

2. Writing and City Life

1. Why do we say that it was *not* natural fertility and high levels of food production that were the causes of early urbanisation?

Answer:

It was *not* natural fertility and high levels of food production that were the causes of early urbanisation, because cities and towns were also place for other major economic activities. Though the food production gives an advantage for people to cluster in towns, urban economies also comprise trade, manufactures and services. People living in cities are not self-sufficient in the food production alone; they depend on the products and services of other villages and cities. There is a continuous interaction among these urban economic activities.

2. Which of the following were necessary conditions and which the causes,of early urbanisation,and which would you say were the outcome of the growth of cities:

(a) highly productive agriculture,(b) water transport,(c) the lack of metal and stone,(d) the division of labour,(e) the use of seals,(f) the military power of kings that made labour compulsory?

Answer:

Following categories are the necessary conditions for urbanisation:

- (i) highly productive agriculture
- (ii) water transport
- (iii) the division of labour

Causes of early urbanisation:

- (i) lack of metal and stones
- (ii) the use of seals
- (iii) the military power of kings that made labour compulsory

Outcome of growth of cities:

- (i) an enhanced transport system
- (ii) growth of trade and economic activities and other institutions, administrations and organisations related to it

(iii) growth of writing and schools

3. Why were mobile animal herders not necessarily a threat to town life?

Answer:

Mobile animal herders were not necessarily a threat to town life, because with the people living in towns, they needed to exchange young animals, cheese, leather and meat in return for grain and metal tools. However, they had conflicts with the people living in agricultural villages. The herders raided the villages and seized their stored goods.

4. Why would the early temple have been much like a house?

Answer:

(i) From 5000 BCE, early settlers in Mesopotamia began to build temples in their villages.

(ii) The earliest known temple was a small shrine made of unbaked bricks.

(iii) They believed that the temples were the houses or residences of various gods: of the Moon God of Ur, or of Inanna the Goddess of Love and War.

(iv) Their temples were larger, and had several rooms around open courtyards.

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. Of the new institutions that came into being, once city life had begun, which would have depended on the initiative of the king?

Answer:

The new institutions that came into being with the beginning of city life included the temple architecture, trade, warfare, sculpture, and writing and schools. All these institutions would have depended on the initiative of the king. For example, none of Mesopotamian achievements would have been possible without writing and the urban institution of schools, where students read and copied earlier written tablets. They were trained to become not record keepers for the administration, but intellectuals who could build on the work of their predecessors. Running schools required enormous resources to support the people associated with the institution. This would not have been possible without the support of the kingship.

6. What do ancient stories tell us about the civilisation of Mesopotamia?

Answer:

Ancient stories reveal the nature of Mesopotamian society, institutions, trade activities, agriculture, and kingship's initiative to encourage writing and schools, and economic related

conflicts among the rulers and communities. For example, a flood story in the Bible describes Mesopotamia as a land of brick-built cities. According to the Bible, the flood was meant to destroy all life on earth. However, God chose a man, Noah, to ensure that life could continue after the Flood. Noah built a huge boat, an ark. He took a pair each of all known species of animals and birds on board the ark, which survived the Flood. There was a strikingly similar story in the Mesopotamian tradition, where the principal character was called Ziusudra or Utnapishtim.

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