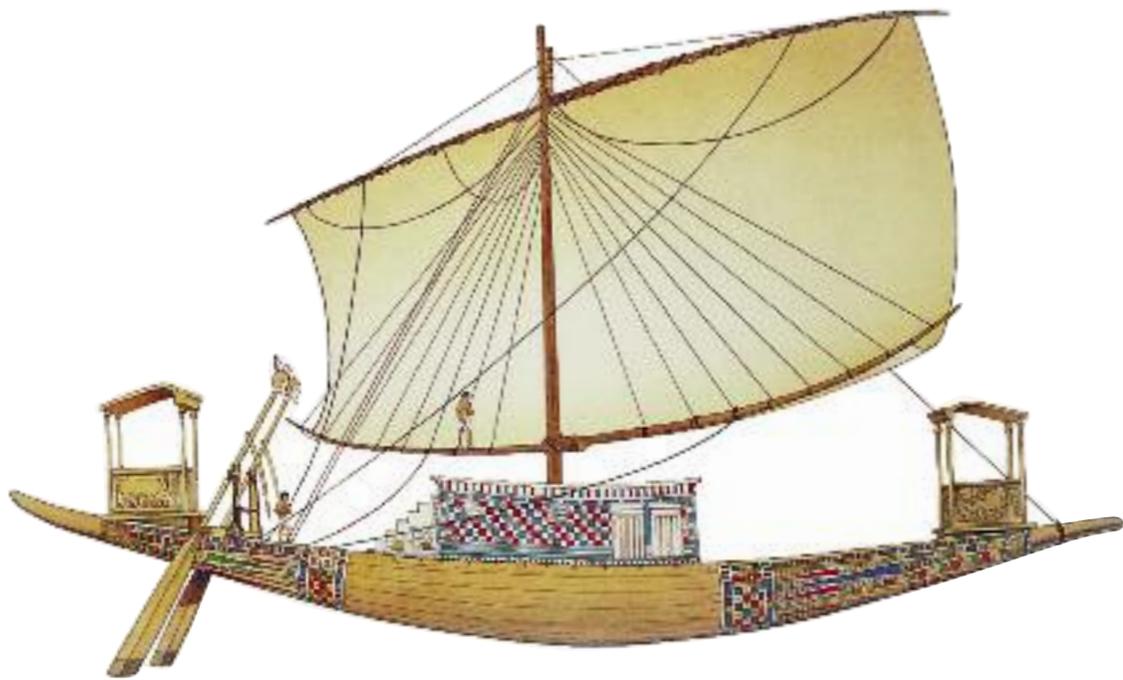


children's illustrated encyclopedia

The Ancient World



 Orpheus

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Abbreviations: BC before Christ; AD anno Domini ("in the year of the Lord", indicating years numbered from the birth of Christ); c. circa ("about")

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ARCHAEOLOGY

ARCHAEOLOGISTS find out about the past by excavating (digging up) the sites of ancient buildings or settlements. They study artefacts such as tools and pottery to piece together a picture of everyday life in the past.

People have always been curious about the past, but for centuries most people's knowledge of early history came from myths and legends. They did not begin to search for real evidence until the late 18th and 19th centuries, when rich Europeans began to travel and collect curiosities from the ancient world.

Evidence was easy enough to find in Greece and Rome, where buildings and sculptures were there for all to see. But in the Middle East, for example, whole cities lay buried deep in the earth until Europeans began to search for objects from its past.



This tiny ivory head of a young girl, which was found at Brassempouy in France, may be the earliest known portrait in the world. Just under 4 cm high, it was carved over 24,000 years ago. Evidence like this can tell archaeologists a great deal about the past and how people lived and worked.

Once this search for the past had started to take a hold, the first "archaeologists" began to travel to different parts of the world in search of evidence. They studied clues, such as descriptions in literature, to discover where lost cities might be and then dug down to find them. They uncovered artefacts which had lain there for centuries. Unfortunately some of these were damaged because these early explorers did not have the knowledge that archaeologists have today. But they did make significant discoveries about early civilizations.



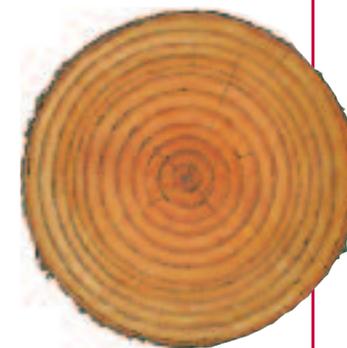
The remains of human bodies give information about diet and disease. The body of this woman has been perfectly preserved by the acid in the peat bog where she was found.

One of the early archaeologists was the German businessman, Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90). He studied two long poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, by the Greek poet Homer, in which two lost cities, Troy and Mycenae, are described. Schliemann decided to use the evidence in the poems to search for the two cities. In 1870 he discovered Troy near the Dardanelles in Asia Minor. He found the hilltop fortified town of Mycenae in 1876. He also came across huge amounts of gold at Mycenae, showing that this early Greek civilization was fabulously wealthy.

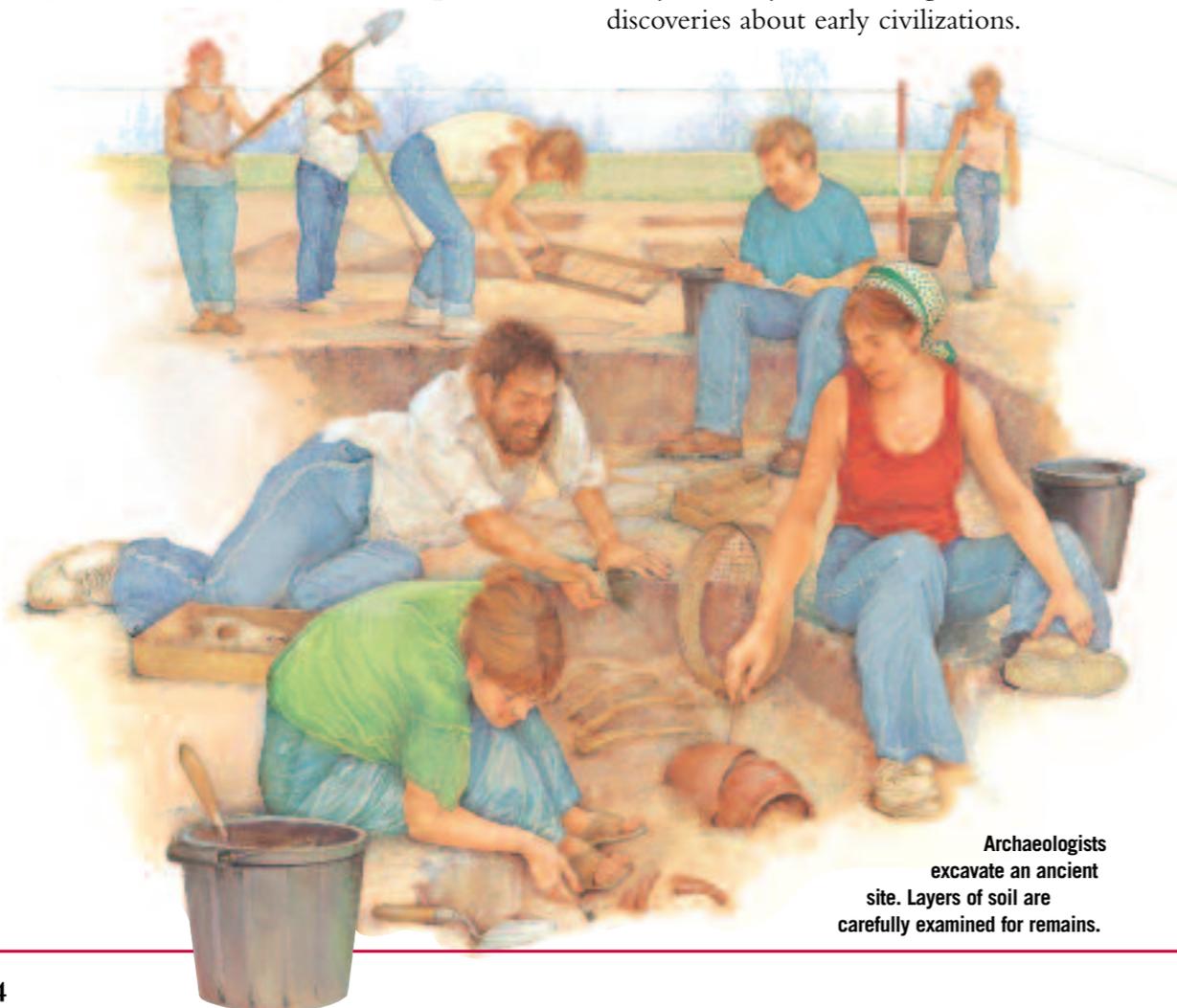
In 1922 a British archaeologist, Howard Carter, made a stunning discovery. He had set out to search for the tomb of the Egyptian boy king, Tutankhamun (see page 21). One morning in November, he and Lord Caernarfon, who had financed the search, found it. Unlike the tombs of other Egyptian pharaohs, grave robbers had not discovered it and all the burial treasures were still there. The king was wearing a fabulous gold mask and his mummy lay in three gold coffins, one inside the other. In a separate chamber were all the possessions he might need in the afterlife.

Archaeologists have also helped to trace the history of writing with finds such as clay tablets containing ancient scripts. One example of such a find is the library of the Assyrian king, Assurbanipal, who reigned in the seventh century BC (see page 26). The library contained 20,000 tablets in an early form of writing. When alphabets such as this were deciphered, people could read ancient historical records which told them more about how the different civilizations lived and organized their communities.

Every year, a tree grows a new layer of bark and sapwood. When the tree is cut down, the layers of sapwood can be seen as single rings. If you count the rings, you can tell the age of the tree. This technique is also used to date wooden objects.



Today, archaeologists can make very accurate assessments of their finds. For example, they can use scientific methods to calculate how old things are. Without archaeologists, we would have only a very sketchy knowledge of history, and the lost cities of the ancient world would have stayed buried for ever.



Archaeologists excavate an ancient site. Layers of soil are carefully examined for remains.



EARLY HUMANS

THE FIRST EVIDENCE of human-like creatures, or hominids, dates back more than four million years. Remains of ape-like creatures, called Australopithecines (“southern apes”), have been found in various parts of Africa. The skeleton of one, found at Hadar in Ethiopia in 1974, was named “Lucy” (it was later found to be a male). Scientists could tell that Lucy, although it had a chimpanzee-like posture, stood upright and walked on two feet—the distinguishing feature of a hominid.

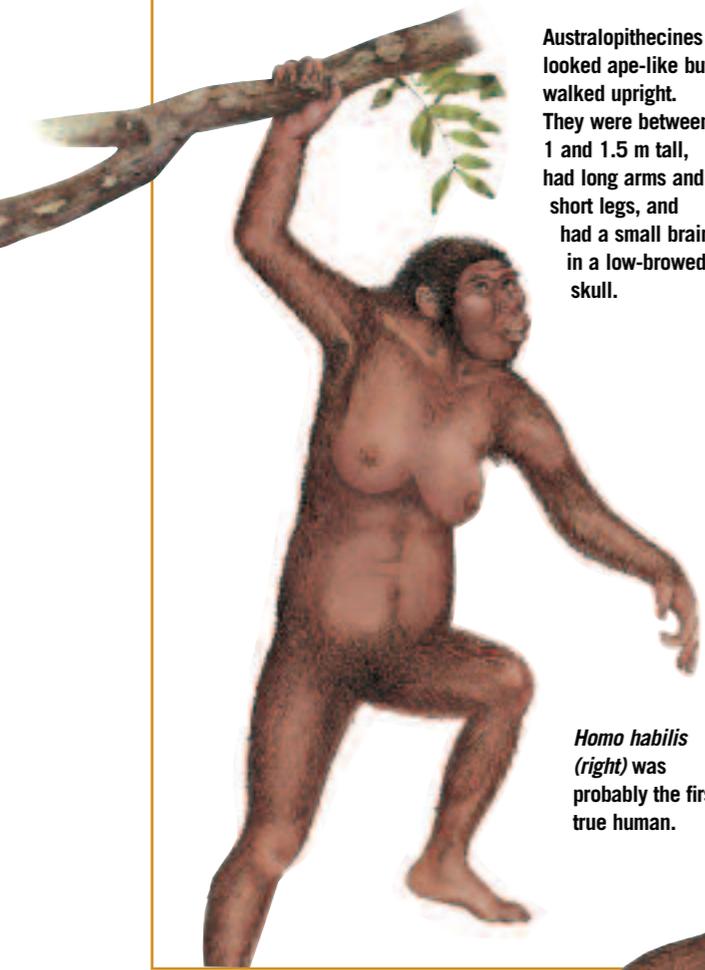
Humans, apes and monkeys are all descended from one ancestor. This may have been *Aegyptopithecus*, or “Egyptian Ape”. It lived in Egypt about 35 million years ago, climbing through the trees on all fours. Of all the descendants of this tiny mammal, only humans developed bipedalism, the ability to walk upright and on two feet.



