READING 2

Candice Goucher, Charles LeGuin, and Linda Walton, "Settled Societies: The Emergence of Cities," in *In the Balance: Themes in Global History* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 88–109.

Abstract: This essay explores the process of urbanization in North Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe. While each society was characterized by different urban forms and cultures, they shared similar problems of feeding large populations, of interacting with and depending on local environments, with establishing centers of cultural expression and worship, and with relations between rural areas. Throughout, the theme of complexity recurs as both a necessary condition for and a consequence of larger communities.

North Africa: Egyptian Cities of the Living and Dead

Egypt was settled rather slowly, probably at first by peoples who moved in from areas in east-central Africa, perhaps as early as 13,000 B.C.E. These peoples domesticated and raised barley and wheat in communities scattered along the Nile Valley. Other peoples moved into Egypt from the Persian Gulf region several thousand years later and are thought to have brought with them sheep, which grazed in the upland country of the Nile Valley. Arable land was found only along the narrow confines of the river banks; thus early Egyptian communities were constrained by the limited amount of useful land available and by the vagaries of the Nile's water flow. With the climatic changes brought on by the end of the last glaciation, desiccation and changes in the Nile Delta intensified the land problem in the Nile Valley. People were forced to live in dense settlements, which survived only by intensively exploiting resources and controlling their distribution. By the end of the fourth millennium B.C.E., cities developed, sustained by the relationships between those situated on the river and those in the hinterland of earlier agricultural-herding communities. Two Nile Valley cities became paramount: Thebes in Upper Egypt (the Nile Valley proper) and Memphis in Lower Egypt, which made up most of the Nile Delta. The upper and lower regions of Egypt were united around 3200 B.C.E.

The Ecology of the Nile

Both cities were the consequence of religious and political developments that centered around the remarkable environmental conditions of the Nile itself. By the end of the fourth millennium B.C.E., environmental factors had helped shape a stable agricultural society in the Nile Valley, based on irrigated farming in the natural floodplains and delta of the Nile. Regional rainfall and the short- and long-term trends of Nile flooding required systematic responses, and these responses were made by community efforts and

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

interests. The needs of the peoples in the Nile Valley helped determine the growing complexity of activity in Egyptian cities. Supported by their agricultural hinterlands, they became centers of both exchange and culture.

Known mostly by their monumental temples and royal structures of stone, such as the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza (2600 B.C.E.), Egyptian cities were actually built mostly of mud brick. The pyramids, tombs of the pharaohs (divine kings), were built at sites outside the cities. The pharaoh resided near the place where his tomb was to be built; during his lifetime, work on the pyramid continued, while government was carried out in the nearby city. Specialization was a feature of the economic and social organization of these settlements, which supported bakers, potters, watchmen, scribes, goldsmiths, and dog keepers, to name a few of the many specialists. The laborers who built the pyramids lived in workers' quarters close to the site of the pharaoh's tomb.

Irrigation and Water Control

The most important concern of Egyptian society was control of the waters of the Nile. Artificial irrigation methods, including the cutting of canals and basins, were under way by the time of the Old Kingdom (ca. 3200–2700 B.C.E.), the earliest period of unified Egypt. A technique for lifting water by means of the *shaduf*, or pole-and-bucket lever, came later, around 1350 B.C.E. The organization of irrigation systems took place on the local level and did not in itself generate the social stratification, bureaucracy, and concentration of power usually connected with the rise of cities. However, establishing successful agricultural systems and being able to predict Nile flooding were associated with effective religious and political leadership. One of the pharaoh's most important tasks was feeding his people.

Ecology and Society

Famine and plenty were seen as indicative of a cosmic order, from the flooding of the Nile to the growth of vegetation and the increase of flocks. Egyptians responded to times of famine and abundance in a variety of ways. For example, the period of "Lamentations" (2250–1950 B.C.E.) recorded in the Hebrew Bible was a time of low Nile floods, desiccation of delta marshlands, dust storms, and sand dune activity. This ecological crisis produced famine, mass dislocation of starving people, plundering, and civil war, resulting in political anarchy. Though such social disintegration was not an uncommon result of environmental stress in the long history of Egypt, environmental and economic stress also provided opportunity for the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling pharaohs and their bureaucracies, those whose essential task was to ensure the continuity of the Nile ecological system and thus the cosmic order.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

Memphis and Thebes

The ancient Egyptian city of Memphis became a political center and dominated the countryside until the rise of Thebes around 2050 B.C.E. Located on the west bank of the Nile near the apex of its delta (near modern Cairo), Memphis lay on the border between Upper and Lower Egypt and was thus a fitting site for the capital of unified Egypt. Memphis was also an ancient religious center, the chief seat of the cult of Ptah, the artisan deity. The necropolis—"city of the dead"—at Memphis was as impressive as its palaces, temples, and markets. It contained funerary monuments and tombs of early pharaohs and was also a residence of the city's principal deity, Ptah. Though subsequent dynasties established their seats elsewhere up and down the Nile Valley, Memphis remained the largest city and seat of government until Thebes replaced it.

