CHAPTER 3 STUDY GUIDE KEY

Key Terms

**Code of Hammurabi:** A series of laws publicized at the order of King Hammurabi of Babylon (d. 1750 b.c.e.). Not actually a code, but a number of laws that proclaim the king’s commitment to social order. (See the excerpt of the code in Document 3.2, pp. 118–121.)

**cradle of civilization:** Commonly used term for southern Mesopotamia (in present-day Iraq).

**cuneiform:** Wedge-shaped writing in the form of symbols incised into clay tablets; used in Mesopotamia from around 3100 b.c.e. to the beginning of the Common Era.

**Egypt: “the gift of the Nile”:** Egypt is often known as “the gift of the Nile” because the region would not have been able to support a significant human population without the Nile’s annual inundation, which provided rich silt deposits and made agriculture possible.

***Epic of Gilgamesh*:** The most famous extant literary work from ancient Mesopotamia, it tells the story of one man’s quest for immortality.

**Harappa:** A major city of the Indus Valley civilization; flourished around 2000 b.c.e. (*pron.* hah-RAHP-uh)

**Hatshepsut:** Ancient Egypt’s most famous queen; reigned 1472–1457 b.c.e. (*pron.* hat-shep-soot)

**Hebrews:** A smaller early civilization whose development of a monotheistic faith that provided the foundation of modern Judaism, Christianity, and Islam assured them a significant place in world history.

**hieroglyphs:** Ancient Egyptian writing system; literally, “sacred carvings”—so named because the Greeks saw them prominently displayed in Egyptian temples.

**Hittites:** An Indo-European civilization established in Anatolia in the eighteenth century b.c.e.

**Hyksos:** A pastoral group of unknown ethnicity that invaded Egypt and ruled in the north from 1650 to 1535 b.c.e. Their dominance was based on their use of horses, chariots, and bronze technology. (*pron.* HICK-sose)

**Indus Valley:** home of a major civilization that emerged in what is now Pakistan during the third millennium b.c.e., in the valleys of the Indus and Saraswati rivers, noted for the uniformity of its elaborately planned cities over a large territory.

**Mandate of Heaven:** The ideological underpinning of Chinese emperors, this was the belief that a ruler held authority by command of divine force as long as he ruled morally and benevolently.

**Mesopotamia:** The “land between the rivers” of the Tigris and Euphrates, in what is now Iraq.

**Minoan civilization:** An advanced civilization that developed on the island of Crete around 2500 b.c.e.

**Mohenjo Daro:** A major city of the Indus Valley civilization; flourished around 2000 b.c.e. (*pron.* moehen-joe DAHR-oh)

**Norte Chico/Caral:** Norte Chico is a region along the central coast of Peru, home of a civilization that developed in the period 3000–1800 b.c.e. Caral was the largest of some twenty-five urban centers that emerged in the area at that time.

**Nubia:** A civilization to the south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, noted for development of an alphabetic writing system and a major ironworking industry by 500 b.c.e.

**Olmec civilization:** An early civilization that developed along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico around 1200 b.c.e.

**oracle bones:** In Chinese civilization, animal bones that were heated and the cracks then interpreted as prophecies. The prophecies were written on the bone and provide our earliest written sources for ancient China.

**patriarchy:** Literally “rule of the father”; a social system of male dominance.

**pharaoh:** A king of Egypt. The term literally means “the palace” and only came into use in the New Kingdom, but it is generally employed in reference to all ancient Egyptian rulers.

**Phoenicians:** A civilization in the area of present-day Lebanon, creators of the first alphabetic writing system.

**pyramid:** Monumental tomb for an Egyptian pharaoh; mostly built during the Old Kingdom (2663–2195 b.c.e.). Pyramids are also found in Meroë to the south of Egypt.

**quipu:** A series of knotted cords, used for accounting and perhaps as a form of writing in the Norte Chico civilization.

**rise of the state:** A process of centralization that took place in the First Civilizations, growing out of the greater complexity of urban life in recognition of the need for coordination, regulation, adjudication, and military leadership.

**salinization:** The buildup of minerals in soil, decreasing its fertility; can be caused by long-term irrigation.

**Sanxingdui:** An ancient city of China that developed independently from the Shang dynasty. (*pron.* sahnshing-dwee)

**Shang dynasty:** Period of Chinese history from 1766 to 1122 b.c.e. (*pron.* shahng)

**Son of Heaven:** Title of the ruler of China, first known from the Zhou dynasty. It acknowledges the ruler’s position as intermediary between heaven and earth.

