



FOLLOWING THE
LIGHT OF THE
SUN WE LEFT
THE OLD WORLD



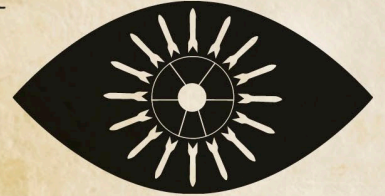
AMERICA IS
GOD'S CRUCIBLE,
THE GREATEST
MELTING POT



A REVOLUTION
IS NOT A BED
OF ROSES



DEEDS
NOT
WORDS



WE'RE EYEBALL TO
EYEBALL, AND I THINK THE
OTHER FELLOW JUST BLINKED



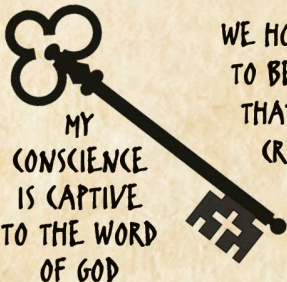
A MAN
DESTINED TO
BECOME MASTER
OF THE STATE

THE HISTORY BOOK

BIG IDEAS SIMPLY EXPLAINED



WE WILL CUT
OFF HIS HEAD
WITH THE CROWN
UPON IT

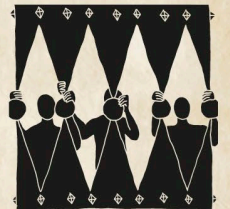


MY
CONSCIENCE
IS CAPTIVE
TO THE WORD
OF GOD

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS
TO BE SELF-EVIDENT,
THAT ALL MEN ARE
CREATED EQUAL



ROYALTY IS A
REMEDY FOR
THE SPIRIT OF
REBELLION



I HAVE A
DREAM



GIVE THE
SUN THE
BLOOD OF
ENEMIES
TO DRINK



SOCIETY
WAS CUT
IN TWO

THE
HISTORY
BOOK



THE HISTORY BOOK





Penguin
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4 JENNER WAY, ECCLES, AYLESFORD,
KENT ME20 7SQ

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original styling by
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First American Edition, 2016
Published in the United States by
DK Publishing
345 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014

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Dorling Kindersley Limited
DK, a Division of Penguin Random House
LLC

16 17 18 19 20 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
001-283973-July/2016

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Published in Great Britain by Dorling
Kindersley Limited.

A catalog record for this book is available
from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4654-4510-0

DK books are available at special discounts
when purchased in bulk for sales
promotions, premiums, fundraising, or
educational use. For details, contact: DK
Publishing Special Markets, 345 Hudson
Street, New York, New York 10014
SpecialSales@dk.com

Printed and bound in Hong Kong

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CONTENTS

10 INTRODUCTION

HUMAN ORIGINS

200,000 YEARS AGO—3500 BCE

- 20 **At least as important as Columbus's journey to America or the *Apollo 11* expedition**
The first humans arrive in Australia
- 22 **Everything was so beautiful, so fresh**
Cave paintings at Altamira
- 28 **The foundations of today's Europe were forged in the events of the late Ice Age**
The Big Freeze
- 30 **A great civilization arose on the Anatolian plain**
The settlement at Çatalhöyük
- 32 **Further events**

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

6000 BCE—500 CE

- 36 **To bring about the rule of righteousness in the land**
The Law Code of Hammurabi
- 38 **All the lands have fallen prostrate beneath his sandals for eternity**
The temples of Abu Simbel

- 40 **Attachment is the root of suffering**
Siddhartha Gautama preaches Buddhism
- 42 **A clue to the existence of a system of picture-writing in the Greek lands**
The palace at Knossos
- 44 **In times of peace, sons bury their fathers, but in war it is the fathers who bury their sons**
The Persian Wars
- 46 **Administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few**
Athenian democracy
- 52 **There is nothing impossible to he who will try**
The conquests of Alexander the Great
- 54 **If the Qin should ever get his way with the world, then the whole world will end up his prisoner**
The First Emperor unifies China
- 58 **Thus perish all tyrants**
The assassination of Julius Caesar

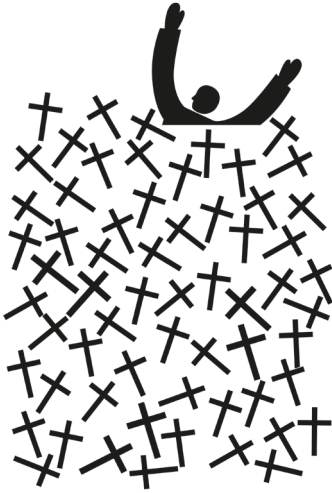


- 66 **By this sign conquer**
The Battle of Milvian Bridge
- 68 **The city which had taken the whole world was itself taken**
The Sack of Rome
- 70 **Further events**

THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

500–1492

- 76 **Seek to enlarge the empire and make it more glorious**
Belisarius retakes Rome
- 78 **Truth has come and falsehood has vanished**
Muhammad receives the divine revelation
- 82 **A leader in whose shadow the Christian nation is at peace**
The crowning of Charlemagne
- 84 **The ruler is wealthy but the state is destroyed**
The An Lushan revolt
- 86 **A surge in spirit and an awakening in intelligence**
The founding of Baghdad
- 94 **Never before has such a terror appeared in Britain**
The Viking raid on Lindisfarne
- 96 **The Roman church has never erred**
The Investiture Controversy



- 98 A man destined to become master of the state**
Minamoto Yoritomo becomes Shogun
- 100 That men in our kingdom shall have and keep all these liberties, rights, and concessions**
The signing of the Magna Carta
- 102 The most potent man, as regards forces and lands and treasure, that exists in the world**
Kublai Khan conquers the Song
- 104 I did not tell half of what I saw, for I knew I would not be believed**
Marco Polo reaches Shangdu
- 106 Those who until now have been mercenaries for a few coins achieve eternal rewards**
The fall of Jerusalem
- 108 The work of giants**
The construction of Angkor Wat
- 110 He left no court emir nor royal office holder without the gift of a load of gold**
Mansa Musa's *hajj* to Mecca
- 112 Give the sun the blood of enemies to drink**
The foundation of Tenochtitlan
- 118 Scarce the tenth person of any sort was left alive**
The outbreak of the Black Death in Europe
- 120 I have worked to discharge heaven's will**
Hongwu founds the Ming dynasty
- 128 Cast down the adversaries of my Christian people**
The fall of Granada
- 130 I have newly devised 28 letters**
King Sejong introduces a new script
- 132 Further events**
-
- THE EARLY MODERN ERA**
1420–1795
-
- 138 As my city falls, I shall fall with it**
The fall of Constantinople
- 142 Following the light of the sun we left the Old World**
Christopher Columbus reaches America
- 148 This line shall be considered as a perpetual mark and bound**
The Treaty of Tordesillas
- 152 The ancients never raised their buildings so high**
The beginning of the Italian Renaissance
- 156 War has become very different**
The Battle of Castillon
- 158 As different from ours as day and night**
The Columbian Exchange
- 160 My conscience is captive to the Word of God**
Martin Luther's 95 theses
- 164 He began war in Bohemia, which he subjugated and forced into his religion**
The Defenestration of Prague
- 170 Royalty is a remedy for the spirit of rebellion**
The conquests of Akbar the Great
- 172 They cherished a great hope and inward zeal**
The voyage of the *Mayflower*
- 174 We will cut off his head with the crown upon it**
The execution of Charles I
- 176 The very being of the plantations depends upon the supply of Negro servants**
The formation of the Royal African Company
- 180 There is no corner where one does not of talk shares**
The opening of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange
- 184 After victory, tighten the cords of your helmet**
The Battle of Sekigahara
- 186 Use barbarians to control barbarians**
The Revolt of the Three Feudatories

188 I have in this treatise cultivated mathematics so far as it regards philosophy
Newton publishes *Principia*

189 As far as I think it possible for man to go
The voyages of Captain Cook

190 I am the state
Louis XIV begins personal rule of France

191 Don't forget your great guns, the most respectable arguments of the rights of kings
The Battle of Quebec

192 Assemble all the knowledge scattered on the surface of the earth
Diderot publishes the *Encyclopédie*

196 I built St. Petersburg as a window to let in the light of Europe
The founding of St. Petersburg

198 Further events

CHANGING SOCIETIES

1776–1914

204 We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal
The signing of the Declaration of Independence

208 Sire, it's a revolution
The storming of the Bastille

214 I must make of all the peoples of Europe one people, and of Paris the capital of the world
The Battle of Waterloo



216 Let us lay the cornerstone of American freedom without fear. To hesitate is to perish
Bolívar establishes Gran Colombia

220 Life without industry is guilt
Stephenson's *Rocket* enters service

226 You may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say you did not know
The Slave Trade Abolition Act

228 Society was cut in two
The 1848 revolutions

230 This enterprise will return immense rewards
The construction of the Suez Canal

236 Endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved
Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*

238 Let us arm. Let us fight for our brothers
The Expedition of the Thousand

242 These sad scenes of death and sorrow, when are they to come to an end?
The Siege of Lucknow

243 Better to abolish serfdom from above, than to wait for it to abolish itself from below
Russia emancipates the serfs

244 Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth
The Gettysburg Address

248 Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent
The California Gold Rush

250 America is God's crucible, the greatest melting pot
The opening of Ellis Island

252 Enrich the country, strengthen the military
The Meiji Restoration

254 In my hand I wield the universe and the power to attack and kill
The Second Opium War

256 I ought to be jealous of the Eiffel Tower. She is more famous than I am
The opening of the Eiffel Tower

258 If I could, I would annex other planets
The Berlin Conference

260 My people are going to learn the principles of democracy, the dictates of truth, and the teachings of science
The Young Turk Revolution

262 Deeds not words
The death of Emily Davison

264 Further events

THE MODERN WORLD

1914–PRESENT

- 270 You often wish you were dead**
The Battle of Passchendaele
- 276 History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now**
The October Revolution
- 280 This is not peace. This is an armistice for 20 years**
The Treaty of Versailles
- 281 Death is the solution to all problems. No man—no problem**
Stalin assumes power
- 282 Any lack of confidence in the economic future of the United States is foolish**
The Wall Street Crash
- 284 The truth is that men are tired of liberty**
The Reichstag Fire
- 286 In starting and waging a war, it is not right that matters but victory**
Nazi invasion of Poland
- 294 The Final Solution of the Jewish Question**
The Wannsee Conference
- 296 All we did was fly and sleep**
The Berlin Airlift
- 298 At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom**
Indian independence and partition
- 302 The name of our state shall be Israel**
The establishment of Israel
- 304 The Long March is a manifesto, a propaganda force, a seeding-machine**
The Long March
- 306 Ghana, your beloved country, is free forever**
Nkrumah wins Ghanaian independence
- 308 We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked**
The Cuban Missile Crisis
- 310 People of the whole world are pointing to the satellite**
The launch of *Sputnik*
- 311 I have a dream**
The March on Washington
- 312 I am not going to lose Vietnam**
The Gulf of Tonkin Incident
- 314 A revolution is not a bed of roses**
The Bay of Pigs invasion
- 316 Scatter the old world, build the new**
The Cultural Revolution
- 318 We shall defend it with our blood and strength, and we shall meet aggression with aggression and evil with evil**
The Suez Crisis
- 322 The Iron Curtain is swept aside**
The fall of the Berlin Wall
- 324 All power to the people**
The 1968 protests
- 325 Never, never, and never again**
The release of Nelson Mandela
- 326 Create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life**
The Siege of Sarajevo
- 327 Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack**
The 9/11 attacks
- 328 You affect the world by what you browse**
The launch of the first website
- 330 A crisis that began in the mortgage markets of America has brought the world's financial system close to collapse**
The global financial crisis
- 334 This is a day about our entire human family**
Global population exceeds 7 billion
- 340 Further events**
- 342 GLOSSARY**
- 344 INDEX**
- 351 QUOTE ATTRIBUTIONS**
- 352 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**



INTRODU

CTION





The ultimate aim of history is human self-knowledge. In the words of 20th-century historian R. G. Collingwood: “The value of history is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.” We cannot hope to understand our lives without it.

