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SEVENTH EDITION

The Humanistic Tradition

The First Civilizations and
the Classical Legacy

GLORIA K. FIERO



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THE HUMANISTIC TRADITION, BOOK 1
THE FIRST CIVILIZATIONS AND THE CLASSICAL LEGACY
SEVENTH EDITION

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Cover of the coffin of Tutankhamen (ca. 1345–1325 B.C.E.) (detail), from the Valley of the Kings. Gold with inlay of enamel, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and turquoise, height 6 ft.

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Stonehenge trilitions (lintel-topped pairs of stones at center), ca. 3000–1800 B.C.E., Tallest upright 22 ft. (including lintel).

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Letter from the Author

The Humanistic Tradition originated more than two decades ago. As a long-time humanities instructor, I recognized that the Western-only perspective was no longer adequate to understanding the cultural foundations of our global world. However, none of the existing humanities textbooks served my needs. The challenge was daunting—covering the history of Western literature, philosophy, art, music, and dance was already an ambitious undertaking for a humanities survey; how could I broaden the scope to include Asia, Africa, and the Americas without over-loading the course?

I found the solution in my classroom: Instead of assuming a strictly historical approach to the past, (as I did in my history classes), I would organize my humanities lectures topically, focusing on universal themes, major styles, and significant movements—gods and rulers, classicism, imperialism, the Romantic hero, racial and sexual equality, globalism—as they reflected or shaped the culture of a given time or place. What evolved was *The Humanistic Tradition*, a thematic, yet global and chronological approach to humanities, one that provokes thought and discussion without burying students under mountains of encyclopedic information.

Now in its seventh edition, *The Humanistic Tradition* continues to celebrate the creative mind by focusing on how the arts and ideas relate to each other, what they tell us about our own human nature and that of others on our planet. Its mission remains relevant to the present, and essential (I would hope) to enriching the future of each student who reads its pages.

The Seventh Edition of *The Humanistic Tradition*

To the seventh edition of *The Humanistic Tradition* I have added a new feature: **Looking Into** is a diagrammatic analysis of key works, such as Neolithic stone circles (including the latest archeological discoveries in Southeast Turkey), the Parthenon, the sonnets of Petrarch and Donne, *Shiva: Lord of the Dance*, Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Double Portrait*, and Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*.

The new edition expands two popular features that promote critical thinking: **Exploring Issues**,

which focuses on controversial ideas and current debates (such as the battle over the ownership of antiquities, and creationism versus evolution); and **Making Connections**, which brings attention to contrasts and continuities between past and present. To **Exploring Issues**, I have added the debate over the origins of India's Vedic culture (chapter 3). To **Making Connections** I offer a novel illustration of the contemporary affection for Chinese landscape painting (chapter 14).

The chapter-by-chapter integration of literary, visual, and aural primary sources remains a hallmark of *The Humanistic Tradition*. In an effort to provide the most engaging and accessible literary works, some selected readings in this edition appear in alternate translations. **Marginal logos** have been added to direct students to additional literary resources that are discussed but not included in the text itself.

Additions to the art program include the Nebra Sky Disk, Hellenistic mosaics, Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*, Oceania's art of tattoo, Japan's Amida Buddha, Charles Willson Peale's *Portrait of Yarrow Mamout* (the earliest known portrait of a Muslim in America), Ai Wei Wei's *Forever Bicycle*, Ernesto Neto's *Anthropodino*, and Zaha Hadid's Heydar Aliyev Center. Chapters 37 and 38, which treat the Information Age and Globalism, have been updated to present a cogent overview of contemporary issues, including terrorism, ecological concerns, ethnic conflict, and the digital arts.

The Humanistic Tradition pioneered a flexible six-book format in recognition of the varying chronological range of humanities courses. Each slim volume was also convenient for students to bring to classes, the library, and other study areas. The seventh edition continues to be available in this six-book format, as well as in a two-volume set for the most common two-term course configuration.

In preparing the seventh edition, I have depended on the excellent editorial and production team led by Donald Dinwiddie at Laurence King Publishing. Special thanks also go to Kara Hattersley-Smith at LKP and Sarah Remington at McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Gloria K. Fiero

The Humanistic Tradition—a personalized learning

Each generation leaves a creative legacy, the sum of its ideas and achievements. This legacy represents the response to our effort to ensure our individual and collective survival, our need to establish ways of living in harmony with others, and our desire to understand our place in the universe. Meeting the challenges of *survival*, *communality*, and *self-knowledge*, we have created and transmitted the tools of science and technology, social and political institutions, religious and philosophic systems, and various forms of personal expression—the totality of which we call **culture**. Handed down from generation to generation, this legacy constitutes the humanistic tradition, the study of which is called *humanities*.