**Teotihuacán:** The largest city of ancient Mesoamerica; flourished around 500 c.e. (*pron.* teh-o-tee-WAH-kahn)

**Uruk:** The largest city of ancient Mesopotamia. (*pron.* OOH-rook)

**Xia dynasty:** A legendary series of monarchs of early China, traditionally dated to 2200–1766 b.c.e. (*pron.* shah)

**Zhou dynasty:** Period of Chinese history from 1122 to 256 b.c.e. (*pron*. joe)

**ziggurat:** A Mesopotamian stepped pyramid. Unlike an Egyptian pyramid, a ziggurat was a solid structure of baked brick, an artificial hill at the summit of which stood a temple.

Margin Review Questions

Q. When and where did the First Civilizations emerge?

• Emergence of the First Civilizations was a global phenomenon that happened independently in six major locations around the world and in a number of smaller expressions as well. The six major locations were:

1. Sumer in Mesopotamia, by 3000 b.c.e.

2. Egypt in the Nile River valley, by 3000 b.c.e.

3. Norte Chico along the coast of central Peru, by 3000 b.c.e.

4. Indus Valley civilization in the Indus and Saraswati river valleys of present-day Pakistan, by 2000 b.c.e.

5. China, by 2200 b.c.e.

6. The Olmec along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico near present-day Veracruz in southern Mexico, around 1200 b.c.e.

• In addition, other smaller civilizations also flourished, including the Nubian civilization that emerged south of Egypt in the Nile River valley, and the large city in China known as Sanxingdui, which arose separately but at the same time as the more well-known Shang dynasty.

Q. What accounts for the initial breakthroughs to civilization?

• Civilizations had their roots in the Agricultural Revolution, which allowed communities to produce sufficient food surpluses to support large populations and the specialized or elite minorities who did not themselves produce food.

• Scholars have posited many theories as to why some agricultural societies formed into civilizations and other did not, including a need to organize for large-scale irrigation projects; the efforts of favored groups to protect their privileges; the needs of warfare; and the influence of trade.

• Robert Carneiro combines several of these factors to argue that:

1. The growing density of population, producing more congested and competitive societies, was a fundamental motor of change, especially where rich agricultural land was limited either by geography or by powerful competing societies.

2. Such settings provided incentives for innovations, such as irrigation or plows that could produce more food, because opportunities for territorial expansion were not readily available.

3. These same environments generated intense competition among rival groups that led to repeated warfare. A strong and highly organized state was a decided advantage in such competition.

4. Since losers could not easily flee to new lands, they were absorbed into the winner’s society as a lower class.

5. Successful leaders of the winning side emerged as an elite with an enlarged   
base of land, a class of subordinated workers, and a powerful state at their disposal.

Q. What was the role of cities in the early civilizations?

• political and administrative centers

• centers of culture including art, architecture, literature, ritual, and ceremony

• marketplaces for both local and long-distance exchange

• centers of manufacturing activity

Q. In what ways was social inequality expressed in early civilizations?

• wealth

• avoidance of physical labor

• clothing

• houses

• manner of burial

• class-specific treatment in legal codes

Q. In what ways have historians tried to explain the origins of patriarchy?

• Transition from hoe and digging-stick agriculture (mostly women) to more intensive agriculture with animal-drawn plows and more intensive large-herd pastoralism (tasks that men were better able to perform)

• The growing population of civilizations meant that women were more often pregnant and even more deeply involved in child care than before.

• Men, because they were less important in the household, were available to take on positions of economic, religious, and political authority as societies grew more complex. From these positions men shaped the values and practices of their societies in a manner that benefited them at the expense of women. In this development lay the origin of the ancient distinction between the realm of the home, defined as the domain of women, and the world of public life, associated with men.

• Women had long been identified with nature because of their intimate involvement in reproduction, but civilization valued culture and the human mastery of nature through agriculture, monumental art and architecture, and the creation of large-scale cities and states. Some scholars have suggested that, as civilizations developed, women became associated with an inferior dimension of human life (nature), while men assumed responsibility for the higher order of culture.

• Large-scale military conflict with professionally led armies was a central feature of the First Civilizations.

• With military service largely restricted to men, the needs of warfare served to enhance the power and prestige of a male warrior class.

• The emergence of private property and commerce also may have shaped the status of women.

• Restrictions on women’s sexual activity became central to ensuring that offspring of the male head of household inherited family property. Moreover, the buying and selling associated with commerce was soon applied to male rights over women, whether as slaves, concubines, or wives.

Q. What were the sources of state authority in the First Civilizations?

• Citizens recognized that the complexity of life in cities or densely populated territories required some the authority to coordinate and regulate the community enterprises, such as defense and irrigation.

• State authorities frequently used force to compel obedience.

• Authority in early civilizations was often associated with divine sanction.

• Writing and accounting augmented state authority by defining elite status, conveying prestige on the literate, providing a means to disseminate propaganda, strengthening the state by making accurate record keeping possible, and giving added weight to orders, regulations, and laws.

• Grandeur in the form of lavish lifestyles of elites, impressive rituals, and the building of imposing structures added to the perception of state authority and power.

