

Chapter 1

The Earliest Human Societies

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Chapter Chronology

c. 3.5. million–10,000 B.C.E.

Paleolithic Era

c.150,000–100,000 B.C.E.

Early Homo sapiens (Homo ergaster) appears

c. 80,000 B.C.E.

Humans develop the first true languages

c. 80,000–15,000 B.C.E.

Humans migrate out of Africa and populate the major continents

c. 10,000 B.C.E.

Neolithic Age commences

c. 7000 B.C.E.

Bronze Age begins

c. 3500 B.C.E.

First agrarian civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt

c. 1500 B.C.E.

Iron Age begins



The Earliest Human Societies

- **Hominid** (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 BCE
 - Recent genomic studies trace the migration

Table 1.1 Evolution of the Genus *Homo*

TABLE 1.1 Evolution of the Genus Homo

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Homo habilis (toolmakers) | 3.5-4 million years ago |
| Homo erectus (bipedal walkers) | 1.5-1.8 million years ago |
| Homo ergaster | 150,000-100,000 years ago |
| Homo sapiens (modern humans) | 100,000-30,000 years ago |

Definition of Terms (Slide 1 of 2)

History - record of human activity based on evidence

Historiography - systematic study of history

Archaeology - study of past cultures and civilizations through their artifacts

Anthropology - study of humans as species rather than studying specific activities

Definition of Terms (Slide 2 of 2)

Archaeologists - are crucial to the study human societies that existed before recorded history

Paleoanthropologists - study human evolution

Paleoenvironmentalists - study ancient natural environments

Paleographers - study old writing

The Evolving Past

- Paleoanthropology is advancing our knowledge about the age, nature, and locales of humans

Tool-making is a primary indicator of human development

- Early hominids possessed tool kits
- More refined tools began to appear about 70,000 years ago.
- These tools seem to have decorative markings



The Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age)

- Dates roughly from first tools to about 10,000 BCE
- Hunter-gatherer culture
- The family was the basic social unit, organized into small groups of 40 people or fewer
 - Extended Family, or “Clan” offered protection
 - Included uncles, aunts, in-laws & other relatives



Human Development in the Paleolithic Age

- Of 17 varieties of hominids, only **Homo sapiens** survived past the Ice Age
- Changes in hominids over time
 - Became upright, walked more erect
 - Enlarged skull and brain
 - Less hairy bodies, shorter arms
 - Eyesight improved, sense of smell diminished
 - Larynx shifted to allow for speech
- Late Paleolithic climate changes led to lifestyle changes
 - Semi-permanent shelters (caves, lean-tos)
 - Expanded use of clothing, fire, tools

The Neolithic Age (New Stone Age) (Slide 1 of 2)

Agricultural Revolution - Effects on Society

- From gathering and hunting to livestock breeding and herding, sowing, and harvesting for food production
- Slow process (5-10 generations, or 200-400 years)
- Early changes in human societies
 - Population expanded in permanent settlements
 - Property privately owned (both land and livestock)
 - Systematized regulation (laws and government)
 - Specialization of labor

The Neolithic Age (New Stone Age) (Slide 2 of 2)

- Some believe there were enlarged public roles for women
 - First farmers probably women
 - Women associated with fertility
 - Importance of mother-goddess
 - Some evidence of **matriarchy** (female social and political dominance) in Neolithic China, Near East, and West Africa



Agrarian and Irrigation Civilizations

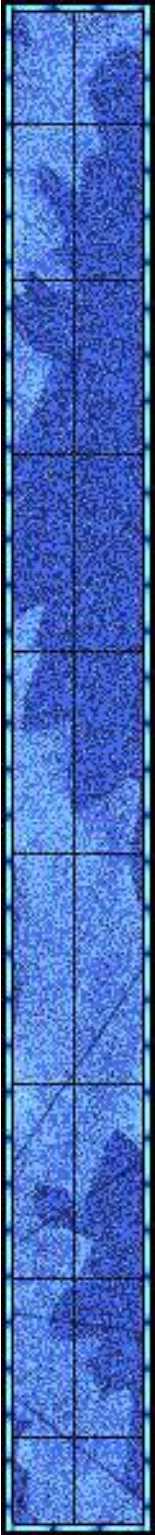
Changes brought by dependency on agriculture

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



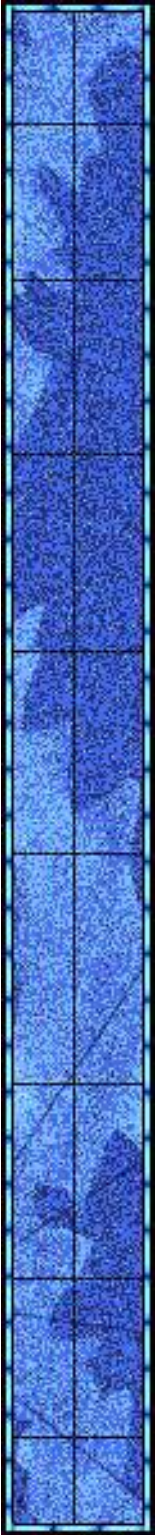
Characteristics of Agrarian Civilizations

1. Primarily rural societies, with a few cities.
2. Based primarily on peasant agriculture and/or livestock breeding.
3. Most people maintained life in balance with their natural environment.
4. Religion was based heavily on gods and spirits that controlled their natural environment.
5. Religion emphasized ritual and sacrifice as ways to control the deities.
6. Society relied on religious specialists to communicate with the gods.
7. Believed time to be cyclic.
8. Their social values emphasized kinship and the clan.



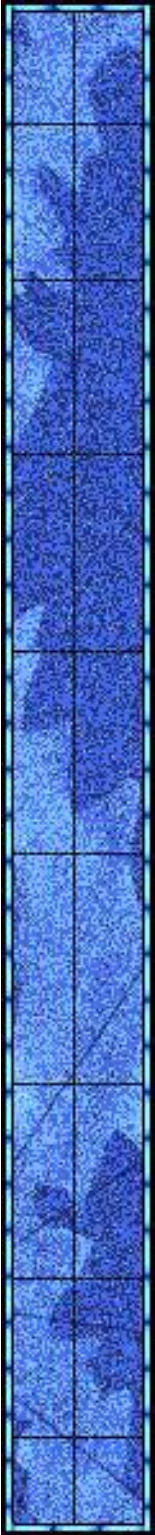
River Valley Civilizations

- Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia)
- Nile (Egypt)
- Niger (west Africa)
- Indus (India)
- Yellow and Yangtze (China)
- Valleys in Andes (Peru)



Benefits of Rivers

- Provided means of transportation and communication
- Served to extend the power and influence of government
- Interchange of goods and services
- Helped to avoid catastrophic effects of crop failure through the creation of new, supplementary forms of wealth
- Trade and migration maintained connections between different societies



Desert and Steppe Life

- Greater reliance on livestock breeding
 - Food
 - Clothing
- Settled life impossible, so populations were constantly moving
- Frequent trade with farmers or raiding of agricultural settlements
- Pastoralists heartier (because of harsh life)
- Warfare between pastoralists and neighboring civilizations one of the constants of history



Metal and its Uses

- **Copper** – the first metal used by humans
 - A very soft metal
- **Bronze Age** (7000 BCE – 1500 BCE)
 - 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 1500 BCE)
 - Smelting began
 - Tools and weapons stronger, cheaper, sharper, longer-lasting
 - Iron plowshares improved agriculture