Monumental Architecture

One of the characteristic features of a city was monumental architecture. In Thebes, which succeeded Memphis as the capital of Egypt in about 2200 B.C.E., following the disintegration of the Old Kingdom, inscriptions, funerary monuments, and great buildings record the achievements of Theban rulers of the New Kingdom (ca. 1575–1085 B.C.E.). These inscriptions, monuments, and buildings were also physical reminders to city residents of the spiritual or divine realms. As at Memphis, among the most impressive architectural achievements are those found in the necropolis. One mortuary temple consisted of a long, unroofed causeway leading to a court with a platform on which was a giant altar. To the rear of this was the temple proper; the burial chamber was hewn out of the rock of the cliff against which the temple abutted and was entered from a concealed place in the pavement of the temple floor.

The principal deity of Thebes was Amon-Ra, chief of the gods, and Egyptians sometimes referred to Thebes as "No-Amon," or "City of Amon." Sections of the city were devoted to lesser local gods. Initially, the necropolis, a vast city of temples and tombs along with the dwellings of priests, was on the west bank and the living city on the east bank of the Nile. As the city grew in size, eventually covering an area of three square miles, royal palaces and their accompaniments were added to the necropolis as individual rulers died and were reborn into the afterlife. The city of the dead stretched back from the western shore of the river as far as the desert hills. Each of the city's many temples collected its own community of living members, too; one of the oldest of these communities was around the temple of Karnak. New temples were constantly being built, and a long series of royal tombs and funerary monuments extended far into the desert in the Valley of the Kings.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

El-Amarna and Urban Life

Many resources were dedicated to the building of the great pyramids that were the tombs of pharaohs and to the temples of the gods of Egypt, and these stand today as monuments to the power of the pharaohs. In contrast, the remains of urban settlements, which were simpler and less permanent constructions of mud brick, are relatively few. One exception to this is the recently excavated site of El-Amarna, located midway between Cairo and Luxor. Built by the pharaoh Akhenaten (d. 1358 B.C.E.) to escape the power of the priests of the god Amon at Thebes and to proclaim his belief in the sun god Aten as the only god, El-Amarna was occupied for only about forty years. It was abandoned in 1356 B.C.E., when Akhenaten's successor returned to Thebes and to the worship of Amon. At El-Amarna, in addition to temples to Aten and Akhenaten's palace in the city, as well as police and military barracks, the wealthy people of the city built their residences along the main thoroughfares of the grid pattern of the urban plan, while the poor squeezed their dwellings into whatever spaces remained. About 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) to the east lay the workers' village for those who labored on the pharaoh's tomb.

The agricultural wealth of the Nile supported the city folk with food. At the same time, their labor (used by the elites to construct the temples and tombs and fill them with artistic treasures) was also thought to support the working of the cosmos: the material and spiritual worlds were inseparable. Whether artisan or farmer, deified king or enslaved foreigner, everyone contributed to the maturing barley fields and estates.

The Egyptian Diet

Among the remains of tombs dated to about 3000 B.C.E. were meals left to feed the deceased until she or he reached the other world. These included dishes of barley porridge, cooked quail, kidneys, pigeon stew, fish, beef ribs, bread, cakes, figs, berries, cheese, wine, and beer. Most likely they were comparable to the meals enjoyed by wealthy living Egyptians. The poor ate mainly the commonest kind of flatbread, called *ta*, and a variety of less desirable marsh and canal creatures, including eel, mullet, carp, perch, and, according to a Greek observer in about 200 B.C.E., "slimy magpies." Tombs contained not only food but also jewelry, clothes, wigs, and furniture. Their artwork, especially wall paintings, describes visually and in hieroglyphic (sacred picture writing) forms much about the daily lives of rural and urban Egyptians, from the royal family to their slaves.

Urban Crowding

As settlements became more crowded, living space was expanded upward to city rooftops and sometimes to second stories. Many specialized activities, including baking and brewing, weaving, and other craft production, took

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

place within household compounds. Traders traveled up and down the Nile carrying on their transactions from boats, so that Nile cities were, in many ways, floating cities. Never far from the Nile waters, ancient Egyptians lived in cities and smaller villages as part of an elaborate system that linked land and labor to a world of belief.