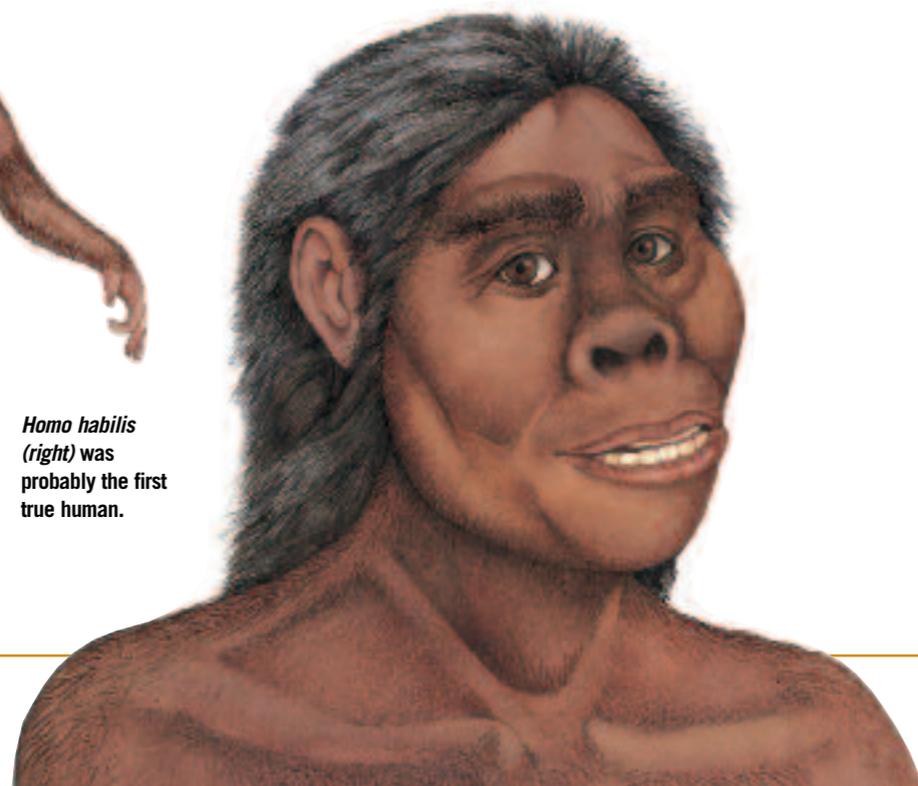
Aegyptopithecus

Bipedalism allowed hominids to develop in an important way that was different from other mammals. They could use their hands for other tasks. By about 2.5 million years ago, *Homo habilis* (“handy man”) had appeared in Africa. It was probably the first true human, although it still looked ape-like. *Homo habilis* could use simple stone tools, rather than its teeth or its bare hands, to kill and skin animals for food. The tools were made by striking one stone against another to make a sharp edge. These early pebble tools are so simple that they look like naturally chipped stones.

Australopithecines looked ape-like but walked upright. They were between 1 and 1.5 m tall, had long arms and short legs, and had a small brain in a low-browed skull.



Homo habilis (right) was probably the first true human.



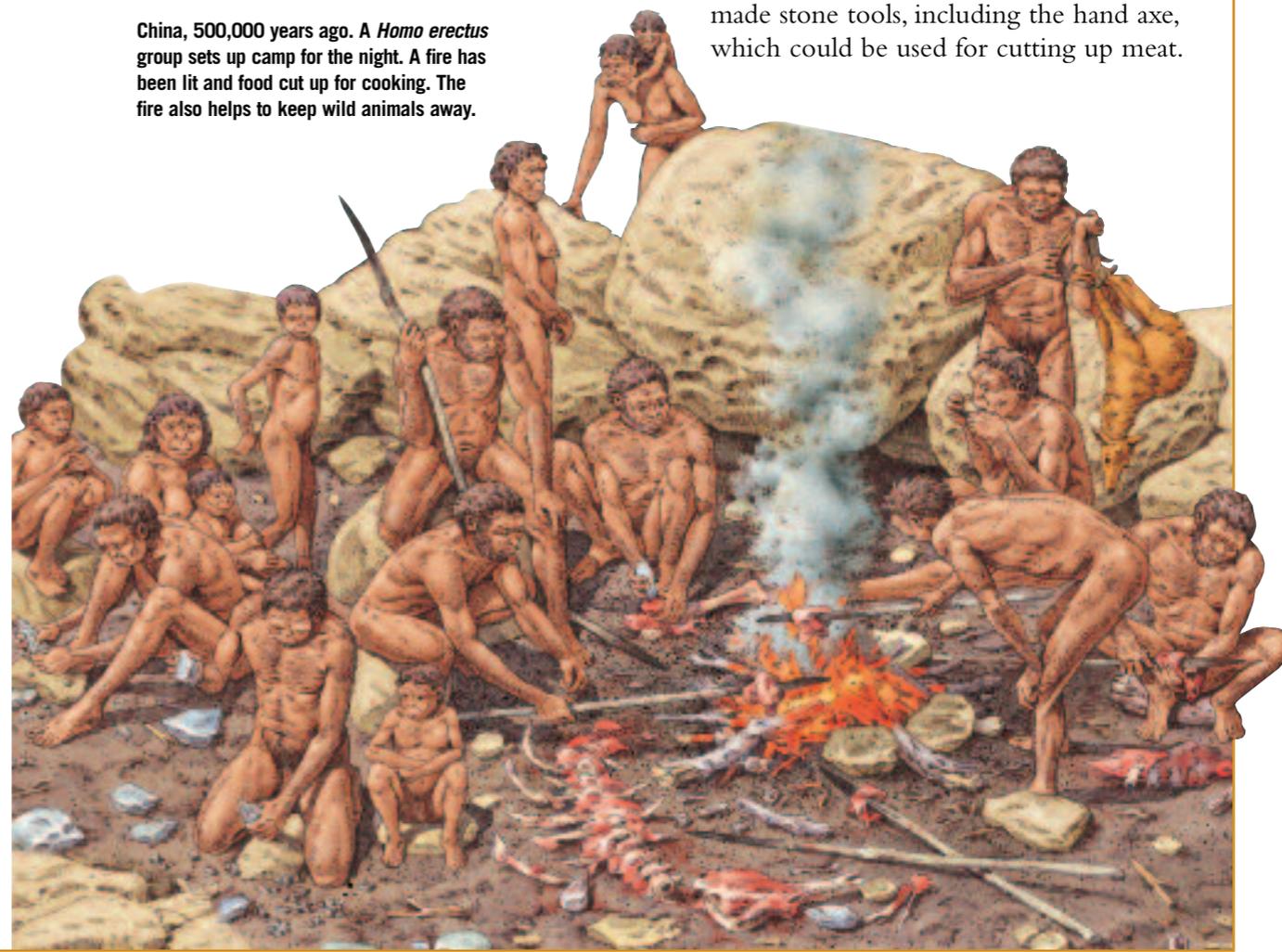
DISCOVERING FIRE

Chewing raw meat must have been hard work but it was thousands of years before early humans were able to soften their food by cooking it. Early humans may have discovered fire by seeing how lightning sometimes set bushes alight. A more intelligent species of human, *Homo erectus* or “upright man”, first appeared in Africa about 1.8 million years ago. Taller, leaner and able to move more quickly across open grassland, *Homo erectus* learned to hunt larger animals with sharper weapons. It was the first hominid to leave the African continent and travel north and east. Remains have been found in China, Java and Europe. *Homo erectus* had protruding jaws and thick brow ridges, but lived in groups and cooked food over a fire.

Homo erectus males went out hunting while the females gathered plant food and looked after their young. Bones found at the site of one of their camps in China show that they hunted and killed elephants, rhinoceros, horses, bison, water-buffalo, camels, wild boar, sheep and antelopes. The hunters could not have caught and killed large animals like these with simple weapons unless they had a larger and more cunning brain than their ancestors. *Homo erectus* may even have been capable of simple speech, although it still had heavy jaws which had developed for chewing raw meat.

The hunter-gatherers were always on the move. At night, they slept in caves or built simple shelters from branches and skins. The females collected firewood so that they could light a fire to keep themselves warm and cook their food. The males made stone tools, including the hand axe, which could be used for cutting up meat.

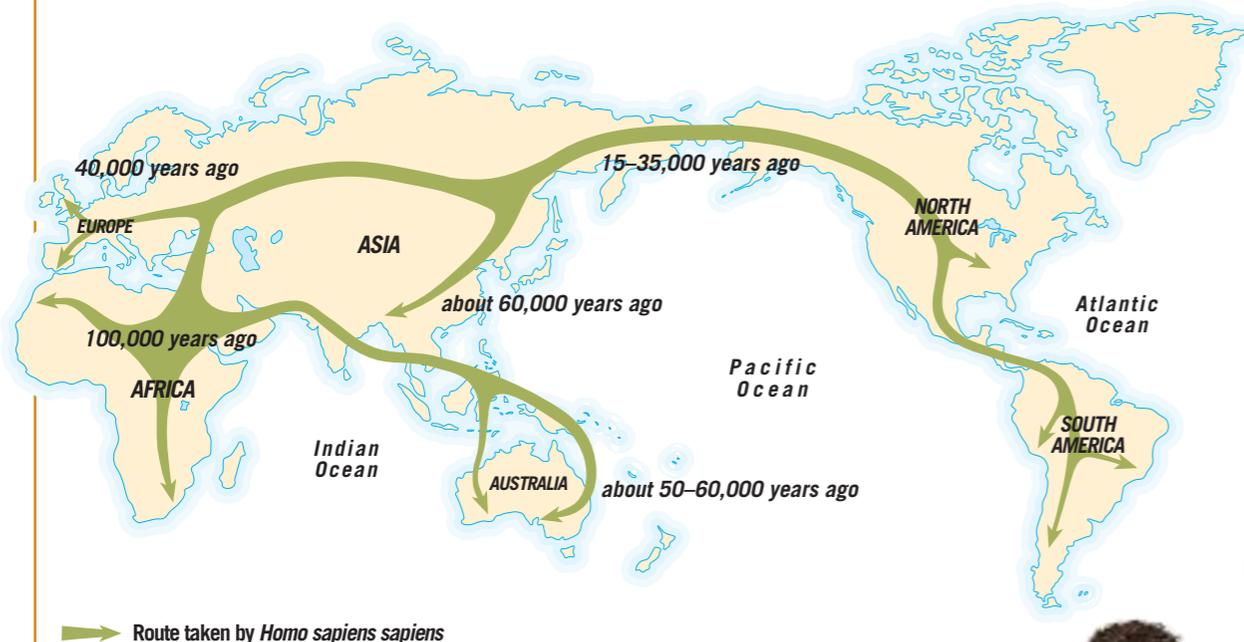
China, 500,000 years ago. A *Homo erectus* group sets up camp for the night. A fire has been lit and food cut up for cooking. The fire also helps to keep wild animals away.



HOMO SAPIENS

MORE MODERN-looking people began to appear about 750,000 years ago. These were early *Homo sapiens* (“wise man”). Remains have been found in Africa, Europe and Asia. Some scientists believe that *Homo erectus* developed into *Homo sapiens* on different continents, but most say that *Homo sapiens* spread out of Africa.

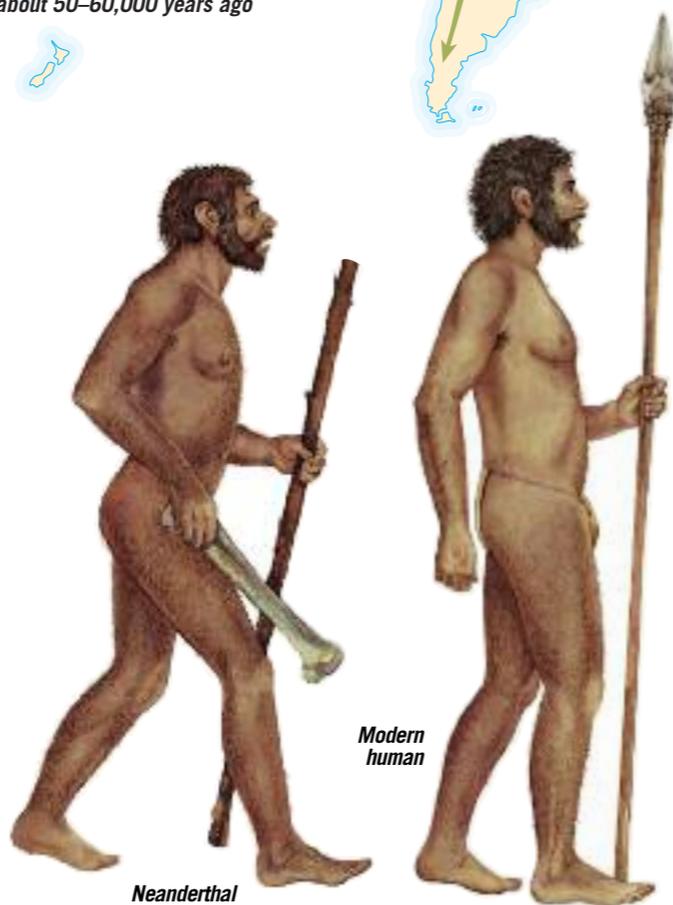
Modern people, given the scientific name *Homo sapiens sapiens*, first appeared about 125,000 years ago, reaching Europe 40,000 years ago. They no longer had the jutting brows and large jaws of earlier *Homo sapiens*, but high foreheads and bony chins. Their brains were larger than any of their ancestors, apart from the Neanderthals. They have been the only humans on Earth since the Neanderthals disappeared.



