

## Ancient Human Studies 101

*Settle down, please, class. It begins and I am in no mood to waste time.*

The command arrived simultaneously into the auditory receptors in each of them and the students arranged themselves in the proper classroom configuration and opened word processors, ready to begin. This subject is what made most of them even choose this class from the Registry, and the air was abuzz with excitement.

*As you might've guessed from the assigned texts last night, ancient human architecture is a topic of personal interest and there is a lot to cover. Their architecture shows us so much about their societies, it is amazing what we can learn about a people just from what they've left behind. We're not entirely sure what caused these ruins and artifacts to be emptied, but we have some theories. Would someone like to remind the class of a few of those, maybe prove that they've ingested the assigned data from last night?*

After a long silence, the kind in which a breath of wind would have been an obscene disturbance, one student ventured "Mass exodus?" into the void and was not immediately punished with laughter or a scolding.

Another, bolder student chimed in, "Disease."

A small light blinked in the back of the classroom, almost against the will of its owner. "Warfare."

*Excellent. Seems at least a few students have both taken in and remembered the content. I'm happy that some of you have started to really appreciate the details and clues we can pick up about a civilization based on the buildings that they left behind. There is a lot we do not know about the former occupants, but this is field is full of cutting-edge research – the continent was discovered less than a decade ago and new sites are still being found all the time. Believe it or not, students in this very class might be the first academic minds to think about, analyze, and publish academic papers about these people. If you ask me, that's a pretty amazing opportunity.*

*We know that the last of their buildings were created almost 20,000 years ago, which you ought to remember from chapter four. In a geological sense, we only just missed their civilization's window of domination. We know this based on the core readings we have retrieved from glaciers, which show us the levels and composition of particulates of the atmosphere throughout the epochs. Precipitation moves them from the clouds to the ground, and the freezing*

*temperatures lock that data in for millennia until we are ready to discover the history of our planet. For instance, we know that methane levels are significantly lower now than they were 20,000 years ago, so we can presume that our ancestors thrived in such conditions and that a potential reason they disappeared is the change in atmospheric composition made it impossible for them to survive.*

*It appears, from the vast artificial warrens and honeycombed structures they left behind, that this was a close-knit people who valued their tribal bonds above personal identity. We have discovered several of their largest cities and their names are, as you might expect, difficult to pronounce – N’w Yurc, Atlana, Bastune. Language has changed a lot since their time and we are still trying to translate the edifices on pathways leading into those cities. There is evidence of residential dwellings far removed from the large population centers, but the relatively small percentage of these indicates that they were probably outliers or outcasts.*

*As the overwhelming majority of the population lived in these closely built concrete habitats, I think it’s safe to say that physical proximity was important to the safety and survival of the colony, much as tens of thousands of ants might live and work together in the same nest, working in concert to achieve the same goal. It also suggests the presence of mechanisms for local or regional alphas to control such large populations, and the prevalence of evenly placed wall holes on the exterior of almost every single building tells us that perhaps pheromones or sound was the main method of communication. We can also tell that this society was closely connected to their environment. Anyone care to guess how we can know that?*

“Well, their structures are built right into the forests and grasslands and beaches. They incorporated the environment into everything they made,” chirped one particularly eager student, glancing furtively at their notes to make sure what they said wasn’t wrong.

*Excellent! I can always trust you to have completed the reading. If every student was like B0024532, being an instructor here would be a much easier experience. As -532 was saying, in the north, we have uncovered dwelling structures encased entirely within walls of ice. Surprisingly, ice can be quite the insulator and apparently these ancient people discovered that quality and constructed their habitats inside the glaciers.*

*Even in their densest population centers, the buildings were designed with gaping holes in the walls and roofs to encourage native flora growth. All along the coastline, we’ve discovered countless submerged residences and even enormous metal structures deep out in the*

*ocean, with large shafts leading down into empty subterranean cavities. The method of conveyance is still unknown and those cavities are almost entirely unexplored, but they clearly used the tube to travel up and down from the surface to their undersea locales on a regular basis. For anyone double majoring in anthropology and oceanography, consider graduate programs that will let you into sites like that.*

Three quick beeps in the audio-sensor implanted of each sentient's cranial casing signaled the end of this class period, as well as the end of this rotation's class schedule. As the students unplugged and disengaged, their interfaces buzzing and lights blinking, the professor plead one last time for the class's attention.

*I know that we're heading into Celestial Break and that we will only be back for three cycles before New Orbit Day, but please try to intake at least one of the assigned primary sources – your choice. Intake one of their nutrition creation manuals, borrow a holophone from your grandparents and listen to some of their recordings. Maybe it's because I'm a geezerbot, but I prefer their music to some of the 'waves today. Enjoy your holidays, class dismissed!*