

The Origin of Man and the Animals

2.1

A long time ago during a blizzard, a handsome young man entered an igloo. He was welcomed into the bed and slept with the entire family. The next morning when the family awoke, the young man was gone. Seeing only animal tracks outside, the father proclaimed that they had been deceived, and that the young man had been the lead dog disguised as a man. His daughter became pregnant and the father was ashamed of what kind of children she might have. He took her in a kayak to a small island, where he abandoned her. The lead dog kept the girl alive by swimming to the island and giving her tender meat. The girl gave birth to six young. Three of them were Inuit children, but the other three had bigger ears and noses like snouts. The young mother sewed some seal skins into a large slipper, placed the three strange children inside, and pushed them off towards the south. Some say all white men and Indians are descended from those three dog children.

Later the father went in a umiak with some men to take his daughter off the island. A storm arose and the boatmen were afraid that the overloaded boat would capsize. To lighten the load, they threw the daughter overboard. When she tried to climb back into the boat, the father cut off her fingers. These became the seals.



Image by Gilbert Hay

She tried again, and he cut off her hands, which became the walruses. She made one last attempt, and he cut off her forearms, which became the whales. She sank to the bottom of the ocean and became Sedna, or Taluliyuk, the woman who controls all the sea beasts.

TOPIC 2.1

Peopling the Land

Why do you think early peoples started moving from Africa to other areas?

How has modern technology influenced the peopling of the land?

Introduction

Let's start at the beginning. How did humankind populate Earth? There are many theories about this. Most cultures have creation stories or beliefs that suggest humans are the product of intelligent design. Other people use scientific data to help explain that *Homo sapiens* (humans) first evolved in Africa about 200 000 years ago and then spread around the world.

If we accept the second explanation, a question then arises: how did humans get from Africa to the Americas, which are surrounded by water? One theory is that people migrated across a land bridge called **Beringia**. This land bridge, which is now under water, connected Siberia to Alaska at some point during the last ice age – sometime between 9000 and 50 000 years ago. It

is speculated that these people then spread across the Americas, including Newfoundland and Labrador, and diversified into many culturally distinct groups.

Once Beringia disappeared beneath the sea, the Americas were again isolated from the rest of the world. As historian and writer Peter Watson notes, this meant that "... [at] the close of the fifteenth century ... there were two huge groups of people, on two vast landmasses ... entirely separated from one another and developing side-by-side, oblivious to the existence of each other." Europeans would later refer to these two "worlds" as the "**Old World**"* (the parts of the world then known to Europeans, Asians, and Africans) and the "**New World**"* (the Americas and Oceania).

*These are Eurocentric labels. Before contact, Europeans had no idea that the Americas existed.

46 000 - 50 000 years ago

Humans entered Europe. Most Europeans today can trace their ancestry to mtDNA lines that appeared between 50 000 and 13 000 years ago