Cities in South Asia: The Limits of Archaeological Evidence

The earliest south Asian cities, like those of Sumer and the Nile, appeared in a river valley, the valley of the Indus, in the area of northwest India that is now Pakistan. The Harappan culture of the Indus Valley flourished from around 2300 to around 1500 B.C.E. The origins and development of urbanism at the sites of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, both of which were revealed to the modern world only by excavations made in the second decade of the twentieth century, are linked to the rise of Indus culture. They remain partially buried with no fewer than seventy unearthed sites covering more than half a million square miles.

Harappan Culture: Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro

The area of northwestern India where Harappan culture, the earliest known culture on the Indian subcontinent, emerged seems to have been a region of communities based on herding and the limited practice of grain cultivation, not unlike the Tigris-Euphrates region. Sites indicate numerous village communities of mud brick scattered along the Indus and its tributaries and along the shores of the Arabian Sea. The eventual appearance of large cities, some of which housed populations estimated at more than 35,000, suggests that the sort of desiccation that contributed to urbanization in Sumer and Egypt may also have been a factor in the development of urban settlements in the Indus Valley.

Like other cities, those of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were centers of an agricultural hinterland. Mohenjo-Daro, the best-documented site, was located midway along the Indus River, and Harappa lay about 6500 kilometers (4000 miles) to the northeast on a tributary of the Indus. The annual natural inundation of the Indus Valley, along with simple irrigation techniques, made possible the settling of relatively large communities in the Indus Valley by the third millennium B.C.E. Harappan cities were part of systems of local trade and economy linking rural producers to urban centers of specialists. They also became centers of long-distance trade, establishing contacts with the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan, and areas to the south of the Indus.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

Lothal

Lothal was an important trading center on the coast southeast from the Indus delta, approximately 725 kilometers (450 miles) from Mohenjo-Daro. Excavations at Lothal have yielded evidence of a docklike structure and a locking mechanism to control the inflow of tidal water; both of these suggest the existence of sea vessels and seaborne trade. Trading connections provided such raw materials as gold, tin, copper, and jade that were used by craftspeople. By 2000 B.C.E., the Indus people had begun to spin cotton into yarn and weave it into cloth for trade.

Urban Planning

The Indus cities were also ceremonial or religious centers, as remarkable for their monumental structures as for the technology of city planning employed by the people who built them. Temple sites are found in each urban center, where worshipers gathered to conduct rituals. Water purification rites, still found in modern Indian culture, were an important part of ancient rituals, and evidence of public baths has been excavated. Their streets of shops and brick houses, in orderly rows, were arranged in a grid pattern. There were such amenities as effective drainage systems and public wells, as well as baths. Objects of gold, silver, copper, stone, and pottery attest to the presence of specialist craftspeople. To the west of each city was the citadel, a group of public buildings raised up above the level of the rest and surrounded by fortifications. The regularity of construction down to the size of each brick suggests uniformity and control over the production processes, probably by the city's government.

The urban societies of the Indus were literate. Their script, dated to about 2500 B.C.E., is unlike any early West Asian script and remains undeciphered. Evidence of this script is confined to about 2000 carved seals, usually made of soft stone, delicately engraved and hardened by heating. Examples of these seals, which include engraved images of religious figures, have been found as far away as Sumer, attesting to the role that literacy played in the trade and communication links required by successful urban centers and their systems. Once they are translated, we may have a better idea of the culture and daily reality of life in South Asian cities. Until then, historians must rely on the archaeological evidence—selective examples of what has physically survived at the early sites of urban occupation—and make inferences based on its interpretation.

Environmental Change

Shortly after 1750 B.C.E., the character of this civilization was disrupted by a series of floods caused by earthquakes and by other environmental changes such as the depletion of resources due to human and animal population

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

increase. The Indus River changed its course, and the patterning of irrigation, food surplus, and commercial activity was destroyed. Squatters from neighboring villages and nomadic communities replaced the urban population, and crumbling walls replaced the glorious citadels. Chariot-riding peoples from south-central Asia laid claim to the remains of Harappan culture, bringing their seminomadic way of life, new languages, and vastly different ideas about food, social organization, and religion. These newcomers gradually settled the region surrounding the other great river system of northern India, the Ganges, and by the sixth century B.C.E. the Ganges Valley was the primary center of population, productivity, cities, and commerce.

Later Indian Cities

A fourth-century B.C.E. account by the Greek Megasthenes (ca. 350–290 B.C.E.) describes the city of Pataliputra, a political and economic center strategically located along the Ganges River trade route. Pataliputra was the capital of the Mauryan empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 322 B.C.E. (see Chapter 4). At the time this account was written and for perhaps two centuries afterward, Pataliputra was probably the largest, most sophisticated city in the world. Surrounded by large wooden walls with 570 towers and 64 gates, Pataliputra was the center of a wealthy, highly organized economic system that included farms, granaries, textile industries, and shipyards that built ships for seaborne trade. Pataliputra was also the seat of a famous university and library, along with palaces, temples, gardens, and parks.

