

Chapter 4. People as Nomadic Foragers: The Communal Wave

Chapter 4. A. Study Questions

Chapter 4. Section 1: Introduction to the Communal Wave

Section 1. Terms to Consider

Paleolithic

Upper Paleolithic

foraging

"living fossils"

"nasty, brutish, and short"

"break through"

"noble savages"

consciousness

"big picture" perspective

Section 1. Questions to Consider:

1. A 2.5 Million Year History

- a. Do you agree with the approach that traces human history over the last 2.5 million years? Why or why not?
- b. What does it mean to you when stated that for 99% of our human history we have lived as foragers?

2. Foragers of the Past and Today

- a. Why is the argument used that we should not view the way of life of contemporary foragers as exact replicas of past foragers?
- b. What are the drawbacks of this comparison?
- c. What benefits can be derived from this comparison?
- d. Why do some anthropologists discourage us from making this comparison?
- e. Are there any commonalities that can be established between contemporary and past foragers?
- f. What does the following statement mean to you: "The map should not be confused with the territory?"

3. Views of Foragers

- a. Why are foragers sometimes called backward or primitive?
- b. Deconstruct (analyze) the terms "break through," "backward," and "advanced way of life."
- c. What is meant by these terms?
- d. Do you think the terms seem to tell us more about ourselves than foragers? Explain.
- e. What are the current attitudes of people about foragers?
- f. Take a survey to obtain a diverse sampling of people's attitudes towards foragers. What questions would you ask?
- g. Deconstruct portrayals of foragers in the media. Has it changed over time?

4. Humans Exploitation

- a. Do we expand beyond our means, as argued in this section?
- b. What examples in your everyday life can you find to support this statement?
- c. Is expansion beyond our means just a human condition or part of other species' behaviors as well?
- d. What examples can you find to support your conclusion?

e. If you have concluded that humans and other species expand beyond their means, why do you think this is so?

5. 40,000 Years Ago

a. Conduct additional research to see the pace of change around 40,000 years ago. Was it abrupt, gradual, or varied from region to region?

b. Do you agree with the “big picture” approach in which world history begins 40,000 years ago? Why or why not?

6. Contemporary Foragers

a. Conduct research to study remaining foraging peoples who still (at least somewhat) practice the Communal Wave way of life.

b. Where do they live? How have they adapted to modern influences?

7. Change and Continuity

a. How would you respond to the question: “If they were so smart why did foragers continue to use simple tools and technology?”

b. Why is continuity more important than change to people in the Communal Wave?

c. In your opinion, what were the benefits of continuity over change for the people of the Communal Wave?

d. In your opinion, what were the drawbacks of continuity over change?

e. What do you prefer: change or continuity? Why?

f. Do you think the Communal Wave should be included in a world history course? Explain your answer.

Chapter 4. Section 2. Relationship with Nature: Ecosystem Currents

Section 2. Terms to Consider

“perfect” ecological balance

Ice Age

“over-chill theory”

“over-kill theory”

Blitzkrieg theory

Section 2. Questions to Consider

1. Environmental Influences

a. What superficial human characteristics evolved according to environmental and regional variations?

b. Why are these human characteristics considered superficial?

c. Why does regional specialization occur?

d. Conduct additional research to find at least two ways in which regional specialization has occurred in our human history.

2. Populations

a. Conduct additional research to find the population numbers of different foraging people (past and present).

b. Do they maintain zero population growth? Why?

3. Natural Populations

a. Describe the flora and fauna of the Earth 10,000 to 13,000 years ago.

b. What were the reasons for the massive extinction of many species 13,000 years ago?

c. Did our ancestors hunt certain species to extinction?

d. Conduct additional research to find different theories about this topic.

e. Which theory or conclusion do you agree with?

4. Human and Nature Interaction

- Foraging people can generally be described as participators who were interdependent with nature and not dominators of nature. Do you agree with this statement? Why?
- Do you think people in your particular nation are participators or dominators of nature? Explain.

5. Ecosystem Insights

- What can we learn from the mass extinction of species of the past?
- I argue in this section that the first step in helping to avoid environmental destruction is to change our thinking from seeing nature as separate from us to recognizing that we are part of nature. What is your reaction to this statement?
- What is your reaction to this whole insights section?

