THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION and THE DISCOVERY OF AGRICULTURE

The Great Technological Discoveries of Pre-History

1. The discovery of Tools.

Although there are examples of ”tools” being used by animals, the development of tools

is one of the distinguishing characteristics of humans. The development of tools such as flint

points, axes, weapons such as the spear, the atlatl, and the bow and arrow, snares, and hooks is

a reflection of the change from gathering and scavenging to hunting. The development of

hunting societies leads to social organization.

2. The discovery and control of Fire.

Fire provides heat and expands the food supply. Many foods are inedible or unsanitary

without the cooking process. Fire provides warmth enable man to live in a wider range of

climates. Fire also provides protection from predators. The discovery of techniques to make

fire and to preserve that fire is a key discovery of humankind.

3. The invention of the Agriculture.

Agriculture refers to a series of discoveries involving the domestication, culture, and management of plants and animals. It is one of the most far-reaching discoveries of early humans leading to profound social changes. It is clearly the basis for civilization. Agriculture was adopted repeatedly and independently in various parts of the world after the retreat of the Pleistocene ice around 12,000 years ago. The warming trend affected the middle East, northern China, and Mesoamerica where agriculture began.

4. The invention of the Wheel.

The wheel is not only the basis for the mechanical and transportation revolution but is

involved with the technologies of ceramics (pot making) and spinning (spinning thread used to

weave cloth).

The Neolithic Age

The Neolithic or New Stone Age (7,000 to 10,000 years ago) pertains to a stage of

culture following the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age and is characterized by the use of polished

stone implements, development of permanent dwellings, cultural advances such as pottery

making, domestication of animals and plants, the cultivation of grain and fruit trees, and

weaving. The change from hunting/gathering to primitive farming appears so abrupt that this

technological change is often characterized as the Neolithic Revolution.

Origins of Agriculture

Agriculture must be thought of as a series of discoveries involving the domestication of

plants and animals and their management. The precise origin of the first center of agriculture is

not known, but is quite likely southeast Asia. That area has certain factors that would make it a

likely candidate for such an event: different ecological type, a mild climate, the ability to support

a population by hunting and fishing, and a naturally rich flora. The evidence places

contemporary agriculture 7,000 to 9,000 years ago in the river valley in three locations: Tigris-

Euphrates River, Indus River, Nile River.