

# *The Ways We Were*

## *PART II*

## The First Human Societies

1. Societies were small, bands of 25– 50 people
2. Very low population density (because of available technology)
  - a. Very slow population growth
  - b. Perhaps 10,000 people in world 100,000 years ago
  - c. Grew to 500,000 by 30,000 years ago
  - d. Reached 6 million 10,000 years ago



Paleolithic Art  
Ways of the World, First Edition  
Image courtesy of S.A. Taurian

## The First Human Societies



Paleolithic Art  
Museum of the World, Paris, France  
Image courtesy of J.A. Scott

3. Paleolithic bands were seasonally mobile or nomadic
  - a. Moved in regular patterns to exploit wild plants and animals
  - b. Since they moved around, they couldn't accumulate goods

## The First Human Societies

4. Societies were highly egalitarian
  - a. Perhaps the most free people in human existence
  - b. Did not have specialists, so most people had the same skills
  - c. Relationships between women and men were far more equal than in later societies

## The First Human Societies

5. James Cook described the gathering and hunting peoples of Australia as tranquil and socially equal
6. Paleolithic societies had clearly defined rules
  - a. men hunted, women gathered
  - b. Clear rules about distribution of meat from a kill
  - c. Rules about incest and adultery

## **Change:**

- a. Continued reliance on a gatherer-hunter lifestyle meant that the settlement communities remained roughly the same size as before they settled down.
- b. Maintained the same egalitarian social organizations that they possessed before they settled down.
- c. Able to accumulate and store more goods.
- d. They no longer needed a clearly defined leader to direct their yearly migratory movements.

When Paleolithic humans settled down into the first permanent settlements,

## Economy and the Environment

1. gathering and hunting peoples used to be regarded as “primitive” and impoverished
  - a. modern studies point out that they worked fewer hours
  - b. wanted or needed little
  - c. but life expectancy was low (35 years on average)

# Economy and the Environment

## 2. alteration of natural environments

- a. deliberately set fires to encourage growth of certain plants
- b. extinction of many large animals shortly after humans arrived
- c. gradual extinction of other hominids, like the Neanderthals (Europe) and Flores man (Indonesia)



The Lascaux Caves  
Mural of the World, First Edition  
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# The Realm of the Spirit

3. apparent variety of beliefs
  - a. some societies were seemingly monotheistic
  - b. others saw several levels of supernatural beings
  - c. still others believed in an impersonal force running throughout the natural order
  - d. Venus figurines make some scholars think that Paleolithic religion was strongly feminine, with a Great Goddess
  - e. many peoples probably had a cyclical view of time



The Willendorf Venus  
Ways of the World, First Edition  
Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria/The Bridgeman Art Library

# The Realm of the Spirit

1. it is difficult to decipher the spiritual world of Paleolithic peoples
  - a. lack of written sources
  - b. art is subject to interpretation
  - c. contemporary gathering and hunting peoples may not reflect ancient experience
2. Paleolithic peoples had a rich ceremonial life
  - a. led by part-time shamans (people especially skilled at dealing with the spirit world)
  - b. frequent use of psychoactive drugs to contact spirits

## Settling Down: “The Great Transition”

1. Gradual change as populations grew, climates changed, and peoples interacted
2. Collection of wild grains started in northeastern Africa around 16,000 years ago
3. Last Ice Age ended 16,000–10,000 years ago
  - a. Followed by a “global warming” period
  - b. richer and more diverse environment for human societies
  - c. Population rise
  - d. Beginnings of settlement

## Settling Down: “The Great Transition”

4. Settlement led to societal change
  - a. Larger and more complex societies
  - b. Storage and accumulation of goods led to inequality

## Settling Down: “The Great Transition”

5. Settling-down process occurred in many areas 12,000–4,000 years ago
  - a. Jomon culture in Japan
  - b. Scandinavia, Southeast Asia, North America, Middle East
  - c. Bows and arrows were invented independently in Europe, Africa, and Middle East
6. The process of settlement was a major turn in human history

## **Comparing Paleolithic Societies**

# The San of Southern Africa

1. northern fringe of the Kalahari Desert (present-day Angola , Namibia , Botswana )
2. 50,000–80,000 San still live in the region
3. part of the Khoisan language family, inhabited southern Africa at least 5,000 years
  - a. gathering and hunting way of life, with stone tools
  - b. remarkable rock art, going back 26,000 years
  - c. most of the Khoisan peoples were absorbed or displaced by Bantu-speaking peoples

# The San of Southern Africa

4. The San (Ju/'hoansi) still practiced their ancient life with few borrowings when anthropologists started studying them in the 1950s and 1960s

- a. use some twenty-eight tools, including digging stick, leather garment for carrying things, knife, spear, bow and poisoned arrows, ropes, and nets
- b. men hunt, women do most of gathering
- c. adequate diet
- d. short workweek, with even labor division between men and women
- e. uncertain and anxious life, dependent on nature



# The San of Southern Africa

5. San society characterized by mobility, sharing, and equality
  - a. basic unit is band of 10–30 people, connected to other bands
  - b. many people claimed membership in more than one band
  - c. frequent movement to new territory
  - d. no formal leaders, priests, or craft specialists
  - e. very complex social relations
  - f. high value given to modesty, cooperation, equality
  - g. complex system of unequal gift exchange

# The San of Southern Africa

6. relative equality between the sexes

a. free sex play between teenagers

b. most marriages are monogamous

c. frequent divorce among young couples

7. frequent conflict over distribution of meat; rivalries  
over  
women

# The Chumash of Southern California

1. show a later Paleolithic stage than the San, with permanent villages



## The Chumash of Southern California

2. Chumash lived near present-day Santa Barbara, California

- a. richer environment than the San
- b. perhaps 20,000 when the Spaniards arrived in the sixteenth century
- c. Chumash created new society after 1150 c.e. in response to violence and food shortages

# The Chumash of Southern California

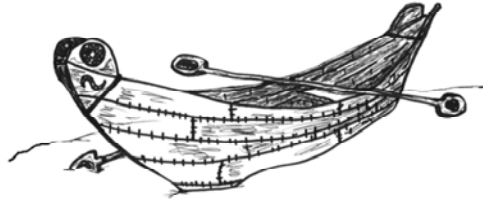
3. central technological innovation: the planked canoe  
(*tomol*)

- a. ability to make and own tomol led to social inequality
- b. stimulated trade between the coast and islands
- c. made deep-sea fishing possible

## The Chumash of Southern California

4. living conditions were more elaborate than the San
  - a. round, permanent, substantial houses (for up to 70 people)
  - b. a market economy, despite being gathering and hunting peoples
  - c. beginning of class distinctions (e.g., bearskin capes, burials)
  - d. emergence of a permanent, hereditary political elite

# The Chumash of Southern California



A Chumash Tomol  
Ways of the World, First Edition  
Globe and Map Company Publishers by © Elizabeth Leahy

5. Chumash largely solved the problems of violence in the region

**OP:** Which of the following do you think would most improve our knowledge of Paleolithic man?

- a. A more precise chronological sequence for the spread of mankind across the planet
- b. A better understanding of their religious beliefs
- c. If more hunter-gatherer societies existed today
- d. A better understanding of the origins of our species





Jomon Figurines  
*Ways of the World*, First Edition  
Tokyo National Museum, Collection of Mrs. Kane Yamazaka

**OP:** Would you like living in a Paleolithic society?

a. Yes

b. No