



From Human Prehistory to the Early Civilizations

Overview

- 1st humans
 - East Africa over 2 million years ago
 - *Homo sapiens sapiens* emerged
 - Migrated from Africa into the Middle East and then into Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas
 - Hunting and gathering
 - Development of tools
 - Development of agriculture
 - Led to specialization
 - More elaborate political and cultural structures emerge
- Civilization emerged in 5 different regions



Mesoamerica
(Mayas, Aztecs, etc.)

Andean
Region
(Incas, etc.)

Mesopotamia

Nile
Valley
(Egypt)

Indus River
Region
(Harappas)

Huang Ho
River Region
(Shang, etc.)

Big Concept

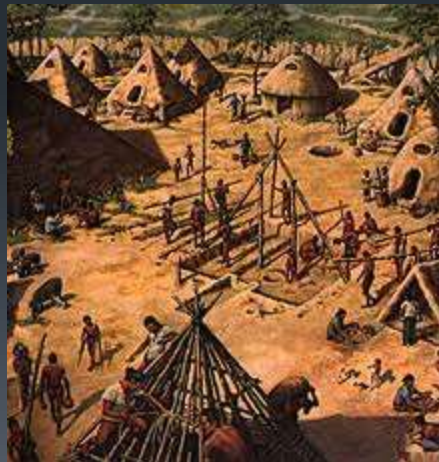
- Development of human hunting skills
 - Adaptation of those skills to changes in
 - Geography
 - Climate
 - Altered patterns of human migration
- Rise of Agriculture and changes in technology
 - Set in motion the agricultural phase of human history
- Appearance of increasingly distinctive human societies
 - Around 3500 B.C.E.
 - Larger and more formally organized
 - Began developing more consistent patterns of interregional trade

Triggers for Change

- Early human history
 - Story of accommodating different environments
 - In search of food
- Around 10,000 years ago
 - Humans turned to agriculture in Black Sea region
 - Hunting had become less productive
 - Population pressures
 - Shortage of game caused by accidental or deliberate over-hunting
- Agriculture brought changes in
 - Social organization
 - Tool-making
 - Specialization of occupation

The Big Changes

- Changes caused by turn to agriculture:
 - Sedentary life with larger settlements
 - Complex social structures
 - Greater gender divisions of labor
 - Made possible the key elements of civilization
 - States, towns, and monumental building



Continuity

- This transition took place over millennia
 - Many adhered to traditional economy
 - Adherence to traditional social and cultural ways
- As farming took hold
 - Men developed ideas of superiority over women
 - Men now doing “women’s work”
 - Way to compensate for this change

Impact on Daily Life

- Hunting and gathering societies necessitated small families
 - Migratory lifestyle and limited resources
- Larger families needed for farming
 - Children integral part of agriculture
 - Strict control over children develops
 - Culture of paternal dominance emerges



Hunters and Gatherers

Human Life in Era of Hunters & Gatherers

- Human species
 - Emerged 2 to 2.5 million years ago
 - Spread to every landmass (except polar regions)
 - Drawbacks— violence, dependencies of babies, back pain, awareness of death
 - Advantages— opposable thumb, sexual drive, omnivorous, expressions, brains, speech
- Paleolithic (Old Stone) Age— 2 million+ years of human development
 - Simple tools: rocks, sticks for hunting and warfare
 - Fire tamed about 750,000 years ago
 - *Homo erectus* 500,000 to 750,000 years ago

Late Paleolithic Developments

- *Homo sapiens sapiens* 240,000 years ago
 - Bands of hunter gatherers; significant equality between sexes
 - Communication helped with cooperation and transmitting technical knowledge
- Greatest Paleolithic achievement– spread of species
 - Migrations due to scarcity, discovery of fire, animal skins
 - Land bridge from Siberia to Alaska allowed migration into Americas 30,000 years ago
 - Eliminated by 8000 B.C.E. due to warmer climates and rising ocean levels
 - Chinese settlers reach Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia 4500 to 3500 years ago
- Mesolithic (Middle Stone) Age– 12,000 to 8000 B.C.E.
 - After end of last great ice age
 - Improved tool development aided transportation, housing, fishing, food preparation
 - Animals domesticated
 - Increases in population led to conflict and warfare





