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## Beginnings to 600 BCE

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Preparing for the AP World History exam does not mean you have to know all history “from the dawn of time” until the present. Instead, the exam focuses on important developments over time in different places. As you move through this book, you will see an increase in the connections between civilizations as they encounter each other. You will also notice that as history approaches the early twenty-first century, time “slows down” in the AP World History curriculum. This chapter covers the most amount of time, but it contains the least amount of detail. By the time you reach your study of the twentieth century, you will see much more detail covered for the least amount of time—just 100 years, and this is true of any of the six periods in World History.

### I. Peopling the Earth

- A. The Paleolithic or Old Stone Age era (c. 250,000 BCE–c. 8000 BCE)
1. Archaeological evidence indicates that early humans migrated from Africa to Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas, usually in small hunting-foraging bands that survived by hunting animals and gathering edible plants. These groups usually had family connections.
  2. In this era, humans learned to use tools made from stone and wood. Tools included the spear, the bow and arrow, the club, and the stone axe. Paintings on cave walls from about 17,000 years ago in France show people hunting with these types of tools.

3. Humans started religious practices in this era.
  - i. Archaeological evidence indicates that religions were usually animistic; that is, they attributed sacred powers to events in nature. Abundant examples of ceremonial burials have been found. These burials indicate that the dead in this era weren't just left to the wild animals. Instead they were carefully placed in graves with flowers and other objects, showing that the living expected their dead to carry on into an afterlife.
  - ii. Another example of religious belief is that archaeologists have found many examples from this era of small statues of deities made from stone and clay.
4. Trade of goods and technology occurred between bands of hunter-foragers.
  - i. As groups encountered each other, they may have fought over nearby herds of animals and at other times, hunted together for animals, grains, and fruit. In these encounters, they exchanged weapon- and tool-making technology and possibly religious beliefs.

*It is important that you understand the geography of the peopling of the Earth, so be sure to study maps that show the migrations of early humans in this era.*

## **II. The Neolithic Revolution (also called the Agricultural Revolution) (c. 8000 BCE)**

- A. About 8000 BCE, humans began to plant crops in areas with rich soil and abundant water, usually found in river valleys.
  1. Starting in Southwest Asia, in an area called Mesopotamia ("between the rivers"), people deliberately planted seeds and harvested their crops instead of constantly roaming around looking for fruits, grains, and nuts.
  2. Planting seeds in the ground on purpose is agriculture. People chose to stay in these fertile areas and build



permanent shelters and eventually ended their hunting-foraging ways.

3. Humans also settled along the Nile River in North Africa, the Yellow (Huang) River Valley in East Asia, and the Indus River Valley in South Asia. Other early agricultural civilizations included those in Mesoamerica (southern Mexico and nearby areas) and in the Andes mountains of modern-day Peru.
- B. Note that the Neolithic Revolution did not occur globally and concurrently, meaning that people didn't start planting crops all over the world at exactly the same time.
1. Agriculture developed in China about 2000 years after Mesopotamia.
  2. In the Andes and Mesoamerica, agriculture occurred in about the year 2500 BCE.



*This divergence of dates of the Neolithic Revolution is an example of the difficulties historians have in assigning periods in world history. Thus, the writers of the AP World History exam expect you to understand the concept of periodization. (See Chapter 23.)*

- C. Animals were domesticated during this period as well.
1. Humans tamed wild animals and used them for protection, for food, and also to help in the hunt. Dogs, cats, goats, sheep, cattle, horses, chickens, and pigs were the most important domesticated animals in Afro-Eurasia.
  2. In the Americas, horses didn't exist until Europeans brought them during the late fifteenth century CE. However, in South America, the Chavin in the Andes mountain region domesticated llamas and alpacas.
  3. Because of closer contact with animals, diseases were increasingly transferred between humans and animals.

- D. Technological developments increased food production.
  - 1. Wooden plows, wheels, sickles, traps, clay pots, and large woven baskets allowed for more efficient planting and harvesting of food—this led to more food being available, which in turn led to an increase in population growth.
  - 2. Humans also learned to dig irrigation canals that brought water from the rivers to their crops, increasing yet again the amount of food produced.
  - 3. Humans figured out how to melt metals like iron, gold, silver, tin, and copper to create cooking utensils like cups and pots, religious figurines, and weapons.
    - i. Bronze, a mixture of tin and copper, was greatly valued because it could hold a sharp edge, unlike most early manufactured metals.
    - ii. Iron was also a hard metal that, once refined, was used to make weapons and plow tips.
  
- E. Because more food was available, people lived longer and had more children, who in turn had more children, and so on.
  - 1. This increase in population is one factor in the development of the world's first cities.
  - 2. Storing food became an important function—keeping account of how much food was available led to the first writing systems.
  
