**Chapter 9**

*Chapter Summary*

Even before the shift to agriculture, the archaeological record bears witness to the development of social and political complexity. At sites like Göbekli Tepe in the Old World and Watson Brake and Poverty Point in the New, people relying on hunting and gathering for their subsistence appear to have developed complex ways of organizing labor that allowed them to construct enormous monuments. Later, and in a more geographically broad pattern, following the shift from a subsistence strategy based on wild, collected foods to one at least partially reliant on domesticated, produced foods, numerous societies began to shift from a simple social and political organization based on the household or family to a more complex framework. In some cases, the shift to complexity was fueled by the need to organize the labor of a large group of people to increase food production—for instance, to construct water- control facilities. In other instances, the development of a social and political structure to organize and coordinate monumental projects was necessitated by some external threat—for example, the construction of a defensive wall around a community. In still other cases, the evolution of an organizational framework beyond the household or family may have come about as the result of the unique opportunities offered by a particularly rich habitat or proximity to and monopolization of a valued resource.

The transition to more complex social, political, and economic life is represented in the archaeological record by the monumental works made possible by large groups of organized people—Stonehenge is just one example. In some cases, the shift to complexity and the creation of ranks or classes are also evidenced in the archaeological record by the appearance of burials differentiated by the inclusion of precious raw materials and finely made works of art. Examples of the development of complexity in the Old World following the adoption of an agricultural subsistence base are seen at Jericho in Israel and Çatalhöyük in Turkey. Soon after, social complexity can be seen in Mesopotamia. The earliest example in Mesoamerica is found along the Mexican Gulf Coast among the people called Olmec. The earliest archaeological evidence for the development of complexity in South America occurs at about 4,500 years ago at the site of Caral in Peru, characterized by a cluster of enormous, flat-topped pyramids, plazas, and substantial residential complexes. By 3,000 years ago, the Chavin style developed as a regional iconography, a religious and artistic approach that served to unify a broad array of societies, setting the stage for the later development of regional states.