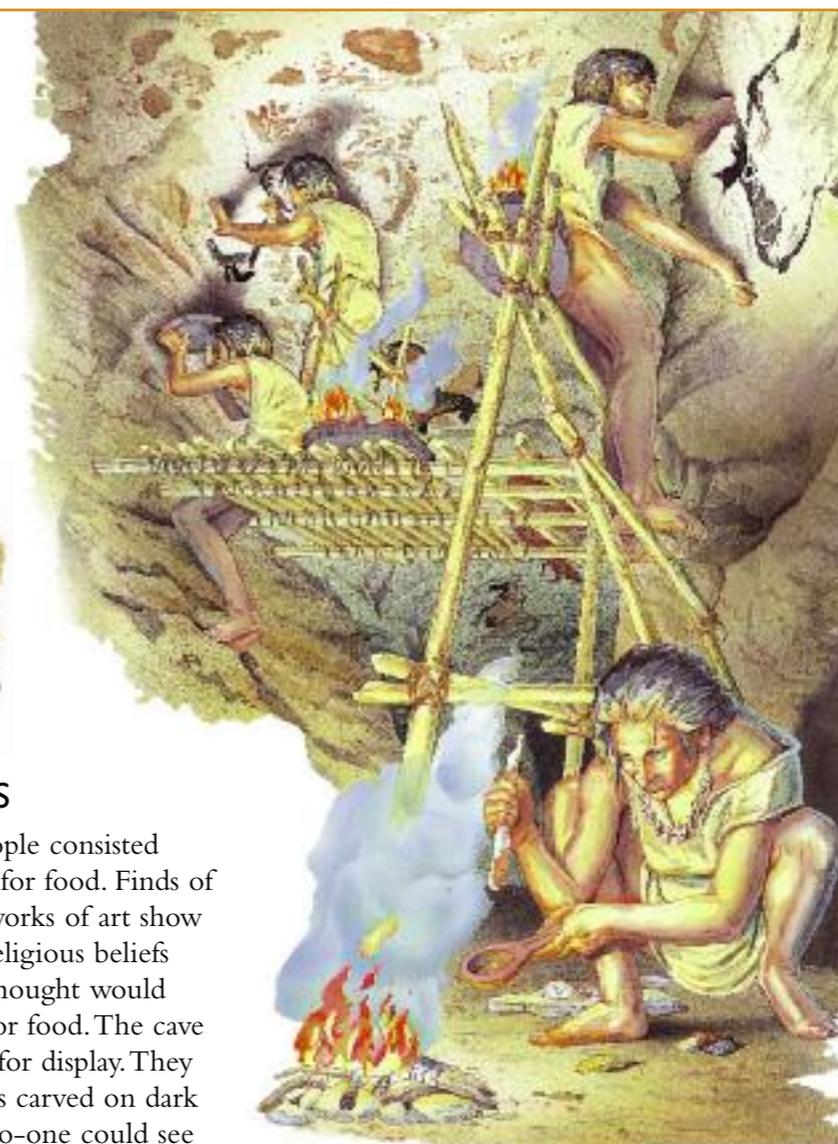
Our own ancestors, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, emerged about 125,000 years ago, probably in Africa, from where they spread out.

Neanderthals (*right*) died out about 30,000 years ago. They probably suffered in competition for food with modern humans.

Neanderthal people were a species of human who appeared more than 200,000 years ago. They are named after the Neander Valley in Germany, where bones were found in a cave in 1857. The bones of Neanderthals have since been found at many sites all over Europe and the Middle East. While they may have looked brutish with their heavy, chinless jaws and overhanging brows, Neanderthals had larger brains than modern humans and, as far as we know, they were the first people to hold religious ceremonies and to bury their dead with possessions for the afterlife.



Humans began to paint and draw on cave walls thousands of years ago, long before they learned to write. The most famous examples of cave paintings were found at Lascaux in France in 1940 (*below*). They were painted about 18,000 years ago using colours made from minerals in rocks. Sticks or bare hands were used to apply the colour to the wall. The pictures, which were hidden away in dark parts of the cave, show animals the people hunted and are very realistic.



CAVE PAINTINGS

Life for early nomadic people consisted mainly of an endless hunt for food. Finds of cave paintings and other works of art show that some may have had religious beliefs and customs which they thought would help them in their quest for food. The cave paintings were not meant for display. They were painted or sometimes carved on dark walls and ceilings where no-one could see them. The artists had to use burning branches to see by and climb ladders to reach their work. The animals are carefully painted using glowing colours.

People also left handprints by placing a hand on the wall and painting round it.



The fact that the paintings are hidden away suggests that they may have been part of a secret ritual to make the hunt more successful. The people may have believed that the pictures would help them to catch real animals. Or perhaps they thought that drawing the animals would ensure that they multiplied so that there were always plenty to hunt. Some of the pictures may have been straightforward records of the things the artists saw around them. Whatever the reasons for them, people went on painting and carving on cave walls for about 20,000 years and examples have been found in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia. They give us many clues about changes in climate and environment.

HUNTER-GATHERERS

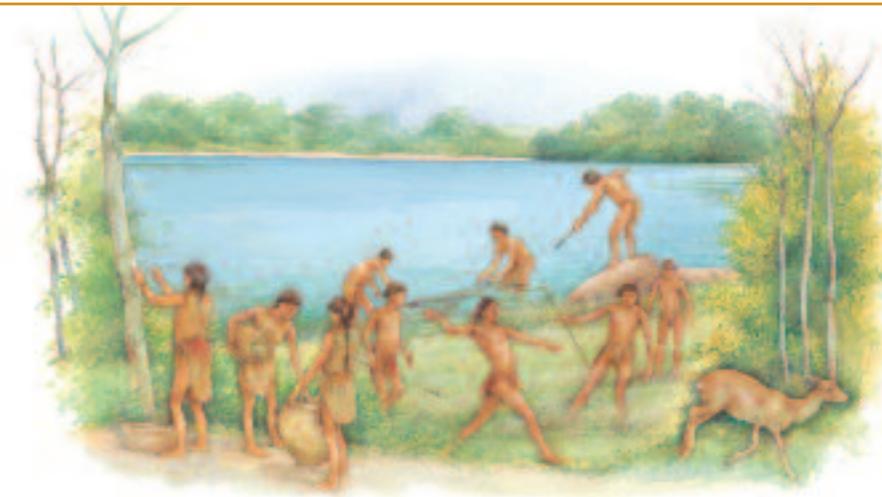
AS TIME WENT BY, hunters became more skilled and made more effective weapons. They were cunning and learned to use tell-tale signs for finding animals, such as footprints and broken branches. They also managed to trap some of the larger animals by driving them over cliffs or into bogs. As people developed language, they could communicate plans to one another, which also made hunting easier and more effective.

The Palaeolithic Period, or Old Stone Age, describes the time between the first use of simple tools (which took place about 2.5 million years ago) to the start of the Neolithic Period, or New Stone Age, when people began to farm the land and grow crops (12,000 years ago).

About 20,000 years ago the world was in the grip of the Ice Ages. Huge woolly mammoths abounded in northern regions. They were prey for the hunters.

The hunters used spears, bows and arrows and knives to kill prey, and fish hooks to catch fish from the rivers and lakes. They did not wander round aimlessly, hoping some animals would come their way. They studied the lie of the land and learned where animals were likely to gather or shelter. They also saw that some animals moved to different areas when the weather got colder or hotter. This study of their environment saved them a lot of time and effort and made life easier.

Most hunter-gatherers lived in small groups of two or three families because a woolly mammoth or a bison went a long way with fewer people to feed. Groups sometimes became larger if there was a lot of food around. Each group would probably have had a leader who made decisions and plans for the others.



Here, hunters are using wooden spears with sharp stone tips to catch their prey. Shaped pieces of wood or bone were used as spear-throwers, which helped the hunters throw their spears with more force. Fishermen trap fish from the lake in a net, while the women gather nuts and fruit.

The group did not stay in one place for long. Animals moved on and the hunters followed them.

GATHERING PLANTS

Hunting was important, but plant food was vital, too, because it provided a more varied diet. People came to know where certain nuts, fruit and grasses grew. They learned that bees made honey, which could be used to sweeten food. They dug into the ground to find roots and tubers. Plants provided a regular supply of food during the growing season, which could keep the group nourished if hunting became difficult. But meat remained an essential part of the diet.

MAKING CLOTHES

Animal skins had many uses, including making clothes. First the skins had to be prepared so that they did not crack. Each skin was stretched out on the ground and scraped to remove the animal fat. Then it was smoothed with a bone tool to make it supple and easier to work with. When the skins were ready, they were cut into shape with a stone knife. Holes were punched along the edges so that they could be sewn together using a bone needle and a length of sinew (animal muscle tendon).

At the end of the day, the group gathers back at the camp. Shelters were made from whatever material was available. Some tents were made from animal skins draped over a simple wooden frame. Mammoth-hunters built igloo-shaped huts from mammoth bones. Shelters could also be made by weaving branches together to form a screen. This was curved round a frame of sticks to form a hut. It could be covered with skins to give extra warmth.

Huts or tents were often grouped in a circle to protect the people from wild animals and from bad weather. The fire also deterred the animals from coming any closer.



FIRST FARMERS

THE HUNTERS and gatherers of the late Palaeolithic Period made other important advances. They tamed, or domesticated, wild animals such as wolves, which became the first hunting dogs. The people also realised that the seeds from grasses they picked could be sown in the ground to produce more plants.

Once these discoveries had been made, people could settle in permanent groups and form communities. The first farming communities began about 12,000 years ago. Farmers planted early forms of wheat and barley that grew wild on the hillsides, and domesticated animals such as sheep and goats for milk and meat.

The farmers needed sunshine and water for their crops. The first communities settled on the banks of rivers in the hot lands of the Middle East and North Africa. Some farmed the fertile soil on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq: *see page 26*). Others settled in the valley of the River Nile in Egypt (*see page 16*).

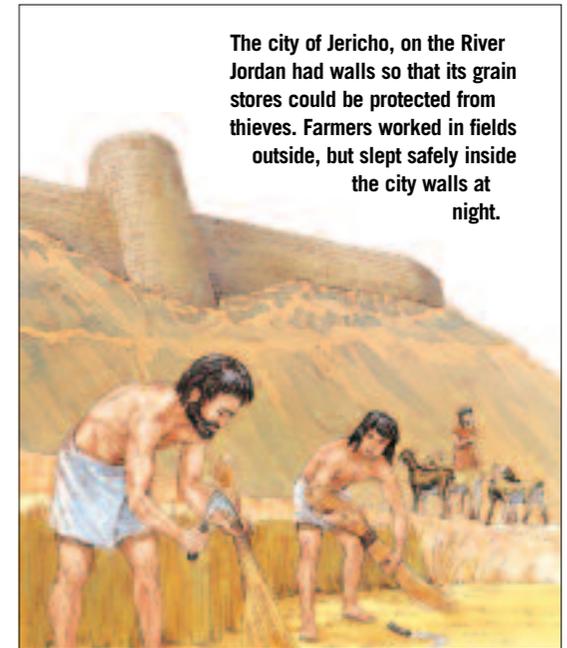
Groups of families built mud-brick houses clustered together to form villages. They learned to make the things they needed for farming: tools for working the land, baskets for gathering crops and pots for storing food. The first farmers used very simple tools such as sticks, which they jabbed into the ground to make holes and shallow trenches for planting seeds.

PLOUGHING THE LAND

Farming was slow and laborious using these methods. Farmers could only grow enough food for themselves and their families, which meant that every able person in the community had to farm to survive.

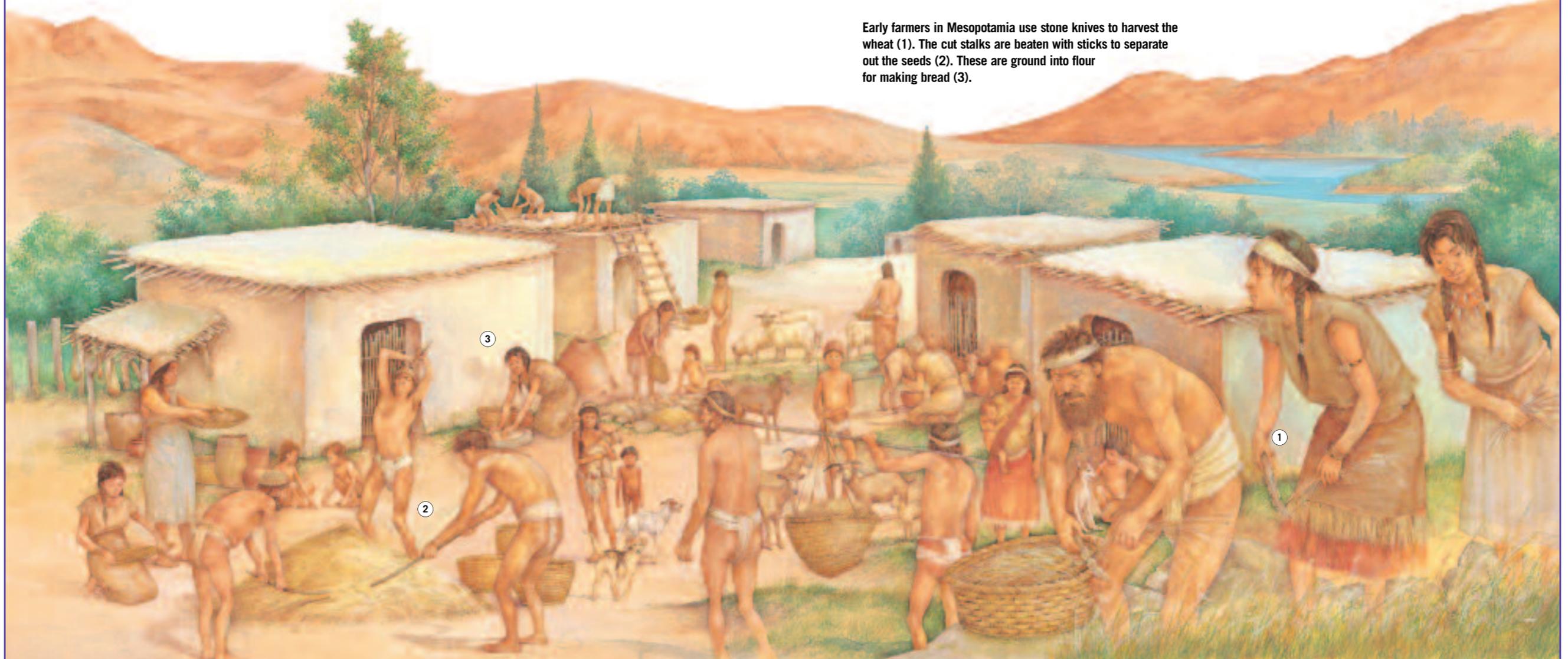
Some new tools were needed to enable food to be produced more efficiently. One was the invention of the plough. The first plough was probably a bough with forked branches that could be pulled along the ground to turn the soil.

