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The Mainstream of CIVILIZATION SINCE 1500



SIXTH EDITION

STANLEY CHODOROW

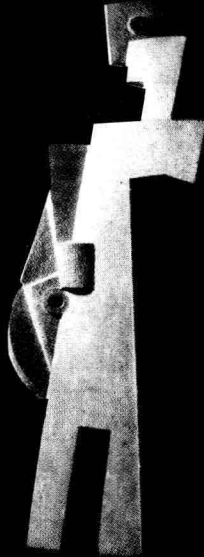
MACGREGOR KNOX

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JOSEPH R. STRAYER

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S I X T H E D I T I O N

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PREFACE

Writing a history of civilization is an almost foolhardy enterprise. But it is easier to do if you have done it before, as the authors of the first four editions of this history, Joseph R. Strayer and Hans W. Gatzke, noted dryly in their preface to the Fourth Edition. We, their successors, had not done it before the mid-1980s. But we did have the robust framework the original authors left to us. In this Sixth Edition of *The Mainstream of Civilization*, we have built on that framework and on the major recasting of the work carried out in the Fifth Edition.

That edition integrated into the text new themes—such as social history and the history of women—that had figured less in earlier editions. Especially in the modern period, it emphasized the great driving forces—technology, demography, economics, and nationalism—that have made the twentieth century immensely different from any earlier age. It sought to explain the origins of key events, such as the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, and the World Wars. And unlike its predecessors, it used charts and graphs to present chronological and other quantitative data vividly, new picture captions to integrate the illustrations into the text, new boxed quotations from primary

sources (some of them translated for the purpose), and frequent primary-source quotations in the text to convey the flavor of the past.

Yet the Fifth Edition also drew on the greatest strength of earlier editions—their global perspective. Like its predecessors, it sought to follow the “mainstream of civilization” by gradually shifting its geographic focus from the Mediterranean to Europe, and ultimately to the wider world. It offered detailed treatment of the major civilizations east and south of Europe, from Byzantium and Islam to India, China, and Japan. And as that “mainstream” flowed toward the present, the text provided increasingly detailed analysis and narrative in order to make that present understandable. That narrative attempted to convey to readers the texture and flavor of past civilizations and the astonishing variety of human possibilities and accomplishments. It sought to emphasize the interrelationships of all spheres of life, from politics and warfare to economics, art, scholarship, and religion. It sought to suggest at least some of the differing ways in which contemporaries and historians have understood the past. But above all, the text attempted to explain that past, to explain historical change and the recurring patterns visible in the past. Why and how

have states, institutions, and ideas risen, flourished, and crumbled into dust? Why did events happen as they did and not otherwise?

This new Sixth Edition, we are confident, has kept the strengths of its predecessors. But it also contains much that is new both in presentation and substance. We have reviewed and rewritten the entire text sentence by sentence for clarity and readability; the result is slightly shorter than the Fifth Edition. We have reorganized Chapters 9, 10, and 11 to group related topics more effectively and to strengthen the narrative line. We have sometimes written new chapter introductions to make clearer how the material presented in topical chapters, such as 24, 25, and 27, fits into our overall chronological and thematic framework. We have rewritten or added subheadings where necessary to group the text into more easily understood segments. And we have revised and updated the bibliographical suggestions at the end of each chapter.

The Sixth Edition also incorporates recent research and new material on topics that range from humanity's origins to the end of the Cold War. We have added material on Hebrew culture to provide a better understanding of the background of European religion. We have reorganized and strengthened the sections on Hellenistic civilization to better explain the transition from Greece to Rome. We have radically rewritten and shortened our chapter on the post-1945 non-Western world to simplify the presentation and bring it up to 1992. Finally, we have rewritten the final chapter almost completely to offer both narrative and interpretation of recent momentous events. We are confident that Chapters 34–36 of the new *The Mainstream of Civilization* offer the best short analysis of the world since the Second World War available in any similar textbook.

The Sixth Edition also comes with a totally recast package of ancillary materials: a textbook (also available in software form) and film guide with learning objec-

tives, 50 map transparencies, and 25 color transparencies of major works of art and architecture. Above all, the Sixth Edition study guide is completely new; it contains new chapter summaries, chapter objectives, time-lines, maps and map questions, identifications, and numerous probing essay questions also designed to serve as topics for class discussion.

