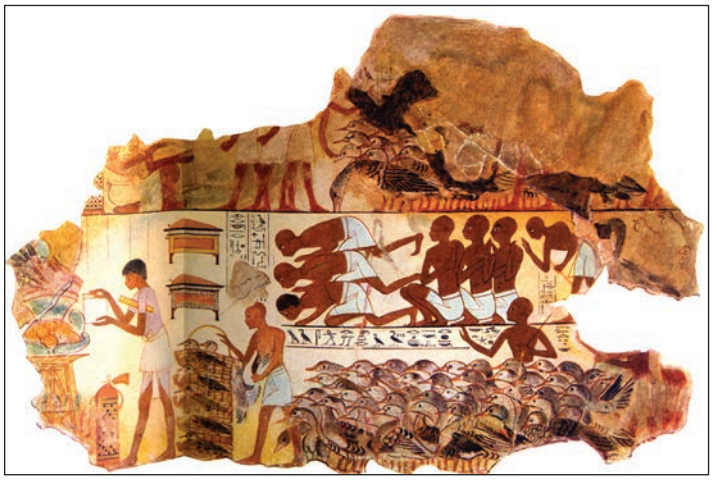
Kush did not regain its autonomy until the eighth century BCE, when a new line of rulers established themselves at Napata (nah-PAH-tah) between the Third and Fourth Cataracts. The high point of Kush's power came a short time later. Taking advantage of strife in Egypt, the armies of Kush's King Piye swept through Egypt, conquering territory as far north as the Nile delta. Although Piye proclaimed himself pharaoh over Egypt and Nubia, he allowed local rulers in Egypt a measure of independence, and he cultivated the priests of the temple of Amon. His brother and successor, Shabaqo, was not so benign. He brought Egypt under the direct control of Kush and moved his capital to Thebes. He and the three pharaohs who succeeded him established the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, which ruled Kush and Egypt for the next half century until they were forced to retreat following an Assyrian invasion. Kush's capital then moved to Meroe (MEHR-oh-wee), situated at the confluence of the Nile and Apara rivers. This site enjoyed greater annual rainfalls and supported a larger population. Meroe became a noted center for ironworking and weaving and exporting cotton cloth.

Kush remained in existence until 400 CE, when it was absorbed into the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum (ak-soom). Around the second century BCE, Kush's rulers started recording their royal annals in a script based on hieroglyphics and a cursive script also derived from hieroglyphics. This language, known as Meroitic, has not been translated to this day.

1.6.7 Egyptian Society and Economy

Egyptian society was highly stratified. Most Egyptians were poor peasants who lived in simple dwellings made of papyrus reeds or mud bricks. In Lower Egypt they herded cattle, while in Upper Egypt, they kept goats and sheep and grew crops such as wheat, barley, and flax, which was a source of textile fiber. They were subject to paying a labor tax to rulers by repairing canals and irrigation systems and undertaking construction projects, and to paying taxes to those who owned the land—the pharaoh, temples, or wealthy landowners—based on the yields of harvests, animal holdings, and beer production.

However, class distinctions were not rigid. People could rise to a higher rank in the service of the pharaoh by joining the tiny literate elite. Pupils—usually boys—attended a scribal school for many years at temples in which they learned to read and write hieratic script, a cursive form of hieroglyphics. They also could learn more advanced skills in mathematics, bookkeeping, and building and surveying techniques. Students initially practiced by copying hieroglyphic signs with reed pens on limestone chips or clay tablets and then graduated to papyrus scrolls. The scribes' basic kit consisted of a wooden palette that held pens and ink cakes with red and black pigments. Scribes were in demand by the state for many tasks—writing letters, recording harvests, tracking taxes collected and owed, and keeping accounts for the Egyptian army. Scribes also assumed positions as priests or secretaries to businessmen, doctors, and engineers. The profession of scribe was a mark of high



EGYPTIAN SCRIBE On the upper part of the painting a scribe is sitting, compiling a list of geese brought before him. The lower part shows herders with geese.

Ivy Close Images/Alamy Stock Photo

status. Scribes enjoyed secure positions and were free from the labor tax. One text extolled scribes: "Be a scribe for he is in control of everything, he who works in writing is not taxed, nor does he have to pay any dues."

Compared with the Greeks and Romans, Egyptian women enjoyed more rights, although their status at all levels of society was generally lower than that of men. Few women could qualify as scribes and thus they were largely excluded from administrative positions. However, women could serve as temple priestesses, musicians, gardeners, farmers, and bakers. Some royal women, because of their positions as wives or mothers of pharaohs, had great influence in royal courts. Business and legal documents show that women shared many of the economic and legal rights of men. Women generally had the right to own, buy, sell, and inherit property without reliance on male legal guardians; to negotiate legal settlements; to engage in business deals; to make wills; and to initiate litigation and testify in court. In a divorce, a woman kept any property she brought into a marriage as well as one-third of a couple's community property. When Egypt came under Greek rule, most Egyptian women preferred the option of maintaining their legal rights under Egyptian rather than Greek law.

The economy of Egypt was dominated by the divine pharaoh and his state, which owned most of the land and monopolized its commerce and industry. Because of the Nile and the proximity to the Mediterranean and Red seas, most of Egypt's trade was conducted by ships. Boats regularly plied up and down the Nile, which, unlike the Tigris and the Euphrates, is easily navigable in both directions up to the First Cataract at Aswan. The current carries ships downstream, and the prevailing north wind enables them to sail upstream easily. Trade reached its height during the empire (c. 1570–1090 BCE), when commerce traveled along four main routes: the Nile River to and from the south; the Red Sea, which was connected by caravan to the Nile bend near Thebes; a caravan route to Mesopotamia and southern Syria; and the Mediterranean Sea, connecting northern Syria, Cyprus, Crete, and Greece with the Nile delta. Egypt's primary imports were timber, copper, tin, and olive oil, paid for with gold from its rich mines, linens, wheat, and papyrus rolls.

1.6.8 Egyptian Religion

Religion played a central role in the everyday life of Egyptians, who attributed to acts of the gods everything from the annual cycles of flooding of the Nile to personal illnesses. The Egyptian pantheon included hundreds of gods and goddesses. Male gods usually represented rulers, creators, and insurers of fertility, while goddesses assumed roles as nurturers, magicians, and sexual temptresses. People made sacrifices and prayed to household gods to protect the well-being and health of their families. They also worshipped deities on a local and regional basis. When the Old Kingdom came into being, ruling families elevated certain local gods, and religious centers such as Heliopolis (hel-YOH-POH-lis) and Thebes (in the Middle Kingdom) gained national prominence. The most important gods—such as Osiris, Horus, Re, Amun, and Hathor—had their own temples and priesthoods that conducted rituals, sacrifices, and festivals honoring the god they served. The temples owned vast properties, and the income they generated paid for the salaries and upkeep of priests.