History itself has a history. From earliest times, all societies—literate or pre-literate—told stories about their origins or their past, usually imaginative tales centering around the acts of gods and heroes. The first literate civilizations also kept records of the actions of their rulers, inscribed on clay tablets or on the walls of palaces and temples. But at first these ancient societies made no attempt at a systematic inquiry

into the truth of the past; they did not differentiate between what had really happened and the events manifest in myth and legend.

Ancient historical narrative

It was the Ancient Greek writers Herodotus and Thucydides in the 5th century BCE who first explored questions about the past through the collection and interpretation of evidence—the word “history,” first used by Herodotus, means “inquiry” in Greek. Herodotus’s work still contained a considerable mixture of myth, but Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian War satisfies most criteria of modern historical study. It was based on interviews with eyewitnesses of the conflict and attributed events to human agency rather than the intervention and actions of the gods.

Thucydides had invented one of the most durable forms of history: the detailed narrative of war and political conflict, diplomacy, and decision-making. The subsequent rise of Rome to dominance of the Mediterranean world encouraged historians to develop another genre of broader scope: the account of “how we got to where we are today.” The Hellenic historian Polybius (200–118 BCE) and the Roman historian Livy (59 BCE–17 CE) both

sought to create a narrative of the rise of Rome—a “big picture” that would help to make sense of events on a large timescale. Although restricted to the Roman world, this was the beginning of what is sometimes called “universal history,” which attempts to describe progress from earliest origins to the present as a story with a goal, giving the past apparent purpose and direction.

At the same period in China, historian Sima Qian (c.145–86 BCE) was similarly tracing Chinese history over thousands of years, from the legendary Yellow Emperor (c.2697 BCE) to the Han dynasty under Emperor Wu (c.109 BCE).

Moral lessons

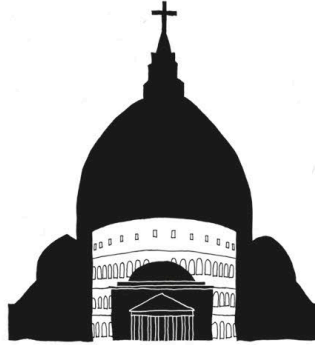
As well as making sense of events through narratives, historians in the ancient world established the tradition of history as a source of moral lessons and reflections. The history writing of Livy or Tacitus (56–117 CE), for instance, was in part designed to examine the behavior of heroes and villains, meditating on the strengths and weaknesses in the characters of emperors and generals, providing exemplars for the virtuous to imitate or shun. This continues to be one of the functions of history. French chronicler Jean Froissart (1337–1405) said he had

“

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

George Santayana
The Life of Reason (1905)

”



written his accounts of chivalrous knights fighting in the Hundred Years' War "so that brave men should be inspired thereby to follow such examples." Today, historical studies of Lincoln, Churchill, Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, Jr. perform the same function.

The "Dark Ages"

The rise of Christianity in the late Roman Empire fundamentally changed the concept of history in Europe. Historical events came to be viewed by Christians as divine providence, or the working out of God's will. Skeptical inquiry into what actually happened was usually neglected, and accounts of miracles and martyrdoms were generally accepted as true without question. The Muslim world, in this as in other ways, was frequently more sophisticated than Christendom in Medieval times, with the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) railing against the blind, uncritical acceptance of fanciful accounts of events that could not be verified.

Neither Christian nor Muslim historians produced a work on the scale of the chronicle of Chinese history published under the Song dynasty in 1085, which recorded Chinese history spanning almost 1,400 years and filled 294 volumes.

Renaissance Humanism

Whatever the undoubted merits of other civilizations' traditions of history writing, it was in Western Europe that modern historiography evolved. The Renaissance—which began in Italy in the 15th century, then spread throughout Europe lasting until the end of the 16th century in some areas—centered upon the rediscovery of the past. Renaissance thinkers found a fertile source of inspiration in classical antiquity, in areas as diverse as architecture, philosophy, politics, and military tactics. The humanist scholars of the Renaissance period declared history one of the principal subjects in their new educational curriculum, and the antiquary

became a familiar figure in elite circles, rummaging among ancient ruins and building up collections of old coins and inscriptions. At the same time, the spread of printing made history available to a much wider audience than ever before.

The Enlightenment

By the 18th century in Europe, the methodology of history—which consisted of ascertaining facts by criticizing and comparing historical sources—had reached a fair level of sophistication. European thinkers had reached general agreement on the division of the past into three main periods: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. This periodization was at root a value judgment, with the Medieval period, dominated by the Church, viewed as a time of irrationality and barbarism and separating the dignified world of the ancient civilizations from the newly emerging, rational universe of modern Europe. Enlightenment philosophers wrote histories that ridiculed the follies of the past.

The Romantic spirit

In stark contrast, the Romantic movement that swept across Europe from the late 18th century found an intrinsic value in the difference between the past and the present. »

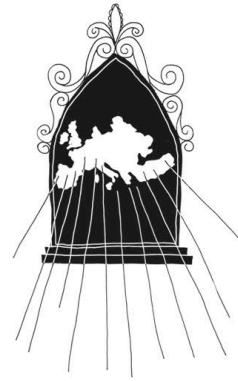
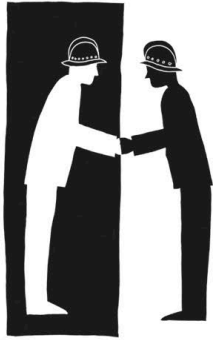


To live with men of
an earlier age is like
travelling in foreign lands.

René Descartes

Discourse on Method (1637)





The Romantics drew inspiration from the Middle Ages, and instead of seeing the past as a preparation for the modern world, as had previously been the case, Romantic historians tried the imaginative exercise of entering into the spirit of past ages. Much of this was associated with nationalism. The German Romantic thinker Johann Gottfried Herder (1774–1803) burrowed into the past in search of roots of national identity and an authentic “German spirit.” As nationalism triumphed in Europe in the 19th century, much of history became a celebration of national characteristics and national heroes, often veering into myth-making. Every country wanted to have its sacred heroic history, just as it had its flag and its national anthem.

The “Grand Narrative”

In the 19th century, history became increasingly important and took on the quality of destiny. Arrogantly, European civilization saw itself as the goal to which all history had been progressing and constructed narratives that made sense of the past in those terms. The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) articulated a grand scheme of history as a logical development, which culminated in the end point of the Prussian state.

Philosopher and social revolutionary Karl Marx (1818–83) later adapted Hegel’s scheme into his own theory (“historical materialism”), in which he claimed that economic progress, which caused conflict between the social classes, would inevitably one day result in the proletariat seizing power from the bourgeoisie, while the capitalist world order collapsed under its own inner contradictions. Arguably, Marxism was to prove the most influential and durable of all historical “grand narratives.”

Like other areas of knowledge, in the 19th century history underwent professionalization and it became an academic discipline. Academic history aspired to the status of a science, and the

accumulation of “facts” was its avowed purpose. A gap opened up between “serious” history—often heavy on economic statistics—and the colorful literary works of popular historians, such as Jules Michelet (1798–1874) and Thomas Macaulay (1800–59).

The rise of social history

In the 20th century, the subject matter of history—which had always focused on kings, queens, prime ministers, presidents, and generals—increasingly expanded to embrace the common people, whose role in historical events became accessible through more in-depth research. Some historians (initially those in France) chose to disregard the “history of events” altogether, preferring instead to study social structures and the patterns of everyday life, beliefs, and ways of thinking (“mentalités”) of ordinary people in different historical periods.

A Eurocentric approach

Broadly speaking, until the second half of the 20th century, most world history was written as the story of the triumph of Western civilization. This approach was as implicit in Marxist versions of history as in those histories that celebrated the

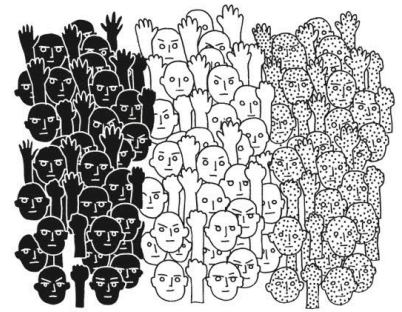


History is little more than the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.

Edward Gibbon

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776)





progress of technology, enterprise, and liberal democracy. It did not necessarily imply optimism—there were numerous prophets of decline and doom. But it did suggest that essentially history had been made, and was still being made, by Europe and European offshoots further afield. For instance, it was deemed acceptable for respected European historians to maintain that black Africa had no significant history at all, having failed to contribute to the onward march of humanity.

Postcolonial revisionism

In the course of the second half of the 20th century, the notion of a single, purposeful, historical “grand narrative” collapsed, taking Eurocentrism with it. The postcolonial, postmodernist world was seen as requiring a multiplicity of histories told from the point of view of many different social identities. There was a surge of interest in the study of black history, women’s history, and gay history, as well as histories narrated from an Asian, African, or American Indian standpoint. The marginal and oppressed in society were reassessed as “agents” of history rather than passive victims.

A riot of revisionism upturned much of the history of the world as commonly known to educated

people in the West, although often without putting any satisfactory alternative version in place of the old. For example, the puzzlement that resulted can be seen in the response to the 500th anniversary in 1992 of Christopher Columbus’s first voyage to the Americas. It would once have been expected to excite widespread celebration in the United States, but was in practice acknowledged with some embarrassment, if at all. People are no longer sure what to think about traditional history, its Great Men, and its epoch-making events.

A 21st-century perspective

The content of *The History Book* reflects this abandonment of “grand narratives” of human progress. It aims to present a general reader with an overview of world history through specific moments, or events, which can act as windows upon selected areas of the past. In line with contemporary concerns, this book also reflects the long-term importance of key factors such as population growth, climate, and the environment throughout human history. At the same time, it gives an account of matters of traditional popular historical interest, such as the Magna Carta, the Black Death, and the American Civil War.

The book begins with the origins of humans and “pre-history” and then progresses through different historical ages to the present day. In reality of course there were no such clear breaks between epochs, and where there is an overlap on dates, entries are included in the most appropriate ideological era.

As this book illustrates, history is a process rather than a series of unconnected events. We can only speculate on how the events we experience today will shape the history of tomorrow. No one in the early 21st century can possibly claim to make sense of history, but it remains the fundamental discipline for anyone who believes, as the poet Alexander Pope did, that “the proper study of Mankind is Man.” ■

“

We are not makers of history.

