

Ch. 1 – Early People

Section 1 –

Anthropology – the study of how human beings behave, how they act together, where they came from and what makes one group of people different from the other.

There are different types of anthropologists. One in particular is the archeologist. They study human life in the past by examining the things that people left behind.

People really did not write anything until about 5,000 years ago. Therefore, to study prehistory, or the time before written records, archeologists look for the places people may have lived.

- Archeologists depend mainly on fossils - hardened remains or imprints of living things that existed long ago and are millions of years old..
- Ex. – plants, feathers, bones and even footprints
- Fossils can form in different ways: a living thing dies, it is covered by sand or mud, soft parts decompose, bones teeth, hard stems last longer and over years minerals from soil replace the living material and form a rock like copy.
- Fossilized bones are rare. When found, bones or teeth can tell us about the size and structure of the body or what kind of food early humans ate.

Methods for determining age of fossils or artifacts:

- Information from geologists: scientists who study the physical materials of Earth itself, such as soil and rocks.
 - o Compare objects found in lower layers of rock or soil. The lower the layer, the older the object.
- Comparing objects with similar fossils or artifacts whose age is already known.
- Radioactive dating – measuring the radioactive material left after decomposition or decay of an object.
- Using DNA – (genetic evidence) comparing human remains from the past with humans of today.
 - o It can show how people changed and moved from place to place.

Archeologists look for old settlements, such as villages or campsites. These sites are buried beneath layers of dirt. They carefully excavate (uncover) these sites to study.

- They look for artifacts – objects made and used by humans. Try to identify patterns (grouping) of similar objects.
- They study objects such as tools, pottery, weapons, or other man-made items.

In 1960, British archeologists Mary and Louis Leaky discovered a piece of a human skull in East Africa.

- They called it Homo habilis (handyman) because evidence found showed these early human used tools.
- Tests showed it was at least 1.75 years old.

In 1974, Donald Johanson, a fossil hunter, and his team found hundreds of pieces of human bones.

- All belonging to one human. About 40% of the body.
- She was a 3.5 ft. woman.
- Named her Lucy.
- Type of bones: legs, pelvis, ankle, and spine suggest that she walked upright on two legs.

- Lived about 3.2 million years ago.

In 1992, anthropologist Tim White found human remains in Ethiopia, dating about 4.4 million years ago.

- By 2009, White showed a nearly complete skeleton of a female.
- Named her Ardi and she was taller and heavier than Lucy.

These discoveries led many scientists to conclude that humankind began in East Africa. But this is still an ongoing debate.

- Fossil hunter, Michael Brunet, in 2001, found a human skull in Central Africa.
- Test to be about 7 million years old.
- Some scientists claim that it is more apelike and not human.

Section 2 –

Early humans were hunter-gatherers – lived by hunting small animals and gathering plants.

- To survive and grow they developed technology – tools and skills people used to meet their needs and wants.
 - o Ex: split stones to make cutting tools for chopping small, cutting meat, scraping animal skins.
- 2.5 million years ago they made tools out of stone.
- This was so important for survival that archeologists called this period the Paleolithic Era – Old Stone Age – Greek word meaning old and stone.
- This period lasted from 2.5 mil. to 10,000 years ago.
- As tool making improved, weapons became better and hunting larger animals became possible. (ex: deer)
- During this period people learned how to make fire.
 - o Uses: Had light during the night, cooked meat and plants, used flames to scare off animals.
 - o Ability to live in places where otherwise have been too cold.

Culture – the many different elements (details) that make up the way of life of a people.

- Social and family organizations, beliefs and values, technology, shelter and clothing, common activities, storytelling, traditions, rituals, art, music.
- Early Stone Age hunter-gatherers lived in small groups or bands. 10-12 adults and their children.
 - o Many were nomads – people who moved from place to place with the season and availability of food and shelter resources.
 - Lived in temporary huts or tents out of branches and animal skins.
 - Sometimes in caves.
 - o Men and boys hunted (animals and fish), women and girls gathered (fruit grains, seeds and nuts).

Later Stone Age people:

- Two larger brained humans appeared (Neanderthals and Homo sapiens)
 - Both:
 - Had more developed cultures
 - Made hunting tools
 - Used fire

- Buried the dead
- Lived in the same region 30,000 to 40,000 years ago
- Neanderthals –
 - First appeared about 200,000 years ago
 - Short, sturdy skeletons
 - Very simple language skills
 - No art or music
 - Simple burial practices
- Homo sapiens –
 - First appeared about 100,000 years ago
 - Taller, slimmer bodies
 - Complex language skills
 - Made art and music
 - More complex burial practices

Section 3 –

Over the years many groups of early humans appeared then died out. Homo sapiens (modern humans) were the last to appear.

- They are large-brained (wise people) and often on the move. They spread out to populate, or become inhabitants of, almost every land area of the world

Two theories about migration:

- Some scientists believe Homo sapiens originated in Africa, and then migrated (to leave your homeland in order to live somewhere else)
 - As they migrated, they replaced the older groups who were living there.
- Other scientists believe that large-brained humans developed separately in many different parts of the world.
 - Regional populations mixed together, eventually becoming one group, now known as Homo sapiens.
- In 2007, a fossil skull found in South Africa, was analyzed and found to be 36,000 years old. The same as skulls found in Europe from the same period.
 - This suggests that humans were already in their modern form when they migrated from Africa.

As modern humans migrated, they settled into a variety of environments (surroundings).

- They had to adapt (change their way of life) to suit their new environment.
Ex. – climate, plants and animals
- Changes in the world's climate – Past 2 mil years, including the Stone Age, the Earth had 4 long ice ages.
 - The last Ice Age began 70,000 years ago soon after modern humans appeared.
 - Glaciers (thick sheets of ice) spread across the regions of the Earth.
 - Moving glaciers created many of the world's mountains, lakes and rivers.

- Because of this, rainfall decreased affecting regions that had grasslands where they became deserts.
- Sea levels dropped, exposing land bridges, because oceans were gone.
- Animals had to migrate to find food, Because of this people had to migrate as well.
- People adapted to these changes.
 - Ex: People built huts out of mammoth bones (huge furry animals, related to elephants living during the Ice Age) and covered them with animal skins.
 - Bone needles to sew clothing from animal skins and fur.
 - Kept fires burning day and night.
 - They formed larger communities where they could hunt together to kill very large animals such as the mammoth, to protect and defend their group from attack from other nomadic groups.
 - Growing communities may be organized into clans (groups of families with a common ancestor).
 - 25-50 people, clan leaders took on decision-making roles, organized hunts.
 - Human societies developed creating a network (connection between groups) of clans which made for a stronger community.
 - Trading of items and information developed between communities.

Complex Cultures:

- The existence of artwork such as paintings and statues.
- In 1940, in southern France walls in a cave were covered in paintings of prehistoric animals, human figures and abstract designs. Dated back about 16,000 years to the last Ice age. Some carvings were found as well.
- This art showed that these people were capable of complex (deep, more advanced) thoughts and actions.
- Signs of religious beliefs and practices.
 - Practices about death and burials.
 - Buried their dead with beads and jewelry
 - This suggests that they have deeper thoughts about the natural and social world. Possible belief that the natural world was filled with spirits, known as animism.
 - Spirits in the animals, trees, rocks, water and weather around them.