

Robert W. Strayer

**Ways of the World: A Brief Global  
History with Sources  
Second Edition**

**Chapter 1**

First Peoples, First Farmers: Most of History in a  
Single Chapter, to 4000 B.C.E.

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Paleolithic Art  
Image courtesy of S. A. Tourism  
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1. What creatures, people, and actions does this painting show?

This painting shows three hunters amid a herd of grazing animals. Probably produced with ochre, this art shows a group of herd animals—one running, one young, and one with an arrow protruding from its torso—among three very tall figures, also painted in ochre. These tall figures carry bows and arrows; two of them may carry parts of an animal.

2. Take a look at the proportions of the animals and the hunters. Why do you think the bushmen chose to paint the scene in these proportions?

The hunters are painted with long, strong legs and very long and lean torsos. They are naked except for wide, decorated belts over their waists. They tower over the animals, which are drawn in proportions that make them far more recognizable than the hunters. The hunters' outsized representation might be intended to suggest their dominance over the herd animals and stress their mastery over their prey with their hunting skills. It may also overemphasize physical attributes important for accomplished hunters.

3. Why do you think the bushmen created this painting?

Only the hunters themselves would have witnessed a hunt, so this may have been an effort by the hunting group to share this experience with those at home. Given the importance of hunting for the subsistence and health of a family and community, the painting may also have been a means of celebrating and honoring hunters. Finally, this painting may have been a form of communicating hunting skills to other generations.

# **I. Out of Africa to the Ends of the Earth: First Migrations**

## **A. Into Eurasia**

1. Migrations: 45,000–20,000 years ago
2. New hunting tools
3. Cave paintings
4. Venus figurines

## **B. Into Australia**

1. Migrations by boats as early as 60,000 years ago
2. Dreamtime

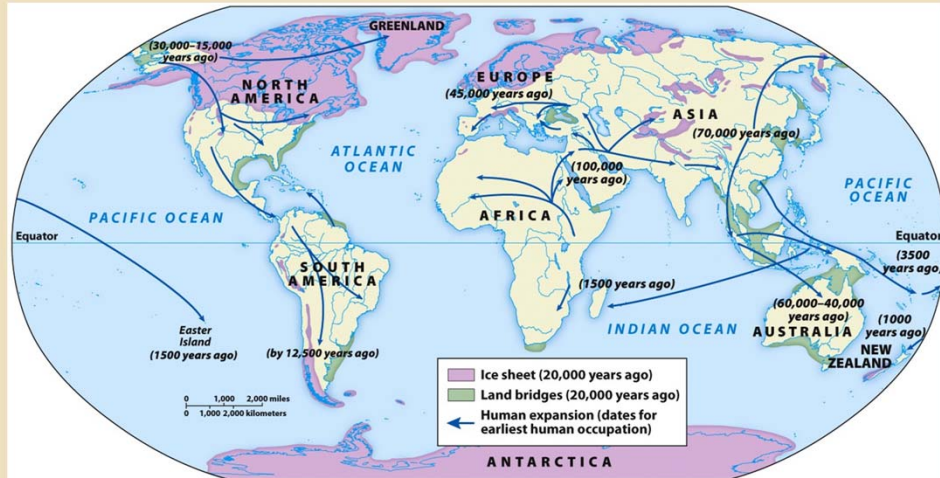
# **I. Out of Africa to the Ends of the Earth: First Migrations**

## **A. Into Eurasia**

1. Migrations: 45,000–20,000 years ago: Starting 45,000 years ago, a series of migrations out of Africa and the Middle East populated Asia and Europe. Around 20,000 years ago, colder Ice Age temperatures moved humans from northern Europe towards the south and brought new hunting tools.
2. New hunting tools: Moving southwards, humans developed spears, bows, arrows, and stone tools to hunt reindeer and horses.
3. Cave paintings: Earliest existing records of representative human communication, mostly animals and human forms but also some abstract symbols.
4. Venus figurines: Female figures with exaggerated breasts and hips across Eurasia raise the possibility of widespread networks of human communication.