We are made by history.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

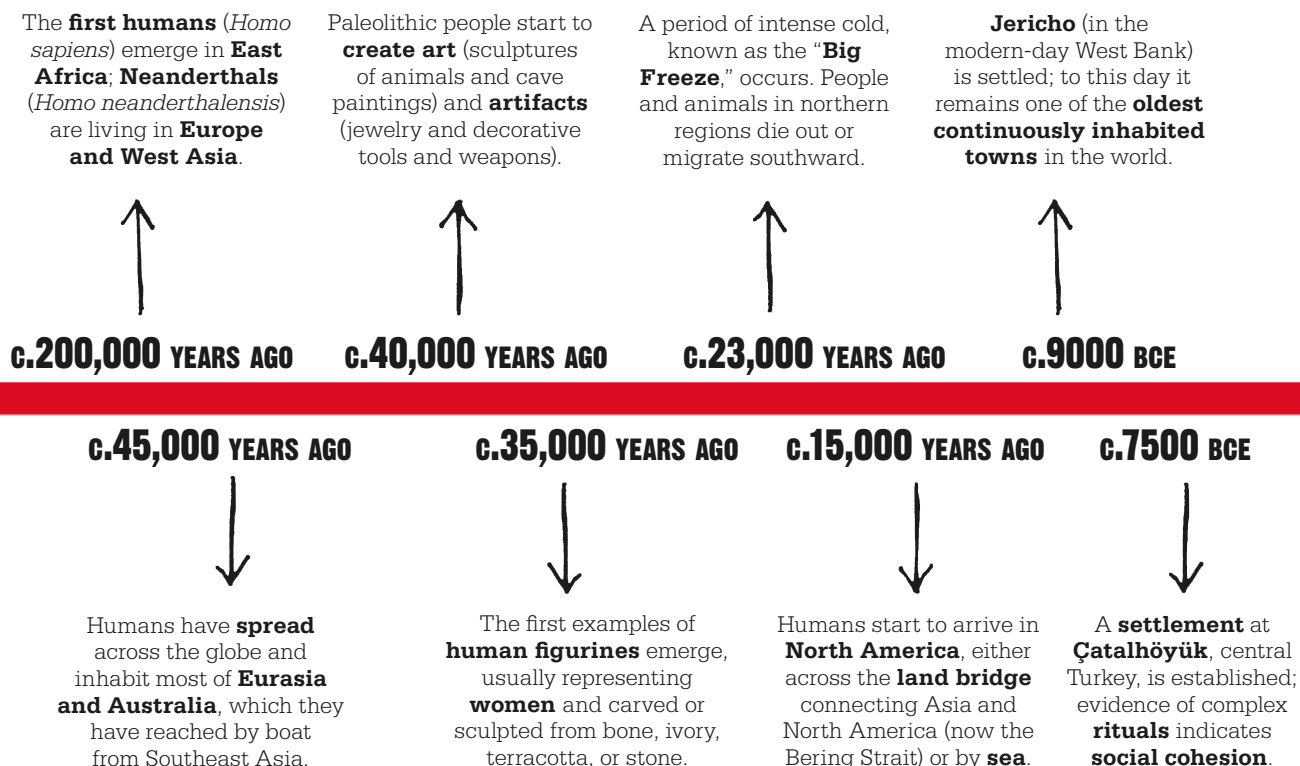
Strength to Love (1963)

”

HUMAN 0
200,000 YEARS

RIGINS

AGO—3500 BCE



It is widely believed that the origins of the human race lie in Africa. By the usual processes of biological evolution and natural selection, the genus *Homo* evolved in East Africa over millions of years alongside the chimpanzees, its near relatives. By the same biological processes, *Homo sapiens*—modern humans—evolved alongside other hominins (the relatives of humans, including Neanderthals, who died out 40,000 years ago).

About 100,000 years ago or so, the scattered bands of hunting and foraging humans would have been almost indistinguishable from the other great apes. But at some point (precisely when is hard to define) humans began to change in a new way, not by the process of biological evolution but by cultural evolution. They developed the ability to alter

their way of life through the creation of tools, languages, beliefs, social customs, and art. By the time they were painting exquisite pictures of animals on the walls of caves and carving or sculpting figurines out of stone or bone, they had marked themselves out uniquely from other animals. Their transformation was slow in the early years, but it was set to gather incredible momentum over millennia. Humans had become the only animals with a history.

Discovering history

The early development of human cultures and societies presents a particular problem to historians. The first writing was not invented until quite late in the human story—about 5,000 years ago. Traditionally, the period before writing tended to be dismissed as “pre-history,” since

it left no documents for historians to study. However, in recent years a wide range of new scientific methods—including the study of genetic material and radiocarbon dating of organic remains—have been added to the long-established techniques of archaeology, enabling scholars to shine at least a flickering light upon the pre-literate era.

The narrative of the distant human past is under constant revision as new discoveries and research—its findings frequently disputed—create radical shifts in perspective. The fresh investigation of a single cave, a burial site, or a human skull can still throw large areas of accepted knowledge into question. However, in the 21st century much of the history of early humans can be described with a reasonable degree of confidence.

There is evidence of **copper smelting** in Serbia and the **wheel** is invented in the Near East, probably for the production of pottery rather than for transport.

The **Bronze Age** begins in the **Near East**, and the **Indus Valley Civilization** emerges on the Indian subcontinent.

Cuneiform script, one of the world's **oldest** writing system, is invented in **Sumer**, in southern Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq).

Stones are raised at Britain's **Stonehenge**, at the center of an earthwork enclosure constructed 500 years previously; the stones are later rearranged.



c.5000 BCE



c.3300 BCE



c.3000 BCE



c.2500 BCE

c.4000 BCE



Civilizations develop in **Mesopotamia**, in the Tigris–Euphrates valley (modern-day Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait), where **irrigated agriculture** is established.

c.3100 BCE



Narmer **unifies** Upper and Lower **Egypt**, becoming king of the **First Dynasty**; Egyptian **hieroglyphs** are prevalent.

c.2700 BCE



The first stone **pyramids** are constructed as monumental **tombs** in **Egypt**; the Great Pyramid of Giza is built two centuries later.

c.1800 BCE



Alphabetic writing (Proto-Sinaitic script, based on hieroglyphs) **emerges in Egypt**; it is the ancestor of most modern alphabets.

Nomadic hunter-gatherers

All historians agree that until about 12,000 years ago humans were hunter-gatherers, using stone tools and living in small, mobile groups. This period is referred to as the Paleolithic Era (or Old Stone Age). Humans were a successful species, expanding their numbers to perhaps 10 million and spreading to most parts of the Earth. Generally, they adapted well to the major natural climate changes that occurred over tens of thousands of years, although they were temporarily driven out of northerly areas, such as Britain and Scandinavia, during the coldest phase of what is popularly known as the Ice Age.

Humans existed in an intimate relationship with their natural environment, but their effect on that environment even at this early

stage was not necessarily benign. There is a disturbing coincidence between the spread of human hunters across the planet and the extinction of megafauna such as woolly mammoths and mastodons. Although human hunting is far from being identified as the sole cause of these extinctions—natural climate change may well have been a contributing factor—from our modern perspective they can seem to set a troubling precedent.

The farming revolution

The hunter-gatherer lifestyle, which can reasonably be described as “natural” to human beings, appears to have had much to recommend it. Examination of human remains from early hunter-gatherer societies has suggested that our ancestors usually enjoyed abundant food,

obtainable without excessive effort, and suffered very few diseases. If this is true, it is not clear what then motivated so many human beings all over the world to settle in permanent villages and develop agriculture, growing crops and domesticating animals: cultivating fields was grindingly hard work, and it was in farming villages that epidemic diseases first took root.

Whatever its immediate effect on the quality of life for humans, the development of settlements and agriculture indisputably led to a high increase in population density. Sometimes known as the Neolithic Revolution (or New Stone Age), this period was a major turning point in human development, opening the way to the growth of the first towns and cities, and eventually leading to settled “civilizations.” ■



AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS COLUMBUS'S JOURNEY TO AMERICA OR THE APOLLO 11 EXPEDITION

THE FIRST HUMANS ARRIVE IN AUSTRALIA
(c.60,000–45,000 YEARS AGO)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Migration

BEFORE

c.200,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* (modern human) evolves in Africa.

c.125,000–45,000 years ago Groups of *Homo sapiens* expand out of Africa.

AFTER

c.50,000–30,000 years ago Denisovan hominins are present in south-central Russia.

45,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* arrives in Europe.

c.40,000 years ago The Neanderthals die out. Their last known sites are on the Iberian peninsula.

c.18,000 years ago *Homo floresiensis* fossils date from this time.

c.13,000 years ago Humans are present near Clovis, New Mexico, but may not be the continent's first humans.

Homo sapiens evolves in Africa.

Homo sapiens spreads into the **Near East** but retreats to Africa, only later reaching **Europe and western Asia**.

After moving into **southern Asia**, *Homo sapiens* groups follow the coastline to **Southeast Asia**.

In western Eurasia, *Homo sapiens* encounters **other hominin species**, the **Neanderthals and Denisovans**.

***Homo sapiens* arrives in Australia.**

All hominin species except *Homo sapiens* **die out**.

Modern humans are the only truly global mammal species. Since evolving in Africa around 200,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* has rapidly expanded across the world—testament to our species' curiosity in exploring its surroundings and creativity in adapting to different habitats. In

particular, many researchers think that humans' ability to exploit coastal environments was key to their rapid spread along the southern coasts of Asia.

Even the radically different flora and fauna of Australia proved no barrier; humans may have arrived on the continent as early as 60,000

See also: Cave paintings at Altamira 22–27 ■ The Big Freeze 28–29 ■ The settlement at Çatalhöyük 30–31



Remains of *Homo floresiensis* were found on the Indonesian island of Flores in 2003. Some studies suggest that its small size was due to disease rather than indicating a new species.

years ago, although the earliest dates are controversial. Small groups may have visited much earlier, but the bulk of the evidence suggests widespread colonization of Australia only around 45,000 years ago, at much the same time as *Homo sapiens* arrived in Europe.

Other hominin species

Homo sapiens was the first hominin to arrive in Australia. However, in parts of Eurasia, humans did face

competition. By the time humans reached Europe, Neanderthals had already been there for around 250,000 years, having evolved from an ancestor they shared with modern humans, *Homo heidelbergensis*, and they were well adapted to life in the region.

Further east, at Denisova Cave in Russia's Altai Mountains, there is evidence of a mysterious species—the Denisovans—known only from their DNA. And on the island of Flores in Southeast Asia, fossils of another possible species—the short, small-brained *Homo floresiensis*—date from just 18,000 years ago, although some researchers believe these were simply modern humans afflicted with some form of disease.

Of all these species, *Homo sapiens* is the only one to have survived and gone on to colonize the New World. Beringia, a land-bridge between Russia and Alaska, exposed when sea levels dropped as a result of the Ice Age, allowed humans to reach the Americas from northeast Asia. The exact date remains controversial: stone tools

“

The human blitzkrieg across America testifies to the incomparable ingenuity and the unsurpassed adaptability of *Homo sapiens*.

Yuval Noah Harari
Sapiens (2011)

”

from the c.13,000-year-old “Clovis culture” were once thought to have belonged to the earliest humans in the New World. Older sites are now known, but many of the earlier dates, particularly in South America, remain highly contentious.

The social network

Until more evidence is found, the fates of the Denisovans and *Homo floresiensis* remain unknown, while the most recent research suggests Neanderthals died out around 40,000 years ago. Many researchers believe the resourcefulness of *Homo sapiens* was crucial to its success in other species' home territories in the face of climate change around the time of the Last Glacial Maximum. In particular, it is thought that they could also rely on more extensive social networks than those other species—an asset that would have proved crucial both to survival in lean times and to helping them colonize the unfamiliar environments they encountered as they expanded across the globe, perhaps following animal herds. ■

***Homo sapiens*: the only remaining hominin**

There is no evidence of violence between humans and other species. Indeed, modern human DNA shows small traces of Neanderthal and Denisovan genes, suggesting that a few individuals from each species interbred, albeit rarely.

Although Neanderthals were skilled manufacturers of stone tools and excellent hunters, modern humans may have been quicker to adapt, and therefore better able to cope with the rapid climatic changes occurring

as the Ice Age progressed. They developed new stone tools, as well as techniques that made use of resources such as bone and antler. They also established extensive networks of support, enabling various groups to pool resources across large distances, enhancing their chances of survival. This cultural adaptability may have been what allowed humans to outcompete their cousins for access to increasingly unpredictable resources.



**EVERYTHING WAS SO
BEAUTIFUL,
SO FRESH**

**CAVE PAINTINGS AT ALTAMIRA
(c.40,000 YEARS AGO)**





IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Paleolithic culture

BEFORE

c.45,000 years ago Modern humans arrive in Europe.

c.40,000 years ago The earliest currently known examples of art in Europe are made, such as the sculpture of the Lion Man of Hohlenstein-Stadel, Germany.

AFTER

c.26,000 years ago

A triple burial is carried out at Dolní Věstonice, in the Czech Republic.

c.23,500 years ago The Arene Candide “prince” is buried in Italy, richly adorned with dentalium shell jewelry.

c.18,000 years ago The last Ice Age reaches its height.