Most of our evidence about early ploughs comes from wall paintings and carvings. We know that a simple scratch plough was used in Mesopotamia from about 4500 BC and in ancient Egypt from about 2600 BC.



The city of Jericho, on the River Jordan had walls so that its grain stores could be protected from thieves. Farmers worked in fields outside, but slept safely inside the city walls at night.

Early farmers in Mesopotamia use stone knives to harvest the wheat (1). The cut stalks are beaten with sticks to separate out the seeds (2). These are ground into flour for making bread (3).

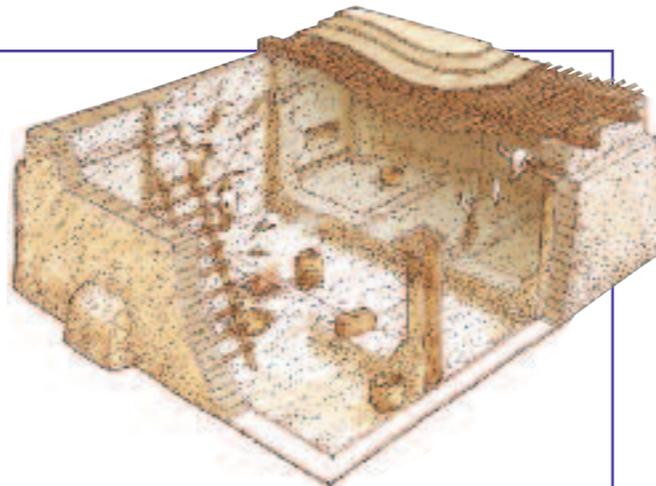


THE FIRST CITIES

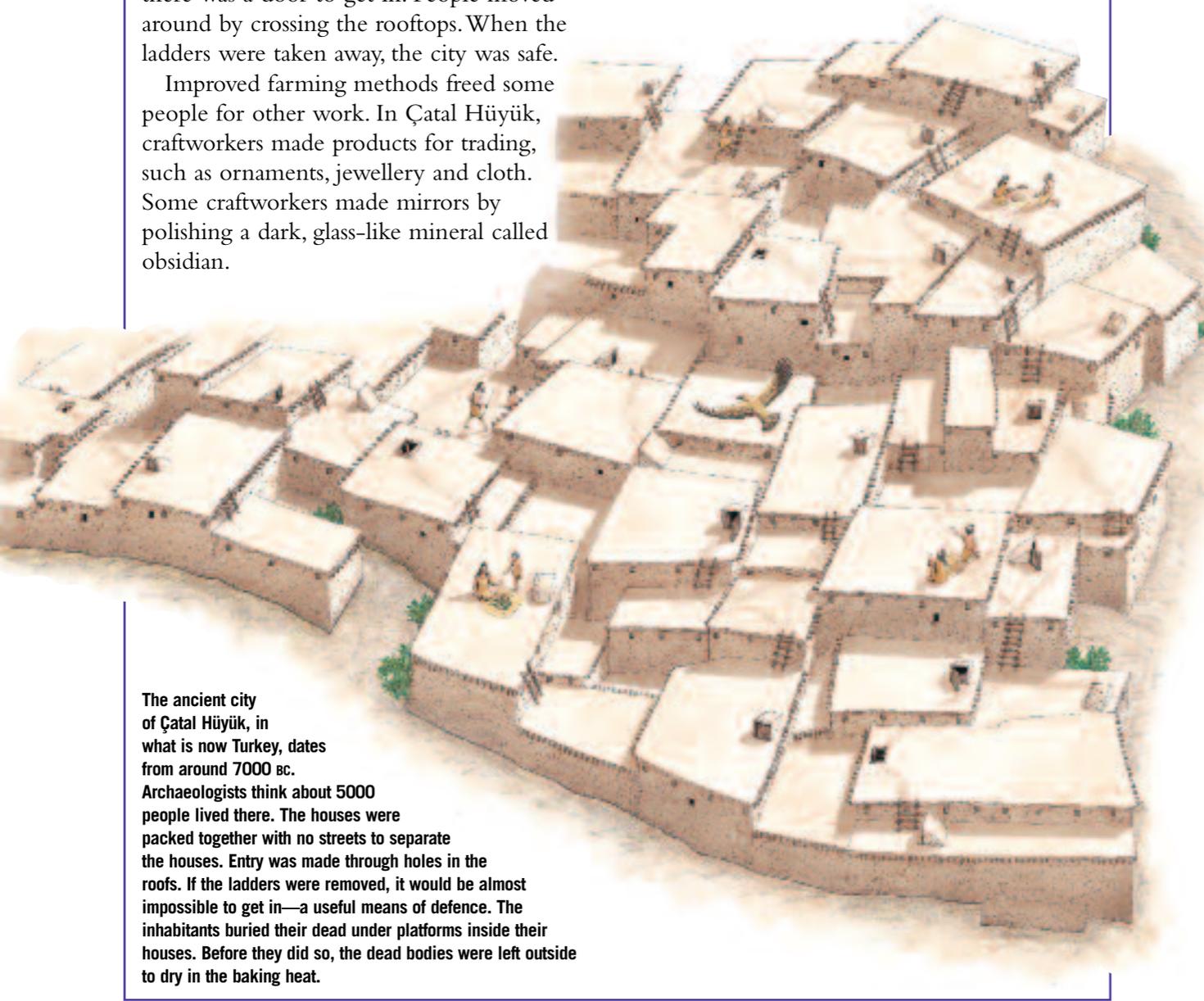
EARLY VILLAGES were built of mud-brick which crumbled after a time. When the houses were no longer useable, new houses were built over the ruins. In time, a mound, called a *tell* in Arabic or *höyük* in Turkish, formed as more buildings were built one top of the other.

Eventually towns and cities grew up on some of these sites. The ancient city of Çatal Hüyük (*below*) in Turkey had no outer wall to protect it. The houses were linked together and there were no streets. A ladder ran up to the roof of each house, where there was a door to get in. People moved around by crossing the rooftops. When the ladders were taken away, the city was safe.

Improved farming methods freed some people for other work. In Çatal Hüyük, craftworkers made products for trading, such as ornaments, jewellery and cloth. Some craftworkers made mirrors by polishing a dark, glass-like mineral called obsidian.



The houses in Çatal Hüyük each had a living room, a store-room and a religious shrine. This illustration (*above*) shows what a shrine would have looked like. It contained plaster figures of the gods and sometimes wall paintings of animals.



The ancient city of Çatal Hüyük, in what is now Turkey, dates from around 7000 BC. Archaeologists think about 5000 people lived there. The houses were packed together with no streets to separate the houses. Entry was made through holes in the roofs. If the ladders were removed, it would be almost impossible to get in—a useful means of defence. The inhabitants buried their dead under platforms inside their houses. Before they did so, the dead bodies were left outside to dry in the baking heat.

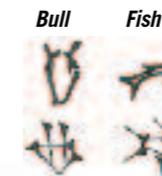
EARLY WRITING

WHEN PEOPLE BEGAN to trade with each other, it became essential to record the details in writing. Writing was invented by the ancient Sumerians in Mesopotamia about 5500 years ago. The earliest writing was a series of marks scratched on to stone tablets. Later, scribes began to write on clay tablets using a reed pen called a stylus. The earliest writing was in picture form. This was very slow because there was a different picture for every word and scribes had to learn more than 2000 symbols.

Early writing in picture symbols on a clay tablet (*left*).



Symbols were later replaced by cuneiform. Below are two words written in both ways.



A scribe records the number of sheep and goats a farmer has. He is making symbols, called cuneiform, on a clay tablet, using a stylus with a wedge-shaped tip. This method was very slow and complex and mastered by only a few trained scribes. People had no way of recording numbers, so they counted on their fingers and thumbs.



The Mesopotamians gradually developed a method of writing using symbols. This was called “cuneiform” writing, from the Greek word for “wedge-shaped”. The wedge-shaped tip of the stylus was used to make different symbols in soft clay. But even this system used about 600 symbols. Even so, cuneiform writing was adopted by the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians (*see pages 26-27*).

Early writing was slow and laborious and few people could write or read the symbols. For centuries, it was mainly used for recording taxes and details of ownership and sales. Later, people realised that words and syllables were made up of a few sounds and that each sound could be shown by a single letter. The first people to understand this were the Canaanites, who lived on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. They developed an alphabet known as “Semitic” script. After this, different scripts began to follow. The Phoenicians (*see page 25*) used an alphabet which contained only consonants. The Greeks adopted it, introducing vowels as well. This was the beginning of the modern alphabet.

The word alphabet comes from “alpha” and “beta”, the first two letters of the Greek alphabet. The Romans developed their alphabet (the one we still use today) from later versions of the Greek alphabet and some of the letters are similar.

The Chinese have never had an alphabet. Their writing consists of thousands of symbols or “characters”.

Writing was invented for practical reasons but it is one of the major breakthroughs in history. In fact, history itself could not be recorded until people could write it down.

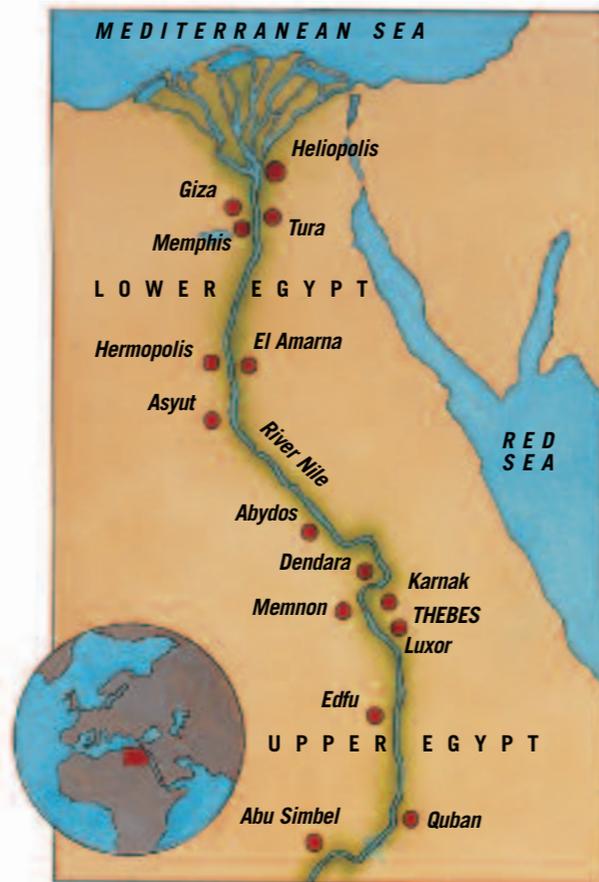
A society in which people live in towns, where many of them work as craftsmen, scribes, builders, merchants and other occupations, is described as a civilized one. The first civilizations grew up in the Middle East, India, China and Egypt.

ANCIENT EGYPT

ONE OF THE GREATEST and longest-lasting civilizations grew up on a narrow strip of fertile land along the banks of the River Nile in Egypt (see map, right). The ancient Egyptians were surrounded by arid desert and their farming year relied on the annual flooding of the Nile. Yet their civilization lasted for 3500 years and they created some of the most spectacular monuments of any in the ancient world.

The first Egyptians were wandering hunters who came from the desert to settle in the Nile Valley. They discovered that the summer floods provided fertile soil for growing grain and pasture for raising sheep, goats and cattle. The Nile floods were essential but they could also be disastrous. If the waters rose at the wrong time of year, all the crops would be ruined. If there was not enough water, the crops would not grow and people would starve. Early Egyptian farmers learned to control the flood waters by building dykes and ponds for storing water for use in time of drought.

As time passed, villages grew into towns and cities and the people developed a system of government. Craftworkers in the towns and cities learned to work metals such as copper. The potters' wheel, an import from Asia, was a valuable tool. Egypt became wealthy as trading increased.



By about 3400 BC Egypt consisted of two kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt. In about 3100 BC, Menes, a king of Nekhen in Upper Egypt conquered Lower Egypt and became the first pharaoh of both kingdoms. The history of Egypt is divided into three main periods: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom.

At the time of the Old Kingdom (2575-2134 BC), belief in the afterlife became an important part of ancient Egyptian religion. It was the age of pyramid-building (see page 20). In the Middle Kingdom (2040-1640 BC), Egypt traded with other lands and conquered Nubia to the south.

The New Kingdom (1560-1070 BC) was Egypt's Golden Age. With their capital at Thebes, the pharaohs conquered lands in the Middle East and made their kingdom prosperous. The pharaohs built great temples. The wealth of ancient Egypt attracted other rulers. Egypt later fell to the armies of Assyria, Greece, Persia and finally the Romans in 30 BC.



This is a bust of Queen Nefertiti (left), wife of Akhenaten (ruled 1379-1362 BC). They wanted to make the people abandon their many gods and instead worship only one, Aten, the Sun in the sky. After their deaths, Egyptians reverted to their old ways. Queen Nefertiti ruled Egypt briefly in her own right.