Egypt's most popular religious cult was devoted to Osiris, the fertility god of the Nile, whose death and resurrection symbolized the planting of grain and its sprouting. The Egyptian myth of fertility and life after death, according to the priests at Heliopolis, was that Osiris had been murdered by Seth, his brother, who cut the victim's body into many pieces and scattered them around Egypt. When Isis, his bereaved widow, collected all the pieces and wrapped them in linen, Osiris was resurrected so that he could father Horus, the Nile floods resumed, and vegetation revived. The Osiris cult taught that Seth was the god of violence and disorder, that Osiris was the ruler of the dead in the netherworld, and that every mummified Egyptian could become another Osiris, capable of resurrection from the dead and a blessed eternal life.

However, only a soul free of sin would be permitted to live forever. In a ceremony called "counting up character," Osiris presided over a court of 42 gods that weighed the heart of the deceased against the Feather of Truth. If the virtues of the heart were outweighed by the Feather of Truth, a horrible creature devoured it. Charms and magical prayers and spells were sold to the living as insurance policies guaranteeing them a happy outcome in the judgment before Osiris. They constitute much of what is known as the *Book of the Dead*, which was placed in tombs and

GREAT SPHINX AND PYRAMID OF KHAFRE The Great Pyramid of pharaoh Khufu (2589–2566 BCE), the oldest and largest of the three pyramids at Giza and the Great Sphinx, featuring the head of a pharaoh and the body of a lion.

Pablo Charlón/Moment/Getty Images

coffins. During the Sixth Dynasty, coffin texts, inscriptions that made the afterlife accessible to commoners, began appearing in nonroyal coffins. Among other things, the inscriptions expressed the hope that the deceased would be reunited with their families in the afterlife.

Egyptian religious beliefs in original sin, an underworld populated by evil spirits, a final judgment, the promise of an afterlife, and a joyous resurrection were eventually important influences on the belief systems of Judaism and Christianity.

1.6.9 Mathematics and Science

The Egyptians were much less skilled in mathematics than the Mesopotamians. Their arithmetic was limited to addition and subtraction, which also served them when they needed to multiply and divide. They could cope with only simple algebra, but they did have considerable knowledge of practical geometry; the obliteration of field boundaries by the annual flooding of the Nile made the measurement of land a necessity. The basic unit of measure was the cubit, the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger. Knowledge of geometry was also essential in computing the dimensions of ramps for raising stones during the construction of pyramids. In these and other engineering projects, the Egyptians were superior to their Mesopotamian contemporaries. Like the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians acquired a "necessary" technology without developing a truly scientific method. Yet what has been called the oldest known scientific treatise (c. 1600 BCE) was composed during the New Kingdom. Its author, possibly a military surgeon or a doctor who treated pyramid-building laborers, described cases of head and spinal injuries, dislocations, and broken bones and recommended treatments or, in the case of more serious complications, nothing at all. Other medical writings considered a range of ailments, from pregnancy complications, infertility, rheumatism, and tuberculosis to worn teeth, parasites, and hippopotamus bites and recommended herbal, animal, and mineral remedies. They also delved into veterinary medicine and prescribed treatments for animal diseases. To Egyptian practitioners, the causes of medical conditions had to be dealt with holistically on a spiritual as well as a physical level. Thus they prescribed a combination of medicines, rituals, magical spells, and amulets.

The Old Kingdom also produced the world's first known solar calendar, the direct ancestor of our own. In order to plan their farming operations in accordance with the annual flooding of the Nile, the Egyptians kept records and divided the calendar into three seasons—flooding, planting and growing crops, and harvesting. Each season contained four months, with 30 days in each month. Five days were added to every year. They observed that the Nile flood coincided with the annual appearance of the Dog Star (Sirius) on the eastern horizon at dawn, and they soon associated the two phenomena.

1.6.10 Monumentalism in Architecture

Because of their impressive, enduring tombs and temples, the Egyptians have been called the greatest builders in history. The earliest tomb was the mud brick Arab *mastaba* (MAS-tuh-buh), so called because of its resemblance to a low bench. By the beginning of the Third Dynasty, stone began to replace brick, and an architectural genius named Imhotep, now honored as the "father of architecture in stone," constructed the first pyramid above ground by piling six huge stone *mastabas* one on top of the other. Adjoining this Step Pyramid was a temple complex with stone columns that were not freestanding but were attached to a wall, as though the architect was tentatively feeling his way in the use of the new medium.

Eighty pyramids were constructed in the Nile valley; the most celebrated were those built for the Fourth Dynasty pharaohs Khufu (2589–2566 BCE), Khafre, and Menkaure at Giza. Khufu's pyramid, the largest of the three, covers 13 acres and originally rose 481 feet. It was twice as tall as the largest of the other Great Pyramids and was the tallest structure in the world until the Eiffel Tower was erected in Paris

in 1889. Khufu's pyramid is composed of 2.3 million limestone slabs, cut from nearby quarries with copper chisels. Most weighed 2 tons, but some weighed as much as 15 tons.

Although pyramid building was a year-round pursuit, most construction took place from late June to October, when the Nile overflowed its banks. A work crew of many thousands, which consisted of permanent laborers, war captives, and peasants paying the labor tax, used ropes to pull the huge blocks levered on a sledge on a well-watered track to the site, where they were raised along ramps. Completing construction over a 20-year period required laborers working a 10-hour day to set one block every 10 minutes. This stupendous monument was built without mortar, yet some of the stones were so perfectly fitted that a knife cannot be inserted in the joints. The Old Kingdom's 80 pyramids are a striking expression of Egyptian civilization. Their dignity and massiveness reflect the religious basis of Egyptian society—the dogma that the king was a god who owned the nation and that serving him was the most important task of the people.

Just as the glory and serenity of the Old Kingdom can be seen in its pyramids, constructed as an act of loyalty by its subjects, so the power and wealth of the empire survive in the Amon temples at Thebes, made possible by the booty and tribute of conquest. On the east side of the Nile were built the magnificent temples of Karnak and Luxor. The Hypostyle Hall of the temple of Karnak, built by Ramses II, is larger than the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Its forest of 134 columns is arranged in 16 rows, with the roof over a central aisle raised to allow the entry of light. This technique was later used in Roman basilicas and in Christian churches.

1.6.11 Writing and Literary Texts

In Egypt, as in Sumer, writing began with pictures. But unlike the Mesopotamian signs, the Egyptian hieroglyphics remained primarily pictorial. At first, the hieroglyphics represented a mix of pictorial signs and one- and two-consonant signs that later came to stand for ideas and syllables. Early in the Old Kingdom, the Egyptians took the further step of using alphabetical characters for 24 consonant sounds. Although they also continued to use the old pictographic and syllabic signs, the use of sound symbols had far-reaching consequences. It influenced their Semitic neighbors in Syria to produce an alphabet that, in its Phoenician form, became the forerunner of our own.

The earliest Egyptian literary works generally recorded the accomplishments of rulers or expressed religious beliefs through prayers, hymns, and funerary inscriptions. Among the latter are the Pyramid Texts, a collection of magic spells and ritual texts inscribed on the walls of the burial chambers of Old Kingdom pharaohs. Their recurrent theme is an affirmation that the dead pharaoh is really a god and that no obstacle can prevent him from joining his fellow gods in the heavens.

