CHAPTER 2

First Civilizations: Cities, States, and Unequal Societies
to 3,500 B.C.E.–500 B.C.E.

CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To establish the relationship between the First Civilizations and the Agricultural Revolution
• To contrast civilizations with other forms of human communities
• To explore when, where, and how the First Civilizations arose in human history
• To explore how the emergence of civilizations transformed how humans lived and how their societies were structured
• To show the various ways in which civilizations differed from one another
• To explore the outcomes of the emergence of civilizations, both positive and negative, for humankind

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Opening Vignette

A. The contrast between “artificial” life as a “civilized” city dweller and the spacious freedom and imagined simplicity of earlier times still resonates today.
B. “Civilizations” are a relatively recent phenomenon in human history, made possible by the surpluses produced by the Agricultural Revolution.

C. The distinctive features of civilizations are:
   1. cities with monumental architecture and populations in the tens of thousands
   2. powerful states that could compel obedience and wage large-scale warfare
   3. much greater inequality in economic function, wealth, and social status

II. Something New: The Emergence of Civilizations

A. Civilization was a global phenomenon
   1. seven major civilizations and some smaller manifestations
   2. scattered around world
   3. developed after 3500 B.C.E.

B. Introducing the First Civilizations
   1. one of the earliest civilizations emerged in Sumer (in southern Mesopotamia) between 3500 and 3000 B.C.E.
      a. first written language
      b. appearance of Egyptian civilization in Nile River Valley (northeast Africa) and smaller Nubian civilization to its south at about the same time
   2. Norte Chico (central coastal Peru), emerged between 3000 and 1800 B.C.E.
a. twenty-five urban centers
b. Norte Chico differed in several ways from Mesopotamia and Egypt
c. unusually self-contained; only import was maize, derived from Mesoamerica

3. Indus Valley civilization in Indus and Saraswati river valleys of present-day Pakistan arose between 3000 and 2000 B.C.E.
a. elaborately planned cities and standardized weights, measures, architectural styles, and brick sizes
b. written script that remains thus far undeciphered
c. unlike other civilizations, it generated no palaces, temples, elaborate graves, kings, or warrior classes
d. scholars remain uncertain as to how society was organized; theories include a series of small republics, rule by priests, or an early form of the caste system
e. environmental degradation led to the collapse of this civilization by about 1700 B.C.E., but several aspects of its culture shaped later Indian societies

4. around 2200 B.C.E., a First Civilization took shape in China
a. from the start, China was defined by the ideal of a centralized state
b. the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties enlarged the Chinese state
c. ruler was the “Son of Heaven,” an intermediary between heaven and earth
d. early written language with oracle bones as early documents
e. China has maintained impressive cultural continuity into modern times

5. in central Asia another First Civilization known as the Central Asian or Oxus civilization arose around 2200 B.C.E.
a. centered on the Oxus or Amu Darya river valley in modern northern Afghanistan
b. possessed a number of fortified centers
c. practiced irrigation agriculture
d. possessed a distinctive culture, art and burial rituals, but not literate
e. included an aristocratic hierarchy
f. was the focal point of Eurasian wide system of exchange
g. by 1700 B.C.E. had faded as a civilization
h. but influence persisted on the cultures of Iran, India, and the eastern Mediterranean

6. the Olmec produced a First Civilization much later (around 1200 B.C.E.) on coast of Gulf of Mexico, near present-day Veracruz
a. cities arose from competing chiefdoms and produced elaborate ceremonial centers
b. created the first written language in the Americas by about 900 B.C.E.
c. culture influenced later civilizations in Mesoamerica, including the Maya and Teotihuacán

7. other smaller civilizations also flourished
a. Nubian civilization south of Egypt was distinctive and independent
b. city of Sanxingdui in China arose separately from the more well-known Shang Dynasty

C. The Question of Origins
1. First Civilizations had their roots in the Agricultural Revolution
2. First Civilizations tended to develop from earlier, competing chiefdoms that already had some social rank and economic specialization
3. process was gradual and evolutionary
4. why did some chiefdoms develop into civilizations and others did not?
a. one argument: the need to organize large-scale irrigation projects (archaeologists have found that these projects appeared long after civilizations began)
b. another argument: the needs of elite groups, warfare, and trade all played roles as well
c. Robert Carneiro’s argument: population density created competition, especially when agricultural land was limited.

5. the creation of the First Civilizations was quick by world history standards but was an unconscious undertaking for those involved.

6. all First Civilizations relied on highly productive agriculture.

D. An Urban Revolution
1. cities were one of the most distinctive features of First Civilizations.
2. the scale, layout, and specialized industries of cities would have impressed visitors from villages.
3. cities lay at the heart of all First Civilizations because they were:
   a. political/administrative capitals
   b. centers of cultural production—art, architecture, literature, ritual, and ceremony
   c. places of local and long-distance exchange
   d. centers of manufacturing activity
4. cities produced new societies with greater specialization and inequality.

III. The Erosion of Equality
A. Professional and craft specialization marked early urban life.
B. Hierarchies of Class
1. First Civilizations had vast inequalities in wealth, status, and power.
2. civilizations multiplied and magnified inequalities that already existed in complex gathering and hunting societies and agricultural chiefdoms.
3. these new levels of inequality represent one of the major turning points in the social history of humankind.
4. upper classes:
   a. enjoyed great wealth
   b. avoided physical labor
   c. had the finest in everything
   d. occupied the top positions in political, military, and religious life.
5. free commoners formed the vast majority of the population and included artisans of all kinds, lower-level officials, soldiers and police, servants, and farmers.
   a. their surplus production was appropriated to support the upper classes.
   b. some members of these classes recognized and resented their situation.
6. slaves were at the bottom of social hierarchies everywhere.
   a. slavery and civilization seem to have emerged together.
   b. first-generation slaves were prisoners of war, criminals, and debtors.
   c. worked in fields, mines, homes, and shops.
   d. more rarely, they were sacrificed.
   e. slavery varied from place to place.
   f. most ancient slavery differed from the recent American variety.

C. Hierarchies of Gender
1. civilizations everywhere undermined the earlier and more equal relationships between men and women.
2. women in horticultural societies remained relatively equal to men.
3. but patriarchy gradually emerged in First Civilizations.
   a. more intensive agriculture with animal-drawn plows and large dairy herds favored male labor over female.
   b. patriarchy also developed in civilizations without plow agriculture, such as Mesoamerica and the Andes.
   c. David Christian: the declining position of women was a product of growing social complexity.
   d. the association of women with nature because of their role in reproduction may also have played a role.
   e. warfare may also have contributed to patriarchy.
   f. private property and commerce also may have played a role.
g. need to restrict female sexual activities
to assure inheritance by father’s
offspring

D. Patriarchy in Practice
1. Gerda Lerner: emergence of patriarchy in Mesopotamia
   a. written law codes codified patriarchal
      family life
   b. regulation of female sexuality was central
   c. women in Mesopotamia were
      sometimes divided into two sharply
distinguished categories, depending on
      protection of one man
   d. powerful goddesses of Mesopotamia
      were gradually replaced by male deities
2. Egyptian patriarchy gave women greater
   opportunities than in most First
   Civilizations, including ability to:
   a. own property and slaves
   b. administer and sell land
   c. make their own wills
   d. sign their own marriage contracts
   e. initiate divorce
3. royal women occasionally wielded
   political power as regents for their sons or,
   more rarely, as queens in their own right