## **B. Into Australia**

1. Migrations as early as 60,000 years ago: From Indonesia into Australia by boats, a human first.
2. Dreamtime: Contemporary Australian Aboriginal concept that expresses a world outlook that places human activity and knowledge in the continent's natural environment of rocks, rivers, and waterholes.



Map 1.1 The Global Dispersion of Humankind  
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# I. Out of Africa to the Ends of the Earth: First Migrations

## C. Into the Americas

1. Bering Strait migrations: 30,000–15,000 years ago
2. Clovis culture
3. Large animal extinctions
4. Diversification of lifestyles

## D. Into the Pacific

1. Waterborne migrations 3,500–1,000 years ago
2. Intentional colonization of new lands
3. Human environmental impacts

## I. Out of Africa to the Ends of the Earth: First Migrations

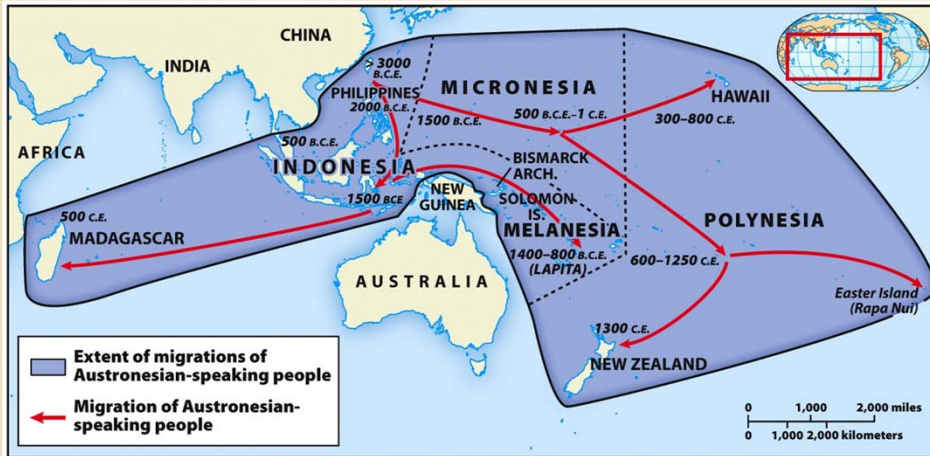
### C. Into the Americas

1. Bering Strait migrations: 30,000–15,000 years ago: Humans used land bridges created by colder temperatures and lower sea levels.
2. Clovis culture: Common type of projectile point called “Clovis point” found all over North America. Used by Clovis people to hunt large animals.
3. Large animal extinctions: Unclear why extinctions happened (perhaps over hunting or weather changes?) but suddenly Clovis culture disappeared.
4. Diversification of lifestyle: After the extinction of the mega-fauna, humans adapted to various ecological niches with some remaining mobile foragers and hunters and others developing agriculture and urbanization.

### D. Into the Pacific

1. Waterborne migrations 3,500–1,000 years ago: Migrations came from Solomon and Bismarck Islands near New Guinea and from the Philippines to all corners of the Pacific (and from Indonesia to Madagascar in the Indian Ocean) and showed exceptional seamanship and navigation skills.
2. Intentional colonization of new lands: Unlike other migrations, these were done by agricultural people with the intention of finding new lands and creating new communities. Common pattern of highly stratified societies.
3. Human environmental impacts: Species such as the *moa* in New Zealand and many large trees of Rapa Nui were overused by these settlers, resulting in waves of manmade extinctions of flora and

fauna.



Map 1.2 Migration of Austronesian-Speaking People  
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## II. The Ways We Were

### A. The First Human Societies

1. Small populations with low density
2. Egalitarian societies
3. Widespread violence

### B. Economy and the Environment

1. The “original affluent society?”
2. Altering the environment

### C. The realm of the Spirit

1. Ceremonial space
2. Cyclical view of time

## II. The Ways We Were

### A. The First Human Societies

1. Small populations with low density: Bands of twenty-five to fifty people organized by kinship. Sumatran megavolcanic eruption 70,000 years ago lowered global temperatures and decreased human population to 10,000—a number that flirted with extinction.
2. Egalitarian societies: Small numbers and relatively little accumulated wealth made these Paleolithic communities very egalitarian with little social stratification and relative equality between the sexes.
3. Widespread violence: Without formal state systems, inter-personal violence was common and the community as a whole might punish a wrongdoer with death.

