

Ancient Civilizations

SECOND EDITION

CHRISTOPHER SCARRE

BRIAN M. FAGAN



Second Edition

Ancient Civilizations

Christopher Scarre

*McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
Cambridge University*

Brian M. Fagan

University of California, Santa Barbara

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Preface

Three thousand, four thousand years maybe, have passed and gone since human feet last trod the floor on which you stand, and yet, as you note the recent signs of life around you—the half-filled bowl of mortar for the door, the darkened lamp, the fingermark on the freshly painted surface, the farewell garland dropped on the threshold. . . . Time is annihilated by little intimate details such as these, and you feel an intruder.

Egyptologist Howard Carter, notebook entry on Tutankhamun's tomb,
November 26, 1922

Ancient civilizations tempt romantic visions of the past: golden pharaohs, great cities and temple mounds, lost palaces mantled in swirling mists. The discovery of the Assyrians, Homeric Troy, and the Maya civilization of Central America was one of the nineteenth century's great adventure stories. Archaeologists like Englishman Austen Henry Layard, who dug biblical Nineveh, and New Yorker John Lloyd Stephens, who revealed the ancient Maya to an astonished world, became celebrities and bestselling authors. They and other early excavators are the prototypes of the swashbuckling Indiana Jones of late twentieth-century movie fame. The romance continued into the 1920s, culminating in Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon's dramatic discovery of the undisturbed tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamun and Sir Leonard Woolley's spectacular excavation of the Royal Tombs at Ur in Iraq. Even today, the occasional spectacular find, like the terracotta regiment of the first Chinese emperor Qin Shihuangdi or the Lords of Sipán in coastal Peru, reminds us that archaeology can be a profoundly exciting endeavor.

The nineteenth century was the century of archaeological adventure. The twentieth saw archaeology turn from a casual pursuit into a complex, highly specialized academic discipline. *Ancient Civilizations* describes what we know about the world's early civilizations today, 150 years after John Lloyd Stephens and artist Frederick Catherwood stumbled through the ruins of Maya Copán and Paul-Emile Botta and Austen Henry Layard electrified London and Paris with spectacular bas-reliefs from Assyrian palaces. This book is about science and multidisciplinary research, not about adventure and romance, an attempt to summarize state-of-the-art

knowledge about preindustrial civilizations in every corner of the world. We draw on many avenues of inquiry: on archaeological excavations, surveys, and laboratory work; on highly specialized scientific investigations into such topics as the sources of volcanic glass and metals; and on both historical and ethnohistorical records. In the final analysis, this book is a synthesis of science and ancient voices, for in many cases the latter add telling detail to a story reconstructed from purely material remains.

Ancient Civilizations is divided into six parts that lead logically from one to the other. Part I gives essential background, some key definitions, and historical information. It also describes some of the major theories concerning the development of civilizations, one of the key controversies of archaeology for more than a century. Part II focuses on the very first civilizations: Sumer, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and the earliest Chinese states. Parts III and IV build on earlier foundations and trace later civilizations in the Near East and the Mediterranean. This book is unique in that it describes Classical Greek and Roman civilizations, whose roots lie much deeper in the past than many authorities would have one believe. Part V links the Mediterranean and Asian worlds with the discovery of the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean about 2,000 years ago. Finally, the last four chapters, Part VI, describe the remarkable states of Mesoamerica and the Andean region of the Americas. An epilogue rounds off the narrative.

This book provides the reader with a straightforward narrative account of the ancient civilizations from their first appearance in the Near East some 5,000 years ago to the Spanish Conquest of Mexico and Peru in the early sixteenth century A.D. As such, it is written from a global perspective and without forcing it into a particular theoretical framework—this results both from the variability in the ancient societies themselves and from the diversity of the ways that they have been researched in recent decades. Chapter 2 summarizes major theoretical viewpoints and makes the point that the development of state-organized societies was a complex, multifaceted process, which took hold in many parts of the world. It also stresses that there were no overall principles or rules that governed this process. Rather, each civilization is a reflection of local conditions and of the distinctive worldview that shaped its institutions. Divine kingship is characteristic of Egyptian civilization, the Khmer, the Maya, and the Inka. But that does not mean that divine monarchy originated in one place and spread to all parts of the world thereafter. If there is a theoretical bias to this book, it is that each early civilization was a unique society, an attempt by human beings (as individuals and groups) who subsisted in very different environments to deal with problems of rising populations; increasingly cheek-by-jowl living conditions; and ever greater economic, political, and social complexity. We know that each instructor will use this book in a different way, each bringing his or her theoretical emphases to the narrative in these pages, so this approach seems appropriate.