Old Kingdom literature went on to achieve a classical maturity of style and content—it stresses a "truth" that is "everlasting." Hence *The Instructions of Ptah-hotep*, addressed to the author's sons, insists that "it is the strength of truth that it endures long, and a man can say, 'I learned it from my father'" (Lichtheim, 1980). Ptah-hotep's maxims stress the values and virtues that are important in fostering positive human relationships. To him, honesty is a good policy because it will gain one wealth and position, whereas an affair with another man's wife is a bad policy because it will impede one's path to success in life. The troubled times that followed the collapse of the Old Kingdom produced the highly personal writings of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom. They contain protests against the ills of the day and demands for social justice. In the New Kingdom, writers composed love poems as a means of forgetting misery.

1.7 Mesopotamian Successors to Babylon, c. 1600–550 BCE

What is the legacy left by the states that succeeded the Babylonian Empire?

The Babylonian Empire came to an end in the sixteenth century BCE, most probably because of the sack of Babylon by the Hittites, followed by invasions of peoples from the east known as the Kassites. Primarily warriors and raiders, they ruled as conquerors over the native population and established a dynasty that controlled Babylonia for over 400 years. Kassite kings administered Babylonia by granting authority to provincial governors. Trade and commerce were extensive, with diplomats and merchants active in Egypt, Elam, Assyria, and Hittite lands. The Kassite dynasty was ended in the twelfth century by the conquest of Babylon by the Elamites.

1.7.1 The Hittites

In the eighteenth century BCE, a people known as the Hittites began to migrate into Asia Minor (modern Turkey), where they established a kingdom that by 1400 BCE became

the strongest power in the region and the greatest rival of the Egyptian Empire. Very little was known about the Hittites until archaeologists began to unearth the remains of their civilization in Turkey at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1920, Hittite writing had been deciphered, and it proved to be an early example of an Indo-European language, closely related to Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. The Hittites' superior military tactics, in particular their mastery of horse-drawn chariot warfare and mass attacks by archers using long-range bows, enabled them to conquer the native people of central Asia Minor and establish a kingdom with its capital city at Hattushash (HAHT-teu-shahsh), which is near the present Turkish capital city, Ankara.

The kings of the early Hittite kingdom were aggressive monarchs who were frequently at odds with their nobles and struggled to establish an orderly succession to the throne. As a result, the early effectiveness of the Hittite monarchy was severely limited by patterns of constant internal strife.

After 1450 BCE, a series of energetic Hittite kings succeeded in limiting the independence of their nobles and creating a more centralized empire that included Syria and northern Palestine, which had been left virtually undefended by the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton. The pharaoh Ramses II moved north from Palestine in an unsuccessful attempt to reconquer the region in the battle of Kadesh (1285 BCE). Ambushed and forced back to Palestine after a bloody standoff, the pharaoh agreed to a treaty with the Hittites in 1269 BCE.

VESSEL IN THE SHAPE OF A STAG The Hittites dedicated animal-shaped drinking vessels to their gods for their own private use. This vessel in the shape of a stag, made of silver with gold inlays, is 7 inches high and dates between the fifteenth to the thirteenth centuries BCE.

Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989/The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1.7.2 The Hittite Civilization

The Hittite state under the empire differed in its organization and reflected the traditions of its Indo-European origins rather than the governmental patterns set by the older monarchies of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The king was thought to be the greatest of the nobles, but not a living god or even a god's representative on earth. Hittite nobles held large estates granted to them by the king and in return provided warriors to the king and served on his advisory council, which limited the arbitrary exercise of royal power.

The Hittites adopted the Mesopotamian cuneiform script in order to write their Indo-European language. In addition to preserving their own customs, the Hittites readily incorporated features of earlier Mesopotamian civilization that they found appealing. Sumerian and Mesopotamian literature were preserved, and Mesopotamian gods and goddesses were honored with temples and placed on equal footing with traditional Hittite deities. Although their law codes showed great similarity to the Code of Hammurabi, the Hittites differed in prescribing more humane punishments. Instead of retaliation ("an eye for an eye"), the Hittite code made greater use of restitution and compensation.

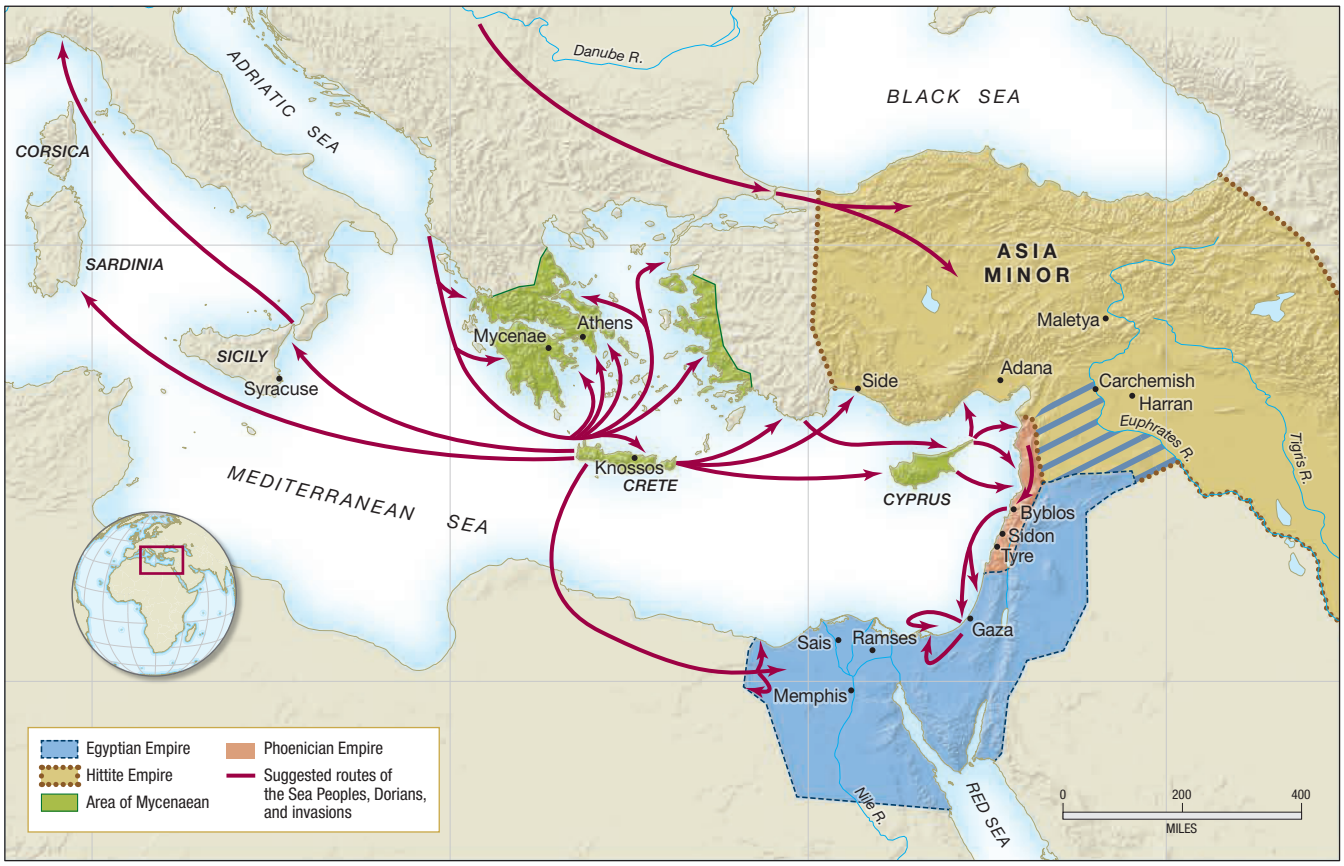
The Hittites left their mark on later peoples of the region primarily as intermediaries. Their skills in metalworking, especially in iron, were passed eventually to their neighbors. Not especially innovative in the formulation of law, literature, or art, they borrowed extensively from other cultures and in turn passed their knowledge on to others, in particular to their neighbors to the west, the Phrygians, Lydians, and Greeks.