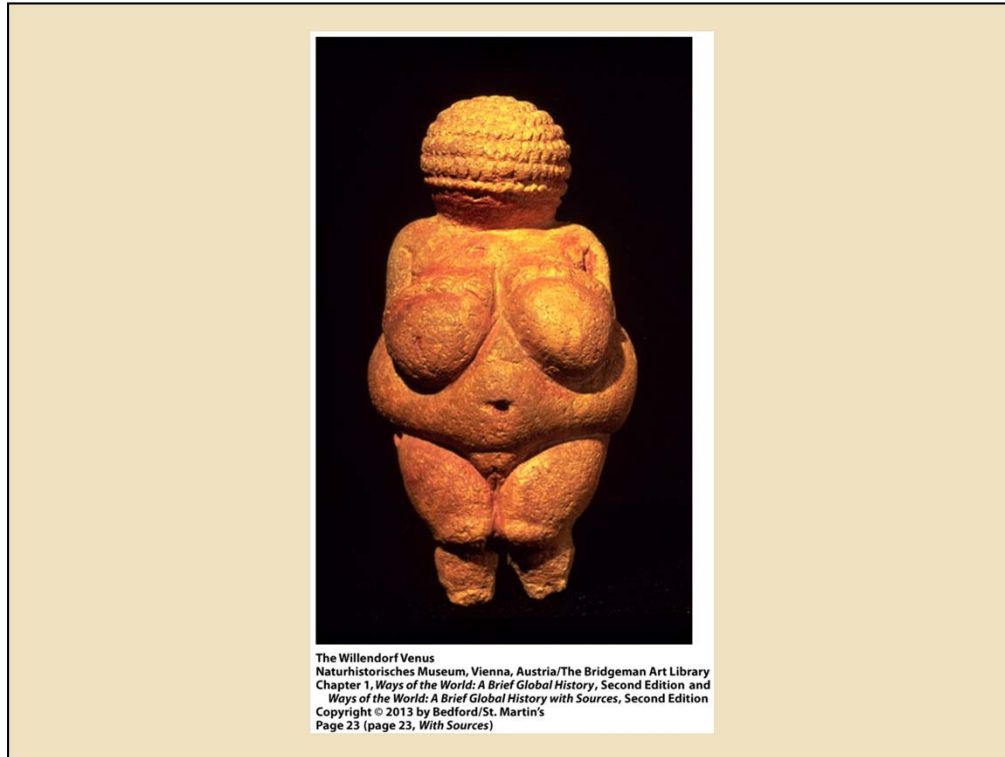
### B. Economy and the Environment

1. The “original affluent society?": Gathering and hunting required fewer work hours than agriculture, allowing more leisure time. That said, these societies had limited needs to be met.
2. Altering the environment: Setting fires and hunting had clear impacts on the environment, showing early human alteration of the landscape and species, including extinctions.

### C. The realm of the Spirit

1. Ceremonial space: While it is very difficult to research spiritual beliefs of prehistoric people, there is clear evidence of specific sites such as caves associated with various forms of spiritual and ceremonial activity.
2. Cyclical view of time: While there were varieties of mono and polytheism in these cultures, there was a strong feminine dimension that concerned the regeneration and renewal of life. Thus the natural cycles of human life influenced early religious thought.





The Willendorf Venus  
Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria/The Bridgeman Art Library  
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1. Describe this statue. What features stand out, and what features are missing?

The statue represents a female figure. It is made of a porous stone, has a yellow tint, and is quite small, measuring only 4 ½ inches. While the breasts, upper thighs, and abdomen are large and pronounced, there are no facial features visible. Instead, the head seems covered in what might represent braided hair. The arms are barely visible and seem to be resting on top of the breasts.

