

PART ONE

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

Beginnings in History  
to 600 B.C.E.



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## THE BIG PICTURE

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# TURNING POINTS IN EARLY WORLD HISTORY

Human beings have long been inveterate storytellers. Those who created our myths, legends, fairy tales, oral traditions, family sagas, and more have sought to distill meaning from experience, to explain why things turned out as they did, and to provide guidance for individuals and communities. Much the same might be said of modern historians. They too tell stories—about individuals, communities, nations, and, in the case of world history, of humankind as a whole. Those stories seek to illuminate the past, to provide context for the present, and, very tentatively, to offer some indication about possible futures. All tellers of stories—ancient and modern alike—have to decide at what point to begin their accounts and what major turning points in those narratives to highlight. For world historians seeking to tell the story of “all under Heaven,” as the Chinese put it, four major “beginnings,” each of them an extended historical process, have charted the initial stages of the human journey.

### AP® EXAM TIP

The historical events in Part One make up 5 percent of the AP® World History exam.

### *The Emergence of Humankind*

Ever since Charles Darwin, most scholars have come to view human beginnings in the context of biological change on the planet. In considering this enormous process, we operate on a timescale quite different from the billions of years that mark the history of the universe and of the earth. According to archeologists and anthropologists, the evolutionary line of descent leading to *Homo sapiens* diverged from that leading to chimpanzees, our closest primate relatives, some 5 million to 6 million years ago, and it happened in eastern and southern Africa. There, perhaps twenty or thirty different species emerged, all of them members of the Homininae (or hominid) family of human-like creatures. What they all shared was bipedalism, the ability to walk upright on two legs. In 1976, the archeologist Mary Leakey uncovered in what is now Tanzania a series of footprints of three such hominid individuals, preserved in cooling volcanic ash about 3.5 million years ago. Two of them walked side by side, perhaps holding hands.

Over time, these hominid species changed. Their brains grew larger, as evidenced by the size of their skulls. About 2.3 million years ago, a hominid creature known as *Homo habilis* began to make and use simple stone tools. Others

started to eat meat, at least occasionally. By 1 million years ago, some hominid species, especially *Homo erectus*, began to migrate out of Africa, and their remains have been found in various parts of Eurasia. This species is also associated with the first controlled use of fire.

Eventually all of these earlier hominid species died out, except one: *Homo sapiens*, ourselves. With a remarkable capacity for symbolic language that permitted the accumulation and transmission of learning, we too emerged first in Africa and quite recently, probably no more than 250,000 years ago (although specialists constantly debate these matters). For a long time, all of the small number of *Homo sapiens* lived in Africa, but sometime after 100,000 years ago, they too began to migrate out of Africa onto the Eurasian landmass, then to Australia, and ultimately into the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands. The great experiment of human history had begun.

### *The Globalization of Humankind*

Today, every significant landmass on earth is occupied by human beings, but it was not always so. A mere half million years ago our species did not exist, and only 100,000 years ago that species was limited to Africa and numbered, some scholars believe, fewer than 10,000 individuals. These ancient ancestors of ours, rather small in stature and not fast on foot, were armed with a very limited technology of stone tools with which to confront the multiple dangers of the natural world. But then, in perhaps the most amazing tale in all of human history, they moved from this very modest and geographically limited role in the scheme of things to a worldwide and increasingly dominant presence. What kinds of societies, technologies, and understandings of the world accompanied, and perhaps facilitated, this globalization of humankind?

The phase of human history during which these initial migrations took place is known to scholars as the Paleolithic era. The word "Paleolithic" literally means the "old stone age," but it refers more generally to a food-collecting or gathering, hunting, and fishing way of life, before agriculture allowed people to grow food or raise animals deliberately. Paleolithic cultures operated within natural ecosystems, while creatively manipulating the productive capacities of those systems to sustain individual lives and societies. Lasting until roughly 11,000 years ago, and in many places much longer, the Paleolithic era represents over 95 percent of the time that human beings have inhabited the earth, although it accounts for only about 12 percent of the total number of people who have lived on the planet. It was during this time that *Homo sapiens* colonized the world, making themselves at home in every environmental setting, from the frigid Arctic to the rain forests of Central Africa and Brazil, in mountains, deserts, and plains. It was an amazing achievement, accomplished by no other large species. Accompanying this global migration were slow changes in the technological tool kits of early humankind as well as early attempts to

impose meaning on the world through art, ritual, religion, and stories. Although often neglected by historians and history textbooks, this long period of the human experience merits greater attention and is the focus of the initial sections of Chapter 1.