IV. The Rise of the State
A. States were central to the organization and
   stability of First Civilizations.
B. Coercion and Consent
   1. the state fulfilled a variety of roles in
      coordinating and regulating the First
      Civilizations, including:
      a. organizing irrigation systems
      b. adjudicating conflicts
      c. defense
   2. the state served the needs of the upper
      classes by:
      a. protecting the privileges of the elites
      b. requiring farmers to give up a portion
         of their product to support city people
      c. demanding labor on large public
         projects
   3. the state frequently used force to secure its
      will
   4. force was not always necessary because
      the state often claimed that its authority
      was normal, natural, and ordained by the
      gods
      a. rule by divine right
      b. deference to religion restrained or even
         undermined the right to rule, as in the
         rule of Chinese emperors by the
         Mandate of Heaven
C. Writing and Accounting
   1. writing provided support for the state and
      emerged in all of the First Civilizations
      except the Andes (though some scholars
      now regard their knotted strings, or
      quipus, as a kind of writing)
   2. writing sustained the First Civilizations
      by:
      a. defining elite status and conveying
         prestige on those who wrote
      b. allowing some commoners to join the
         elite through literacy
      c. providing a means for propaganda
      d. providing a means to keep accurate
         accounts and complex calendars
      e. giving weight to regulations and laws
   3. writing also served functions beyond the
      state
      a. fostered literature, philosophy,
         astronomy, mathematics, and history
      b. sometimes threatened rulers
D. The Grandeur of Kings
   1. source of state authority
   2. monumental residences and temples
   3. luxurious dress
   4. elaborate burials

V. Comparing Mesopotamia and Egypt
A. Environment and Culture
   1. both depended on rivers, but were very
      different
      a. erratic and destructive flooding in
         Mesopotamia
      b. Nile flooded more predictably and less
         destructively
2. Mesopotamia was less geographically isolated than Egypt
   a. Mesopotamia was vulnerable to external attack
   b. Egypt was usually protected from external attack

3. Many scholars see a relationship between physical setting and culture
   a. More negative Mesopotamian worldview seems to reflect its precarious and violent environment
   b. Egyptian worldview reflected the more stable, predictable, and beneficent environment in which it took shape

4. Environmental impact of rising population
   a. In southern Mesopotamia, deforestation, soil erosion, and salinization of the soil weakened Sumerian city-states, leading to foreign conquest and the northward shift of Mesopotamia’s cultural centers
   b. Egypt built a more sustainable agricultural system that contributed to the remarkable continuity of its civilization

B. Cities and States
1. The political systems of Mesopotamia and Egypt differed sharply
2. Mesopotamia for its first thousand years was organized into a dozen or more separate city-states
   a. Each city-state was ruled by a king
   b. 80% of the population lived in city-states for protection
   c. Environmental devastation and endemic warfare ultimately led to conquest by outside forces after about 2350 B.C.E.
   d. These outside powers built large territorial states or bureaucratic empires encompassing all or most of Mesopotamia
3. Egypt
   a. Around 3100 B.C.E., several earlier states or chiefdoms merged into a unified territory that stretched some 1,000 miles along the Nile
   b. For 3,000 years, Egypt maintained its unity and independence with few interruptions
   c. Most Egyptians lived in agricultural villages, perhaps because of greater security
   d. The pharaoh, a god in human form, was the focus of the Egyptian state
   e. From 2200 to 2000 B.C.E., anarchy; when state was restored, pharaohs never regained their old power

C. Interaction and Exchange
1. Egypt and Mesopotamia frequently interacted
2. Egypt’s agriculture benefited from interaction
3. Egypt’s “divine kingship” seems to have been derived from central or eastern Sudan
4. Both Mesopotamia and Egypt carried on extensive long-distance trade
   a. Mesopotamian sea trade with the Indus Valley civilization as early as 2300 B.C.E.
   b. Mesopotamian trade with Anatolia, Egypt, Iran, and Afghanistan
   c. Egyptian trade in the Mediterranean and Middle East
   d. Egyptian trade in Nubia and along the East African coast
5. Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultural influences moved along trade routes
   a. Hebrews migrated from Mesopotamia to Palestine and Egypt early in their history
   b. Phoenicians (in present-day Lebanon) were commercially active in the Mediterranean basin; adapted Sumerian cuneiform to an easier alphabet
   c. Some Indo-European peoples settled in north-central Anatolia
   d. Sustained contact between Nubia and Egypt
6. Mesopotamia and Egypt were also influenced by their neighbors
   a. Indo-Europeans brought horse-and-chariot-based armies to Mesopotamia; Indo-European Hittites conquered the Babylonian empire in 1595 B.C.E.
   b. beginning in 1650 B.C.E., foreigners from surrounding regions migrated into the Nile Valley
   c. Mesopotamians and Egyptians adopted chariot technology
   d. arrival of the Hyksos spurred further innovations in Egypt
7. by 1500 B.C.E., Egypt had become an imperial state
   a. rule over non-Egyptian peoples in both Africa and Asia
   b. regular diplomatic correspondence with Middle Eastern empires

VI. Reflections: “Civilization”: What’s in a Word?
A. Some scholars have reservations about the use of the word “civilizations” to describe the cultures studied in this chapter.
B. Modern assessments of the First Civilizations reveal a profound ambiguity.
   1. they gave us inspiring art, profound reflections on life, more productive technologies, increased control over nature, and writing
   2. but they also produced massive inequalities, state oppression, slavery, large-scale warfare, the subordination of women, and epidemic disease
   3. some scholars prefer more neutral terms, such as complex societies, urban-based societies, or state-organized societies
C. Scholars object to the term “civilization,” because it implies more clear-cut boundaries from other societies than was actually the case.
   1. aside from elites, most of the people living in the First Civilizations probably defined themselves more by occupation, clan, village, city, or region than as a member of some larger “civilization”
D. This book continues to use the term because:
   1. it is so deeply embedded in our way of thinking about the world
   2. no alternative concept has achieved widespread usage
   3. we need to make distinctions among different kinds of human communities
E. But in using this term, we must remember:
   1. historians use “civilization” as a purely descriptive term designating a particular type of human society—one with cities and states—without implying any judgment or assessment, any sense of superiority or inferiority
   2. it is used to define broad cultural patterns in particular geographic regions while recognizing that many people living in those regions may have been more aware of differences and conflicts than of those commonalities

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Following are answer guidelines for the Big Picture Questions, Seeking the Main Point Question, Margin Review Questions, Portrait Question, and Documents and Visual Sources Feature Questions that appear in the textbook chapter. For your convenience, the questions and answer guidelines are also available in the Computerized Test Bank.

Big Picture Questions

1. How does the use of the term “civilization” by historians differ from that of popular usage? How do you use the term?
   • In popular usage, “civilization” implies superiority; refined behavior of a “higher” form of society is seen as unreservedly positive. This idea suggests that other forms of living must be “uncivilized,” which normally implies inferiority.
Scholars have also opposed the term “First Civilizations” because it implies more clearly demarcated boundaries from other units than was actually the case.

The earlier civilizations lacked clear borders, and identification with the civilization probably faded as distance from its core region increased. The line between civilizations and other kinds of societies is not always clear.

Historians continue to use the term “civilizations” because the term is deeply embedded in our way of thinking about the world; there is no alternative term; and we need to make distinctions among different kinds of human communities. Historians, though, use “civilization” purely as a descriptive term designating a particular type of human society—one with cities and states—without implying any judgment or assessment, any sense of superiority or inferiority.

Instead, “civilization” is used to define broad cultural patterns in particular geographic regions, recognizing that many people living in those regions may have been more aware of differences and conflicts than of those commonalities.

“Civilizations were held together largely by force.” Do you agree with this assessment, or were there other mechanisms of integration as well?

Force played a role in holding the First Civilizations together. The state used coercion or the threat of coercion to extract surplus products from farmers to support city people. The First Civilizations used officials, soldiers, police, and “attendants” to accumulate resources.