Understanding that a global humanities course is taught in varying ways, Gloria Fiero redefines the discipline for greater flexibility via a variety of innovative digital tools. Enhanced by McGraw-Hill Education’s LearnSmart and SmartBook, Fiero delivers a learning experience tailored to the needs of each institution, instructor, and student. With the ability to incorporate new extended readings, streaming music, and artwork, *The Humanistic Tradition* renews the understanding of the relationship between world cultures and humankind’s creative legacy.



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No two humanities courses are the same. That is why Gloria Fiero has personally hand-picked additional readings that can be added easily to a customized edition of *The Humanistic Tradition*. Marginal icons (right) that appear throughout this new edition indicate additional readings, a list of which is found at the end of the Table of Contents.

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Various instructor resources are available for *The Humanistic Tradition*. These include an instructor’s manual with discussion suggestions and study questions, music listening guides, lecture PowerPoints, and a test bank. Contact your McGraw-Hill sales representative for access to these materials.



BEFORE WE BEGIN

Studying humanities engages us in a dialogue with primary sources: works original to the age in which they were produced. Whether literary, visual, or aural, a primary source is a text; the time, place, and circumstances in which it was created constitute

the context; and its various underlying meanings provide the subtext. Studying humanities from the perspective of text, context, and subtext helps us understand our cultural legacy and our place in the larger world.

Text

The *text* of a primary source refers to its medium (that is, what it is made of), its form (its outward shape), and its content (the subject it describes).

Literature: Literary form varies according to the manner in which words are arranged. So, *poetry*, which shares rhythmic organization with music and dance, is distinguished from *prose*, which normally lacks regular rhythmic patterns. Poetry, by its freedom from conventional grammar, provides unique opportunities for the expression of intense emotions. Prose usually functions to convey information, to narrate, and to describe.

Philosophy (the search for truth through reasoned analysis) and *history* (the record of the past) make use of prose to analyze and communicate ideas and information.

In literature, as in most forms of expression, content and form are usually interrelated. The subject matter or form of a literary work determines its *genre*. For instance, a long narrative poem recounting the adventures of a hero constitutes an *epic*, while a formal, dignified speech in praise of a person or thing constitutes a *eulogy*.

The Visual Arts: The visual arts employ a wide variety of media, ranging from the traditional colored pigments used in painting, to wood, clay, marble, and (more recently) plastic and neon used in sculpture, to a wide variety of digital media, including photography and film. The form or outward shape of a work of art depends on the manner in which the artist manipulates the elements of color, line, texture, and space. Unlike words, these formal elements lack denotative meaning.

The visual arts are dominantly spatial, that is, they operate and are apprehended in space. Artists manipulate form to describe or interpret the visible world (as in the genres of portraiture and landscape), or to create worlds of fantasy and imagination. They may also fabricate texts that are nonrepresentational, that is, without identifiable subject matter.

Music and Dance: The medium of music is sound. Like literature, music is durational: it unfolds over the period of time in which it occurs. The major elements of music are melody, rhythm, harmony, and tone color—formal elements that also characterize the oral life of literature. However, while literary and visual texts are usually descriptive, music is almost always nonrepresentational: it rarely has meaning beyond sound itself. For that reason, music is the most difficult of the arts to describe in words.

Dance, the artform that makes the human body itself the medium of expression, resembles music in that it is temporal and performance-oriented. Like music, dance

exploits rhythm as a formal tool, and like painting and sculpture, it unfolds in space as well as in time.

Studying the text, we discover the ways in which the artist manipulates medium and form to achieve a characteristic manner of execution or expression that we call *style*. Comparing the styles of various texts from a single era, we discover that they usually share certain defining features and characteristics. Similarities between, for instance, ancient Greek temples and Greek tragedies, or between Chinese lyric poems and landscape paintings, reveal the unifying moral and aesthetic values of their respective cultures.

Context

The *context* describes the historical and cultural environment of a text. Understanding the relationship between text and context is one of the principal concerns of any inquiry into the humanistic tradition. To determine the context, we ask: In what time and place did our primary source originate? How did it function within the society in which it was created? Was it primarily decorative, didactic, magical, or propagandistic? Did it serve the religious or political needs of the community? Sometimes our answers to these questions are mere guesses. For instance, the paintings on the walls of Paleolithic caves were probably not “artworks” in the modern sense of the term, but, rather, magical signs associated with religious rituals performed in the interest of communal survival.

Determining the function of the text often serves to clarify the nature of its form, and vice-versa. For instance, in that the Hebrew Bible, the *Song of Roland*, and many other early literary works were spoken or sung, rather than read, such literature tends to feature repetition and rhyme, devices that facilitate memorization and oral delivery.

Subtext

The *subtext* of a primary source refers to its secondary or implied meanings. The subtext discloses conceptual messages embedded in or implied by the text. The epic poems of the ancient Greeks, for instance, which glorify prowess and physical courage, suggest an exclusively male perception of virtue. The state portraits of the seventeenth-century French king Louis XIV bear the subtext of unassailable and absolute power. In our own time, Andy Warhol’s serial adaptations of Coca-Cola bottles offer wry commentary on the commercial mentality of American society. Examining the implicit message of the text helps us determine the values of the age in which it was produced, and offers insights into our own.

