

Task Three – Evaluate Societies

For each human society listed below, complete the table to evaluate the various aspects of each society. We will use these to estimate these societies' susceptibility to various diseases. The first one is done for you.

Society #1 - Ancient Mesopotamia at the dawn of urban civilization

Agriculture first appeared on Earth in the ancient Middle East, c. 8-10,000 B.C.; wheat was the main crop while domesticated goats, cattle, sheep and pigs were also consumed. A few millennia later, c. 3,500 B.C., the first urban societies appeared, with 'civilization' supported by irrigation agriculture in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what is today Iraq. Ancient towns and small cities such as Sumer interacted with one another, and with people further away, through trade, war, migration, tax-collecting, etc.

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| Population Density | Higher than anything which had been seen before, both in the villages and in the towns. The largest settlements in earliest times, such as Uruk, had 10-20,000 inhabitants. |
| Local environment & climate | Not quite as hot as Iraq is today, but had a warm climate with limited rainfall. Irrigation created large bodies of standing water. |
| Animal contacts | Domesticated cattle, sheep and pigs were all used in the wider area; dogs and cats also kept as pets. |
| Sanitation & Medical Knowledge | No concept of sanitation or medical science, as far as we are aware. People lived in closer proximity to their own waste than ever before. |
| Disease experience | Very little |
| Connectedness | Long-distance trade existed much earlier than agriculture. Rivers facilitated movement; regular contact between cities and villages was required for tax collection, and the cities were nodes on trade networks extending through the wider region. |

Society #2 – Ancient Rome

The Ancient Roman Republic and Empire flourished c. 150 B.C. – 200 A.D. (the state had much older origins and nominally lasted until 1453), the latest and largest of a series of agrarian empires in the Middle East and Mediterranean region. It was the first (and last) to completely integrate the Mediterranean Sea; trade flourished under the protection of the *Pax Romana*, and long-distance networks connected it to other kingdoms and empires in Africa, the Iranian Plateau, India and even China, along the camel-powered 'Silk Road' and near-shore maritime routes. Rome itself peaked at 1 million inhabitants. The Empire facilitated movement and interaction among diverse peoples from Scotland to Mesopotamia and the Nile, through trade, war, settlement, administration, taxation, and slave transfer.

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| Population Density | |
| Local environment & climate | |
| Animal contacts | |
| Sanitation & Medical Knowledge | |
| Disease experience | |
| Connectedness | |

Society #3 – Mongol Empires c. 1200-1350 A.D.

c. 1200 A.D., Genghis Khan united the tribes of the Mongolian steppe into the most ferocious war machine the world had ever seen. By combining the mobility and firepower of hardy steppe horseback archers with more sophisticated technology such as siege engineering from conquered peoples, and led with tactical and strategic genius, he and his successors obliterated first rival steppe confederacies and trading states of Central Asia, then the rich empires of the Middle East and China, and the Hungarian and Polish kingdoms in Eastern Europe. After the initial destructive raids, the Mongols did much to promote trade and Eurasian overland trade became intensely connected than ever before under the protection of the *Pax Mongolica* (enjoyed by the likes of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, even after the breakup into 4 successor states c. 1300). A well-managed system of horseback messengers allowed speedy transfer of information, while famous technologies such as gunpowder, paper, printing and the compass diffused from their origins (usually China) around the world.

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| Connectedness | |

Society #4 – Equatorial West Africa c. 1900-1970

In the late 19th-century, both France and Belgium began to develop colonies in the Congo river basin in equatorial West Africa based on intensive land transformation and resource extraction (e.g. ivory, timber and especially rubber, and later industrial minerals). Native people were cleared from their lands and brutally forced to work on the new projects; the level of violence was curtailed after c. 1910, but unusually large concentrations of people continued to work on large labour projects constructing port cities, railroads, plantations and mines. The high male to female ratio associated with migrant labour, and the absence of close links to families and traditional communities facilitated prostitution and general promiscuity. Bushmeat (i.e. primates) had always been eaten and continued to be so. Colonial (and post-colonial after 1960) administrators had a vested interest in maintaining a healthy labour force, and organised large vaccination campaigns (e.g. against Smallpox); antibiotics were also used to treat ancient diseases such as Sleeping Sickness. Unfortunately the dangers of re-using unsterilized needles were not then known.

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Society #5 – Russia/Soviet Union during the Civil War 1917-22

By the end of Great War (1914-1917 in the East), the economy of the Russian Empire had collapsed, food prices soared, army discipline had completely broken down, peasants (including returning soldiers abandoning the front) seized their landlords' land, the government collapsed, the Bolshevik revolutionaries claimed power in St. Petersburg and exited the Great War. Initial chaotic violence developed into full-blown Civil War by 1918, which scoured Western Russia until 1921 (and the Far East until a year later). The harsh Russian winter was particularly brutal in 1917-18. Both sides practiced forced conscription and 'requisitioning' (i.e. confiscation) of as much food from peasant villages as they could, since the normal cash-based economy no longer functioned, and because the agricultural output had already been drastically weakened by the war. With agricultural producers (peasants) underfed, and seed crops confiscated, widespread starvation and malnutrition developed into famine which killed c. 6 million. During the Great War, de-lousing became common on the Western Front, but not on the Eastern Front.

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