1.7.3 The Sea Peoples

The Hittites may have been eager for peace with Egypt after the battle at Kadesh because of threats posed by new movements of raiding and displaced peoples—Indo-Europeans and others. A series of disruptions all over the eastern Mediterranean resulted in the overthrow of previously stable regimes now sacked and destroyed. Many survivors of these upheavals, which possibly included the fall of Troy (c. 1150 BCE), fled by sea to seek new lands to plunder or settle. Collectively known as the Sea Peoples, these uprooted people included Philistines (FI-le-steens), Sicilians, Sardinians, Etruscans, and probably pre-Mycenaean Greeks. Many gave their names to the areas where they eventually settled. The collapse of the Hittite Empire, shortly after 1200 BCE, was partially a result of these migrations and attacks.

Scholars still hotly debate the causes behind the collapses of so many regimes for around 200 years after 1200 BCE. Some experts now believe that changes in warfare—especially the reliance on mobile infantry using short swords and javelins in place of the extensive use of

Map 1.2 **THE SEA PEOPLES, C. 1200 BCE**



Population movements, the fall of established states, and even the introduction of new and more effective techniques of producing iron weapons may be some of the reasons for the disruption of the eastern Mediterranean around 1200 BCE.

chariots—account for the destruction of stable governments and the resulting displacement of peoples. (See Map 1.2.)

1.7.4 The Beginnings of the Iron Age, c. 1100 BCE

Shortly after the disruptions culminating with the invasion of the Sea Peoples, scholars mark the beginning of the Iron Age in the eastern Mediterranean. In fact, iron had been present in small amounts in Mesopotamia as early as 1,000 years before, but the metal was seen as too precious to be employed extensively. Moreover, its crude production process left it too brittle to replace bronze as the metal of choice for tools and weapons. Eventually, however, the use of carbonization in the production of iron implements made them harder and more durable than comparable items made of bronze.

The Hittites used iron weapons as early as 1400 BCE, and they and others familiar with the technology guarded its secrets fiercely. Many scholars now suggest that, around 1100 BCE, partially because of the collapse of the Hittite Empire as well as a shortage of tin needed to manufacture bronze, the use of iron spread from north to south in the eastern Mediterranean.

After 1200 BCE, with the Hittite Empire destroyed, Egypt in decline, and the region still struggling with the disorder brought about by the incursions of the Sea Peoples, the Semitic peoples of Syria and Palestine were able to assert their territorial claims in the power vacuum created by the weakness of once dominant states. For nearly 500 years, until they were conquered by the Assyrians, these peoples played a significant role in the history of the eastern Mediterranean and southwestern Asia.

1.7.5 The Phoenicians

Phoenicians (foh-NEE-shee-ans) is a name the Greeks gave to those Semitic peoples, called Canaanites (KAY-nah-naits), who lived along the Mediterranean coast of Syria, an area that is today Lebanon. Hemmed in by the Lebanon Mountains to the east, the Phoenicians turned to the sea for their livelihood, and by the eleventh century BCE, they had become the Mediterranean's greatest traders, shipbuilders, navigators, and colonizers. To obtain silver and copper from Spain and tin from Britain, they established the colony of Gades (Cadiz) on the Atlantic coast of Spain. Carthage, one of a number of Phoenician trading posts on the shores of the Mediterranean, was a remarkably successful commercial colony and became Rome's chief rival in the third century BCE (see Chapter 5).

Although the Phoenicians were essentially traders, their home cities—notably Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos—also produced manufactured goods. Their most famous export was woolen cloth dyed with the purple dye obtained from shellfish found along their coast. They were also skilled makers of furniture (made from the famous cedars of Lebanon), metalware, glassware, and jewelry. The Greeks called Egyptian papyrus rolls *biblia* ("books") because Byblos was the shipping point for this widely used writing material; later the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures were called "the Book" (Bible).

The Phoenicians left behind no literature and little innovative art. Yet they made one of the greatest contributions to human progress, the perfection of the alphabet, which had a direct influence on the development of all later western European scripts. Between 1800 and 1600 BCE, Phoenician and neighboring Semitic peoples, influenced by Egypt's semi-alphabetical writing, started to evolve a simplified method of writing. The Phoenician alphabet of 22 consonant symbols (the Greeks later added signs for vowels) is related to the 30-character alphabet of Ugarit, a Canaanite city, which was destroyed about 1200 BCE by the Sea Peoples.

The half-dozen Phoenician cities never united to form a strong state, and in the second half of the eighth century BCE, all but Tyre were conquered by the Assyrians. Tyre fell to the Chaldean (kahl-DEE-an) Empire in 571 BCE, and the one-time fiercely independent Phoenicians ended with their subjugation first to the Chaldeans, and later to subsequent empires—those of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

1.7.6 The Hebrew Kingdoms

In war, diplomacy, technology, and art, the ancient Hebrew contributions to history are of small significance; in religion and ethics, however, their contribution to civilization was of great impact. Out of the Hebrew cultural experience grew three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Much of that experience is recorded in the Hebrew Bible, the collection of literature that the Hebrews believe was written through divine inspiration. The Hebrew Bible's present content was approved about 90 CE by a council of *rabbis* (spiritual leaders). It is an inspirational work of literature and also a valuable source for the study of early Hebrew history and the evolution of Hebrew thought, culture, and religion.

The biblical account of the history of the Hebrews (later called Israelites, and then Jews) begins with the account of a **patriarchal** clan leader named Abraham. Abraham is said to have led his clan out of Ur in Sumer, where they had settled for a time in their wanderings. Most biblical scholars suggest that the date of such a migration should be around 1900 BCE. Abraham is then credited with leading his followers to northwestern Mesopotamia. He and his followers remained nomadic—the Bible records that Abraham moved his people to Egypt and back again to the north, and Abraham's grandson Jacob (later called Israel, and from whom the Israelites derive their name) eventually led a migration into the land of Canaan.

