

PART 2 – *Settling Down* – (10,000 BCE to 1000 CE)

2 FROM VILLAGE COMMUNITY TO CITY STATE **10,000 B.C.E — 750 B.C.E.**

WHAT ARE CITIES AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

COMMENTARY

Part Two – *Settling Down* – traces and compares the development of the earliest “innovative primary” urban civilizations, that is those regions of **urbanization** in which cities are believed to have evolved independently, without benefit of the cultural **diffusion** from outside (p. 44). Urban civilizations in these seven separate areas – Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, northern China, the Niger Valley, central Mexico and the Andes Mountains – began at widely varying dates (from 3300 B.C.E. in Sumer to 400 C.E. in west Africa) and exhibited their own distinctive individual characteristics, but all shared certain features in common, as well. They all required the **specialization of labor**: farmers were joined by shopkeepers, builders, handicraft workers, administrators, engineers, priests and soldiers. **Social stratification** developed, usually with slaves and peasant farmers at the bottom and a warrior or priestly ruling class at the top. The earliest cities served as trading and administrative hubs for their agricultural hinterlands, but all appear to have been important religious centers, too. Their commercial, governmental and **sacerdotal** importance encouraged the building of public works (markets, irrigation systems, temples) and monumental structures and the production of sophisticated artwork. All invented forms of commercial, historical and cosmological record-keeping and most developed **ideographic** or **phonetic** writing systems. “Most significantly, however,” Spodek observes, “cities signaled the emergence of a **state** organization,” a new, more impersonal, form of social organization and focus of loyalty which superseded that of the band, tribe or local village. “The new state, hand-in-glove with the new city, provided leadership, organization, control of official armed power, an inegalitarian stratification of population, and power over the people, sometimes with their consent, sometimes without,” (p. 36).

Chapter 2 explains the evolution of these characteristic city-states from agricultural villages, focusing primarily on the earliest known region of urbanization, the **Fertile Crescent**, extending from Mesopotamia (the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in modern Iraq) to the Mediterranean Sea. Several early agricultural settlements (Jericho in Palestine and Ban Po in northern China) are described and compared with the later, larger city-states of Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia. The text seeks to explain not only how hunter-gatherers “settled down” but why; and how and why some of these settlements eventually developed into much larger, more centrally-controlled, cities in the world’s first **urban revolution**. The key to urban growth, it appears, was the range and degree of control by the kings, priests and citizens of the cities over the agricultural resources, raw materials, and labor of the surrounding countryside, confirming the author’s emphasis on the importance of the emergence of the state.

“What Do We Know?” describes the cities of Sumer, among them Ur, Nippur, Uruk and Lagash, and their impressive accomplishments: their irrigation canals, **ziggurats** (great temples), and royal tombs; their complex social **hierarchy**, dominated by priests and semi-divine kings; their art, music and expertise in metal-working; their use of wheeled carts and sailing vessels for trade; and their development of **cuneiform script**, a part-ideograph, part alphabet, writing system. “How Do We Know?” examines what can be inferred about Sumerian civilization from its rich trove of written sources, from simple king lists to the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the legal code issued by Sumer’s Babylonian conqueror, Hammurabi.

But the chapter also contemplates the “meaning of cities” in its broader social and political sense, as well as its more immediate cultural and material effects. Human progress, it appears, has always involved trade-offs, and urbanization provides a good case study. In addition to resulting in a loss of control over their resources and subjection to a ruling elite for most residents of city-states, urbanization may have contributed to the relegation of women to inferior status and an increased need for slave labor and definitely encouraged inter-city wars for agricultural land and control of trade routes, warfare in which some city-states would succumb and others would develop into empires.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- A. Food First: the Agricultural Village
 - 1. Basic crops and livestock
 - 2. Neolithic tools, products and trade
 - 3. SPOTLIGHT: Ban Po, China – Interpreting an Early Neolithic Village

- B. The First Cities
 - 1. Innovation vs. diffusion
 - 2. The seven areas of “primary innovative urbanization”

- C. The Meaning of Cities
 - 1. Urban technologies and culture
 - 2. The significance of the “Urban Revolution”

