**Chapter 10**

*Chapter Summary*

The Neolithic set the stage for the development of sedentary farming villages in various places in the Old World. In a select few regions, an acceleration of cultural complexity led to the development of stratified social systems that controlled the excess wealth made possible through the ability to produce an agricultural food surplus. Social elites developed as part of a reorganization of society that allowed for orderly and systematic trade, the construction of irrigation canals to increase the food base, and the construction of monumental defensive fortifications. In these same regions, the new way of organizing and controlling human labor was utilized by the developing elite to construct less practical monumental works—temples, palaces, and mortuary features such as pyramids. This kind of monumental construction, today diagnostic of ancient civilizations, was both cause and effect of the new social dynamic of the world’s first civilizations. Large, impressive monuments served as dramatic evidence of the power of the elite, while both symbolizing and magnifying it. The processes that led to state societies and civilization occurred in Mesopotamia, in the Nile Valley of Egypt, in Sudan, in southern Africa, and on the island of Crete in the Mediterranean.