The Birth and Early Development of Civilization

Paleolithic Age

Origins (300,000 kya) to 11.7 kya

Pleistocene Era 2.6 mya to 11.7 kya

Enviroment

Cooler

More homogeneous

Hunting and gathering

Society

Tradition contributed to the great length of the Paloelithic

Burials and religion

Grave artefacts

Shells, stone, bones

Cave art

Nomadic

Division of labor

Marriage

Material artefacts

Stone tools

Pottery

Originated from clay lined baskets

Used for cooking

Boiling different plant foods might go back 23,000 kya

Neolithic Age

11.7 kya

Holocene Era

Warming period

More heterogeneous

The development of agriculture

More suggest that Neolithic is less than a revolution and more evolution

Society

Defining characteristics

Domestication of plants and animals

Domestication of plants contributed to sedentarism

Some animal domestication continued to require nomadism

Agriculture is a necessary but not sufficient condition of civilization

Early Neolithic settlements (about 8000 BCE) were small circular huts of similar size

Some say the uniformity shows minor differences of wealth

Çatalhöyük in southeastern Turkey is an exceptional Neolithic site (7500-6400 BCE)

About 6,000 population

Defensive in nature

Had to enter through roof

Population growth

Due to food availability

And social behavior which also contributed to food availability

Birth of Civilization

Concept of Civilization

Extension of social behavior

To distant related or unrelated people

The thing that makes civilization is ultimately the thing that breaks civilization

Social behavior favors others interests and makes it possible for others to behave selfish and take advantage of those behaving socially

Religion

Prophets

All morals, ranks, rules, law, government, and knowledge are associated with religion

Mesopotamia

The first area civilization is said to have appeared is in the southern half of Mesopotamia known about 4000-5000 years ago (3500 BCE cities appear)

Sumer

Mesopotamia means between the rivers (Tigris (swift) and Euphrates (associated with copper))

Irrigation agriculture

An effect of the expansion of traditions that expand social behavior and reflect a need for greater cooperation?

Urban civilization initially developed in the area at Uruk and then spread to other sites along the rivers an more people utilized the region’s water resources

Apparently, the Sumerian language is not related to any know language

Each civilization was ruled over by a monarch (representing the organizational ancestral lineage) who led armies and religious rituals of sacrificial offerings

In some areas the monarch was also the chief priest

In other areas the monarch was separate, but the priests were kinsmen

There must have been a ranked caste system

High ranked families owned landed estates worked by subjects

Some land was leased

Freeholders also owned parcels of land

Chattel and debt slavery

Chattel slaves come from foreigners?

Debt slaves are from the society

Mesopotamian civilization also produced the first know system of writing known as cuneiform from the Latin *cuneus* meaning wedge

Most of the writing is associated with administration and was practiced by a skilled elite caste

A significant amount of writing was dedicated to religious and traditional literature

Sumerians developed the idea of numbers as entities in themselves and established a mathematical system based on 60 (sexagesimal system)

This is where we get our 60 minute hour and 60 second minute

Also the circle divided into 360 degrees or 6 parts of 60

These mathematical observations apparently are based on the observation of astronomy in order to tell time

Thus the Mesopotamians developed accurate calendars consisting of 12 months and every seventh day as a holy day

The Akkadians were a Semitic people who established the first empire when the king Sargon (meaning He (God) has established the king? Or something like the manifestation of the original ancestor) his authority over the Sumerian states and bordering regions

What is an empire?

Conglomeration of civilizations

Naram-Sin, (meaning beloved of the Moon God) grandson of Sargon, reigned over the height of the Akkadian empire (2254-2218 BCE)

The Akkadian Empire is characterized by agricultural output, warfare, commerce and trade, great monuments, Cuneiform writing, epic poetry and literature, highly centralized administrative government

Internal weakness is said to have led to the collapse of the Akkadian Empire

However, they were also pressured by invaders from the east and north

Elamites from east

Amorites from north

The Amorites

Founded Babylon from which they extended their control over Mesopotamia

Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE) reigned at the peak of this empire

He is known for the Code of Hammurabi which is the earliest major collection of codified laws to survive

The Code spelled out the social ranks and the privileges and responsibilities associated with each rank

A caste of judges decided cases based on evidence

The main principle of justice was retribution

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth

The Amorite dynasty lasted until 1600 BCE when it ultimately collapsed and was invaded by peoples from the north; Hittites, Hurrians, and Kassites (Indo-Europeans?)