Several centuries later, in the third century C.E., the city of Madurai, capital of a southern Indian state, flourished as a cultural, economic, religious, and political center. Like other south Indian cities of the time, Madurai was enriched by maritime trade, largely with Southeast Asia, and dominated by a temple complex. As described in the introduction to this chapter, Madurai displayed the social, economic, and cultural complexity characteristic of other cities found throughout the world in the first centuries C.E.

Urbanism in East Asia

Occurring later than in West and South Asia, the rise of urbanism in China was directly related to the formation of early political orders, in particular the first dynastic state, the Shang (ca. 1600–1027 B.C.E.). Shang kings based their political authority on their claim of descent from ancestors who were able to intercede with the central deity of Shang religion. Because political authority was legitimized by religion, the royal capital where the ruler lived was a sacred ceremonial center that embodied the close relationship between kingship and urbanism in early China. Shang rulers moved their capitals

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

several times during the course of the dynasty, possibly in response to shifting defense needs or access to resources.

Anyang: Ceremonial Center and Stratified Society

Near the modern city of Anyang on the north China plain lie the ruins of the late Shang capital, which was excavated in the early twentieth century. Like earlier Shang capitals, Anyang was a ceremonial center, including royal tombs containing evidence of human sacrifices as well as a rich material culture, such as bronze vessels, chariots, and jade. The "palace" itself, like other buildings at the Anyang complex, was made of daub-and-wattle (mud-and-thatch) construction on a pounded-earth foundation, creating a dirt floor that over time would become polished by use. Storage pits and drainage ditches fulfilled the practical needs of the concentrated population, many of whom lived in subterranean "pit" dwellings built into the ground. Social stratification was evident in the distinction between the nobility's ground-level dwellings with their pounded-earth floors and the 4-meter-deep (13-foot-deep) pit dwellings of urban commoners, which resembled those of their social status who lived in the countryside.

The ability of a relative few—the Shang king and nobility—to claim the right to the fruits of labor of the many—farmers and producers—made possible the settlement of urban sites by allowing ruling elites to be fed and supported by the labor of those subject to their political control. Not only the evidence of rich material culture displayed in tomb artifacts, but also articles and foodstuffs that supported daily life, were produced by artisans and farmers whose labor was controlled by a small elite.

Religious Specialists

Within the Shang capital, specialization was evident in the groups of religious specialists who served the rulers and in the organization of artisans—especially bronzeworkers—into common workshops and living quarters. The crafting of bronze ritual vessels was carried out by hereditary artisans who marked their wares with symbols of their clan. Their work was as vital to the legitimacy of the state as that of the religious specialists, since bronze vessels were an essential part of ritual sacrifices to the ancestors of the Shang kings as well as to the central deity, Di (see Chapter 4).

City and Countryside

Outside the capital, the landscape of Shang China was dotted with earth-walled towns, the residences of families descended from mythological ancestors subordinate to the ancestor of the royal family. The Shang king exercised his authority primarily by ceremonial visits to these towns, by which he demonstrated his power and confirmed the ties between the town

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

and the capital city. Shang walled cities stood as islands in a sea of unfriendly or even hostile "barbarians," peoples ethnically distinct from the cultural heritage claimed by the Shang. In fact, some scholars have argued that the impetus for the organization of the Shang state lay in the need for defense against ethnically different groups that also inhabited the north China plain.

The distinction between town and countryside was seen as the line between what was civilized (the city) and what was suburban: farmland, pasturage, forest, or even borderland. Areas occupied by hostile ethnic groups not related to the Shang were, by definition, "uncivilized." As elsewhere, however, the relationship between the city and its hinterland was crucial: farmers produced food and other goods that were necessary for the provision of urban dwellers and for the support of the ruling elite. The protection of access to such vital resources was an essential function of the Shang military.

Cities, Commerce, and Complexity

In the succeeding Zhou period (ca. 1027–250 B.C.E.), towns were organized into *guo*, states whose leaders were ranked and titled according to a hierarchy based on the intimacy of their relationship to the Zhou king. The hierarchical link between each of these territories and the Zhou capital was confirmed by the ceremonial placement of a mound of earth that came from the king's own altar of earth in the capital city. A network of kinship ties bound clans identified by common surname and lineages sharing common descent in the towns with the Zhou king in the capital city.

