

## PART ONE

# FIRST THINGS FIRST: Beginnings in History, to 500 B.C.E.

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**Chapter 1—First Peoples; First Farmers: Most of History in a Single Chapter, to 4000 B.C.E.**

**Chapter 2—First Civilizations: Cities, States, and Unequal Societies, 3500 B.C.E.–500 B.C.E.**

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### OUTLINE: THE BIG PICTURE: TURNING POINTS IN EARLY WORLD HISTORY

#### **I. The Emergence of Humankind**

- A. Most scholars in the post-Darwinian world regard human beginnings in the context of biological change.
  - 1. archeologists and anthropologists believe that the lines of descent leading to Homo sapiens and chimpanzees diverged around 5 million–6 million years ago
  - 2. hominid family emerged in eastern and southern Africa, with 20–30 different related species
    - a. they were bipedal (walked on two legs)
- B. The hominids developed over time.
  - 1. brain size increased
  - 2. around 2.3 million years ago, Homo habilis began to use stone tools
  - 3. by 1 million years ago, some hominid species, especially Homo erectus, began to migrate from Africa
    - a. knew how to use fire

- C. Of the hominid species, only Homo sapiens still survives.
  - 1. emerged in Africa around 250,000 years ago; around 100,000 years ago began to migrate beyond Africa

#### **II. The Globalization of Humankind**

- A. Today humans occupy every significant landmass.
  - 1. 500,000 years ago didn't exist
  - 2. 100,000 years ago fewer than 10,000 individuals
  - 3. remarkably become a worldwide and increasingly dominant presence
- B. Initial migrations from Africa took place in the Paleolithic Era.
  - 1. gatherers and hunters
  - 2. Paleolithic era continued until around 11,000 years ago
    - a. the Paleolithic era accounts for over 95 percent of human time on earth
    - b. accounts for about 12 percent of the total number of people who have lived
- C. No other large species created homes in every environmental niche as Homo sapiens did.
  - 1. slowly developed technology
  - 2. slowly imposed meaning through art, ritual, and religion

**III. The Revolution of Farming and Herding**

- A. 7 billion people in the world today; almost all live from domesticated plants and animals.
- B. Domestication first occurred in several regions about 11,000 years ago.
  - 1. it was the most significant and enduring transformation of humankind
  - 2. provided the foundation for almost all subsequent change
  - 3. the period from 11,000 years ago to around 1750 C.E. can be regarded as a single age—the age of agriculture
  - 4. allowed for a large increase in the human population
- C. Food production laid the foundation for enduring divisions within human communities.
  - 1. some regions were luckier in terms of climate and plants/animals available for domestication
  - 2. the Americas were disadvantaged by the lack of large animals to be domesticated
  - 3. in the Afro-Eurasian world, conflicts between agriculturalists and pastoralists became an enduring pattern

**IV. The Turning Point of Civilization**

- A. The most prominent human communities that emerged were “civilizations”: societies based in cities and governed by powerful states.
- B. Almost everyone in the world now lives in a state with a formal political authority.
- C. The first cities and states emerged around 3500 B.C.E.

- 1. well after 1000 C.E. substantial numbers still lived in communities without any state or urban structures
- 2. state- and city-based societies have been the most powerful and innovative human communities
  - a. they have given rise to empires
  - b. they have created enduring cultural and religious traditions
  - c. they have created new technologies
  - d. they have bred sharp class inequalities, patriarchy, and large-scale warfare
- 3. The earliest civilizations emerged in at least seven different locations between 3500 and 500 B.C.E.

**V. Time and World History**

- A. A recent convention encourages dating by B.C.E. and C.E., not B.C. and A.D.
  - 1. B.C.E. = before the Common Era = B.C. (before Christ)
  - 2. C.E. = the Common Era = A.D. (Anno Domini, Latin for “year of the Lord”)
- B. B.C.E./C.E. dating is an effort to get away from Christian-centered and Eurocentric thinking.
- C. Societies have reckoned time in many different ways.
  - 1. China: dated by the reign of particular emperors
  - 2. Muslim calendar: Year 1 marks Muhammad’s emigration to Medina in 622 C.E.