We have elected to provide Guides to Further Reading at the end of each chapter rather than a comprehensive bibliography because the individual literatures for each area are now so complex that they are confusing, even for

specialists. The works cited in the chapter-by-chapter guides will give readers access to the more specialized literature through widely quoted standard works and some guidance through a myriad of specialized monographs and periodical articles.

Inevitably, a book of this nature is a compromise, both in geographical coverage and in topics selected for more detailed discussion. We are also limited in our ability to illustrate the complex archaeological record of these societies. Perceptive readers will notice, for example, that we do not describe sub-Saharan African kingdoms in this book. Although they have sometime been described as “civilizations” or “states,” they did not qualify for those terms until relatively recent centuries, so we made a conscious decision to omit them here. Readers who wish to delve into early African kingdoms should consult Graham Connah’s admirable *African Civilizations, Second Edition*. By the same token, our coverage of many aspects of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilization is inevitably sketchy, especially in the areas of religion, philosophical beliefs, and literature. The Guides to Further Reading refer the reader to works that cover these subjects in detail. Our primary concerns are to achieve balanced geographical coverage and to place the world’s ancient civilizations in as broad an archaeological and historical context as possible. We believe that one can understand these societies only by seeking their roots deep in the past, by understanding their local environments, and by placing them in both an indigenous and a broader perspective. We hope we have succeeded.

Highlights of the Second Edition

The second edition of *Ancient Civilizations* has been revised throughout to reflect the latest advances in the field, and it includes suggestions by both instructors and students who have taken the trouble to contact us after reading the first edition. There is new coverage throughout the book, specifically of new discoveries and the latest theoretical advances.

Updating and Rewriting

- *New perceptions of the origins and collapse of states.* Chapter 2 reviews the issue of sustainability. A new generation of research into climate change is revising perceptions of the vulnerability of early states to environmental and climatic shifts.
- *The first civilizations.* New discoveries, surveyed in Chapters 3 and 4, are changing long-established ideas on the origins of Sumerian and Egyptian civilization.
- *South Asian and Southeast Asian Civilization.* Chapters 5 and 13 describe entirely new understandings of these civilizations derived from recent fieldwork.
- *Revision and updating throughout.* The entire text and Guides to Further Reading have been revised and updated on a page-by-page basis.

Boxes

Three types of in-text boxes enhance the book, designed to amplify the narrative:

- *Discovery.* These boxes describe important finds that changed our perceptions of an early civilization.
- *Sites.* Important sites of unusual interest and significance receive special coverage.
- *Voices.* Some chapters include special boxes that quote from writings of ancient times, giving an unusual “voice” to the text.

New and Revised Art Program

The second edition’s art program has been expanded with new photographs and fresh or revised line art. These illustrations provide additional background on recent discoveries, amplify the narrative, or replace older art with new pictures. Some expanded captions serve to integrate the illustrations more closely into the text.

Complete Redesign

The entire book has been completely redesigned to make it more user-friendly.

Acknowledgments

This book results from years of experience, visiting sites in all parts of the world, and from many hours of discussion with colleagues. It is impossible to name all these individuals personally. We hope they will take this collective acknowledgment as an inadequate reflection of our gratitude for their advice and intellectual insights.

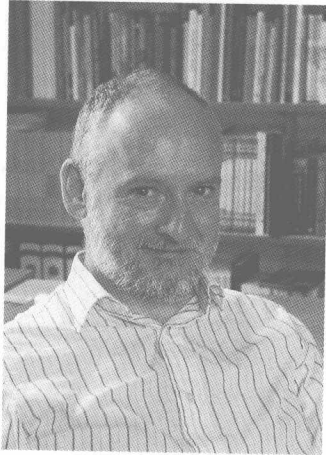
A number of scholars reviewed the manuscript while it was in preparation. We are grateful to Gina Barnes, Joan Oates, Nicholas Postgate, Jane McIntosh, Christine Morris, and Charles Higham for reviewing the Chinese, Mesopotamian, South Asian, Aegean Bronze Age, and Southeast Asian chapters, respectively.