The Altamira cave complex, near Santander on the northern coast of Spain, comprises a series of passages and chambers extending for nearly 984ft (300m) that boast some of the best examples of Stone Age, or Paleolithic, cave art yet discovered. So impressive are the paintings that when the cave was discovered in 1880, they were widely considered fakes and took nearly 20 years to be accepted as the genuine creations of prehistoric hunter-gatherers. Some of the early artistic activity here may date from more than 35,000 years ago, although most of the famous paintings were probably created much later, around 22,000 years ago. These include the images in the famous Bison Chamber: here the low ceiling is covered in representations of animals including multicolored, lifelike images of bison, expertly painted across the natural undulations of the rock in such a way as to make them appear almost three-dimensional.

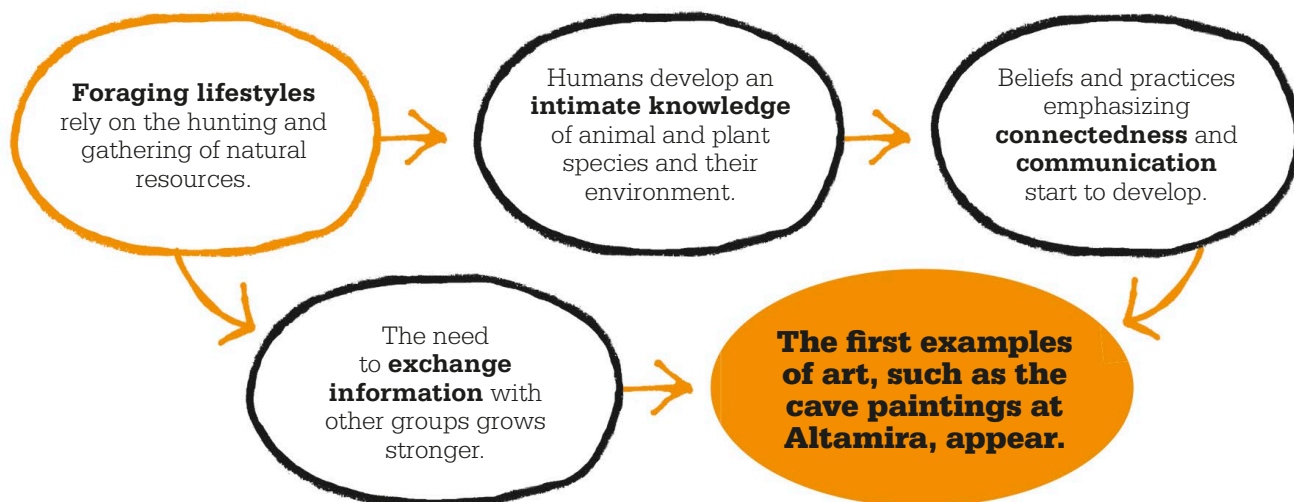
The artistic impetus

Other stunning displays of cave art are also known, concentrated in southwest France and northern

Spain. They include not only finely detailed images of animals, but also engraved and painted signs, symbols, and handprints. Archaeologists remain divided over the meaning and function of Stone Age art. One explanation is simply that these people appreciated the aesthetic qualities of art—just as their descendants do today. Others suggest that the incredible detail of some of the images—the sex of the animal or the season in which it was observed can still be determined, for example—may mean the paintings were a means of conveying vital survival information, such as which animals to hunt, and when and how they could be found and targeted.

Hunting rituals

Alternatively, cave art might be linked to the world views or religions of Paleolithic people. Even today, many societies still living mainly by hunting and gathering share animistic beliefs, meaning they believe entities such as animals, plants, and parts of the landscape have spirits with which humans interact during their daily life. Many such societies' religious specialists, or shamans, believe



See also: The first humans arrive in Australia 20–21 ■ The Big Freeze 28–29 ■ The settlement at Çatalhöyük 30–31



The undulating structure of the rock cave at Altamira enhances, rather than detracts from, the art, with the animals in the Bison Chamber acquiring an almost three-dimensional quality.

with only a lamp filled with animal fat might have been a form of initiation test for young people—one that would have required a great deal of courage to endure.

Burials and the afterlife

More evidence of human beings engaging in religious or ritual practices at this time comes from burials. At the site of Dolní Věstonice, in the Czech Republic, for example, three bodies were buried together in a sexually suggestive pose, with one of the male individuals flanking a female skeleton reaching toward her pelvis, and the male on the other side buried face down. A red pigment known as ochre had been sprinkled across their heads and across the female's pelvis. Interestingly, all three individuals »

they are able to communicate with these spirits to help sick or injured people, and historically, rock art has been created by shamans during states of altered consciousness, or trances, as part of this communication, leading some researchers to suggest that Paleolithic societies may have had similar beliefs. Shamans are

also often thought to be able to transform themselves into animals to encourage them to give themselves up to the hunter, which could also explain depictions combining human and animal characteristics, such as the Lion Man of Hohlenstein-Stadel, in Germany, or the Sorcerer of Les Trois Frères Cave in France, a human-like figure with antlers.

Creating images of animals may have also been part of “magic” rituals designed to improve the chances of success during hunting. For societies dependent on animal resources for a significant part of their diet, the importance of such rituals cannot be overstated.

Initiation ceremonies

Other researchers have noted that many of the handprints and footprints found beside the art in the caves seem to belong to quite young individuals. Traveling down into dark, damp, and potentially dangerous caves



Handprints in the cave of Fuente del Salín, in Spain's Cantabria region, were probably left by youngsters, suggesting that venturing underground might have been a coming-of-age ritual.



People everywhere and throughout time have shared the basic instinct to represent themselves and their world through images and symbols.

Jill Cook
Ice Age Art (2013)



share the same rare skeletal deformities and may therefore have been related. Although the reasons why these bodies were arranged this way will probably always be a mystery, it is clear that there was more to this burial than just the functional disposal of remains.

At other sites, some individuals were buried with many “grave goods”—for example, the complex jewelry made from dentalium shells at Arene Candide, in Italy, and the striking spears fashioned from mammoth ivory at the burial site of two young children in Sunghir, in Russia. Some researchers have suggested that these richly adorned individuals—especially the young ones, who would not have had time in their short life to establish a reputation that might account for special treatment in death—imply that hierarchies and status distinctions were beginning to develop in some groups. However, they do not appear to have become

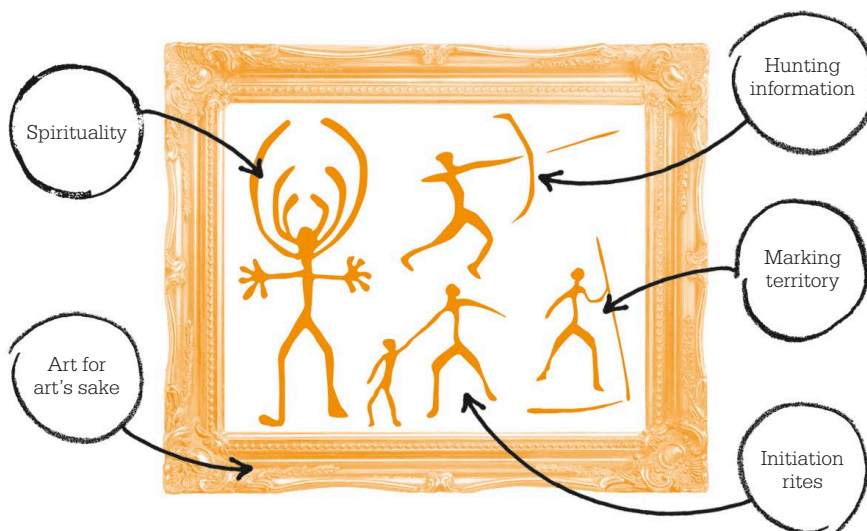
widespread until much later. It is clear, however, that for the first time, people were now increasingly concerned with what happened after death, and about how the dead should enter into the afterlife.

Marking territory

Other researchers note that most “classic” Paleolithic cave art is concentrated in southwest France and northern Spain. This region would have been a relatively favorable place to live: even at the height of the Last Glacial Maximum, more southerly, warmer climates and hence more productive habitats attracted dense herds of animals. As a result, people may have lived here in fairly large numbers, packed closely together, leading to greater social tensions among groups vying for territory and resources.

Just as human groups today—whether it be football supporters or nation states—use symbols such as flags, costumes, and markings of

Historians are still unsure whether or not there are precise meanings behind the majority of cave art. Their best guesses are that they may relate to any one or more of several possibilities: art for art’s sake; spirituality; initiation rites; the marking of territory; and a method of imparting valuable information about hunting.



“

People thought of themselves as part of a living world, where animals, plants, and even landmarks and inanimate objects had lives of their own.

Brian Fagan
Cro-Magnon (2010)

”

borders, territories, and group identities, so European Paleolithic groups may have decorated caves for similar reasons at a time when there was the potential for intense competition for resources.

Cooperation to survive

Such complex social interactions may help explain how *Homo sapiens* was able to survive in the harsh environments of Ice Age Europe. Hunter-gatherers probably lived in small groups scattered at relatively low densities across the landscape. Most archaeological sites from this time do not demonstrate any evidence of complex buildings or structures, suggesting that people moved around a lot, according to the weather and the local environment, often following large herds of animals like reindeer as they migrated with the seasons.

Homo sapiens' ability to forge new relationships readily allowed groups of hunters to combine as and when necessary. When resources were plentiful, they would hunt together—for example, intercepting migrating herds of reindeer at places in the landscape where they were most vulnerable, such as in



narrow valleys or at river crossings. In leaner times, these groups would split up again and range far across the landscape to find enough wild resources to sustain themselves.

Early technologies

These hunter-gatherers expended considerable effort on hunting technology, since it could spell the difference between life and death. They hafted elaborately worked stone tips on to spears that were then launched at the target using atlatls, or spear-throwers, designed to increase the distance

over which a spear could travel and the force with which it hit its target. These tools were crucial to hunting success, so it is no surprise that some of these atlatls were beautifully carved and decorated, often with representations of the animals being hunted. Similarly, they also painstakingly carved complex barbed harpoons from bone and antler for fishing.

First seeds of a society

Delicately worked bone awls and needles suggest Stone Age humans also made warm clothes out of

Hunting tools, such as this spear-thrower, were often carved in the shape of the animals they were used to kill, probably as a sort of “magic ritual” to improve chances of success in the hunt.

animal skin and fur with much more care than their predecessors, and they made many other items—from jewelry finely crafted from animal teeth and shell, to figurines carved from stone or sculpted from clay. Many of these may also have been traded, gifted, or exchanged with individuals from other groups as part of large-scale social networks.

The unpredictable environments of Europe during the Last Glacial Maximum meant sharing resources with other groups in times of plenty could pay off significantly at a later date: if a group struggled to find resources in one area, others elsewhere who had previously benefited from their generosity would be more inclined to return the favor. These kinds of exchange relationships probably linked even very far-flung groups together into complex networks of individual and group relationships that were fundamental to survival in such a tough environment. ■

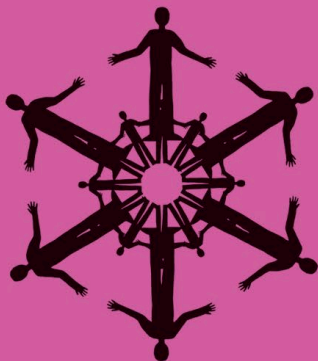
Venus figurines



Figurines of women carved or sculpted from stone, ivory, or clay are a type of Paleolithic art found widely across Europe. These figurines share many striking similarities. While details such as facial features and feet are largely ignored, feminine sexual characteristics (breasts, belly, hips, thighs, and vulva) are often exaggerated. The focus on features related to sexuality and fertility, and the round body shapes depicted (during the Ice Age fat would have been a precious commodity) suggest that the figurines may

have played a symbolic role as a charm relating to childbirth or, more generally, fertility.