# First Peoples; First Farmers: Most of History in a Single Chapter to 4,000 B.C.E.

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## CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize students with the spread of human societies in the Paleolithic era
- To explore the conditions of life in gathering and hunting societies
- To examine factors that eventually led to change in gathering and hunting societies
- To make students aware that agriculture evolved independently in several regions of the world
- To trace the development of agriculture and its local variations
- To consider the social implications of the Agricultural Revolution

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### I. Opening Vignette

- A. The Hazda of Tanzania are one of the last gathering and hunting societies on earth.
  1. likely to disappear soon
  2. will mark the end of what was universal human existence until 10,000–12,000 years ago
- B. For 95 percent of human history, the means of life was gathering and hunting.
  1. food collection, not food production
  2. has been labeled “Paleolithic” (old stone age) era
- C. 12,000 years ago new shift in Eurasia, Africa and the Americas
  1. deliberate cultivation of plants and domestication of animals
  2. known as Agricultural or Neolithic Revolution
  3. implications for every aspect of human life
  4. Paleolithic and Neolithic periods represent all but last 5500 years of human history
- D. History courses often neglect Neolithic and Paleolithic periods.
  1. start with civilizations instead
  2. argue earlier periods largely unknowable
  3. pace of change relatively slow
  4. little of significance happened
- E. It’s wrong to ignore the first 200,000 years of human existence.
  1. archeologists, biologists, demographers, linguists, and anthropologists cast light on the period
  2. achievements of Paleolithic peoples important

- a. settled the planet
- b. created the earliest human societies
- c. were the first to reflect on issues of life and death
- 3. achievements of Neolithic peoples important as well
  - a. agriculture arguably the most profound transformation of human life in all of history
- 4. while achievements slow compared to civilizations, quick compared to other species
  - a. changes cultural or learned, rather than biological
  - b. foundation on which all subsequent history was constructed

## II. Out of Africa: First Migrations

- A. Homo sapiens emerged in eastern and southern Africa 250,000 years ago.
  - 1. stayed there exclusively for about 150,000 years
  - 2. Africa was home to the “human revolution,” in which culture became more important than biology in shaping human behavior
  - 3. humans began to inhabit environments not touched by earlier hominids
  - 4. technological innovation: use of stone and bone tools
  - 5. hunting and fishing, not just scavenging
  - 6. patterns of exchange
  - 7. use of ornaments, perhaps planned burials
    - a. earliest evidence ochre processing in Blombos Cave, South Africa, circa 100,000 years ago
  - 8. between 100,000–60,000 years ago: beginning of migrations out of Africa
    - a. adapted to nearly every environment on earth
    - b. much took place in the difficulties of the last Ice Age
- B. Into Eurasia
  - 1. humans started migrating into the Middle East around 45,000 years ago
  - 2. the best evidence of early European settlement comes from southern France and northern Spain
    - a. settlers in northern Europe were pushed southward into warmer areas around 20,000 years ago
    - b. developed new hunting habits, new hunting technologies
  - 3. the earliest Europeans left hundreds of cave paintings: depictions of animals and humans and abstract designs
  - 4. development of new technologies in Ukraine and Russia
    - a. needles, multilayered clothing, weaving, nets, storage pits, baskets, pottery, etc.
    - b. partially underground dwellings made from mammoth remains
    - c. suggests semipermanent settlement
    - d. creation of female figurines (“Venus figurines”); earliest dated at least 35,000 years ago
- C. Into Australia
  - 1. humans reached Australia about 60,000 years ago from Indonesia
  - 2. very sparse settlement; estimated 300,000 people in 1788
  - 3. development of some 250 languages
  - 4. still completely a gathering and hunting economy when Europeans arrived in 1788
  - 5. complex worldview: the Dreamtime
    - a. stories, ceremonies, and art tell of ancestral beings
    - b. everything in the natural order is an echo of ancient happenings
    - c. current people are intimately related to places and events in past
  - 6. major communication and exchange networks

- a. included stones, pigments, wood, pituri (psychoactive drug)
  - b. also included songs, dances, stories, and rituals
- D. Into the Americas
1. when settlement of the Americas began is still argued over (somewhere between 30,000 and 15,000 years ago)
    - a. mode of migration (Bering Strait or by sea down west coast of North America) also still argued about
    - b. how many migrations and how long they took also argued over
    - c. evidence of humans in southern Chile by 12,500 years ago
  2. Clovis: the first clearly defined and widespread culture of the Americas
    - a. name comes from the Clovis point, a kind of projectile point
    - b. flourished briefly around 13,000 years ago
    - c. hunted large mammals (mammoths, bison)
    - d. disappeared at the same time as the extinction of a number of large mammals
  3. next stage: much greater cultural diversity, as people adapted to the end of the Ice Age in different ways
- E. Into the Pacific
1. the last phase of the great human migration, started ca. 3,500 years ago
  2. migration by water from the Bismarck and Solomon islands and the Philippines
  3. very quick migration over very long distances
  4. migrants spoke Austronesian languages (can be traced to southern China)
  5. settled every habitable area of the Pacific basin within 2,500 years
    - a. also settled the island of Madagascar
    - b. made Austronesian the most widespread language family
    - c. completed initial human settlement of the world ca. 1000–1300 C.E. with occupation of Aotearoa (New Zealand)

6. Pacific settlers
  - a. took agriculture with them, unlike other migrations
  - b. apparently followed a deliberate colonization plan
  - c. created highly stratified societies or chiefdoms (e.g., Hawaii)
  - d. massive environmental impact on previously uninhabited lands