Mesopotamian Religion

The Mesopotamians ultimately practiced an ancient modern religion

However, the origins and the founding prophets are not known

Each Mesopotamian City initially had its own patron god or goddess (ancestors)

Thus as the region became integrated by imperial authority the Mesopotamian religion became more polytheistic associated with a pantheon ranked below the three main gods of Ea, the god of (ancestral) wisdom and magic (social behavior?), Anu, the sky god, and Enlil, the god of earth, storms and agriculture and the controller of fates

Ea is the creator and protector of humanity (original ancestor?) in both the Epic of Gilgamesh and the story of the Great Flood

The epic is regarded as a foundational work in religion and the tradition of heroic sagas, with Gilgamesh forming the prototype for later heroes like Heracles (Hercules), and the epic itself serving as an influence for Homeric epics

In the flood story, Ea made humans out of clay, but the God Enlil sought to destroy humanity by creating a flood. Ea had the humans build an ark and mankind was spared

Mesopotamian religious stories about the Garden of Eden, the Great Flood, and the Creation of the Tower of Babel found their way into the Bible, and the Mesopotamian religion influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Was Gilgamesh a prophet?

He was King of Uruk sometime between 2800-2550 BCE

This corresponds with the development of civilization

It’s said that he was worshipped as a god at various locations around Sumeria

Later kings called him “divine brother”

Egypt

By 3100 BCE Upper and Lower Egypt had become a single state under the king Menes due to stability provided by geographical isolation, integrated social relations, and traditions of unified ancestral authority

Egypt was characterized by peace and order more than Mesopotamia

Suggests greater homogeneity and traditions that promoted social behavior?

Early Dynastic Period (3100-2700 BCE)

Unification (expanded social behavior) paved the way for the achievements of the Old Kingdom

Old Kingdom (2700-2200 BCE)

Achievements in institutions, the arts, and monuments that are associated with ancient Egypt were established during this period

Pyramids

Elaborate burial mounds and monuments to ancestral authority and sacrifice

The hierarchical ruler, the Pharaoh (meaning “the great house” or defining lineage) represented the ultimate (metaphorical) ancestor of all Egyptians

Many suggest that the pharaoh was considered a god, but most likely he was honored as such because of his intimate and close association with the ultimate ancestor

The structure of authority was highly hierarchical and bureaucratic (cooperation)

Governors of regional districts called nomes are called nomarchs

Bureaucratic officials dealt with granaries, surveys, law enforcement, assessments, tax collection, disbursements from the treasury, and water management

The Old Kingdom unraveled by 2200

Erosion of traditions

Pharaoh lost authority and local nomarchs and other local hierarchical authorities established their independence

Middle Kingdom (2200-1630 BCE)

Amunemhet I, a minister to a dynasty of Upper Egypt reunited Egypt and established the Middle Kingdom

The authority seems to be less centralized as nomarchs to have had more autonomy and pharaohs established their heirs as co-regents during their lifetimes in order to protect the seat of authority for their descendants

One of the achievements of this era was the extension of Egyptian contact into sub-Saharan Africa and toward Syria

The weakness of central authority created conditions of internal competition for authority

Expansion beyond the boundaries of Egypt contributed to conditions that allowed outsiders to have access into Egypt

Foreigners called Hyksos (meaning “chiefs of foreign lands”) took control of parts of Lower Egypt

It’s hypothesized based on archeological evidence that the Hyksos were Amorites from Mesopotamia

New Kingdom (1630-1075 BCE)

Ahmose drove out the Hyksos and founded the New Kingdom

The pharaohs of this era sought to expand their authority in an imperial fashion (empire) expanding deeper into Africa and to Mesopotamia