Other mechanisms also helped to hold the First Civilizations together. The state solved certain widely shared problems such as the organization of irrigation networks, the adjudication of disputes, and defense.

These roles earned First Civilizations a measure of voluntary support among the population. States were also able to secure voluntary support by generating the idea that class and gender inequalities were normal, natural, and ordained by the gods. States also used grandeur, displayed through lavish lifestyles, impressive rituals, and imposing structures. Grandeur was intended to overwhelm the common people and reinforce the sense that it was natural that the ruling elites were in charge.

3. How did the various First Civilizations differ from one another?

- In terms of government, the Indus Valley civilization differed from the others by not offering evidence of powerful centralized rule, while the way that rulers legitimated their positions in other First Civilizations varied.
- In terms of social hierarchy, while all possessed more hierarchical societies with greater inequalities than the societies that they emerged from, the number of slaves in each society varied as did the restrictiveness of the patriarchal system.
- In terms of writing, all developed a form of writing but Norte Chico’s quipu was a less sophisticated system than many of the others.
- In terms of technology, Norte Chico and the Mesopotamian civilizations possessed less developed metallurgy.
- In terms of urban living, Mesopotamia was more urbanized than the other civilizations, while Norte Chico possessed the smallest cities.

4. **Looking Back:** To what extent did civilizations represent “progress” in comparison with earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies? And in what ways did they constitute a setback for humankind?

- In terms of progress, humankind gained urban living, writing, complex calendars, monumental architecture, trade specialists who helped to drive technological innovation, a wider variety of consumer goods, and greater overall wealth.
- In terms of a setback, humankind experienced greater class and wealth differentiation, slavery, patriarchy, and large-scale warfare.

**Seeking the Main Point Question**

Q. What distinguished “civilizations” from earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies?

- Far larger populations
- Cities with populations in the tens of thousands
- Powerful states that could compel obedience and wage large-scale warfare
- Much greater inequality in economic function and wealth
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• More elaborate class and gender hierarchies
• Monumental architecture
• Written literature and complex calendars

Margin Review Questions

Q. When and where did the first civilizations emerge?

• Emergence of the first civilizations was a global phenomenon that happened independently in seven major locations around the world and in a number of smaller expressions as well. The seven major locations were:

  1. Sumer in Mesopotamia, by 3000 B.C.E.
  2. Egypt in the Nile River valley, by 3000 B.C.E.
  3. Norte Chico along the coast of central Peru, by 3000 B.C.E.
  4. Indus Valley civilization in the Indus and Saraswati river valleys of present-day Pakistan, by 2000 B.C.E.
  5. China, by 2200 B.C.E.
  6. Central Asia/Oxus, by 2200 B.C.E.
  7. The Olmec along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico near present-day Veracruz in southern Mexico, around 1200 B.C.E.

• In addition, other smaller civilizations also flourished, including the Nubian civilization that emerged south of Egypt in the Nile River valley, and the large city in China known as Sanxingdui, which arose separately but at the same time as the more well-known Shang dynasty.

Q. What accounts for the initial breakthroughs to civilization?

• Civilizations had their roots in the Agricultural Revolution, which allowed communities to produce sufficient food surpluses to support large populations and the specialized or elite minorities who did not themselves produce food.
• Scholars have posited many theories as to why some agricultural societies formed into civilizations and other did not, including a need to organize for large-scale irrigation projects; the efforts of favored groups to protect their privileges; the needs of warfare; and the influence of trade.
• Robert Carneiro combines several of these factors to argue that:

  1. The growing density of population, producing more congested and competitive societies, was a fundamental motor of change, especially where rich agricultural land was limited either by geography or by powerful competing societies.
  2. Such settings provided incentives for innovations, such as irrigation or plows that could produce more food, because opportunities for territorial expansion were not readily available.
  3. These same environments generated intense competition among rival groups that led to repeated warfare. A strong and highly organized state was a decided advantage in such competition.
  4. Since losers could not easily flee to new lands, they were absorbed into the winner’s society as a lower class.
  5. Successful leaders of the winning side emerged as an elite with an enlarged base of land, a class of subordinated workers, and a powerful state at their disposal.

Q. What was the role of cities in the early civilizations?

• Political and administrative centers
• Centers of culture including art, architecture, literature, ritual, and ceremony
• Marketplaces for both local and long-distance exchange
• Centers of manufacturing activity

Q. In what ways was social inequality expressed in early civilizations?

• Wealth
• Avoidance of physical labor
• Clothing
• Houses
• Manner of burial
• Class-specific treatment in legal codes

Q. In what ways have historians tried to explain the origins of patriarchy?

• Transition from hoe and digging-stick agriculture (mostly women) to more intensive agriculture with animal-drawn plows and more intensive large-herd pastoralism (tasks that men were better able to perform)
• The growing population of civilizations meant that women were more often pregnant and even more deeply involved in child care than before.
• Men, because they were less important in the household, were available to take on positions of economic, religious, and political authority as
societies grew more complex. From these positions men shaped the values and practices of their societies in a manner that benefited them at the expense of women. In this development lay the origin of the ancient distinction between the realm of the home, defined as the domain of women, and the world of public life, associated with men.

- Women had long been identified with nature because of their intimate involvement in reproduction, but civilization valued culture and the human mastery of nature through agriculture, monumental art and architecture, and the creation of large-scale cities and states. Some scholars have suggested that, as civilizations developed, women became associated with an inferior dimension of human life (nature), while men assumed responsibility for the higher order of culture.
- Large-scale military conflict with professionally led armies was a central feature of the First Civilizations.
- With military service largely restricted to men, the needs of warfare served to enhance the power and prestige of a male warrior class.
- The emergence of private property and commerce also may have shaped the status of women.
- Restrictions on women’s sexual activity became central to ensuring that offspring of the male head of household inherited family property. Moreover, the buying and selling associated with commerce was soon applied to male rights over women, whether as slaves, concubines, or wives.

Q. How did Mesopotamian and Egyptian patriarchy differ from each other?

- In Mesopotamia by the second millennium B.C.E., written law codified and sought to enforce a patriarchal family life. The law supported unquestioned authority of men while offering women a measure of paternalistic protection. Central to these laws was the regulation of female sexuality by men.
- Women in Mesopotamian civilization were sometimes divided into two sharply distinguished categories: (1) respectable women, those under the protection and sexual control of one man, who were often veiled outside the home; and (2) nonrespectable women, such as slaves and prostitutes, who were often forbidden to wear a veil.
- Powerful goddesses of early Mesopotamian civilization were gradually relegated to home and hearth, to be replaced by male deities, who were credited with the power of creation and fertility and viewed as the patrons of wisdom and learning.
- While Egypt was still a patriarchal society, it afforded women greater opportunities than did Mesopotamia.
- Women in Egypt were recognized as legal equals to men. They were able to own property, sell land, make their own wills, sign their own marriage contracts, and initiate their own divorces.
- Royal women occasionally exercised significant political power as regents for their young sons or, more rarely, as queens in their own right.
- Women were not veiled in Egypt, and art depicting married couples showed women and men in affectionate poses as equal partners.

Q. What were the sources of state authority in the First Civilizations?

- Citizens recognized that the complexity of life in cities or densely populated territories required some the authority to coordinate and regulate the community enterprises, such as defense and irrigation.
- State authorities frequently used force to compel obedience.
- Authority in early civilizations was often associated with divine sanction.
- Writing and accounting augmented state authority by defining elite status, conveying prestige on the literate, providing a means to disseminate propaganda, strengthening the state by making accurate record keeping possible, and giving added weight to orders, regulations, and laws.
- Grandeur in the form of lavish lifestyles of elites, impressive rituals, and the building of imposing structures added to the perception of state authority and power.

Q. In what ways might the advent of “civilization” have marked a revolutionary change in the human condition? And in what ways did it carry on earlier patterns from the past?

