Sediment sample from Mawmluh Cave, Meghalaya, northeast India, showing the position of the 4.2-ka event.

Source: Mike Walker, et al, "Subdividing the Holocene Series/Epoch," 178.

various parts of the world date back to the start of the Late Holocene or earlier. The challenge of evaluating these historical records and narratives in relation to the climate history of the Late Holocene will be discussed in the next part of Section II.

CLIMATE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CIVILIZATIONS

A good start for beginning to understand the relationship between climate history and human history is to try to synchronize the timelines of our narratives of the two histories. Yet, even this seemingly simple task has pitfalls. One pitfall is that scholarly fields in climatology typically date past events—as we have been doing so far in this sectionn—according to how long ago they happened, using 1950 CE or 2000 CE as the present. So, the Holocene began 11,700 years ago, using the year 2000 CE as the marker for the present.

In our narratives of human history, on the other hand, Western scholars and global scholars in dialogue with the West use a calendar system that counts down to the year 1, corresponding with the estimated date of the birth of Jesus Christ, and then back up from there, bringing us to the year 2024. So, according to this system, the Holocene began in 9,700 BCE. As confusing as it may be, scholars and students engaged in the interdisciplinary task of studying climate history and human history together need to hold two dating systems in their heads simultaneously and be ready to make quick calculations. For instance, the Late Holocene began 4,250 years ago which is the same as 2250 BCE.

Another pitfall when trying to synchronize climate history and human history is that it is hard to conceptually grasp the different scales of the historical timelines for each. The Pleistocene is only one of the most recent geological epochs, and it lasted a miniscule 2.6 million years out of the Earth's four-billion-year history.[36] Yet, from the perspective of human life, 2.6 million years is a staggering amount of time that dwarfs the entire history of humanity. (Because climatologists deal with such large numbers, it is conventional to round to a number such as 2.6 million.)

One may also notice that sometimes scholars in climatology use 1950 CE and sometimes they use 2000 CE as the date they count back from when dating an event that happened many thousands of years ago. While fifty years feels like a lifetime in our daily