

UNIT ONE: FOUNDATIONS (8000 B.C.E. – 600 C.E.)

The first historical period of the AP World History curriculum is called “Foundations,” a name that describes the importance of the era for shaping virtually all events and trends that followed. It is by far the longest of the five time periods of the course, encompassing some 8600 years. As a result, we will divide (or periodize) Foundations into three big “chunks” to make it more manageable:

- 1) **Development of Agriculture and Early Agricultural Communities** (8000 B.C.E. – about 3500 B.C.E.)
- 2) **Early “River Valley” Civilizations** (about 3500 B.C.E. – about 1200 B.C.E.)
- 3) **Classical Civilizations** (about 1000 B.C.E. – 600 C.E.)

The dates of these eras are flexible, and historians disagree about exactly when each one began and ended, but the categories help to make the story of early human settlements and civilizations a little easier to follow. Part of the problem with fixing exact dates for eras is that we have only a limited knowledge of the eras, particularly the first two, and archaeologists regularly discover new evidence that changes our previous conceptions about them. Another problem in fixing dates, particularly for “**marker events**” that change the course of history, is that interactions among groups of human beings were very limited, so that change in one area might not occur in another part of the world till much later. For example, the invention of agriculture did not occur at one time all over the world. The first agricultural settlements probably appeared about 8000 B.C.E. (setting the beginning year for the Foundations Period), but they did not quickly spread to other areas of the world. Instead, agriculture seems to have been independently invented by many different, widely dispersed groups of people around the globe.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GEOGRAPHY AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Have you ever looked through an historical atlas of the world to study changes in civilizations and their borders? If you have, you know that change is the rule rather than the exception. The world in 4000 C.E. looks very similar physically to our world today. If you pick out the familiar land and water shapes you realize that geological history moves at a much slower pace than political history. On the other hand, try to trace any nation in existence today, and while some are older than others, you don't have to go very far back in history to find its origins. Yet no matter what time period you choose over the past 6000 years or so, the political imprint of human beings is there, and political change occurs much more rapidly than geological change.

Study the map on the opposite page by concentrating on the physical features of the earth's surface that it reveals. Notice the land shapes and the lakes, seas, and oceans. Larger scale maps of different regions would of course show many more physical features that are very similar to those that our ancestors in ancient times were familiar with. Before people began transforming the landscape with their cultural imprints, physical geography shaped and limited their activities. These alterations became apparent first as people settled into agricultural communities, and grew more profound with the growth of cities and eventually industry. In even the earliest civilizations, people devised and used maps that not only represented physical geography but their cultural transformations (such as cities and roads) as well.

The Cultural Perspective

If we are to successfully travel backward through time to try to understand what life was like during the Foundations period, it is important to focus on **perspective**, or point of view. All of us see our surroundings through the lens of our own time period and culture, even though we seldom realize it. For example, did you notice that the map on the opposite page has one cultural construct? It is divided into continents. Think objectively about this. Why does one continent begin in one place and end in another? Certainly, physical geography has something to do with the divisions, but not always. For example, look at the areas where Europe, Asia, and Africa intersect. For most of us, cultural images shape those dividing lines, so that we think of "Europeans" in one way, "Asians" in another, and "Africans" in yet another. In ancient times, people made cultural distinctions, too, but not the same ones that we do in modern times. So our task is to adjust our cultural perspectives as we go through time, realizing that cultural meanings from one era impact those of later eras and that change has been continual.



The Myth of Continents. Dividing the world into basic chunks called “continents” is a cultural construction loosely based on physical geography, but more importantly on our conceptions of cultural differences.

Demography

The study of population is called **demography**, a term derived from the ancient Greek words “demos”, meaning population or people, and “graphe”, meaning to describe. Demography is of interest to many social science disciplines including geography, with its special emphasis on spatial organization: the location of places, people, and events, and the connections among places and landscapes. For historians, changes in population are an important part of the human mosaic that has shaped the story of the world. Population increases and decreases have caused people to move from one place to another, bringing them in contact with other ways of life and causing many political, social, and economic changes.