The Neolithic (New Stone) Age

The Neolithic Revolution

- Development of agriculture
 - Deliberate planting for later harvest
 - Fueled population increase
 - 6-8 million to 100 million people in 3000 years
 - Gave rise to elaborate social and cultural patterns
- Conditions for agricultural development
 - Retreat of last ice age
 - Big game animals replaced by smaller game in forested areas
 - Climate conducive to improved food supply increases population
 - By 9000 B.C.E— people turn to wild grains, berries, nuts
- Domestication of plants and animals
 - Plants— 1st by accident
 - Slow development to seed selection and deliberate planning
 - Animals— (By 9000 B.C.E.) pigs, sheep, goats, cattle for meat, skins, dairying

The Neolithic Revolution

- Geography of early agriculture
 - Began in Middle East
 - Started around 10,000 B.C.E., advanced rapidly after 8000 B.C.E
 - Stimulated by fertility of region, barley & wheat, lack of forests with game
 - Gradual spread to other areas
 - Parts of India, north Africa, Europe
 - Independent development in southeast Asia
 - Spreading to China– rice cultivation
 - Spread from Mediterranean coast to west Africa by 2000 B.C.E.
 - Local grains, root crops
- Meaning of “revolution”
 - Dramatic shift towards agricultural societies but not in relation to speed
 - Hunting & gathering persisted alongside farming
 - Took thousands of years to develop and thousands more to spread

Patterns of Change

- Term “revolution” appropriate in terms of magnitude of change
 - Agriculture needed more regular work than hunting & gathering
- Rewards of agricultural life
 - Support larger populations
 - Better food supply
 - Settled existence with houses and villages
 - Domesticated animals provided hides and wool for more clothing
- Agriculture gained ground
 - Success hard to deny
 - Cleared forests drove out hunters or converted them
 - Contagious diseases of settled peoples infected hunters-gatherers without immunities
- Some hunting gathering societies persisted
 - Small societies in southern Africa, Australia, islands of southern Asia, northern Japan
 - Isolated and unchanged until about 100 years ago
 - Northern Europeans and south Africans developed agriculture about 5000 years ago
 - Most North America hunting and gathering, limited agriculture until recent centuries
- Herding societies
 - Climate conducive to herding as the basic socioeconomic system of central Asia
 - Nomadic invaders played vital role linking civilizations until a few centuries ago

Further Technological Change



- Agricultural basis for rapid change in human societies
- Stimulated greater wealth and larger populations
- Stimulated specialization and innovation
- Agriculture required new techniques, knowledge, and tools
 - Science to understand weather and flooding
 - Need to store grains and seeds stimulated basket-weaving and pottery
 - 1st potter's wheel (c. 6000 B.C.E.) stimulated better, faster pottery production

Further Technological Change

- First big change— metal tools introduced in Middle East around 4000 B.C.E
 - First copper, bronze soon after
 - By 3000 B.C.E. metal working so common in Middle East
 - Referred to as Bronze Age
 - Stone tools persisted in many parts of the world
 - Metal working extremely useful to agriculture and herding societies
 - Metal hoes improved farming
 - Metal weapons superior to stone or wood
- Metal-working early specialization
 - Agriculture freed up labor
 - Metal-working one such result
 - Specialization does not require innovation but does provide a climate of discovery
 - Knowledge of metals spread to other parts of Asia, Africa, Europe
 - Manufacturing artisans as well as farmers benefited from knowledge of metals
 - Metal tools enhanced woodworking

Prehistory versus History

- Despite shift to agricultural societies in Neolithic period, technically still “prehistoric”
- Distinction based on concept of recordkeeping associated with writing
- Distinction blurred by current use of tools and burial sites as historical records
- Preagricultural change marked in thousands of years
- Agricultural change marked in decades and centuries



Civilizations

Conditions Prior to Growth of Civilization

- Farming provided basis of building larger, more stable human communities
- Most hunting peoples moved in groups of tribes
 - 40-60 people
- Hunting societies couldn't settle permanently without game running out
- Some agricultural peoples remained unstable by using the "slash and burn" method
 - Burning an area, cultivating crops until soil is depleted, moving on
 - People of American South until 150 years ago
- Herding peoples of central Asia, Middle East, Sudan, and elsewhere moved in tribal bands

Settled Societies

- The major agricultural regions involved permanent settlements
 - Advantages– houses, wells, etc. built to last for generations
- Key incentive for stability in Middle East, China, parts of Africa, India– irrigation devices to channel river water into fields
 - Advantageous to regulate river's flow, build and maintain irrigation ditches and sluices
- Settled villages– groupings of several hundred people
 - Advantageous for defense
- Characteristic pattern of residence from Neolithic period until our own day
- Characteristics of civilization appeared as early as 6000 B.C.E.