2. Why do you think the artist decided to shape the statue in this way?

While it is difficult to say with any certainty what the motivations of the artist were, she or he wanted a symbol that was easily transportable. The exaggerated female body parts suggest that this statue could have been a fertility symbol or a celebration of the role of women as the bearers of new life.

3. What might this statue tell us about women and Paleolithic communities?

This statue required considerable time and skill to create, and the surplus of both is a sign of modest comfort in this Paleolithic community. Furthermore, as the only lasting form of visual representation available in that time period, this statue probably reflected not just a practical appreciation of women's role for the procreation and prosperity of the community but a spiritual value as well.

## II. The Ways We Were

### D. Settling Down: The Great Transition

1. New tools and collecting wild grains
2. Climate change and permanent communities
3. Göbekli Tepe: “The First Temple”
4. Settlements make greater demands on environment

## II. The Ways We Were

### D. Settling Down: The Great Transition

1. New tools and collecting wild grains: Micro-blades allowed more precision and dexterity for human work. Better spear points were developed, as were better knives, scrapers, and arrowheads.
2. Climate change and permanent communities: A warming trend in the long-term natural climate cycles altered the habitats of plants and animals, allowing many to flourish. This allowed some humans to settle down and create permanent dwellings such as the Jomon societies in Japan and the longhouses of Labrador.
3. Göbekli Tepe: “The First Temple”: In southwestern Turkey, this 11,600-year-old site is built out of massive limestone pillars (some 16 tons) placed in a set of circles and decorated with carvings of animals. It is the product of gathering and hunting people who spent part of the year in a settled site.
4. Settlements make greater demands on environment: Settlement allowed for population growth, but these larger communities needed more food, thus placing greater demand on the environment and creating a need to increase the food supply.

## III. Breakthrough to Agriculture

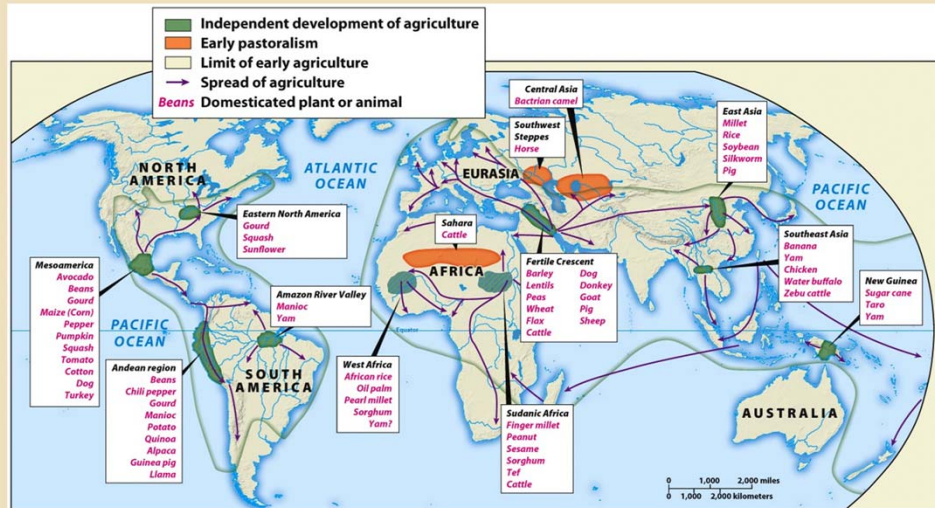
### A. Common Patterns

1. Separate, independent, and almost simultaneous
2. Climate change
3. Gender patterns
4. A response to population growth

## III. Breakthroughs to Agriculture

### A. Common Patterns

1. Separate, independent, and almost simultaneous: Between 12,000–4,000 years ago, agriculture developed in Fertile Crescent of Southwest Asia, several places in sub-Saharan Africa, China, New Guinea, Mesoamerica, the Andes, and eastern North America. As this happened within the context of 250,000 years of human history, it was surprisingly simultaneous.
2. Climate change: Warming started 16,000 years ago; by about 11,000 years ago, the Ice Age was over, creating warmer, wetter, and more stable conditions for human settlement and allowing for the flourishing of plants that were soon domesticated.
3. Gender patterns: As traditional plant gatherers, women likely led the way towards developing agriculture. As hunters, men likely led the way towards animal domestication. Many communities had long experience collecting plants such as grains in the Middle East and trapping animals such as eels in Australia.
4. A response to population growth: The warmer climate at the end of the Ice Age may have allowed a dramatic population growth of gatherer-hunter communities, thus necessitating a more abundant and stable food supply. Farming may have come after developing a sedentary way of life.



