

CIVILISATION RECAST

Civilisation is a debated concept and is often associated with the prerogatives of the 'West', colonial histories, and even emerging global politics. In this book, Stephan Feuchtwang and Michael Rowlands use examples from Africa and China to provide a new conceptualisation that challenges traditional notions of 'civilisation'. They explain how to understand duration and continuity as long-term processes of transformation. Civilisations are best seen as practices of feeding and hospitality, of rituals and manners of living and dying, of entering the portals into the invisible world that surrounds and encompasses us, of healing and the knowledge of the encompassing universe and its powers, including its ghosts and demons. Civilisations furnish the moral ideals for people to live by and aspire to and they are changed more by the actions of disappointed grassroots and their little traditions than by their ruling authorities. Just as they revitalise and change their civilisations, this book revitalises and changes the way to think about civilisations in the humanities, the historical, and the social sciences.

Stephan Feuchtwang is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of several books on China, including *The Imperial Metaphor* and *After the Event*.

Michael Rowlands is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Anthropology at University College London. The author of *The Handbook of Material Culture* and *Reclaiming Heritage*, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Gothenburg in 2015.

Civilisation Recast

Theoretical and Historical Perspectives

STEPHAN FEUCHTWANG

London School of Economics and Political Science

MICHAEL ROWLANDS

University College London



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-70618-6 — Civilisation Recast
Stephan Feuchtwang, Michael Rowlands
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108706186

DOI: 10.1017/9781108594875

© Cambridge University Press 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

First paperback edition 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-108-48434-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-70618-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
Introduction	1
1 Civilisation: A Critical and Constructive Review	7
2 Civilisation in This Book	38
3 Long-Term Traditions of Food, Substance, and Sacrifice: Interpreting Cultures of Ingestion in West, South, and East Asia	47
4 Neolithicities: From Africa to Eurasia and Beyond	75
5 Ancestors, Civilisation, and Hierarchy: Some Comparisons from Africa	95
6 Civilisation in China	116
7 Civilisation and the Government of ‘Civilisation’ in Contemporary China	155
Conclusion	182
<i>References</i>	187
<i>Index</i>	215

Figures

- 1 Map of centres of agricultural origins indicating regions with pre-agricultural pottery and pre-pottery agriculture. *page* 51
- 2 A time–space chronological chart for Asia and North Africa indicating the regional advent of ceramics, plant food grinding, domesticated plants, and domesticated animals. 52
- 3 Evolution of boiling and steaming ceramic sets in China, based on archaeological ceramics, juxtaposed with examples from the early Chinese script that reference boiling vessels. 57
- 4 The sticky cereal zone of eastern and southeastern Asia, indicating the approximate traditional distribution of sticky rice and millets. 59
- 5 Map of early (Neolithic) oven distribution, including both domed (*firin*) and cylindrical (*tannur*) inferred to have a major function for bread-baking. 67
- 6 The importance of grinding and bread in early cultural traditions in Egypt and Mesopotamia as represented in art and early script. 69
- 7 Examples of roast meat and smoke as food for the gods. 71