### III. The Ways We Were

- A. The First Human Societies
1. societies were small, bands of 25–50 people
  2. very low population density (because of available technology)
    - a. very slow population growth
    - b. 70,000 years ago population dropped to about 10,000
    - c. grew to 500,000 by 30,000 years ago
    - d. reached 6 million 10,000 years ago
  3. Paleolithic bands were seasonally mobile or nomadic
    - a. moved in regular patterns to exploit wild plants and animals
    - b. since they moved around, they couldn't accumulate goods
  4. societies were highly egalitarian
    - a. perhaps the most free people in human existence
    - b. did not have specialists, so most people had the same skills
    - c. relationships between women and men were far more equal than in later societies
      - i. rape, wife beating, and the sexual double standard all unknown in San culture
      - ii. San mostly live in monogamous relationships and divorce is common among young adults
  5. James Cook described the gathering and hunting peoples of Australia as tranquil and socially equal
    - a. but tensions do exist

- b. European settlers observed physical competition among Australian males, and wife beating
  - c. some Aboriginal myths explain how men achieved power over women
  - d. in San culture the distribution of meat, perceived laziness, stinginess, rivalry for women all cause tension
6. Paleolithic societies had clearly defined rules
- a. men hunted, women gathered
  - b. clear rules about distribution of meat from a kill
  - c. rules about incest and adultery
- B. Economy and the Environment
1. gathering and hunting peoples used to be regarded as “primitive” and impoverished
    - a. modern studies point out that they worked fewer hours
    - b. wanted or needed little
    - c. but life expectancy was low (35 years on average)
  2. alteration of natural environments
    - a. deliberately set fires to encourage growth of certain plants
    - b. extinction of many large animals shortly after humans arrived
    - c. gradual extinction of other hominids, like the Neanderthals (Europe) and Flores man (Indonesia)
- C. The Realm of the Spirit
1. it is difficult to decipher the spiritual world of Paleolithic peoples
    - a. lack of written sources
    - b. art is subject to interpretation
    - c. contemporary gathering and hunting peoples may not reflect ancient experience
  2. Paleolithic peoples had a rich ceremonial life
    - a. led by part-time shamans (people especially skilled at dealing with the spirit world)
    - b. frequent use of psychoactive drugs to contact spirits
3. apparent variety of beliefs
    - a. some societies were seemingly monotheistic
    - b. others saw several levels of supernatural beings
    - c. still others believed in an impersonal force running throughout the natural order
    - d. Venus figurines make some scholars think that Paleolithic religion was strongly feminine, with a great goddess
    - e. many peoples probably had a cyclical view of time
    - f. many made no sharp distinction between the material and spiritual worlds
- D. Settling Down: The Great Transition
1. gradual change as populations grew, climates changed, and peoples interacted
  2. collection of wild grains started in northeastern Africa around 16,000 years ago
  3. last Ice Age ended 16,000–10,000 years ago
    - a. followed by a “global warming” period
    - b. richer and more diverse environment for human societies
    - c. population rise
    - d. beginnings of settlement
  4. settlement led to societal change
    - a. larger and more complex societies
    - b. storage and accumulation of goods led to inequality
  5. settling-down process occurred in many areas 12,000–4,000 years ago
    - a. Jomon culture in Japan
    - b. Scandinavia, Southeast Asia, North America, Middle East
    - c. bows and arrows were invented independently in Europe, Africa, and Middle East
  6. Göbekli Tepe archeological complex in southeastern Turkey
    - a. ceremonial site comprising 20 circles made up of carved limestone pillars

- b. gatherer hunter builders lived at least part of the year in settled villages
  - c. example of monumental construction by gatherer hunters
7. Chumash gather hunters in southern California
    - a. developed substantial permanent structures
    - b. hereditary political elites
    - c. elements of a market economy
    - d. the beginnings of class distinctions
  8. settled gatherer hunter communities
    - a. major turn away from small group nomadic communities
    - b. placed greater demand on the environment
    - c. agriculture emerged in these more complex gathering and hunting societies