A strong answer to this question will touch on most of the following categories.

- In terms of revolutionary change to the human condition:
  - New, more stratified social hierarchies defined many groups of people, including women and slaves, as inferior, while a small elite secured unprecedented power, wealth and prestige.
• Urban centers created a new environment for humans to live in.
• Monumental architecture and art offered new ways to express oneself.
• Literacy transformed how information was stored and retrieved.
• New specialist professions emerged offering individuals new work opportunities.

• In terms of earlier patterns:
  • In terms of the Neolithic period, the production of food through agriculture remained the primary occupation of most of the population.
  • The family remained an important component of the social order.
  • Humans continued to practice religions and express themselves through art.

Q. In what ways did Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations differ from each other?

  • The Mesopotamian outlook on life viewed humankind as caught in an inherently disorderly world, subject to the whims of capricious and quarreling gods, and facing death without much hope of a life beyond. By contrast, Egypt produced a more cheerful and hopeful outlook on the world, wherein the rebirth of the sun each day and of the river every year assured Egyptians that life would prevail over death.
  • Mesopotamian civilization adversely affected its environment through deforestation, soil erosion, and salinization of the soil. This ecological deterioration weakened Sumerian city-states, facilitating their conquest and the shift of Mesopotamian civilization permanently north from its original heartland. By contrast, Egypt produced a more sustainable agricultural system that lasted for thousands of years and contributed to the continuity of its civilization.
  • Mesopotamia and Egypt also differed in settlement patterns. Some 80 percent of the population of Sumer lived in urban environments because of the need for protection in an unstable world. In Egypt, cities were primarily political, religious, and market centers, with most people living in agricultural villages along the river. This was possible in part because Egypt’s greater security made it less necessary for people to gather in fortified towns.
  • The political system in Sumer, the first Mesopotamian civilization, consisted of independent city-states that frequently warred among themselves and were subject to unexpected attack from the outside. This instability, along with environmental degradation, weakened the civilization and led to its ultimate conquest by outside powers. By contrast, Egypt unified early in its history under the pharaoh, the head of a strong divine-right monarchical system. While over time the pharaohs declined in real power, the political tradition helped Egypt to maintain unity and independence with only occasional interruptions for 3,000 years.

  • Underlying these contrasts were the very different rivers along which the two civilizations developed and the geographic locations in which they emerged. The Nile proved a more predictable river, one whose yearly floods facilitated agricultural production. Meanwhile, the Tigris and Euphrates were more unpredictable, bringing fertility but also on occasion destruction through flooding. Moreover, the Nile River valley was more protected from invasion than was Mesopotamia. The Nile was surrounded by deserts, mountains, seas, and cataracts that limited the possibility of outside invasion, while Mesopotamia lacked any serious obstacles to travel and suffered from frequent invasions. The certainty and security enjoyed by Egyptians had an impact on their civilization, just as the uncertainty and insecurity experienced by Mesopotamians influenced their civilization.

Q. In what ways were Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations shaped by their interactions with near and distant neighbors?

  • Egyptian agriculture relied on wheat and barley adopted from Mesopotamia as well as gourds, watermelon, domesticated donkeys, and cattle from Sudan.
  • Some scholars argue that Egypt’s step pyramids and system of writing were stimulated by Mesopotamian models.
  • The practice of “divine kingship” most likely derived from traditions in central or eastern Sudan.
  • Indo-European pastoralists influenced both Mesopotamia and Egypt as they migrated into the region. They brought with them the domesticated horse and chariot technology, which proved effective on the battlefield. Both Mesopotamian and Egyptian armies rapidly incorporated both the horse and chariot into their armies.
  • With the invasion of the Hyksos into Egypt, Egyptian civilization also adopted new kinds of armor, bows, daggers, and swords; improved methods of spinning and weaving; new musical instruments; and olive and pomegranate trees.
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Portrait Questions

1. Since most of the evidence against Paneb comes from his archrival, how much weight should historians grant to that account? How might the story appear if written from Paneb’s viewpoint?

   • Historians must treat the account of Paneb carefully because the author has reason to cast Paneb in a bad light.
   • However, we would know nothing of Paneb’s life without this account so it is of some value.
   • It is perhaps most valuable as a window into everyday life in ancient Egypt, especially tensions in communities, the realities of working in one of the skilled professions valued by the pharaoh, and family associations with specific trades.
   • It can also tell us something of the types of sexual liaisons and corruption that existed in Ancient Egypt. Even if this account is untrue, it is likely that the accusations made would have been at least plausible.
   • Paneb undoubtedly would have offered an account of his actions that cast himself in a better light and perhaps even explained or justified his actions.

2. What perspective on the Egypt of his time does Paneb’s career disclose? How do those perspectives differ from more conventional and perhaps idealized understandings?

   • The account sheds unusual light on the tensions within Egyptian society and the sort of dishonest behaviors that Egyptians were sometimes guilty of.
   • It provides useful insight into how the tomb cutting profession was organized, the role of families in such professions, and the pathways to promotion.
   • It explores what was considered moral and immoral behavior in Egyptian society.
   • It reveals a more disorderly world than typical depictions of the social order produced by the authorities.

Headnote Questions

Document 2.1: In Search of Eternal Life

Q. How would you define the Mesopotamian ideal of kingship? What is the basis of the monarch’s legitimacy?

   • The complaints of the men of Uruk concerning Gilgamesh indicate that an ideal king ruled justly and as a shepherd concerned with the well-being of his flock, rather than abusing his powers.
   • It can be inferred that an ideal king built great temples and defensive structures, was successful in battle, and possessed personal traits beyond those of average men.
   • Gilgamesh’s legitimacy is based on three foundations: (1) his own personal traits including his wisdom, knowledge, courage, and physical beauty; (2) the gods’ decision to endow him with these traits, making him super human—two-thirds god, one-third human; and (3) his special status with the gods, as is explicitly stated when Enkidu interprets Gilgamesh’s dream as telling him that “The father of the gods has given you kingship, such is your destiny”; this is also implied elsewhere in the text.

Q. What understanding of the afterlife does the epic suggest?

   • The afterlife in Gilgamesh’s account is not an appealing place. The souls of the dead are held in the palace of Irkalla or house of dust, from which no soul ever leaves, indicating a permanent separation of the dead from the living.
   • In the palace of Irkalla, souls “sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay is their meat,” meaning that they live in a world with few or none of the pleasures of life before death.
   • Even the powerful lose their status and authority, becoming the equivalent of servants in the afterlife.
   • There were high priests and acolytes, and priests of the incantation and of ecstasy in the house of dust, but their roles and meanings are not developed in the passage.

Q. What philosophy of life comes across in the Gilgamesh story?

   • The advice of Siduri and Utnapishtim provide a clear philosophy of life for Gilgamesh. Its basic premises are that death is inevitable, as the gods made it part of human existence at creation; but man was given life to do with as he or she wished.

Using the Documents and Visual Sources Features

Following are answer guidelines for the headnote questions and Using the Evidence questions that appear in the documents and visual sources essays located at the end of the textbook chapter.
Therefore, one should enjoy life and the pleasures it allows in terms of food and dance, love, and family.

- Nothing is permanent in this life, so it must be enjoyed in the here and now.

Q. How does the *Epic of Gilgamesh* portray the gods and their relationship to humankind?

- The gods are portrayed as protectors of particular communities of humans, as in the case of Shurrupak, which relied on Anu as lord of the firmament, father, and warrior, and Enlil as councilor.
- The gods in Gilgamesh regularly interfere with events on earth, for instance, sending Enkidu to counsel Gilgamesh or sending a deluge of water to destroy all humans because of the noise that they made.
- The gods are also portrayed as possessing human attributes, such as making decisions and later regretting them. The best example is when Ishtar expresses, after the fact, her regret at sending the flood to destroy all humankind.

