

# The Neolithic Agricultural Revolution

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HIST 110 Lecture 1

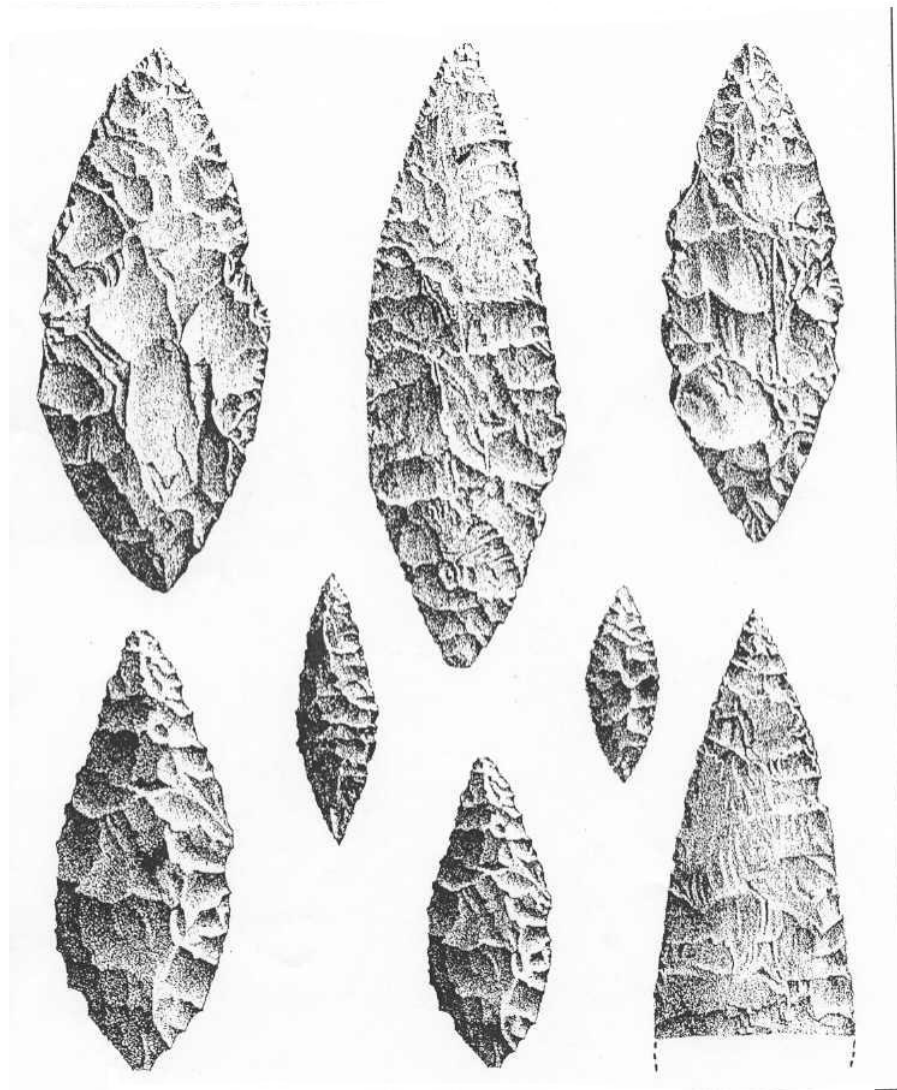
# Stages of human development

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- Hunting and gathering
  - Human origins to Paleolithic (“Old Stone Age”)
- Use of wild grains
  - Transition to agriculture: 11,000-8500 BCE
  - Long period, complex transition
  - Role of climate change: end of Ice Age, dryer climate
- Neolithic agricultural revolution
  - “New Stone Age”
  - Farming as main food source: 8500 BCE (Near East)
  - First domestic animals: dog, sheep, goat
  - Wide-ranging social, cultural consequences



Paleolithic Europeans (artist's reconstruction)



Paleolithic stone tools



The Venus of Willendorf



Paleolithic cave paintings



# The Neolithic Revolution

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- Food raising
  - Agriculture, domestic animals
- Settled life
  - Villages → towns → first cities
- New technologies
  - Pottery, textiles, baskets
- Social organization
  - Hierarchy, warfare, state formation