This edition, like its predecessors, inevitably draws heavily upon the publications, contributions, and advice of other scholars. We have sought wherever possible to hint at our major debts in the Suggestions for Further Reading that follow each chapter. We owe special thanks to Conrad Schirokauer, City College of the City University of New York, for his contribution of Chapters 6 and 15. We thank Carl Abrams, Bob Jones University; Ron Brown, Charles County Community College; Ann Sumner Holmes, Louisiana State University; Gilberto Ramirez, Auburn University; Randall Rogers, Louisiana State University; Alan Schaffer, Clemson University; and Marian E. Strobel, Furman University, for their perceptive comments and criticisms. And we are profoundly grateful to Everett M. Sims, who edited the final manuscript with tact, decisiveness, and a brilliant choice of synonyms. All have helped to make this book better, but they bear no responsibility for sins of omission or commission and errors of fact or judgment, which belong to the authors alone.

Finally, we remain deeply indebted to the late Hans W. Gatzke. Despite the debilitating effects of a tragic illness, he oversaw with tact and consideration the transition from one "team" of authors to the next. He set ambitious goals for the new team: a major revision and recasting of the book. He shaped the plan for that revision and suggested a number of the new themes that we have attempted to emphasize. To his memory, and to that of the late Joseph R. Strayer, we thankfully dedicate this Sixth Edition.

Stanley Chodorow

MacGregor Knox

A Note on the Paperbound Editions

This volume is one of a number of variant printings of the Sixth Edition of *The Mainstream of Civilization*. It is not a revised or condensed text. Many users of the Fourth Edition found the various paperbound versions of that edition useful because the variant printings made it possible for them to fit the text into their own patterns of teaching and scheduling. In the Sixth Edition, the publishers have continued the practice of preparing separate paperbound volumes. Users may choose the volume that best corresponds to the chronological period covered by their courses. The variants are:

In all the variant printings, the pagination, index (except for *To 1500*, which has its own index), illustrations, maps, and other related materials from the one-volume version are retained. The difference between the one-volume and the other versions of this book is a difference only in form.

1. A two-volume edition

The first volume, To 1715 (Chapters 1 through 21), starts with the beginnings of Western civilization in the ancient Middle East and continues to the end of the Middle Ages. The second volume, Since 1660 (Chapters 20 through 36), begins with the seventeenth century and carries the account forward to the present day.

2. A two-volume edition

The first volume, To 1500 (Chapters 1 through 15), starts with the beginnings of Western civilization in the ancient Middle East and continues to the end of the Middle Ages. The second volume, Since 1500 (Chapters 16 through 36), after a Prologue that summarizes events to the year 1500, begins with the Renaissance and carries the account forward to the present day.

INTRODUCTION

History as Foresight and Memory

History is the story of the human past. It is also the only available introduction to the human future. That was how the first critically thinking historian, Thucydides the Athenian, justified his history of the great war between the rival Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta in the fifth century B.C. Thucydides addressed his work to those “who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future.” He added that his book was “not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever.”

No modern historian would dare make that claim. Forever is a length of time beyond human grasp, and the tastes of the immediate public now have a weight that Thucydides the aristocrat would have roundly condemned. But Thucydides’ book, the most penetrating historical work of the ancient world, has nevertheless survived for 2400 years, and has probably enjoyed more readers in the last three centuries than in its entire previous existence. Thucydides’ claim that human affairs follow patterns meaningful to the trained eye has remained the fundamental argument for studying history.

The future is by definition unknowable and unpredictable; events are unique, and never repeat themselves precisely.

But they often follow patterns. Individuals are unique, and are free to make their own history. That freedom gives the unfolding of history its element of suspense. But individuals also band together to create societies. Those societies have structures—languages, religions, intellectual traditions, artistic styles, and political, social, economic, and military institutions—that limit how individuals can make history, and that restrict the range of thoughts and actions open to them. Those historical structures operate in consistent and often predictable ways. Historical situations separated by centuries and continents have similarities, and sometimes develop according to a similar logic. Historical analogies—comparisons between one set of historical structures or events and another—are powerful if treacherous tools for probing future possibilities.

Historical analysis inevitably has limits. Evidence about the past is always incomplete. Politics, warfare, religion, philosophy, and art have left more traces than everyday life. The few with power and leisure loom far larger in the surviving sources than the peasants and workers on whose drudgery that power and leisure rested. Men appear in the sources more frequently than women. Societies with writing have left far more behind them than those without. Twentieth-century technology—aerial photography, radio-carbon dating, precise chemical analysis,

meticulous archaeological technique—has told us much about voiceless societies and groups, and has broadened our knowledge even of societies that left extensive literatures. Source criticism—close scrutiny of the style, content, context, purposes, and reliability of surviving texts—has deepened our understanding of the written sources and of the societies that created them. The fragmentary nature of the evidence transmitted from the past nevertheless limits the historian's ability to see clearly and to draw valid conclusions. And in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the written record has swollen geometrically with the coming of mass literacy and the creation of immense bureaucracies. Too much evidence rather than too little is the burden of the historian of the recent past.