**Document 2.2: Law and Justice in Ancient Mesopotamia**

Q. If you knew nothing else about ancient Mesopotamia, what could you conclude from the Code of Hammurabi about the economy and society of this ancient civilization in the eighteenth century B.C.E.? What kind of economy prevailed in the region? What distinct social groups are mentioned in the code? What rights did women enjoy and to what restrictions were they subject?

- The economy was based on agriculture and trade; some workers were specialists, including physicians, tavern keepers, and house builders.
- The economy used contracts and money, and at least some economic activities, like ox-cart hiring and certain types of surgery, were subject to price controls.
- The social groups mentioned were split roughly into elites, including elders, judges, chieftains, priestesses; commoners or freed men, including common soldiers, farmers, merchants, house builders, physicians, and tavern keepers; and slaves.
- Women enjoyed a number of rights, including the status for some as “sister of a god,” which allowed them to play roles in religious temples (Law 110); the freedom to leave her husband if no sexual intercourse occurs (Law 128); protections against rape in certain circumstances (Law 130); and the requirement that a husband provide direct proof of adultery (Law 131).
  - If a woman was abandoned by her husband, she could go to live in another house; even if the husband returned he could not force her to come back to his house (Law 136).
  - If a woman of good reputation was neglected by her husband, she could take her dowry and return to her father’s house (Law 142).
  - A man had to support a sick wife for as long as she lived (Law 148).
  - If a man wished to separate from a woman or wife that had borne him children, he had to return her dowry and a part of the usufruct of field, garden, and property so that she could rear her children. Once she brought up her children, she could then marry again (Law 137).
  - Restrictions were also present in these laws, including the restriction that “sisters of a god” not open a tavern or enter a tavern to drink (Law 110). Also, a woman could be cast into the water if she left or neglected her husband (Law 143).
  - A particularly observant student might note that, aside from slave women, in nearly all circumstances women are defined as subject to either their father or husband.

Q. What can you infer from the code about the kind of social problems that afflicted ancient Mesopotamia?

- There were frequent disputes over property that the Code of Hammurabi seeks to address through written contracts.
- There were concerns about adultery in society.
- There were stark differences in wealth that in conjunction with laws against stealing (Law 8) indicate that these differences led to tension.

Q. How would you define the principles of justice that underlay Hammurabi’s code? In what different ways might twenty-first-century observers and those living at the time of Hammurabi assess that system of justice?

- The system of justice is based on retribution (literally an eye for an eye in some cases) and jeopardy for both the accuser and accused.
- Law is not equal for all, but rather punishments for some specific crimes are linked to the social class and gender of the criminal and the victim.
- Its chief mechanisms for punishment are corporal and fine-based.
• For an observer in Hammurabi’s world, this system might appear just and fair because it represents both customary law in the region and the social realities of an unequal society.
  • However, for some in Hammurabi’s world, such as a woman, slave, or other non-elite, this system may have seemed oppressive.
  • For a twenty-first-century observer, a number of aspects of the code might appear unjust or unusual, including the lack of equality for all plaintiffs under the law; the reliance on strictly corporal and fine-based punishments without the option of confinement; the potential jeopardy that a plaintiff could find himself or herself in if they fail to prove a charge; and the harshness of punishments for some laws.

Document 2.3: The Afterlife of a Pharaoh

Q. How is the afterlife of the pharaoh represented in this text?

• The afterlife of the pharaoh is represented as a continuation of this life, with the tradition of regular monthly and half-monthly feasts continuing after death.
  • It implies that the pharaoh, including his physical body, will travel to the next world and that only the pharaoh, not the population as a whole, passes through the gate to the afterlife.

Q. How does it compare with depictions of the afterlife in the Epic of Gilgamesh?

• This description of a divine welcome for the pharaoh, the maintenance of his social status as seen through references to his retinue of great ones and servants that receive him in the afterlife, and the continuance of his monthly and half-monthly feasts all describe an afterlife that closely replicates the pharaoh’s experiences before death. This is highlighted and emphasized in the final line, “Rise up, O Teti, you shall not die!”

• The account of the afterlife in the Epic of Gilgamesh offers a stark contrast. In the house of dust, no god greets the dead; all souls leave behind this world for the next; no soul maintains his or her social status on earth; and the house of dust that houses the Mesopotamian afterlife lacks light, water, harvests, or feasts like those described in The Afterlife of the Pharaoh.

Document 2.4: A New Basis for Egyptian Immortality

Q. What changes in Egyptian religious thinking does the Negative Confession mark?

• Entrance into heaven is not restricted to Pharaohs, but is open to anyone who can demonstrate that he or she has lived a moral life to the satisfaction of the gods.
  • Entrance into the afterlife is dependent on moral behavior in this life.

Q. On what basis are the users of the Negative Confession making their claim for eternal life?

• They are making the case that they have not wronged others, particularly those least fortunate in society, like slaves or the poor; they have not wronged the gods; and they have not cheated in the pursuit of wealth or honors.

Q. What does the Negative Confession suggest about the sources of conflict and discord in New Kingdom Egypt? How do these compare with the social problems revealed in the Code of Hammurabi?

• The Negative Confession was written primarily for an elite audience, which is evident in the numerous transgressions that could only be committed by someone in a position of authority. The primary sources of conflict fall into several categories, including:
  • Causing suffering to others
  • Stealing from kinsfolk and the less fortunate
  • Wronging the gods or people
  • Allowing wrongs to take place without interfering
  • Causing pain to the multitude
  • Stealing from temples or doing things that are ritually impure
  • A variety of more specific offenses that a government official might be guilty of, like obstructing water when it should run, driving beasts from their pastures, or adding to a weight of the balance

• These concerns do correlate with some of the social concerns of Hammurabi’s law code, in particular Hammurabi’s stated intention that his code should protect the weak and promote righteousness.
  • However, here these goals are presented as signs of virtue in an individual, whereas in Hammurabi’s code these virtues are expressed in terms of laws and punishments for transgressions.
**Document 2.5: The Occupations of Old Egypt**

Q. What might historians learn from this text about the occupational and social structure of Middle Kingdom Egypt?

*This text is rich in descriptions of the varied jobs and professions of Egypt, including the following:*

- Manual trades (washerman, potter, cobbler, or watchman), which the author argues must labor away at physically demanding jobs in bad conditions
- Merchants, who work hard but see their labors disappear in taxes
- Sailors, whose work is dangerous and forces them to travel far from Egypt
- Outworkers, who spend all day in the fields with their tools
- Peasants, who suffer from tough physical labor and the uncertainties associated with growing crops
- Scribes, who are rewarded by the pharaoh, wear fine clothes, and possess horses, boats, attendants, houses, and powerful positions
- Soldiers, who must do as they are ordered, labor on projects, and go to war, and who because of the deprivations that they suffer are left weak if not dead

Q. What does learning to write offer to a young Egyptian? What advantages of a scribal position are suggested in the document?

- Learning to write offers a promising career path that may lead to the literate student being advanced by his superiors, being sent on a mission, and being rewarded by the pharaoh with fine clothes, horses, boats, attendants, houses, slaves, and powerful positions.

Q. What timeless frustrations of a teacher are evident in this text?

- The second paragraph speaks to the frustrations of a teacher who cannot convince his student to focus on learning, despite the student’s talents for scribal work.

**Visual Source 2.1: A Seal from the Indus Valley**

Q. How might a prominent landowner, a leading official, a clan head, or a merchant make use of such a seal?

- Other possibilities include use as a decoration, for financial or commercial contracts, or as a symbol of authority.

