

The reading from lesson 1 begins with the Neolithic Revolution and concludes with the fall of the Western Roman Empire. This is page 1 of the 3 page reading.

DEVELOPING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS

8000 BC – 500 AD

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.

Cicero

Hunters and Food-Gatherers

Before the Neolithic Revolution, early people spent most of their time gathering and hunting food. Eventually, they developed the **technology** to paint pictures, make pottery, and weave fibers into baskets and textiles. They developed social organizations and a **traditional economic system**.

The Neolithic Revolution

About 8000 B.C. people who lived in great river valleys learned to grow food crops and **domesticate** animals. This was the beginning of the **Neolithic Revolution**. As a result of this, people were no longer just hunter-gathers; they were food producers! For the first time, they were able to establish permanent settlements in fertile river valleys.

Improving the Stand of Living

Slowly, over the course of the next five and a half **millennia**, farmers and herders improved their agricultural knowledge and technology. This resulted in greater crop yields and larger herds of domesticated animals such as horses, donkeys, oxen, sheep, and goats. As more food became available, the **standard of living** improved and the population increased.

Economic Growth

While many people depended on **subsistence farming**, others were able to produce excess products which could be traded for other products. As production and trade increased, the **demand** for goods made by craftspeople and artisans also increased. As a result of this, people began to create more handcrafted products and invent new technologies.

New Technologies

Circa 3500 BC, an unknown Sumerian inventor built the wheel; this provided an easier method for transporting goods. By

3000 BC, the Chinese were weaving worm cocoons into silk fabric, and the Sumerians were making bronze.

Rise of Civilizations

Increased food production and trade fueled the growth of cities, and created a need for social organization, laws, and written records. Consequently by the beginning of the **Bronze Age**, river valley settlements in Mesopotamia (*Iraq*)* Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley (*Pakistan*) evolved into **civilizations**. Each area developed its own form of government. These included **monarchies**, **theocracies**, and, in China, a **feudal** system. In other areas, people depended on tribal organizations and warrior kings to protect their trade centers, farms, grazing lands, and natural resources.

The Invaders

As **natural resources**, **agriculture**, and workers became more valuable, invading warriors sought to gain control over those **assets**. These invasions resulted in spatial diffusion which contributed to an expansion of knowledge, linguistic amalgamation, new technologies, and increased trade.

* Country in parenthesis denotes the name and /or general location on modern maps.