Historians and archaeologists have raised many questions about the accuracy of biblical accounts for the early Hebrew community. No archaeological proof exists for a migration of peoples into Canaan around 1900 BCE, although no evidence exists to negate the possibility either. Recently archaeologists have suggested that the culture of the founders of the Hebrew community—that culture described in the early books of the Bible—best describes Hebrew culture around 1100 BCE, and not that probably in existence 800 years earlier (Marcus, 2000). (See Map 1.3.)

The Bible suggests that about 1550 BCE, driven by famine, some Hebrews followed Abraham's great-grandson Joseph into Egypt. Joseph's possible rise to power in Egypt and the hospitable reception of his people there may be attributed to the presence of the largely Semitic Hyksos, who had conquered Egypt about 1720 BCE. Following the expulsion of the Hyksos by the pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the biblical account states that the Hebrews were enslaved by the Egyptians.

There are no indications in Egyptian sources of a large number of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt after the Hyksos were expelled; at the same time, there are no reasons to believe that such treatment of Semitic peoples who remained in Egypt after the Hyksos did not occur. Hebrew tradition identifies Moses as the leader and eventual liberator of the Hebrews in Egypt and their leader during the Exodus (the "Road Out" in Greek) shortly after 1300 BCE, but Egyptian records give no mention of him, the demands he made of Pharaoh, or the plagues the Hebrew god supposedly visited on Egypt.

The Bible records that the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years in sight of the land promised to them by the Hebrew god. Here, they had to contend with the Canaanites, whose Semitic ancestors had migrated from Arabia early in the third millennium BCE. Joined by other Hebrew tribes already in Canaan, the Israelites formed a **confederacy** of 12 tribes, and in time succeeded in subjugating the Canaanites. The biblical account of the conquest of Canaan records a bloody history of conquest and destruction of those Canaanite cities that resisted Hebrew domination. Recent archaeology reveals a different view: that the Hebrew occupation of Canaan was a long and slow process and that the massive destruction of Canaanite cities by Israelites is not affirmed by archaeological remains. Rather, for the most part, the Hebrews seemed to have peacefully coexisted alongside the established Canaanite communities in the region and to have engaged in cultural exchange with them.

Credit

Amy Dockser Marcus, *The View from Nebo* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2000), pp. 22–28.

Map 1.3 **ISRAEL AND JUDAH, EIGHTH CENTURY BCE**

In the eighth century BCE, the Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah often found themselves in opposition to each other, as well as being surrounded by potentially more powerful enemies.

Leadership of the Israelites at this time seems to have been exercised by judges—men and women among the 12 tribes of Israel who had shown uncommon degrees of spiritual insight (Deborah), strength (Sampson), or divine inspiration (Samuel). The active and decisive role the Hebrew Bible attributes to Israelite women reflects the great influence they must have exercised in early Israel. But the continuing dangers that faced the nation led to the creation of a strong centralized monarchy, and with it came male domination.

As the Israelites were contesting the Canaanites for dominance of the region, an even more formidable opponent appeared. The Philistines, Sea Peoples who had tried unsuccessfully to invade Egypt, and from whom the name Palestine originally comes, settled along the coast of Israel about 1175 BCE. Aided by the use of iron weapons, which were new to the region and to the Hebrews, the Philistines appeared to have been on course to dominate the entire land.

Lacking a central authority, the loose 12-tribe confederacy of Israel could not hope to ward off the Philistine danger, and a king, Saul, was chosen to unify resistance to the Philistines.

The Hebrews

c. 1800 BCE	Migration of Hebrews to Palestine
c. 1550 BCE	Migration to Egypt
c. 1300–1200 BCE	Exodus from Egypt
c. 1020–1000 BCE	Reign of Saul
c. 1000–961 BCE	Reign of David
961–922 BCE	Reign of Solomon
722 BCE	Northern kingdom destroyed by Assyria
586 BCE	Southern kingdom destroyed by Chaldeans
586–538 BCE	Babylonian Captivity

According to the Bible, Saul's reign (c. 1020–1000 BCE) was not successful. Continuously undercut by tribal rivalries and overshadowed by the fame of the boy hero David, who came to prominence by slaying the Philistine giant Goliath in single combat, Saul made no attempt to transform Israel into a centralized monarchy. Saul's successor, the popular David (c. 1000–961 BCE), is credited with restricting the Philistines to a narrow coastal strip to the south of Israel, and also with the consolidation of an impressively large and unified state. David also won Jerusalem from the Canaanites and made it the private domain of his royal court, separate from the existing 12 tribes.

David was succeeded by his son Solomon (961–922 BCE), under whom the Bible states that Israel reached its highest degree of power and splendor as a monarchy. But the price of Solomon's vast bureaucracy, building projects (especially the palace complex and the Temple at Jerusalem), standing army (1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses), and harem (700 wives and 300 concubines) was great. High taxes, forced labor, and tribal rivalries led to dissension.

Recently, archaeologists have called the Bible's accounts of the glorious reigns of David and Solomon into question. Some scholars even suggest that a united monarchy never existed, and that even if it did, the extent of its influence is vastly overstated by the Bible. Experts also suggest that the biblical accounts of David's glory and Solomon's wealth are the work of later rulers, dating in particular to the seventh century in the Kingdom of Judah, whose rulers were searching for a glorious past on which to base their claims of legitimacy (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2002). Most archaeologists now concur that the biblical description of David's power and might is exaggerated. Jerusalem appears to have been a hill town of probably no more than 5,000 inhabitants in the tenth century BCE, and traces of Solomon's great temple have so far evaded archaeologists.

Credit

I. Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), pp. 123–145 passim.

The Bible records that when Solomon died in 922 BCE, the kingdom split in two—Israel in the north and Judah in the south. These two weak kingdoms were in no position to defend themselves when new, powerful empires rose again in Mesopotamia. In 722 BCE, the Assyrians captured Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, taking 27,290 Israelites into captivity (the famous "10 lost tribes" of Israel; the two other tribes remained in Judah) and settling other subjects of their empire in the newly conquered territory. The resulting population, called Samaritans, was ethnically, culturally, and religiously mixed, as well as deprived of any political role.

The southern kingdom of Judah held out until 586 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean ruler of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and carried away a large number of its residents to his capital city. This deportation began the so-called Babylonian Captivity of the Jews (Judeans), which lasted until 538 BCE. While they were held in Babylon, the Jews were considered to be free people, allowed to engage in commerce and industry and to practice their own religion. Some Jews abandoned their religious traditions, but most seem to have held strongly to them. It was in Babylon that the first synagogues (Greek for "gathering together") came into existence, as the Jewish communities assembled for worship and study.

In 538 BCE, Cyrus the Great, the king of Persia, conquered Babylon and allowed the captive Judeans to return to Jerusalem. In 515 BCE, the returning exiles completed the reconstruction of the temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. But large numbers of believers never returned to Judah, which was by then referred to as Judea by the Persian governors who administered it. These Jews, scattered all over the region, formed communities of worship in their cities of residence, and membership in these communities of believers became an essential component in the lives of the participants. By 500 BCE, the majority of Jewish believers lived outside Judea. This "scattering" (*diaspora* in Greek) has been a significant characteristic of Jewish existence since this time in their history.

