

Class 11th | History

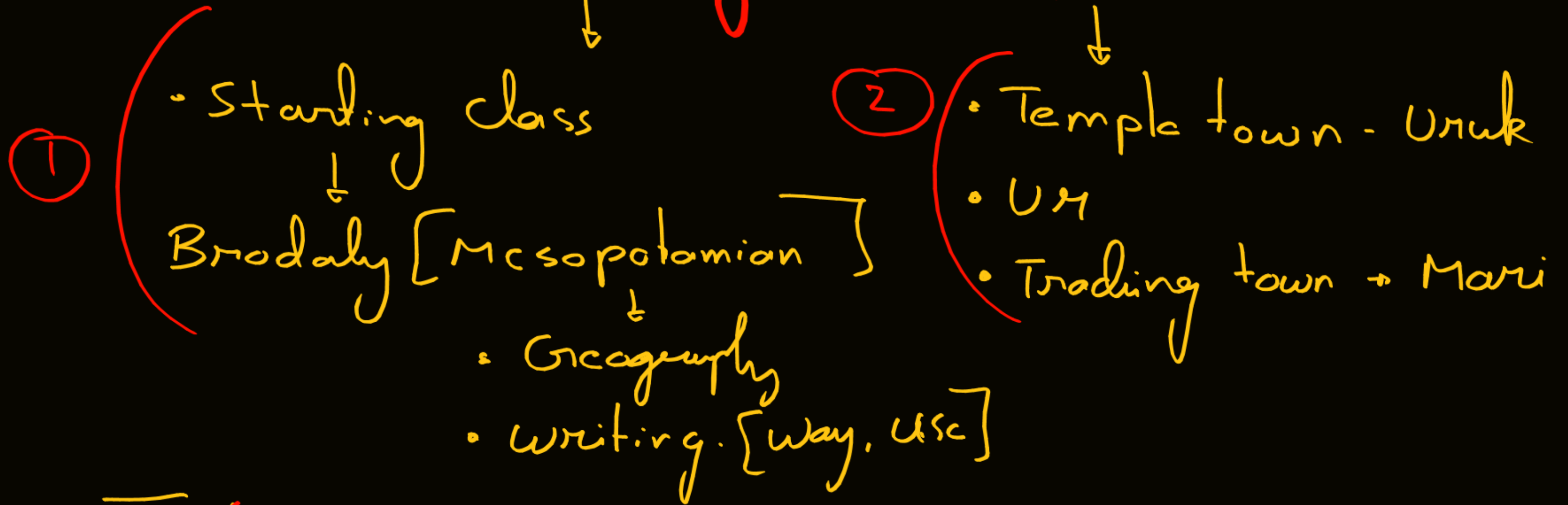


Section : A

Writing and
& City life

Lecture -06

Writing and City life



③ writing se hi related hai...
we will study in today's class)

CITIES IN MESOPOTAMIAN CULTURE

After cities were destroyed in war, they recalled them in poetry.

End of the Gilgamesh Epic -

- Which was written on twelve tablets. Gilgamesh was one of the successor of Enmerkar.
- He was a great hero who subdued people far and wide, he got a shock when his heroic friend died.
- He then set out to find the secret of immortality, crossing the waters that surround the world.
- After a heroic attempt, Gilgamesh failed, and returned to Uruk.
- There, he consoled himself by walking along the city wall, back and forth.



CITIES IN MESOPOTAMIAN CULTURE

How cities were mentioned in the poetry:

- He admired the foundations made of fired bricks that he had put into place.
- It is on the city wall of Uruk that the long tale of heroism and endeavour fizzles out.
- Gilgamesh does not say that even though he will die his sons will outlive him, as a tribal hero would have done.
- He takes consolation in the city that his people had built.



THE LEGACY OF WRITING

- Narratives can be transmitted orally but science requires written texts that generations of scholars can read and build upon.

Legacy of mesopotamia in time reckoning and multiplacation:

- Dating around 1800 BCE → Tablets with multiplication and division tables, Square- and square-root tables, Tables of compound interest.
- The division of the year, months, week and days
- Records about the observed positions of stars and constellations in the night sky and solar and lunar eclips.
- Thus writing was used not only keeping records for administration, but intellectuals who could build on the work of their predecessors.