The historian's own values also color and sometimes drastically distort both the selection of evidence and the analysis of ideas and events. The past is the key to the present, but the present can also crush the past. Crusading religions and combative secular ideologies such as nationalism or Marxism-Leninism alter history to fit dogma. Traumatic experiences such as wars, revolutions, or economic catastrophes sometimes lead the historian to seek escape in a largely imaginary and far more pleasant distant past, or to rewrite recent events as a one-way street leading inevitably to the unhappy present. And historians, although their craft should lead them to take the long view, sometimes fall victim to passing fads. The historian's only defenses against ideological distortion and trendiness are the search for detachment and the passionate commitment to the verifiable evidence that has distinguished the best historical writing from Thucydides onward. For history, if painstakingly and honestly written, gives to those who pursue it a sense of the probabilities, of the range of outcomes inherent in a given historical situation. Historical knowledge can teach us how the world works.

That knowledge is also indispensable in a second way. History is memory. Historical knowledge is self-knowledge. It tells us how our world, our own society,

and we as individuals got to where we are. Memory can give pleasure, but is also decisive in our lives. For the individual, memory is identity. For society, the "collective memory" or knowledge of the society's past and shared values is equally central. It is part of the glue that binds society together. When a society suffers collective amnesia, when it loses its historical consciousness, the values formed through that society's history erode. That decay undermines the society's political, social, and intellectual cohesion, and may threaten its survival.

In the empires, city-states, monarchies, and tribal polities of the past and in the single-party dictatorships of the present, religion, custom, political indoctrination, and force have usually maintained cohesion. But our own civilization has over the last three centuries evolved a historically unique concept: laws that guarantee the rights of the ruled against the rulers, the rights of individuals against the state. Those laws have given individuals a measure of freedom unprecedented in history: freedom to worship as they please, to follow their economic interests, to pursue private happiness. The victories of rights against the state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of representative democratic government in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries marked an immense leap forward in human freedom and economic dynamism. But that freedom also carried with it the possibility that its heirs might one day lose it, through forgetfulness of the sacrifices and struggles that has secured it and through ignorance of its historical uniqueness and potential fragility. Historical knowledge can guard against that danger as no other knowledge can.

History as the History of Civilization

Our present comes from our past, but what is the shape of that past? All readers of this book, by the fact that they read the English language, are heirs to a tradition that stretches back to the first millennium B.C., to the Greeks on the one hand and

to the Hebrew authors of the Old Testament on the other. That *civilization*—a term coined in the eighteenth century and derived from the Roman word for city, *civitas*—is the civilization of the West, the civilization of Europe.

Civilization above all means cities, a human institution less than 10,000 years old. Cities demand a highly developed peasant agriculture to feed them, architects and laborers to erect them, artisans to people them, bureaucrats to organize and tax them, soldiers to defend them, rulers to rule them, and religious or communal myths and customs to foster loyalty to the existing order. Cities mean a degree of social stratification, of differences between the high and the low, unknown in the hunter-gatherer or cattle-herding nomad societies that preceded them. Cities mean *literacy*, *organization*, and *specialization* of work. And the degree of literacy, organization, and specialization affects the density of population that a given civilization can support and the character and attainments of that civilization. The Greek city-states were capable of efforts and achievements far surpassing those of the Scythian nomads to their north and of the ramshackle Persian empire to their east.

Cities have meant the intensified development of religion, philosophy, technology, art, and literature. The great religions, from those of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia through Hinduism and Buddhism to Christianity and Islam, were or became urban civilizations. Philosophy, the quest for the principles and realities underlying human knowledge and existence, was an offshoot of religion that first arose in the Greek cities and in the urban civilizations of China and India. Technological advance—from improvements in tools and weapons to the building of fortifications, roads, and aqueducts—made cities possible, and cities in turn accelerated technological advance. Highly developed art, from architecture and sculpture to ceramics and painting, has been the mark of urban civilizations. And writing, invented for the tax accounting of the bureaucrats and the records of the city priest-hoods, eventually made possible the

flowering of poetry, drama, history, and science.

Cities have meant common values that bind the inhabitants together, that inspire them to accept the sacrifices—often without immediate or apparent compensating benefits—that specialization and organization impose. Those values can derive from a variety of sources. The great religions, the cult of the nation-state, the modern ideologies that claim to grasp the meaning and destination of history, and the sense of duty toward the community that is the “civic religion” of democracies have all provided the myths and values needed to sustain urban civilization. Those myths and values have been closely related to the type of civilization they spring from and support.