#### IV. Breakthroughs to Agriculture

- A. Agriculture is the second great human process after settlement of the globe.
    1. called the Neolithic (New Stone Age) or Agricultural Revolution
      - a. started about 12,000 years ago
      - b. deliberate cultivation of plants and domestication of animals
      - c. gradually replaced gathering and hunting in most parts of the world
      - d. transformed human life across the planet
    2. agriculture brought new relationship between humans and other living things
      - a. actively changing what they found in nature rather than just using it
      - b. shaping the landscape
      - c. selectively breeding animals
    3. “domestication” of nature created new mutual dependence
      - a. many domesticated plants and animals came to rely on humans
      - b. humans lost gathering and hunting skills
    4. “intensification” of living: getting more food and resources from much less land
      - a. more food led to more people
- b. more people led to greater need for intensive exploitation
- B. Common Patterns
    1. Agricultural Revolution happened independently in several world regions
      - a. Fertile Crescent of Southwest Asia
      - b. several areas in sub-Saharan Africa
      - c. China
      - d. New Guinea
      - e. Mesoamerica
      - f. the Andes
      - g. eastern North America
      - h. all happened at about the same time, 12,000–4,000 years ago
        - i. scholars have struggled with the question of why agriculture developed so late in human history
    2. Agricultural Revolution coincided with the end of the last Ice Age
      - a. global warming cycle started around 16,000 years ago
      - b. Ice Age was over by about 11,000 years ago
      - c. end of Ice Age coincided with human migration across earth
      - d. extinction of some large mammals: climate change and hunting
      - e. warmer, wetter weather allowed more wild plants to flourish
    3. gathering and hunting peoples had already learned some ways to manage the natural world
      - a. “broad spectrum diet”
      - b. development of sickles, baskets, and other tools to make use of wild grain in the Middle East
      - c. Amazon: peoples had learned to cut back some plants to encourage growth of the ones they wanted
      - d. Australians had elaborate eel traps
    4. women were probably the agricultural innovators
    5. gathering and hunting peoples started to establish more permanent villages
      - a. especially in resource-rich areas

- b. population growth perhaps led to a “food crisis”
  - 6. the need to supply food to those who built and maintained Göbekli Tepe may have stimulated agriculture
- C. Variations
1. agriculture developed in a number of regions, but with variation
    - a. depended on the plants and animals that were available
    - b. only a few hundred plant species have been domesticated
    - c. only fourteen large mammal species were domesticated
  2. the Fertile Crescent was the first to have a full Agricultural Revolution
    - a. presence of large variety of plants and animals to be domesticated
    - b. transition to agriculture triggered by a cold and dry spell between 11,000 and 9500 B.C.E.
    - c. transition apparently only took about 500 years
    - d. much more societal sophistication (mud bricks, monuments and shrines, more elaborate burials, more sophisticated tools)
  3. at about the same time, domestication started in the eastern Sahara (present-day Sudan)
    - a. the region was much more hospitable 10,000–5,000 years ago
    - b. domestication of cattle there about 1,000 years before Middle East and India
    - c. in Africa, animals were domesticated first; elsewhere, plants were domesticated first
    - d. emergence of several widely scattered farming practices
    - e. African agriculture was less productive than agriculture in the Fertile Crescent
  4. separate development of agriculture at several places in the Americas
    - a. absence of animals available for domestication
    - b. lacked cereal grains, instead relied on maize or corn
    - c. result: replacement of gathering and hunting with agriculture took 3,500 years in Mesoamerica
    - d. Americas are oriented north/south, so agricultural practices had to adapt to distinct climate zones to spread
- V. The Globalization of Agriculture
- A. Agriculture spread in two ways:
1. diffusion: gradual spread of techniques and perhaps plants and animals, but without much movement of human population
  2. colonization or migration of agricultural peoples
  3. often both processes were involved
- B. Triumph and Resistance
1. language and culture spread with agriculture
    - a. Indo-European languages probably started in Turkey, are spoken today from Europe to India
    - b. similar process with Chinese farming
    - c. spread of Bantu language in southern Africa
    - d. similar spread of Austronesian-speaking peoples to Philippines and Indonesian islands, then to Pacific islands and Madagascar
  2. the globalization of agriculture took about 10,000 years
    - a. did not spread beyond its core region in New Guinea
    - b. did not spread in a number of other regions
    - c. was resisted where the land was unsuitable for farming or where there was great natural abundance
  3. by the beginning of the Common Era, gathering and hunting peoples were a small minority of humankind
- C. The Culture of Agriculture
1. agriculture led to much greater populations
  2. changes in world population

- a. 10,000 years ago: around 6 million people
- b. 5,000 years ago: around 50 million people
- c. beginning of Common Era: around 250 million people
3. effects on the environment
  - a. fields and grazing land replaced forests and grasslands
  - b. humans modified the genetic composition of plants and animals through selection
  - c. civilization brought even more intensive agriculture
4. farming did not necessarily improve life for ordinary people
  - a. meant much more hard work
  - b. health deteriorated in early agricultural societies
  - c. new diseases from interaction with animals
  - d. the first epidemics appeared due to larger communities
  - e. new vulnerability to famine, because of dependence on a small number of plants or animals
5. new constraints on human communities
  - a. all agricultural people settled in permanent villages
  - b. the case of Banpo in China (settled ca. 7,000 years ago)
6. explosion of technological innovation
  - a. pots
  - b. textiles
  - c. metallurgy
7. “secondary products revolution” started ca. 4000 B.C.E.: a new set of technological changes
  - a. new uses for domesticated animals, including milking, riding, hitching to plows and carts
  - b. only available in the Eastern Hemisphere
8. widespread brewing of alcohol emerged with the agricultural revolution