Settled Societies

- Catal Huyuk
 - c. 7000 B.C.E.
 - Large (32 acres), lavish décor in buildings, religious images common, some trade
 - By 1500 B.C.E., engaged in production activities
 - Tools and jewelry
 - Political and military specializations emerged with growth of linked cities and villages
 - Emergence of kings with divine status
 - By 3000 B.C.E., Catal Huyuk identified as a civilization



Defining Civilization

- Inclusive definition
 - Enough economic surpluses to form divisions of labor and a social hierarchy involving significant inequalities
- Narrower definition
 - Formal political organizations or states as opposed to family or tribes
- Most civilizations characteristically produced huge kingdoms or empires
- Most civilizations depend on significant cities
 - City— center of wealth, power, politics, ideas, art, intellectual activity, manufacturing, trade

Defining Civilization

- Most civilizations developed writing
 - First in Middle East around 3500 B.C.E.
 - Cuneiform (writing with wedge-like characters)
 - Advantages
 - Government messages, records, tax management, contracts, treatise
 - More elaborate political structures emerge as a result
 - Substantiates value of collecting data, building on the past, and gaining wisdom
 - Encourages notion of organized human inquiry
-
- ***Broad literacy irrelevant for growth of civilization
 - Not common until under 200 years ago

Civilized or Not Civilized?



- If defined narrowly, hunting, nomadic, and some agricultural societies not civilizations
 - Too few resources or stability
 - Lack of writing or strong political organization
- Long history of the civilized looking down on others
 - Ex. Greeks called non-Greeks “barbarians”
- Incorrect to view history as a divide between civilization and primitive nomads
 - Civilization not a synonym for “good”
 - Civilizations incur greater class, caste, ruler-ruled divisions, slavery, war, gender inequalities
 - Nomadic or hunter-gatherer people depend on word of mouth communications and tend to promote intense social regulation, veneration of elders, less strict child-rearing

Historical Role of Hunter-Gatherers and Nomads



- Hunter-gatherers became increasingly isolated
- Nomadic herding people flourish with aid of technologies in riding and weaponry
- Nomads had major role in world trade and developing contact among settled peoples

Significance of Civilizations



- Technological, political, artistic, intellectual changes for large populations
- Environmental impact due to agriculture and mining
 - Deforestation
 - Erosion
 - Flooding
- Early river valley civilizations pilot tests of new social organizations



Tigris-Euphrates Civilization

Mesopotamia

- 1st civilization in Middle East
- Developed: writing, law, trade, religion, money, elaborate architecture, city planning
 - By 4000 B.C.E., farmers familiar with copper, bronze, and had invented the wheel
 - Had pottery industry and developed artistic forms
 - Irrigation required coordination of communities
 - Led to complex social structures
- By 3500 B.C.E., the Sumerians had developed the first real civilization



The Sumerians

- Achievements
 - Alphabet and writing (cuneiform)
 - Astronomy, numerical system
 - Religion
 - Professional priests, rituals, shrines
 - Ziggurats first monumental architecture
 - Polytheism (gods in aspects of nature)
 - Patron gods, earth from water, flood story, gloomy afterlife
 - Legacy carried into Old Testament influencing Judaism, Christianity, Islam
- Political and Social Organization
 - City-States
 - Establish boundaries
 - State religion
 - Courts
 - Kings
 - Defense, war
 - Priests
 - With kings, administer state land and slaves

The Sumerians

- Slavery
 - Warfare ensured supply of slaves
 - Variable existence, slaves could purchase freedom
- Commerce
 - Agricultural prosperity
 - Irrigation, wheeled carts, fertilizers
 - Silver means of exchange
 - First money, facilitated trade
- Defense
 - Region a constant temptation for invaders
 - Difficult to defend
 - Fell to Akkadians who continued Sumerian culture
 - Period of decline, followed by Babylonian rule

