

3

Ancient Civilizations in the World

Introduction

Man was in shape of an ape at the beginning, but he developed himself with time. We discussed in our earlier lessons how man started farming at a later time after walking from one place to another and collecting food by hunting. Man made his great achievements after starting to build cities and living in them. As many important events such as inventing scripts and using money took place during this time, it can be called as the civilization of man. That is what you will learn in this lesson. After learning this lesson, you will understand how man differs from other animals though he too is an animal belonging to the nature.

3.1 Origin of Civilizations

In the previous lesson, we learnt how man got used to forming villages and living in them since the ancient times. People who lived in those villages for a long time made progress day by day. Some villagers became wealthy as a result of farming and rearing animals. But some other villagers had to do their farming in infertile plots of lands, for which getting water facility was difficult. They could not get a good harvest and as a result their livelihood became difficult.

They were considered the poor. This led to a division in the society as rich and poor. Some time later, the rich and their relatives started living separately from these villages. Such places which consisted of houses made of stones instead of clay and wattle, well constructed streets, moats, walls and temples (shrines) for worshipping were called cities. These rich villagers were called citizens. Hereafter, they never engaged in farming or rearing animals. Instead, the poor villagers cultivated the land that belonged to the rich. But much of the harvest was taken by the wealthy people who lived in the cities.

A civilization means such kind of cities and the citizens who lived in them. A city was larger than a village. These citizens practised writing scripts. There was a group of citizens to rule the cities. The people who lived in the cities built religious places. They were engaged in trade with distant countries. Therefore, these basic characteristics help understand what a civilization is.

Thus, people who lived in various parts of the world in different eras built their own civilizations. Mesopotamian civilization, Nile River Valley civilization, Indu Valley civilization and Hwang Ho civilization were of the oldest of them.

It is important for us to learn about civilizations because various things which were produced by those who lived then are useful for our lives even today.

In mathematics we learn that a circle has 360 degrees. We know that there are 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour. This was taught to us by the mathematicians who lived in the ancient Mesopotamian civilization.



Activity 07

Draw a picture which depicts the difference between an ancient village and a city.

People who lived in the Hwang-Ho civilization introduced gun powder, the compass, paper and the printing machine to the world for the first time. All of these are immensely useful for us today.

For the first time, a rubber ball was produced by the people who lived in the Maya civilization. Rubber is a very useful material to us today. Rubber is used to produce slippers that we wear as well as tyres in airplanes.

3.2 Expansion of Civilizations and its Consequent Benefits to the World

Some information about several civilizations needs to be studied to understand what a civilization is. We have discussed below some interesting information about the Mesopotamian civilization, Egyptian civilization and the Indu River valley civilization.

A civilization is a process which reflects man's progress. You too should be determined to serve the country by learning how those who lived in the ancient civilizations invented things to make our lives easy and comfortable.

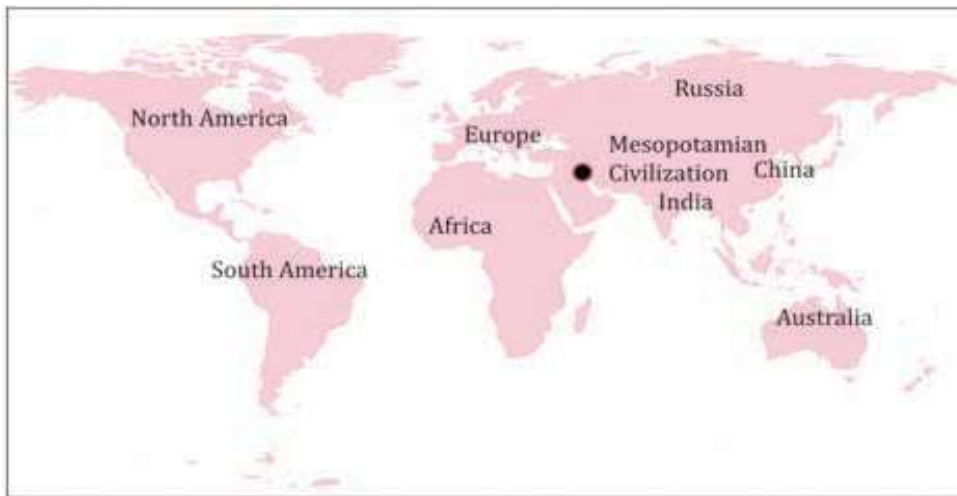


Activity 08

Mark the expansion of civilizations on a map with the instructions of your teacher.

Important Points

1. People first lived in villages. They started living in cities much later.
2. A civilization is cities and a society where a large number of citizens live.
3. People who lived in old civilizations bestowed many different things to the world.



Part II

Mesopotamian Civilization

Introduction

This civilization developed in the river valleys of Euphrates and Tigris. The area where the two rivers existed belongs to Iraq at present. Mesopotamia means 'the country in between two rivers'.

Mesopotamia is located in between the two rivers mentioned above. This civilization existed between 3,100 -2,900 BC, that is, five thousand years ago.



