

# L From Hunting and Gathering to Civilizations, 2.5 million–1000 B.C.E.: Origins

## Chapter 1 From Human Prehistory to the Early Civilizations

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### OVERVIEW

The earliest known, fully human species lived in east Africa about 2.5 million years ago. Gradually humans developed a more erect stance and greater brain capacity. Early humans lived by hunting and gathering. Because hunting-and-gathering economies require a great deal of space—on average about 2.5 square miles per person—populations remained small, and people lived in small groups. Even a modest population increase in a hunting-and-gathering group required part of the group to migrate in search of new game. Tens of thousands of years ago, the most advanced of the human species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, migrated from Africa into the Middle East, then into Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. Early humans developed tools, first using stones, sticks, and other natural objects. Gradually, people learned to fashion tools and weapons from stone, bone, and wood.

Agriculture began at different times in different places, from about 10,000 years ago onward. It developed independently in at least three regions and perhaps more. The map shows the early centers of food production. Gradually, agriculture spread widely, though not universally, from these initial centers.

The development of agriculture was a radical change in humans' way of life. By providing a dependable source of food, it allowed people to live in larger groups. Later on, toolmaking technology advanced with the discovery of metalworking, which in turn fur-

ther increased agricultural production. Increased production freed some members of the society to perform other kinds of work. This in turn encouraged a further series of organizational changes we call civilization.


Early civilizations arose in five different sites, four of them along the fertile shores of great rivers. At least three and possibly all five of these early civilizations arose entirely independently of each other. The map of early civilizations makes another point clear: large parts of the world were not involved in these developments. Early world history focuses on agricultural civilizations, but it must also pay attention to regions that developed different kinds of economies and different organizational structures.

Hunting-and-gathering societies offered an intriguing mixture of features. Not surprisingly, material life could be meager. The food supply could be precarious, which was one reason for frequent movement and migration, as when the supply of game ran low. On the other hand, average workdays were short, leaving a good bit of time for rest, ritual, and play. Warfare was limited. Hunting bands might confront one another, but conflict involved more bluster than bloodshed—more serious wars developed only when societies became more advanced. Men and women both had important though separate economic tasks, and overall formal inequality was usually limited. Here too, more complex societies would bring changes that were not necessarily improvements.

# II The Classical Period, 1000 B.C.E.–500 C.E.: Uniting Large Regions

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- Chapter 3 Classical Civilization: India
- Chapter 4 Classical Civilization in the Mediterranean: Greece and Rome
- Chapter 5 The Classical Period: Directions, Diversities, and Declines by 500 C.E.

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The major development during the classical period of world history was the formation of large regional civilizations in China, India, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, East Africa, and Mesoamerica. These developments can be seen in the accompanying maps. The map on the top depicts the Eastern Hemisphere early in the classical period (around 800 B.C.E.); the map on the bottom shows the same area around 100 C.E. In China and the Mediterranean, what had been a set of small states—or no states at all—had been replaced by two giant empires. India also developed substantial empires at several key points in the classical centuries.

Although much of the world remained outside the main areas of civilization, these areas had by far the largest concentration of population. Furthermore, the influence of these civilizations extended into surrounding regions outside their direct control. Classical civilizations also had important relationships with nomadic groups, mostly from central Asia, who traded with them and periodically attempted invasion. Nevertheless, regions outside the world's main civilizational areas require some separate attention during this long period.

Except for brief interludes, the main civilizations did not share direct borders. Much of the development of each civilization was separate, and the establishment of distinctive cultural and institutional patterns was a key legacy of this period. Nevertheless, trade offered some contacts, as products like silk were carried from east Asia to the Mediterranean. Occasionally interaction was more direct. The conquests of the Greek-trained warrior Alexander the Great resulted in the creation of a short-lived empire that stretched from the Mediterranean into northwestern India. This empire brought into direct contact Mediterranean, cultural Asian, Middle-Eastern, and Indian societies, an encounter that yielded interesting results, some of which are clearly evident in art of the period. For example, a statue sculpted by an Indian artist depicts the beloved Buddha clothed in Greek fashions. This combination of cultural elements, called syncretism, is a common result of significant contact between cultures. It can have lasting implications. Syncretism was not the most common feature of the classical period, but its occurrence hinted at what would develop more fully later.