20 000 - 30 000 years ago

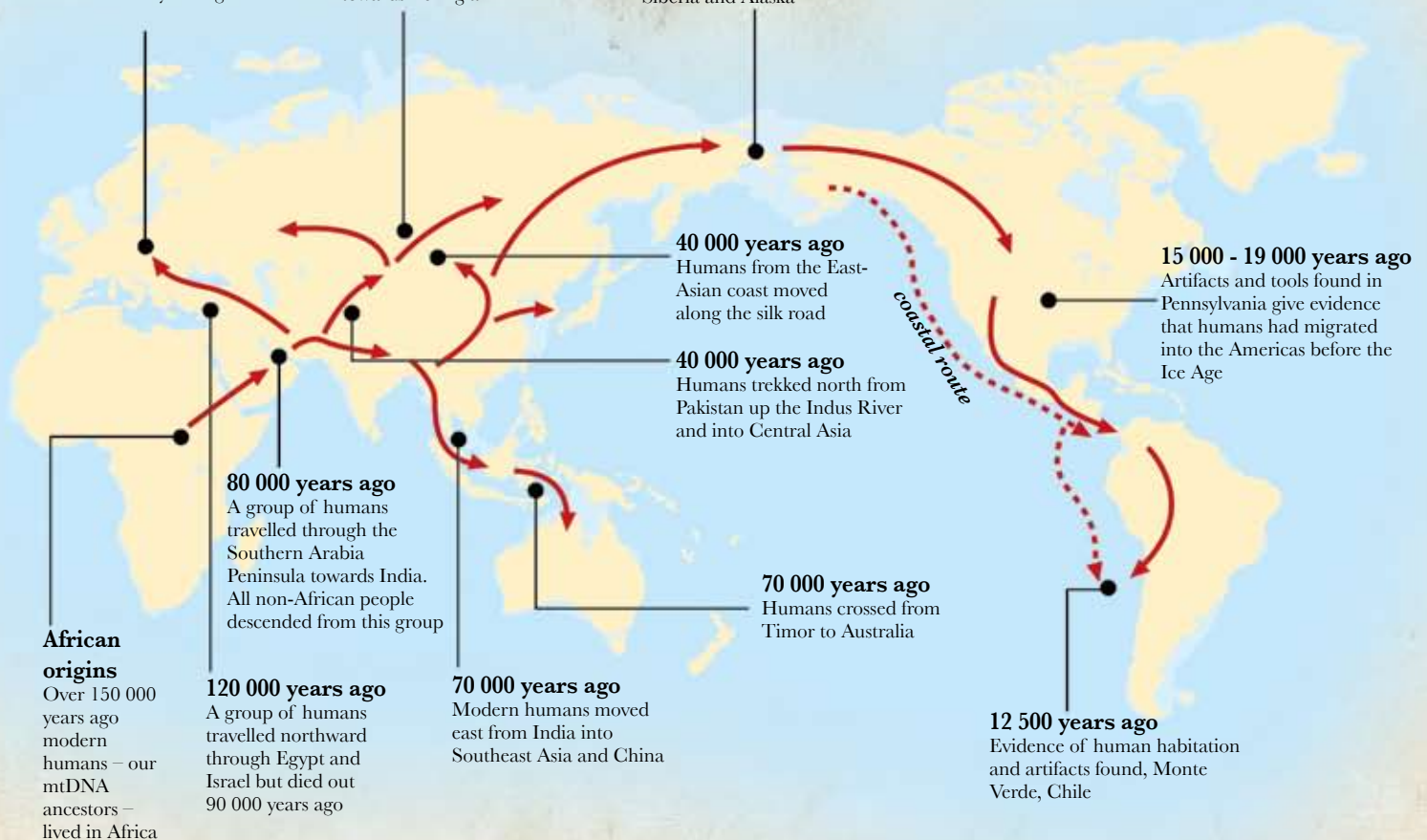
Central Asians moved west towards Europe and east towards Beringia

22 000 - 25 000 years ago

Humans crossed the Bering land bridge that connected Siberia and Alaska

2.2 Peopling the earth

Adapted from information provided in *Out of Eden* by Stephen Oppenheimer



Experiencing The Arts

Part of the craft of storytelling is preserving the experiences of our ancestors. Stories from the past are sometimes fictional, while others are more factual. Often, there is a blending of both. Either way, they provide insight into the past.

Much of this section of the chapter is about the distant past. What we know of this period is limited. It is difficult to conduct a detailed understanding of the distant past because there is a limited amount of archaeological information available.

The same is often true about our own personal histories. We most likely know a fair bit about our parents or guardians, but know less about our grandparents, and less again about our great-grandparents. Much of

what we do know has likely been passed on through family stories.

In this series of exercises, you will need to use your tools as an artist (and historian) to construct a story about a part of your past that you wish to explore. By the end of the chapter, you will be asked to share that story with close family or friends as part of the private tradition of storytelling.

For this exercise, compile a list of questions about your personal past that you would like to have answered. Keep the list in a convenient place so that you can add to it when you get an idea. (Remember, inspiration can come at any time or in any place.)