Introduction

Prehistory and the Birth of Civilization

ca. 7 million B.C.E.–1500 B.C.E.

*"But, after all, who knows, and who can say
whence it all came, and how creation happened?"*
Rig Veda



Figure 0.1 Spotted horses and negative hand prints, Pech-Merle caves, Lot, France, ca. 15,000–10,000 B.C.E. Length 11 ft. 2 in.

AT THE BEGINNING

The first chapters in the history of human life are often regarded as the most challenging. They present us with a gigantic puzzle that requires scientists and historians to piece together various fragments of information, most of which, like buried treasure, have been dug out of the earth. Reassembled, they reveal the progress of humankind from its earliest beginnings; they track a record of the

genetic and behavioral adaptation of human beings to their natural (and often hostile) surroundings. The story of modern humans is the last chapter in a long history that begins with the simplest forms of life that thrived in the primeval seas hundreds of millions of years ago. To understand that story, we must turn to the evidence provided by prehistory.

Prehistory

The study of history before the appearance of written records, an enterprise that originated in France around 1860, is called **prehistory**. In the absence of written records, prehistorians depend on information about the past provided by the disciplines of geology, paleontology, anthropology, archeology, and ethnography. For instance, using instruments that measure the radioactive atoms remaining in the organic elements of the earth's strata, geologists have determined that our planet is approximately 4.5 billion years old. Paleontologists record the history of fossil remains and that of the earth's earliest living creatures. Anthropologists study human biology, society, and cultural practices, while archeologists uncover, analyze, and interpret the material remains of past societies. Finally, a special group of cultural anthropologists known as ethnographers study surviving preliterate societies. All of these specialists contribute to producing a detailed picture of humankind's earliest environment and the prehistoric past.

The earliest organic remains in the earth's strata are almost four billion years old. From one-celled organisms that inhabited the watery terrain of our planet, higher forms of life very gradually evolved. Some hundred million years ago, dinosaurs stalked the earth, eventually becoming extinct—possibly because they failed to adapt to climatic change. Eighty million years ago, mammals roamed the earth's surface. Although even the most approximate dates are much disputed, it is generally agreed that between ten and five million years ago ancestral humans first appeared on earth, probably in eastern and southern Africa. The exact genealogy of humankind is still a matter of intense debate. However, in the last fifty years, anthropologists have clarified some aspects of the relationship between human beings and earlier primates—the group of mammals that today includes monkeys, apes, and human beings. Fossil evidence reveals structural similarities between human beings and chimpanzees (and other apes). More recent research in molecular biology indicates that the DNA of chimpanzees is approximately 99 percent identical to human DNA, suggesting that humans are more closely related to chimpanzees than domestic cats are to lions.

Paleolithic (“Old Stone”) Culture* **(ca. 7 million–10,000 B.C.E.)****

Early in the twentieth century, anthropologists discovered the first fossil remains of the near-human or proto-human

creature known as **hominid**, who lived some five or more million years ago. Hominids lived in packs; they gathered seeds, berries, wild fruits, and vegetables, and possibly even hunted the beasts of the African savannas. Hominid footprints found in South Africa in the mid-1990s and fossil remains uncovered since 2002 in Central Africa and near the Black Sea suggest that hominids may have walked upright as early as six million years ago. What is the relationship between modern humans and their now-extinct relatives? Molecular biologists have analyzed fossil DNA and determined that the human family tree has numerous branches. Diverse groups of the genus *Homo* left Africa at different times, some co-existing before dying out. The branch that represents our ancestors, that is, modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) departed from Africa some 66,000 years ago. However, many human species preceded us.

About three million years ago, a South African variety of hominid known as *Australopithecus* was using sharp-edged pebbles for skinning animals and for chopping. Creating the first stone and bone tools and weapons, *Homo habilis* (“tool-making human”) met the challenge of survival with problem-solving ingenuity. Stone-tipped spears were in use some 500,000 years ago. Anthropologists have long considered tool-making the distinguishing feature of modern humans. Tool-making represents the beginnings of **culture**, which, in its most basic sense, proceeds from the manipulation of nature; and the appearance of tools and weapons—humankind's earliest technology—constitutes the initial act of extending control over nature. Co-existing with *Homo habilis* for half a million years in parts of Africa and East Asia, hunter-gatherers known as *Homo erectus* (“upright human”) made tools that were more varied and efficient than those of their predecessors. These tools included hand-axes, cleavers, chisels, and a wide variety of choppers. The hand-ax became the standard tool for chopping, digging, cutting, and scraping. Fire, too, became an important part of the early culture of humankind, providing safety, warmth, and a means of cooking food. Although it is still not certain how long ago fire was first

*The terms Paleolithic and Neolithic do not describe uniform time periods, but, rather, cultures that appeared at different times in different parts of the world.

