

## The Beginnings of Human Society

An important era in Prehistory was known as the Stone Age. It is called this because most of the people used tools and weapons made from stone. During the early part of the Stone Age, people did not know how to farm. They were known as hunters and gatherers, moving around to find food. Eventually they began to hunt in groups and learned the important skill of Cooperation. They were nomads, people who had no single, settled home. They traveled in search of Food. This nomadic lifestyle led to the spread of the human population over the earth.

Over time stone tools became more developed, but people still lived as hunters and gatherers. Finally, man discovered that planting seeds would result in new plant growth and thus farming was discovered. They learned more about their environment and surroundings. They learned not to collect all the seeds at harvest time so new plants would grow the following Season and start a new crop. People no longer needed to be nomads because they could grow their own Food.

Some areas in the World were better for farming than others. Places that had fertile soil, long spring and summers for light and warmth and plenty of water created very successful farming communities. In

in addition to farming, people also learned to domesticate wild animals. They watched the habits of the animals they hunted and protected them from predators, building their trust. Over time, these animals began to depend on man for food and would breed thereby increasing the herd. Sheep, goats and dogs were among the first animals to be domesticated. These animals helped with hunting and domestic chores as well as providing a source of meat and animal products. They domesticated plants and animals, making them more useful to humans

Plant and animal domestication made possible the beginnings of agriculture, or farming. Agriculture is the growing of plants and raising of animals to supply food for humans. Although farming was harder work than hunting and gathering, it had many advantages. Farmers and herders could raise more food than hunters and gatherers could collect. They could support more people on small plots of land and when the land was fertile they could move to areas where wild food and game were scarce. People could also create a steady supply of food year round and even create a surplus. The surplus allowed people to store food for a time when they needed it or trade for other goods. Surplus allowed people to stay in one place and create

larger families. This made for larger populations. The surplus also allowed some people to stop farming and develop different types of jobs. Some people became artisans and became skilled at a trade.

This diversification of jobs led to a growth in towns and cities from small farming settlements. Most cities developed near rivers because they provided fertile soil and a source of fresh water. Cities led to the rise of civilization.

Civilization is a complex society that usually has the following five characteristics or features:

1. Stable Food supply
2. Specialization of labor - people had different types of jobs
3. A system of government
4. Social levels-Different Classes of people
5. A highly developed culture that includes arts, architecture, religion, music and law. Frequently, civilizations also would have a system of writing.