Babylonians

- Extended own empire
 - Brought civilization to other parts of Middle East
- Hammurabi
 - Created first Law Code
 - Established courts
 - Duties
 - Rights
 - Punishments
- Invasions persisted, fragmentation followed
 - Semitic people and languages came to dominate but continued culture of the conquered
 - Greatest turmoil between 1200 and 900 B.C.E. favoring smaller, regional kingdoms
 - After 900 B.C.E., Assyrians and Persians created large new empires in the Middle East



Egyptian Civilization



Nile River Valley

- Civilization formed by 3000 B.C.E.
 - Benefited from trade and technological influence of Mesopotamia
- Very different society and culture than Mesopotamia
 - Less open to invasion
 - Unified state for most of its history
 - Economy more government-directed, smaller business class
- Government
 - Pharaoh— power king, intermediary between gods and men
 - Built pyramids for themselves from 2700 B.C.E. onward

Nile River Valley

- Continuity
 - Despite some disruptions Egyptian civilization basically intact until after 1000 B.C.E.
 - Spread into Sudan, impact on later African culture
 - Interaction with African kingdom of Kush
- Comparative achievements with Mesopotamia
 - Science and alphabet less developed
 - Math more advanced and influential
 - Art lively, colorful; architecture influential
 - Concept of afterlife more pleasant



Indus River Valley Civilization



Indian Subcontinent

- Civilization formed by 2500 B.C.E. along Indus River
- Large cities: Harappa and Mohenjo Daro
 - Buildings had running water!
- Traded with Mesopotamia
- Developed own alphabet and artistic forms
- Invasions by Indo-Europeans and natural calamities led to decline
- Harappa writing still not deciphered
- Not enough evidence to claim much about culture or influence on subcontinent Indian cultures
- Indo-European migrants combined early Indian culture with their own

Harappa & Mohenjo Daro

- 100s of miles apart yet very similar layout and construction
 - Precise grid pattern, walled city and buildings of kiln-dried bricks
 - Inference– considerable coordination of labor power required
 - Large well-fortified citadels
 - Inference– strong ruling class
 - Possible sanctuaries when attacked and community centers in peacetime
 - Granaries built nearby
 - Preparation for shortages, regulation of production, sale
 - Complex agricultural system
 - Irrigation inferred
 - Wheat, rye, peas, cotton, possibly rice
 - Animal domesticated
 - Fish dietary staple

Harappa & Mohenjo Daro

- Trade
 - Harappa cities major trading centers
 - Trade enhanced with use of riverboats and ox carts
 - Jade from China
 - Jewels from Burma
 - Harappa stone seals made in India found in Mesopotamia
 - Used by merchants to ensure crates/urns remain unopened during transport
 - Inference— trade highly developed
 - Despite contact, did not adopt superior tools, weaponry of Mesopotamia metal-workers
 - Inference— conservative, resistant to change, vulnerable to invasion
- Religion
 - Rule by priestly class
 - Functioning as intermediaries between population and fertility gods

Demise of Indus River Valley Civilizations

- Short term disasters— flooding and earthquakes
- Long term climatic changes— shifts in monsoon and temperature patterns, desertification
- Urban centers abandoned
- Invaders settle or take over
 - Evidence in change of pottery style, loss of town planning, quality of building
 - Inference— priestly elite lost control over artisans and laborers
 - Some invaders were Aryan herders
 - Replaced irrigation and farming developments with cattle-raising
 - Economic decline followed shift away from crop cultivation
- Evidence suggests violence a possible contributing factor
 - Result possibly of fight from invaders or flooding
- 3 primary factors: environmental changes, related administrative decline, and nomadic migrations



Early Civilization in China



Yellow River Valley

- Developed independently along Huanghe (Yellow River)
 - Later contact with India and Middle East
- By 2000 B.C.E.
 - Irrigation, advanced technology, science, music, intellectual life, pottery, writing (ideographic)
- By 1000 B.C.E.
 - Introduced iron and working with coal

Shang Kingdom

- Laid foundations for Chinese civilization by 1500 B.C.E.
 - Originally nomads, conquered Yellow River region & established kingdom
 - Horseback, chariots, bronze weapons
 - Non-Shang subjects were foot soldiers
 - Warfare involved amassed troops and hand-to-hand combat
- Ruled by strong kings and system of vassalage to build empire
 - King was intermediary between supreme being, Shangdi, and mortals
 - Kingdom viewed as center of world
 - Dominion over all mankind
 - Kings responsible for affairs of state, fertility of kingdom, well-being of subjects
 - Sizable bureaucracy
 - Vassalage— involved land tenure, tribute, military service, administrative duties
 - Common people provided labor and produce