**Dates are signified as B.C.E., “Before the Christian (or common) era,” or C.E., “Christian (or common) era.”

used, archeologists confirm that fire was a regular feature in the hearths of most *Homo erectus* dwellings.

Some 100,000 years ago, a group of humanoids with anatomical features and brain size similar to our own appeared in the Neander Valley near Düsseldorf, Germany. The burial of human dead (their bodies dyed with red ocher) among Neanderthals and the practice of including tools, weapons, food, and flowers in Neanderthal graves are evidence of the self-conscious, symbol-making human known as *Homo sapiens*. Characterized by memory and foresight, these now-extinct cousins of modern-day humans were the first to demonstrate—by their ritual preparation and disposal of the deceased—a self-conscious concern with human mortality. That concern may have involved respect for, or fear of, the dead and the anticipation of life after death.

The development of the primate brain in both size and complexity was integral to the evolution of *Homo sapiens*: over millions of years, the average brain size of the human being grew to roughly three times the size of the gorilla's brain. Equally critical was the growth of more complex motor capacities. Gradually, verbal methods of communication complemented the nonverbal ones shared by animals and proto-humans. Over time, modern humans came to use spoken language as a medium for transmitting information. Communication by means of spoken language distinguished *Homo sapiens* from other primates. Chimpanzees have been known to bind two poles together in order to reach a bunch of bananas hanging from the

top of a tree, but, short of immediate physical demonstration, they have developed no means of passing on this technique to subsequent generations of chimpanzees. *Homo sapiens*, on the other hand, have produced symbol systems that enable them to transmit their ideas and inventions. Thus, in the fullest sense, culture requires both the manipulation of nature and the formulation of a symbolic language for its transmission.

Paleolithic culture evolved during a period of climatic fluctuation called the Ice Age. Between roughly three million and 10,000 years ago, at least four large glacial advances covered the area north of the equator. As hunters and gatherers, Paleolithic people were forced either to migrate or to adapt to changing climatic conditions. It is likely that more than fifteen species of human co-existed with one another, and all but *Homo sapiens* became extinct. Ultimately, the ingenuity and imagination of *Homo sapiens* were responsible for the fact that they fared better than many other creatures.

Early modern humans devised an extensive technology of stone and bone tools and weapons that increased their comfort and safety, and almost certainly their confidence. A 7-foot stone-tipped spear enabled a hunter to attack an animal at a distance of 6 or more yards. Other devices increased the leverage of the arm and thus doubled that range. Spears and harpoons, and—toward the end of the Ice Age—bows and arrows, extended the efficacy and safety of Paleolithic people, just as axes and knives facilitated their food-preparing abilities.

Figure 0.2 Hall of Bulls, left wall, Lascaux caves, Dordogne, France, ca. 15,000–10,000 B.C.E. Paint on limestone rock, length of individual bulls 13–16 ft.



Science and Technology

2,500,000 B.C.E.	first stone tools are utilized in East Africa [†]
500,000 B.C.E.	in China, <i>Homo erectus</i> uses fire for domestic purposes
24,000 B.C.E.	fish hooks and lines are utilized in Europe
20,000 B.C.E.	bows and arrows are in use in North Africa and Spain; oil lamps, fueled by animal fat, come into use
13,000 B.C.E.	devices to hurl harpoons and spears are in use

[†]All dates in this introduction are approximate.

Cave Art

Since 1875 archeologists have found painted, drawn, and engraved images on cave walls in Europe, Africa, Australia, and North America. The most recent of these discoveries was made at the El Castillo cave in northwestern Spain, where painted disks, clublike symbols, and hundreds of handprints, at least 37,000 years old, appear to be the world's oldest known wall-paintings. Handprints, probably made by blowing or splattering earth pigments through a hollow reed as the hand rested against the wall, are commonly found in most prehistoric caves (Figure 0.1). The hand, an essential ally in the creation of tools and weapons, as well as in the depiction of imagery, held an obviously prized place in Paleolithic culture.

At Lascaux, a site discovered in southern France in 1940, a magnificent array of animals and symbols is now tragically disappearing under the ruinous attack of algae, bacteria, and fungi (the caves have been closed to the public since 1963). While Lascaux features a variety of commonly hunted species—bison, reindeer, elk, mammoths, and zebras—caves at Cosquer and Chauvet on the southern coast of France, found in the early 1990s, depict an even wider variety of Paleolithic creatures: rhinoceros, horses, bears, lions, panthers, hyenas, and sea birds. Executed between 30,000 and 10,000 years ago, the images at these various sites were skillfully painted with **polychrome** mineral pigments. The animals, shown standing or running, often wounded by spears or arrows, are strongly **naturalistic**: shaded with bitumen and burnt coal, and sometimes protruding from the uneven rock surface, they appear three-dimensionally lifelike (Figure 0.2).

