

WORLD ISTORY-1

MODULE-II-BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATIONS



TOPIC- MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION
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MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION



- Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), was one of the earliest bronze age civilizations in the world
- The word 'Mesopotamia' means 'the land between the rivers' and it is watered by Tigris and Euphrate rivers
- The southern region of Mesopotamia was known as Sumer in the ancient days, while the regions to the north-east of Sumer were called Babylonia and Akkad.
- In the north there existed the highland called Assyria.
- The southern end of the Fertile Crescent, Sumer was thickly studded with farming villages in the neolithic period
- The Mesopotamian people could produce large amounts of surplus food grains, due to their better organized irrigation system



- The canals resisted flood in the river banks, where deposits from centuries of drainage from up country and annual flooding had built up a soil of great richness
- Fertile land and irrigation system were available
- The river-bed was high and the canals they made were very wide so that while the water rushed from the river to the canal, the banks remained intact
- The Canals were navigable channels and thus helped in transport as well as in Irrigation
- The Sumerian civilization, on the southern part of Mesopotamian had reached a high level of achievement by about 3000 BCE
- The cities started as the centres to control irrigation systems.
- They developed into the centres of commerce and industry.



- Erech, Eridu, Lagash and Ur were the important cities of Mesopotamia and each one of them was the capital of a small state
- By about 2600 BCE the kings of Ur had become more powerful and their influence spread to other regions also
- Around 2500 BCE both Sumer and Akkad were combined together to form a single kingdom but was soon destroyed by external invaders
- Sumerian culture had influenced the Akkadians also
- Whole of Mesopotamia was united under the able Babylonian ruler Hammurabi
- By 1600 BCE the kingdom of Hammurabi was destroyed by external invaders who came from Asia minor
- Sumerians referred to themselves as ‘the black headed people’



- By 4th millennium BCE, Sumer was composed of about a dozen independent city states, each of them centered on a temple dedicated to particular patron God and ruled over by priestly governor or by a king, who was intimately tied with city's religious rites
- CITY OF UR
- 'Ur' was the most important city of ancient Sumerian in the Mesopotamian civilization
- Ur now in ruins is located near the modern city of Nasiriyya in Southern Iraq
- The excavations at the site of Ur has revealed the existence of one of the greatest cities of the Bronze age, covering almost an area of 60 acre,
- The city's patron deity was Nanna, the Sumerian moon god and the name of the city is in origin derived from the God's name,



- ‘Urimz’ in sumerian language, literally meaning the ‘Abode of Nanna’
- The city of Ur is marked by the ruins of great ziggurt, which contained the shrine of Nanna excavated in the 1930s
- The Ziggurat meaning ‘ hill of heaven’, the temple of patron god was built in the 21st century
- City began its decline from around 550 BCE and no longer inhabited after it due to unprecedented drought or changing of river pattern
- Ur was the largest city in the world during 2030-1980 BCE and its population was approximately 65000
- The city of Ur, in its golden days was divided into three parts, The sacred area, the walled city on the mound and the outer town
- Ziggurat was built upon the artificial mound in the sacred area with mud bricks.



- The Zggurat was so high and all the inhabitants who lived in and around the city were aware of the ‘divine presence’ on the hill above them.
- The walled city and the outer towns were the residential areas of the city
- Three levels of people must have lived in the city.
- In the first level- government officials, priests, soldiers etc
- In the second level- merchants, teachers, labourers and craftsmen



- Third level- slaves and prisoners of wars
- RELIGION
- There was no organized set of gods for the sumerians
- Each city had its own patron god, temple and priest –kings
- The sumerians worshipped Anu, the sky god, as the fulltime god
- Enki was another god, a friend of humanity and gave them arts and sciences.
- Enlil, the lord of storms and the lord of the ghost land was the patron god at the temple of Nippur in the north
- Ishtar or Innana was the God of the morning and the evening at the temple at Uruk
- The sun god, Utu was at Sippar and the moon god Nanna was at Ur



- These deities were the original matrix and there had hundreds of minor deities
- The Gods said to have created human beings from clay for the purpose of serving them
- The temple centred farming communities of Sumer had a social stability
- The Ziggurats consisted a fore-court, with a central pond of purification
- The temples had a central nave with aisles along either side
- Flanking the aisles would be rooms for the priests
- At one end would stand the podium and mud-brick table for animal and vegetable sacrifices.
- Granaries and stone houses were usually located near the temples