Some researchers believe that the figures represent a “mother goddess,” but there is no real evidence for such an interpretation. Others have focused instead on the fact that the figurines demonstrate widely shared cultural ideas and symbols. These would have been crucial to social interactions and exchanges of resources, information, and potential marriage partners in the Ice Age world.



THE FOUNDATIONS OF TODAY'S EUROPE WERE FORGED IN THE EVENTS OF THE LATE ICE AGE

THE BIG FREEZE (c.21000 BCE)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Climate change

BEFORE

c.2.58 million years ago

The Pleistocene, or Ice Age, begins.

c.200,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* emerges as a species.

AFTER

c.9700 BCE The Pleistocene ends, marking the beginning of today's relatively warm and stable climates—the Holocene.

c.9000–8000 BCE Agriculture becomes established in the Near East.

c.5000 BCE Sea level reaches near-modern levels; low-lying land is submerged.

c.2000 BCE The last mammoths are thought to have died out, on Wrangel Island, Russia.

Climate change results from shifts in the earth's position and orientation relative to the sun.

The Big Freeze expands ice caps, lowering sea levels.

Habitats change, and plant and animal species' ranges alter for survival.

Animals and humans colonize **newly exposed low-lying land**, only to be isolated when sea levels rise again.

Human groups are faced with **new opportunities** and constraints.

Scientists have only recently begun to appreciate how the two-way relationship that exists between humans and our environments has affected the development of our societies. Humans evolved during the last Ice Age, living through periodic shifts between very cold climatic conditions (glacials) and warmer periods more like those of today

(interglacials). However, toward the end of the Ice Age, these shifts became more pronounced and occurred at shorter intervals, culminating around 21000 BCE in a "Big Freeze," a period of intense cold known as the Last Glacial Maximum. People and animals living in northern regions died out or retreated south as ice caps expanded to reach southern

See also: The first humans arrive in Australia 20–21 ■ Cave paintings at Altamira 22–27 ■ The settlement at Çatalhöyük 30–31 ■ The Law Code of Hammurabi 36–37



An entire mammoth was unearthed in Siberia, Russia, in 1900—the first complete example ever found. A cast of it is on display in St. Petersburg’s Natural History Museum.

England. Such huge amounts of sea water froze that sea levels dropped, exposing low-lying land such as Beringia, the continental shelf that connects North America and Asia—and the route by which humans first reached the Americas.

Rising temperatures

Temperatures eventually rose again, and today’s relatively warm and stable climate had become established by around 7000 BCE. The ice caps melted, and rising sea levels separated Eurasia from the Americas, turned Southeast Asia into an archipelago, and made islands out of peninsulas such as Japan and Britain, thereby isolating many human groups. The impact on ecosystems was particularly severe for the large animals known as megafauna—mammoths, for example. The open glacial steppe grasslands in which megafauna thrived were replaced by expanding forests, and across the globe the combination of environmental change and human hunting drove many species to extinction.

The forests and wetlands of the new post-glacial world offered humans many new opportunities. They hunted large forest animals such as red deer and wild boar, as well as smaller mammals like rabbits, and they foraged for a range of aquatic and coastal food sources. Migratory fish like salmon, sea mammals such as seals, and shellfish, seasonal wildfowl, and a range of fruits, tubers, nuts, and seeds all became important dietary staples.

Changing lifestyles

In areas that were particularly rich in natural resources, human groups may not have settled in one place, sending small bands on forays further afield to target specific resources. The Natufian communities of the Eastern Mediterranean, for example, were able to exploit abundant stands of wild cereals in the Near East. Some groups began to manipulate their environments, burning vegetation and cutting down trees to encourage their preferred

Few humans have ever lived in a world of such extreme climatic and environmental change.

Brian Fagan

Expert in human prehistory

plant and animal species to thrive. They started to select and care for productive plant species and sowed the seeds of favored strains, while managing and controlling certain animals. This manipulation led to these species becoming ever more reliant on human input—and to the development of agriculture, a radical change in the human way of life that has since resulted in even more dramatic human impact on the environment. ■

Ice cores and past environments

Paleoclimatologists study the elemental composition of the sediments laid down over time on ocean floors to understand how climates have changed in the past. Tiny sea creatures known as foraminifera absorb two different forms of oxygen, ^{16}O and ^{18}O , from sea water. Because ^{16}O is the lighter of the two, it evaporates into the air more easily, but during warmer periods it falls as rain and drains back to the sea. So ^{16}O and ^{18}O exist in sea water and appear

in the shells of foraminifera, in roughly equal ratios. However, in cold conditions most of the evaporated ^{16}O does not return to the ocean but freezes as ice, so sea water contains more ^{18}O than ^{16}O . When foraminifera die, their shells sink to the ocean floor, building up over time. Paleoclimatologists drill into the ocean floor to extract cores of sediment and study the changing proportions of ^{16}O and ^{18}O in different layers to see how climates have changed over time.



A GREAT CIVILIZATION AROSE ON THE ANATOLIAN PLAIN

THE SETTLEMENT AT ÇATALHÖYÜK
(10,000 YEARS AGO)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Neolithic revolution

BEFORE

11000–10000 BCE There is evidence of cultivation of crops and domestication of animals in West Asia.

c.9000 BCE Maize farming begins in Mesoamerica.

c.8800 BCE Farming lifestyles are well established across West Asia.

AFTER

8000 BCE Cultivation and domestication begin in East Asia.

7400–6000 BCE The town of Çatalhöyük is established.

7000–6500 BCE Agriculture spreads west into Europe via Cyprus, Greece, and the Balkans.

3500 BCE The earliest cities are built in Mesopotamia.

Hunter-gatherers interact closely with **animal and plant species**.

The **climate and environment** stabilize after the **Ice Age**.

Humans start to **manage and control** some **animals and plants**, domesticating them.

Human populations begin to grow.

The **cultivation of land and crops** and the stockpiling of harvests **reduce mobility**.

People build larger settlements, such as the one at Çatalhöyük.

The Neolithic town of Çatalhöyük on the Konya Plain in Turkey was discovered by James Mellaart in the 1960s. It has become one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world due to its size, density of settlement, spectacular wall paintings, and evidence of complex religious and ritual behavior.

Since its discovery, several other large settlements across West Asia have been found that attest to the growing scale of human communities during the shift from foraging to agricultural lifestyles, or “Neolithic revolution,” that occurred between around 10000 BCE and 7000 BCE. Whether rising populations forced people to find

See also: The first humans arrive in Australia 20–21 ■ Cave paintings at Altamira 22–27 ■ The Big Freeze 28–29 ■ The Law Code of Hammurabi 36–37



This illustration shows the way in which humans lived and worked close to each other at the Çatalhöyük site, with their domesticated animals also kept nearby.

more stable means of subsistence or farming allowed people to have more children, the sizes of many settlements increased substantially and became more permanent. New ways had to be found to resolve social stresses such as disputes between neighbors.

Early villagers invested time and effort in planting and cultivating crops, then in storing the harvest to last the year, so they could no longer simply move as foragers had.

Community cohesion

It is thought that the development of more formal religious organization and group ritual practices may have helped community cohesion. At many sites, buildings were set aside for such purposes; these were larger than domestic structures, with unusual features such as lime plaster benches and more evidence of symbolic and representational art: Çatalhöyük boasts murals and figurines of a range of subjects including wild animals such as bulls, leopards, and vultures. At many sites, some inhabitants

remained in the community even when they died; they were buried under the floors of the houses. Sometimes they were later dug up and their skulls removed; facial features were molded on some in plaster and painted with ochre for display. At sites like Ain Ghazal in Jordan, large statues made of lime plaster have been found, and there are many examples of clay figurines of animals and (mainly female)

humans. It is not clear whether these decorated skulls, statues, and figurines represent specific individuals or heads of households or lineages, or perhaps mythical ancestors or gods, but they may have been part of the communal ideologies, rituals, and social practices that helped smooth over tensions between individuals and broader regional groups, who were establishing more formal links with one another for long-distance trade and exchange of goods. Some of the success of Çatalhöyük may have been due to its role as a center for the large-scale trade of items made from the obsidian, or volcanic glass, of Hasan Dağ.

The many dramatic social and economic changes that came with the Neolithic revolution have helped shape both human history and the world's ecosystems ever since. ■

Farming and health

The adoption of farming established a plentiful and stable long-term source of food, allowing for population growth. However, there were negative consequences, too. Farmers may have had to work harder at times than hunter-gatherers did, and their more limited diets—focused on just a few crops and animal species—led to nutritional deficiencies.

The health of early farmers also suffered in other ways. Living at close quarters with

animals meant that some animal diseases spread to humans—for example, smallpox, anthrax, tuberculosis, and the flu. Larger communities living at higher densities allowed for such diseases to be more easily passed around. It also caused problems in disposing of human and animal waste and thus a rise in intestinal complaints and waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid, while irrigation created breeding grounds for mosquitoes and parasites, infecting humans with diseases like malaria.

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS 6000 BCE—500

IONS

CE

Hammurabi, one of the great kings of **Mesopotamia**, writes a **law code**—the **earliest** known written legal system in history.



1780 BCE

Egyptian pharaoh **Ramesses II** builds two vast temples at **Abu Simbel** to **glorify** the pharaohs and assert **dominance** in Nubia.



1264 BCE

Democracy is introduced in **Athens** by Cleisthenes. All Athenian citizens are **allowed to vote** directly on Athenian policy.



507 BCE

The start of the **Persian Wars** between **Greece** and the **Persian Empire**; military successes influence the development of classical Greek identity.



490 BCE

1700 BCE



Knossos palace is built on Crete by the **Minoans**—the first civilization in Europe to produce a **system of writing** (known as the **Linear A** syllabary).

650 BCE



The high point of a **Celtic culture**, which developed around Halstatt, **Austria**, and spread to France, Romania, Bohemia, and Slovakia.

c.500 BCE



Siddhartha Gautama (known as **Buddha**) rejects material life to seek **enlightenment** and preach **Buddhism** in India.

c.334 BCE



Macedonian king **Alexander the Great** invades Asia Minor and creates a vast empire; **Greek culture** spreads **eastward**.

About 5,000 years ago, humans began to form societies of unprecedented complexity. These “civilizations” typically had state structures and social hierarchies, they built cities and monuments such as temples, palaces, and pyramids, and used some form of writing. The basis for the development of civilizations was progress in agriculture. When only part of the population was required to work in the fields to produce food, the rest could inhabit towns and palaces, performing a range of specialty functions as bureaucrats, traders, scribes, and priests. The invention of civilization undoubtedly raised human life to a new level in many ways—in technology, the arts, astronomy, the measurement of time, literature, and philosophy—but also established inequality and

exploitation as the basis of society, leading to larger-scale warfare as states expanded into empires.

Emerging civilizations

The earliest civilizations developed in areas where it was possible to practice intensive agriculture, usually involving use of irrigation systems—for instance, along the rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the Nile in Egypt, the Indus in northern India and Pakistan, and the Yangtze and Yellow rivers in China. Although these civilizations of Eurasia and North Africa seem to have been founded independently of one another, they developed multiple contacts over time, sharing ideas, technology, and even diseases. All followed a pattern in which stone tools (the Stone Age) were replaced

by bronze (the Bronze Age) and then predominantly iron (the Iron Age). In the Americas, where the Olmec and Maya developed the civilizations of Mesoamerica, the use of stone tools persisted and most of the epidemic diseases that plagued Eurasia were unknown.

Writing and philosophy

From around 1000 BCE, Eurasian civilizations found an innovative momentum. The use of writing evolved from practical record-keeping to the creation of sacred books and classic literary texts that embodied the founding myths and beliefs of different societies, from the Homeric tales in Greece to the Five Classics of Confucianism in China and the Hindu Vedas in India. Forms of writing using an alphabet developed in the eastern

Qin Shi Huangdi **unites China**, previously a region of warring states, and begins major projects, including building the **Terracotta Army**.