Finally, cities have meant conflict as well as achievement. Hunter-gatherers and nomads raid their neighbors for booty, women, slaves, and cattle. All adult males are by definition warriors. But in urban civilizations, specialization of work extends to warfare: hereditary warrior castes or standing armies and navies that may command the entire resources of the state. Urban civilizations, by virtue of literacy, organization, and specialization, can wield violence far longer and more systematically than their predecessors. That violence led to the formation of *state systems*, of highly competitive groups of rival states. In such systems, as the greatest of Greek philosophers, Plato, bitinglly remarked, “What most people call peace . . . is just a name; in fact there is by nature an everlasting undeclared war of all against all.” And even within the city walls, fierce conflicts between rival groups among the ruling few or between the few and the downtrodden many have frequently broken the peace.

A history of civilization must therefore try to explain the gradual increase of literacy, organization, and specialization over the last three millennia. Such a history must be a political history, for politics is the key to understanding the nature, growth, and collapse of *states*—the large-scale political units whose character, success, or failure has been a matter of life or death for the inhabitants of all known

civilizations. A history of civilization must be an economic and social history, for economic and social relationships shape politics and are in turn shaped by politics. A history of civilization must be a history of art, literature, and ideas—for art, literature, and ideas define and reflect the systems of shared beliefs without which no civilization is possible. Above all, a history of civilization has to explore the interconnections of politics, economics, and ideas that determine the character, development, and fate of civilizations.

And as seen from the late twentieth century, the history of human civilization as a whole centers around the history of the West, the history of Europe. For Europe's civilization, although at first merely one of the world's major traditions, spread outward after 1492 to dominate the entire globe. That outcome was not foreordained, for Europe started late. The earliest civilizations arose as early as 3000 B.C. in the great river valleys of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China. The first recognizably Western civilization only appeared after 1000 B.C. in the Greek city-states of Greece, Asia Minor, southern Italy, and Sicily. The Greeks borrowed much from their predecessors to the east and south, including the alphabet they took from their Phoenician rivals. But the Greeks were unique. In the space of little more than three centuries—the sixth through fourth centuries B.C.—they invented the Western traditions of philosophical, historical, and scientific inquiry. They created the concept of individual freedom. They laid the foundations of Western literature. They made Western civilization self-conscious, inquiring, and *historical*. And in the fourth century B.C., the immense conquests of Alexander of Macedon, heir to a half-barbarian kingdom on Greece's northern border, spread Greek civilization—and Greek-ruled cities named Alexandria—from Egypt to the borders of India.

The successors of Alexander, the Romans, dominated the entire Mediterranean basin for five centuries. In art and literature they borrowed much from the Greeks. In law, statecraft, and military organization they were bold and ruthless innovators who solved brilliantly the

problem that had perplexed the Greeks: how to create large-scale and long-lasting political units ruling over citizens and non-citizens alike. The only contemporary civilization that rivaled the brilliance of Rome and the extent of Rome's power was China, which experienced a merciless unification in the same centuries as the Roman conquest of the Mediterranean.

Roman legions, Roman roads, Roman cities, and Roman laws civilized Europe as far east as the great river barriers of the Rhine and the Danube and as far north as the wild borders of Scotland. Rome provided the political order within which a new religion, which blended the Hebrew traditions of the Old Testament with the philosophical conceptions of the Greeks, could spread and prosper. In the fourth century A.D., that new religion, Christianity, became the official religion of the empire. By that point Rome was near collapse. Interrelated and mutually reinforcing pressures from within and without brought the empire down: bloody civil wars, brigandage and piracy, economic decay, plague epidemics, loss of intellectual self-confidence and social cohesion, and vastly increased barbarian pressure on the Rhine-Danube frontier.

In the fifth century A.D., Rome fell to waves of invaders, as the pitiless Huns on their shaggy steppe ponies drove the warlike Germanic tribes across Rome's crumbling frontiers. The western half of the empire collapsed. The unity of the Mediterranean basin was gone. A Greek-speaking remnant of the Empire centered on Byzantium survived in the East for another thousand years, but had small influence on developments in the West. In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the Arabian tribes, under the green banner of their new religion, Islam, conquered the eastern Mediterranean and swept across northern Africa to Spain. Those conquests further divided Rome's inland sea—between the heirs of Greece, Rome, and Jerusalem and the heirs of the prophet Mohammed. The *ancient world*, the Greco-Roman civilization of the Mediterranean basin, had ceased to exist.

The new *medieval* civilization that eventually arose in western Europe after the eighth century was thus thrown back

on its own resources. It saved only a fragment of its Roman inheritance, as Rome itself had been only a part of the ancient world. And the new rulers of western Europe, the Germanic peoples, had never been part of that world. They only gradually absorbed the fragments of Latin literature and Roman law that Rome had left behind. They were slow to blend with the Latin peoples they had conquered. They and their subjects were equally slow to absorb Christianity. But the fusion over some six centuries of those diverse ethnic and cultural elements ultimately produced a distinctive European civilization.