By about 700 B.C.E., a second stage of urban development took place. As the power of the Zhou king waned because of the weakening of kinship links with each new generation, cities evolved from fortified ceremonial enclaves dependent on periodic expeditions to acquire resources to centralized facilities serving a spatially integrated hinterland. In addition to structural change, cities grew in size and number. Less a weblike organization based on kinship ties and more an aggregation of dwellings, markets, and public buildings, a city of the late Zhou period housed otherwise diverse and unrelated people based on their common goals. These developments were related both to the breakdown of the kin-based social structure and to the rise of the bureaucratic centralized state, as well as to the development of commerce. They reflected the increasing complexity of purpose and participation of many different segments of population common to city life everywhere.

Chinese Cities as Ceremonial Centers

After the unification of the empire in the third century B.C.E., the Chinese capital cities retained the ceremonial function of the Shang and Zhou capitals. Like the cities of the Shang and early Zhou periods, the imperial capitals and

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

other urban sites were administrative and political centers rather than primarily centers of population, production, and trade. Sites were chosen using principles of geomancy: selection of landscapes with topographical properties that were believed to confer benefits on the residents of the city. In the imperial capital, the ruler's palace and other important buildings were built in a south-facing direction, to take advantage of the benevolent southern winds. The city itself was laid out in a regular square, with thoroughfares running north-south and east-west, embodying symmetry and order as the imperial capital manifested the patterned order of the empire.

Chang'an: Imperial Capital

Chang'an, the imperial capital during the Han (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) and Tang (618–907 C.E.) dynasties, located in northwest China, is a superb example of the representation of order and symmetry in the building of an imperial capital. Extending to 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) around the city, the walls of Chang'an were built of pounded earth and some bricks by large forces of both men and women conscript laborers. Twelve gates in the walls each measured 6 meters (20 feet) across. The gates had watchtowers for watchmen to monitor the comings and goings of people into and out of the city and to call for the closing of the gates if danger threatened. The city was probably crisscrossed by major thoroughfares that ran both east-west and north-south, with earthenware gullies at the sides to drain away waste water. There existed perhaps as many as 160 wards, divisions of the city set up for residences, temples, palaces, or markets. A Han poet described the dwellings in some of the wards as being packed together "as closely as the teeth of a comb." Marketplaces, of which there were several in Han Chang'an, were more than sites of commercial exchange where urban residents purchased food, textiles, pottery, lamp oil, and other necessities; they were also public places where such things as executions took place to warn people of the punishment for disloyalty or other crimes, where entertainers such as jugglers or acrobats could be found, and where imperial announcements would be made to the population at large.

The imperial palace faced southward to receive the benefits of the direction associated with the sun. In addition, there were religious shrines such as the "Hall of Light," where the emperor performed rituals designed to ensure cosmic order. Other shrines and ceremonial buildings provided places for the populace to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor or for members of the upper classes to venerate their ancestors and otherwise show their status.

Life in Imperial Chang'an

Already in the first century C.E., the affluent lifestyle of urban residents who belonged to the nobility was coming under criticism, revealing something of

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

the luxurious lives lived by some people in the city. They lived in splendid, multistoried houses and kept richly ornamented horse-drawn carriages to ride about the city in. Wealthy people wore fine silks, ate exotic foods such as quails, baby goat, pickles, and oranges, and drank imported wine in inlaid silver goblets. They were entertained by private orchestras, dancers, acrobats, and trained animals. The lives of the majority of the urban population contrasted sharply with the world of the nobility. The city housed a large population of families who lived in poor dwellings, wore rough clothing, and ate inadequate amounts of even the simplest food. Occasionally crime became rampant in the city, and possibly the poorer residents of Chang'an saw robbery as a means of improving their lot in life. Gangs, distinguished by particular clothing, weapons, and armor, sometimes roamed the streets. The inequality characteristic of the society as a whole was intensified in urban settings, where rich and poor were thrust up against each other with greater intimacy and frequency than in rural life, sometimes resulting in violence.

Commercial and Capital Cities

In the mid-eighth century C.E., Chang'an was probably the largest city in the world, with a population of more than 1 million enclosed within the city walls and immediate suburban surroundings. It was the terminus of the Silk Road, the great caravan route across Central Asia, that brought goods to China and carried Chinese silks and spices to other parts of the Eurasian continent. Thus Chang'an was both an imperial capital—a ceremonial political center—and a center of international trade.

Beginning in the late Tang, towns and cities increasingly grew up as centers of commerce, but these commercial cities existed side by side with administrative towns that were walled enclaves of political authority. As early as the ninth century, the southern port city of Canton was a center of international trade. Despite the growth of Canton and other commercial cities, the urban legacy of early China remained throughout its history in the walled towns that dotted the rural landscape, and in the planned imperial capitals of later dynasties. The city of Beijing was built as a capital by the Mongol rulers of China in the thirteenth century and today remains the capital of China.