## *The Revolution of Farming and Herding*

In 2015, almost all of the world's 7.3 billion people lived from the food grown on farms and gardens and from domesticated animals raised for their meat, milk, or eggs. But before 11,000 years ago, no one survived in this fashion. Then, repeatedly and fairly rapidly, at least in world history terms, human communities in parts of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas began the laborious process of domesticating animals and selecting seeds to be planted. This momentous accomplishment represents another "first" in the human story. After countless millennia of relying on the gathering of wild foods and the hunting of wild animals, why and how did human societies begin to practice farming and animal husbandry? What changes to human life did this new technology bring with it?

This food-producing revolution, also considered in Chapter 1, surely marks the single most significant and enduring transformation of the human condition and of human relationships to the natural world. Now our species learned to exploit and manipulate particular organisms, both plant and animal, even as we created new and simplified ecosystems. The entire period from the beginning of agriculture to the Industrial Revolution around 1750 might be considered a single phase of the human story—the age of agriculture—calculated now on a timescale of millennia or centuries rather than the more extended periods of earlier eras. Although the age of agriculture was far shorter than the immense Paleolithic era that preceded it, farming and raising animals allowed for a substantial increase in human numbers and over many centuries an enduring transformation of the environment. Forests were felled, arid lands irrigated, meadows plowed, and mountains terraced. Increasingly, the landscape reflected human intentions and actions.

In the various beginnings of food production lay the foundations for some of the most enduring divisions within the larger human community. Much depended on the luck of the draw—on the climate and soils, on the various wild plants and animals that were available for domestication. Everywhere communities worked within their environments to develop a consistent supply of food. Some relied primarily on single crops, while others cultivated several crops that collectively met their needs. Root crops such as potatoes were prominent in the Andes, while tree crops such as bananas were important in Africa and grain crops such as wheat, rice, or corn prevailed elsewhere. Many communities engaged heavily in small or large animal husbandry, but others, especially in the Americas, did not. In some regions, people embraced agriculture

on a full-time basis, but many more agricultural communities, at least initially, continued to rely in part on gathering, hunting, or fishing for their dietary needs. These various approaches led to a spectrum of settlement patterns from sedentary villages to fully nomadic communities, and many in between. In general, the most mobile of these societies were those of pastoralists, who depended heavily on their herds of domesticated animals for survival. Such communities, which usually thrived in more arid environments where farming was difficult, had to move frequently, often in regular seasonal patterns, to secure productive pasturelands for their animals. However, not all were fully nomadic, because in some regions pastoralists were able to combine permanent settlements with seasonal migration of animals to grazing areas. Thus the Agricultural Revolution fostered a wide variety of adaptations to the natural environment and an equally wide range of social organizations.

### *The Turning Point of Civilization*

The most prominent and powerful human communities to emerge from this Agricultural Revolution were those often designated as “civilizations,” more complex societies that were based in bustling cities and governed by formal states. Virtually all of the world’s people now live in such societies, so that states and cities have come to seem almost natural. In world history terms, however, their appearance is a rather recent phenomenon. Not until several thousand years *after* the beginning of agriculture did the first cities and states emerge, around 3500 B.C.E. Well after 1000 C.E., substantial numbers of people still lived in communities without any state or urban structures. Nonetheless, people living in state- and city-based societies or civilizations have long constituted the most powerful and innovative human communities on the planet. They gave rise to empires of increasing size, to enduring cultural and religious traditions, to new technologies, to sharper class and gender inequalities, to new conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and to large-scale warfare.

For all these reasons, civilizations have featured prominently in accounts of world history, sometimes crowding out the stories of other kinds of human communities. The earliest civilizations, which emerged in at least seven separate locations between 3500 and 600 B.C.E., have long fascinated professional historians and lovers of history everywhere. What was their relationship to the Agricultural Revolution? What new ways of living did they bring to the experience of humankind? These are the questions that inform Chapter 2.

### *Time and World History*

Reckoning time is central to all historical study, for history is essentially the story of change over time. Recently it has become standard in the Western world to refer to dates prior to the birth of Christ as B.C.E. (before the Common Era),

replacing the earlier B.C. (before Christ) usage. This convention is an effort to become less Christian-centered and Eurocentric in our use of language, although the chronology remains linked to the birth of Jesus. Similarly, the time following the birth of Christ is referred to as C.E. (the Common Era) rather than A.D. (*Anno Domini*, Latin for “year of the Lord”). Dates in the more distant past are designated in this book as BP (“before the present,” by which scholars mean 1950, the dawn of the nuclear age) or simply as so many “years ago.” Of course, these conventions are only some of the many ways that human societies have charted time, and they reflect the global dominance of Europeans in recent centuries. But the Chinese frequently dated important events in terms of the reign of particular emperors, while Muslims created a new calendar beginning with Year 1, marking Muhammad’s forced relocation from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. As with so much else, the maps of time that we construct reflect the cultures in which we have been born and the historical experience of our societies.