Once its character was set, medieval Europe developed rapidly. It eagerly received lost Greek texts, decimal numbers, and algebra from its neighbors, the more highly developed Byzantines and Arabs. Many of its basic institutions and ideas, such as universities and representative assemblies, originated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Its centers were in the north, in the triangle bounded by the formerly Roman cities of Paris (*Lutetia Parisiorum*), Cologne (*Colonia*), and London (*Londinium*) and in north Italian cities such as Florence, Bologna, and Padua. Its periphery, from Sicily, Spain, and Ireland to Scandinavia, Poland, and Bohemia, developed more slowly. And beyond that periphery Western influence almost ceased. Byzantium remained apart: Greek in language, despotic in politics, and Orthodox rather than Catholic in religion. Byzantium's influence dominated the southern and eastern Slavic peoples who had moved into eastern Europe as the Germanic tribes had moved west. Byzantium likewise inspired the early Russian state, until Mongol conquerors subjugated Moscow and Kiev in the thirteenth century and forced them to face eastward for more than 200 years.

South and east of Byzantium lay the civilizations of Islam, which began to close themselves off from new ideas just as Europe was beginning its ascent. Still further east lay the great civilizations of India, China, and Japan. Each had characteristic values—religious in India, scholarly and bureaucratic in China, military and bureaucratic in Japan. All three had on occasion borrowed from their neighbors, but

they nevertheless tended toward self-absorption and the perfection of existing modes of thought rather than the acquisition of new knowledge. India suffered Moslem conquest, constant wars, and crushing taxation. China after the fifteenth century showed little interest in exploration or seaborne trade. Japan, which had borrowed much from China, fiercely walled itself off after 1600. And after pioneering efforts—gunpowder, rockets, firearms, crucible steel, iron smelting with coke—none of the Eastern civilizations developed a tradition of scientific inquiry and technological innovation rivaling that of the West.

By the fifteenth century, medieval Europe had begun to break out of its original social and religious mold and out of its narrow and rain-sodden peninsula off the Eurasian landmass. Since the twelfth century, Europeans had shown an insatiable scholarly curiosity about distant lands and a thirst for trade and booty. They had shown a fascination with machinery—from clocks and windmills to ships and cannon—rarely seen to the south and east. European scholars had begun to lay the groundwork for the seventeenth-century scientific revolution that immeasurably increased humanity's mastery over nature and transformed its view of its place in the universe.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century, Europeans leapt across the globe—the Spaniards to the Americas in 1492 and the Portuguese around Africa to India in 1498. Europe's new seaborne empires—the empires of the *early modern* age of Western expansion—soon dominated the fringes of Africa and Asia and conquered three newly discovered continents: North America, South America, and Australia.

Then came two further revolutions within Europe itself. The collapse of the French monarchy in 1788–89 opened 25 years of revolution and war that spread the democratic ideas of the French revolutionaries and the notion of nationalism—the political religion of the nation-state—eastward across Europe. Simultaneously, an industrial revolution that transformed humanity's power over nature and over its own existence began in Britain. Those twin revolutions—of mass politics and

nationalism, and of engine-powered machines and economic freedoms—have been the driving forces of the *modern* era in which we still live. They transformed Europe and the world. For the first time in history, one civilization brought all others into increasingly direct contact with it, and forced its rivals to adopt its techniques and ideas or go under.

Those rivals ultimately maintained or reasserted their independence—within the framework of the worldwide international system that Europe established—by

adopting Western ideas and techniques. The world has not become one; mortal rivalries between states, religions, ideologies, and cultures continue to rend it. But for good or ill a recognizably Western global civilization has taken shape, bound together by an accelerating revolution of science and technology, an ever-expanding world market, and a thickening web of mass communications. That is the present that any history of civilization must seek to explain.

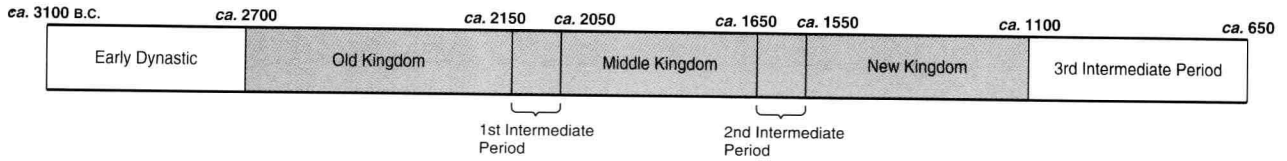
PROLOGUE: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO 1500

Three words that appear repeatedly in this book look simple but are difficult to define: *civilization*, *western*, and *modern*. What is civilization? When and how did a distinct type of civilization—Western civilization—develop in Europe? And when did Western civilization begin to manifest traits that we call modern?