What was the purpose or function of so-called cave art? Scholars have long debated this question. Some hold that it served as part of a hunting ritual. Others contend that the creatures pictured on cave walls were **clan totems** (heraldic tribal emblems) or symbols of male and female forces. Still others read certain abstract markings on cave walls as lunar calendars, notational devices used to predict seasonal change or the seasonal migration of animals. Long associated with the procreative womb and cosmic

underworld, the cave itself may have served as a ceremonial chamber, shrine, or council room in which rituals were orchestrated by **shamans**, that is, mediators between the natural and the spiritual worlds. In the preliterate societies of Native America, Africa, and Polynesia, shamans have traditionally made use of animals as message-bearers, clan totems, and spirit guides; the animals painted on prehistoric cave walls may have served in similar ways.

Located in the most inaccessible regions of the caves, and usually drawn one over the other with no apparent regard for clarity, it is unlikely that cave paintings served as formal decoration or as records of actual hunts. Nevertheless, the association between cave art and hunting remains convincing. It is supported by ethnographic evidence of hunting rituals practiced in the African Congo as recently as the early twentieth century. At such rituals, leaders of the hunt make sand drawings of the animals they are about to hunt, then fire arrows into the drawings. If the hunt is successful, they smear the images with the blood and fur of their prey. Such rituals constitute a form of *sympathetic magic* whereby power is gained over a person, animal, or object by capturing it visually (in the painted mark), orally (in the proper combination of words, chanted or sung), or by way of prescribed gestures and body movements (dance).

It has been argued that some of the animals depicted in the Chauvet cave were never or rarely hunted; however, archeologists confirm that extinct species of panther, jaguar, and lion were indeed hunted by early humans, not exclusively for food, but because such animals were predators—Paleolithic people were as much preyed upon as they were themselves predators—and competitors for smaller game. Some animals, such as the woolly mammoth, were hunted for their bones, which were used for weapons, musical instruments, and the construction of Ice Age huts, at least seventy of which have been found in Ukraine and parts of Russia (Figure 0.3). Sympathetic magic has characterized religious ritual throughout the history of humankind, but it was especially important in the prehistoric world, where mastery of nature was crucial to physical survival. While we may never know its exact function, cave art, like tools and weapons, surely served the communal well-being of a hunting-gathering culture.

Mother Earth

It is likely that shared responsibility characterized humankind's earliest societies. Women probably secured food by gathering fruits and berries; they also acted as healers and nurturers. Since the female (in her role as child-bearer) assured the continuity of the tribe, she assumed a special importance. As life-giver, she was identified with the mysterious powers of procreation and exalted as Mother Earth. Her importance in the prehistoric community is confirmed by the great number of female statuettes uncovered by archeologists throughout the world. A good many of these objects show the female nude with pendulous breasts, large buttocks, and a swollen abdomen, indicating pregnancy (Figure 0.4).



Figure 0.3 Reconstruction of a mammoth-bone house, Mezhirich, Ukraine, ca. 16,000–10,000 B.C.E.



Figure 0.4 “Venus” of Willendorf, from Lower Austria, ca. 25,000–20,000 B.C.E. Limestone, height 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.

Neolithic (“New Stone”) Culture (ca. 10,000–4000 B.C.E.)

Paleolithic people lived at the mercy of nature. However, toward the end of the Ice Age, between 10,000 and 8,000 B.C.E., as the glaciers covering the Northern hemisphere melted, and grassy plains and forests replaced regions once covered with ice and snow, there occurred a transition from nomadic, hunting-gathering culture to a sedentary one marked by settled, food-producing communities. The domestication of wild animals, the production of polished stone tools and weapons, the construction of mud or brick and timber dwellings and huge stone ceremonial centers, and the development of more sophisticated forms of social organization were some of the main features of this transition. But the defining event of the Neolithic culture was the development of agriculture: the discovery that wild grains and fruits might be planted to grow food. The transition to Neolithic culture occurred gradually and at different stages in different regions.

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- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 12,000 B.C.E. | domesticated dogs (descended from Asian wolves) appear |
| 10,000 B.C.E. | goats are domesticated; herding begins in Asia and Africa |
| 8000 B.C.E. | clay tokens are used in Mesopotamia to tally goods |
| 7000 B.C.E. | cloth is woven in Anatolia (now Turkey) |
| 5000 B.C.E. | crop irrigation is first employed in Mesopotamia |



Figure 0.5 Saharan rock-painting, Tassili, Algeria, ca. 8000–4000 B.C.E. Copy of the original. Men and women are shown herding domestic cattle.