Neolithic stone tools



Neolithic pottery



Early forms of wheat

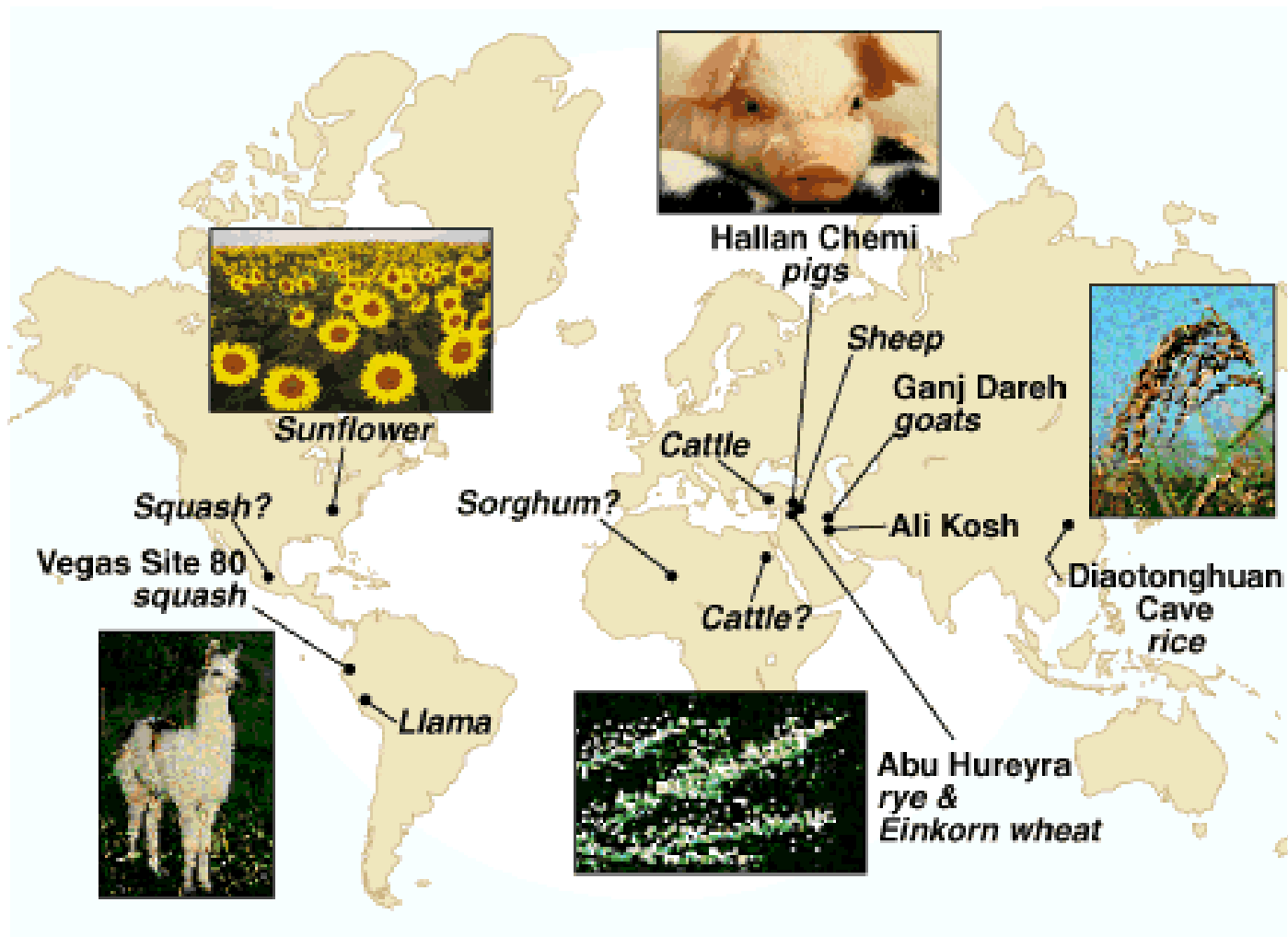


Early domestic goat

# The Neolithic worldwide

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- Fertile Crescent (Levant, Mesopotamia)
  - 8500 BCE: wheat, millet, spelt; dog, sheep, goat
- South Asia (Indus River valley)
  - 7000 BCE: wheat, millet, spelt; dog, sheep, cattle
- East Asia (China: Yellow and Yangtze rivers)
  - 6000 BCE: millet (Yellow), rice (Yangtze); dog, pig, sheep, cattle
- Central America (Valley of Mexico)
  - 6000 BCE: Corn, squash, beans; dog, but no other animals
- Many other regions had independent Neolithics
  - Egypt, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Peru, South American rainforests...
  - Many diverse first domesticates (esp. plants)
  - Some unique domestic animals: llama, zebu...