221 BCE

Julius Caesar is **assassinated** in Rome by senators who believe he is becoming increasingly power-hungry.



44 BCE

The **Maya Classical Period** begins; many cities, temples, and monuments are built throughout **Mexico** and **Guatemala**.



250 CE

Rome falls to the **Visigoths**; the Roman Empire shrinks and much of Europe is invaded by **Barbarian tribes**.



410 CE

218 BCE



Military commander **Hannibal**, from **Carthage** (north Africa), crosses the Alps to **invade Italy**. Unable to capture Rome, he returns to Africa.

43 CE



A **Roman army** led by General Aulus Plautius **invades** southern **England**; later, Roman rule extends to **Wales** and the **Scottish** border.

312 CE



Roman **emperor Constantine** adopts **Christianity** after victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge; Christianity rapidly gains **popularity**.

486 CE



Clovis, leader of the Salian Franks, **defeats the Romans** in Gaul and **unites France** north of the Loire under his dynasty.

Mediterranean region and were spread by the Phoenicians—a race of traders and sailors.

The Greek city-states became a test-bed for new forms of political organization, including democracy, and the source of new ideas in the arts and philosophy. The influence of Greek culture spread as far as northern India, while India itself was the birthplace of Buddhism—the first “world religion,” winning converts beyond its society of origin.

Growing populations

The ancient world reached the peak of its classical period around 2,000 years ago. The world’s population had grown from around 20 million at the time of the first civilizations to an estimated 200 million. About 50 million of these lived in a united Han China, while about the same

number were under the governance of the Roman Empire, which had extended its rule to the shores of the Atlantic and the borders of Persia. In large part, the empires were successful because of efficient communications by land and water, and the ruthless deployment of military power. Long-distance trade routes linked Europe to India and China, and cities had expanded to a great degree—Rome’s population was estimated at over 1 million.

Civilizations in decline

The causes of the decline of these powerful classical empires from the 3rd century CE have long been disputed among historians. Bred in overcrowded cities and transmitted along trade routes, epidemic diseases certainly played a part. Internal power struggles were also

a major factor, leading to political fragmentation and a decline in the quality of government. But perhaps most crucial was the geographical limitation of the civilized areas of Eurasia. Both the Roman and Han empires built walls to mark and defend the borders of their empires, beyond which lived mostly nomadic or semi-nomadic “barbarian” tribes. The civilized societies had little or no military advantage over these peoples, who increasingly raided or settled within their territories. The eastern part of the Christianized Roman Empire survived until 1453, and Chinese civilization revived to full vigor under the Tang dynasty from 618, but Western Europe would take centuries to recover the levels of population and organization that it had known under the rule of Rome. ■



TO BRING ABOUT THE RULE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAND

THE LAW CODE OF HAMMURABI (c.1780 BCE)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Origins of civilizations

BEFORE

c.5000 BCE Copper and gold smelting is common in Mesopotamia and beyond.

c.4500 BCE Uruk in Mesopotamia is the first settlement large enough to be called a city.

c.3800 BCE Upper and Lower Kingdoms of Egypt established along the Nile Valley.

c.3500 BCE Development of the Indus Valley civilizations.

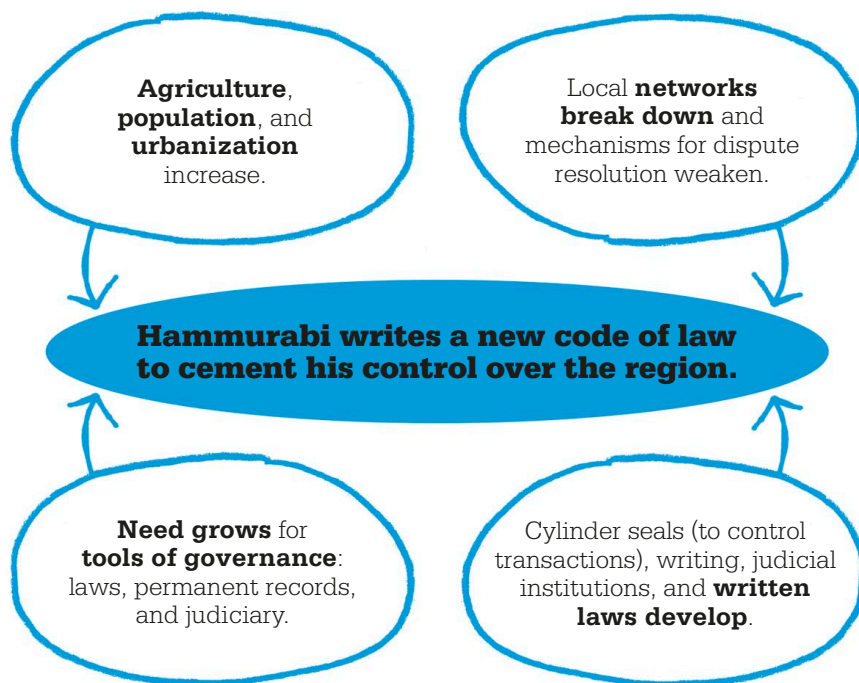
c.3350 BCE Stone circles erected in west and north Europe.

c.2000 BCE Shang dynasty builds the first cities in China.

AFTER

c.1500 BCE Rise of Olmec culture in Mesoamerica.

c.600 CE Emergence of the Mayan civilization.



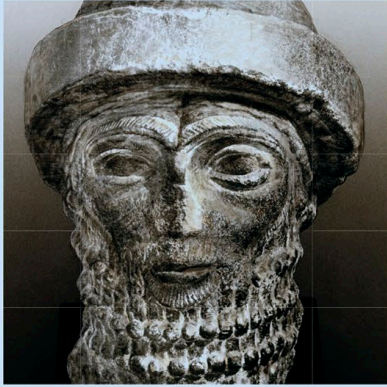
In 1901, a six-foot-tall slab of black stone was found in the ruins of the city of Susa. Carved onto its face were 280 “judgments,” or laws, constituting the earliest known written legal code in history. The slab had originally been erected in Babylon, in around 1750 BCE, by Hammurabi, one of the greatest kings of ancient Mesopotamia.

Bronze Age Revolution

Mesopotamia, which means “between two rivers,” lies between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and it is considered to be the first human civilization ever. Its writing, math, and astronomy were also the first known, and its cities arguably the world’s first true examples. Growth of its population and wealth led to

See also: The settlement at Çatalhöyük 30–31 ■ The temples of Abu Simbel 38–39 ■ The palace at Knossos 42–43 ■ The conquests of Alexander the Great 52–53 ■ The founding of Baghdad 86–93 ■ The foundation of Tenochtitlan 112–17

Hammurabi the Law-Giver



In around 2000 BCE, the Amorites (Westerners), a semi-nomadic people from Syria, swept across Mesopotamia, replacing local rulers with Amorite sheikh dynasties in many of the city-states. By the early 18th century BCE, the three most powerful Amorite kings were pre-eminent Shamshi-Adad in the north, Rim-Sin in Larsa in the south, and Hammurabi in Babylon in the center. Over the course of his long reign, Hammurabi consolidated all of southern Mesopotamia into his kingdom and eventually extended his power as far up the Tigris as

Nineveh, and as far up the Euphrates as Tuttul, on the junction with the river Balikh. He personally supervised the construction of many temples and other buildings.

The prelude to his code, a tribute to Hammurabi, and a long historical record of his conquests, boasts that his leadership was divinely sanctioned by the gods who passed control of humanity to Marduk (deity of Babylon), and so to its king. It also reveals he saw his role as the guarantor of a just and orderly society.

the emergence of a hierarchy in society, led by rulers, courtiers, and priests at the top, through merchants and artisans, to servants and laborers at the bottom. This is often referred to as “specialization”: members of society having different tasks, rather than all producing food as had been the case in previous subsistence societies.

Mesopotamian communities coordinated manpower to build large structures such as defensive walls and huge temples, and to mobilize armies. They utilized hydrological engineering to divert river water and irrigate the alluvial floodplains. Administrative needs such as bookkeeping led to the development of cuneiform writing, the first known script, and of complex mathematical concepts such as fractions, equations, and geometry. Sophisticated astronomy developed for calendric purposes. Sometimes called the Bronze Age Revolution, this great step forward can be seen as the most important change in the human world before the Industrial Revolution.

Mesopotamian unification

For much of the 4th to the 2nd millennia BCE, Mesopotamia was a mosaic of competing kingdoms and city-states such as Uruk, Isin, Lagash, Ur, Nippur, and Larsa. Hammurabi, the Amorite king of Babylon, unified the region through a combination of guile, diplomacy, opportunism, military might, and longevity. As was traditional with conquering kings, Hammurabi used previous edicts as the basis for his laws, but these laws were

distinguished by the reach of his empire, and by the fact that they were inscribed on stelae (stone slabs), and so recorded in perpetuity.

Hammurabi’s laws and their detailed prelude reveal much about life in what is known as the Old Babylonian Period. They contain judgments on matters ranging from property disputes and violence against the person, to runaway slaves and witchcraft.

Hammurabi’s legacy

Although Hammurabi’s laws seem to have carried little weight and were rarely followed at the time, and despite the fact that his empire disintegrated soon after his death, his reign was a turning point for southern Mesopotamia. He firmly established the ideal of a unified state, centered in Babylon, and his laws were copied by Mesopotamian scribes until at least the 6th century BCE. They show many points of similarity with, and may have influenced, laws of the Hebrew Bible, which in turn influence laws in many societies today. ■

“

When Marduk sent me to rule over men... [I] brought about the well-being of the oppressed.

Hammurabi

”



ALL THE LANDS HAVE FALLEN PROSTRATE BENEATH HIS SANDALS FOR ETERNITY

THE TEMPLES OF ABU SIMBEL (c.1264 BCE)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Pharaonic Egypt

BEFORE

c.3050 BCE Narmer unifies the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt.

c.2680 BCE Khufu begins construction of the Great Pyramid in Giza—it is the largest pyramid in history.

c.1480 BCE Thutmose III conquers Syria, extending his empire as far as the Euphrates.

AFTER

c.1160 BCE Ramesses III fights off invasions of Egypt by Libyans and raiding tribes known as the Sea People.

c.1085 BCE Collapse of the New Kingdom; Egypt is divided with Libyan rulers in the north and Theban priest-kings ruling in the south.

7th century BCE Egypt is invaded by Assyrians and then Persians.

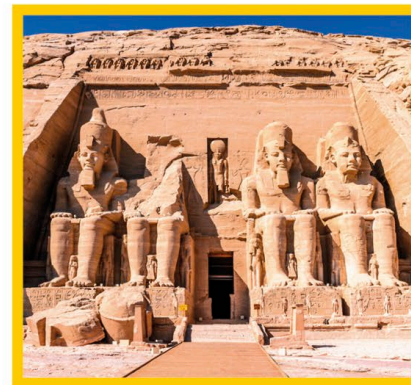
Around 1264 BCE, the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II (c.1278–1237 BCE) had two mighty temples hewn out of the cliffs on the west bank of the Nile in southern Egypt. The entrance was guarded by four vast statues of the pharaoh, seated in glory and wearing the symbols of divine kingship, including the double crown that signified his authority over Upper and Lower Egypt. The temples were designed to signify and embody the unique status, ambition, and power of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs.

The pharaonic tradition

Ramesses II inherited a tradition that was already very ancient: about 1,800 years earlier, King Narmer (called Menes by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus) first unified the kingdoms of the Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Nile. Narmer's deeds were recorded on a stone palette, which was recovered from a temple at Hierakonpolis in the 19th century and provides one of the earliest known depictions of an Egyptian king. The palette is inscribed with many of the symbols and traditions that would come to typify the

pharaohs for the next three millennia. For instance, Narmer is shown holding an enemy by the hair, about to smite him, and Ramesses II was often depicted in the same way—military might and supernatural strength were hallmarks of Egyptian kingship. The pharaoh, like the gods, was frequently shown much larger than ordinary mortals.