An ancient Mesopotamian clay slab which depicts a scene of ploughing

The farmers who belonged to the Mesopotamian civilization and who lived around the main cities were engaged in agriculture and animal

husbandry. As there was not enough water in those areas, they carried water through canals to their agricultural lands.

They ploughed ground with the help of animals to make it more suitable for cultivation. They used ploughs made of iron and mammoth (hoes) made of stones. They cultivated grains, fruits and vegetables. Wheat and barley were two main varieties of grains that they grew.



(a) The head of the group of gods (Pantheon) was a god called 'Anu'.

(b) The god of Earth was called 'Enkiki'.

(c) The god 'Enlili' was worshipped as the god of wind and farming.

A Mesopotamian Ziggurat temple built in the ancient city of Ur

Mesopotamian people regarded nature as God and worshipped it. The rain, wind and floods were thus worshipped. They thought that they lived to please such gods who belonged to nature.

There was a god for each and every city in Mesopotamia. The word 'Ziggurat' was used for the temples which were built to worship gods. The priests in those temples held a respectable position in the Mesopotamian society.

Some vessels belonged to the Mesopotamian Civilization

The Mesopotamian people were clever at trade travelling in small ships in rivers. Some items including food and drink were carried on these ships. The Assyrians who lived in the northern part of Mesopotamia were good traders.

They did their trading across the land. They engaged in trade by carrying the commodities on the backs of donkeys. They were called caravans.





Mesopotamian Society

Mesopotamian society was divided into four categories. (1) priests (2) people who represented the higher classes (3) people who represented the lower classes and (4) slaves. Priests were the most powerful in the Mesopotamian society. They acted as doctors in addition to doing their religious activities. Priests shaved their heads. They wore a cloak made of sheep hide (skin).

It was a custom of men and women who belonged to the higher classes to wear gold jewellery. Men grew their hair long. They grew a long beard. Women wore their clothes covering one shoulder. They too had long hair. People who represented the lower classes did not lead a luxurious life style, but they lived in their houses comfortably. They worked hard. They were paid for their work. The clothes and the jewellery they wore were not valuable.

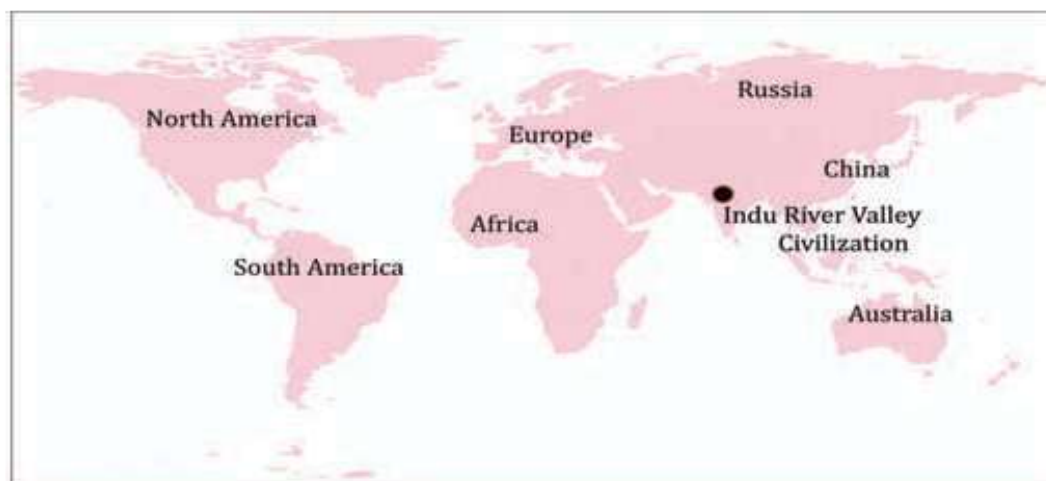


Scripts

The Mesopotamians invented the oldest system of scripts in the world. These scripts are called 'cuneiform' scripts. 'Kunya' scripts were written on slabs made of clay. The scripts were written on the wet clay slabs with a sharpened piece of stick. The Mesopotamian writing system was similar to drawing figures at the very beginning. Later on it developed into a system of scripts. Various things had been written on these clay slabs. Mainly, these descriptions related to the trade affairs.

An epic story written by a person called Gilgamesh who lived in Mesopotamia in Kunya scripts, is considered to be the oldest literary work in the world. Though it was difficult to write on clay slabs, Mesopotamians did it in a clever way. They sent some letters written on clay slabs to the relevant person enclosing them in envelopes made of clay. There remains an old document of laws made by a ruler called 'Hammurabi' who ruled Mesopotamia. It is the oldest law book in the world.





Indu River Valley Civilization

This civilization developed in the Valley of Indu River which flows across the North Western region in India. Today this region belongs to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and to the North Western part of India. This civilization reached its highest development between 2,600 and 1900 B.C. Mohenjo - Daro and Harappa were two main cities of this civilization.

Around five million people had lived in all the cities at its highest development time. People who lived in Indus River Valley civilization used metals such as copper, bronze, lead and tin. They lived in houses made of burnt clay bricks. There was a very advanced system of water-pipes. Their cities were well planned. Indus River people invented a system of symbols that could be used as scripts.



