

## **“Farming and Bureaucracy”**

### **Explaining the Emergence of Agriculture and State Leadership**

**Instructions:** This assignment was used in conjunction with *Maps of Time* by David Christian. Divide students into five groups and read the following snapshots. Then, give each group one of the five questions below and have them discuss. The bullet points beneath each questions are the *answers* that students should highlight and discover in their conversation. Have a student from each group come to the board and write the answers to their question. Then, have a student from each group “teach” the rest of the class the answer to their question. After all groups have finished presenting, give a lecture that ties all the pieces together and delivers some implications and significance of these questions for understanding inequality in modern societies.

#### **Snapshot #1:**

About 10,000 years ago, there was a society living in the “fertile crescent” region of what we now know as the “Middle East.” Archeologists have named this society the “Kukians.” The Kukians were a small band of kin-based family groups, and they had just migrated to an area at the foot of the Zagros Mountains. The land there was especially abundant, due in part to the climatic changes that occurred in this geographical region following the last ice age.

#### **Snapshot #2:**

About 1,000 years ago, the picture of Kukian society looked vastly different. Their society had, in Christian’s terms, “intensified.” Their “small band” had grown to a large scale society. They no longer lived in temporary dwellings, instead building large permanent settlements fortified by walls. They now relied mostly on agriculture and regional trade rather than foraging. Kinship and reciprocity played less of a role than it had previously, instead there were rules of trade and exchange as well as a more robust division of labor. The Kukian people were now subjects to a king and his royal guard.

#### **What happened??**

1. Explain the process by which the Kukians transitioned from foraging to agriculture:
  - Stop extensifying/fissioning
    - Abundance
    - Environmental circumscription
    - Social circumscription
  - Sedentism
    - Benefits of sedentism
    - Draw backs of sedentism
  - “Trap” of sedentism
  - Necessity for agriculture
  
2. Explain how Kukian society likely “intensified” in terms of population growth and technological change:
  - Population growth
    - Caused by sedentism
  - Major innovations

In-Class Activity by Erica Bender, Ph.D.Candidate, UC San Diego

- Shifting cultivation
  - Secondary products revolution
  - Irrigation
  - Result: more resources, more food, more people, more labor, and on and on (see the positive feedback loop diagram on pg. 253) – BUT, remember the “Malthusian Trap”
3. Explain the “bottom-up” reasons for the development of the Kukian state (bureaucratic, impersonal leadership; “leadership by consent”).
- Resource surplus, distribute resources
  - Imports/trades from other societies
  - Protection from pastoralists/raiders
  - Coordinate division of labor for large/collective projects
  - Develop methods of communication and standardization (calendars)
  - Dispute resolution
  
  - Punchline: more resources creates more complex social formations, which creates the demand for more centralization of power/decision making, which facilitates the intensified extraction of resources, and on and on...
4. Explain the “top-down” reasons for the development of the Kukian state (leadership by coercion)
- Instrumental use of power (“leaders use the increasing resources placed under their control to create new forms of power” 264).
    - Create soldiers/guards/armed retinue
  - Social structural power – once social hierarchies are set up, the system works to keep them going; people born with power typically stay in power, people born powerless typically stay powerless
  - Also remember how social caging (being trapped in your society) intensifies/facilitates the concentration of coercive power (can’t just walk away)
5. Explain how this social change created new forms of hierarchy and inequality that were not before seen in the Kukian society.
- In the division of labor (labor specialization and wealth)
  - Between men and women
  - Between slaves and masters
  - Ranked kinship lineages (later to be replaced with royal/noble families)
  - Social status and material wealth
  - Between city residents and nearby towns, between “civilized” and foraging peoples