Chapter 4. Section 3. Ways of Living: Techno-Economic Currents

Section 3. Terms to Consider:

nomadic
 public phase
 private phase
farm wilds
reciprocity
generalized reciprocity
balanced reciprocity
negative reciprocity
subsistence economy
barter
 digging stick
silent trade
division of labor
 work
 leisure time

Section 1. Questions to Consider:

1. Daily Life

- Why is it important to emphasize that foragers did not randomly roam from camp to camp? Do you agree?
- What was the difference between the public phase and private phase?
- Who decided to move the camp and when?
- Write a story about the daily life of a foraging person, include details about where they lived, what they ate, and what they may have talked about.
- Foraging people had to be self-sufficient in all of the needs of life. Are you self-sufficient today? Explain.

2. Reciprocity

- How does reciprocity fit in with the overall way of life for foraging people?
- Can you think of a different economic system that would serve them better? Explain.
- The ecological impact of a foraging economy is light, especially when compared to modern society. Do you agree with this statement? If so why, or why not?

3. Technology

- a. What does this statement mean to you: "While the tools are simple, the knowledge to use the tools is sophisticated."
- b. Do you agree with the premise of this statement?
- c. Do you think this statement is true today in our modern society?

4. Exchange and Trade

- a. How did foragers conduct trade?
- b. How did their trade methods reflect their way of life?

5. Labor

- a. How is labor divided among foragers?
- b. How would you answer the question, "why do women gather and men hunt?"
- c. What is the latest research as to the actual amount of "work" that foragers were engaged in?

6. Techno-economic Insights

- a. Do you think that learning from foragers' use of technology can help us rethink our modern way of life?
- b. What do they do with their leisure or "spare time?"
- c. What would you do if you had more leisure or spare time?
- d. What would you do with your spare time if you did not have access to any technology (TV, computer, phone, etc.)?

Chapter 4. Section 4. Human Networks: Social Currents

Section 4. Terms to Consider:

bands

kinship
exogamous marriage

matrilineal

patrilineal

elderly

male dominance

egalitarian

freeloader

material wants
standard of living
poverty
initiation rites

Section 4. Questions to Consider:

1. Groups and Family

- a. Why didn't foragers hold a concept of an individual identity separate from the group?
- b. What role did marriage play among foragers?

2. Population Control

- a. How did foragers control their population?
- b. Why did they deem it necessary to control their population?
- c. Why did they perform infanticide?

- d. What would be other population control options besides infanticide?
- e. What is your reaction to the use of infanticide by foragers?
- f. Is your attitude reflective of societal values about infanticide? How?

3. The Elderly

- a. What were the contributions by the elderly to the group?
- b. How did the group regard these contributions?
- c. What happened to the elderly when they were no longer productive members of society?
- d. What was the reaction of the elderly to their situation when they were no longer deemed productive?
- e. Why did they go along with the pronouncements of the group?
- f. What is your reaction to this practice by foragers?
- g. How does your society/nation regard the elderly?
- h. What happens to the elderly in your society when they are no longer "productive" or "useful?"

4. Gender

- a. What are some different theories as to why there were different gender roles in foraging societies?

5. Prestige and Status

- a. Were all foraging societies egalitarian?
- b. What were different expressions of prestige among foragers?
- c. Do you know of freeloaders in your family? school? city? state? nation? world? Give examples (not names).
- d. How did foragers deal with freeloaders?
- e. How does your nation/society deal with freeloaders?

6. Socialization

- a. How were girls socialized?
- b. How were boys socialized?
- c. Why was sharing such an important socialized value among foraging people?
- d. Is sharing an important value in your nation or society?

7. Social Insights

- a. Do you agree with the statement that humans are innately greedy and competitive, with their own self-interests paramount? Explain your position and support it with evidence.
- b. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Since our values are not intrinsic to our human condition, they can be changed."
- c. Generally, how do foraging people view poverty?

Chapter 4. Section 5. Establishing Order: Political Currents

Section 5. Terms to Consider:

leadership
 headperson
 mores
 ostracism
 banishment
 territorial rights
 in-group conflict
feud

retribution

Section 5. Questions to Consider:

1. Political Systems

- a. What is meant by a decentralized political organization?
- b. How is order maintained in a decentralized political organization?

2. Leaders

- a. Who were the leaders in foraging bands?
- b. Describe their method of leadership?
- c. What difficulties did these leaders encounter? What rewards?