Migrations are permanent moves to new locations that have occurred on local, regional, and global levels. There are countless reasons why people voluntarily migrate, but most of them are economic. A **push factor** encourages people to move from the region that they live in, and a **pull factor** attracts them to a new region. For example, push factors force refugees to migrate from their homes because of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, or political opinions. Pull factors for these refugees may bring them to an area that has better jobs and a more democratic government. Environmental factors influence migrations greatly, sometimes as **intervening obstacles**, or physical features that halt or



PERSPECTIVES:
The Myth of Continents

The Myth of Continents is a book by Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen that focuses on the unexamined spatial assumptions that we all make, starting with the idea that the world is somehow divided into “continents.” They comment on “our tendency to let a continental framework structure our perceptions of the human community...Each continent is accorded its own history, and we locate its essential nature in opposition to that of the other continents...An obsolete formulation, this framework [continents] is now wholly inadequate for the load it is routinely asked to carry.” They conclude that only by examining our commonplace notions can we develop a “sophisticated understanding of global geography.” Lewis and Wigen’s perspective is an important one to consider in the study of world history.

Reference: Lewis, Martin W. and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.

slow migration from one place to another. Over time, these obstacles may have different meanings: an ocean that separated lands no longer prevents migrations once the technology to cross the ocean develops.

With population movement, people spread their cultures to new areas through a process called **cultural diffusion**, including innovations, technology, religion, language, food and clothing styles, and disease. Throughout history diseases have spread as human interactions have increased. Famous examples include the 14th century plague that spread from Asia to Europe, and the contagious diseases that spread rapidly through the Native American populations that came into contact with Europeans in the New World during the 15th and 16th centuries. During prehistoric times, human beings migrated to many parts of the globe, setting the stage for human domination of other species on earth. Although we cannot pin these prehistoric migrations to a single “marker event” because they took place gradually over long periods of time, without them humans might not have survived those early years.



**THE BIG PICTURE:
FOUNDATIONS
(8000 B.C.E. - 600 C.E)**

Be sure to keep up with these broad trends and themes for the Foundations Period:

- 1) Interactions among different groups of people on the planet were usually limited to groups that were geographically nearby, but interactions increased steadily throughout the time period, both in frequency and distance.
- 2) Physical geography and the natural environment interacted with human activities to shape changes and continuities during the time period.
- 3) Foundations is made up of three time periods that are distinguished by big changes in human life styles, including “marker events”: the development of agriculture and early agricultural communities, the early river valley civilizations, and classical civilizations.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

cultural diffusion

demography

intervening obstacles

“marker events”

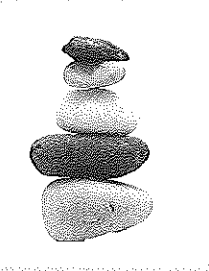
migrations

The Myth of Continents

periodization

perspective

push and pull factors



CHAPTER ONE: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

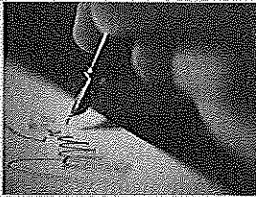
“History” is usually defined as the study of the past beginning with the first systematic written records, sometime in the 4th millennium (4000-3000 B.C.E.). However, some important developments occurred earlier that greatly influenced the course of world history. One important “marker event” was the development of agriculture and agricultural communities.

HUMAN LIFE BEFORE 8000 B.C.E.

Exactly when the first human beings appeared is debatable, but they existed on earth for millions of years before the beginning year for the AP World History curriculum (8000 B.C.E.). Archaeologists (scientists who study prehistoric and ancient peoples) currently believe that the decisive differentiation between humans and apes occurred between 6 and 8 million years ago. New discoveries are being made every day, but the general trend has been to push the date further and further back into prehistory. One distinction between humans and other mammals is **bipedalism**, or the preference for walking erect on two limbs rather than four. DNA analysis of bone fragments that are millions of years old indicates that the earliest known bipedal creature was *Ardepithecus ramidus*, discovered in Ethiopia in 2001. From there, many different species of humans developed, but all disappeared except for *homo sapiens*, which appears to have become the only surviving human species somewhere between 50,000 and 10,000 years ago.