# III The Postclassical Period, 500–1450: New Faith and New Commerce

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  - Chapter 15 The West and the Changing World Balance



## THE OVERVIEW: THE WORLD MAP CHANGES

The big changes in the period 500–1450 did not involve political boundaries. They involved the spread of the major world religions—Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—across political and cultural borders and the development of new, more regular systems of trade that connected much of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

In some ways, an age characterized by faith and trade may seem contradictory. Indeed, many religious leaders looked down on merchants as likely to be seduced from a life of piety by the lure of wealth. But in fact the spread of trade often helped disseminate religion, and confidence in a divine order helped merchants to take risks.

The maps included here show the surge of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam from their initial centers and the expansion of Afro-Eurasian trade around the

same period. While Buddhism and Christianity started well before this period, they gained new vigor as the classical empires collapsed. Islam, which spread most rapidly, was entirely new. All three religions involved active missionary efforts. All periodically benefited from government sponsorship and sometimes from military pressure as well. For example, conquerors might impose higher taxes on those they conquered who did not convert to the conquerors' religion, or they might forcibly expel "nonbelievers" from the territory. Through a combination of persuasion and pressure, many millions of people changed their beliefs about the world around them and about the goals of life. The religious beliefs they adopted during the postclassical period established the dominant religious frameworks that still prevail in Asia, Europe, and parts of Africa today.

During the postclassical period, systematic international trade developed that went far beyond the

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## The Early Modern Period, 1450–1750: The World Shrinks

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### THE OVERVIEW: THE WORLD MAP CHANGES

These maps depict two of the big changes in world history that occurred between 1450 and 1750. Over these centuries, a number of new empires came into being, replacing smaller political units characteristic of the preceding postclassical period. Several European countries acquired overseas empires the first time this option had ever been so dramatically developed, while new land-based empires arose in Asia and eastern Europe. The Russian and Ottoman empires extended over both European and Asian territory, while the new Mughal Empire ruled much of the Indian subcontinent.

The second big change involved trade routes. In 1450 international trade focused on exchanges among Asia, Africa, and Europe across some overland routes but also via seaways in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. By 1750, oceangoing routes across the Pacific and particularly the Atlantic had become increasingly important, although the Indian Ocean sea routes remained significant. For the first time, the Americas and, soon, Pacific Oceania were caught up in global exchanges, with results not only in these regions but for the rest of the world as well.

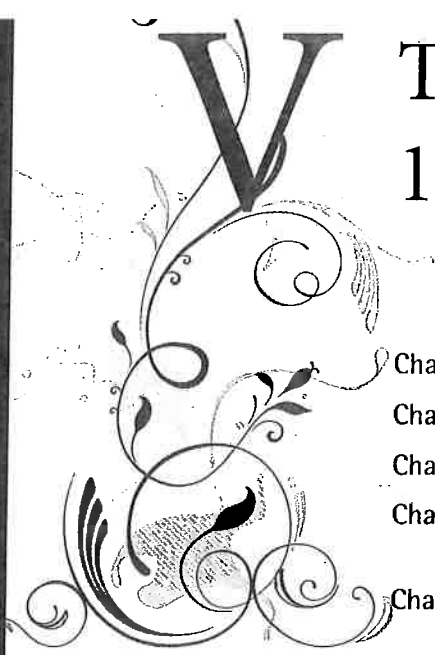
Change, of course, is never complete. Even as world geography shifted fundamentally, some political features persisted during the three early modern centuries. Trade routes also maintained some holdovers from the past.

### Big Concepts

Three themes predominated during the Early Modern period. First, contacts with the Americas ushered in a vital series of biological exchanges of diseases, crops, animals and people. This Columbian Exchange led to major population shifts, in many different parts of the world. It also had environmental impact, particularly in the Americas. Second, obviously, the transregional trade network was redefined, becoming global. Levels of trade increased, with major impact on economies from China to Africa to the Americas. Shipping technology improved once again, and naval contacts were transformed with the use of ships' cannon. Third, partly because of the use of guns, the various new empires formed. Several European powers staked claims in the Americas, but also in certain coastal regions and island groups in Asia. New Islamic empires were joined by the rise of Russia and also renewed political energy in China.

