Vocabulary

Period 1: Technological and Environmental Transformations, to c. 600 B.C.E.

Chapter 1

1. 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-toe-NEEZH-an)

2. Brotherhood of the Tomol: A prestigious craft guild that monopolized the building and ownership of large oceangoing canoes, or tomols (pron. toe-mole), among the Chumash people (located in what is now southern California).

3. Chumash culture: Paleolithic culture of southern California that survived until the modern era.

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

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


7. “gathering and hunting peoples”: As the name suggests, people who live by collecting food rather than producing it. Recent scholars have turned to this term instead of the older “hunter-gatherer” in recognition that such societies depend much more heavily on gathering than on hunting for survival.

8. great goddess: According to one theory, a dominant deity of the Paleolithic era.

9. Hadza: A people of northern Tanzania, almost the last surviving Paleolithic society. (pron. HAHD-zah)

10. “human revolution”: The term used to describe the transition of humans from acting out of biological imperative to dependence on learned or invented ways of living (culture).

11. Ice Age: Any of a number of cold periods in the earth’s history; the last Ice Age was at its peak around 20,000 years ago.

12. “insulting the meat”: A San cultural practice meant to deflate pride that involved negative comments about the meat brought in by a hunter and the expectation that a successful hunter would disparage his own kill.

13. Jomon culture: A settled Paleolithic culture of prehistoric Japan, characterized by seaside villages and the creation of some of the world’s earliest pottery. (pron. JOE-mahn)

14. 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-ah-FAWN-al)

15. Neanderthals: Homo sapiens neanderthalensis, a European variant of Homo sapiens that died out about 25,000 years ago.

16. n/um: Among the San, a spiritual potency that becomes activated during “curing dances” and protects humans from the malevolent forces of gods or ancestral spirits.

17. “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.

18. Paleolithic: Literally “old stone age”; the term used to describe early Homo sapiens societies in the period before the development of agriculture.

19. Paleolithic rock art: While this term can refer to the art of any gathering and hunting society, it is typically used to describe the hundreds of Paleolithic paintings discovered in Spain and France and dating to about 20,000 years ago; these paintings usually depict a range of animals, although human figures and abstract designs are also found. The purpose of this art is debated.

20. 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.

21. San, or Ju'/hoansi: A Paleolithic people still living on the northern fringe of the Kalahari desert in southern Africa. (pron. ZHUN-twasti)

22. 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.

23. trance dance: In San culture, a nghtlong ritual held to activate a human being’s inner spiritual potency (n/um) to counteract the evil influences of gods and ancestors. The practice was apparently common to the Khoisan people, of whom the Ju'/hoansi are a surviving remnant.

24. Venus figurines: Paleolithic carvings of the female form, often with exaggerated breasts, buttocks, hips, and stomachs, which may have had religious significance.
Chapter 2

1. **Agricultural Revolution**: Also known as the Neolithic Revolution, this is the transformation of human (and world) existence caused by the deliberate cultivation of particular plants and the deliberate taming and breeding of particular animals.
2. **Austronesian**: An Asian-language family whose speakers gradually became the dominant culture of the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Pacific islands, thanks to their mastery of agriculture.
3. **Banpo**: A Chinese archeological site, where the remains of a significant Neolithic village have been found. (pron. bahn-poe)
4. **Bantu**: An African-language family whose speakers gradually became the dominant culture of eastern and southern Africa, thanks to their agricultural techniques and, later, their ironworking skills. (pron. BAHN-too)
5. **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.
6. **broad spectrum diet**: Archeologists’ term for the diet of gathering and hunting societies, which included a wide array of plants and animals.
7. **Cahokia**: An important agricultural chiefdom of North America that flourished around 1100 C.E. (pron. cah-HOKE-ee-ah)
8. **Çatalhüyük**: An important Neolithic site in what is now Turkey. (pron. cha-TAYL-hoo-YOOK)
9. **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.
10. **diffusion**: The gradual spread of agricultural techniques without extensive population movement.
11. **domestication**: The taming and changing of nature for the benefit of humankind.
12. **end of the last Ice Age**: A process of global warming that began around 16,000 years ago and ended about 5,000 years later, with the earth enjoying a climate similar to that of our own time; the end of the Ice Age changed conditions for human beings, leading to increased population and helping to pave the way for agriculture.
13. **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.
14. **horticulture**: Hoe-based agriculture, typical of early agrarian societies.
15. **intensification**: The process of getting more in return for less; for example, growing more food on a smaller plot of land.
16. **Jericho**: Site of an important early agricultural settlement of perhaps 2,000 people in present-day Israel.
17. **Mesopotamia**: The valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq.
18. **native Australians**: Often called “Aboriginals” (from the Latin ab origine, the people who had been there “from the beginning”), the natives of Australia continued (and to some extent still continue) to live by gathering and hunting, despite the transition to agriculture in nearby lands.
19. **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.
20. **“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.
21. **stateless societies**: Village-based agricultural societies, usually organized by kinship groups, that functioned without a formal government apparatus.
22. **teosinte**: The wild ancestor of maize. (pron. tay-oh- SIN-tay)