## VI. Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture

### A. Pastoral Societies

1. some regions relied much more heavily on animals, because farming was difficult or impossible there
2. pastoral nomads emerged in central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahara desert, parts of eastern and southern Africa
3. relied on different animals in different regions
  - a. horses were domesticated by 4000 B.C.E.; encouraged the spread of pastoral peoples on Central Asian steppes
  - b. domesticated camels allowed human life in the inner Asian, Arabian, and Saharan deserts
4. no pastoral societies emerged in the Americas
5. relations between nomadic herders and their farming neighbors has been an enduring theme in Afro-Eurasian history
  - a. often conflict as pastoralists sought access to agricultural products and competed for land
  - b. but also peaceful exchanges of technology, ideas, products and peoples
6. relative equality between men and women persisted in pastoral societies
  - a. women essential in milking animals, processing milk and making textiles
  - b. some participate in battle

### B. Agricultural Village Societies

1. most characteristic form of early agricultural societies, like Banpo or Jericho
2. maintenance of equality and freedom (no kings, chiefs, bureaucrats, aristocrats)
3. Çatalhöyük, in southern Turkey
  - a. population: several thousand
  - b. dead buried under their houses
  - c. no streets; people moved around on rooftops
  - d. many specialized crafts, but little sign of inherited social inequality

- e. no indication of male or female dominance
  - 4. in horticultural villages women relatively equal to men
    - a. roles in farming and weaving may explain
    - b. some villages used matrilineal family lines, others patrilineal
    - c. in Europe and China evidence of preference for male children
  - 5. village-based agricultural societies flourished into the nineteenth century
    - a. organized by kinship or lineage groups
    - b. lineage system performed the functions of government
    - c. possessed modest levels of social inequality
    - d. elders sometimes sought to exploit labor of junior members and control women's reproductive powers
    - e. "title societies" brought prestige to members but were not hereditary
- C. Chiefdoms
- 1. chiefs, unlike kings, usually rely on generosity, ritual status, or charisma to govern, not force
  - 2. chiefdoms emerged in Mesopotamia sometime after 6000 B.C.E.
  - 3. anthropologists have studied recent chiefdoms in the Pacific islands
    - a. chiefs usually claim descent from first son of an imagined ancestor
    - b. fulfill secular and religious roles
    - c. collect tribute and redistribute it to privileged groups
    - d. keep part of tribute to sustain status
  - 4. chiefdoms such as Cahokia emerged in North America
  - 5. Agricultural Revolution transformed the trajectory of human journey and evolution of life on earth
    - a. humankind came to dominate nature
    - b. increasingly some people dominated others

## VII. Reflections: The Uses of the Paleolithic

- A. The study of history is about those who tell it today, not just about the past.
  - 1. views of the past reflect our own smugness or disillusionment
  - 2. Paleolithic era is sometimes regarded as a golden age
    - a. admired by feminists, environmentalists, antimaterialists
  - 3. scholars have looked to the Paleolithic era in questioning explosive population and economic growth of recent past
  - 4. gathering and hunting peoples of today have looked to Paleolithic era in an effort to maintain or recover their identities
- B. A basic question: "What have we lost in the mad rush to modernity?"
- C. Nobody can be completely detached when studying the past.

## LECTURE STRATEGIES

### Lecture 1: The Fertile Crescent then and now

Modern Americans are more familiar with the territory known as the Fertile Crescent than ever before, thanks to U.S. involvement in Iraq. This modern familiarity can cause students confusion: except for oil, present-day Iraq and surrounding countries are poor and appear to be anything but "fertile." So, why is the area called the "Fertile Crescent"? The objectives of this lecture strategy are:

- to explore the land and climate of the Fertile Crescent
- to investigate how conditions might have been different there at the time of the Neolithic Revolution
- to examine whether the conditions that are good for an agricultural revolution are the same as those that make modern states prosperous
- to discuss the deterioration of the land that has been caused by millennia of agriculture.

Start by identifying the Fertile Crescent clearly on a map and to go over what modern states are in the region. Then cover the following points:

- examine the weather and climate of the Fertile Crescent (access to water, lack of natural

resources except soil, the need for irrigation in most areas)

- ask students to review the reasons given in the chapter for why conditions were good for an early agricultural revolution in the region (wild grains, large variety of animals to be domesticated, and a natural crisis to encourage innovation)
- consider what makes modern states prosperous: Can a state be prosperous without a strong underpinning of agriculture? Are economies that rely heavily on agriculture as their most significant element prosperous in modern terms?
- discuss what happened to lower the fertility of the Fertile Crescent over the centuries; some points to consider are salinization caused by excessive irrigation, erosion, the problem of overgrazing, and the role of political systems in undermining the agricultural capabilities of the region (the Mongols usually get a lot of the blame for letting the ancient irrigation system of Iraq fall into ruin, with permanent consequences)