- D. Sumer
 - 1. Sumer: What Do We Know?
 - a. The birth of the city
 - b. Size
 - c. Control of the countryside
 - d. Civic loyalty
 - e. Leadership and the state
 - f. Religion: the priesthood and the “Cosmo-magical” city
 FOCUS: The City as Ceremonial Center
 - g. Occupational specialization and class structure
 - h. Arts and invention
 - i. Trade and markets: wheeled cart and sailboat
 - j. Monumental architecture and adornment
 - k. Writing and literature
 - 2. Sumer: How Do We Know?
 - a. The earliest writing: cuneiform script
 - b. SOURCE: the *Epic of Gilgamesh*
 - c. SOURCE: the *Code of Hammurabi*

- E. Early Urbanization: Some Modern Critiques
 - 1. Lewis Mumford: cities and the origins of warfare
 - 2. Karl Marx: cities, property and social classes
 - 3. Gerda Lerner: cities and patriarchy

- F. Mythistory
 - 1. The myth of the egalitarian agricultural village
 - 2. Urbanization and human development
 - 3. Urbanization and the state: cities, government and leaders

IDENTIFICATION TERMS

For each term, students should be able to provide an identification or definition, an approximate date, a geographical location (if relevant) and – most important – a concise explanation of its significance in the context of the chapter. Terms that appear in the *Study Guide* are listed in **bold** font in the first column.

Ziggurats	Catal Huyuk	cosmo-magical city
Neolithic era	Mesopotamia	Lewis Mumford
quipu	Ban Po	Karl Marx
Fertile Crescent	innovation	Gerda Lerner
Hammurabi	diffusion	specialization
Sumerians	Jericho	Tigris
cylinder seals	Semites	Euphrates
Bronze Age	city-state	Zagros
cuneiform	Ur	ideographs
patriarchy	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	phonetic alphabet

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After students have read and studied Chapter 2, they should be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between the systematic practice of agriculture and the development of agricultural villages.
2. Understand that in Mesopotamia, the Sumerians produced the world's first urban revolution.
3. Be able to cite and explain the basic definition and characteristics of "civilization" and understand that it is a descriptive, rather than a qualitative, term.
4. Recognize the importance of the development of writing to human civilization, and understand the contributions of the Sumerians in this regard.
5. Be able to discuss the "meaning of cities" with respect to the "trade-offs" that urbanization has entailed for human society; with specific reference to the critiques of Karl Marx, Lewis Mumford and Gerda Lerner.
6. Understand the relationship between cities, civic loyalty, religion and the state.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURE TOPICS

1. Discuss the technical definition and characteristics of – and difficulties with – the concept or model of "civilization" presented in this and other textbooks.
2. Explain how and why cities developed; and how urbanization may have led to "civilization" and its side-effects: social classes, patriarchy, organized religion, warfare and the state.
3. Explain Paul Wheatley's theory of the "cosmo-magical city" and the importance of religion in early cities.
4. Discuss urbanization as an agent of invention, innovation and diffusion of technology and culture.

TOPICS FOR ESSAYS OR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

1. Describe and compare the distinctive attributes of early cities with those of agricultural villages, with regards to size, function, occupations, social hierarchy and political organization
2. Although cities fostered enormous strides in human progress – writing systems, architecture, irrigation technology, art, literature and trade, for example – a number of commentators have also pointed out a darker side to urbanization and its effects. In short, cities may not have been an unmixed blessing to humankind. Discuss some of the "nasty side-effects" of urbanization, citing specific examples from the reading.