The early modern period saw important social changes, particularly in the establishment of Atlantic slavery and an intensification of serfdom in several key regions. Exploitation of labor increased in many societies, responding to new pressures to produce for global trade and also to population changes. Gender relations shifted in several societies, though there were no global patterns.

Finally, the Early Modern period did not experience systematic cultural change. Important developments occurred, but these must be explored in individual societies or through particular sets of contacts. Precisely because economic exchanges were expanding, many societies proved eager to defend a separate cultural identity.



# The Dawn of the Industrial Age 1750–1914

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## THE OVERVIEW

Maps tell a crucial story for the “long” 19th century—a period whose characteristics ran from the late 18th century to 1914. A radically new kind of technology and economy arose in a few parts of the world, in what began to be called the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution greatly increased industrial production as well as the speed and volume of transportation. Areas that industrialized early gained a huge economic lead over other parts of the world.

Industrial countries also gained power advantages over the rest of the world, thanks to new, mass-produced weaponry, steamships, and developments in communications. Western Europe led a new and unprecedented round of imperialism, taking over Africa, Oceania, and many parts of Asia. Even countries that began industrialization a bit later, like Russia and Japan, were adding to their empires by 1914.


Industrialization was not the only fundamental current in the long 19th century. Dramatic political changes in the Atlantic world competed for attention, though imperialism overshadowed liberal reform ideals in other parts of the world. Industrialization, however, was the dominant force. Its impact spread to art, as some artists sought to capture the energies of the new machines while others, even stylistic innovators, emphasized nostalgic scenes of nature as a con-

trast to industrial reality. Industrialization also supported a new level of global contacts, turning the proto-industrial framework of the early modern period into globalization outright.

## Big Concepts

Industrialization was the dominant force in the long 19th century, but it helped spawn several more specific changes that in turn organize a series of Big Concepts. Western companies used their industrial manufacturing power, plus new systems of transportation and communication, to spread their form of capitalism on a global basis. On a global basis also, capitalists helped organize a growing segment of human labor. This was encouraged also by new patterns of global migration, reflecting population growth, new disruptions to established economies, and the changes in available global transportation. Western industrial dominance also fueled the new forms of imperialism and territorial expansion. Finally, new ideologies and political revolutions promoted reform currents of various sorts, some of them directed against the impacts of industrialization or imperialism. Industrialization and the growing globalization of capital and labor, imperialism, and the mix of new ideologies and reform currents—here were the Big Concepts that help organize a period of fundamental change.

# VI The Newest Stage of World History: 1914–Present

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## THE OVERVIEW

These maps help tell two of the biggest stories of the 20th century. First, the great Western empires and the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and part of the Russian empires had imploded by the end of the century. More new nations arose during the 20th century than during any other span in history. These massive boundary changes were related to other upheavals. The typical political system in 1914 was either monarchy or empire; by the early 21st century, almost every country had a different kind of government from what it had had a century before, and some societies had had multiple kinds of government. The typical social system in 1914 was still dominated by a landed aristocracy or an aristocratic and big business blend. By the beginning of the 21st century, the landed aristocracy had faded dramatically, displaced by revolution or the rise of industry. New nations were thus paralleled by new political systems and new social structures.

But political maps are not the only story. While the current phase of world history involves the rise of the nation-state, the late 20th and early 21st centuries saw new challenges to the nation-state. A variety of new regional combinations formed, the strongest being the European Union. And multinational corporations often possessed powers far greater than any but the largest nations.

The age of empire has passed. But its replacement is less clear. Will it be a welter of new nations, each with a stake in its separate identity, or will it be new organizations associated with globalization? A period of world history has passed. The 19th century has ended far more than chronologically. But defining the new period is an ongoing challenge: The problem is perspective: for past periods we know what the dominant trends and factors were, because we know the end of the story. For the current phase of world history, picking out the key themes amid the specific changes must be more tentative. Several clear conclusions must be mixed with several open questions.