### Lecture 2: The world of the last Ice Age

The purpose of this lecture strategy is to explore in greater detail the challenges that faced human beings as they migrated in the conditions of the last Ice Age and how they overcame those challenges. Its objectives are to:

- teach students about the Ice Age, including presentation of the natural warming and cooling trends of the planet
- discuss what it meant that the earth had an Ice Age—the geographical, biological, and human effects
- present early human beings as problem solvers who managed to survive and adapt themselves to Ice Age environmental challenges

A good place to begin is with a map that shows the extent of the last Ice Age (readily available on the Internet). Go over the main species extinctions that occurred with the changing climate, how glaciation shaped much of the landscape, and the land bridges that were created by the lower sea level of the period. Then back up and discuss the earth's natural pattern of warming and cooling (this is of course a good place to bring up the current global-warming trend and why scientists think it is different from the natural cycles of the past). From there, go on to

consider humans and the Ice Age. Some points to include are:

- the need for teamwork in hunting large mammals (mammoth, bison)
- what sort of tools or weapons would have been developed to deal with the challenges
- the more pressing need for shelter (whether people in this age were really “cavemen,” and the other sorts of shelters they created)
- the need for clothing (and thus for means to fasten animal hides around themselves with fastening pins or sewing)
- what sort of adaptation must have taken place when the Ice Age ended

### Lecture 3: How do we know? Digging up Homo sapiens

Many world civ. classes start with human evolution. While this text begins (rather more logically) with the Paleolithic era, this lecture strategy is an opportunity to give a brief overview of evolution, while keeping the focus on the modern human species. This lecture strategy's objectives are:

- to examine how we know what we know about Paleolithic communities—what archaeology has discovered and the problems of interpretation
- to explore the evolution of modern Homo sapiens and how the process of discovering earlier hominid species provoked a firestorm of debate about human origins that continues today

The story of how archaeologists discovered human origins is an exciting one, and can be told in two basic ways: (1) chronologically by human species, thus starting with early australopithecines and working your way to modern Homo sapiens; or (2) chronologically by discovery, starting with the discovery of the Neanderthal in 1856 and how that find provoked a search for human origins that is still turning up interesting discoveries today.

Especially when it comes to the Paleolithic era, images will come in handy to encourage discussion of how scholars have interpreted human artifacts. Some images to consider are:

- a typical Paleolithic tool—often indistinguishable from a rock, except to professionals
- an “advanced” Paleolithic tool—one that shows clear signs of human shaping

- a burial layout, showing careful positioning of the body, perhaps covered with ochre
- Paleolithic ornaments—beads, shells with a hole bored for hanging, etc.
- an image of a reconstructed hut made of mammoth bones and tusks
- the Willendorf Venus or another of the early Venus figurines
- cave art, such as that painted at Lascaux or Chauvet

Arm yourself with some of the current scholarly views on the meaning of these artifacts, and then encourage a discussion among the students about their meaning.

It may be useful to refer to the chapter's visual sources feature in your lecture.

## THINGS TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM

### Discussion Topics

#### 1. Misconception/Difficult Topic (large or small group). “Cavemen dragged women around by their hair.”

This would have just hurt and is a rather silly image perpetrated by cartoons. Encourage students to discuss why this hairy, grunting, dominant caveman image might have come about and why it is still popular. Students should be encouraged in this way to consider modern stereotypes and what they have to say about contemporary society. Some questions to ask:

- What contemporary images have you seen of grunting cavemen waving clubs, dragging women around, etc.?
- What were the contexts of those images? What point was the creator or creators of those images trying to make?
- Is there any evidence that Paleolithic humans actually behaved that way? What evidence is there that they didn't?

#### 2. Comparison (large or small groups). “Daily life in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras.”

Divide the students into four groups, and ask each group to make an outline of the daily life of one of the following:

- a Paleolithic woman
- a Paleolithic man
- a Neolithic (sedentary) woman
- a Neolithic (sedentary) man

Then bring the groups together and ask the class to discuss essential similarities and differences.

#### 3. Historical Analysis (large or small groups). “Disease, the domestication of animals, and the human connection.”

The domestication of animals, particularly of large mammals that live in herds, was one of the driving forces of the Agricultural Revolution, but for the people who domesticated them, these animals were both great assets and the bringers of new and deadly diseases.

Open the discussion by asking students to identify the advantages that the peoples of the Fertile Crescent received from their domestication of animals as compared to Mesoamerica, where no such large mammals were domesticated. Once students have laid out the advantages in terms of meat, milk, wool, fertilizer, and animal power, ask them if there were any drawbacks to the domestication of animals. Students might note the problems of animal-borne diseases that are mentioned at several points in the chapter. Take this opportunity to discuss the nature of human disease in order to emphasize that the Agricultural Revolution also brought a revolution in human disease. Both William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor, 1976), and Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (New York: Norton, 1997), provide useful overviews of human disease and its impact on human history.