Detailed criticisms also came from the following reviewers: Thomas H. Charlton, University of Iowa; Jeffrey T. Clark, North Dakota State University; and Michael Kolb, Northern Illinois University.

We are deeply grateful to Nancy Roberts of Prentice Hall for her encouragement and support at every turn, to her assistant Lee Peterson for many kindnesses, and to the production team in-house, who made the process of turning a complex manuscript into a book a (comparative) pleasure.

Chris Scarre
Brian M. Fagan

About the Authors

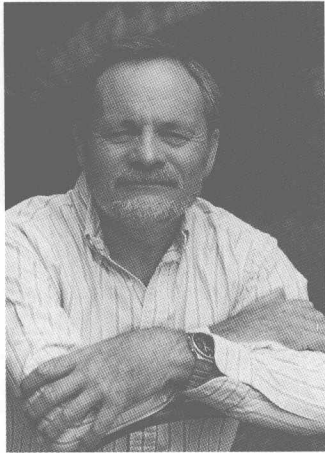


Chris Scarre is an archaeologist specializing in the prehistory of Europe and the Mediterranean, with a particular interest in the archaeology of Atlantic façade (Iberia, France, Britain, and Ireland). He took his MA and PhD at Cambridge, the latter a study of landscape change and archaeological sites in western France. He has participated in fieldwork projects in Britain, France, and Greece and has directed excavations at Neolithic settlement and mortuary sites in western France. His early work was published in *Ancient France*. He is currently Deputy Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, and editor of the twice-yearly *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*. As a Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge, he teaches a wide range of archaeological subjects from early stone use

in the Paleolithic to the expansion of the Roman Empire.

His research interests include the relationship of prehistoric monuments to their landscape setting, the use of color in prehistoric societies, and the development and character of early state societies. Recent papers have considered the meanings which prehistoric societies may have attached to natural landscape features in Brittany, and the manner in which those meanings were given material expression through the construction of burial mounds or settings of standing stones. The nature of early farming societies along the Atlantic façade in relation to theories of demographic displacement is reviewed in a number of articles published since 1992. His latest field project is the excavation (together with French colleagues) of a prehistoric burial mound at Prissé-la-Charrière in western France.

As Deputy Director of the McDonald Institute he is involved with the wider research programs of the Institute that include field projects in Europe and the Middle East and laboratories specializing in the analysis of faunal and botanical remains.



Brian Fagan is one of the leading archaeological writers in the world and an internationally recognized authority on world prehistory. He studied archaeology and anthropology at Pembroke College, Cambridge University, and then spent seven years in sub-Saharan Africa working in museums and in monument conservation and excavating early farming sites in Zambia and East Africa. He was one of the pioneers of multidisciplinary African history in the 1960s. Since 1967, he has been Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he has specialized in lecturing and writing about archaeology to wide audiences.

Professor Fagan has written seven best-selling textbooks: *Ancient Lives: An Introduction to Archaeology*; *In the Beginning*; *Archaeology: A Brief Introduction*; *People of the Earth*; *World Prehistory*; *Historical Archaeology* (with Charles E. Orser)—all published by Prentice Hall—that are used around the world. His general books include *The Rape of the Nile*, a classic history of Egyptology; *The Adventure of Archaeology*; *Time Detectives*; *Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations*; *Ancient North America*; and *The Little Ice Age*. He is General Editor of the *Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. In addition, he has published several scholarly monographs on African archaeology and numerous specialized articles in national and international journals. He is also an expert on multimedia teaching and has received the Society for American Archaeology's first Public Education Award for his indefatigable efforts on behalf of archaeology and education.

Brian Fagan's other interests include bicycling, sailing, kayaking, and good food. He is married and lives in Santa Barbara with his wife and daughter, four cats (who supervise his writing), and, last but not least, four rabbits.

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