World history frequently deals with very long periods of time, often encompassing many millennia or centuries in a single paragraph or even in a single sentence. Such quick summaries may sometimes seem to flatten the texture of historical experience, minimizing the immense complexities and variations of human life and dismissing the rich and distinctive flavor of individual lives. Yet this very drawback of world history permits its greatest contribution to our understanding—perspective, context, a big picture framework in which we can situate the particular events, societies, and individual experiences that constitute the historical record. Such a panoramic outlook on the past allows us to discern patterns and trends that may be invisible from the viewpoint of a local community or a single nation. In the narrative that follows, there will be plenty of particulars—events, places, people—but always embedded in some larger setting that enriches their significance.

# Landmarks in World History (to ca. 600 B.C.E.) *(All dates are B.C.E.)*

27,000 26,000 25,000 24,000 23,000 22,000 21,000 20,000 19,000 18,000 17,000 16,000 15,000

## AFRICA

- ← **250,000–200,000**  
Emergence of *Homo sapiens*
- ← **100,000–70,000**  
Earliest evidence of human symbolic behavior
- ← **100,000–60,000**  
Human migration out of Africa into Eurasia

**16,000–9000**  
Development of  
distinctive regional  
cultures

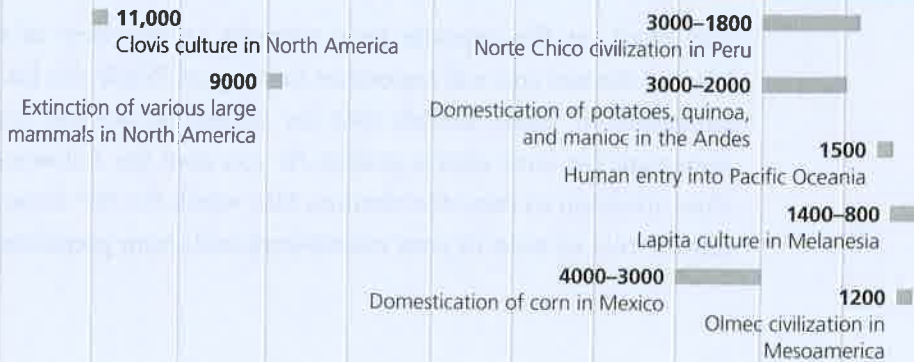
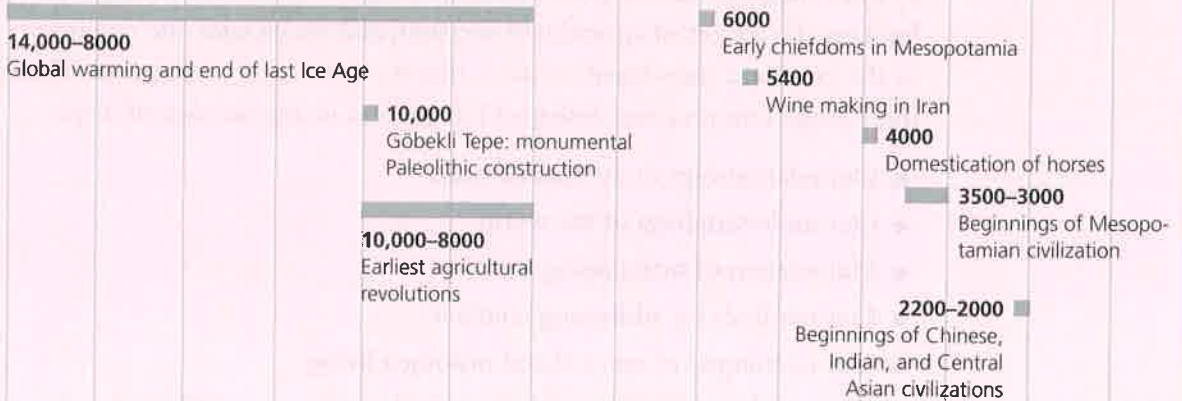
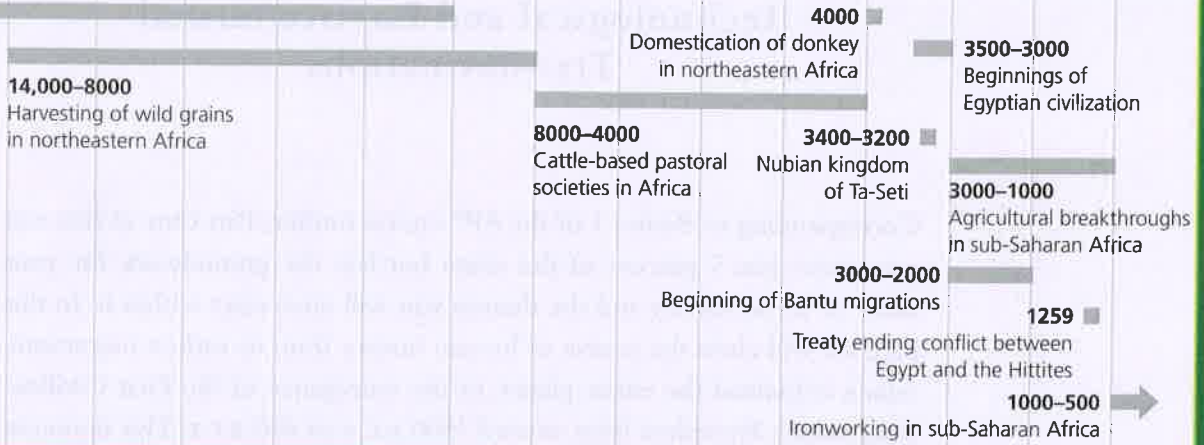
## EURASIA