Q. What meaning might you attach to the use of animals as totems or symbols of a particular group or individual?

- Specific animals may have been associated with specific professions, clans, or people.
- Animals may have been used as totems, and their inclusion on seals was designed to protect or safeguard the item attached to the seal.
- Animals provided a simple written language that the illiterate members of society could decipher.

Q. Notice the five characters of the Indus Valley script at the top of the seal. Do a little research on the script with an eye to understanding why it has proven so difficult to decipher.

*This topic remains the subject of scholarly debate, but research by students could yield the following possible answers:*

- The Indus Valley script was made up of 400–600 signs, 200 of which were common.
- It is likely that some signs are used for their meanings, while others are used for their sounds.
- This seal is typical in that writing usually consists of short sequences of symbols.
- A useful discussion of the debate surrounding the interpretation of Indus Valley script can be found at http://www.harappa.com/script/index.html.
- The meaning of this sequence of symbols is open to speculation.

**Visual Source 2.2: Man from Mohenjo Daro**

Q. What specific features of the statue can you point out?

- The specific features that stand out are its headband, armband, and clothing pattern.
- The facial features of the figure are also pronounced, as is his beard.

Q. What possible indication of elite status can you identify?

- The headband and armband may be signs of elite status.
- The pattern on his clothing may imply wealth and status.
- His beard may also be a sign of elite status.
Q. What overall impression does the statue convey?

- The headband, armband, and clothing give the impression that this statue represents an elite figure.
- The facial features might be interpreted as conveying a sense of authority or confidence.

**Visual Source 2.3: Dancing Girl**

Q. What features of this statue may have provoked such observations?

- Her body posture and facial features, which convey confidence.
- Her bracelets and other jewelry, which might speak to her status and perhaps her profession.

Q. How do you react to this statue? What qualities does she evoke?

- Two possible reactions are delight in its artistic qualities and beauty; and interest in its purpose and meaning.
- Several scholars have noted that the statue evokes confidence and perhaps talent; it might also evoke a sense of impatience on the part of the dancer.

Q. What does Visual Source 2.3 suggest about views of women, images of female beauty, and attitudes about sexuality and the body?

- The nude female form was considered beautiful.
- If the statue is of a dancer, then the Indus Valley civilization may have found female nudity acceptable in some public or semipublic situations.
- Long legs and a thin frame may have been considered signs of female beauty in the Indus Valley civilization.
- Erotic art was part of the Indus Valley civilization’s artistic tradition.

**Using the Evidence Questions**

**Documents: Life and Afterlife in Mesopotamia and Egypt**

1. **Defining civilization:** What features of civilization, described in Chapter 2, do these documents illustrate?

- The emergence of more socially stratified societies that include the institutions of slavery and patriarchy.
- More specialist professions, including priests, merchants, scribes, and physicians.
- The growing power of states as expressed through formal law codes with coercive punishments.
- The growing authority of leaders, as seen in descriptions of Gilgamesh and pharaohs.
- More complex economies with greater wealth.

2. **Making comparisons:** What similarities and differences between ancient Mesopotamia and Egyptian civilizations can you infer from these documents? How might you account for the differences?

- Different conceptions of political leaders between Mesopotamian kings and Egyptian pharaohs.
- Different conceptions of death and the afterlife.
- Less obvious differences between the social orders of the two societies.
- The differences in the physical environments of Mesopotamia and Egypt, as explored in the textbook (see the Classroom Activities feature that follows).

3. **Considering past and present:** What elements of thought and practice from these early pieces of written literature resonate still in the twenty-first century? What elements remain strange or unfamiliar to modern sensibilities?

- The description in Document 2.1 of Gilgamesh’s poor rule before the arrival of Enkidu could still be recognized as poor leadership today.
- The idea in Document 2.2 of a written law code guaranteed by the state to regulate society still resonates.
- Many of the crimes in Document 2.2 would be considered crimes today.
- The concept of moral behavior in this life securing entrance into the afterlife, as laid out in Document 2.4, may also resonate with people who subscribe to one of several major world religions that have similar beliefs.
- Elements that remain strange or unfamiliar include the very human characteristics of the gods and their decision to destroy humankind (see Document 2.1); the idea that only the Pharaoh could enter into the afterlife (see Document 2.3), the lack of equality under the law, the retribution-based punishment system, and the social order described in Document 2.2; and the social order described in Document 2.5.
4. **Seeking further evidence:** What dimensions of these civilizations’ social life and religious thinking are not addressed in these documents? What other perspectives might you want to seek out?
   - Largely unaddressed in the documents are the priestly class of both societies; relations between children, parents, families, and extended families; and the lives and functions of slaves.
   - While Document 2.5 does chronicle the daily lives of many types of people, there is much less information about the daily lives of farmers, artisans, merchants, or elites in Mesopotamia in these sources.
   - The documents are uniformly written by elite males, therefore the perspectives of women, lower-class freemen, slaves, and even children would add substantially to our understanding of society.

5. **Reading between the lines:** Historians often use documents to obtain insights or information that the authors did not intend to convey. How might these documents be used in this fashion? What are the advantages and dangers in this use of ancient texts?
   - These documents contain many insights for modern scholars that their authors did not intend to convey, including the role and status of women in society; the social structures of societies; aspects of economic and religious life in these civilizations; and approaches to education (see Document 2.5).
   - The advantages derived from reading ancient texts are that they provide insight into aspects of these civilizations for which we often have no other sources and, in the case of Document 2.2, the inclusion of a law code implies that the references are to a society as it actually existed.
   - Disadvantages arise because these passages are written by elite males and therefore we see only their perspective. Works such as Document 2.1 are fictional, and may contain passages that do not correlate with reality.

**Visual Sources: Indus Valley Civilization**

1. **Using art as evidence:** What can we learn about Indus Valley civilization from these visual sources? How does our level of understanding of this civilization differ from that of Egypt and Mesopotamia where plentiful written records are available?
   - We can learn a great deal about this civilization, including its technological abilities, its use of a written language, its use of animals as symbols and totems, its depictions of men and women, and the dress of elite men.
     - We know considerably less about the Indus Valley civilization than about Egypt and Mesopotamia, and our knowledge is also far more speculative.
naturalistic depiction of the Egyptians Raherka and Mersankh (P 2.1), Egypt and Nubia (P 2.7), Man from Mohenjo Daro (VS 2.2) and Dancing Girl (VS 2.3).

- The clothing and possessions of figures in Chapter 2 represent the goods of civilizations, while those of Chapter 1 depict gatherer hunter and early agricultural clothing and possessions.
- The activities of the human figures also frequently reveal the era that they were created in.
- In Chapters 1 and 2, women are presented primarily in the nude, while male figures are depicted clothed.

4. Seeking further evidence: What additional kinds of archeological discoveries would be helpful in furthering our understanding of Indus Valley civilization?

- Certainly a key discovery is one that would allow modern scholars to decipher the Indus River civilization’s written script—for example, a tablet along the lines of the Rosetta Stone, which was critical for the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyph writing.
- Archeological discoveries that would help us better understand who ruled the civilization and how they ruled, such as the unearthing of a palace or other type of structure in which government was conducted, or perhaps grave sites of elite members of society, would also improve our understanding of the Indus Valley civilization.
- Finally, the unearthing of a temple, another holy site, the graves of priests, or some other evidence of religious life would help us to better understand the role of religion in society, a topic that is currently the subject of much speculation.

LECTURE STRATEGIES

Lecture 1: The monumental nature of First Civilizations

The objectives of this lecture strategy are:

- to help students visualize the physical culture of First Civilizations in a comparative way
- to aid comprehension of societal organization

This lecture strategy requires access to PowerPoint or to an overhead projector.

