**CHAPTER 1:** THE RISE OF CULTURE: From Forest to Farm

**Thinking Ahead**

* What characterizes the beginnings of human culture?
* How do we distinguish the Neolithic from the Paleolithic?
* What is a megalith?
* How can we understand the role of myth in prehistoric culture?

**Transition Guide**

*Images removed from 2nd edition:*

Wall painting with three horses facing one another, Chauvet Cave, Fig. 1.3  
 Helmet Mask, from Ivory Coast, Fig. 1.5  
 Major Paleolithic Archeological Sites in Europe, Map 1.2  
 Aerial view of Jericho, Jordan, Fig. 1.8  
 Neolithic human skull with restored features, from Jericho, Fig. 1.9  
 Fred Kabotie, *Zuni Corn Dance*, Fig. 1.17

*Images added to the 2nd edition:*

Early Neolithic wall and tower, Jericho, Jordan, Fig. 1.5  
 Plastered skull from Jericho, Fig. 1.6  
 House interior, Skara Brae, Orkney Islands, Scotland, Fig. 1.7  
 Head, Nok, Fig. 1.12  
 Wall painting with giraffes, zebra, eland, and abstract shapes, Fig. 1.16  
 Cribbed roof construction of a kiva, fig. 1.18  
 Naiku (Inner) shrine housing Amaterasu, Ise, Japan, fig. 1.20

***MyArtsLab* Resources**

* **Architectural Simulation**
  + Post and Lintel Construction
* **Closer Look**
  + Stonehenge
* **Compare and Contrast**
* **Flashcards**
  + Image Flashcards
  + Term Flashcards
* **Interactive Map Quiz**
* **Methods and Materials**
* **Videos and Podcasts**
  + Video: Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vezere Valley
  + Video: Stonehenge Monument
* **Visual Analysis**
* **Web Resources**
  + Encyclopedia of Austria
  + Orkneyiar
  + Stonehenge

**Chapter Outline**

The Beginnings of Culture in the Paleolithic era  
 Agency and Ritual: Cave Art  
 Paleolithic Culture and Its Artifacts  
The Rise of Agriculture in the Neolithic Era  
 Neolithic Jericho and Skara Brae  
 Neolithic Pottery Across Cultures  
 Neolithic Ceramic Figures  
 The Neolithic Megaliths of Northern Europe  
The Role of Myth in Cultural Life  
 Native American Cultural Traditions  
 The Anaszai and the Role of Myth  
 Zuni Pueblo Emergence Tales  
 Japan and the Role of Myth in the Shinto Religion  
Sacred Sites: The Example of the Americas  
 The Olmec  
 The Mound Builders

**Topical Lecture Suggestions**

1. Neolithic pottery and the invention of the potter’s wheel.

Neolithic pottery develops in the Middle East, Japan, and China. The transition from cultures based on hunting and fishing to cultures based on agriculture led to the increased use of pottery vessels. Common pottery techniques included molding clay over a round stone or coiling long ropes of clay on top of one another and then smoothing the seams between them. The pots were then fired in a kiln at temperatures high enough to make them watertight. With the invention of the potter’s wheel (beginning in Egypt), artisans are able to consistently mass produce their wares and sell them for a profit. As skilled individuals specialized in making and decorating pottery, and traded their wares for other goods and services, the first elemental forms of manufacturing began to take shape.

2. The creation of Stonehenge and its purpose

From the “Closer Look: Stonehenge” (*MyArtsLab*) you can see that this structure is the most famous megalithic structure (a cromlech) in the world. A “henge” consists of a circle of stones or posts surrounded by a ditch with built-up embankments. The site at Stonehenge reflects a number of building periods extending from about 2750 to 1500 BCE. The site started as a cemetery of cremation burials but why Stonehenge was constructed remains a mystery. It seems clear that orientation toward the rising sun at the summer solstice connects it to planting and the harvest; Stonehenge embodies the growing importance of agricultural production. Its presence suggests that the late Neolithic peoples who built it were extremely social beings, capable of great cooperation. They worked together not only to find the giant stones that rise at the site, but also to quarry, transport, and raise them, Theirs was a culture of some magnitude and no small skill. It was a culture capable of both solving great problems and organizing itself in the name of creating a great social center.

3. The significance of the discovery at Chauvet

The cave drawings found in Chauvet are remarkable for their realism and depiction of animals not commonly hunted for food. The realism of the drawings, particularly their perspective character, has challenged a linear theory of development in painting. Previously scholars had believed that realistic painting developed over time and was only extant in relatively recent periods due to the difficulty of acquiring the necessary skills for realistic depiction. The Chauvet cave predates the other famous cave paintings discovered elsewhere in Spain (Altamira) and France (Lescaux) and its paintings are more realistic than these more recent discoveries. This has caused scholars to revise their theories about Paleolithic art.

**Discussion Suggestions**

1. What is the role of geography in the development of specialization of trades and the emergence of religious and political elites?

Civilizations develop within fertile river valleys which can sustain the necessary material conditions for life. In regions with ample resources and moderate climate, individuals are not universally forced to spend every waking hour in procuring food. Thus, some of the population can engage in activities of their choice while others take a supervisory role based on dominant values that the society recognizes such as expertise, courage, and wisdom. Given these conditions, religious and political elites developed who claimed to speak for the gods and to be able to offer divine protection and guidance.

2. Discuss the types of megaliths and their significance.

The three types of megaliths are *menhirs* (single, vertically positioned megaliths), *trilithons*, and *cromlachs* (circularly arranged megaliths). These structures are found widely across Europe, particularly in England and France, and are believed to serve a religious or a ritual purpose. They are significant in that they are the earliest examples of architecture and demonstrate the basic principle of post-and-lintel construction, a technique not surpassed until the invention of the arch. They also evidence a remarkable degree of cooperation in these early Neolithic civilizations in that their stones were quarried far away and transported long distances. Structures like Stonehenge in England are orientated towards the rising sun and the summer Solstice and so demonstrate an awareness of calendars and their relation to astronomy.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

1. What are the characteristics of Neolithic Myth? What is the significance of the Zuni emergence tale and the Japanese creation myth?

Myth allows for the unification or reality and experience for a culture. Myth is not entirely fantastic because it is based on and created to explain the day-to-day experience and life of a people. In the Zuni and Japanese stories, we see a common theme of myth: the explanation of common experience through supernatural agency. These myths also demonstrate the three common elements of Neolithic Myth: 1) animism (the belief that everything is permeated by spirits), 2) anthropomorphism (the belief that natural objects behave like human beings), and 3) that humans can communicate and influence objects by communicating with them.

In the Zuni emergence tale we have a mythic presentation of the natural process of human maturity and a justification and explanation for specialization within a society. In the Japanese creation tale, we have a similar explanation of hierarchy, this time the divine creative hierarchy. Human beings can explain the specialization of society and division of labor by reference to a similar division between spiritual beings. We also see another purpose of myth, evidence here: the explanation of the origins of peoples and cultures.

2. From the “Architectural Simulation” in MyArtsLab, explain how the post-and-lintel construction technique works and identify the contribution of each key component in the technique.

Post-and-lintel construction is one of the simplest methods of spanning space. It is used in countless variations of construction. The vertical elements are called posts. The posts support a horizontal element called the lintel. The weight of the lintel on the posts keeps the structure stable.