- ← **70,000**  
Human entry into Asia
- ← **45,000**  
Human entry into Europe
- ← **35,000**  
Earliest female figurines from Germany
- ← **30,000–15,000**  
Paleolithic cave art in Europe
- **25,000**  
Extinction of Neanderthals

## THE AMERICAS AND PACIFIC OCEANIA

- ← **60,000–40,000**  
Human entry into Australia
- ← **30,000**  
Extinction of large mammals in Australia
- ← **30,000–15,000**  
Human entry into the Americas

14,000 13,000 12,000 11,000 10,000 9000 8000 7000 6000 5000 4000 3000 2000 1000





# UNDERSTANDING AP® THEMES IN PART ONE

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## Technological and Environmental Transformations

Corresponding to Period 1 of the AP® course outline, Part One of this text constitutes just 5 percent of the exam but lays the groundwork for your study of world history and the themes you will encounter within it. In this part, we will chart the course of human history from its earliest migrations, which colonized the entire planet, to the emergence of the First Civilizations, which flourished from around 3500 B.C.E. to 600 B.C.E. This immense period of time encompasses most of the human journey and is characterized by three major global transformations: the initial colonization of the earth by humans, the advent of agricultural societies, and, much later, the emergence of the city- and state-based societies that we refer to as civilizations. These three long-term processes reshaped humankind in any number of ways:

- Our relationships to the natural order
- Our understandings of the world
- Our systems of maintaining order
- Our methods for addressing conflicts
- Our techniques of survival and making a living
- Our social organizations and ways of relating to one another
- The range of our interactions with those beyond our own communities

The chart on the opposite page provides an overview of the AP® World History themes you will encounter in this part. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it offers threads that are significant for the time period and important for your course studies. As you read the following chapters, pay close attention to these five themes. Also watch for AP® Exam Tips throughout the text to assist in your coursework and exam preparation.

Environment	Cultures	State Building	Economies	Social Structures
Initial human migrations	Paleolithic religions	Political life in pre-state societies	Gathering/hunting technologies and economies	Paleolithic egalitarianism; ex.: among the San and Aboriginal Australians
Paleolithic environmental transformations	Stories from the Australian Dreamtime	Emergence of chiefdoms	Breakthroughs to agricultural economies	Sedentary life among gathering/hunting peoples
Global warming and the Agricultural Revolution	Connections between religion and politics in the First Civilizations	State building in the First Civilizations	Comparing Agricultural Revolutions; ex.: in Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica	Agricultural village life: gender, age, and kin
Environmental effects of agricultural societies	Outlooks on the afterlife in Egypt and Mesopotamia	Comparing political life in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia	Globalization of agriculture and resistance to it	Pastoral societies
Environmental basis of pastoralism	Cultural diffusion in the ancient world; ex.: Egyptian influence in Nubia, Crete, and Greece	Flowering of an Egyptian empire	Agriculture and technological innovations	Emergence of urban life
Environmental effects of First Civilizations	Art in the Indus Valley civilizations	Sumerian incorporation into Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires	Emergence of pastoral economies	Class structures of early civilizations
Environment and culture in Egypt and Mesopotamia	Writing in the earliest civilizations	Hittite invasion of Egypt and Babylonia	Conflicts between pastoral and agricultural peoples	The evolution of patriarchy
		Diplomatic relations of Egypt and Mesopotamia	Agriculture: setting the stage for civilization	Consent and coercion in maintaining highly unequal societies
			Long-distance trade among ancient Afro-Eurasian civilizations	