2.3 World population by continent including world's largest cities, 1500 CE

Statistics for this period are approximations. Historians' figures can vary widely – particularly for Africa and the Americas. The data given above is based largely on the work of Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, and William Denevan.



2.4 Although most of the people in the Americas in the 15th century lived an agrarian lifestyle, there were also larger, sophisticated centres of civilization such as the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan (in Mexico) and the Inca city of Machu Picchu (in Peru). Shown here are the ruins of Machu Picchu. Built in approximately 1430 it was designated a World Heritage Site in 1983 for being “an absolute masterpiece of architecture and a unique testimony to the Inca civilization.”





2.5 Various Aboriginal groups of the Americas

This illustration first appeared in the Swedish encyclopedia Nordisk Familjebok in 1904.

Population Distribution

At the close of the fifteenth century, there were approximately 40-60 million people living in the Americas (although estimates vary widely on this number). The most densely settled parts of the Americas were the modern-day sites of Mexico and Peru. These areas were largely **agrarian** with a few large centres, such as the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City). In 1500, approximately 250 000 people lived in Tenochtitlan, making it larger than any

European city at the time. In the other parts of the Americas (especially modern-day Brazil, Canada, and the United States), the population consisted mostly of hunters and gatherers.

It has been estimated that a **hunter-gatherer** in the Americas needed about 10 square kilometres of land to provide him with enough resources to survive. Once the population density exceeded this, some of the hunter-gatherers had to move to find new resources. This, along with conflict between different groups and changes in environmental conditions, may explain why groups spread out across the Americas.

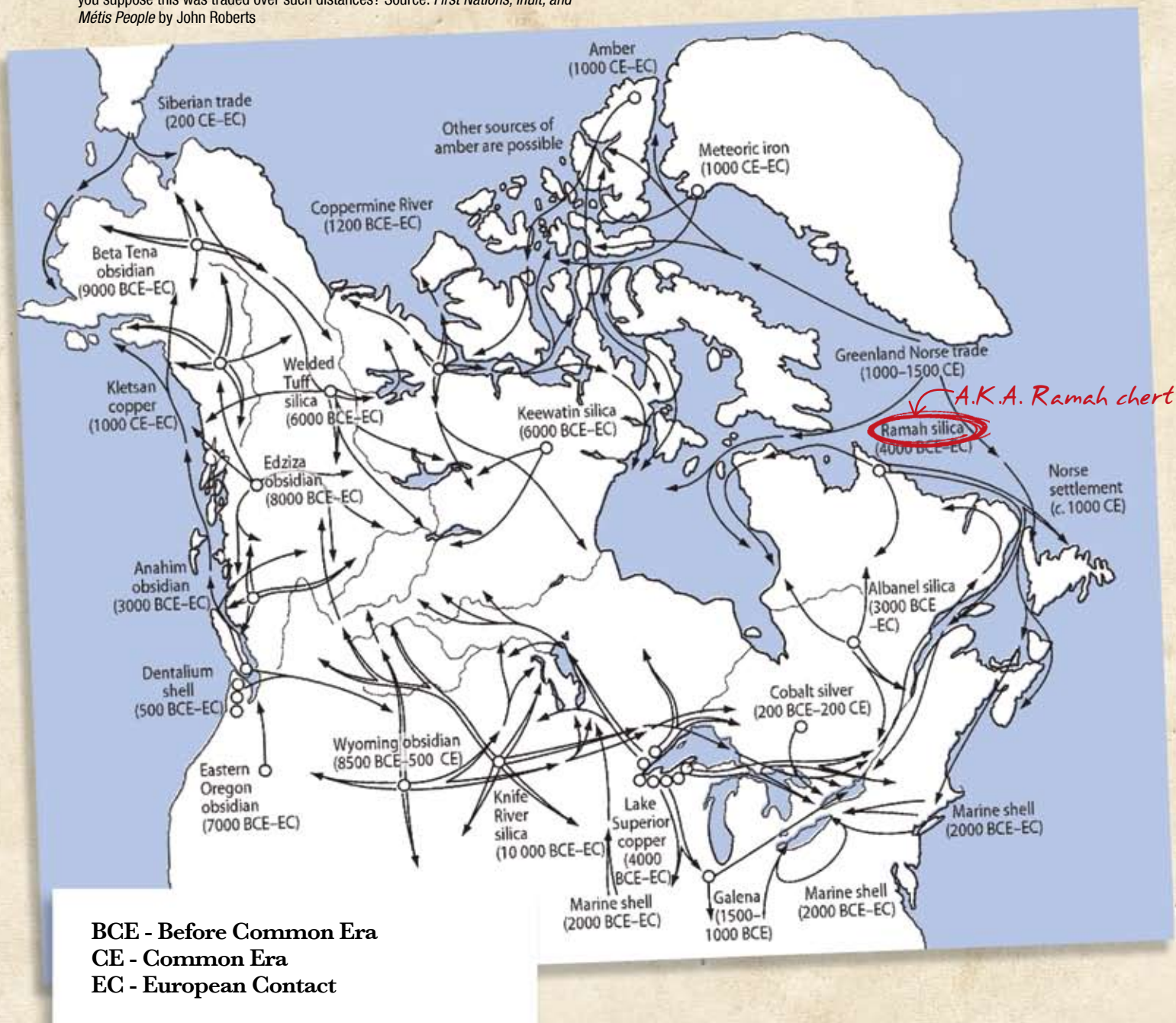
Although some farming was practised in North America prior to European contact, much of North America's population belonged to hunter-gatherer societies. There was an extensive trade network between many of the groups. Trade allowed these groups to acquire resources not found in their own environment and to build alliances with neighbouring groups. Goods traded included food (such as dried fish, maize, and beans), raw materials (such as obsidian, **chert**, and shells), and manufactured items (such as pottery, knives, and needles).