Start with images of one or two major Neolithic building projects, such as Newgrange, Stonehenge, or one of the Neolithic Temples of Malta. Discuss the amount of organized, skilled labor involved in such projects—the amount of earth moved at Newgrange, the difficulties in lifting the lintel stones at Stonehenge, and so on. As much as possible, call on students for information covered in earlier reading assignments or lectures. Continue with monumental images from at least four of the First Civilizations covered in Chapter 2. The textbook has several interesting images; you might also consider:

- Egypt: the Great Pyramid is the most obvious, but you might also consider the temple of Hatshepsut at Luxor, the Ramesseum, the Colossi of Memnon, or Abu Simbel
- Mesopotamia: the ziggurat of Ur
- Teotihuacán: the pyramid to the sun and the pyramid to the moon
- Olmec: the monumental heads (an image search for the site La Venta will come up with interesting images)
- Norte Chico: pyramid at Caral
- Indus Valley: citadel at Harappa, Lothal Harbor, Great Bath at Mohenjo Daro

Ask students questions that will encourage a discussion of physical remains that might not have survived (e.g., Was wood for building available in the region? What is the likelihood of water or wind damage over the centuries? Might there have been reuse of building materials by later civilizations?). In this context, contrasting images of the current remains of these sites with artist reconstructions of their original form can be very useful.

Help the students make a list entitled “To produce works like these, a civilization needed . . . ,” encouraging discussion of kings strong enough to force their people to do unpaid labor for the state, specialized sculptors, ability to move building materials long distances, and so on.

Lecture 2: Unification in the First Civilizations

The objectives of this lecture strategy are:

- to review material covered in the chapter
- to fill in some of the history of Mesopotamia
- to develop material about the Indus Valley
- to aid students in directed examination of what archeological material means

Start with the issue of how Egypt became a single political entity. Key issues are the political division between Upper and Lower Egypt (don’t forget to remind students that “lower” means “downstream”—thus, Lower Egypt is north of Upper Egypt) and the unification under Menes (Narmer). A good visual
resource is the Narmer Palette commemorating the unification. Mention that early pharaohs had two tombs—one in Upper Egypt and one in Lower Egypt—and that the royal crown incorporates the symbols of both north and south.

Move from Egypt to the more drawn-out process of unification in Mesopotamia, paying special attention to the role of city-states with strong self-identities in hindering the process of unification. Students respond well to a narrative history of ancient Mesopotamia organized around the question, “What got in the way of unification?” Start with Sumer and its city-states, then explore what made it possible for Sargon of Agade to establish the Akkadian Empire (military, administration, use of religious institutions—such as making his daughter Enheduanna the world’s first named author, priestess of the moon god at Ur). Discuss internal and external factors that made the Akkadian Empire dissolve after only two generations, comparing the Akkadian experience to the relative stability of Egypt (use, for instance, the Gutian invasion to examine the resentment of “foreign” rule). Then explore the rise of the more stable Old Babylonian Empire, best represented by the rule of Hammurabi, again discussing why it enjoyed greater longevity.

Finally, lead the students in speculating about the much more mysterious Indus Valley civilization. Review the basic facts about this civilization (Web searches for “Harappa” or “Harappan India” will yield better material on the whole than searches for “Indus Valley”). Ask the students whether, based on the archeological evidence, they think this civilization consisted of a unified territorial state (like Egypt) or independent city-states (like Sumer). During your lecture, it may be useful to reference the Visual Sources feature in this chapter.

Lecture 3: How “now” affects “then”—modern prejudice and understanding the past

The objectives of this lecture strategy are:

- to build from the discussion of the term “civilization” at the end of the chapter
- to help students understand how crucial interpretation is in understanding the past
- to encourage students to think objectively about the past
- to encourage students to recognize their own prejudices about other cultures

This strategy provides an opportunity to talk about archeology—who conducts it, the methodology, and the prejudices that affect the interpretation of archeological evidence. It can be approached in a variety of ways. Some points to consider are:

- the development of archeology as a branch of science in the nineteenth century
- the role of the Bible and romantic views of ancient Greece in the development of the discipline
- nineteenth-century attitudes about the “colored peoples” of the world

Discuss some notorious cases of bias by archeologists, such as Heinrich Schliemann and the destruction of the level of Troy he was looking for. You might also consider feminist interpretations of Çatalhüyük, or even “proofs” that Europeans (or even the Chinese!) created the early civilizations of the Americas. Three other central issues are:

1. civilizations that have still not been systematically excavated (such as Norte Chico and Nubia) because of political climate, lack of funding, or lack of interest
2. odd interpretations based on assumptions about a culture’s potential (e.g., scholars of ancient Egypt have translated a word as “king” while scholars of ancient Nubia have interpreted the same word as “chief”)
3. evidence for diffusion versus independent invention

Conclude by showing some archeological finds from the First Civilizations for which we do not have deciphered written records. Encourage the class to discuss what their significance might be, especially in comparison to materials from the cultures we understand more deeply thanks to writing. For example, is the statuette of a dancing girl from Mohenjo Daro erotic, religious, or decorative?

THINGS TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM

Discussion Topics

1. Comparison (large or small group). “Slavery in human societies.”

The passage on pp. 95–97 offers an ideal opportunity to engage with the history of slavery.
Add to this passage by asking students to read the extracts of Hammurabi’s law code on slavery (readily available online):

- How did slavery in Mesopotamia compare to slavery in the United States?
- Why did slavery first emerge with civilization?
- Hammurabi’s law code also provides an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast the status of free women and slaves in Mesopotamia and the impact of “class” on Mesopotamian society.

2. Contextualization (large or small group).
“Studying First Civilizations versus studying societies before civilizations.”

This chapter offers an ideal opportunity to discuss the importance of writing to the study of the past:

- What questions can now be answered, thanks to the development of writing?
- Does the existence of deciphered writing from one First Civilization help in understanding them all?
- What questions would you most like to ask an inhabitant of the Olmec civilization? the Norte Chico civilization? the Indus Valley civilization?
- What do you think the answers would be?

3. Misconception/Difficult Topic (large or small group). “‘Civilization’ is necessarily a good thing.”

The whole chapter, and especially the Reflections section, provides fertile ground for class discussion of the deep-seated assumption that civilization was necessarily a good thing in human history. Such a discussion provides an ideal opportunity to ask students to assess the positive and negative implications for humankind of the emergence of civilizations. Possible approaches:

- Require groups of students to report back, or present the cases, “for” and “against” civilization.
- Ask students to assess deep-seated assumptions in Western society today, including that civilization is a product of Western culture and that the Americas were “uncivilized” before Europeans arrived.
- Should historians be in the business of making these kinds of judgments about the past? Is it enough to understand what happened and why? Should we necessarily move on to issues of moral assessment? Or are such judgments unavoidable?
- Would the students prefer to live in a First Civilization rather than in a gathering and hunting band, agricultural village, or chiefdom?
- If so, under what circumstances? Would the student’s gender or class status make a difference in that judgment?
- To what extent do the experiences of First Civilizations reflect the experiences of civilization today?

Classroom Activities

1. Map analysis (large or small group).

Using a physical map of the world, ask students to identify the location of the main civilizations discussed in this chapter. Then encourage the students to make lists of

- physical conditions (mountains, oceans, deserts, and so on) that would simplify or hinder contact with other regions
- similarities (longitude, river valleys, etc.) and differences (relative size, etc.) between the geographic settings of the first civilizations

2. Role-playing exercise (small group).

You and your family have just migrated from an agricultural, nomadic, or chiefdom society to one of the newly established cities of Sumer.

- How would your life change?
- What would stay the same?
- How would your gender impact your experience?
- Would your experience be different if you had migrated to Egypt? the Indus Valley? China?