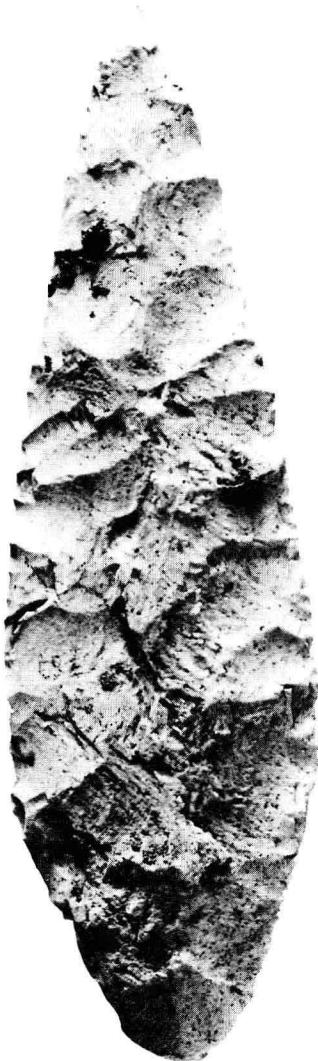
Every group of scholars interested in humankind and society gives a different meaning to the word *civilization*. Even historians are by no means in full agreement, though during the last century a good many of them have reached a consensus. When they speak of a civilization, they mean a society in which there is some degree of economic and political organization, some measure of occupational specialization, and a set of beliefs or values that is accepted by most members of the society. Organization, specialization, and common beliefs in turn combine to

generate a distinct pattern of living that is recognizable over long periods of time.

Organization in its simplest form provides security against external and internal enemies, some control of the environment (for example, irrigation, community building, or collective agricultural operations), and some reasonably stable means of exchanging products. Without some measure of organization, each family or small group of families has to strive for self-sufficiency and so is doomed to live at a bare subsistence level. No one will stop procuring food to spend time making cloth unless there is some assurance that the cloth can be exchanged—safely and regularly—for food. And if everyone has to give over every day to hunting animals or collecting grain, no one is likely to become a very good clothmaker. As soon as a group of people has attained an acceptable level of security, however, and has set up regular procedures for exchanging



Homo Habilis made tools by striking flint off of a core.



goods, individual members of the group can develop specialized skills. Effective organization, even in a small community, can stimulate a high degree of specialization. A few thousand Greeks working together in a city-state managed to produce or acquire almost every object they wanted from almost anywhere in the Mediterranean world, in spite of the poverty of their soil and the lack of other natural resources. By contrast, a few thousand North American Indians who were divided into small, wandering bands barely managed to survive, though they lived in a much richer country.

Organization requires a certain amount of cooperation from the people who make up the community. Cooperation is not achieved by coldly rational appeals to self-interest, nor can it be maintained simply through threats and punishments. People who share common beliefs, however, are likely to cooperate in carrying out the tasks of their society. So long as a group believes that it is working toward generally accepted goals through forms of organization that seem right and proper, it will attain at least some of its objectives and will survive as a group. Once a group, or some part of a group, loses that assurance, either an altered set of beliefs or a restructured society will emerge. One of the problems faced by every civilization is how to maintain common beliefs and common values in the face of technical, economic, and social change. Once those common beliefs and values are lost, the civilization dies.

THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST

The earliest examples of organization, specialization, and cooperation based on common beliefs are found in the city-states of the great river valleys of Eurasia—

first in the Tigris-Euphrates valley of Mesopotamia, next in the Nile valley of Egypt and the Indus River valley of India, and last in the Yellow River valley of China. *City-state* is too grand a term for the earliest settlements, which were hardly more than big villages. But the emergence of the village itself marks an important stage in organization and specialization; it was the product of a social and economic revolution that took place at the end of the Old Stone Age, about 10,000 B.C.

When people began to grow their food in cleared fields instead of relying on hunting and food gathering, when they settled in one place rather than roaming over a wide area, and when they built permanent homes instead of hastily erecting temporary shelters, the need for organization grew more pressing and the opportunities for specialization grew more frequent. A settled population is more vulnerable to attack and to internal strife than is a migratory population. It cannot solve its problems simply by moving on or by splitting up into smaller groups. The members of a village using primitive farming methods have to cooperate in clearing and planting fields, herding animals, and controlling the water supply. At the same time, the existence of a settled community means that there is a permanent market in which specialized craftsmen can produce and exchange goods. Even in the very earliest settlements there was a differentiation of social, economic, and political roles. There was a governing group, a priestly group, a merchant group, an artisan group, and an agricultural group. One person may have played several roles—ruler and priest, or priest and merchant.