- F. Societies developed specialization of labor and social structures.
  - 1. With the Agricultural Revolution's steady food supply, people tended to stay in one place.
    - i. This led to a specialization of work tasks and jobs, such as craftspeople, warriors, religious leaders, and government officials (like kings and scribes).
      - Craftspeople, such as construction workers, built storage facilities for food reserves;

- Warriors protected their food supplies from outside attacks and sometimes attacked other cities to take their food;
- Religious leaders asked their gods to supply good food harvests;
- Scribes kept records of how much food was on hand; and
- Kings told them all what to do.

### III. Early Urban Societies

- A. Cities with permanent building structures developed out of agricultural settlements.
1. *Civilization* is a term many historians use to describe societies that have cities.
    - i. The first cities, in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley, developed roughly six thousand years ago. They had buildings made both of stone and of a human invention—sun-dried bricks. They discovered that by stacking bricks into an arch, multi-story buildings could be created. *Arch* is the root word of *architecture*.
    - ii. Tall buildings of religious importance in Mesopotamia were called *ziggurats*, and in Egypt, they were called *pyramids*.
    - iii. Elites (royalty) had palaces built for themselves. (The AP World History exam calls such buildings “monumental structures.”) Kings commissioned statues, carvings on buildings and walls (also called *bas relief*), and elaborate tapestries and paintings to decorate their palaces.
- B. Cities had both political and religious leaders who usually worked together to maintain social order.
1. Sometimes the same people held both positions because it was difficult to question the authority of a leader who was also a god.

- i. To pay for construction of protective city walls, kings imposed taxes on businesses and individuals.
  - ii. To keep records of stored grain supplies, writing systems developed, like *cuneiform* in Mesopotamia and *hieroglyphics* in Egypt.
    - ▶ The roots of the English alphabet came from the Phoenicians of Southwest Asia, who passed it to the Greeks, then the Romans, and so on.
- C. Legal codes were written and enforced by the courts to maintain order in the ever-crowded cities.
1. The most well-known early legal code, the Code of Hammurabi, came from Mesopotamia. Its rules, such as “an eye for an eye,” were first established in Southwest Asia.
- D. Over time, cities that had close proximity to each other, a common language, and common religious beliefs began to unite to form early empires.
1. These empires were led by kings who almost always claimed that their authority came from the gods.
  2. The Babylonians of Mesopotamia and the Egyptians are examples of early empires.
  3. Empires were built and expanded by conquering people who lived beyond the borders of the empire.
  4. Over the centuries, the patterns of empire-building established in this era were repeated often in every region and time period.



*For the AP World History exam, it is important to be familiar with political and social features of the following empires: those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Shang in China, the Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley, the Olmecs in Mesoamerica, and the Chavin in Andean South America. You must also be able to locate them on a map.*

- E. The first literature emerged in the era of the early civilizations. Written stories explaining the world's creation and the meaning of life was a common theme.
1. From Mesopotamia, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* addressed questions about life and death and explored human relationships.
  2. *The Rig Veda* (from the Indus Valley) and *The Book of the Dead* (from Egypt) sought to explain religious themes such as the origin of the Earth and its peoples and the destiny of humans after this life ends.
- F. Nonsettled groups—pastoralists—transferred technology, goods, and ideas among settled societies.
1. *Pastoralists* were nomadic people who herded domesticated animals such as sheep, horses, goats, and/or cattle in central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and parts of Africa. They did not participate in agriculture like the settled peoples of the cities.
  2. Pastoralists fostered connections between settled areas and were agents of change across long distances, sometimes peacefully, other times through raids designed to take the stored materials found in the cities.
- G. Religions developed in this era carried over into later periods.
1. Hinduism, which developed in the Indus River Valley, is probably the world's oldest religion.
    - i. It was influenced by the Aryan peoples of Central Asia.
    - ii. The *Vedas* are the religious texts of Hinduism.
    - iii. The Hindu faith adheres to the belief in one overall god-spirit, but believes that it reveals itself to humanity in many forms.
  2. Although most religions from this era were polytheistic (believing in many gods or many representations of god), two stand out as unique in their monotheism:
    - i. The Hebrew faith from Southwest Asia; and
    - ii. Zoroastrianism out of Central Asia.



H. Social pyramids emerged.

1. Elites, such as rulers and religious leaders, were at the top of the pyramid; craftspeople, merchants, and laborers were in the middle; and slaves were on the bottom.
2. Social and political systems tended to be patriarchal, with men holding power in governments, religions, and families. Women attained political power through marriage or by supervising their young ruling sons.

*The material in this chapter accounts for only 5 percent of the AP World History exam, so plan your study time accordingly.*

