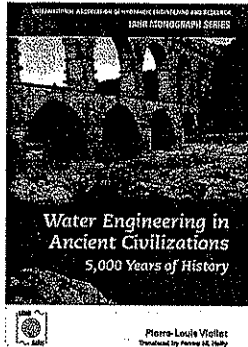


Water Engineering in Ancient Civilizations: 5,000 Years of History by Pierre-Louis Viollet (translated by Forrest M. Holly). Madrid, Spain: International Association of Hydraulic Engineering and Research, 2007; 220 pages; €68.

As global population grows and such countries as China and India develop larger middle classes, access to enough water for drinking, agriculture, and other uses is sure to pose problems in the coming decades. But only the details here are new, for water has always been one of civilization's key ingredients, just as water engineering has provided the means by which humans have brought water to their places of abode.

In *Water Engineering in Ancient Civilizations*, author Pierre-Louis Viollet drives this point home by offering a history of man's water-oriented endeavors beginning millennia in the past. The survey encompasses agriculture, irrigation, flood protection, wastewater drainage, and, of course, the constant need to supply freshwater to population centers.



First published in 2000, the book has now been translated into English from the original French so that this new edition can reach a wider audience. Part of the International Association of Hydraulic Engineering and Research's monograph series, *Water Engineering in Ancient Civilizations* does not, its author says, propose to be a comprehensive catalog of hydraulic works. It is, however, "reasonably complete" within the scope of "the vast and continuous landmass extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the China Sea." The book is divided into two parts, the first covering the time up to the third century BC and the second stretching from Archimedes to medieval times and the beginning of modern fluid dynamics.

Sprinkled throughout the book are quotes from writers from long ago, and their utterances, together with maps, sketches, photos, and other elements, lend a sense of history and help readers appreciate what these ancient peoples accomplished without the benefit of our modern tools and technologies. In reading about aqueducts, wells, water mills, canals, and dikes built in the Middle East, China, and elsewhere, the reader is sure to be impressed by feats of hydraulics and triumphs of engineering that were realized dozens of generations before our country had even been discovered by the Europeans.