3. Customs and Rules

- a. What methods of social control were used among foragers?
- b. Does your nation use any of these methods of social control? Explain.
- c. What is meant by the statement a band collectively "owned" or occupied the land, individuals did not control it?

4. Migration and Interaction

- a. Conduct additional research to describe human migration during the Upper Paleolithic period. Where did people go, how did they get there?

5. Conflict, War and Cooperation

- a. Why was it important to temporarily isolate the disputing parties from their respective kin when conflict broke out between two parties?
- b. Why was it not so important to determine who was morally right or wrong in a conflict situation? Is this different then the way your nation administers justice?
- c. What were methods for resolving conflict among foragers? Does your nation use any of these methods?

6. Political Insights

- a. Were foragers peaceful people?
- b. What were causes of conflict among forages?
- c. What role did the scarcity of resources play in conflict?
- d. Does the scarcity of resources contribute to conflict today? Give examples.
- e. Were foragers in the Communal Wave the real "first democracy?" Explain.
- f. Are we, as a species, inherently democratic? Explain.

Chapter 4. Section 6. Human Expression: Cultural Patterns

Section 6. Terms to Consider:

animism
 shaman
 "Great Spirit"
 storytelling
 legends
 collectivity
 separate ego
 cognitive system

Section 6. Questions to Consider:

1. Beliefs, Religion and Spirituality

- a. How did an animistic belief system reflect the foragers' way of life?
- b. What role did a shaman play in the spirituality of foraging people?

2. Communication

- a. Why didn't foraging people "invent" writing?
- b. What was the content and purpose of the storytelling?
- c. Conduct additional research about different stories in diverse cultures. What were these stories about? Form an imaginary "campfire" circle, sit around and tell some of these stories to others. Invent your own stories about your contemporary life.

3. Identity and Belonging

- a. What is meant by the statement "foraging societies bound the individual into the collectivity, and subordinated a separate self?"
- b. Do you do that in your particular culture? Explain.

4. Aesthetic Expression

- a. How did the discoveries of artistic expressions during the Upper Paleolithic lead researchers to conclude that humans developed an expanded cognitive system at the time?
- b. What are the different interpretations of Paleolithic art? Do you agree or disagree with any particular theory?
- c. What is the significance of the Venus figurines? Do you agree with this interpretation?
- d. Conduct additional research into the different expressions of Paleolithic art. What were some of the common themes? What does this tell us about the lives of the people at the time?

5. Cultural Insights

- a. Do you think it is important to study the religious expression of among foraging people? Why?

Chapter 4. Section 7. The !Kung Nomadic Foragers of the Kalahari Desert

Section 7. Questions to Consider:

1. Population/Environment

- a. What is the current situation of the !Kung? Conduct additional research to find updated information.
- b. Why do contemporary foraging bands, such as the !Kung, live on environmentally marginal lands of the world?
- c. What hardships does this pose for them?

2. Techno-economic Currents

- a. Describe the daily life of the !Kung.
- b. How does it differ from your daily life?
- c. How is the economic system of the !Kung different than yours?
- d. Why don't they use money?
- e. Why is the distribution of meat so important to the !Kung?
- f. Why do you think the !Kung organized their villages in concentric circles?
- g. What does it tell us about their values and attitudes?
- h. Why was exchange such an important part of their society?

3. Social Currents

- a. How do the kinship relations of the !Kung affect their social organization?
- b. How are !Kung children integrated into the group?
- c. What was the purpose of humbling the skilled !Kung hunter in the short passage in the text?
- d. What criteria would you use to evaluate the !Kung's way of life?

4. Political Currents

- a. What was the role of !Kung leaders?
- b. How was conflict expressed among the !Kung?

5. Cultural Currents

- a. How was the !Kung's spirituality expressed?

6. General Questions

- a. What similarities or commonalities do we have with the !Kung?

Section 8. Chapter 4: The Communal Wave: Concluding Insights

1. What factors are contributing to contemporary foraging people's lives changing so rapidly in the last 10 years? Why?
2.
 - a. Is tourism beneficial to foraging people?
 - b. How does it disrupt their lives?
3. What valuable lesson can we learn from people in the Communal Wave?
4.
 - a. What does it mean when stated that foragers live "within" nature?
 - b. Do we live "within" nature?
5. Why is sharing such an important value for hunting and gathering people?