There were four main cities that belonged to Indus River Valley civilization. They were Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Dholavira and Kalibangan. All of them were well planned cities. This picture shows the ruins of such a city, which was found in archaeological excavations.



It is considered that this is a sculpture of a priest who lived in a city during Indus River Valley civilization. This was found in the Indus River Valley. The headband on the forehead of this sculpture is a sign which indicates that he was an esteemed person. Half-closed eyes of the person in this sculpture show that he is in a meditative position. It further confirms that the person in the sculpture was a priest.

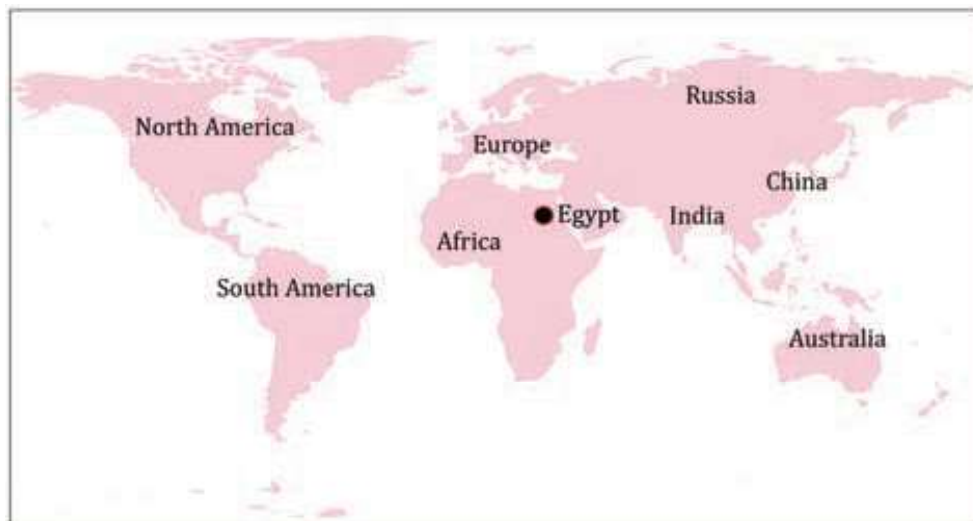
People who lived in the cities of Indus River Valley civilization had a methodically constructed system of gutters, wells and sewerage. This picture shows a well, built in such a city, which was used for private utility.



The well constructed roads in the ancient cities of Indus River Valley civilization can be considered as evidence for their transport. This picture shows a dummy of a cart used for transportation. This must have been a toy cart used for playing.



This picture shows an emblem which belonged to the Indus River Valley civilization. There are some symbols at the top. Many thought that they must have been a set of scripts used to express some ideas. It is sure that the animal in the picture is a rhinoceros. None has found what had been written in the emblems that belonged to the Indus River Valley Civilization yet.



Egyptian (Nile River Valley) Civilization

This civilization developed in the lower part of the area of valley of Nile River which flows across the African continent in 3,150 B.C. Since this region belongs to present day Egypt, it is called by the same name. This civilization was ruled by a dynasty called Pharaohs for a long time. The main livelihood of the people who lived in Egyptian civilization was agriculture. Therefore, they were able to create an advanced irrigation system.

The greatest creation they bestowed to the world is the pyramids. The dead bodies of pharaoh kings were deposited in pyramids. Another important thing that they invented was scripts. These scripts were designed by combining figures of animals and various items. Those scripts are called the Egyptian pictograms.



This picture shows the pyramids which have been constructed in a place named Giza, some distance away from Cairo, the capital of Egypt. The dead bodies of the Pharaoh kings and their queens are laid in them. The oldest Pyramids in Egypt were constructed between 2,630 – 2,611 B.C. The pyramid in Giza is considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world.

Queen Neferneferuaten Nefertiti was the consort of one of the pharaoh kings called Akhenaten. She lived in 1,370 – 1,330 B.C. This sculpture of her bust must have been created while she was alive. She ruled Egypt for a short period of time after the death of king Akhenaten. Queen Nefertiti was one of the most beautiful women who lived in the ancient time.



The scholars who lived in the Egyptian civilization designed a set of symbols which could be used for writing purposes. These symbols had been designed from pictures of various items used and seen in their day-to-day life. These are called The Egyptian pictograms.



This is an old Egyptian picture which shows a prince chasing after a flock of birds. The surroundings have been beautifully painted in the picture.

This picture shows a mummy of a chieftain who belonged to the Egyptian civilization. People who lived in the Egyptian civilization introduced the method of mummifying to preserve the dead bodies for a long time.



Activity 09

Read the descriptions in the lesson and fill in the grid given below.

This picture shows the golden mask which was placed on the face of the mummy of king Tutankhamun who lived between 1,332 – 1,323 B.C.



(a) Monument	(b) Civilization
Toy cart made of clay	
Kunya scripts	
Pyramids	
Queen Nefertiti	
Clay slabs with symbols of animals	
Golden mask of King Tutankhamun	