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World History

B5

9/24/12

Early Civilizations

There were several civilizations that have been classified as early civilizations, or civilizations that ranged and lived during the time period from 8,000 B.C. to 500 B.C. All of them have been primarily centered in Mesopotamia, Mesoamerica, and Asia. Despite miles of land and sea that separate these cultures, similarities can be found throughout, and in all time periods.

Take the Mesopotamians and the Asian civilizations. Geographically, every civilization encompassed in the two was created near water. Also, like most early civilizations, they thrived in the time period between 2,000 and 1,000 B.C. Most civilizations focused primarily on agricultural trading; however there were some people, examples include the Sumerians and the Shang Dynasty, who traded products such as cloth and silk. Another similarity between two cultures in these areas is the idea of theocracy. Egypt had this, where the power was given by the gods, and the Shang Dynasty had it to go with their traditional Chinese law. So you can see this idea developing about God Kings, or people whose power was given to them through some god, or many gods.

Moving on to the Mesopotamian and Mesoamerican civilizations, there is a natural occurrence that ties into our instincts. Unlike Asia, which could have possibly had similar animals to Mesopotamia, the Mesoamericans had a completely different set of animals. Yet there is still domestication occurring with the Incas and their llamas. This can lead people to believe that it is in human nature to make work easier for them, even for basic functions. The belief in spiritual beings was also common. All of the Mesoamerican civilizations were polytheistic, as were many of the Mesopotamian regions. The **wide** conclusion can also be made by tying together art and architecture, geography, and a culture’s beliefs. The area’s natural resources are a staple in the influence of art, take the Incans for example, gold and silver were found in abundance in their region, and can be found often in their art. Take the Assyrians, whose artwork depicted battle scenes and powerful emperors, and they were a brutal, military based society. Even though art was commonplace in each civilization, style depended and varied greatly on the society’s culture.

Then there are the Mesoamericans and Asia. What’s different about these cultures is that none of them were based in the fertile cresant. A theme of something being more than them can be seen as a part of both of these areas. Places like the Mayan civilization had art and architecture based around astrology and astronomy, and the Shang Dynasty believed in their ancestors, and spirits. So much so, that it was a key part of their ceremonies and burials. There are many differences in the two areas; one of the biggest is their social classes. The Indus River Valley civilization had no social classes, while the Aztecs had four, the nobles, the commoners, the serfs, and the slaves. It’s obvious that some things are part of human nature, like domestication, government, and belief in some sort of higher being. Other parts of our cultures come naturally as well, but expressed differently depending on outside factors. Art for example, differentiates because of interpretation and social factors. There is no concrete *this is what ALL places were like* because even the closest of neighbors sometimes had the biggest of differences.