In the long period of time before people began keeping written records, **primary sources** (original evidence from the time period) did not take the form of documents but included objects, artifacts, and skeletal remains. Some objects made of stone and bone have survived, so that we know that hominids used refined tools some 70,000 years ago during the **Paleolithic Age (or Old Stone Age)**. The Paleolithic Age extended until about 8000 B.C.E., by which time humans inhabited all the continents except Antarctica. *Homo sapiens* had several advantages over other species, including forelimbs freed from

walking and opposable thumbs, with both features allowing them to manipulate objects as tools or weapons. Perhaps the most significant advantage, however, was the development of a large brain, especially well developed in the frontal regions where conscious and reflective thought takes place. Humans were not as strong as many other species, but they were able to figure out how to thrive, even in colder climates, by devising effective ways to solve the problems of survival.



PRIMARY SOURCES: LUCY

A very important milestone in the development of early humans was the discovery in 1974 of the hominid “Lucy,” so named because the researchers celebrated by loudly playing the old Beatles’ song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” in their camp the evening after they found her. Lucy’s species was named *Australopithecus afarensis*, a bipedal creature that lived in eastern Africa more than three million years ago. Lucy was a hybrid between modern humans and apes that was able to walk upright for small distances. Lucy’s species, like all other hominids except *homo sapiens*, eventually became extinct.

Hunting and Gathering

During the Paleolithic Age humans survived by foraging for their food: hunting wild animals and gathering edible plants. They traveled in small groups (probably about thirty to fifty members) and had to constantly keep moving in order to follow the herds of animals and to find new areas where edible plants grew. Their movement kept them from accumulating possessions and from developing any sense of property ownership. Although some people undoubtedly emerged as leaders, hunting and gathering groups were marked by very few status differences since they did not accumulate wealth. The basic division of labor was based on sex, with the men usually responsible for hunting and the women for gathering. However, it appears as if they made no judgment that one

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activity was more important than the other, so many scholars believe that one sex did not dominate the other. Meat was highly prized, as was the hunter, but the groups could not have survived without the gathering skills of women.

The survival of hunters and gatherers depended on a thorough understanding of their natural environment. Older women, in particular, had an extensive knowledge of which plants were edible and which were poisonous, and they passed their skills down to younger women, who were able to gather with young children strapped to their bodies. Hunters had to devise clever ways of catching animals that were often larger and faster than they were, and they wore disguises, carefully coordinated their movements, set traps, and created distractions in order to snare their prey.

The Importance of Tools

Homo sapiens and some of their ancestors created special tools, such as sharp knives, bows and arrows, and spears. Early tools were made from wood, bone, and stone, although no wooden tools and few bone tools survive. The earliest stone tools were made by breaking off the edges of stone cores to create points or cutting surfaces. Later they sharpened flakes broken off the core stone. Humans used tools to help them build huts of branches, stones, bones, skins, and leaves, and some 26,000 years ago they began to weave cloth. Tools also eventually allowed them to invent and sustain agriculture as early as 8000 B.C.E.

Paleolithic Culture

Little is known about Paleolithic culture since few artifacts have survived to modern day. Perhaps the best known remainders of culture that we have today are the cave paintings in Europe and North Africa, the oldest being created about 32,000 years ago. The paintings show food animals, such as wild oxen, reindeer, and horses, as well as people dressed in animals skins, smeared with paint. A newly discovered cave near Pont d'Arc in the Ardeche region of France shows panthers, bears, owls, rhinoceros, and a hyena. Some cave art also indicates that Stone Age people had well-developed religions, and at several Neanderthal (a people first found in the Neander valley in southwestern Germany) sites, there are signs of careful, ritualistic burials. In some, survivors placed flint tools and animal bones in and around the graves of the dead. Cro-Magnon people wore necklaces, bracelets, and beads, and also decorated their furniture.

The life styles of prehistoric people are often characterized as violent, uncertain, and exhausting, but many scholars believe that hunters and gatherers in areas abundant with game and plants, such as the African grasslands, probably only spent from three to five hours a day tending to their survival. In such areas,

people would have had plenty of time to make tools, create art, and socialize with others in their group.