3. Clicker question.

On the whole, was the emergence of First Civilizations a positive or negative development for humankind?
Classroom Activities for the Documents and Visual Sources Features

Culture and Environment

Split the class into small groups and ask them to examine the documents in this feature with reference to the hypothesis advanced under the heading “Environment and Culture,” pp. 80–82. Do the documents support the idea that the different environments of Mesopotamia and Egypt shaped the cultures of these two regions? Is there any evidence in the documents that challenges or even contradicts this hypothesis?

Role-Playing (small group): Deciphering Ancient Languages

The final headnote question for Visual Source 2.2 and Using the Evidence question 5 provide opportunities to explore the problems involved in deciphering ancient scripts. Divide students into small groups and ask them to try to decipher the seal image by speculating on the meaning of the symbols, researching the symbols on the Internet, or using materials that you provide in class. Then ask what they would like scholars or archeologists to discover that would make the reading of these symbols easier? Take this opportunity to explore more widely the problems that scholars have had in deciphering ancient scripts. Look at other regions where the original language has disappeared but a written script survives, like the Linear A system found on the island of Crete. Take an opportunity to look at places where breakthroughs have been made, for example, in deciphering the hieroglyphs of Egyptian civilization thanks to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone.

WHAT’S THE SIGNIFICANCE?

Central Asian/Oxus civilization: A major First Civilization that emerged around 2200 B.C.E. in Central Asia along the Oxus or Amu Darya river in what is now northern Afghanistan. An important focal point for a Eurasian-wide system of intellectual and cultural exchange, it faded away about 1700 B.C.E.

Code of Hammurabi: A series of laws publicized at the order of King Hammurabi of Babylon (d. 1750 B.C.E.). Not actually a code, but a number of laws that proclaim the king’s commitment to social order. (See the excerpt of the code in Document 2.2, pp. 95–97.)

Egypt: “the gift of the Nile”: Egypt is often known as “the gift of the Nile” because the region would not have been able to support a significant human population without the Nile’s annual inundation, which provided rich silt deposits and made agriculture possible.

Epic of Gilgamesh: The most famous extant literary work from ancient Mesopotamia, it tells the story of one man’s quest for immortality.

Hatshepsut: Ancient Egypt’s most famous queen; reigned 1472–1457 B.C.E. (pron. hat-shep-soot)

Mohenjo Daro/Harappa: Major cities of the Indus Valley civilization; both of which flourished around 2000 B.C.E. (pron. moehen-joe DAHR-oh) (pron. hah-RAHP-uh)

Norte Chico/Caral: Norte Chico is a region along the central coast of Peru, home of a civilization that developed in the period 3000–1800 B.C.E. Caral was the largest of some twenty-five urban centers that emerged in the area at that time.

Nubia: A civilization to the south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, noted for development of an alphabetic writing system and a major ironworking industry by 500 B.C.E.

Olmec civilization: An early civilization that developed along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico around 1200 B.C.E.

Paneb: A circa 1300 B.C.E. Egyptian foreman in charge of a crew of tomb workers whose misdeeds in life were recorded by a rival.

patriarchy: Literally “rule of the father”; a social system of male dominance.

pharaoh: A king of Egypt. The term literally means “the palace” and only came into use in the New Kingdom, but it is generally employed in reference to all ancient Egyptian rulers.

rise of the state: A process of centralization that took place in the First Civilizations, growing out of the greater complexity of urban life in recognition of the need for coordination, regulation, adjudication, and military leadership.

Uruk: The largest city of ancient Mesopotamia. (pron. OOH-rook)
FURTHER READING

• Bridging World History: Order and Early Societies, http://www.learner.org/resources/series197.html. An interesting and useful site with video clips, teaching suggestions, and even an audio glossary for those hard-to-pronounce words.
• Mesopotamia—Internet Resources, http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESINRES.HTM. Includes links to primary sources and studies of Mesopotamia, as well as works of art.
• Scarre, Chris, ed. The Seventy Wonders of the Ancient World. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999. A quick read that is full of useful information about such things as pyramids and ziggurats.
• Scarre, Christopher, and Brian M. Fagan. Ancient Civilizations, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003. This is a book that every world civ. instructor should have on her or his shelf. It starts with background on the rediscovery of the ancient world and concepts of the state, and offers short presentations on Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, early Chinese civilizations, Near Eastern kingdoms, the early states in northeast Africa, early civilizations in the Americas, and more.
• Art History Resources on the Web: Art of the Ancient Near East, http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHneareast.html. An impressive collection of good-quality images for classroom use assembled by Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe, a professor of art history at Sweet Briar College.
• Art History Resources on the Web: Ancient Egyptian Art, http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHegypt.html. Links to an impressive number of images for all periods of ancient Egyptian history assembled by Christopher L. C. E.Witcombe, a professor of art history at Sweet Briar College.

LITERATURE


FILM

• The First Egyptians. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2004. 25 minutes. Explores the archeological evidence from Egypt that predates the building of the pyramids by thousands of years in order to discover whether the dynasties of the pharaohs were directly linked to the early inhabitants of Egypt.
• Indus: The Unvoiced Civilization. Insight Media, 2000. 59 minutes. Explores the
language, customs, and beliefs of the Indus River civilization.


- Mari, Part 2: The Palace of Zimri-Lim. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2005. 27 minutes. Provides insight into life at the center of power in a Sumerian city through the archeological excavation of the Palace of Zimri-Lim.


- Messages from the Past: Reassessing Ancient Civilizations. Four-part series. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2000. 59 minutes each. Examines the histories of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and China by focusing on the rivers that sustained them.

- Writing and Civilization. Insight Media, 1998. 23 minutes. Explores the shift from oral to written communication in China, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, paying particular attention to the connection of writing to religious, political, and economic developments. The film also considers the development of phonetic writing in Phoenicia.

ADDITIONAL BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN’S RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER 2

PowerPoint Maps, Images, Lecture Outlines, and i>clicker Content

These presentation materials are downloadable from the Media and Supplements tab at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer/catalog, and they are available on an Instructor’s Resource CD-ROM. They include ready-made and fully customizable PowerPoint multimedia presentations built around lecture outlines that are embedded with maps, figures, and selected images from the textbook and are supplemented by more detailed instructor notes on key points. Also available are maps and selected images in JPEG and PowerPoint format; content for i>clicker, a classroom response system, in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint formats; the Instructor’s Resource Manual in Microsoft Word format; and outline maps in PDF format for quizzing or handouts. All files are suitable for copying onto transparency acetates.

Documents and Essays from Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader, Fifth Edition

The following documents, essays, and illustrations to accompany Chapter 2 are available in this reader by Kevin Reilly:

- Catherine Clay, Chandrika Paul, and Christine Senecal, Women in the First Urban Communities
- Kevin Reilly, Cities and Civilization
- The Epic of Gilgamesh
- Hammurabi’s Code
- The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, c. 1850 B.C.E.
- Images from Hunefer’s Book of the Dead, c. 1275 B.C.E.
- An Assyrian Law and a Palace Decree, c. 1100 B.C.E.
- Smithsonian, First City in the New World, 2003

Online Study Guide at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer

The Online Study Guide helps students synthesize the material from the textbook as well as practice the skills historians use to make sense of the past. Each chapter contains specific testing exercises, including a multiple-choice self-test that focuses on important conceptual ideas; a flashcard activity that tests students on their knowledge of key terms; and two interactive map activities intended to strengthen students’ geographic skills. Instructors can monitor students’ progress through an online Quiz Gradebook or receive email updates.

Computerized Test Bank

This test bank provides over fifty exercises per chapter, including multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and full-length essay questions. Instructors can customize quizzes, add or edit both questions and answers, and export questions and answers to a variety of formats, including WebCT and Blackboard. The disc includes correct answers and essay outlines.