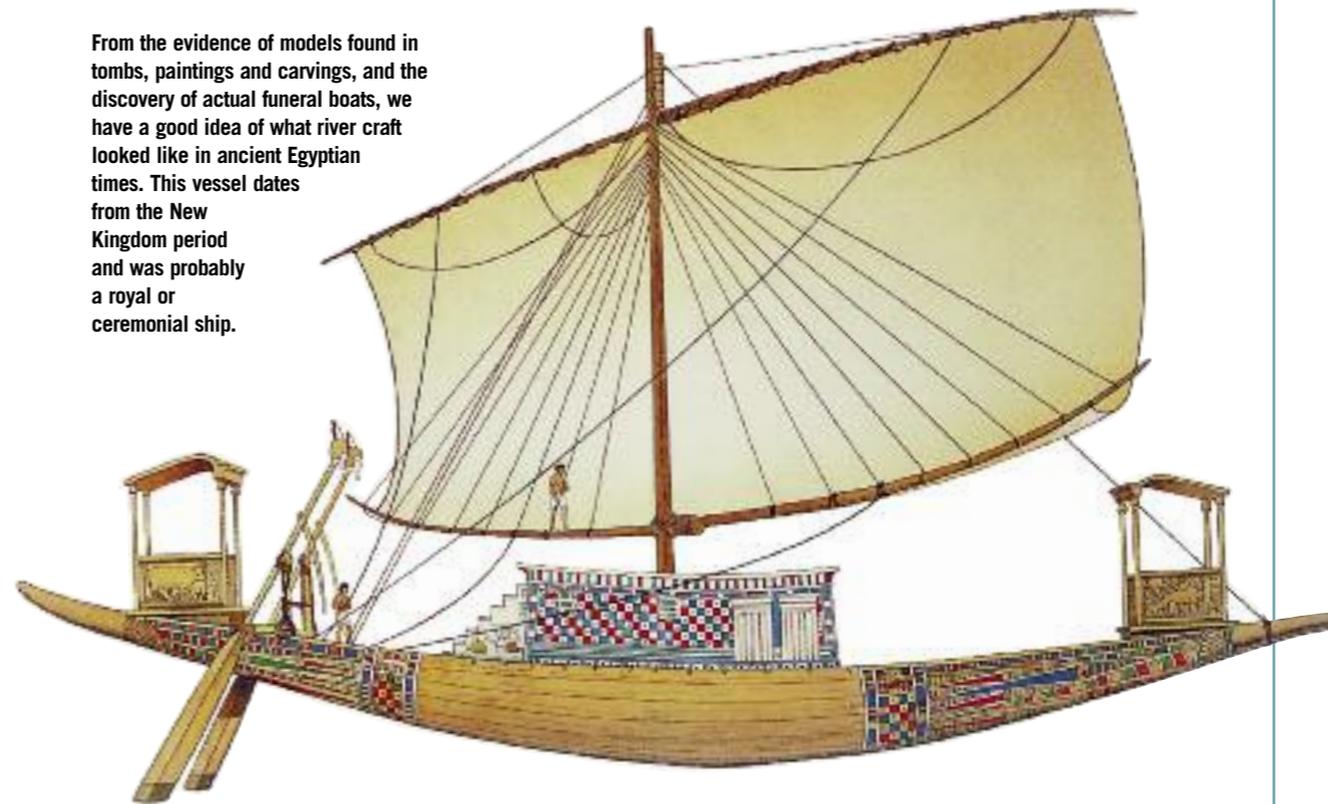


Egypt was often in conflict with its neighbours and also with enemies from further afield. The pharaohs and their armies would ride out to conquer new lands and return home laden with riches taken in war. Most of the prisoners became slaves. The riches were used to embark on ambitious building projects, often in honour of the pharaoh's conquests. The two temples at Abu Simbel were built by Rameses II (ruled 1290-1224 BC) to commemorate his victory over the Hittites, who came from Syria. Outside the Great Temple are colossal seated statues of the king (above, right). The smaller temple is dedicated to Rameses' queen, Nefertari.

BOATS ON THE NILE

Boats on the Nile were the main form of transport in ancient Egypt. The earliest boats were made from bundles of papyrus (a reed that grows by the Nile) tied together. They had wooden paddles or long poles. Later boats were larger and had square sails. The boat in the picture has a large sail and two huge rudder oars for steering it.

From the evidence of models found in tombs, paintings and carvings, and the discovery of actual funeral boats, we have a good idea of what river craft looked like in ancient Egyptian times. This vessel dates from the New Kingdom period and was probably a royal or ceremonial ship.



The pyramids were built as tombs for the pharaohs or kings of ancient Egypt. They were incredible feats of engineering for their time. Many survive today.

EVERYDAY LIFE

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS grew their crops in fertile black soil on the banks of the Nile. They learned to irrigate the land so that it was not too dry or too sodden after the floods. They dug channels between the fields to take water to fields that were further away from the river. They also invented a device called a *shaduf* for lifting water from the river to water the fields close by.

Most people were farmers, who worked throughout the year to provide food for people in the towns. Cattle pulled simple ploughs that turned the soil and prepared the fields for sowing the seeds.

Farmers grew wheat and barley, fruit and vegetables, and flax for making linen. The harvest was the most important time in the farming year, for if it was not successful, the people would starve. Before the crops were harvested, scribes wrote down the size of the field and the amount of grain it would probably produce. Then the wheat or barley was cut down with sickles and made into sheaves, which were taken away for threshing (removing the ears of grain from the stalks). Cattle and donkeys were driven into the threshing enclosure to trample on the grain and separate it from the stalks. Then the grain was thrown into the air on shovels to clean it and separate out bits of straw and chaff.



In Egyptian towns, people could obtain the things they needed from the markets. There was no money so people exchanged or bartered goods for others of similar value.

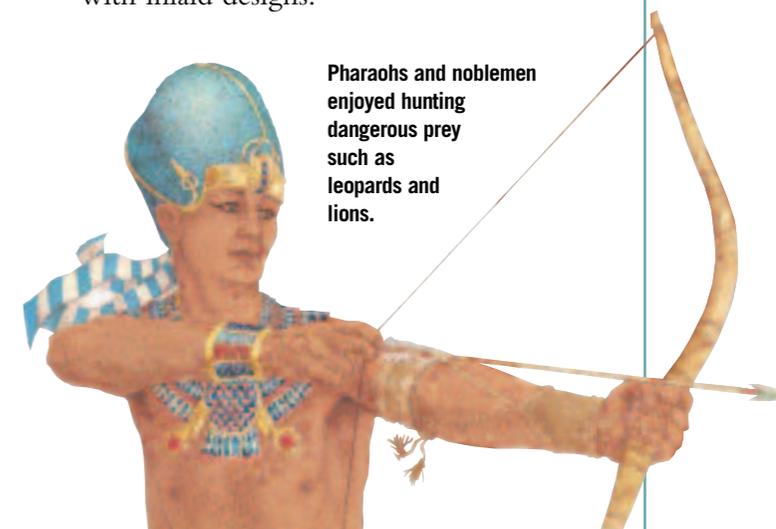
The scribes kept a strict eye on what the farmer produced because the crops did not really belong to the farmer. He was expected to hand most of them over to the government to feed people who were not farmers. If a farmer did not produce as much food as he should have done, he was punished with a beating.

As food was produced more efficiently, larger numbers of people were able to do other types of work. Many of these people were craftworkers who had workshops in the towns. Often a son would learn his father's craft and follow him into the workshop.

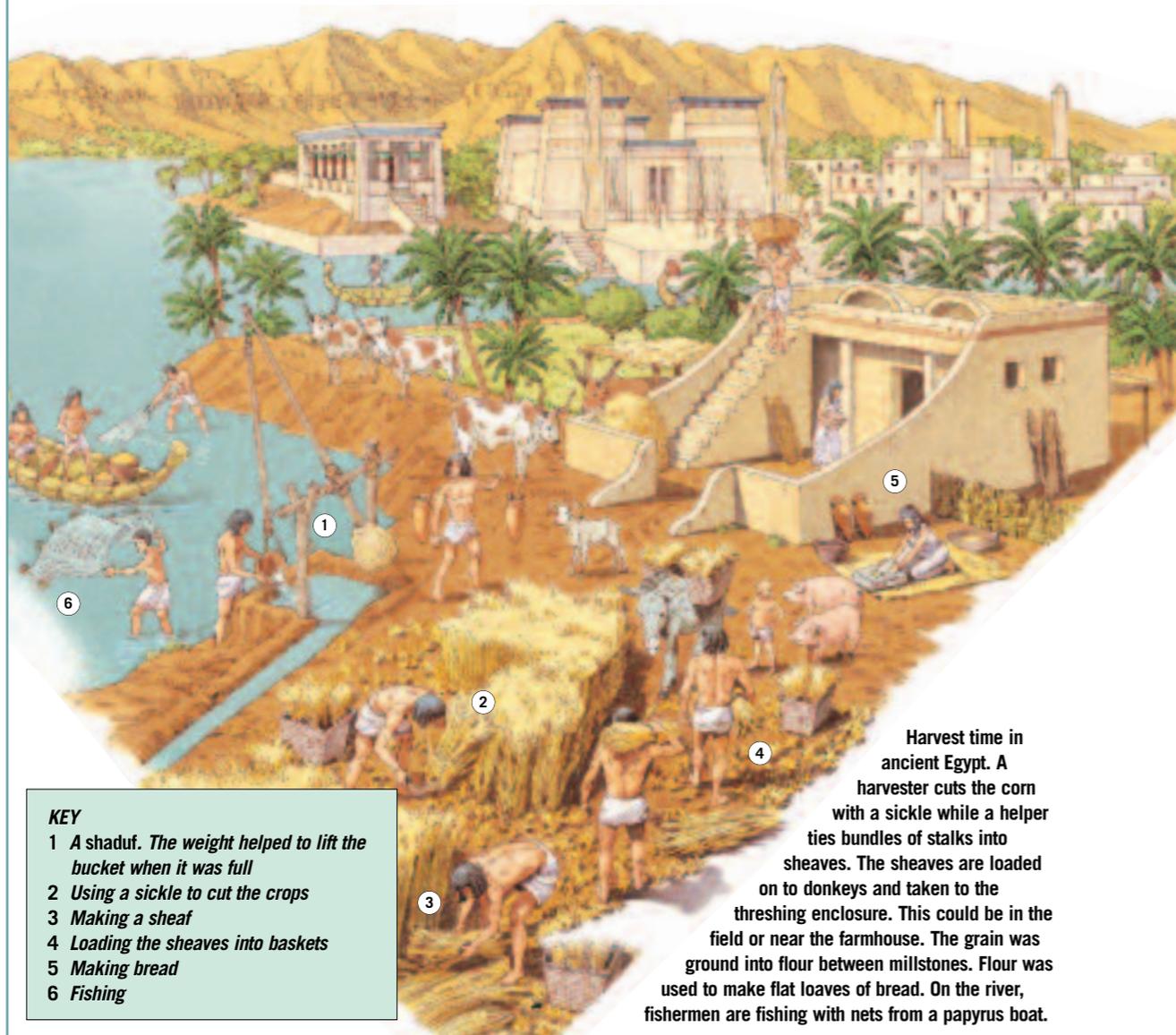
The craftworkers were very skilled, despite only having simple tools to work with. There were stoneworkers, carpenters, potters, glassworkers, leatherworkers, spinners and weavers, metalworkers, and jewellers. The products they made were for trading with other countries as well as for the Egyptians themselves.

Egyptian houses were made of mud-brick and plastered white on the outside. Some had two storeys. Windows were shuttered to keep the house cool. Inside the house, the walls were often exquisitely painted with bright designs.

Furniture was well designed and comfortable. Beds were made of wicker on a wooden frame and the sleepers rested their heads on wooden headrests. Couches had cushions stuffed with goose feathers, and tables and boxes were often decorated with inlaid designs.



Pharaohs and noblemen enjoyed hunting dangerous prey such as leopards and lions.