Cities in Mediterranean Europe

Cities rose in Europe conspicuously later than they did elsewhere in the world. Because urbanization was late in appearing, the rise of cities in Europe is perhaps more directly related to the development of agriculture there, though no single model holds sway. Despite the diversity of the European continent—the Mediterranean basin is as different from the Danube and Rhine River basins as they are different from the rocky fringelands of

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

Scandinavia and the northern British Isles—a common relationship existed between agricultural developments and urbanization. As elsewhere, in the process of settling down, Europeans practiced agriculture and pastoralism in combination with gathering and hunting. This pattern of subsistence was subsequently replaced by developments that were considerably affected by environment. It was in fertile Balkan valleys that some of the earliest permanent agricultural settlements took root. Such settlements did not mean the abandonment of a mixed economy, and farming continued to be combined with collecting, fishing, and hunting. Many Balkan communities specialized in metalworking, providing some of the earliest evidence of copper and bronze technology.

Permanent settlements supported by agriculture appeared throughout Europe, though in a variety of patterns and at differing times. They were at once the final stage of the European agricultural revolution and the first stage in the emergence of European cities. European agricultural village societies were in time replaced by densely populated, complex organized urban centers based on expanding technologies and economies.

Knossos

Something of the pace and character of early urban development in Mediterranean Europe can be seen in the examples of Knossos, Athens, and Rome. By around 1800 B.C.E., the complex of Knossos on the island of Crete displayed characteristics associated with the rise of urban centers throughout the world. Our knowledge of Knossos, the center of Minoan civilization, is derived from myth, archaeology, and written inscriptions. According to Greek legend, the Minotaur—the mythical half man, half bull—was confined in a labyrinth in the palace of the founder of Knossos, King Minos. Archaeological excavations have confirmed the existence of the labyrinth by revealing vast complexes beneath the palaces in Knossos. In addition to the palaces, Knossos included working people's residences, as well as, businesses and warehouses that supplied the trading networks of Cretan merchants throughout the Aegean Sea. The chief building was the Great Palace, the "House of Minos," consisting of numerous rooms around a central paved courtyard. Among the rooms was a throne room, residential chambers, and bathrooms. Much of the palace was made up of private rooms connected by halls. Walls in some of the rooms were decorated with beautiful murals, and the palace also included practical facilities such as a remarkable drainage system and water supply. When excavation was completed, the palace complex was found to cover 874 square meters (9400 square feet).

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

Athens

The early history of Athens is obscure, but there are traces—remains of walls, early fortifications, pieces of a tower, and tombs—that suggest a settlement as early as around 1500 B.C.E. These remains indicate a small place of minor significance, a settlement primarily of local importance. The Greek poet Homer (ca. 800 B.C.E.) made scant mention of Attica, the area where Athens was located; indeed, at the time he described, Athens was no more important than other communities found there. Athens did enjoy an ongoing and unbroken course of development, in part because of the favorable situation of the abrupt hill—the Acropolis—on which Athenians erected their earliest settlement. The Acropolis dominated the surrounding plain and possessed easy communication with the sea. Soon dwellings spread around the base of the Acropolis. Relying on its agricultural hinterland, Athens absorbed the other communities of the Attic plain as it grew. Public buildings were built, and those who lived in the town were interconnected with those who dwelt in the countryside around it by political and religious activities, by commerce and society, by their interdependency. Those in the rural areas benefited from the trading connections made possible by political and economic links overseas. In turn, they fed their city neighbors.

Athena, the Patron Goddess of Athens

It was also the city's role as the reserved precinct of the goddesses and gods of Attica that distinguished Athens as the urban center for the farmland and villages that made up its hinterland. Ancient Greek religion focused neither on sacred texts nor on abstract dogmas but was rooted in community practices: rituals, festivals, processions, athletic contests, oracles, gift giving, and animal sacrifices. Fully one-third of the calendar year was devoted to festivals, opportunities for public communal assemblies in which people could honor the gods and goddesses and enjoy feasting and entertainment. The most important festival in ancient Athens was the Panathenaia, the annual state festival honoring the city's patron deity, the goddess Athena Polias ("of the city"). Every four years the festival was celebrated on a much grander scale, including musical competitions, recitations of Homer's epic poetry, gymnastic and equestrian contests, and a long, colorful procession through the city to the goddess Athena's shrine on the Acropolis. The culmination of this spectacle was the presentation of a *peplos*, a richly woven robe, to the cult statue of Athena. Spinning and weaving occupied most of women's time, even elite Athenian women's. In Homer's *Odyssey*, while the hero Odysseus is on his long voyage home from the Trojan Wars, his patient and faithful wife, Penelope, has spent her time weaving and then unraveling her father-in-law's burial shroud, thus fending off unwelcome suitors whom she could not marry until the shroud was completed. Athena's *peplos* was

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

traditionally woven by young women selected from upper-class Athenian families.