Map 1.3 The Global Spread of Agriculture and Pastoralism  
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## III. Breakthrough to Agriculture

### B. Variations

1. Local plants and animals determined path to agriculture
2. Fertile Crescent first with a quick, 500-year transition
3. Multiple sites in Africa
4. Potatoes and maize but few animals in the Americas

## III. Breakthroughs to Agriculture

### B. Variations

1. Local plants and animals determine path to agriculture: Geographical dispersion of various plants and animals suitable for domestication was quite varied and determined the path to agriculture.
2. Fertile Crescent first with a quick, 500-year transition: Due to climate changes and human migrations as well as grains suitable for cultivation, the Middle East saw a rapid transition to settled farming.
3. Multiple sites in Africa: With a dramatically different climate than contemporary Africa (the Sahara was wetter and fit for human habitation), multiple sites of agriculture developed south of the Sahara, each exploiting a plant adapted to that specific region.
4. Potatoes and Maize but few animals in the Americas: Lacking the cereal grains of the Fertile Crescent, the Americas saw the development of maize (corn) in Mesoamerica and potatoes in the Andes over a period of several thousand years. With the exception of the llama, the Americas lacked suitable animals for domestication. This was in sharp contrast to Eurasia.



Map 1.4 The Fertile Crescent  
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The Statues of Ain Ghazal  
Courtesy, Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA). Photo: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC  
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1. What does this statue show, and what do you know about its origin?

This statue from present-day Jordan was found at the archeological site of Ain Ghazal, one of the largest agricultural settlements between 7200 B.C.E. and 5000 B.C.E. With up to 3,000 inhabitants who cultivated barley, wheat, beans, peas, and lentils and raised domesticated goats, Ain Ghazal consisted of multi-room stone houses.

2. Discuss the statue's appearance.

The statue features four heads on long necks and crudely shaped bodies—two of the heads seem to be attached to one torso. The figures probably became more brittle over time as the lime rock plaster crumbled over the core of reeds around which the figures were formed. While the neck and torso are crudely shaped, the faces of all figures have very precise features accentuated with black ink around the eyes.

3. What about the statue speaks to its site of origin?

The bundle of reeds that form the core of these statues suggests that they were produced by an agricultural community. The clear facial features raise the possibility that these are not abstract representations of gods but ordinary people. The fact that this statue includes four figures of very similar size and shape also suggests that the Ain Ghazal settlement of almost 3,000 people developed a sense of sameness, if not equality.



Spot Map Bantu Migrations  
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## **IV. The Globalization of Agriculture**

### **A. Triumph and Resistance**

1. Diffusion and migration
2. Resistance
3. End of old ways of life

## **IV. The Globalization of Agriculture**

### **A. Triumph and Resistance**

1. Diffusion and migration: Agriculture spread by diffusion, which involved exposure and adoption. The spread from China into Southeast Asia is an example of this process. Agriculture also spread by migration, which involved agricultural ways of life being forced on conquered people or the displacement of existing communities. The sub-Saharan African Bantu migrations illustrate this phenomenon.
2. Resistance: Some resisted agriculture for environmental reasons. For some, their land was not well suited but for others, the land was so abundant that they did not need farming.
3. End of old ways of life: Settled agricultural communities were often incompatible with gathering and hunting groups, leading to violent displacement. Some pre-agricultural societies were changed by exposure to technology and epidemic diseases and others inter-married with members of the new settled societies.