The mostly peaceful Persian rule in Judea was followed by the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. After Alexander's death, Judea was part of the empire ruled by the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt, and in 63 BCE, it became a Roman protectorate. Roman administration proved especially rigid and unpopular with the Jews. In 70 CE, a revolt of the Jews against their Roman rulers was crushed, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the history of the Jews as a nation ended until the twentieth century. The resulting *diaspora* from their troubled homeland sent the Jews to all the major cities of the Mediterranean, where many became influenced by the culture of the Greco-Roman world, even while others strictly adhered to their traditional beliefs and customs emphasized through instruction in the synagogues.

1.7.7 Hebrew Religion

The Bible states that from the time of Abraham, the Hebrews worshiped one stern, patriarchal tribal god whose name was not revealed to the Hebrews until the time of Moses. Yet there are traces in the Bible of an earlier stage of religious development that shows evidence of animism and a reverence for spirits associated with the winds, stones, and sacred springs. Gradually, beliefs became more sophisticated and developed into a worship of **anthropomorphic** gods. Hebrew religion entered a more sophisticated stage of development around the thirteenth century BCE, when Moses is credited with directing the Hebrews toward the worship of a national god, the god now named Yahweh. The religion of Moses may be called monolatry—the belief that there is one god for that god's select people, but that there may exist other gods for other peoples.

Moses is credited in the Bible with being the leader who, with Yahweh's assistance, led the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land. After their entrance into Palestine, many Hebrews adopted the **polytheism** of the Canaanites as well as the luxurious Canaanite manner of living. As a result, prophets arose who "spoke for" Yahweh (*prophetes* is Greek for "one who speaks for God"), insisting on strict adherence to the laws delivered by Moses. Between 750 and 550 BCE, a series of these prophets wrote down their messages and insisted that disaster would result if Yahweh's chosen people strayed from proper worship. They also developed the idea of a coming Messiah (the "anointed one" of God), a descendant of King David, who would begin a reign of peace and justice.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and the exile in Babylon was another formative event in the evolution of Jewish thought. In accord with the prophetic warnings, Yahweh had punished his chosen people, yet the prophets also foretold that they would be allowed to return to Jerusalem and be reconfirmed as the chosen of God. Many scholars believe that the time spent in Babylon was crucial to the final achievement of true monotheism by Jewish thinkers: the destruction of Yahweh's holy city was not a sign of His weakness, but rather a sign of His power and universality, and His people's journey would serve as proof to all humankind of His glory.

1.7.8 The Aramaeans

Closely related to the Hebrews were the Aramaeans (ah-rah-MAY-ens), who occupied Syria east of the Lebanon Mountains. The most important of their small kingdoms was centered at Damascus, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The Aramaeans dominated the camel caravan trade connecting Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, and Egypt and continued to do so even after Damascus fell to the Assyrians in 732 BCE. The Aramaic language, which used an alphabet similar to that of the Phoenicians, became the international language of the Mesopotamian

region and the northeastern Mediterranean coast by the fifth century BCE. In Judea, it was more commonly spoken than Hebrew among the lower classes and was the language spoken by Jesus and his disciples.

1.7.9 The Assyrian Empire, c. 745–612 BCE

By 700 BCE, the era of small states had ended with the emergence of a powerful Assyrian Empire. Two of the greatest achievements of the Assyrians were the forcible unification of weak, unstable regions of Mesopotamia and the establishment of an efficient and centralized imperial organization.

As early as the fourteenth century BCE, the Assyrians had been attempting to transform the growing economic prosperity of northern and central Mesopotamia into political unity. But Assyrian attempts to dominate the region were limited by more powerful neighboring states, such as the Hittites and Hurrians. But in the twelfth century BCE, strong Assyrian monarchs succeeded in expanding their control over neighboring states. After a lengthy period of weakness, the Assyrian monarchy reasserted its effectiveness in the eighth century, when the Assyrians also took over Babylon. By 671 BCE, they had annexed Egypt and were the masters of the entire Fertile Crescent.

A Semitic people long residing in the hilly region of the upper Tigris, the Assyrians had experienced a thousand years of constant warfare. But their matchless army was only one of several factors that explain the success of Assyrian imperialism: a policy of calculated terrorism, an efficient system of political administration, and the support of the commercial classes that wanted political stability and unrestricted trade over large areas.

The Assyrian army, with its chariots, mounted cavalry, and sophisticated siege engines, was the most powerful ever seen in the ancient world before 700 BCE. Neither troops nor walls could long resist the Assyrians, whose military might seemed unstoppable. Conquered peoples were held firmly in control by systematic policies designed to terrorize. Mass deportations, like that of the Israelites, were employed as an effective means of destroying national feeling.

The well-coordinated Assyrian system of political administration was another factor in the success of the empire. Conquered lands became provinces ruled by governors who exercised extensive military, judicial, and financial powers. Their chief tasks were to ensure the regular collection of tribute (payments demanded by the conquerors) and the raising of troops for the permanent and professional army that eventually replaced the native militia of Assyrian peasants. An efficient system of communication carried the orders of the monarch to the governors in the empire's provinces.

1.7.10 Assyrian Culture

The Assyrians borrowed from the cultures of other peoples and unified the disparate elements into a new product. This is evident in Assyrian architecture and sculpture, the work of subject artisans and artists. Both arts glorified the power of the Assyrian king. The palace, serving as both residence and administrative center, replaced the temple as the characteristic architectural form. A feature of Assyrian palace architecture was the structural use of the arch and the column, both borrowed from Babylonia. Palaces were decorated with splendid relief sculptures that glorified the king as warrior and hunter. Assyrian sculptors were especially skilled in portraying realistically the ferocity and agony of charging and dying lions.

Assyrian kings were interested in preserving written as well as pictorial records of their reigns. King

Assyria

c. 1350 BCE	First expansionist Assyrian kingdom
704–681 BCE	Military power at height
669–626 BCE	Reign of Ashurbanipal
612 BCE	Fall of Nineveh

ASSYRIAN LION HUNT This relief depicts the great Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (669–627 BCE) on a lion hunt on horseback. Such stylized representations served to emphasize the king's forcefulness, strength, and virility.

World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Ashurbanipal (ah-shoor-BAH-ni-pahl; 669–626 BCE), for example, left a record of his great efforts in collecting the literary heritage of Sumer and Babylon. The 22,000 clay tablets found in the ruins of his palace at Nineveh (NI-neh-vah), in today's northern Iraq, provided modern scholars with their first direct knowledge of the bulk of this literature, which included the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh.*

1.7.11 Downfall of the Assyrian Empire

Revolt against Assyrian terror and tribute was inevitable when Assyria's strength weakened and united opposition to Assyrian domination arose. By the middle of the seventh century BCE, the Assyrians had been worn down by wars, and the Assyrian kings had to use unreliable mercenary troops and conscripted subjects in their armies. Egypt regained its independence from the Assyrians under the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, and the Medes to the north refused to pay further tribute. The Chaldeans, tribal groups of Semites who had migrated into Babylonia, revolted in 626 BCE. In 612 BCE, they joined the Medes in destroying Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. With the fall of the capital city, Assyrian dominance was ended, much to the general satisfaction of the subjects of the Assyrian overlords.