Two key developments with important implications for disease occurred during the Agricultural Revolution. The first was true of all agricultural societies: living in higher concentrations of population facilitated the spread of some diseases. The second was true only of societies that domesticated animals, especially large herd mammals: humans first caught many of the most deadly and destructive diseases, including small pox, flu, measles, chicken pox, malaria, tuberculosis, and rabies, from their domesticated animals. While humans at the time were probably unaware of this linkage, the emergence of these diseases was a heavy price to pay for the domestication of animals. It is useful at the end of the discussion to point ahead by noting how Mesoamerica largely escaped the worst human diseases until first contact with Europeans,

when smallpox in particular spread among the populations of the Americas with devastating effect.

## Classroom Activities

### 1. Map analysis (large or small group). “Tracing human migrations.”

Using either a modern physical map or a map that shows the extent of the last Ice Age, ask students to trace out the probable lines of human migration from Africa. Emphasize the role of land bridges and where they lay during the Ice Age.

### 2. Role-playing exercise (small groups). “How to domesticate a plant.”

You are gatherers and hunters, thinking that there has to be an easier way of getting food than wandering around looking for plants. There’s a great bulbous tuber that you like to eat; how would you go about making it grow where you want it, when you want it?

## WHAT’S THE SIGNIFICANCE?

**Austronesian migrations:** The last phase of the great human migration that established a human presence in every habitable region of the earth. Austronesian-speaking people settled the Pacific islands and Madagascar in a series of seaborne migrations that began around 3,500 years ago. (*pron.* aws-troe-NEEZH-an)

**Banpo:** A Chinese archeological site, where the remains of a significant Neolithic village have been found. (*pron.* bahn-poe)

**Bantu migration:** The spread of Bantu-speaking peoples from their homeland in what is now southern Nigeria or Cameroon to most of Africa, in a process that started ca. 3000 B.C.E. and continued for several millennia.

**Çatalhöyük:** An important Neolithic site in what is now Turkey. (*pron.* cha-TAHL-hoo-YOOK)

**chiefdom:** A societal grouping governed by a chief who typically relies on generosity, ritual status, or charisma rather than force to win obedience from the people.

**Clovis culture:** The earliest widespread and distinctive culture of North America; named from the Clovis point, a particular kind of projectile point.

**diffusion:** The gradual spread of agricultural techniques without extensive population movement.

**Dreamtime:** A complex worldview of Australia’s Aboriginal people that held that current humans live in a vibration or echo of ancestral happenings.

**Fertile Crescent:** Region sometimes known as Southwest Asia that includes the modern states of Iraq, Syria, Israel/Palestine, and southern Turkey; the earliest home of agriculture.

**Flores man:** A recently discovered hominid species of Indonesia.

**Göbekli Tepe:** A ceremonial site comprising 20 circles made up of carved limestone pillars located in southeastern Turkey. The site, which dates to 11,600 years ago, was built by gatherer hunters who lived at least part of the year in settled villages. (*pron.* goh-BEHK-lee TEH-peh)

**Ishi:** The last surviving member of a gathering and hunting group known as the Yahi who lived in northern California. His people were driven into extinction during the second half of the nineteenth century by the intrusion of farming and herding ‘civilized’ societies.

**megafaunal extinction:** Dying out of a number of large animal species, including the mammoth and several species of horses and camels, that occurred around 11,000–10,000 years ago, at the end of the Ice Age. The extinction may have been caused by excessive hunting or by the changing climate of the era. (*pron.* meg-ah-FAWN-al)

**“the original affluent society”:** Term coined by the scholar Marshall Sahlins in 1972 to describe Paleolithic societies, which he regarded as affluent not because they had so much but because they wanted or needed so little.

**Paleolithic settling down:** The process by which some Paleolithic peoples moved toward permanent settlement in the wake of the last Ice Age. Settlement was marked by increasing storage of food and accumulation of goods as well as growing inequalities in society.

**pastoral society:** A human society that relies on domesticated animals rather than plants as the main source of food; pastoral nomads lead their animals to seasonal grazing grounds rather than settling permanently in a single location.

**“secondary products revolution”:** A term used to describe the series of technological changes that began ca. 4000 B.C.E., as people began to

develop new uses for their domesticated animals, exploiting a revolutionary new source of power.

**shaman:** In many early societies, a person believed to have the ability to act as a bridge between living humans and supernatural forces, often by means of trances induced by psychoactive drugs.

**stateless societies:** Village-based agricultural societies, usually organized by kinship groups, that functioned without a formal government apparatus.

**teosinte:** The wild ancestor of maize. (*pron.* tay-oh-SIN-tay)

**trance dance:** In San culture, a nightlong ritual held to activate a human being's inner spiritual potency (n/um) to counteract the evil influences of gods and ancestors.