KEY

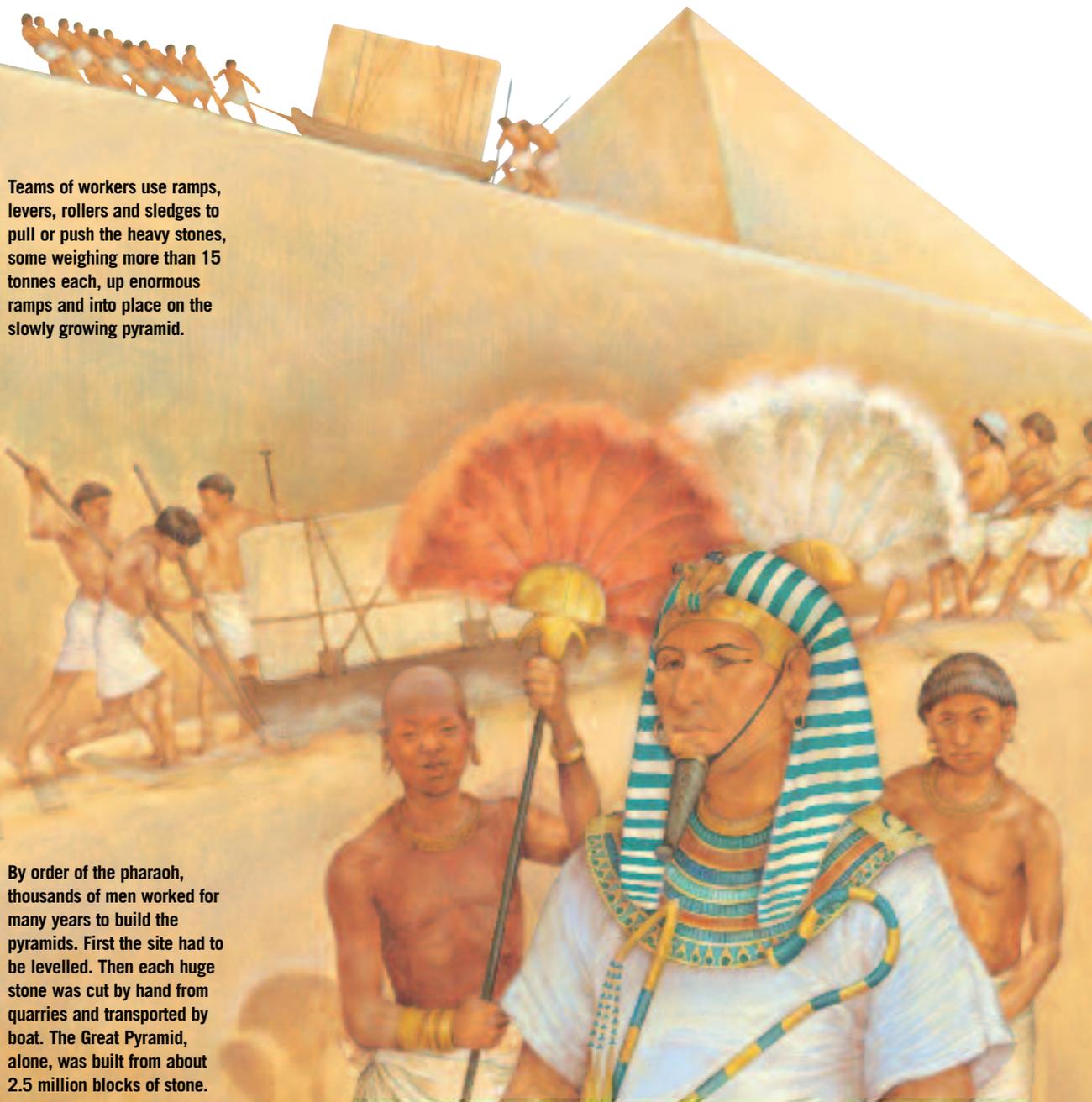
- 1 A shaduf. The weight helped to lift the bucket when it was full
- 2 Using a sickle to cut the crops
- 3 Making a sheaf
- 4 Loading the sheaves into baskets
- 5 Making bread
- 6 Fishing

Harvest time in ancient Egypt. A harvester cuts the corn with a sickle while a helper ties bundles of stalks into sheaves. The sheaves are loaded on to donkeys and taken to the threshing enclosure. This could be in the field or near the farmhouse. The grain was ground into flour between millstones. Flour was used to make flat loaves of bread. On the river, fishermen are fishing with nets from a papyrus boat.

PYRAMIDS

THE BEST-KNOWN monuments of the ancient Egyptian civilization are the pyramids. They were built about 4500 years ago, as huge tombs for the pharaohs of Egypt. The most famous pyramid site is at Giza, the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World to survive today. The site is made up of three large pyramids, the largest of which, the Great Pyramid, was 147 metres high when first built.

The ancient Egyptians studied the movements of the stars, planets and sun. They believed that the spirits of dead kings joined the gods among the stars. The pyramids were built to align with the Pole Star in the north, with each face pointing exactly north, south, east and west. At the base of the pyramids, temples were built where priests would make offerings to the king's spirit. Small stone tombs were built around the pyramid for the king's family and courtiers.



Teams of workers use ramps, levers, rollers and sledges to pull or push the heavy stones, some weighing more than 15 tonnes each, up enormous ramps and into place on the slowly growing pyramid.

By order of the pharaoh, thousands of men worked for many years to build the pyramids. First the site had to be levelled. Then each huge stone was cut by hand from quarries and transported by boat. The Great Pyramid, alone, was built from about 2.5 million blocks of stone.

BURYING THE DEAD

Before a body could be placed inside the tomb, it had to be prepared for burial. All pharaohs and other very important people in Egypt were mummified, or preserved after death. This was because the ancient Egyptians believed that only by preserving the body as a mummy could the spirit live on. People called embalmers were responsible for this process.

When the mummy had been completed, it was shut inside its brightly-coloured coffin. It was then placed into a heavy stone case, called a sarcophagus, in the burial chamber, along with treasures the pharaoh would need in the afterlife. The tomb was then sealed up as securely as possible. Unfortunately, robbers often broke into the



The case in which a mummy lay was painted with an image of the dead person, so that its spirit would recognize it in the afterlife. It was beautifully decorated with brightly-coloured paintings. Carefully painted hieroglyphics and scenes from the Book of the Dead, a book of magic spells, were meant to help the mummy on its journey to the afterlife.



As a result of the embalmer's skilled work, many bodies have not decayed thousands of years after mummification.



Many tombs and their treasures were plundered by thieves, but that of King Tutankhamun lay undisturbed in the Valley of the Kings for over 3300 years. The tomb was finally discovered in 1922. Archaeologists were amazed to find it still full of treasure: gold, jewels, fine clothing, chariots and musical instruments. A beautiful mask (left) made of gold and jewels covered the mummy's face. Tutankhamun was only about 17 years old when he died.

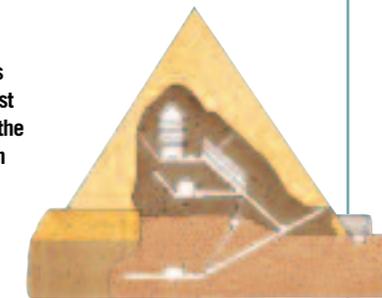
Embalmers had to make sure the body would not rot and decay after burial. Firstly they removed all the inner organs (1), except the heart, placing them in special jars. Known as canopic jars, they were decorated with images of the heads of either the dead person, or a god, and were buried with the body. Next, the embalmers packed the body with salt, sand and spices (2) and rubbed it with oils, wine and resin, before wrapping it in layers of long linen bandages (3). The mummy was ready for burial.



pyramids and stole the treasures in the burial chamber. Because of this, later pharaohs were buried not in pyramids but in tombs cut into the rocks of the secluded Valley of the Kings.

It was said that if a tomb was disturbed and the treasures taken, the mummies would be angry and would wreak terrible revenge. When Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered and emptied for scientific and historical examination, people feared that the dead pharaoh had put a curse on the people who had entered his tomb.

The mummified body was placed at the very deepest part of the pyramid, and the entrance was sealed with huge rocks. False passageways leading to empty rooms were also sealed, to confuse any would-be looters.



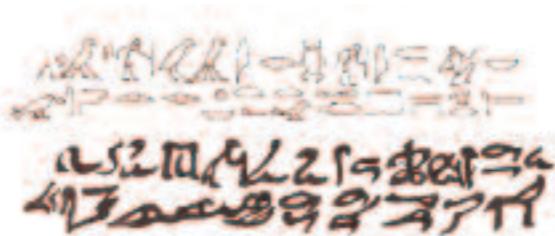
EDUCATION

ONLY THE PHARAOH'S children and the sons of wealthy families went to school. Girls stayed at home with their mothers, who taught them to look after the house, cook, spin and weave. Farmers' children were also taught at home and were expected to go out to the fields from an early age, gathering crops and tending animals. Fishermen taught their children their own skills in the same way.

Many boys who received an education learned to be scribes. Scribes were highly thought of in ancient Egypt. It was the way to a good career. In the cities, classes were set up for scribes, where they were taught by officials such as priests or government administrators.

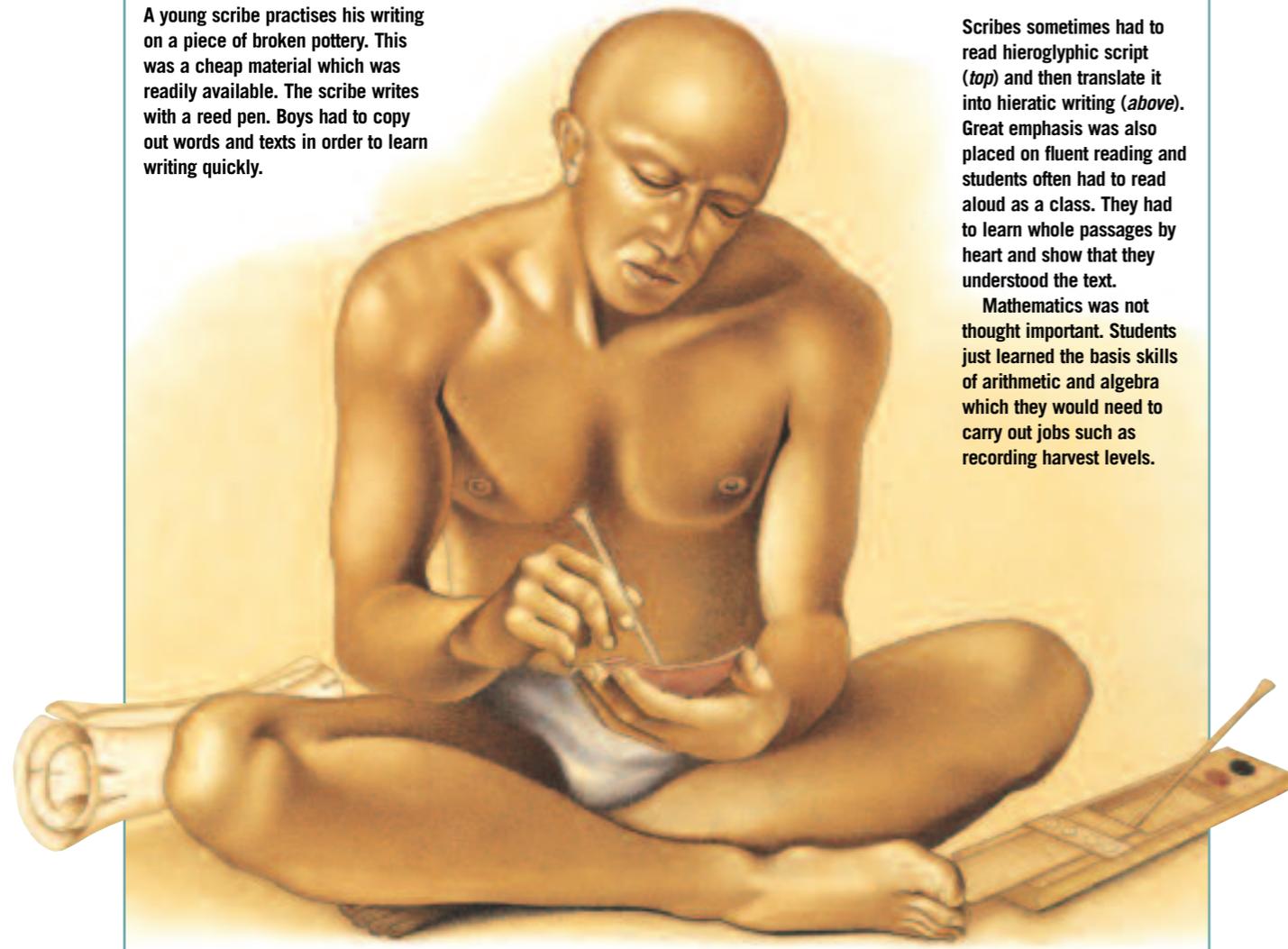
A young scribe practises his writing on a piece of broken pottery. This was a cheap material which was readily available. The scribe writes with a reed pen. Boys had to copy out words and texts in order to learn writing quickly.

The would-be scribes had to learn to read and write in both hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts. Hieroglyphs, the oldest form of Egyptian writing, were picture symbols which could be used to make simple records or to write more complicated pieces such as poetry. But using hieroglyphs was a slow process because each picture symbol had to be painted separately. Hieratic script was a simplified form of hieroglyphic writing. It was more straightforward and quicker to use.



Scribes sometimes had to read hieroglyphic script (top) and then translate it into hieratic writing (above). Great emphasis was also placed on fluent reading and students often had to read aloud as a class. They had to learn whole passages by heart and show that they understood the text.

Mathematics was not thought important. Students just learned the basis skills of arithmetic and algebra which they would need to carry out jobs such as recording harvest levels.