3. Research among surviving hunter-gatherer peoples suggests that they work less hard, enjoy more free time and are generally happier, healthier and better-adjusted than the evidence would suggest concerning early agricultural peoples. Given this fact, why might hunter-gatherer peoples have begun to settle down into the mundane, laborious existence of village farmers?
4. This is a double-barreled “Thought Question” for which there is no direct answer in the chapter:
 - a. What economic prerequisite would have been necessary before cities, with all their attributes, could have evolved from agricultural villages?
 - b. How might this factor account for some of the negative, as well as positive, results of urbanization?
5. The geographer Paul Wheatley and other scholars have argued that the earliest cities were primarily religious and ceremonial centers and that their societies existed in an “all-pervading religious context” (“The City as Ceremonial Center,” p. 48). Support this argument, citing evidence and examples from contemporary written and archaeological sources reproduced or described in the text. What other important purposes might early cities have served?
6. Group activity: Using either the *Epic of Gilgamesh* or the *Code of Hammurabi* (p. 56) as your only source at first, make as many inferences as you can about the society of ancient Mesopotamia as you can from the actual evidence. Which of those inferences can be supported or corroborated by other primary sources reproduced or described in the text?
7. Using the text and the maps on pp. 40 and 45, distinguish between primary and secondary areas of civilization. Why did civilizations develop where they did? Which ones were most likely to have developed mainly as a result of “innovation” as opposed to “diffusion?”
8. Debate: Given all of its concomitant problems, is “civilization” all that “civilized”?
9. Current events & issues: Discuss the significance of the findings of Slocum, Barber and Lerner (Chapters 1 & 2) to the question of women’s role and status in the modern world. Is there such a thing as women’s “natural role”? If so, what is it and why?

TEXT RESOURCES (Spodek, 2nd ed.)

Timetables, charts and graphs:	Early West Asia	(p. 39)
	The Earliest Human Settlements	(p. 44)
	The Earliest Writing	(p. 52)
	Sumer: Key Events and People	(p. 60)
Large photographs or illustrations:	Map of Nippur	(p. 47)
	Standard of Ur	(p. 47)
	Ziggurat at Ur	(p. 48)
	He-goat and flowering tree	(p. 53)
	Stele of vultures	(p. 59)
Maps:	The Fertile Crescent	(p. 40)
	The origins of agriculture & domestic animals	(p. 41)
	Farming in China	(p. 43)
	The spread of civilizations	(p. 45)
	Mesopotamian trade	(p. 51)
SPOTLIGHT:	Ban Po, China	(pp. 42-43)
FOCUS:	The City as Ceremonial Center	(p. 48)
SOURCE:	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	(pp. 54-55)
	<i>The Code of Hammurabi</i>	(p. 56)

ADDITIONAL PRIMARY SOURCES (*Documents Set & www.prenhall.com/Spodek*)

- 2-1 Lugal Sulgi: role model for Mesopotamian royalty
- 2-2 Suffering, resignation, and explanation: two Mesopotamian models
- 2-3 The Nippur murder trial and the “silent wife”
- 2-4 Beloved but deadly: the goddess Inanna of Ur
- 2-5 Law and legality in early Sumeria and Babylonia [two additional Mesopotamian legal codes]
- 2-6 Shuruppak’s instructions to his son: transmitting the knowledge of a lifetime’s experience
- 2-7 An alumnus reminisces about scribal school in ancient Sumeria
- 2-8 Ua-aa: a Sumerian mother’s lullaby to her ailing son
- www Shamash the Sun: a sense of morality and ethics

AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCES (videos, DVD’s, CD-ROM and web-sites)

***The Agricultural Revolution: 1985.* [video: 26 minutes, color]**

Examines the role of agriculture in the development of the village communities that became the foundation of later civilizations.

***Ancient World Web:* http://www.julen.net/ancient/Language_and_Literature [web-site]**

A web-site devoted to early language studies: examples of early cuneiform writing can be found here, along with examples of pictographic and phonetic writing from Egypt, the Indus Valley and Mesoamerica.

***Assyria-on-line:* <http://www.aina.org/aol/> [web-site]**

Includes information about all early Mesopotamian history, including Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria. Longer selections from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Hammurabi’s Code* are available.

***Diotima: Women and Gender in the Ancient World:* <http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/Classics/gender.html> [web]**

Includes both information on women and gender in the ancient world and references to related web-sites.

***Exploring Ancient World Cultures:* <http://eawc.evansville.edu> [web-site]**

The site includes information on a number of ancient cultures, including Mesopotamia, Egypt and India.