1.7.12 The Lydians and the Medes

The fall of Assyria left four states to struggle over the remains of the empire: the Chaldeans and Egypt fought for control of Syria and Palestine, and Media and Lydia clashed over eastern Asia Minor.

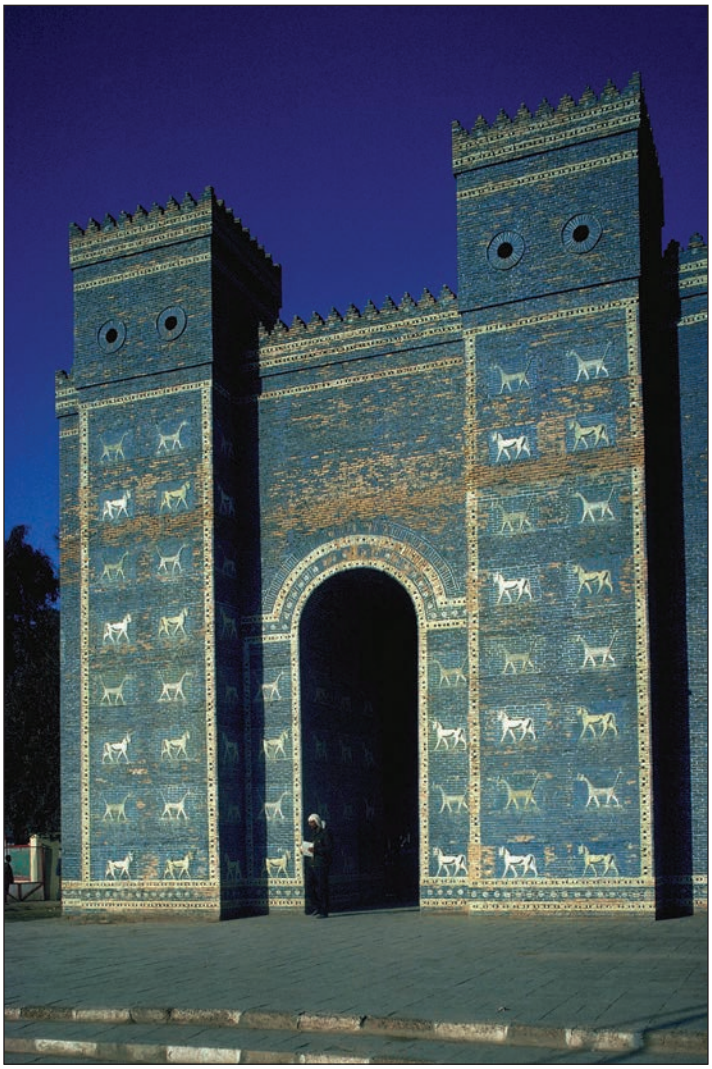
After the collapse of the Hittite Empire about 1200 BCE, the Lydians succeeded in establishing a kingdom in western Asia Minor. When Assyria fell in 612 BCE, the Lydians expanded eastward until they were stopped by the Medes at the Halys River, in central Asia Minor. Lydia profited from being in control of part of the commercial land route between Mesopotamia and the Aegean Sea, and from the possession of valuable gold-bearing streams. About 675 BCE, the Lydians invented coinage, which replaced the silver bars in general use up to that time. Lydia's most famous king was Croesus (KREE-sus), a monarch whose wealth was legendary. With the king's defeat by the Persians in 547 BCE, Lydia ceased to exist as an independent state.

The Medes were an Indo-European people who by 1000 BCE had established themselves on the Iranian plateau east of Assyria. By the seventh century BCE, they had created in Media a strong kingdom with Ecbatana (ek-bah-TAH-nah) as its capital and with the Persians, their kinsmen to the south, as their subjects. Following the collapse of Assyria, the Medes expanded into Armenia and eastern Asia Minor, but their short-lived empire ended in 550 BCE when they, too, were absorbed by the Persians.

1.7.13 The Chaldean (New Babylonian) Empire

While the Median kingdom controlled the northern Iranian plateau, the Chaldeans, with their capital at Babylon, became masters of the Fertile Crescent. Nebuchadnezzar, who had become king of the Chaldeans in 604 BCE, raised Babylonia to another epoch of brilliance after more than a thousand years of eclipse. By defeating the Egyptians in Syria, Nebuchadnezzar ended Egyptian hopes of re-creating their empire. As we have seen, he destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE and took thousands of captured Jews to Babylonia.

Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the city of Babylon, making it the largest and most impressive urban center of its day. The tremendous city walls were wide enough at the top to have rows of small houses on either side. In the center



ISHTAR GATE Now restored in Berlin's Pergamon Museum, the Ishtar Gate, 47 feet high and 32 feet wide, once stood as the last of eight ceremonial gates on the Processional Way in Babylon. Built in 575 BCE by the Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar II, the gate, decorated with blue glazed tiles and alternating rows of bulls and dragons, was once considered one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Nik wheeler/Corbis Historical/Getty Images

of Babylon ran the famous Procession Street, which passed through the Ishtar Gate. This arch, which was adorned with brilliant tile animals, is the best remaining example of Babylonian architecture. The immense palace of Nebuchadnezzar towered terrace upon terrace, each decorated with masses of ferns, flowers, and trees. These roof gardens, the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon, were so beautiful that they were regarded by the Greeks as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Nebuchadnezzar was the last great Mesopotamian ruler, and Chaldean power quickly crumbled after his death in 562 BCE. Chaldean priests, whose interests included political intrigue as well as astrology, continually undermined the monarchy. Finally, in 539 BCE they opened the gates of Babylon to Cyrus the Persian, allowing him to add Babylon to his impressive new empire.

1.8 The Persian Empire, 550–331 BCE

In what ways were the Persians innovators, and how did they also incorporate the legacies of earlier Mesopotamian societies?

Cyrus the Persian was the greatest conqueror in the history of the ancient Near East. In 550 BCE, he ended Persian subjugation to the Medes by capturing Ecbatana and ending the Median dynasty. Most of the Medes readily accepted their vigorous new ruler, who soon demonstrated that he deserved to be called "the Great." When King Croesus of Lydia moved across the Halys River in 547 BCE to pick up some of the pieces of the collapsed Median Empire, Cyrus defeated him and annexed Lydia, including Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor that were under Lydia's nominal control. Then he turned his attention eastward, establishing his power as far as the frontier of India. Babylon and its empire were also annexed to the great Persian Empire in 539 BCE.

After Cyrus died in 530 BCE, his son Cambyses (cam-BAI-seez; 530–522 BCE) conquered Egypt. The next ruler, Darius I (522–486 BCE), added the Punjab region in India and Thrace in Europe. He also began a conflict with the Greeks that continued intermittently for more than 150 years until the Persians were conquered by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE.

