Lecture 2. Geographic Setting and the Neolithic Era

Geographic and Ecological Background
--Contrasts between North and South China: climate, rainfall, soils, and forest cover
--Loess region of northwestern China: rich soil and absence of forests provided ideal conditions for primitive agriculture

Neolithic (“New Stone Age”) Revolution
--Domestication of cultivated plants in East Asia: millet, rice, soybeans

Early Neolithic Cultures of East Asia (from c. 7000 BCE)
(1) Yangshao 仰韶 (northwestern China)
   --Farmers (millet), supplemented by fishing, pig-raising
   --Village society little evidence of social stratification
(2) Hemudu 河姆渡 (eastern coast)
   --Earliest evidence of rice farming
(3) Dabenkeng 大坌坑 (Taiwan); later, c. 3500 BCE
   --Origins of Austronesian peoples (present-day inhabitants of Philippine, Indonesian, and Pacific Islands)

Social Differentiation & Stratification
--Status, authority, and the origins of inequality

China's Later Neolithic Era (c. 3200-2000 BCE)
--Longshan 龍山 (Central Plain of North China)
--Marked social stratification; ancestor worship; occupational specialization, including warriors & priests
--Prominence of violence in construction of social order