The geographical situation of Egypt—with its stark contrasts between the fertile Nile Valley and its delta, which empties in the



The magnificent temple complex at Abu Simbel was, remarkably, moved 656 ft (200 m) inland and 213 ft (65 m) higher up in 1964–68 to rescue it from the rising waters of the Nile during the construction of the High Aswan Dam.

See also: The Law Code of Hammurabi 36–37 ■ The palace at Knossos 42–43 ■
The conquests of Alexander the Great 52–53 ■ The assassination of Julius Caesar 58–65

“

I, [the creator], give you
Ramesses II, constant
harvests... [your] sheaves
are as plentiful as the sand,
your granaries approach
heaven and your grain
heaps are like mountains.

**Inscription in temple at
Abu Simbel, c.1264 BCE**

”

north into the Mediterranean Sea, and the surrounding expanses of uninhabitable desert—gave rise to the kingdom’s unique culture and civilization. The pharaoh was viewed as a living god who could control the order of the cosmos, including the annual flooding of the Nile, which brought fertilizing silt to replenish the soil. Pharaohs were also often depicted as farmers in agricultural scenes, representing their role as guardians of the land.

The Old Kingdom

The Old Kingdom that followed Narmer was ruled by a succession of dynasties that were led by powerful pharaohs, who channeled the bureaucratic and economic might of the unified kingdom into monumental building projects, such as the construction of the pyramids. These, in turn, stimulated scientific, technological, and economic development, increasing trade with other kingdoms in the Near East

and the Mediterranean. In the Old Kingdom the predominant gods were Ra, the sun god; Osiris, the god of the dead; and Ptah, the creator. In the Middle and New Kingdoms that followed, which were ruled by families from Thebes, Amon became the main deity. As supreme ruler, the pharaoh was closely associated with the gods, and was believed to be the living incarnation of certain deities.

The New Kingdom

In the 23rd century BCE, the Old Kingdom collapsed. After what is known as the Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom dynasties restored unified control of Egypt from 2134 BCE until around 1750 BCE, when they were invaded by the Hyksos (probably Semites from Syria). The Hyksos, in turn, were expelled from Egypt in about

1550 BCE, with the XVIII dynasty—arguably the greatest and most important—coming to power and establishing the New Kingdom. By this time, immortality was believed to be available not just to the pharaoh, but to priests, scribes, and others who could afford offerings, spells, and mummification, and many tombs were dug into the Valley of the Kings to be filled with extraordinarily rich grave goods.

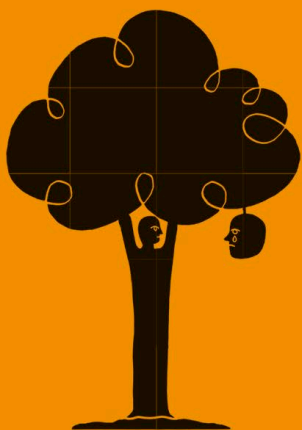
Under expansionist pharaohs, such as Thutmose III and Ramesses II, Egyptian control was extended into Asia as far as the Euphrates River, and up the Nile into Nubia. It was no coincidence that Ramesses built Abu Simbel in Nubia: as well as representing the divine glory of Egypt’s pharaohs generally, the temple was a symbol of Ramesses’ control over the recently conquered territory. ■

The **Nile Valley** is bordered by **inhospitable desert**, but is **highly fertile** because the longest river in the world flows through it and **irrigates it**.

A **sophisticated, coherent, and unified** civilization develops over a **vast stretch** of terrain.

Trade and conquest boost the economy and **population levels**. A large, prosperous kingdom emerges.

Vast monuments, such as the Abu Simbel temple complex, are constructed, reflecting Egypt’s power, wealth, and belief systems.



ATTACHMENT IS THE ROOT OF SUFFERING

**SIDDARTHA GAUTAMA
PREACHES BUDDHISM (c.500 BCE)**

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

The spread of Buddhism

BEFORE

1200 BCE Vedic (aka Aryan) culture extends across northern and central India.

1200–800 BCE Oral Vedic traditions are written down in Sanskrit as the Vedas.

c.600 BCE The Mahajanapadas, the 16 competing kingdoms of Vedic India, emerge.

AFTER

322 BCE Chandragupta Maurya founds the Mauryan Empire.

3rd century BCE Sri Lanka converts to Buddhism.

185 BCE The Mauryan Empire collapses.

1st century CE Buddhism arrives in China and Japan.

7th century Buddhist missionaries are invited to establish a monastery in Tibet.

Siddhartha rejects material life and preaches Buddhist philosophy.

Ashoka the Great conquers India and **unifies** the empire.

Ashoka **makes Buddhism the state religion** and spreads it across South and East Asia.

After the collapse of the Mauryan Empire, **Buddhism declines in India.**

Buddhism flourishes in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Tibet, and Central Asia.

Siddhartha Gautama, better known as the Buddha, was born at the end of the Vedic Age (1800–600 BCE) into a South Asia in transition. In the country's caste system, the priestly Brahmins and the warrior-elite Kshatriyas ranked highest, and it was into this latter group that Siddhartha Gautama was born.

India was then a ferment of sects and new ideologies, some of which espoused a philosophy renouncing

the material world. Siddhartha developed a similar philosophy based on mystical Hinduism, but he also rejected the increasingly rigid strictures of Vedic ritual and the inherited piety of the Brahmins. Renouncing material possessions, he sought and eventually found enlightenment, and became the Buddha. He preached in northeast India and founded the Sangha—the monastic order of Buddhism—to continue his ministry.

See also: The conquests of Alexander the Great 52–53 ■ The Indus Valley Civilization collapses ■ The construction of Angkor Wat 108–09 ■ The conquests of Akbar the Great 170–71

“

Given that separation is certain in this world, is it not better to separate oneself voluntarily for the sake of religion?

Siddhartha Gautama

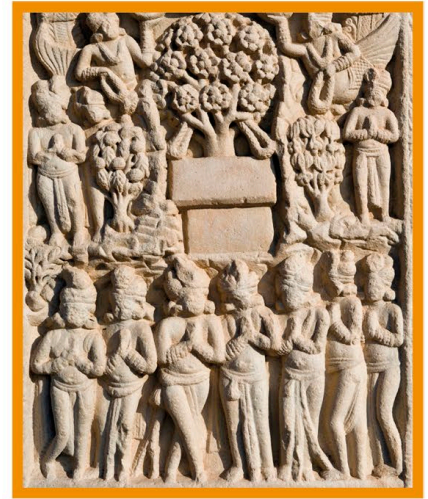
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For the next two to three centuries, Buddhism remained one among several minor sects but, under the Mauryan emperor Ashoka the Great (304–232 BCE), it became India's state religion. Ashoka's reign had proceeded initially through bloody conquest, but in around 261 BCE he had a change of heart. From then he embraced a new model of kingship and religious philosophy based on a creed of tolerance and non-violence.

He extended Mauryan control and, his Buddhism proving a powerful unifying force, succeeded in joining all of India, except the southern tip, into an empire of 30 million people.

A world religion

Having established Buddhism as the state religion, Ashoka founded monasteries, and sponsored scholarship. He sent Buddhist missionaries to every corner of the subcontinent and abroad as far as Greece, Syria, and Egypt. His missions established Buddhism initially as an elite pursuit, but the religion went on to take root at all levels of society in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, along the Silk Road in the Indo-Greek kingdoms (in modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan), and later in China, Japan, and Tibet. In India—its birthplace—Buddhism started to decline after Ashoka's death in 232 BCE, affected by a resurgence of Hinduism and then the arrival of Islam. Outside India, however, its tradition and scholarship flourished, evolving into multiple strands



Stone reliefs depicting the life of Buddha decorate gateways of The Great Stupa at Sanchi, commissioned by the emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE.

including Zen Buddhism, Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Varayana Buddhism.

The first religion to have spread widely beyond the society in which it originated—so the first “world religion”—Buddhism is also one of the oldest, having been practiced since the 6th century BCE. ■

The Buddha



The life history of Siddhartha Gautama is obscured by the myth and legend that has grown up around him. Different traditions give different chronologies for his birth and death, but many agree on 563–483 BCE. Said to have been born miraculously through the side of his mother, Siddhartha was raised in luxury in the palace of his father, King Suddhodana Tharu, leader of the Shakya clan.

Aged 29, Siddhartha rejected this luxurious life and left his wife and child, renouncing material things to seek enlightenment through asceticism. Having spent

six years wandering and meditating, he achieved enlightenment and became the Buddha, but instead of ascending to nirvana, the transcendent state that is the goal of Buddhism, he chose to remain and preach his new message, the *dharma*.

Gathering followers who formed the Sangha, a monastic order, the Buddha pursued his ministry until he died, at age 80. He urged his disciples to follow the *dharma*, instructing them: “All individual things pass away. Strive on, untiringly.”



A CLUE TO THE EXISTENCE OF A SYSTEM OF PICTURE-WRITING IN THE GREEK LANDS

THE PALACE AT KNOSSOS (c.1700 BCE)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Minoan Crete

BEFORE

c.7000 BCE Initial colonization of Crete.

c.3500 BCE Beginning of the Bronze Age in Crete.

AFTER

c.1640 BCE Massive eruption of volcano Thera devastates Minoan colonies and coastline.

c.1500 BCE Deeper stratification of Minoan culture; local administration is devolved to large villas.

c.1450 BCE The Mycenaean invasion of Crete.

c.1100 BCE The Sea Peoples terrorize the Mediterranean world, leading to the final decline of Minoan civilization.

1900 CE Arthur Evans begins the excavation of Knossos.

1908 Italian archaeologist Luigi Pernier discovers the Phaistos disc.

Minoan society becomes highly prosperous through agriculture and trade.



Social stratification develops, with a wealthy elite controlling trade.



Elaborate palace complexes are built to store commodities for redistribution.



The need for record-keeping gives rise to "writing" in the form of hieroglyphs.



Hieroglyphs evolve into Linear A syllabary at Knossos.

In the 1890s, British historian Arthur Evans came across some ancient clay seals for sale in Athens. They originated from the relatively unexplored Mediterranean island of Crete, and for Evans they offered a tantalizing hint at the existence of the first writing system in Europe.

Following the seals to their Cretan source, Evans decided to excavate a promising parcel of land at Knossos, in the north of the island, where he uncovered a vast palace complex. The iconography of the palace centered on a bull-cult, including frescoes that depicted the sport of bull-leaping. Evans named the civilization "Minoan" after the mythical Cretan King Minos, who—according to Greek legend—built a labyrinth to contain the Minotaur: a fearsome half-man, half-bull creature. In the process, Evans discovered that the Minoans had indeed invented an early type of alphabet, which he called Linear A.