Document 3.1: In Search of Eternal Life

Q. How would you define the Mesopotamian ideal of kingship? What is the basis of the monarch’s legitimacy?

• The complaints of the men of Uruk concerning Gilgamesh indicate that an ideal king ruled justly and as a shepherd concerned with the well-being of his flock, rather than abusing his powers.

• It can be inferred that an ideal king built great temples and defensive structures, was successful in battle, and possessed personal traits beyond those of average men.

• Gilgamesh’s legitimacy is based on three foundations: (1) his own personal traits including his wisdom, knowledge, courage and physical beauty; (2) the gods’ decision to endow him with these traits, making him super human—two-thirds god one-third human; and (3) his special status with the gods, as is explicitly stated when Enkidu interprets Gilgamesh’s dream as telling him that “The father of the gods has given you kinship, such is your destiny”; this is also implied elsewhere in the text.

Q. What understanding of the afterlife does the epic suggest?

• The afterlife in Gilgamesh’s account is not an appealing place. The souls of the dead are held in the palace of Irkalla or house of dust, from which no soul ever leaves, indicating a permanent separation of the dead from the living.

• In the palace of Irkalla, souls “sit in darkness; dust is the their food and clay is their meat,” meaning that they live in a world with few or none of the pleasures of life before death.

• Even the powerful lose their status and authority, becoming the equivalent of servants in the afterlife.

• There were high priests and acolytes, and priests of the incantation and of ecstasy in the house of dust, but their roles and meanings are not developed in the passage.

Q. What philosophy of life comes across in the Gilgamesh story?

• The advice of Siduri and Utnapishtim provide a clear philosophy of life for Gilgamesh. Its basic premises are that death is inevitable, as the gods made it part of human existence at creation; but man was given life to do with as he or she wished. Therefore, one should enjoy life and the pleasures it allows in terms of food and dance, love and family.

• Nothing is permanent in this life, so it must be enjoyed in the here and now.

Document 3.2: Law and Justice in Ancient Mesopotamia

Q. If you knew nothing else about ancient Mesopotamia, what could you conclude from the Code of Hammurabi about the economy and society of this ancient civilization in the eighteenth century b.c.e.? How might you describe the economy of the region? What distinct social groups are mentioned in the code? What rights did women enjoy and to what restrictions were they subject?

• The economy was based on agriculture and trade; some workers were specialists, including physicians, tavern keepers, and house builders.

• The economy used contracts and money, and at least some economic activities like ox-cart hiring and certain types of surgery, were subject to price controls.

• The social groups mentioned were split roughly into elites, including elders, judges, chieftains, priestesses; commoners or freed men, including common soldiers, farmers, merchants, house builders, physicians, and tavern keepers; and slaves.

• Women enjoyed a number of rights, including the status for some as “sister of a god,” which allows them to play roles in religious temples (Law 110); the freedom to leave her husband if no sexual intercourse occurs (Law 128); protections against rape in certain circumstances (Law 130); and the requirement that a husband provide direct proof of adultery (Law 131).

• If a woman was abandoned by her husband, she could go to live in another house; even if the husband returned he could not force her to come back to his house (Law 136).

• If a woman of good reputation was neglected by her husband, she could take her dowry and return to her father’s house (Law 142).

• A man had to support a sick wife for as long as she lived (Law 148).

• If a man wished to separate from a woman or wife that had borne him children, he had to return her dowry and a part of the usufruct of field, garden, and property so that she could rear her children. Once she brought up her children, she could then marry again (Law 137).

Document 3.3: The Afterlife of the Pharaoh

Q. How is the afterlife of the pharaoh represented in this text?

• The afterlife of the pharaoh is represented as a continuation of this life, with the tradition of regular monthly and half-monthly feasts continuing after death.

• It implies that the pharaoh, including his physical body, will travel to the next world and that only the pharaoh, not the population as a whole, passes through the gate to the afterlife.

Document 3.4: A New Basis for Egyptian Immortality

Q. What changes in Egyptian religious thinking does the Negative Confession mark?

• Entrance into heaven is not restricted to Pharaohs, but is open to anyone who can demonstrate that he or she has lived a moral life to the satisfaction of the gods.

• Entrance into the afterlife is dependent on moral behavior in this life.

Q. What does learning to write offer to a young Egyptian? What advantages of a scribal position are suggested in the document?

• Learning to write offers a promising career path that may lead to the literate student being advanced by his superiors, being sent on a mission, and being rewarded by the pharaoh with fine clothes, horses, boats, attendants, houses, slaves, and powerful positions.

• Restrictions were also present in these laws, including the restriction that “sisters of a god” not open a tavern or enter a tavern to drink (Law 110). Also, a woman could be cast into the water if she left or neglected her husband (Law 143).

• A particularly observant student might note that, aside from slave women, in nearly all circumstances women are defined as subject to either their father or husband.