THE INVENTION OF FIRE: A PALEOLITHIC MARKER EVENT

Long before the time period of *homo sapiens*, human ancestors made the important discovery of fire, probably borrowed from flames caused by lightning or lava flows. Eventually they learned to start their own fires, and the control of fire led to many improvements in their lives. For example, it made a much wider range of foods edible, particularly animal flesh. Cooked meat is not only easier to digest; it may be stored and preserved more easily. Also, fire frightened off predatory animals, hardened wooden weapons and tools, and warmed body and soul. Even though no one knows exactly who or when the discovery of fire was first made, it is one of the first “marker events” that changed early human prehistory.

THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

The term **Neolithic (or Agricultural) Revolution** refers to the changeover from food gathering to food producing that serves as a “marker event” to begin the Foundations period in history (8000 B.C.E.). However, the term is deceiving because the revolution was not a single event but instead occurred at different times in different parts of the world. Even as the “agricultural revolution” took place in one place, it usually happened gradually over the course of several generations. Slowly, hunting and gathering gave way to sowing, harvesting, and keeping domesticated animals. Usually **agriculture** (the deliberate tending of crops and livestock in order to produce food and fiber) was adopted a little at a time to supplement the needs of hunters and gatherers. Some members of the group hunted while other experimented with planting seeds from wild plants, usually grasses, and eventually agriculture became the primary economic activity. When that event occurred, the revolution was complete for that group, as the sequence of events continued to evolve for other groups.

Early Horticulture and Pastoralism

Horticulture may be distinguished from agriculture in that horticulturists used only hand tools, such as hoes and digging sticks to plant seeds and cultivate

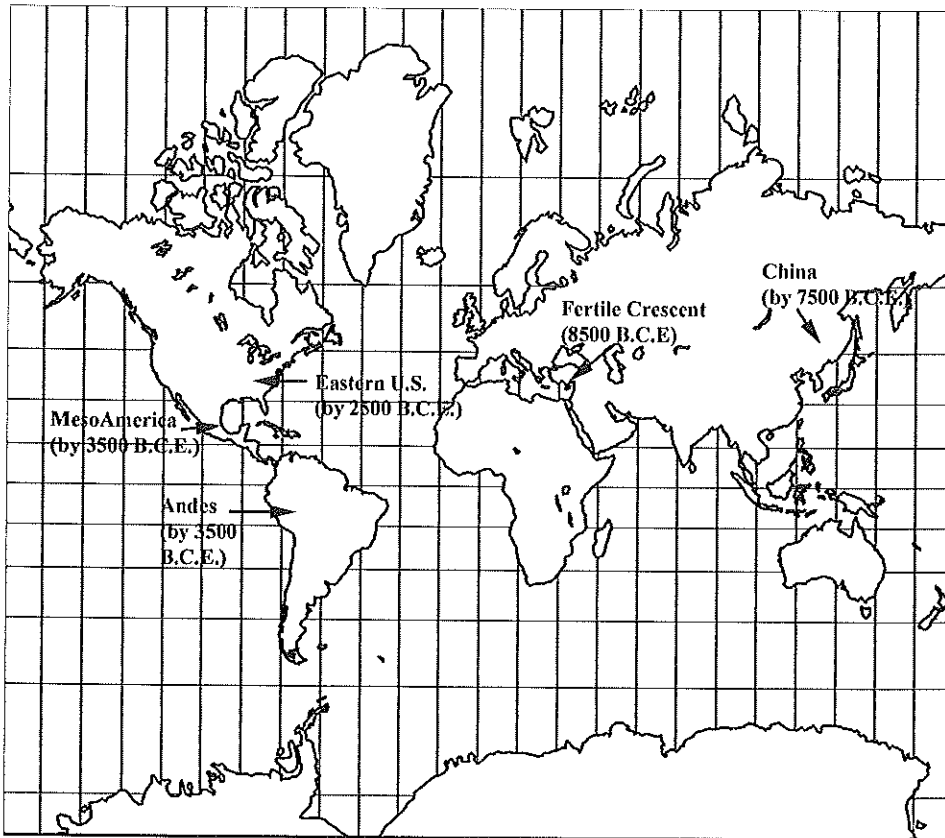
crops. Horticulture developed earlier than agriculture that made use of animals and plows to speed up and otherwise greatly improve the process. **Pastoralists** were the first domesticators of animals, and they remained semi-nomadic, leading their herds to fresh grazing lands. Horticulturists were the first to settle in one place, and eventually were able to integrate domesticated animals into their communities. Agriculturists could cultivate fields vastly larger than the garden-sized plots worked by horticulturists, and plows turned and aerated soil to increase fertility. As a result, their communities grew larger and their surpluses rose.