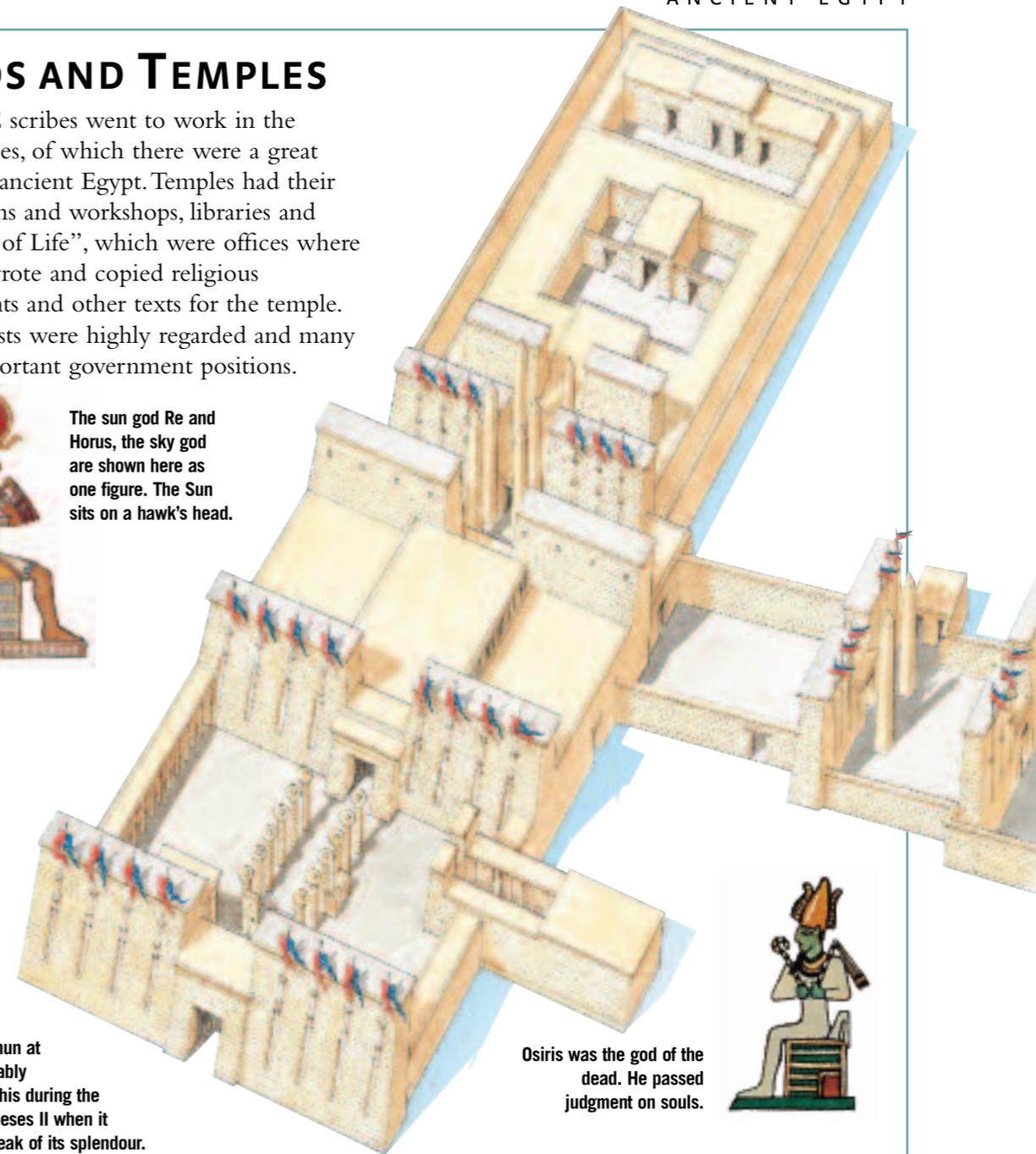


GODS AND TEMPLES

SOME scribes went to work in the temples, of which there were a great many in ancient Egypt. Temples had their own farms and workshops, libraries and "Houses of Life", which were offices where scribes wrote and copied religious documents and other texts for the temple. The priests were highly regarded and many held important government positions.



The sun god Re and Horus, the sky god are shown here as one figure. The Sun sits on a hawk's head.



The massive temple of Amun at Karnak probably looked like this during the reign of Rameses II when it was at the peak of its splendour.



Osiris was the god of the dead. He passed judgment on souls.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped many different gods and their whole lives revolved around religion. Some of the gods were local and were only worshipped in certain towns or districts. Others were national gods who were worshipped in the major cities and the largest temples. These principal gods included Re, the sun god, Ptah the god of Memphis, Horus the king's personal god and Amun (Amon-Re), a sun god and a god of the pharaohs, who was the most important of all the gods in Egypt.

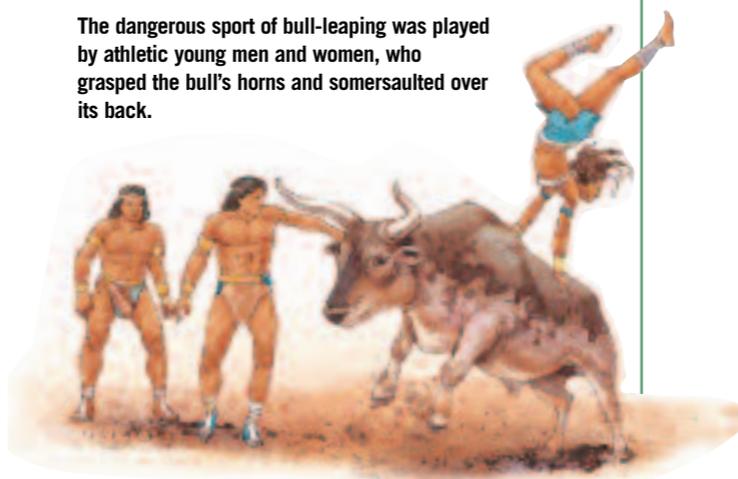
The great temple to Amun at Karnak is one of Egypt's most amazing sights. It was built over many years and during the reigns of several pharaohs but was completed during the reign of Rameses II. The temple complex had ceremonial halls and avenues where processions took place, and thousands of servants and slaves worked there. Because so many people worshipped Amun, the priests at Karnak were some of the most powerful men in the land and were said to have a special relationship with the gods.

MINOAN CRETE

ONE OF THE GREATEST civilizations of the ancient world developed on the Greek island of Crete. Little was known about it until the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) began digging on Crete in 1900 and uncovered the remains of a magnificent palace at Knossos. Four other palaces were also found on the island. Evans and other archaeologists found many treasures, including wall paintings and clay tablets which told them about the lifestyle of the people who had lived there. But there was a missing link. Nowhere could they find the name of this mysterious civilization. So they decided to call the people Minoans after their legendary ruler King Minos, who, according to Greek legend, ruled like a tyrant from Knossos.

The Minoans arrived on Crete in about 6000 BC and had begun to build their palaces by 2000 BC. They made their wealth by trading around the Mediterranean. Large towns built up around the palaces (*below*).

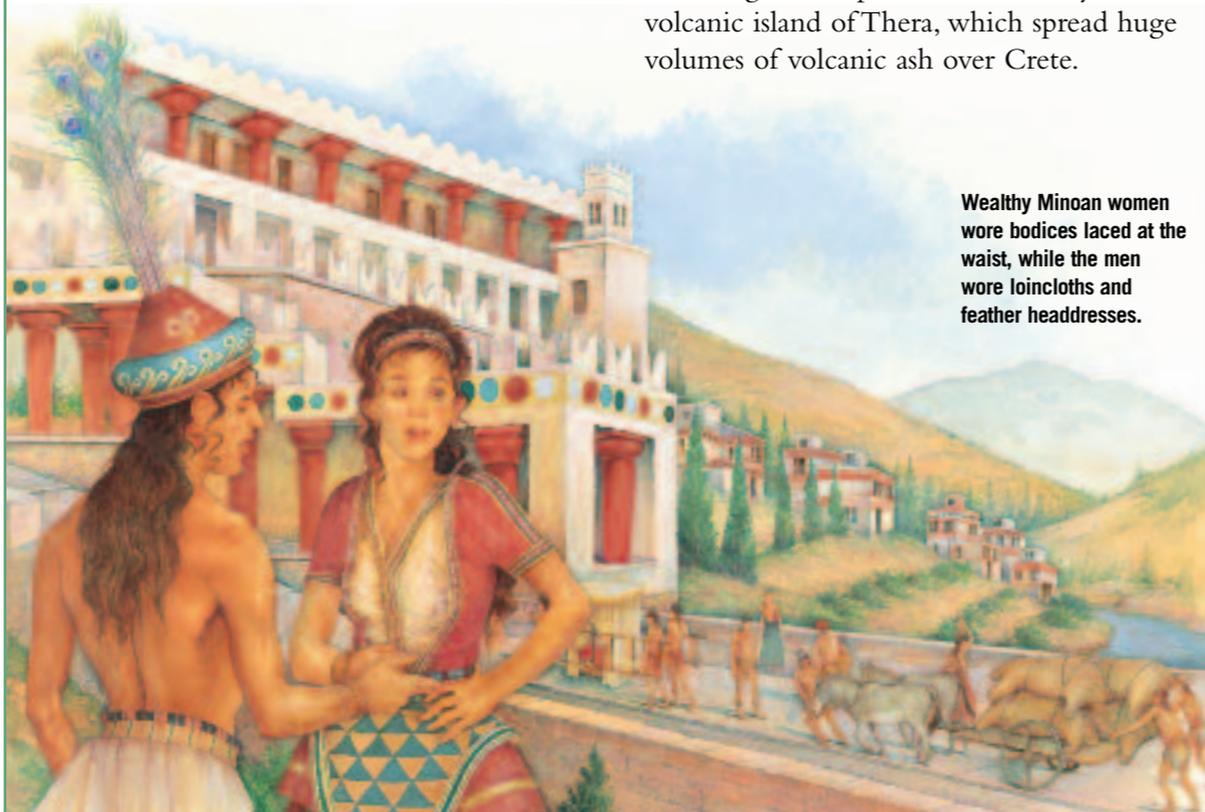
The dangerous sport of bull-leaping was played by athletic young men and women, who grasped the bull's horns and somersaulted over its back.



Knossos was the largest of these and, at its peak, probably had a population of about 100,000 people. Many were craftworkers who produced exquisite pottery, jewellery and metalwork. Minoan nobles lived in country villas as well as in the towns, and seem to have enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle. There is no evidence of any wars or unrest on the island and the Minoans probably led peaceful lives.

What happened to the Minoans? They vanished in about 1450 BC, possibly following the eruption of the nearby volcanic island of Thera, which spread huge volumes of volcanic ash over Crete.

Wealthy Minoan women wore bodices laced at the waist, while the men wore loincloths and feather headdresses.



THE PHOENICIANS

LIKE THE MINOANS, the Phoenicians, were Mediterranean traders, active between the years 1500 and 1000 BC. They lived along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. At first they were known as Canaanites, but later went under the name of Phoenicians, from the Greek word *phoinos*, which means red, the colour of a dye they traded. The Phoenicians were skilful and daring sailors for their time. They built fast warships to escort their merchant ships on trading voyages. These ships had a square sail and two banks of oarsmen. Examples of their ivory carvings, glassware, jewellery and metalwork have been found all over the Mediterranean lands. As well as exporting goods, they sailed off in search of raw materials, such as metals, even travelling around the west coast of Africa.

The Phoenicians dominated the Mediterranean during the first millennium BC. In 814 BC they founded Carthage, a city in what is now Tunisia, which quickly expanded into a powerful state.

Many Phoenician exports came from the natural resources of their land. Cedars and pine trees grew in the mountains and these could be exported to lands such as Egypt, where wood was scarce. The trees also provided precious oils for export. The Phoenicians made glass from sand and wove fine wool and linen, which they dyed with a purple dye made from a local type of sea snail. This famous Tyrian cloth, named after their city of Tyre, was one of the most popular of Phoenician exports (*above*).

The Phoenicians also developed an alphabet which merchants used for trading. The Canaanite script, as it was called, was adopted by the Greeks and formed the basis of our modern alphabet (*see page 15*).

The Etruscan civilization emerged in central Italy in about 800 BC. Known for their art and architecture, the Etruscans had links with both Greece and Carthage. Music (*right*) was an important part of their culture.

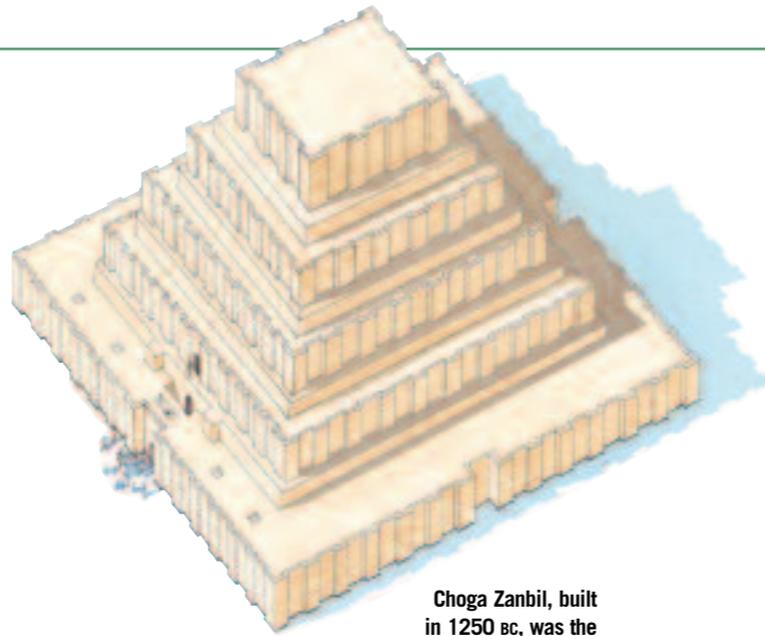


MESOPOTAMIA

MESOPOTAMIA, the fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq, was one of the first places to be settled when people decided to form communities (see page 12). The Sumerians, who first formed a civilization there, were conquered in about 2370 BC. Different groups of invaders then founded new city-states, which struggled to rule the area for the next 500 years. Then Hammurabi came to the throne of one of the city-states, Babylon, in 1792 BC. He brought other city-states under his control. Babylon dominated Mesopotamia.

Hammurabi was a wise king who set out a new code of laws. These gave status to women, protected poor people and punished wrongdoers. Unlike previous rulers, Hammurabi did not regard himself as a god. During his reign, Babylon was a rich city, the capital of a kingdom known as Babylonia. Massive stepped pyramid temples, called ziggurats, were built to worship the gods. The most famous of these was the Tower of Babel. It was, the Bible says, designed to reach Heaven.

Six centuries after Hammurabi's death in 1750 BC, the kingdom he founded was eventually conquered by a warlike people, the Assyrians.

