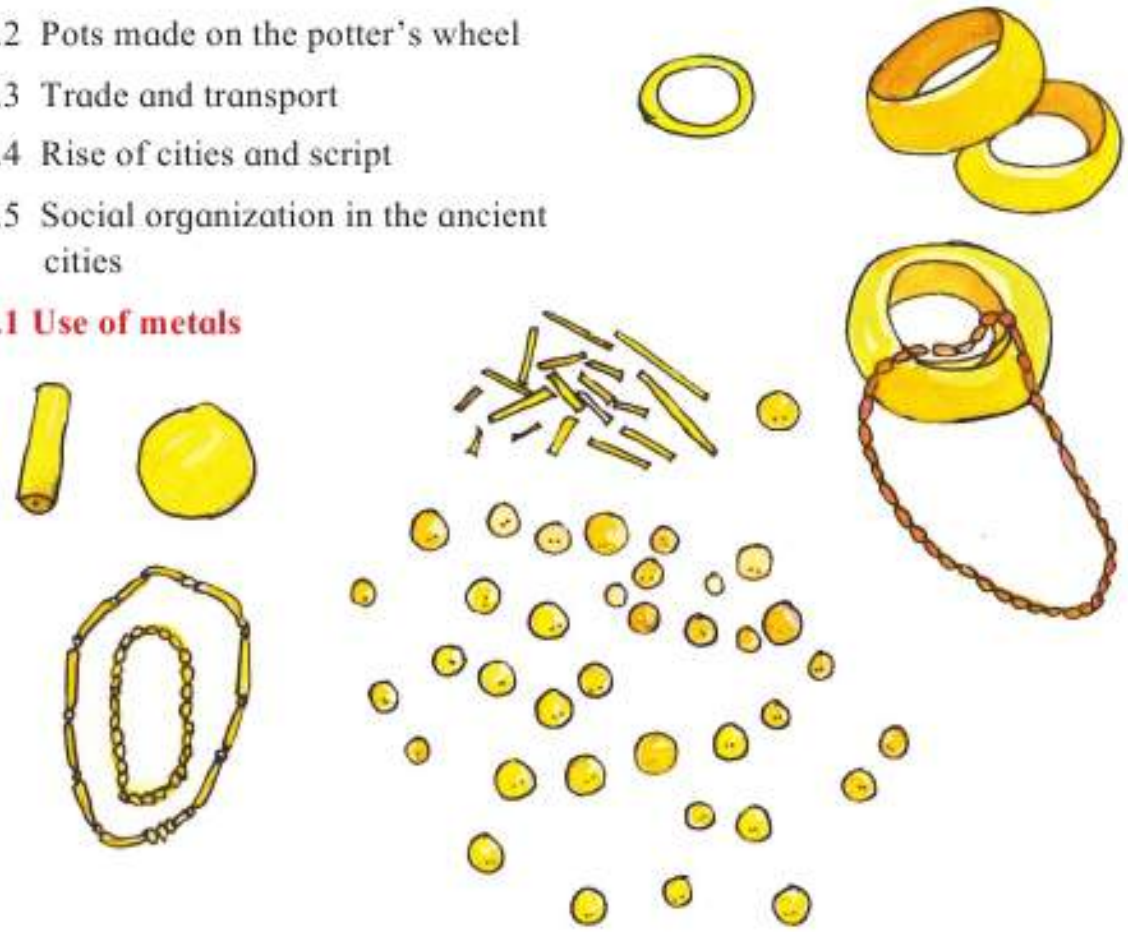
9. Settled Life and Urban Civilization

9.1 Use of metals



Ancient gold objects found in burials grounds – Bulgaria

You may have wondered about the first metal that humans used. Museums in Europe had large collections of pre-historic artefacts and antique objects. A scholar named Christian Thomsen introduced a method for classifying them. It is called the 'Three Age System'. Thomsen classified the objects into three groups.

1. Stone tools – Stone Age
2. Copper tools and other copper articles– Copper Age
3. Iron tools and other iron articles – Iron Age

Thomsen established with the help of evidence that stone tools were the earliest. The period of copper tools and articles was next. It was followed by the period of iron tools and articles. Accordingly, the three periods were named the Stone Age, Copper Age and Iron Age respectively. This gave rise to the belief that copper was the first metal to come into use.