The Domestication of Grains

In the Middle East, the region with the earliest evidence of agriculture, humans transformed wild grasses into higher-yielding domesticated grains called emmer wheat and barley. According to Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, the development of agriculture was mainly dependent on the availability of grains and animals in the area that were domesticable. Another factor may have been the availability of food that could be hunted and gathered, and hunger may have necessitated invention in areas where readily available food was scarce. Plants domesticated in the Middle East spread to nearby areas through **cultural diffusion** as nearby people learned from those already practicing farming, but agriculture probably rose as an **independent invention** (no cultural diffusion involved) in many other areas. Domestic rice originated in southern China, Southeast Asia, or northern India; maize (corn) was grown in Mesoamerica; and potatoes, squash, tomatoes, and peppers were grown in the Andes Mountain areas of Peru.

The Domestication of Animals

As agriculture developed, many areas also domesticated animals. It makes sense that as people settled down, they had to free themselves from following the herds, so the logical solution was to train the animals to stay put, too. Of course, some animals are more easily domesticated than others. The dog was probably the first domesticated animal, as hunters discovered the animal's helpfulness in tracking game. More directly related to the development of agriculture was the domestication of sheep and goats in Southwest Asia; cows in Eurasia and northern Africa; water buffalo and chickens in China; camels in Arabia and central Asia; and horses and pigs in Eurasia. Some areas of the world appear to have had few good animal candidates for domestication, such as Mesoamerica, Sub-Saharan Africa, New Guinea, and the Andes area, although the llama was domesticated in the Andes.



Centers of origin of food production. The map above shows some of the earliest areas where the Neolithic Revolution took place. The scattered land space and the big differences in time of production indicate that the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture was independently invented by a number of people.

Reference: Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999, pp. 99-100.

The Neolithic Revolution as a “Marker Event”

Even though the changes were gradual, it is still appropriate to call the transition to agriculture a “revolution” or “marker event” because it profoundly affected the way that human beings lived. Some important changes include:

- 1) **People settled down** – To be near their crops, people settled into villages instead of constantly moving about as hunters and gatherers did. Because they didn’t have to worry about carrying their possessions with them, people began to accumulate goods and claim pieces of land as their own. The concept of **private property** began to define human society.

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- 2) **Division of labor** – In hunting and gathering groups, the basic division of labor was between men (the hunters) and women (the gatherers). In early agricultural settlements, people began to see the advantages of “specialization.” For example, those most talented at crafting agricultural tools could do that for all the villagers, and those that best tended animals that pulled plows could do that. As a result, all work could be done more efficiently.
- 3) **Social inequality** – Whereas hunting and gathering groups were characterized by relative social equality, agricultural groups began to display social distinctions, and eventually social classes. Some people accumulated more land than others and passed that land down to their children, making some families “distinguished” and others not. With specialized occupations, some were awarded more respect and/or material rewards, and social inequality increased even more.
- 4) **Gender inequality** – The Neolithic Revolution is almost certainly responsible for the beginnings of status distinctions between men and women. Scholars offer many explanations, but most are based on the loss of women’s economic power. In hunting and gathering societies, a woman’s gathering skills were essential for the survival of the group. With agriculture, men took over both the care of animals and plants, and women were sidelined to domestic chores that enhanced, but were not central to, the survival of the village. One explanation for this change is that the male’s superior physical strength meant that he was better able to manage when animal and plant care were merged in agricultural production.
- 5) **The importance of surplus** - With increasing specialization, not everyone was a farmer. For every craftsman that did not spend his days tending to crops, the farmers had to produce a surplus to support him and his family. The only way to do this was to raise a **surplus**, or more crops than the farmer needed to feed his own family. Surplus also meant that foodstuffs could be put away for later so that food supplies became more reliable. Once food supplies became more reliable, people ate more regularly, health improved, and population increased. With larger populations, more specialization could occur, and so villages grew into towns and eventually into cities that needed to be coordinated and controlled, giving way to specialized jobs in government.
- 6) **Religious changes** – Religious beliefs are evident in hunting and gathering societies, but most agricultural societies developed **polytheism**, or the belief in multiple gods. Whereas earlier beliefs probably centered on spirits, now “gods” with many human characteristics presided