Chapter 3

1. **Code of Hammurabi**: A series of laws publicized at the order of King Hammurabi of Babylon (d. 1750 B.C.E.). Not actually a code, but a number of laws that proclaim the king’s commitment to social order. (See the excerpt of the code in Document 3.2, pp. 118–121.)
2. **cradle of civilization**: Commonly used term for southern Mesopotamia (in present-day Iraq).
3. **cuneiform**: Wedge-shaped writing in the form of symbols incised into clay tablets; used in Mesopotamia from around 3100 B.C.E. to the beginning of the Common Era.
4. **Egypt: “the gift of the Nile”**: Egypt is often known as “the gift of the Nile” because the region would not have been able to support a significant human population without the Nile’s annual inundation, which provided rich silt deposits and made agriculture possible.
5. **Epic of Gilgamesh**: The most famous extant literary work from ancient Mesopotamia, it tells the story of one man’s quest for immortality.
7. Hatshepsut: Ancient Egypt’s most famous queen; reigned 1472–1457 B.C.E. *(pron. hat-shep-soot)*
8. Hebrews: A smaller early civilization whose development of a monotheistic faith that provided the foundation of modern Judaism, Christianity, and Islam assured them a significant place in world history.
9. Hieroglyphs: Ancient Egyptian writing system; literally, “sacred carvings”—so named because the Greeks saw them prominently displayed in Egyptian temples.
10. Hittites: An Indo-European civilization established in Anatolia in the eighteenth century B.C.E.
11. Hyksos: A pastoral group of unknown ethnicity that invaded Egypt and ruled in the north from 1650 to 1535 B.C.E. Their dominance was based on their use of horses, chariots, and bronze technology. *(pron. HICK-sock)*
12. Indus Valley: home of a major civilization that emerged in what is now Pakistan during the third millennium B.C.E., in the valleys of the Indus and Saraswati rivers, noted for the uniformity of its elaborately planned cities over a large territory.
13. Mandate of Heaven: The ideological underpinning of Chinese emperors, this was the belief that a ruler held authority by command of divine force as long as he ruled morally and benevolently.
14. Mesopotamia: The “land between the rivers” of the Tigris and Euphrates, in what is now Iraq.
15. Minoan civilization: An advanced civilization that developed on the island of Crete around 2500 B.C.E.
17. Norte Chico/Caral: Norte Chico is a region along the central coast of Peru, home of a civilization that developed in the period 3000–1800 B.C.E. Caral was the largest of some twenty-five urban centers that emerged in the area at that time.
18. Nubia: A civilization to the south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, noted for development of an alphabetic writing system and a major ironworking industry by 500 B.C.E.
19. Olmec civilization: An early civilization that developed along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico around 1200 B.C.E.
20. Oracle bones: In Chinese civilization, animal bones that were heated and the cracks then interpreted as prophecies. The prophecies were written on the bone and provide our earliest written sources for ancient China.
21. Patriarchy: Literally “rule of the father”; a social system of male dominance.
22. Pharaoh: A king of Egypt. The term literally means “the palace” and only came into use in the New Kingdom, but it is generally employed in reference to all ancient Egyptian rulers.
23. Phoenicians: A civilization in the area of present-day Lebanon, creators of the first alphabetic writing system.
24. Pyramid: Monumental tomb for an Egyptian pharaoh; mostly built during the Old Kingdom (2663–2195 B.C.E.). Pyramids are also found in Meroë to the south of Egypt.
25. Quipu: A series of knotted cords, used for accounting and perhaps as a form of writing in the Norte Chico civilization.
26. Rise of the state: A process of centralization that took place in the First Civilizations, growing out of the greater complexity of urban life in recognition of the need for coordination, regulation, adjudication, and military leadership.
27. Salinization: The buildup of minerals in soil, decreasing its fertility; can be caused by long-term irrigation.
28. Sanxingdui: An ancient city of China that developed independently from the Shang dynasty. *(pron. sahnshing-dwee)*
29. Shang dynasty: Period of Chinese history from 1766 to 1122 B.C.E. *(pron. shahng)*
30. Son of Heaven: Title of the ruler of China, first known from the Zhou dynasty. It acknowledges the ruler’s position as intermediary between heaven and earth.
31. Teotihuacán: The largest city of ancient Mesoamerica; flourished around 500 C.E. *(pron. teh-o-tee-WAH-kahn)*
32. Uruk: The largest city of ancient Mesopotamia. *(pron. OOH-rook)*
33. Xia dynasty: A legendary series of monarchs of early China, traditionally dated to 2200–1766 B.C.E. *(pron. shah)*
34. Zhou dynasty: Period of Chinese history from 1122 to 256 B.C.E. *(pron. joo)*
35. Ziggurat: A Mesopotamian stepped pyramid. Unlike an Egyptian pyramid, a ziggurat was a solid structure of baked brick, an artificial hill at the summit of which stood a temple.