The rock art paintings discovered at Tassili in Africa's Sahara Desert—once fertile grasslands—tell the story of a transition from hunting to herding and the domestication of cattle and camels (Figure 0.5). Gradually, over a period of centuries, as hunters, gatherers, and herdsman became farmers and food producers, the dynamic Neolithic culture emerged. Food production freed people from a nomadic way of life. They gradually settled permanent farm communities, raising high-protein crops such as wheat and barley in Asia, rice in China, and maize in the Americas. They raised goats, pigs, cattle, and sheep that provided regular sources of food and valuable by-products, such as wool and leather. The transition from the hunting-gathering phase of human subsistence to the agricultural-herding phase was a revolutionary development in human social organization, because it marked the shift from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life.

Neolithic sites excavated in Southwest Asia (especially Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq), East Asia (China and Japan), and (as late as 1000 B.C.E.) in Meso-America center on villages consisting of a number of mud- and limestone-faced huts—humankind's earliest architecture (Figure 0.6). At Jericho, in present-day Israel, massive

defense walls surrounded the town, while tombs held the ornamented remains of local villagers. At Jarmo, in northern Iraq, a community of more than 150 people harvested wheat with stone sickles. Polished stone tools, some designed especially for farming, replaced the cruder tools of Paleolithic people. Ten thousand years before plant cultivation and agriculture came to China, communities in the southern part of the country were producing pottery in the form of simple concave ceramic vessels. But it is in Southwest Asia that some of the finest examples of painted pottery have come to light. Clay vessels, decorated with abstract motifs such as the long-necked birds that march around the rim of a beaker from Susa (Figure 0.7), held surplus foods for the lean months of winter, and woven rugs and textiles provided comfort against the wind, rain, and cold. Homemakers, artisans, and shepherds played significant roles in Neolithic society.

Agricultural life stimulated a new awareness of seasonal change and a profound respect for those life-giving powers, such as sun and rain, that were essential to the success of the harvest. The earth's fertility and the seasonal cycle were the principal concerns of the farming culture. The overwhelming number of female statuettes found

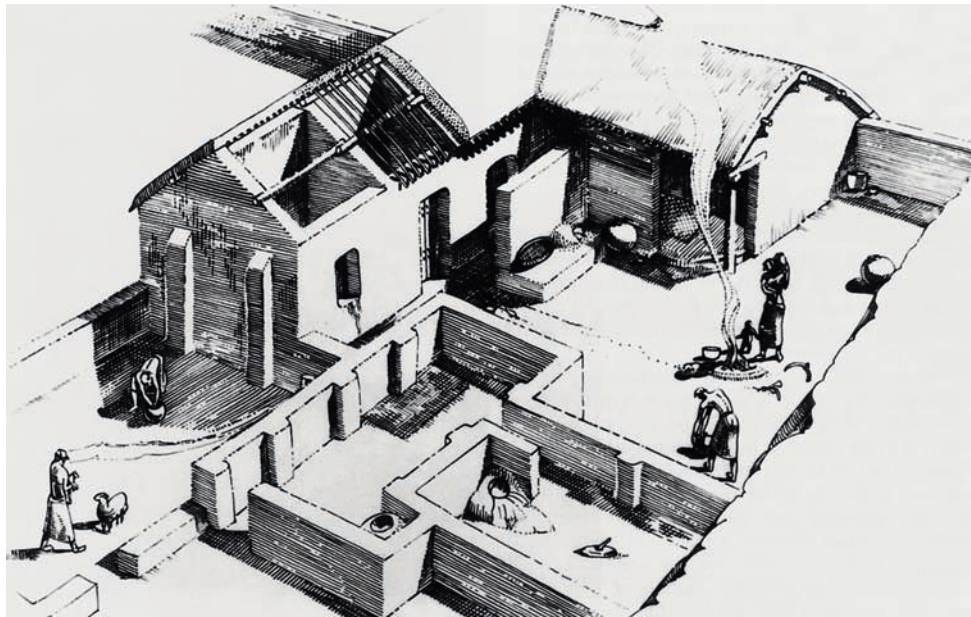


Figure 0.6 Isometric reconstruction of a Neolithic house at Hassuna, Mesopotamia (level 4). Originally mud and limestone.

in Neolithic graves suggests that Mother Earth may have become increasingly important in the transition from food gathering to food production, when fertility and agricultural abundance were vital to the life of the community. Nevertheless, as with cave art, the exact meaning and function of the so-called mother goddesses remain a matter of speculation: they may have played a role in the performance of rites celebrating seasonal regeneration, or they may have been associated with fertility cults that ensured successful childbirth. The symbolic association between the womb and Mother Earth played an important part in almost all ancient societies. In contrast with the Paleolithic “Venus” of Willendorf (see Figure 0.4), whose sexual characteristics are boldly exaggerated, the marble statuettes produced in the Cyclades, the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea, are as streamlined and highly stylized as some modern sculptures (Figure 0.8). Although lacking the pronounced sexual characteristics of the “Venus,” the Cycladic figure probably played a similar role in rituals that sought the blessings of Mother Earth.