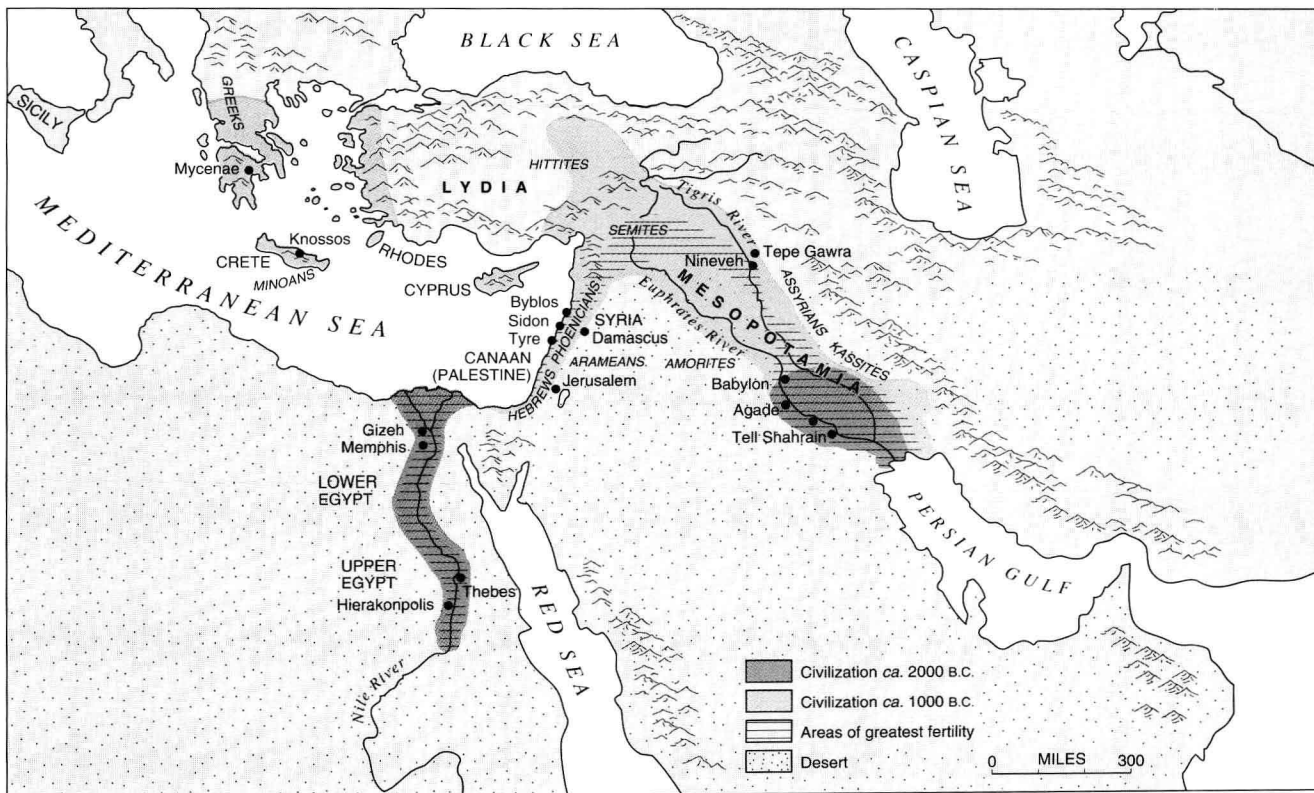
Over time, the villages grew into cities, and the cities into states. The influence of an urban center spread farther and farther across the countryside until it touched the area dominated by another urban cen-

ter. The frictions that developed when two spheres of influence met often led to war, and a series of wars in turn sometimes gave rise to the development of a fairly large kingdom. War itself was likely to strengthen political institutions, and a kingdom required more elaborate forms of organization. The creation of a kingdom also required a conscious attempt to establish common beliefs and loyalties. The victors might, for example, substitute their gods for the gods of the defeated, they might simply subordinate the gods of the defeated to their own greater gods (who had proved their greatness by bringing victory), or the victors and the defeated might decide that they had been worshipping the same gods all along, though under different names. A good deal of local variation in worship was tolerated so long as special respect was paid to the ruler's god or to the ruler himself as an embodiment of that god.