The Palatial Period

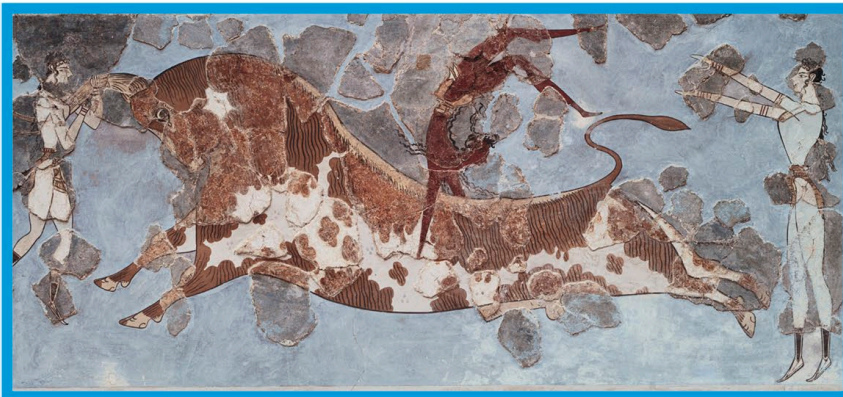
The Minoans were a people of unknown origin (possibly from Anatolia), who settled on Crete in the Neolithic era, in about 7000 BCE. They farmed crops, herded sheep,

See also: The settlement at Çatalhöyük 30–31 ■ The Law Code of Hammurabi 36–37 ■ The Persian Wars 44–45 ■ Athenian democracy 46–51 ■ King Sejong introduces a new script 130–31 ■ The fall of Constantinople 138–41

and worshipped in caves, on top of mountains, and at springs, but by 2400 BCE they had begun to build large palace complexes. By 1900 BCE, in what is known as the Palatial Period of the Minoan civilization, palaces at Knossos, Phaistos, Malia, and Chania had been constructed in broadly similar forms, with the one at Knossos being the largest. It was destroyed, possibly by fire or perhaps a tsunami, around 1700 BCE, but it was rebuilt soon after on the same site. At its peak, in about 1500 BCE, Knossos palace and the city that grew up around it covered 185 acres (75 hectares) and had a population of up to 12,000.

The Minoan palaces all had large central courts, flanked by many-chambered buildings, and were highly decorated with frescoes of flora and fauna. In the extensive magazines (storehouses), the rulers—who may have served dual roles as priest-kings or priest-queens—gathered many commodities for redistribution. Minoan rulers also

This bull-leaping fresco in the palace at Knossos in Crete is the most completely restored of several taureador stucco panels. Bull-handling was a common theme in art at this time.



controlled trade with other Bronze Age civilizations around the Mediterranean, such as Byblos in Phoenicia (now Lebanon), Ugarit in Syria, pharaonic Egypt, and Mycenaean Greek settlements in the Cyclades and further afield.

Linear A script

The Minoans developed their own script, probably initially for record-keeping and administration purposes. It began as hieroglyphic picture-writing, but later evolved into the Linear A syllabary, in which symbols denote syllables (rather than letters, as is the case with the alphabet). The Minoan language as recorded in Linear A script remains undeciphered to this day, but in around 1450 BCE the Minoans were invaded by the Mycenaeans from mainland Greece, who adapted the Minoan script into Linear B, which was used to write archaic Greek.

Not long after the Mycenaeans invaded Crete, Minoan civilization collapsed completely. However, the legacy of Minoan writing lives on through its connection with the Phoenician alphabet, which in turn would come to form the basis of the Latin alphabet that is used in many parts of the world today. ■



The Phaistos disc

Found in 1908 in the ruins of the Minoan palace at Phaistos, southern Crete, the Phaistos disc (shown above), made from fired clay and about 6 in (15cm) across, is printed with symbols in an unknown script. Although dated to 1700 BCE, it was made using the technique of woodblock printing, which was not thought to have been invented for another 2,000 years or so (in China), making the disc one of the great archaeological mysteries. The symbols, many of which are recognizable as everyday objects, are arranged in a spiral and divided into words by vertical lines. Some scholars have drawn parallels between certain symbols in Cretan hieroglyphics and Linear A, suggesting that the writing on the disc may be an elaborated form of an existing Minoan script. There are many theories about the disc's significance—some consider the inscription is a hymn to a goddess, others that it tells a story, or that the disc is a calendar or a game. Some experts even believe the disc to be a clever fake.



IN TIMES OF PEACE, SONS BURY THEIR FATHERS, BUT IN WAR IT IS THE FATHERS WHO BURY THEIR SONS

THE PERSIAN WARS (490–449 BCE)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

The Persian Empire

BEFORE

7th century BCE The Medes establish a powerful kingdom in modern-day Iran.

c.550 BCE Cyrus the Great rebels against Median rule and founds the Achaemenid Persian Empire.

c.499 BCE Greek city-states rebel against Persian control, but their revolt fails.

AFTER

431 BCE Athens and Sparta clash for supremacy in Greece in the Peloponnesian War.

404 BCE Artaxerxes II becomes ruler of the Achaemenid Empire.

331 BCE Alexander the Great defeats Darius III and conquers the Persian Empire.

312 BCE Persia becomes part of the Seleucid Empire, founded by one of Alexander's generals.

Leonidas of Sparta stood before his band of 300 warriors facing the mightiest army the world had ever seen. The envoy of his enemy demanded that he lay down his arms at the feet of the Persian god-king. “Come and take them” was Leonidas’s laconic reply.

The Persian Wars (490–449 BCE), also known as the Greco–Persian Wars, pitted a vast and cosmopolitan empire against a small band of city-states in the south of Greece. The conflict profoundly influenced the development of Classical Greek identity and culture, leaving a vivid trail in Western literature and myth. By contrast, the story of the Persian Achaemenid Empire remains comparatively neglected, belying the significance of that great Middle Eastern civilization.

The Achaemenids

The first Persian Empire, ruled by the dynasty known as the Achaemenids, grew rapidly. At its height it may have ruled over half the world’s population. It began in around 550 BCE, when the Persian king Cyrus the Great overthrew the ruling Medes, going on to conquer Babylonia, and Lydia (now in



A hoplite—or Greek citizen-soldier—vanquishes his Persian adversary in this decoration inside a 460 BCE wine cup. The winged horse Pegasus adorns the victor’s shield.

Turkey), which brought the Ionian Greeks under Persian rule. Cyrus’s successors Cambyses II and Darius extended the empire into Egypt and the Balkans, where Thrace and Macedon gave the Persians a foothold in Europe.

The Achaemenids established Persian rule as a model for later empires. Despite its vast size, the state embraced a degree of multiculturalism, allowing conquered peoples to keep liberty of religion, language, and culture. There was investment in infrastructure—like

See also: The Law Code of Hammurabi 36–37 ■ Athenian democracy 46–51 ■ The conquests of Alexander the Great 52–53 ■ The Peloponnesian Wars 70 ■ Muhammad receives the divine revelation 78–81

the Romans, the Persians built a network of roads to hold their empire together—and the military, and devolution of administration to local provinces. Under the Achaemenids, the Middle East was united under a single umbrella culture for the first time.

Conflict with the independent Greeks arose after the city-states of Athens and Eretria supported an unsuccessful revolt by the Ionians against Persian rule in 499 BCE. Darius responded by invading mainland Greece, but was defeated by the Athenians and their allies at Marathon in 490 BCE. He planned an even larger invasion, but it was only after his death that his son Xerxes began mustering a huge army to execute the plan.

Father of Lies

The main source for the Greco–Persian Wars is the ancient Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus, known as both the Father of History and the Father of Lies. Herodotus estimated that Xerxes' land army was made up

“All other expeditions... are as nothing compared with this. For was there a nation in all Asia which Xerxes did not bring with him against Greece?”

Herodotus

of 1,700,000 men—but modern historians believe the maximum figure to be closer to 200,000.

The second Persian invasion, in 480 BCE, was held up by the heroic defense of Leonidas and his 300 Spartans at Thermopylae, and by Greek naval resistance at Artemisium. Later the Athenian navy lured the Persian fleet into a trap at Salamis. Xerxes returned to

Persia, leaving a large force to carry on the fight, but at the Battle of Plataea in 479 BCE the Greeks, led by the Spartans, crushed the Persians, who also lost to the Spartans at Mycale. Greek success can probably be ascribed to Xerxes' difficulties in keeping his vast army supplied and supported after naval defeat, although Herodotus ascribed it to the moral superiority of their cause.

The Delian League

The Greeks now began to go on the offensive, forming the Delian League to oppose Persia. In 449 BCE, the Persians finally concluded peace, conceding the independence of the Ionian states.

The Persian War had reinforced Greek identity and bolstered cultural and military confidence, most significantly in Athens. The country's rising power sparked conflict with Sparta, leading to the Peloponnesian War of 431–404 BCE. The Persian Empire had reached the limits of its expansion, but remained strong until defeated by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE. ■

Cyrus the Great



The founder of the Achaemenid Empire was Cyrus II, later known as “the Great.” In around 557 BCE, he became king of Anshan, a vassal of the Median king.

According to legend, he won the Persian army's support by making them spend one day clearing thorn bushes, and the next banqueting, then asking why they remained slaves to the Medes when, by backing his revolt, they could live in luxury.

Some ten years later he had conquered Media, and Sardis and Lydia in Asia Minor. He conquered Babylon seven years after that by

diverting the Euphrates and marching his army along the dry riverbed into the great city. This victory brought him the lands of the neo-Babylonian Empire, including Assyria, Syria, and Palestine. He liberated the Jews from their Babylonian bondage and allowed them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The Greek writer Xenophon saw him as an example of the ideal ruler.

Cyrus died in 530 BCE while on campaign in Central Asia. He was buried in a great tomb inside the royal palace he had built at Pasargadae in Persia.



**ADMINISTRATION
IS IN THE HANDS OF
THE MANY
AND NOT OF THE FEW**

ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY (c.507 BCE)





IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

Greek politics and philosophy

BEFORE

14th–13th centuries BCE

Mycenaean settlement at Athens, with fortification of the Acropolis.

c.900 BCE Political union of small towns in Attica into a city-state centered on Athens.

c.590 BCE Reforms of Solon open the political machinery of Athens to all citizens, regardless of class.

AFTER

86 BCE Athens sacked by Romans under General Sulla.

c.50 BCE Beginning of the Roman philhellenic movement; Athens becomes the focus of imperial benefactors.

529 CE Christian Emperor Justinian I closes Plato's school and drives out pagan scholars.

The term “democracy” comes from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). The democracy that developed in ancient Athens around 507 BCE and flourished in its purest form from 462 to 322 BCE, albeit with some interruptions, provided the model for what has become the dominant form of government in the world: by 2015, 125 of the world's 195 countries were electoral democracies. The democracy of ancient Athens, however, differed from its modern form, reflecting the history of Athens and the warring Greek states of the age.

Oligarchs and hoplites

After the chaos of the ancient Greek Dark Ages—a period that followed the breakdown of Mycenaean civilization around 1100 BCE and lasted until about the 9th century BCE—most of the emergent city-states evolved into oligarchies, with powerful nobles monopolizing government and serving their own interests. In Athens, the Areopagus—a council and law court consisting of men of aristocratic birth—controlled the

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To the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

Pericles

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machinery of state, appointing officials and serving as a civil court, while the lower classes (*thetes*) were excluded from office.

However, the development of the “hoplite” model of citizen-soldiery in the 8th to 7th centuries BCE proved disruptive to those who were in power, as it led to a certain level of egalitarianism. Hoplites were men in the heavy infantry, mainly free citizens, whose primary tactic was the phalanx—a military formation in which soldiers stood in tightly packed ranks, with each man's shield protecting the hoplite to his left. Any man who could afford the arms and armor would be putting his life on the line to defend the state. As a result, a kind of middle class emerged, which declared that service should bring full citizenship and political representation. At the same time, the lower classes were also making demands, and tensions between them and the higher orders over key issues, such as land reform and debt slavery, threatened to lead to civil breakdown.

Solon and Cleisthenes

In Athens, some of these tensions were eased around 594 BCE by the reforms of the statesman Solon. He

Pericles

Pericles (c.495–429 BCE) became Athens' most famous democrat and the leading man of the city-state for about 30 years. He came to prominence around 462 BCE, when he helped the politician Ephialtes dismantle the Areopagus—the last bastion of oligarchic control. After Ephialtes' death, Pericles undertook further reforms, including the introduction of pay for those serving in the courts, making it possible for even the poorest citizen to have his say.

He is also believed to have helped drive Athens' assertive foreign policy as the city sought to exploit its dominance of the Delian League. During the 440s and 430s BCE, Pericles was involved in an ambitious public building program that provoked controversy at home, where he fought off revolt, and abroad, where he was condemned for requisitioning money from the Delian League to pay for the Parthenon. Nonetheless, he was popular and was elected as general every year from 443 BCE.