Rituals, Oracles, & Sacrifice

- Performed by rulers and nobility
- Purpose— fertility, avert or appease natural disasters, good crops
- Sacrifices of grains, incense, wine, animals offered in elaborate cast bronze vessels
- Ritual ceremonies and contests offered human sacrifice
- Oracles— sacred people who could prophecy
 - Performed by shamans
 - Consulted for harvests, warfare, travel, marriages, etc
 - Ritual objects basis of artistic expression
 - Used bones and tortoise shells to read the future

Writing

- Shaman interpretation of patterns on bones/tortoise shells led to inscribing on them
- Standardization of designs evolved into consistent written character set
 - Enlarged, simplified, and stylized over time
- From bones and bronze, to bamboo slips, silk scrolls, wooden plates
- China invented paper in the 1st century C.E.
- Elaborate array of pens and inks
- Writing basis of Chinese culture
 - Unified otherwise very diverse peoples, languages, regions into one common identity
 - Began with elites but filtered into artisan and cultivating classes



The Heritage of the River Valley Civilizations

Lasting Impact

- Monuments
 - i.e. pyramids
- Inventions
 - Wheel
 - Tamed horses
 - Alphabets and writing implements
 - Mathematical concepts like square root
 - Calendar
 - Functional monarchies and bureaucracies
- These are the foundations of all later civilizations
- All pioneering civilizations in decline by 1000 B.C.E.

New Societies in Middle East

- Connection between early and later civilizations found in smaller cultures
 - Regional cultures influenced by Mesopotamia and Egypt
 - Often flourished while larger civilizations were in decline
 - Became influential in their own right
- Phoenicians
 - Simplified writing
 - Devised 22 letter alphabet
 - Predecessor of Latin and Greek
 - Improved Egyptian numbering
 - Set up colonies and trading centers around Mediterranean
- Lydians first introduced coined money



Judaism

- Jews most influential of smaller Middle Eastern groups
- Semitic, influenced by Babylonians, settled around Mediterranean around 1200 B.C.E
- Introduced monotheism
 - Single God guided destinies of the Jewish people
 - Priests and prophets defined and emphasized this belief
 - History of God's guidance of his people, basis for the Hebrew Bible
 - Jewish God increasingly abstract, less humanlike
 - All powerful, rational, just
 - Linked ethical conduct and moral behavior
 - Religion a way of life not a set of rituals and ceremonies
- Jewish religion and moral code survived foreign rule from 772 B.C.E. to Roman conquest in 63 B.C.E.
 - Judaism survives to this day– basis for Christianity and Islam
 - Durability sustained by lack of interest in converting non-Jews

Assessing the Early Civilization Period

- Legacy that flourished, persisted, and spread across Europe, Africa, Asia
 - Basic tools
 - Intellectual concepts like mathematics and writing
 - Political forms
- Break between institutions of early and later civilizations
 - Fairly firm break in India resulting from climatic shifts, invasions, political decline
 - China, an exception, relatively continuous forms flow from early to later
 - Middle East break from riverine civilizations and the Persian and Greek empires that would later dominate the area
 - Middle East smaller cultures provided bridge, producing new inventions and ideas

Significant Themes

- Proliferating contact against backdrop of fierce local identity
 - Increased diversity of languages and cultures across planet
 - Concurrent increased trade/contact between groups
 - By 1000 B.C.E Phoenicians traded with Britain, Egypt traded with China
- Shared features of early civilization
 - Cities, trade, writing, etc
 - Meeting common basic definition of civilization
- Diversity of civilizations
 - Each civilization unique in its processes, beliefs, attitudes, styles, etc

Global Connections: The Early Civilizations and the World

- Mesopotamia and Egypt presented two different approaches to relationships outside the home region
 - Mesopotamia– expansion
 - A result of recurrent invasions from the north
 - Conquered territories within the Middle East
 - Egypt– though not isolated, was more self-contained
 - Trade and interactions along Nile to the South– the Kush and Ethiopia
- Contacts with China would shape development in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam
- Harappan society traded widely with Mesopotamia, but little evidence of significant influence