The creation of an empire subjected Egyptians to greater wealth, standard of living, and learning and copying greater outside influences

There was significant development of monumental building projects, but the era of the pyramids was a thing of the past

Cave-like tombs lavishly equipped with treasures characterized the elite burials associated with this era

The Valley of the Kings near Thebes in Upper Egypt for example

King Tutankhamun

The New Kingdom was ultimately weakened by internal divisions (the erosion of traditions)

Continuous foreign threats abroad with the Hittite (Indo-Europeans), Libyans, and sea raiders called the Sea Peoples (possibly ancestral Greeks) weakened the empire and thus the Kingdom

Egyptian writing began around 3000 BCE

May have been inspired by Mesopotamia, but they developed their own system

Hieroglyphs (meaning “sacred carving” in Greek) as it was used for holy text on monuments

They used another form of writing for general purposes on papyrus paper

They produced a large body of literature that includes myths, entertaining stories, medical texts and other scientific writings, and administrative documents

Interesting slaves apparently became common in Egypt only after the expansion of Egyptian influence during the Middle Kingdom

Households were managed by women, and men participated in public occupations and duties

Egyptian religion

Three different origin myths arose in three different regions of Egypt

This suggests three different (related?) peoples associated with different ancestors

Castes of priests worshipped in elaborate temples while ordinary people practiced their religion in public rituals or festivals

An interesting religious development during the New Kingdom was the establishment of the sun Aten (“disk”) to be the supreme deity by the pharaoh Amunhotep IV

The claim was that Aten was the creator and sustainer of life (ultimate ancestor) and the pharaoh and his wife Nefertiti were the mediators with the deity

It’s said that Aten is alone among the Egyptian gods to be represented by an abstract symbol instead or human or animal form

What was Amunhotep trying to achieve?

Greater expansion of social behavior

Consolidation of power

The Hittites, Kassites, Assyrians, and Israelites

The Hittites were Indi-Europeans that established a centralized kingdom in Asia Minor becoming a dominant power from 1400 to 1200 BCE

They adopted cuneiform writing and other aspects of Mesopotamian society

Their writing is some of the earliest documentation of the Greeks another Indo-European people

The Kassites have obscure origins and replaced the Amorites as the rulers of Babylonia

They were tribally organized and adopted Mesopotamian society and traditions

They were especially skilled in military use of the horse and chariot

The Assyrians established their kingdom on the upper Tigris River and began to expand their influence in the fourteenth century BCE but it wasn’t until about 1000 BCE that they established control over Mesopotamia, southern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt

They consolidated their authority and control by resettling defeated peoples

Nevertheless, they became overcome by their own success

Too large to govern successfully

Erosion of traditions

The arrival of Indo-Europeans (the Medes, ancestors of Persians) who perfected mounted archery

By 612 BCE the Assyrian empire collapsed

The Israelites originated in Ur as a descendant of the ancestor Abraham who lived about 1900 BCE and ended up in the land of the Canaanites

Some of Abraham’s descendants made their way into Egypt as well (Middle Kingdom?)

By the thirteenth century BCE the prophet Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and returned to Canaan

They conquered the region and established a monarchy that eventually was divided in two Israel in the north and Judah in the south

The Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 BCE led to the destruction of ten of twelve tribes of Israel and left Judah as the defenders of the Israelite traditions

Judah was conquered by the Neo-Babylonians in 586 BCE and removed to Babylon as slaves

They were liberated by the Persians in 539 BCE and allowed to return to Judah in Palestine

Of course, the Israelite religion is of great importance to Western Civilization

There are strong connections of this religious tradition to those traditions associated with Mesopotamia

There may be some connections to Egypt, but the Mesopotamian influence seems stronger

The central tenet of the Jewish religion as taught by Moses is a single deity that demands the obedience of law (restraint)

Moses is called the lawgiver

Abraham had made a covenant (legal agreement or contract) with God

The contract was essentially based on God’s protection in exchange for living by God’s principles of sacrifice

The law is the guide to life and God is the ultimate judge of people’s behavior