# Indus River Valley







# The first settlements

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- Rise of settled villages parallels origin of agriculture
- Some places get both, some get one or the other
- Settlement allows new survival strategies: food storage, having more babies (don't need to carry them)
- Settlement also brings problems, esp. disease (smallpox, measles, malaria, tuberculosis, influenza)



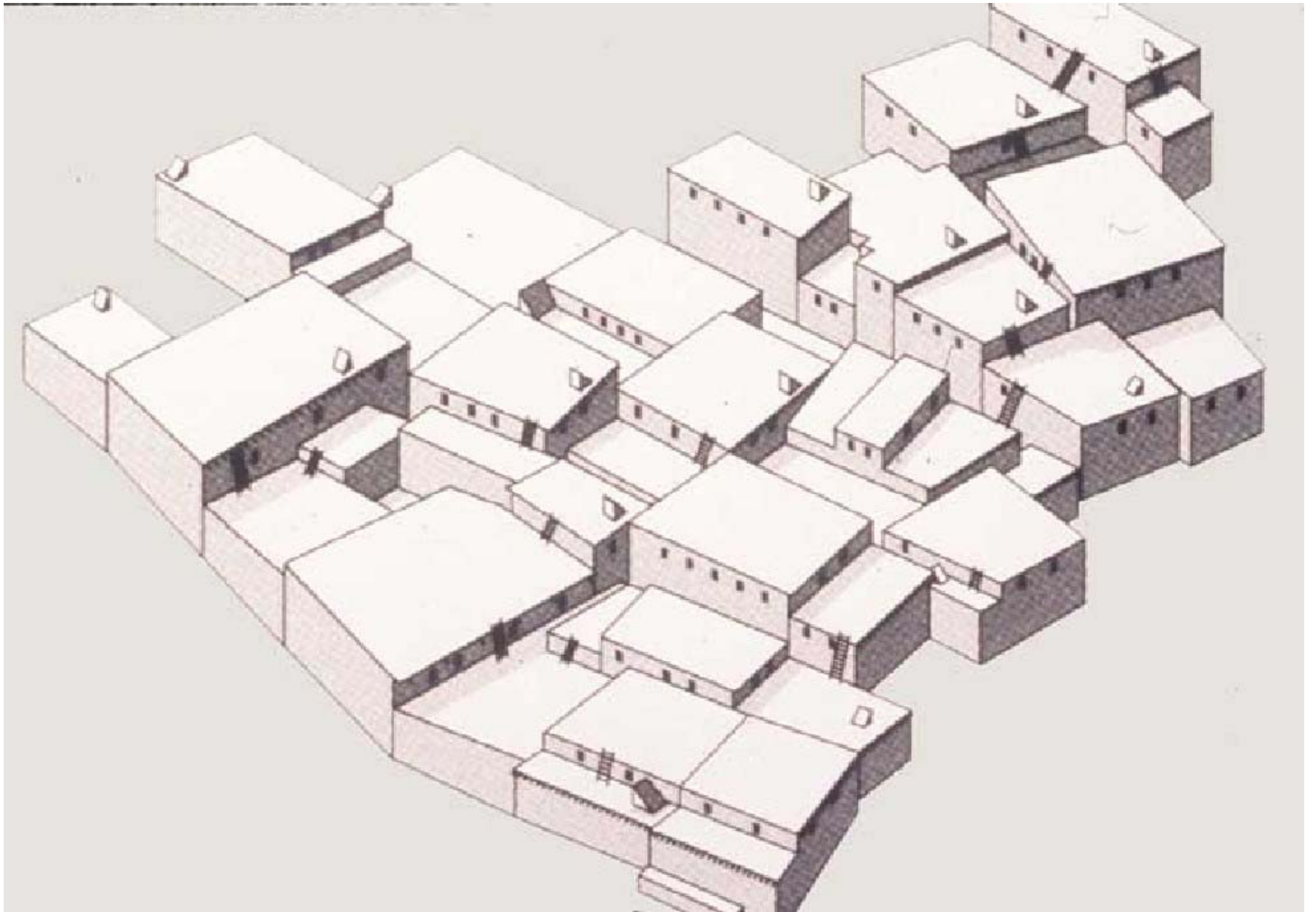
# Earliest Near East towns

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- ❑ Catal Huyuk (Anatolia, i.e. modern Turkey)
- ❑ Jericho (Jordan Valley, Palestine)
- ❑ Ain Ghazal (near Amman, Jordan)
- ❑ More sites currently being discovered