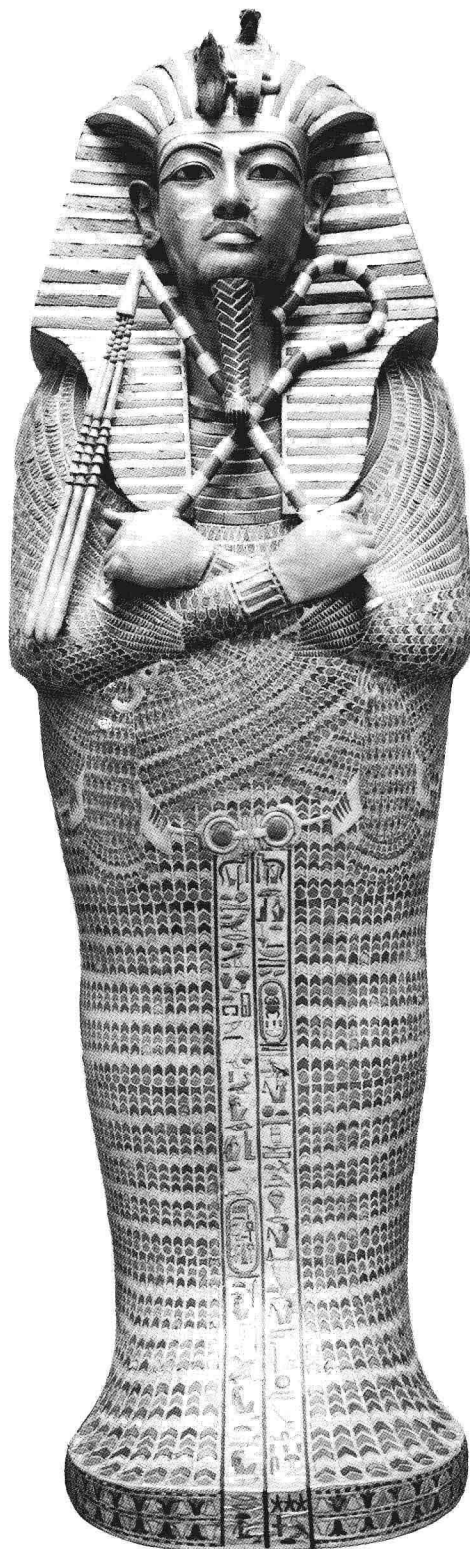


This bone shows the cut marks of the butchering process.

Origins of Agriculture 6000 B.C.



The gold-plated inner coffin of
the pharaoh Tutankhamen
(ca. 1340 B.C.)



In this brief introduction we cannot trace the long history of the kingdoms that arose in India and in China. China, for some time, had few contacts with the rest of the world. And, though India was in fairly close touch with Mesopotamia, ideas that reached the West from India were absorbed into existing cultures and did not survive as a separate tradition. On the other hand, the kingdom of Egypt and the various kingdoms and empires that succeeded one another in the Mesopotamian area laid the foundation for the ancient Mediterranean civilization from which Western civilization arose. Equally important were the border states—especially those of the Phoenicians and the Hebrews—that grew up in Asia Minor and in the contested lands that lay between Egypt and the successive kingdoms of the Tigris-Euphrates area. The Phoenicians invented (or at least perfected) the alphabet, and the Hebrew tradition lies at the root of two great world religions.

There were some striking differences among the peoples of the ancient Middle East. For example, the king of Egypt was a god, owner of the whole country, master of all its inhabitants; the Mesopotamian kings were only servants of the gods, and their subjects had full rights over their own property and considerable freedom of action. Egypt was built in stone, Mesopotamia in brick. In the Nile valley the chief agricultural problem was irrigation; in Mesopotamia it was drainage. But beneath the diversity was a certain degree of uniformity. With very few exceptions, all the societies of the Middle East were agricultural societies. A vast number of agricultural workers supported a much smaller population of artisans and traders, and an even smaller population of priests, bureaucrats, nobles, and members of the royal family. Most of the surplus produced by many thousands of agricultural workers was consumed by a tiny elite.

Some of the surplus was used to finance wars, and every kingdom—even the little kingdom of the Hebrews—went through a phase of empire-building. War, migration, and trade brought a mixing of peoples from various regions and an exchange of ideas and techniques. Curi-

ously, however, some of those ideas and techniques did not spread very far. For example, every Middle Eastern society either invented or borrowed the technique of writing; yet only a few of the border peoples capitalized on the immense improvement made possible by the invention of the alphabet. The Egyptians and other peoples were intensely interested in religion, yet none of them adopted the rigid monotheism of the Jews. But such cases were rare.

All the peoples of the ancient Middle East drew on a common fund of experience and knowledge. That fund was rich and varied. By the end of the second millennium B.C., political organization had reached a stage at which vast areas and hundreds of thousands of people could be governed from a single center, power could be safely delegated to provincial administrators, and large armies could be raised and kept in the field year after year. Economic organization made possible not only a host of local traders and specialized artisans but a class of merchants who traveled thousands of miles every year. Masterpieces of architecture, sculpture, and



An alabaster relief showing an Assyrian king on a hunt.



The great pyramid of Khufu with the Sphinx in the foreground.