

**THEMATIC REVIEW SHEET #1: Origins - Societies - Emergence of Cities**

- Non-written sources of evidence -- both oral testimony and “bones and stones” -- along with methods from other disciplinary fields such as archaeology and literature have been increasingly and effectively used by historians to reconstruct a past that existed before writing.
- The reactions of humans to one another and to the places in which they lived produced a variety of distinctive cultures around the world.
- On most continents, the transition to agriculture eventually occurred, signaling more complex social systems that manipulated their environments in different ways than gathering-hunting societies had. The chronologies of transitions to sedentary agricultural societies are very diverse, but in most areas with high population densities, sedentary communities developed increasingly specialized and complex technologies (including metallurgy) to exploit their environments.
- As agricultural and other settled societies became more permanent, they became materially more complex.
- As the scale and complexity of societies increased, so did the range of inequalities and the means by which some group members established and maintained an advantage.
- Technologies for the production and distribution of goods also contributed to the hierarchical structure of societies, to gender relationships, and to the social and economic controls by which communities ordered themselves.
- Undoubtedly, social changes took place that made technology useful, and in turn technology helped to bring about social changes.
- The development of agriculture was important to the rise of cities, since agriculture supported the population growth that cities housed.
- Early cities originated as or became ceremonial centers, drawing large numbers of people to participate in rituals that were believed to appease deities, to encourage good agricultural harvests, or to request the support of the gods in war against their enemies.
- Cities as ceremonial centers were established at sites that were both economically and strategically advantageous.
- Cities were the centers from which ideology, institutions, material goods, and other urban “products” were transmitted to their hinterlands, on which they in turn depended.
- Though cities flourished around the world, most people still did not live in cities; most did, however, live in intricate relationship with them - visiting them, trading with them, and supporting them with food and other necessary and valued goods and services.

**COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN SOCIETY:**

- involved larger numbers of people and greater management and control of resources and environments
- a wider variety of economic activity and a more rigid structuring and organization of the city's inhabitants
- often meant the intensification of inequality and rigid divisions along lines of class, status, and gender
- gender differences and relations became more clearly defined
- Cities became hierarchical enclaves in which inhabitants were increasingly subject to the experience and expectation of inequality and injustice. Privilege and power were further defined by the accumulation of wealth made possible by the momentum of urban life.
- Urban processes resulted not only in the benefits enjoyed by complex societies and cultures; homelessness, exploitation, and injustice have also been characteristic of the urban experience throughout world history.