The Agora, Focus of City Life

Almost as important a priority to residents of Athens as religion was the *agora*, or market, the focus of commercial life, where everyone had a right to trade agricultural surplus or manufactured articles. No elites controlled the access to or distribution of valuable goods. The *agora* was a civic forum too, where, after worship and marketing, property owners might discuss common community issues—such as customs duties or the issues of government or war—in a sort of open-air town council. It was accepted in Athens that decisions made in common were preferable to any made by a single person.

Small farmers were always of decisive importance to Athens, as they provided the connection between independent agrarian village life and urban society. As infantrymen they protected the city. They preferred to live in small communities and to go out to their fields each day, but they went to the urban center on market days, for religious occasions, or to attend the town council. The first Athenians to abandon this pattern and become permanent residents in the city were artisans and craftspeople, blacksmiths, potters, weavers, and tanners. These small-business concerns made up of skilled workers held both rural laborers and the urban poor in contempt. Between 750 and 550 B.C.E., the number of city dwellers swelled as the result of a population explosion which lessened the already sparse amount of arable land in Attica. Increasing urbanization lead to expanding trade beyond the city as well as increasing complexity within it.

Commerce and the City

Athenians looked to the sea, and trade and entrepreneurship resulted in overseas connections and expansion. Commerce and values associated with commerce became triumphant. Great fortunes were made by merchants who traded across the Mediterranean, and by the fifth century B.C.E. numerous commercial middlemen had begun to share in the profits of that trade. Athens began to develop specialties and, as it did so, to import much of its raw materials and food: two-thirds of the grain consumed by Athenians was imported. But it was trade and industry that became basic to the city's future greatness.

Life in Athens took place largely outdoors. Meals were eaten outside, and talking and drinking lasted into the night. After about 500 B.C.E., the gap between rich and poor began to be felt in city life. As the city became a magnificent intellectual and trade center, Athenians' tastes became more exotic. Peacock eggs or pigs which had died of overeating were considered delicacies. Wine and olives were plentiful on the tables of the wealthy elite.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

The period of classical Athenian "greatness," was also a time of impoverishment for many city dwellers: the poor might have to make a meal of a few beans, greens, turnips, wild fruit, seeds, or grasshoppers swallowed with a mouthful of barley paste.

Urban Life and Epidemics

One major problem that appeared wherever there was a concentration of population in urban environments was the spread of disease. Although documentation of epidemics in early history is sparse, the famous Greek historian Thucydides recorded an epidemic of an unknown disease that swept through Athens in 430–429 B.C.E. The introduction of this disease into the Athenian population was probably related to its reliance on Mediterranean trade, since the disease began in the Athenian port city of Piraeus before it attacked Athens. The expansion of population in the Mediterranean, China, and India that made urban growth possible attests to the balance achieved in these regions between parasitic infectious disease organisms and the inherited resistance found in the gene pools of inhabitants of these regions. Nevertheless, sudden outbreaks of new diseases were intensified by the crowded conditions of urban life.

Rome

The story of the other great Mediterranean city, Rome, follows a pattern similar to that of Athens. Evidence suggests that the hills along the banks of the Tiber River in central Italy were inhabited at an early period: flint as well as Bronze Age implements have been found. There is a continuous archaeological record from the early Iron Age, and graves indicate that the hills were inhabited from as early as the ninth century B.C.E. The agricultural communities that came together to form Rome were clustered around seven hills; the valleys between the hills were drained by ditches or sewers, known as cloacae, which are among the most ancient Roman remains. The hills, naturally adaptable for defense, were crowned by separate fortifications, their object being to render their communities inaccessible to outsiders. The task of uniting these separate agricultural communities into one city was as much a matter of architecture and engineering as of politics.

It seems likely that the earliest settlement bearing the name "Rome" was on the Palatine Hill, which was among the more defensible ones. It had the added advantage of being close to the Tiber River, thus possessing easy communication with the sea, 27 kilometers (17 miles) away. Tradition has it that the first king of the community on the Palatine Hill was Romulus; his successors brought the other six hill communities under their sway, thus forming the city of Rome. The traditional date for the founding of the city is 753 B.C.E.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

Growth in the size, wealth, and power of the city was accompanied by social and political tension. Divisions between the privileged patricians—the "fathers" of the Roman state—and the plebeians, the ordinary Romans, transformed the separate communities on the seven hills beside the Tiber into a city that became the focus of a vast political empire. Urban processes were both the result of and the impetus for political centralization, which exploited growing inequalities.