Excavations at Catal Huyuk



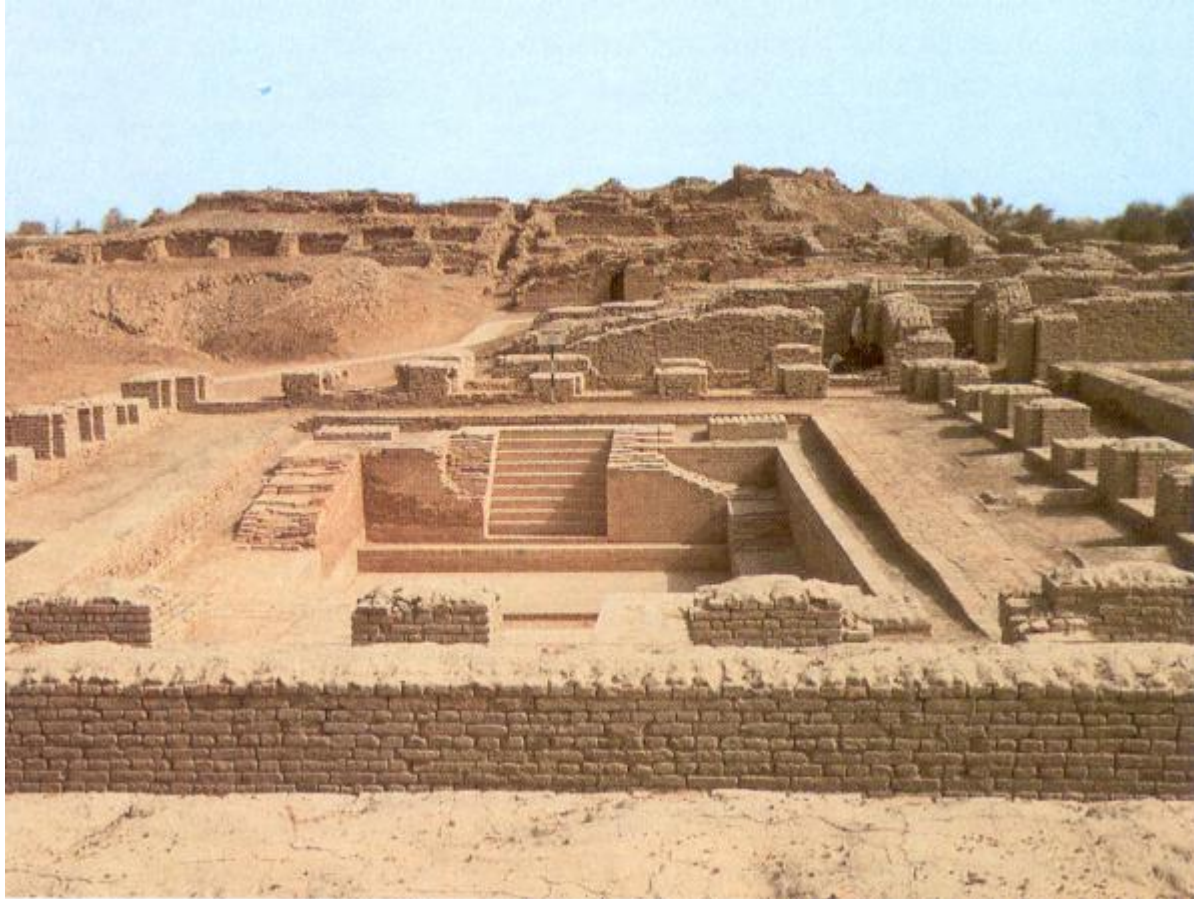
Reconstruction drawing of Catal Huyuk



Statue of  
goddess,  
Catal Huyuk



The walls of Jericho



Excavations at Jericho



Statues from Ain Ghazal, Jordan



Plastered skull,  
Ain Ghazal



# Demographic changes

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- Food production supports higher populations
  - Families can produce surplus
  - Sedentary lifestyle allows more children
- However, sedentary life increases disease
  - Diseases contracted from animals
  - More people in one spot → infection
  - Staying in the same place is dirty
- Population growth prevents return to gathering



# Social transformation

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- Increasing organization
  - Families
  - “Big man” societies
  - Chiefdoms
  - States
- Social stratification/hierarchy
  - Food producers support “non-productive” elites
  - Craft specialization
  - Religious elites (priesthoods)
  - Hereditary rulers (kings)
  - Slavery
  - Gender discrimination
- Warfare between large groups begins



# The first states

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- From chiefdom to state
  - Chiefdom: ranked society
  - State: class society
  - Competition among chiefdoms drives state formation
  - Warfare and trade as basic to emergence of state
- Functions of the state
  - Law: suppress internal disorder
  - Defense against external threats
  - Redistribute resources from producers to consumers (elites)
  - Appease the gods to maintain harvests



The Great Ziggurat of Ur



# Basic elements of civilization

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- Political (territory-based) institutions
- Organized religion
- Urban/administrative centers
- Hierarchical system of classes
- Taxation (far from universal)
- Division, specialization of labor
- Further technological development
- Trade (but note Paleolithic luxury trade)
- Writing (a late step!)