An Early Library

In the iron age, the Assyrians of the north created an empire, at its height between 720 and 610 BCE, that stretched as far west as Egypt. The state economy was now a predatory one, extracting labour and tribute in the form of food, animals, metal and craft items from a vast subject population.

The great Assyrian kings, who had been immigrants, acknowledged the southern region, Babylonia, as the centre of high culture and the last of them, Assurbanipal (668-627 BCE), collected a library at his capital, Nineveh in the north. He made great efforts to gather tablets on history, epics, omen literature, astrology, hymns and poems. He sent his scribes south to find old tablets. Because scribes in the south were trained to read and write in schools where they all had to copy tablets by the dozen, there were towns in Babylonia where huge collections of tablets were created and acquired fame. And although Sumerian ceased to be spoken after about 1800 BCE, it continued to be taught in schools, through vocabulary texts, sign lists, bilingual (Sumerian and Akkadian) tablets, etc. So even in 650 BCE, cuneiform tablets written as far back as 2000 BCE were intelligible – and Assurbanipal's men knew where to look for early tablets or their copies.

Copies were made of important texts such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the copier stating his name and writing the date. Some tablets ended with a reference to Assurbanipal:

'I, Assurbanipal, king of the universe, king of Assyria, on whom the gods bestowed vast intelligence, who could acquire the recondite details of scholarly erudition, I wrote down on tablets the wisdom of the gods ... And I checked and collated the tablets. I placed them for the future in the library of the temple of my god, Nabu, at Nineveh, for my life and the well-being of my soul, and to sustain the foundations of my royal throne...'

More important, there was cataloguing: a basket of tablets would have a clay label that read: 'n number of tablets about exorcism, written by X'. Assurbanipal's library had a total of some 1,000 texts, amounting to about 30,000 tablets, grouped according to subject.



And, an Early Archaeologist!

A man of the southern marshes, Nabopolassar, released Babylonia from Assyrian domination in 625 BCE. His successors increased their territory and organised building projects at Babylon. From that time, even after the Achaemenids of Iran conquered Babylon in 539 BCE and until 331 BCE when Alexander conquered Babylon, Babylon was the premier city of the world, more than 850 hectares, with a triple wall, great palaces and temples, a ziggurat or stepped tower, and a processional way to the ritual centre. Its trading houses had widespread dealings and its mathematicians and astronomers made some new discoveries.

Nabonidus was the last ruler of independent Babylon. He writes that the god of Ur came to him in a dream and ordered him to appoint a priestess to take charge of the cult in that ancient town in the deep south. He writes:

'Because for a very long time the office of High Priestess had been forgotten, her characteristic features nowhere indicated, I bethought myself day after day ...'

Then, he says, he found the stele of a very early king whom we today date to about 1150 BCE and saw on that stele the carved image of the Priestess. He observed the clothing and the jewellery that was depicted. This is how he was able to dress his daughter for her consecration as Priestess.

On another occasion, Nabonidus's men brought to him a broken statue inscribed with the name of Sargon, king of Akkad. (We know today that the latter ruled around 2370 BCE.) Nabonidus, and indeed many intellectuals, had heard of this great king of remote times. Nabonidus felt he had to repair the statue. 'Because of my reverence for the gods and respect for kingship,' he writes, 'I summoned skilled craftsmen, and replaced the head.'



TIMELINE

c. 7000-6000 BCE Beginning of agriculture in the northern Mesopotamian plains

c. 5000 BCE Earliest temples in southern Mesopotamia built

c. 3200 BCE First writing in Mesopotamia

c. 3000 BCE Uruk develops into a huge city, increasing use of bronze tools

c. 2700-2500 BCE Early kings, including, possibly, the legendary ruler Gilgamesh

c. 2600 BCE Development of the cuneiform script

c. 2400 BCE Replacement of Sumerian by Akkadian

2370 BCE Sargon, king of Akkad

c. 2000 BCE Spread of cuneiform writing to Syria, Turkey and Egypt;
Mari and Babylon emerge as important urban centres

c. 1800 BCE Mathematical texts composed; Sumerian no longer spoken

c. 1100 BCE Establishment of the Assyrian kingdom

c. 1000 BCE Use of iron

720-610 BCE Assyrian empire

668-627 BCE Rule of Assurbanipal

331 BCE Alexander conquers Babylon

Akkadian and cuneiform remain in use

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