Foundations of Civilizations

Chapter 1
Understanding Our Past

► Prehistory
  ▪ Before written records
► Artifacts: objects made by humans
► Anthropology: study of culture
► Archaeology: study of past people and their remains
Evidence of Early Hominid Groups

- Australopithecines: lived in Africa 7 million years ago
- Homo habilis: 2 millions years ago; first started using stone tools (for a purpose)
- Homo erectus: walked upright; started using fire; first to migrate out of Africa
- Homo sapiens: Neanderthals vs. today
The Neolithic Revolution

► Old Stone Age (Paleolithic Period)
  ▪ 2 million to 10,000 B.C.
    ► Nomads: hunting and gathering
    ► Relied on the environment
    ► Animism: spirits resided in animals, objects, or dreams (cave drawings)

► New Stone Age (Neolithic Period)
  ▪ 10,000 B.C. to present
    ► Learned how to farm
    ► Domesticated plants and animals
    ► Villages were formed
    ► Government was introduced (Council of Elders)
What are the characteristics of a civilization?
Cities lead to Civilizations
(first one in 3200 BCE → SUMER)

- Civilization = a complex, highly organized social order
First Civilizations

Our first four civilizations surfaced near river valleys b/c conditions favored farming.
Being located in river valleys had its pros and its cons:

**PROS:**
- Flood waters spread nutrient rich silt, favorable for farming
- Animals drink & became source of food
- Regular water supply & means of transportation
Being located in river valleys had its pros and its cons:

**CONS:**

- Flooding
- Building irrigation channels
- Farmers had to work together: built dikes & dug canals
1. CITIES

Early cities arose from farming settlements in river valleys

- Near rivers
- Surrounded by high walls
  - Usually for protection
  - Had temples and palaces
  - Narrow, tangled roads

Cities are the central feature of a civilization; without cities, you do not have a civilization!
2. WELL-ORGANIZED CENTRAL GOV’T TO:

- Oversee irrigation projects
- Ensure a steady food supply was available
- Issue laws
- Organize defense and military
- Collect Taxes
3. COMPLEX RELIGION--POLYTHEISTIC

- Gods controlled natural forces & human activities
- To ensure good favor with the Gods built temples and offered sacrifices
- Full-time priests
4. JOB

SPECIALIZATION

Increase in population (time) and increase in tasks leads people to specialize in certain jobs

- artisans
- metalworkers
- bricklayers (built city walls)
- soldiers = defend city
- merchants = sold goods in marketplace

***Specialization made people dependent on others for various needs***
5. SOCIAL CLASSES

People ranked according to job

- Priests/nobles
- Wealthy merchants (small group)
- Artisans
- Peasants/farmers (majority)
- Slaves
6. ART AND ARCHITECTURE

► Express beliefs and values
► Temples and palaces
  ► reassures people of power and strength of the leaders
► Built by skilled workers
7. PUBLIC WORKS—ORDERED BY RULERS

- irrigations systems
- roads, bridges
- defensive walls
- costly but supposed to benefit city
- also used to keep people busy during periods of agricultural inactivity or warring
8. THE INVENTION OF WRITING

- Originated with the records of religious offering
- At first, used pictograms → then abstract ideas (love) → then sounds → then medical texts!
- Scribes (specially trained) and educated to read and write
- Doesn’t include women