Learning Targets

• To familiarize students with the spread of human societies in the Paleolithic era
• To explore the conditions of life in gathering and hunting societies
• To examine factors that eventually led to change in gathering and hunting societies
• To make students aware that agriculture evolved independently in several regions of the world
• To trace the development of agriculture and its local variations
• To consider the social implications of the Agricultural Revolution

Big Picture Questions

1. In what ways did various Paleolithic societies differ from one another, and how did they change over time?
2. The Agricultural Revolution marked a decisive turning point in human history. What evidence might you offer to support this claim, and how might you argue against it?
3. How did early agricultural societies differ from those of the Paleolithic era?
5. What arguments does this chapter make for paying serious attention to human history before the coming of “civilization”?

Margin Review Questions

1. What was the sequence of human migration across the planet?
2. How did Austronesian migrations differ from other early patterns of human movement?
3. In what ways did a gathering and hunting economy shape other aspects of Paleolithic societies?
4. Why did some Paleolithic peoples abandon earlier, more nomadic ways and begin to live a more settled life?
5. In what different ways did the Agricultural Revolution take shape in various parts of the world?
6. In what ways did agriculture spread? Where and why was it sometimes resisted?
7. What changes did the Agricultural Revolution bring in its wake?
8. What different kinds of societies emerged out of the Agricultural Revolution?

Key Terms

Austronesian migrations: The last phase of the great human migration that established a human presence in every habitable region of the earth. Austronesian-speaking people settled the Pacific islands and Madagascar in a series of seaborne migrations that began around 3,500 years ago. (pron. aws-tree-NEEZH-an)

Banpo: A Chinese archeological site, where the remains of a significant Neolithic village have been found. (pron. bahn-poe)

Bantu migration: The spread of Bantu-speaking peoples from their homeland in what is now southern Nigeria or Cameroon to most of Africa, in a process that started ca. 3000 B.C.E. and continued for several millennia.

Çatalhüyük: An important Neolithic site in what is now Turkey. (pron. cha- TAHL-hoo-YOOK)

chiefdom: A societal grouping governed by a chief who typically relies on generosity, ritual status, or charisma rather than force to win obedience from the people.

Clovis culture: The earliest widespread and distinctive culture of North America; named from the Clovis point, a particular kind of projectile point.

diffusion: The gradual spread of agricultural techniques without extensive population movement.

Dreamtime: A complex worldview of Australia’s Aboriginal people that held that current humans live in a vibration or echo of ancestral happenings.

Fertile Crescent: Region sometimes known as Southwest Asia that includes the modern states of Iraq, Syria, Israel/Palestine, and southern Turkey; the earliest home of agriculture.

Flores man: A recently discovered hominid species of Indonesia.
Göbekli Tepe: A ceremonial site comprising 20 circles made up of carved limestone pillars located in southeastern Turkey. The site, which dates to 11,600 years ago, was built by gatherer hunters who lived at least part of the year in settled villages. (pron. goh-BEHK-lee TEH-peh)

Ishi: The last surviving member of a gathering and hunting group known as the Yahi who lived in northern California. His people were driven into extinction during the second half of the nineteenth century by the intrusion of farming and herding ‘civilized’ societies.

megafaunal extinction: Dying out of a number of large animal species, including the mammoth and several species of horses and camels, that occurred around 11,000–10,000 years ago, at the end of the Ice Age. The extinction may have been caused by excessive hunting or by the changing climate of the era. (pron. meg-AHFAWN-al)

“the original affluent society”: Term coined by the scholar Marshall Sahlins in 1972 to describe Paleolithic societies, which he regarded as affluent not because they had so much but because they wanted or needed so little.

Paleolithic settling down: The process by which some Paleolithic peoples moved toward permanent settlement in the wake of the last Ice Age. Settlement was marked by increasing storage of food and accumulation of goods as well as growing inequalities in society.

pastoral society: A human society that relies on domesticated animals rather than plants as the main source of food; pastoral nomads lead their animals to seasonal grazing grounds rather than settling permanently in a single location.

“secondary products revolution”: A term used to describe the series of technological changes that began ca. 4000 B.C.E., as people began to develop new uses for their domesticated animals, exploiting a revolutionary new source of power.

shaman: In many early societies, a person believed to have the ability to act as a bridge between living humans and supernatural forces, often by means of trances induced by psychoactive drugs.

stateless societies: Village-based agricultural societies, usually organized by kinship groups, that functioned without a formal government apparatus.

teosinte: The wild ancestor of maize. (pron. tay-ohSIN-tay)

trance dance: In San culture, a nightlong ritual held to activate a human being’s inner spiritual potency (n/um) to counteract the evil influences of gods and ancestors.

Venus figurines: Paleolithic carvings of the female form, often with exaggerated breasts, buttocks, hips, and stomachs, which may have had religious significance.