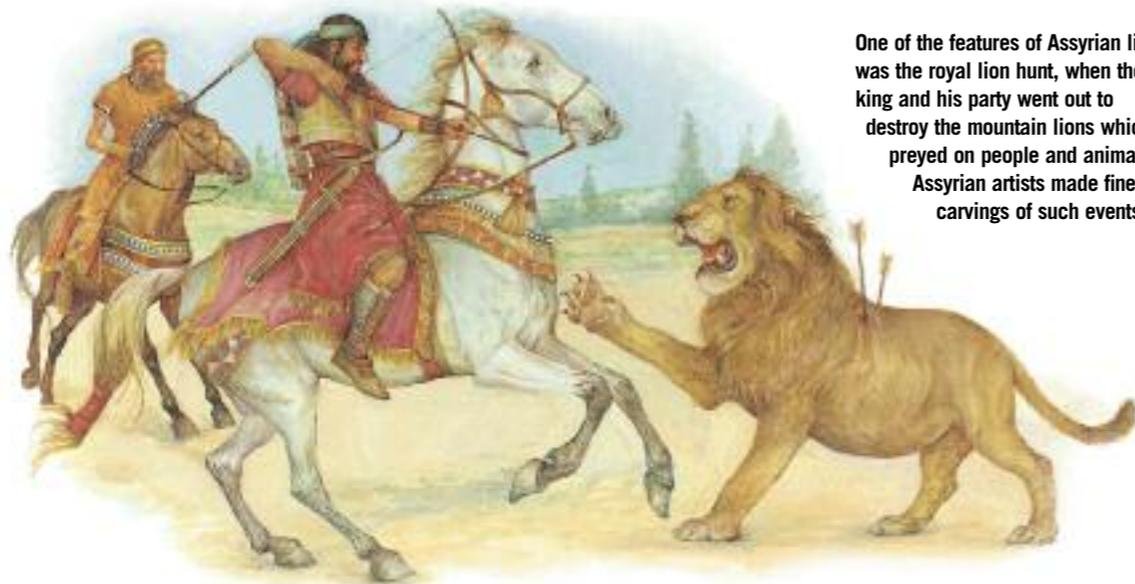


Choga Zanbil, built in 1250 BC, was the largest ziggurat in Mesopotamia.

THE ASSYRIANS

The land of the Assyrians, in northern Mesopotamia, lay on important trade routes. They wanted to dominate the area by building up a great empire. Many years of warfare followed, during which the Assyrian Empire expanded to cover most of the Near East. The ruler during the main period of expansion was Assurbanipal the last great Assyrian king. Archaeologists found 20,000 clay tablets in his library at the palace of Nineveh. These give many details about Assyrian laws and history.

One of the features of Assyrian life was the royal lion hunt, when the king and his party went out to destroy the mountain lions which preyed on people and animals. Assyrian artists made fine carvings of such events.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Babylon became powerful again during the reign of King Nabopolassar (ruled 625–605 BC), who managed to overthrow the Assyrians and win back the city's power. His son, Nebuchadnezzar II (ruled 605–562 BC) fought the Egyptians and conquered Assyria and Judah. He built many fine ziggurats and palaces and created the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



Babylonian scientists study the stars.

Nebuchadnezzar made Babylon the finest city of its day. The Greek historian Herodotus described it as "surpassing in splendour any city of the known world". Archaeologists excavating Babylon at the beginning of the 20th century found that the city wall made a circle almost 18 kilometres long. (Unfortunately, they found no trace of the Hanging Gardens.) The Babylonians built in mud-brick covered with glazed tiles, on which artists created sculptured designs.

The dragons shown on the walls of the Ishtar Gate were symbols of the Babylonians' chief god, Marduk. The bulls represented the lightning god, Adad. The gate was at the northern entrance to the city of Babylon. It has been completely reconstructed and now stands in a museum in Berlin, Germany.

The Babylonians were keen astronomers. They studied the stars and planets and tried to work out their positions in relation to the Earth. They believed that the Earth was a flat disc suspended in space on a cushion of air. Some scientists of ancient Greece also adopted this theory.

Babylonian mathematicians were the first to divide a day into 24 hours, each hour into 60 minutes and each minute into 60 seconds. These ancient units of time have, of course, survived to this day.



EUROPE IN THE BRONZE AGE

THE FIRST METAL objects in Europe were produced from copper or gold and date from about 5000 BC. These metals, easy to shape into jewellery and other artefacts, were too soft for making tools and weapons. The discovery around 2300 BC that copper could be strengthened by mixing, or alloying, it with another metal, tin, heralded the start of the Bronze Age in Europe. By about 1200 BC, metalworkers in Europe had switched almost entirely to using bronze.

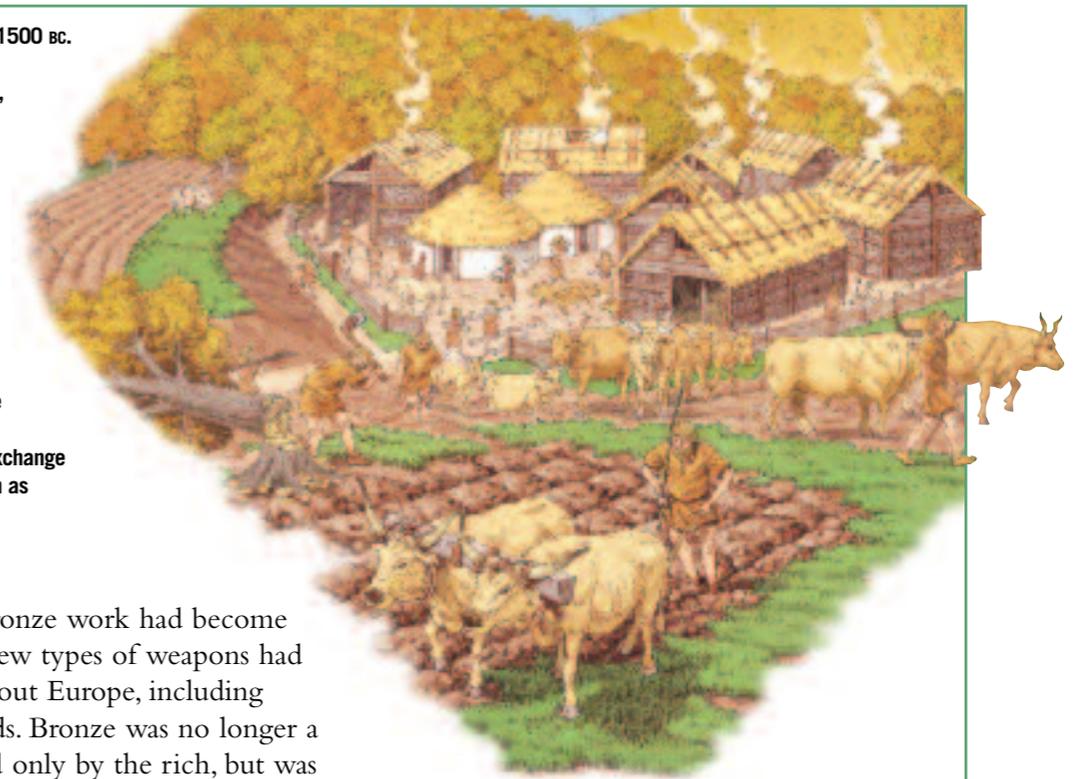
At this time, people in Europe had not formed great civilizations in the same way that some peoples in other parts of the world had. They lived in simple farming communities (*below*). A patch of forest was cleared by cutting down and burning trees. Then the people built huts of mud and straw and grew crops such as wheat.

By about 1500 BC communities had become more complex. The leaders of the communities were not gods or remote nobles like the kings in other parts of the ancient world, but farmers or craftworkers, just like the people themselves. However, these leaders, or chieftains, wanted recognition of their rank in life. They liked to wear luxurious clothes adorned with gold and carry expensive bronze weapons signifying their prowess as a warrior. When a chieftain died, these treasures were put in his tomb to serve him in the next world.

Some early European metalworking communities lived in forts. The chieftain lived near the centre of the settlement which was surrounded by wooden palisades (high fences) and ditches to give him protection against invading enemies. By 1250 BC, bronze swords and helmets were in use. The metalworkers were so important that their workshops were often packed closely together inside the fort, while the farmers lived in simple huts outside.



A farming community in 1500 BC. The farmers have simple ploughs to work the land, and oxen to pull them. Here the farmer ploughs the land before sowing wheat. The people can produce everything they need in the village. They chop wood for their fires and spin yarn and weave cloth to make clothes. If they can grow enough food, they can exchange it for other products such as metal.



By this time, bronze work had become very advanced. New types of weapons had appeared throughout Europe, including armour and shields. Bronze was no longer a luxury metal used only by the rich, but was also made into tools and ornaments. The demand for bronze led to an increase in trade. In northern parts of Europe, fur, skins and amber (a yellow fossil resin prized for making beads) were traded for bronze, and Scandinavian metalworkers became expert in working the new metal. Throughout Europe, chieftains became wealthy because of bronze.

STONE MONUMENTS

By about 2000 BC people in Europe had begun to build huge stone monuments for religious worship. To build Stonehenge (*below*), which stands on Salisbury Plain in southern England, massive stones had to be dragged across the Plain on rollers, placed in deep pits and then hauled upright.



TIMELINE

c.4.4 million BC Australopithecines, the first human-like creatures to walk upright, appear.

c.2.5 million *Homo habilis* (“handy man”) appears in Africa. It uses simple tools.

c.1.8 million *Homo erectus* (“upright man”) appears in Africa. It uses sharper tools and fire.

c.750,000 *Homo sapiens* (“wise man”) appears in Africa.

c.125,000 The first modern people, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, appear in Africa.

c.10,000 The end of the Ice Ages (or its latest coldest phase). Farming begins in Mesopotamia. Some animals are domesticated for the first time.

c.5000 The Chinese civilization begins.

c.3500 Early writing develops in Mesopotamia.

c.3400 Egypt has developed as two kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt.

c.3200 Wooden wheels, made from planks pegged together, in use in Mesopotamia.

c.3100 Egypt is united under the first pharaoh, Menes. The Egyptians are the first people in the ancient world to form a unified nation (other civilizations consist of separate city-states).

c.2575 The Old Kingdom begins in Egypt. Work begins on the pyramids at Giza

c.2500 The rise of the Assyrian civilization in northern Mesopotamia.

c.2400 The Indian civilization develops, with Mohenjo Daro and Harappa as its major cities.

c.2300 Bronze Age in Europe begins.

c.2000 The Minoan civilization begins on Crete with the building of palaces.

c.1750 The Shang dynasty comes to power in China.

c.1650 The start of the Hittite Empire in Anatolia (present-day Turkey in c.2000 BC). Under King Hattushili I, they conquer northern Syria.

c.1595 Hittites overthrow Babylonian Empire.

c.1560 The New Kingdom begins in Egypt. Pharaohs are no longer buried in pyramids but in smaller tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

c.1550 The Mycenaean civilization begins in Greece.

c.1500 Complex communities led by chieftains develop in Europe.

c.1500 Writing develops both in China and Greece.

c.1450 The Minoan civilization disappears.

c.1290 Rameses II (Rameses the Great) comes to the throne of Egypt and reigns for 67 years.

c.1200 The Hittite Empire collapses.

c.1200 The Mycenaean civilization in Greece collapses.

c.1200 The Olmec civilization begins in Mexico.

c.1100 The Shang dynasty is overthrown in China. The Zhou dynasty begins.

c.1000 The Phoenicians develop an alphabet script, the basis of modern western European scripts.

c.800 The Etruscan civilization begins in Italy.

c.800 City-states are founded in Greece.

753 The traditional date for the founding of Rome.

776 The first Olympic Games are held in Greece.

671 The Assyrians conquer Egypt.

650 Iron technology is introduced in China

c.560 The rise of the Persian Empire under Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great)

521 The Persian Empire expands under Darius I (Darius the Great). It stretches from Egypt to India.

510 Rome becomes a republic with two classes, patricians (nobles) and plebeians (workers).

c.500 The dawn of the Classical Age in Greece and the start of democratic government.

449 The Greeks make peace with Persia. Athens begins to flourish under its new leader, Pericles. The Parthenon is built.

431–404 The Peloponnesian Wars are fought between Athens and Sparta. Athens surrenders to Sparta

391 The Gauls attack Rome but are bribed with gold to leave.

371 The Spartans are conquered by Thebes.

334 Alexander the Great invades Persia and defeats Darius III.

323 Alexander dies in Babylon. The Hellenistic Period begins in Greece.

322 The Mauryan empire is founded in India by Chandragupta Maurya.

300 The Olmec civilization disappears in Mexico.

290 The library is founded at Alexandria

264–41 The First Punic War with Carthage gives Rome control of Sicily.

221 Qin rule begins in China. Work on the Great Wall of China begins.

218–201 The Second Punic War. Hannibal of Carthage invades Italy by marching with 36 elephants across the Alps.

210 The Han dynasty in China begins.

206 Rome gains control of Spain.

149–46 The Third Punic War. Rome destroys Carthage. North Africa becomes a Roman province.

c.112 The Silk Route is opened, linking China to the West.

c.100 The Moche civilization begins in Peru

59 Julius Caesar is elected consul of Rome.

58–49 Julius Caesar conquers Gaul and invades Britain twice.

46 Julius Caesar rules Rome as a dictator. Cleopatra is made queen of Egypt.

44 Julius Caesar is stabbed to death by Brutus and a group of senators.

43 Mark Antony and Octavian, Caesar’s nephew, come to power in Rome.

31 Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium.

30 The death of Antony and Cleopatra.

27 Octavian becomes Augustus, the first emperor of Rome.

c.5 The birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity.

1st century AD The city of Teotihuacan is built in Mexico.

c.30 Jesus Christ is crucified in Jerusalem.

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius.

117 The Roman Empire is at its greatest extent. Hadrian becomes emperor.

c.300 The rise of the Hopewell Indian chiefdoms in North America

313 Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire under the emperor Constantine.

400 Settlers reach Easter Island.

410 The barbarian Visigoths sack Rome.

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