Figure 0.8 Female figure, early Cycladic II, Late Spedos type, ca. 2600–2400 B.C.E. Marble, height 24¾ in.



Figure 0.7 Beaker painted with goats, dogs, and long-necked birds, from Susa, southwest Iran, ca. 5000–4000 B.C.E. Baked clay, height 11¼ in.

Neolithic Earthworks

Almost all early cultures regarded the dead as messengers between the material world and the spirit world, hence the need for careful burial. Neolithic peoples marked graves with **megaliths** (literally, “great stones”), upright stone slabs roofed by a capstone to form a stone tomb or **dolmen** (Figure 0.9). At some sites, the tomb was covered over with dirt and rubble to form a mound (Figure 0.10), symbolic of the sacred mountain (the abode of the gods) and the procreative womb (the source of regenerative life). The shape prevails in sacred architecture ranging from the Meso-American temple (see Figure 3.11) to the Buddhist shrine (see chapter 9). The dolmen tomb made use of the simplest type of architectural construction: the **post-and-lintel** principle.

At ceremonial centers and burial sites, megaliths might be placed upright in circles or multiple rows and capped by horizontal slabs. The oldest of such Neolithic earthworks are those found recently in southeastern Turkey (see LOOKING INTO, Figures 0.11 and 0.12). At a site known as Göbekli Tepe (“Potbelly Hill”), located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at the northwestern rim of the Fertile Crescent (see Map 0.1), archeologists have uncovered a series of at least four stone circles dating from ca. 9000 B.C.E.

The best-known Neolithic earthwork, however, is the sanctuary at Stonehenge in southern England, where a group of concentric stone circles, constructed in stages over a period of 2000 years, forms one of the most mysterious and impressive ritual spaces of the prehistoric world (see LOOKING INTO, Figures 0.13 and 0.14). It is probable that Stonehenge, a hub for neighboring Neolithic towns such as Amesbury, served as a celestial calendar, predicting the movements of the sun and moon, clocking the seasonal cycle, and thus providing information that would have been essential to an agricultural society. However, since excavations of the fifty-six pits that circle the rim of the henge have revealed numerous cremated human remains, it is likely that Stonehenge served as a major burial site.

Recent excavations at nearby Durrington Walls confirm that Stonehenge probably functioned as the site of funerary rituals for the cremated dead. Dated at around 2600 B.C.E., the huge settlement at Durrington consists

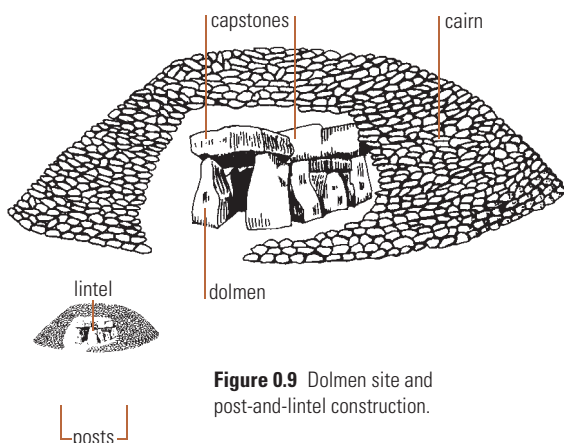


Figure 0.9 Dolmen site and post-and-lintel construction.

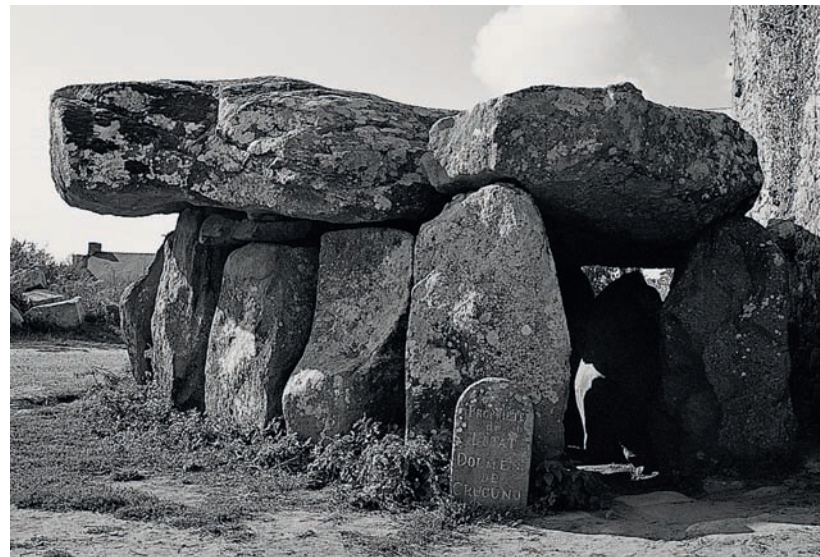


Figure 0.10 Burial site. Dolmen (upright stones supporting a horizontal slab), Crucuno, north of Carnac, France, Neolithic period.

of hundreds of houses, as well as a ceremonial complex featuring concentric timber rings. Buildings thought by archeologists to have housed religious shrines stand along a wide avenue built on the “solstice axis” that may have served as a processional highway connecting Durrington and Stonehenge.