## **IV. The Globalization of Agriculture**

### **B. The Culture of Agriculture**

1. Dramatic population increase
2. Increased human impact on the environment
3. Negative health impacts
4. Technological innovations
5. Alcohol!

## **IV. The Globalization of Agriculture**

### **B. The Culture of Agriculture**

1. Dramatic population increase: 6,000,000 people in the world 10,000 years ago, 50,000,000 people 5,000 years ago, and 250,000,000 people 2,000 years ago.
2. Increased human impact on the environment: More humans meant a greater impact on the planet, specifically human selection of favorable plants and animals. Early examples of overuse of land were soil erosion and deforestation.
3. Negative health impacts: Agricultural life led to shorter life expectancy; people had a shorter physical stature and were plagued by tooth decay, anemia, and malnutrition. Relying on small numbers of crops and animals meant these communities were vulnerable to famine brought on by crop failure or drought.
4. Technological innovations: As seen in Banpo (near present day Xian, China), there was an explosion of technological development such as pottery, jewelry, weaponry, and tool making. Animals were used for secondary purposes, such as hides, wool, milking, and transport.
5. Alcohol: Wine and beer became common between 5400 and 4000 B.C.E., as did rowdy behavior. Drunken debauchery and carousing among the aristocracy prompted an unsuccessful effort by one Chinese ruler around 1046 B.C.E. to outlaw wine. Mesopotamians regarded beer as a symbol of civilization.

## **V. Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture**

### **A. Pastoral Societies**

1. Environmental factors
2. Milk, meat, and blood
3. Mobility
4. Conflict with settled communities

### **B. Agriculture Village Societies**

1. Social equality
2. Gender equity
3. Kinship ties and role of elders

## **V. Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture**

### **A. Pastoral Societies**

1. Environmental factors: Arctic tundra, deserts, and grasslands were generally not favorable to settled agriculture, but they were good for animal husbandry.
2. Milk, meat, and blood: These became central to the diet of these communities.
3. Mobility: Communities moved about with their animals looking for seasonally appropriate and unexploited grazing lands.
4. Conflict with settled communities: Age-old conflict existed between the wealthier, settled communities and the nomadic herders, with the mobile, yet poorer communities desirous of the wealth and diverse products of the villages, towns, and cities.

### **B. Agriculture Village Societies**

1. Social equality: Ties to social patterns of gathering and hunting communities continued in communities that did without formal state systems of kings, chiefs, and bureaucrats.
2. Gender equity: Importance of female work in farming and textile work gave women social importance.
3. Kinship ties and role of elders: Without a formal state system, extended family ties linked people together with elders exercising authority (this created the opportunity for the abuse of power).

## **V. Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture**

### **C. Chiefdoms**

1. Not force but gifts, rituals, and charisma
2. Religious and secular authority
3. Collection and redistribution of tribute

## **V. Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture**

### **C. Chiefdoms**

1. Not force but gifts, rituals, and charisma: Power came not from physical force or violence but by giving gifts, performing religious and political rituals, and personal charisma.
2. Religious and secular authority: Chiefs combined the sacred and the political.
3. Collection and redistribution of tribute: Chiefs collected food and manufactured items from the commoners and redistributed them to warriors.

## VI. Reflections

- A. "Progress?"
- B. Paleolithic values
- C. Objectivity

### VI. Reflections

**A. "Progress?":** Some might point to these various changes as a sign of life getting better.

**B. Paleolithic values:** Other might find aspects of early human life as a model or lesson for contemporary society.

**C. Objectivity:** Condemning or romanticizing a historical era violates the historian's need to be objective.



Visual Source 1.1 Lascaux Rock Art  
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Visual Source 1.2 Women, Men, and Religion in Çatalhöyük  
Museum of Anatolian Civilization, Ankara/Gianni Dagli Örti/The Art Archive  
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Visual Source 1.3a Otzi the Iceman  
W. Smetek/STERN/Picture Press  
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Visual Source 1.3b Otzi the Iceman  
South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, [www.iceman.it](http://www.iceman.it)  
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Visual Source 1.4 Stonehenge  
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