2.6 A Labrador Archaic arrowhead

2.7 Trade patterns in North America

What was traded from Newfoundland and Labrador? How far was it traded? Why do you suppose this was traded over such distances? Source: *First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People* by John Roberts



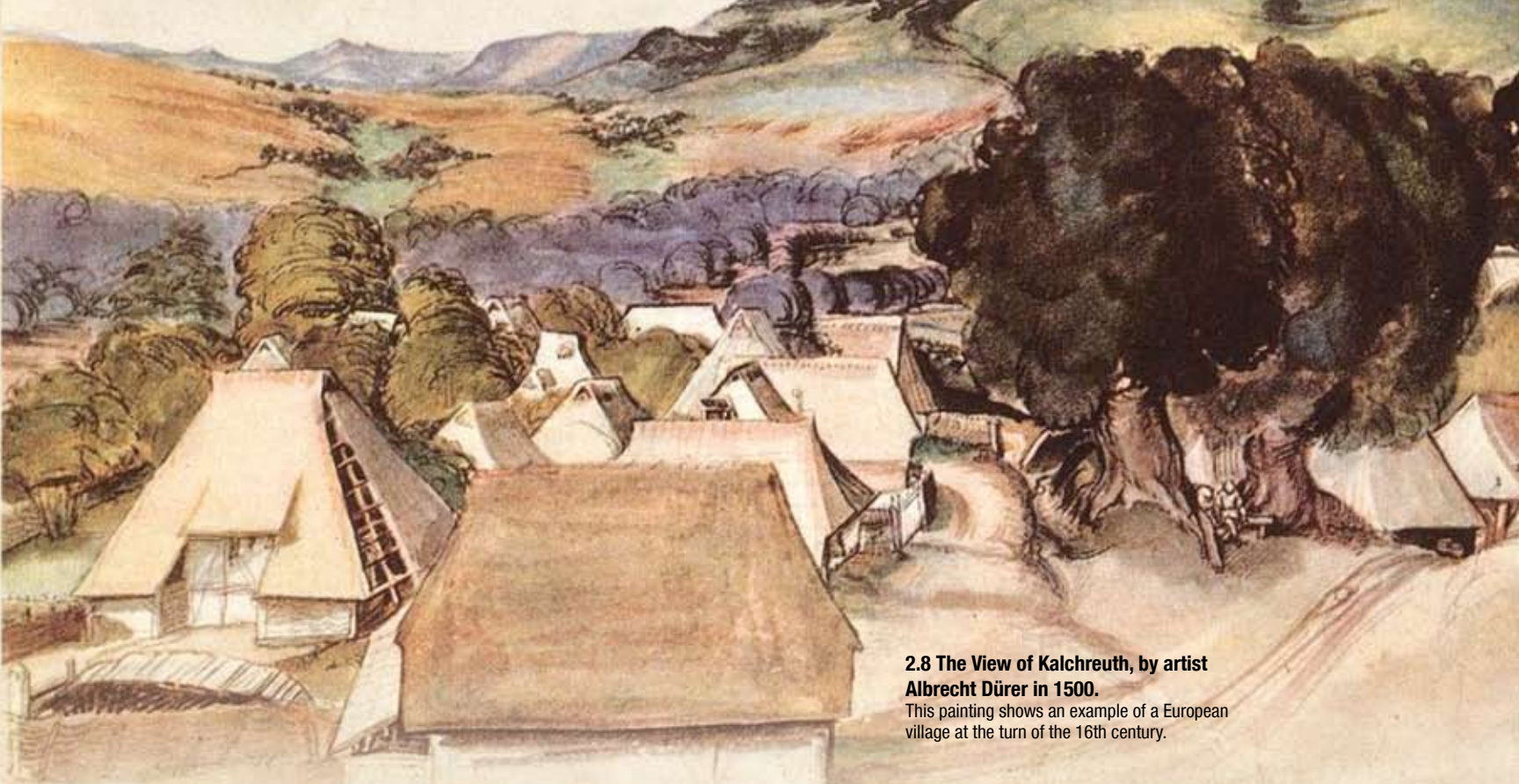
After agriculture, the fisheries employed the most people in medieval Europe.

The map above shows some of the known established trading networks. Archaeologists have been able to learn about these trading routes through the discovery of artifacts in sites other than those from which they originated. For instance, projectile points made from minerals found in Labrador have been found in the St. Lawrence Valley.

Meanwhile, across the ocean, there were approximately 80-100 million people living in Europe. Although the population distribution varied throughout the region, it was largely rural and agricultural. Most groups in

Europe and Asia practised farming and had some domesticated animals. Experts suggest that in 1500 only about one out of every 10 Europeans lived in a town with a population over 5000.

At this time Europe was undergoing rapid population growth. An increasing population meant a need for larger food supplies. To meet the demand, more lands were brought into production. Nevertheless, there still remained a demand for inexpensive sources of protein to feed the masses. Europe began to look outward for resources.



2.8 The View of Kalchreuth, by artist Albrecht Dürer in 1500.

This painting shows an example of a European village at the turn of the 16th century.

Questions:

1. The area of Newfoundland and Labrador is 405 720 square kilometres. Based on the information in the text, how many people could survive in modern day Newfoundland and Labrador as hunter-gatherers? Is this a realistic figure, given the geography of the province? Explain.
2. Assuming that humans migrated into the Americas via Beringia, why do you think most peoples continued the migration south? Why might some have stayed in the north?
3. Describe the pattern of distribution of cities throughout the world c. 1500. What inferences can be made, based on the population distribution for each continent?
4. What would be the relative advantages and challenges of living in:
 - a. A hunter-gatherer society versus an agricultural society?
 - b. A rural area versus an urban area?

2.9 In the 16th century, most of the world's largest and grandest cities lay in Asia.

This diorama shows Peking (now known as Beijing) in the late 15th century. It is believed that Peking was the largest city in the world from 1425 to 1650.