1.8.1 Persian Government

Although built on the Assyrian model, the Persian administrative system was far more efficient and humane. The empire was divided into 20 *satrapies*, or provinces, each ruled by a governor called a *satrap*. To check the *satraps*, a secretary and a military official representing the "Great King (Shah), King of Kings" were installed in every province. Also, special inspectors, "the Eyes and Ears of the King," traveled throughout the realm. Imperial post roads connected the important cities. Along the Royal Road between Sardis and Susa there was a post station every 14 miles, where the king's couriers could obtain fresh horses, enabling them to cover the 1,600-mile route in a week. An efficient postal system was created throughout the realm, and the post roads also aided in the collection of taxes, which were imposed on each of the *satrapies* according to the king's determination. (See Map 1.4.)

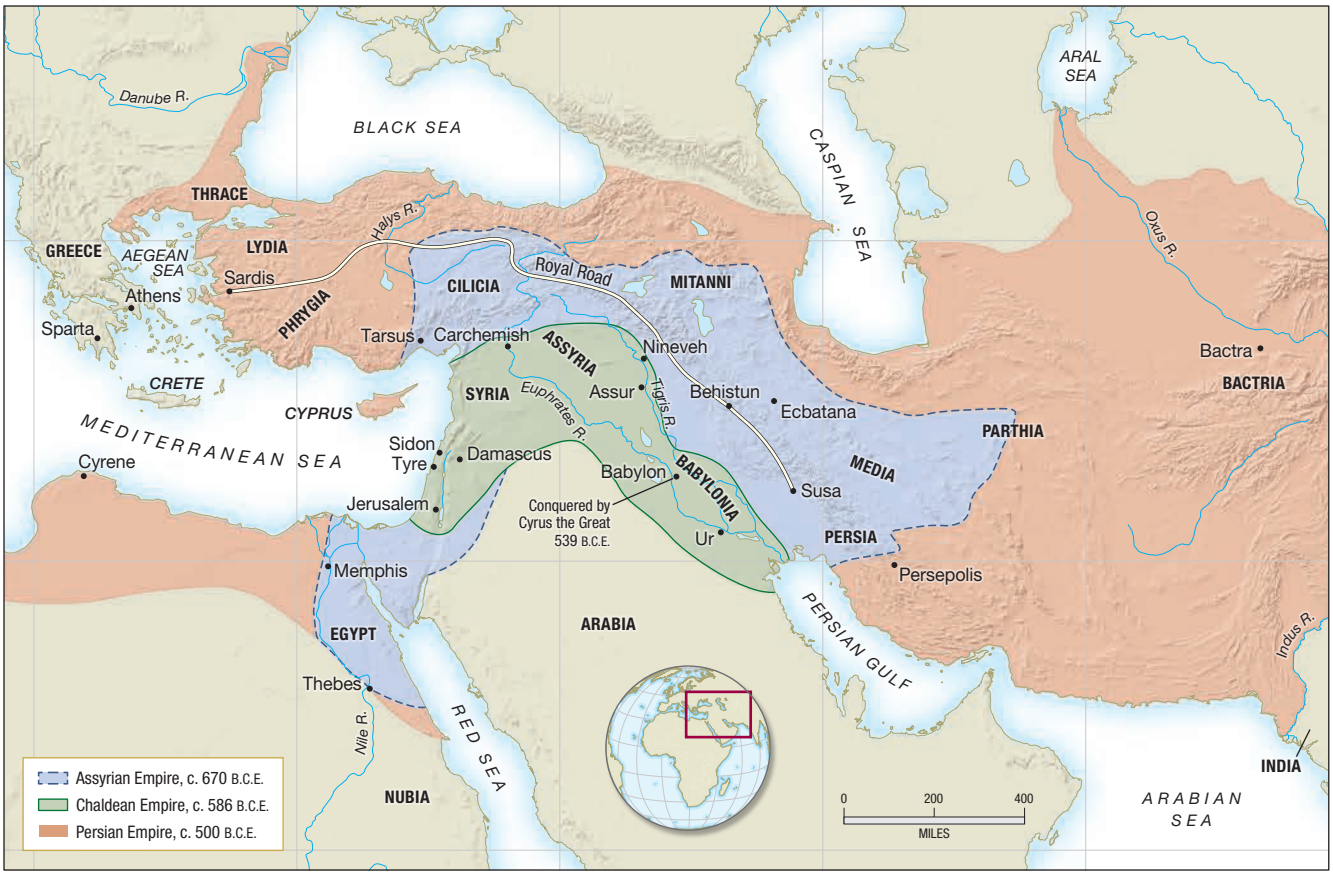
RUINS OF APADANA PALACE The ruins of the Apadana Palace of the Great King of the Persian Empire, at Persepolis, Iran. The columns once supported the ornate roof of the palace, which was destroyed in a fire supposedly permitted by Alexander the Great when he sacked Persepolis in 330 BCE.

Florian Neukirchen/Alamy Stock Photo

The Persian Empire was the first to attempt to govern many different ethnic groups on the principle of equal responsibilities and rights for all peoples; the empire united people from every major civilization and kingdom in southwest Asia, Egypt, and the eastern Mediterranean. As long as subjects paid their taxes and kept the peace, the king did not interfere with local religion, customs, or trade. Indeed, Darius was called "the shopkeeper" because he stimulated trade by introducing a uniform system of gold and silver coinage throughout the empire.

Persian society was patriarchal; polygamy and concubines were permitted but practiced almost exclusively by the nobility. Persian women,

Map 1.4 THE ASSYRIAN, CHALDEAN, AND PERSIAN EMPIRES



After the seventh century BCE, three great empires dominated the Mesopotamian region and sought to extend their control. The Assyrian Empire extended its might into Egypt, the Chaldean Empire expanded into the region of the Fertile Crescent, and the Persian Empire reached from Egypt in the west to the Indus River in the east.

Persia

c. 600 BCE	Union under Achaemenid kings
559–530 BCE	Reign of Cyrus the Great
550 BCE	Conquest of Median Empire
539 BCE	Conquest of Babylon
530–522 BCE	Reign of Cambyses
522–486 BCE	Reign of Darius I

both noble and commoners, however, were still permitted to own property and engage in commerce, earn wages, and even supervise male workers. Persian noble women were often lightly veiled in public appearances, a custom most likely indicating a woman's high status, rather than an effort to hide her form from public observance.

1.8.2 Persian Religion and Art

The humane policies of the Persian rulers may have stemmed from the ethics displayed in the empire's official religion, Zoroastrianism, founded by the prophet Zoroaster, who lived in the early sixth century BCE. Zoroaster attempted to replace what he called "the lie"—ritualistic, idol-worshipping cults and their Magi (Iranian priests)—with a religion centered on the sole god Ahura-Mazda ("Wise Lord"). This source of all justice demanded righteous thoughts and actions, and care for those less fortunate, from those who would attain paradise (a Persian word). Zoroaster's teachings had limited progress until first Darius and then the Magi adopted them. The Magi revived many old gods as lesser deities, added much ritual, and replaced monotheism with dualism by transforming what Zoroaster had called the principle or spirit of evil into a powerful god—Ahriman (the model for the Jewish Satan), the rival of Ahura-Mazda. It was the personal