

# Chapter 1: The Earliest Human Societies

## ***1-1 A Few Definitions of Terms***

History – The record of what people have done in the past.

History depends on the evidence of the past

(Human actions in past time, as recorded and remembered)

Historiography – The systematic study of history, as processed through an author's brain and bias, working with the raw materials he or she has found.

(The writing of history to interpret it)

Archaeology – The study of cultures through the examination of artifacts (anything made by humans)

Word means “the study of origins”

Archaeologists – crucial to the study of human societies that existed before recorded history

Anthropology – The study of humankind as a particular species

The science that studies humans as a species rather than studying a special aspect of their activity

Paleo anthropologists – Study human evolution

Paleo environmentalists – Study ancient natural environments

Paleographers – study old writing

Hominid (human like creature) – Human like creature ~ 4.5 million years ago

Homo sapiens (thinking or wise man) –

- Originated in east Africa
- Migrated 100,000 years ago
- On every continent except Antarctica by 10,000 B.C.E
- Recent genomic studies trace the migration

## ***1-2 The Evolving Past***

Archaeology and Paleoanthropology have both evolved quickly over the past 40-50 years.

Archaeological evidence suggests that refined tools of bone and stone were made not as functional tools but as a form of art or aesthetic to the maker.

70,000 years ago, many thousands of years before our dated art has been recorded

## ***1-3 The Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age)***

Paleolithic Age – Age from first known appearance of homo sapiens to 10,000 B.C.E.

Also called The Old Stone Age because many tools were still made from stone and other natural materials that were quite crude.

- By the end of the Old Stone Age humans inhabited all the continents except Antarctica
- Late Paleolithic people were hunter and gatherers, however famine was always near

## Hunters and Gatherers

Hunting and gathering was done in groups and success depended more on organization and cooperation than on individual bravery or strength

- family was the basic social unit (normally extended family or clan -> includes more than nuclear family)
- bigger family unit was necessary for protection
- total number was about 40 people
- close family relations and interchange with other similar groups among the Paleolithic hunters was critical for their survival

Warfare was at an all-time low during this period.

However, conflicts did arise over hunting grounds, theft, water, etc....

If a group was threatened, they could easily move to another piece of land since there was so much land available

### ***1-3a Human Development During the Paleolithic***

Humans ability to reason, plan, organize, make tools, and create art changed a great deal throughout this time

- At least 17 different varieties of hominid evolved during this time
- Hominids became more upright during the Paleolithic age and their skulls enlarged and became more rounded to account for a larger brain
- Eyesight grew sharper, smell less so
- Less hairy bodies, shorter arms
- Larynx shifted to allow for speech

All these modifications and many other adaptations reflected humans' changing to their physical environments

By the late Paleolithic (c. 100,000 to 10,000 B.C.E.) groups were living in caves for extended periods of time. Groups also mastered their environment, creating clothes, fires, hammers, axes, chisels, etc....

### ***1-4 The Neolithic Age (New Stone Age)***

#### **Agriculture and Livestock Breeding**

Time that humans went from being nomadic food hunters and gatherers to producing food for themselves by domesticating wild plants and animals

1. Livestock breeding
2. Herding
3. Sowing
4. Harvesting

#### **c. 10,000 to 2,000 B.C.E.**

Holocene Era – Period in which archaeology and climatology that came after 10,000 B.C.E. and the last ice age

- Generally warmer climate that forced humans to locate near streams of water and hunt for food

Neolithic Food Producing Revolution (c. 10,000 – 3,000 B.C.E.) – Substitution of farming for hunting and gathering as the primary source of food for a given people

- Slow revolution most groups took 5 to 10 generation to complete it (200 – 400 years)

**The revolutionary part is the dramatic series of changes in human societies that resulted from this change**

1. A steadily expanding population that thrived primarily in **permanent or semi-permanent settlements**.
2. Concept of **private land** was created from the livestock and breeding
3. Food production needed a **systematized regulation** to enforce when disputes arose.
4. Increase in the **specialization of labor**. Made no sense for a farmer to be soldier.

## Modern Hunter-Gatherer

Some believe that agriculture also led to an **enlarged public role for women** in Neolithic societies based on farming.

- First farmers were probably women
- Women associated with fertility
- Importance of mother-goddess
- Some evidence of matriarchy

Adoption of food-producing lifeways brought significantly harmful consequences for humans

- Diseases jumped from animals to people

## Agrarian and Irrigation Civilizations

Changes brought by dependency on agriculture

- Population swelled dramatically
- Surplus wealth supported more complex societies
- Craft production and trade appeared
- New farming techniques
  - Use of draft animals
  - Irrigation
- Urban life developed
- Ruling elites emerged
- Need to maintain records led to invention of writing

## *1-5 Metal and Its Uses*

Copper – the first metal used by humans

- Very soft metal

Bronze Age (7,000 – 1,500 B.C.E)

- Began in Western Asia
- Bronze – copper combined with tin and lead
  - Suitable for weapons, resistant to weather
  - Difficult to make, heavy, expensive
  - Could not keep fine edge for cutting

Iron Age (after 1,500 B.C.E.)

- Smelting began
- Tools and weapons became stronger, cheaper, sharper, and longer lasting
- Iron plowshares improved agriculture