**Venus figurines:** Paleolithic carvings of the female form, often with exaggerated breasts, buttocks, hips, and stomachs, which may have had religious significance.

## FURTHER READING

- Art History Resources on the Web: Prehistoric Art, <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHprehistoric.html>. Provides links to a vast assortment of Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic art.
- The Cave of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/index.html>. An excellent site about the Chauvet Cave, home to one of the finest collections of early cave art. Includes information about the cave's discovery and a complete virtual tour of the cave, with high-quality images.
- Edmonds, Mark. *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic: Landscapes, Monuments and Memory*. London: Routledge, 1999. A vivid portrait of life in Neolithic Britain in the fourth millennium B.C.E.
- Guthrie, R. Dale. *The Nature of Paleolithic Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. A large and detailed study of the subject.
- Hovers, Erella, and Steven L. Kuhn, eds. *Transitions Before the Transition: Evolution and Stability in the Middle Paleolithic and Middle Stone Age*. New York: Springer, 2006. A collection of conference proceedings, with the latest scholarly understanding of important Paleolithic issues.
- Keeley, Lawrence H. *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. An interesting study of warfare in the Neolithic era.
- Neolithic Revolution, [http://archaeology.about.com/od/neolithic/Neolithic\\_Revolution.htm](http://archaeology.about.com/od/neolithic/Neolithic_Revolution.htm). A useful Web page with links to many Neolithic sites.
- Orkneyjar: The Heritage of the Orkney Islands—Skara Brae, <http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/skarabrae/>. An excellent Web site about the best preserved Neolithic settlement in the world.
- Rudgley, Richard. *The Lost Civilizations of the Stone Age*. New York: Free Press, 1999. Despite its provocative title, this highly readable book devotes considerable space to the Paleolithic era.
- Scarre, Chris. *Exploring Prehistoric Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. An interesting and highly readable book that covers both Paleolithic and Neolithic Europe. It has especially good coverage of the monumental structures of Neolithic Europe.
- Scarre, Chris, ed. *The Seventy Wonders of the Ancient World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999. Good discussion of how the great Neolithic monuments were built, along with much more.
- Schrenk, Friedemann, and Stephanie Müller. *The Neanderthals*. Trans. Phyllis G. Jestice. London: Routledge, 2008. A short handbook that presents clearly the current scholarly understanding of Neanderthals and the development of hominids.
- Simmons, Alan H. *The Neolithic Revolution in the Near East: Transforming the Human Landscape*. University of Arizona Press, 2007. A very clear and interesting study of the phenomenon.
- Smith, Andrew, et al. *The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging Society in Transition*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000. An interesting examination of the San culture.
- Stonehenge, <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.876>. A detailed site on Stonehenge, with reconstruction drawings, photos, and details about how the monument was constructed, provided by English Heritage.

## LITERATURE

Paleolithic cultures have left us no literary tradition, but modern fiction authors have attempted to fill in

the gap, creating an entire genre of “paleofiction.” Popular modern novels about life in the Paleolithic era include:

- Auel, Jean M. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1980. The first and best volume in a series about a girl taken in by a clan of Neanderthals.
- Kurtén, Björn. *Dance of the Tiger: A Novel of the Ice Age*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. An interesting and vivid story about western Europeans from 35,000 years ago, written by a leading scholar of Ice Age animals.
- Sarabande, William. *Beyond the Sea of Ice: The First Americans*. New York: Bantam Books, 1987. The first volume in an extended series.
- *Ancient Britons*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1996. 48 minutes. Includes a useful segment about the Neolithic “Dawn People” from the Orkneys to Wessex.
- *First Contact*. Roadshow Home Entertainment, 1984. 52 minutes. Film footage and commentary on the first contact Australian prospectors made with the Stone Age peoples of Papua New Guinea in 1930.
- *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Three-part series. National Geographic Video, 2005. 60 minutes each. A provocative explanation of regional economic differences based on variations among early agricultural revolutions.
- *Homo Sapiens: A Look into a Distant Mirror*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1999. 53 minutes. A good overview of early Homo sapiens and their spread across the globe.
- Nova. “In Search of Human Origins.” Three-part series. PBS Home Videos, 1994. 60 minutes each. Part III deals with Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens.
- *Origins of Homo Sapiens: East African Roots*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1997. 47 minutes. A look at the emergence of the earliest Homo sapiens in Africa.

## FILM

- *Agricultural and Urban Revolutions*. Insight Media, 2004. 30 minutes. Examines the social, technological, and cultural developments associated with the establishment of permanent human settlements.
- *The Agricultural Revolution, 8000 B.C.–5000 B.C.* Insight Media, 1985. 26 minutes. Examines how the domestication of plants and animals across the world led to unprecedented population growth.