Some scholars speculate that the model for Stonehenge may be found at yet another recently uncovered Neolithic earthwork: the settlement on the Scottish islands of Orkney. This waterside site, known as the Ness of Brodgar (“Brodgar Promontory”), includes ceremonial stone circles and earthwork walls dating from 3500 B.C.E. Excavations in 2011 brought to light polished stone tools, clay pottery, and the first evidence of building surfaces covered with red and yellow painted designs. Ongoing excavation will no doubt unlock more of the mysteries of this and other monumental Neolithic landmarks.

The Birth of Civilization

Around 4000 B.C.E., a new chapter in the history of humankind began: Neolithic villages grew in population and size. They produced surplus food and goods that might be traded with neighboring villages. The demands of increased production and trade went hand in hand with changes in division and specialization of labor, which rapidly enhanced economic efficiency. Advances in technology, such as the invention of the wheel, the plow, and the solar calendar, occurred in the earliest known civilizations of Sumer and Egypt. Wheeled carts transported people, food, and goods overland, and sailboats used the natural resource of wind for travel by water. Large-scale farming required artificial systems of irrigation, which, in turn, required cooperative effort and a high degree of communal organization. Neolithic villages grew in complexity to become the bustling cities of a new era. The birth of civilization (the word derives from the Latin *civitas*, or “city”) marks the shift from rural/pastoral to urban/commercial



Map 0.1 Ancient River Valley Civilizations. In the four great river valleys shown on the map, agriculture flourished to support the rise of cities and the beginnings of civilization. The Nile valley regions are the site of modern-day Egypt and the Sudan. The area designating Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent is shared by modern-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. The Indus valley civilization was located primarily in modern-day Pakistan, northwestern India, and parts of Iran and Afghanistan.

culture; or, more specifically, the transition from simple village life to the more complex forms of social, economic, and political organization associated with urban existence.

The first civilization of the ancient world emerged in Mesopotamia, a fertile area that lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of the Southwest Asian landmass (Map 0.1). Mesopotamia formed the eastern arc of the Fertile Crescent, which stretched westward to the Nile delta. At the southeastern perimeter of the Fertile Crescent, about a dozen cities collectively constituted Sumer, the earliest civilization known to history. Shortly after the rise of Sumer, around 3500 B.C.E., Egyptian civilization emerged along the Nile River in Northeast Africa. In India, the earliest urban centers appeared in the valley of the Indus River that runs through the northwest portion of the Indian

subcontinent. Chinese civilization was born in the northern part of China's vast central plain, watered by the Yellow River. The appearance of these four civilizations was not simultaneous. Fully a thousand years separate the birth of civilization in Sumer from the rise of cities in China. Two newly discovered sites, dating from ca. 3000 B.C.E., in Lima on the west coast of Peru, may be added to those of the river valley civilizations. While no evidence of writing has been found in these early American cultures, other hallmarks of civilization are evident (see chapter 3).

By comparison with the self-sustaining Neolithic village, the early city reached outward. Specialization and the division of labor stimulated productivity and encouraged trade, which, in turn, enhanced the growth of the urban economy. Activities related to the production and distribution of goods could not be committed entirely to memory; rather, they required an efficient system of accounting and record keeping.

Science and Technology

- 4500 B.C.E.** sailboats are used in Mesopotamia
- 4200 B.C.E.** the first known calendar (365 days) is devised in Egypt
- 4000 B.C.E.** copper ores are mined and smelted by Egyptians; bricks are fired in Mesopotamian kilns
- 3600 B.C.E.** bronze comes into use in Mesopotamia
- 3500 B.C.E.** the plow, wheeled cart, potter's wheel, tokens with pictographic impressions, and fermentation processes for wine and beer are all introduced in Sumer

The Evolution of Writing

Writing made it possible to preserve and transmit information. More a process than an invention, writing evolved from counting. As early as 7500 B.C.E., people used tokens—pieces of clay molded into shapes to represent specific commodities: a cone for a unit of grain, an egg shape for a unit of oil, and so on. Tokens were placed in hollow clay balls that accompanied shipments of goods. Upon arrival at their destination, the balls were broken open and the tokens—the “record” of the shipment—were counted. Eventually, traders began to stamp the tokens into wet clay to identify the content and quantity of the traded goods. By 3100 B.C.E. these pictorial symbols, or **pictographs**, had replaced the tokens, and other graphic