Poverty and Inequality as Conditions of Urban Life

One of the measures of those inequalities was the documented presence of poverty and hunger in Rome. *Annona* was the term for the distribution of free grain by the city's authorities, a drastic measure to address the persistent poverty that had begun to plague the urban center as early as the second century C.E. From as early as the sixth century B.C.E., serious shortages and famines had occurred; by the time of Julius Caesar's successor, Augustus, in the first century C.E., about 320,000 persons (just under one-third of the population of Rome) were receiving public assistance in the form of *annona*, reckoned to be about 14 million bushels of wheat.

The Roman Diet

The poor citizens of Rome were crowded into tenements: tall, narrow insulae. Fuel was expensive and cooking fires were dangerous, so many people avoided cooking themselves, instead relying on "grimy cookshops" on the streets below that served questionable meats grilled beyond recognition and dry bread. By contrast, the food of the rich was remarkably diverse and ostentatious. Foods were decorated and elaborately presented in feasts: a cooked rabbit given bird wings might be arranged to look like Pegasus. The tables of wealthy Romans held pickles from Spain, pomegranates from North Africa, oysters from Britain, and spices from as far away as Indonesia. But even for the wealthy, foods had to be imported from long distances and stored in warehouses. Disguising the taste of rancid foods was a necessity. Heavily spiced foods were a necessary, if ineffective, antidote to spoiled food. Many Romans also suffered from lead poisoning, a condition brought about by the use of lead in the manufacture of lead-lined water pipes and wine storage vessels.

Cities in Trans-Alpine Europe

Cities were much later appearing in Europe north of the Alps than Athens or Rome. For a thousand years after the "fall of Rome" (476 C.E.), only small, frontierlike towns were found north of the Mediterranean basin. The history of Paris is typical of Trans-Alpine (the area north of the Alps) urbanization. Little in the early history of Paris suggested its future importance. Yet, like Athens and Rome, it had certain environmental and geographical advantages

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

that account for its ultimate rise to prominence as one of the earliest important north European urban centers. Paris occupies the center of the Paris basin, a fertile and naturally endowed area in north-central France. It owes its development to several factors: its proximity to fertile agricultural country, particularly grain-growing areas, such as Brie and the Beauce; the existence of quarries, with good building material lying bare in several areas; and its position as the meeting place of great natural highways such as the Rhône and Seine Rivers from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and from Spain over the western French lowlands.

Paris

Paris began on an island in the Seine much smaller than the present Ile de la Cité, both a central and a defensible location. From this location, its people navigated the lower course of the Seine and perhaps reached the coast of Britain. They were so few in number that in time they placed themselves under the protection of other powerful neighbors. In 53 B.C.E., Paris was subjugated by Julius Caesar, who made it the meeting place of political deputies from all over the Roman province of Gaul. As Paris expanded its river commerce and grew in wealth, it also became a religious center. Romans built a temple to Jupiter there, and subsequently Christians located one of their earliest north European bishops there, probably in the third century C.E. By becoming the seat of a bishop, Paris, as Christian Europeans reckoned it, became a city. It took another thousand years for it to become a major urban center—of secular government, commerce, industry, and culture.

Early Paris suffered the growing pains of many expanding population centers. The divisions between countryside and urban life were often blurred. Streets were muddy pastureland where sheep and pigs grazed on grass and garbage. A twelfth-century C.E. Parisian "traffic jam" caused a pig to run between the legs of a horse, upsetting his rider, the heir to the royal throne. Individual households sometimes had gardens and vineyards (on the other side of town walls) to supplement the availability and offset the high cost of foods. Still, there were many poor and many hungry. Even the wealthy Parisian could not escape the unpleasantness and pollution that was the consequence of an increasing urban population. The concentration of specialists who flocked to cities to produce and sell their wares in the great city markets contributed to a significant decline in the quality of water and hygiene, even as it helped develop the city's trade and economy. The city government faced enormous problems and complaints about activities it tried to regulate and control. Blood and carcasses from slaughterhouses and chemicals from tanneries, waste products from smelting and smithing, choking smoke from the burning of coal and other fuels, noisy industrial activities—all created undesirable living conditions for city residents. Disease

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004

and vermin, such as rats, were rampant. Filth was everywhere a condition of urban existence. Public baths—there were only thirty-two in Paris in 1268 C.E.—were eventually banned by the Church because of their noted contribution to rampant promiscuity, no doubt to the regret of many except the *parfumeurs*.

Used by permission for *Bridging World History*,
The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004