over areas and objects important to farmers – sun gods, rain gods, gods of the harvest, and female fertility gods. Neolithic people made the connection between fertility of the soil and fertility of human beings, and many voluptuous female goddesses were celebrated in the form of clay figurines, decorations on pots, vases, and tools, and ritual objects. Infant deities represented the regeneration of human, animal, and plant life.



PERSPECTIVES: *ISHMAEL* ON THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

In his book *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn questioned the general assumption that the Neolithic (or Agricultural) Revolution changed the course of world history for the better. He also contrasted the points of view of the “Leavers” (hunters and gatherers, who did not leave large footprints on the earth’s environment) and “Takers” (agriculturalists, who transformed the landscape).

The Takers’ view of the Leavers: “He’s running and running and running... hunger and desperation driving him. He’s terrified as well. Behind him on the ridge, just out of sight, his enemies are in pursuit to tear him to pieces – the lions, the wolves, the tigers...forever one step behind his prey and one step ahead of his enemies.”

From the Leavers’ point of view: “Far from scrabbling endlessly and desperately for food, hunter-gatherers are among the best-fed people on earth, and they manage this with only two or three hours a day of what you would call work – which makes them among the most leisured people on earth.”

Reference: Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*. New York: A Bantam Book, 1992, pp. 219-220.

Three Craft Industries

Three Neolithic craft industries emerged as agriculture developed: pottery, metallurgy, and textiles. Making use of natural products around them, early craftsmen fashioned goods that were useful to agricultural communities. Pottery

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served as containers for storing food, and was made by fire-hardening clay into waterproof pots. Copper was probably the first metal that humans shaped into useful items and jewelry because it is easily malleable. By 6000 B.C.E. people had discovered that it was even more versatile when heated to high temperatures, and they fashioned copper knives, axes, farm tools, and weapons. Textile production is hard to trace because fibers don't easily survive the ages, but some fragments indicated that fibers were woven together as early as 6000 B.C.E., and eventually fibers were spun into thread that was woven into cloth.

The Growth of Towns and Cities

By 4000 B.C.E. a number of villages had grown into towns, and towns into a few small cities, such as **Jericho** on the Jordan River and **Catal Huyuk** in southern Turkey. Both settlements were founded by 7000 B.C.E., and both were heavily fortified for protection. Jericho's round houses of mud and brick on stone foundations were surrounded by a ditch and a wall almost 12 feet high. Catal Huyuk's houses were joined together so that once outside entrances were barricaded, the houses could not be invaded. Both places relied upon trade to supplement their agricultural base. Jericho traded its salt, sulfur, and pitch for semiprecious stones from Anatolia, turquoise from the Sinai, and obsidian and cowrie shells from other areas. Catal Huyuk traded flint, obsidian, and jewelry with towns and villages nearby. Although it is not accurate to call Jericho and Catal Huyuk cities, their organizations and the life styles of their inhabitants foreshadowed the development of great cities and civilizations during the watershed 4th Millennium B.C.E.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND CONCEPTS

agriculture

bipedalism

Catal Hayuk

cultural diffusion

division of labor

horticulture

independent invention

Jericho

Lucy

"marker events" of pre-history

Neolithic craft industries

Neolithic (or Agricultural) Revolution

Paleolithic Age

pastoralism

polytheism

primary sources

specialization

surplus