Actually, gold was the first metal to be used. Gold is a soft metal. So it could not be used for making tools and implements. Humans then discovered another metal which could be used for these purposes. That metal was copper. The period when copper came into use is known as the 'Copper Age'.

numbers. In this period, people started making symmetrical and colourful pots with beautiful designs on them. Potters and other craftsmen began to live close to each other in the village-settlement so as to manage their work more easily. We can say that this became the industrial area of that village, where skilled craftsmen had their settlements and centres of production. This happened mainly in those village-settlements where the raw material was easily available and in those which were conveniently situated for trade. Such village-settlements expanded rapidly.

To make it easy to turn the pot while shaping it, a rotating plank was probably used at first. The pot was shaped with one hand, while the other was used to turn the plank. It is possible that the potter's wheel originated in the efforts to modify the rotating plank. Till recent times, tribal women in the north-eastern regions of our country shaped the pots by using a rotating plank.

A pointed quartz pebble fixed at the bottom of the potter's wheel. This pebble is known as a 'pivot'. When the potter's wheel is put in motion, it is balanced on this pivot and revolves with a great speed.

A potter in ancient Egypt working on a rotating plank or turntable.

9.2 Pots made on the potter's wheel

The Copper Age was the age of many new inventions and rapid changes. The invention of the wheel is the most important among them. It is generally agreed that the wheel was first used by potters. Its use in carts and chariots probably began a little later.

9.3 Trade and transport

Once the potters began to use a wheel, it became possible to make pots in large

As the scale of production increased, trade too expanded with it. Therefore, there was a need to change the old systems of transport. It was in this period that wheeled vehicles like carts and chariots were first brought into use.

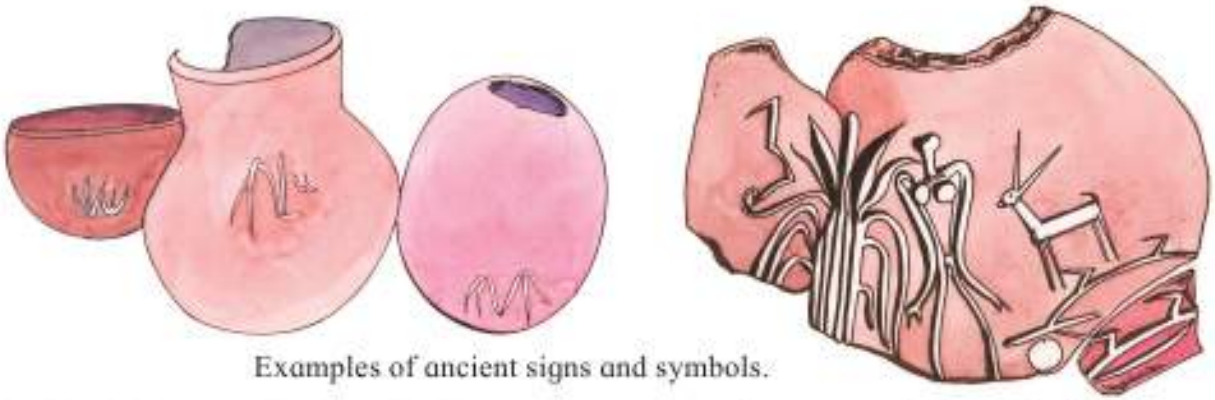
9.4 Rise of cities and script

Long distance trade, rapid transport of goods and centres of large scale production are factors that brought together people engaged in different types of work. It became necessary to keep permanent records of the expanding trade and growing production. By now, signs and symbols had already come into use for the purpose of record-keeping.

Broken pieces of clay pots (potsherds) with such signs have been found in large numbers during excavations. The increase in trade and production and the growth in the volume of records to be kept resulted in much modification and improvement in the signs and symbols used for these purposes. In this way, each culture developed its own script.

Wheeled carts and chariots were first used in Mesopotamia.

Harappan civilization (Indus civilization) was the earliest civilization on the Indian subcontinent. Wheeled toy-carts of that civilization.



Examples of ancient signs and symbols.

9.5 Social organization in the ancient cities

It is true that rise in trade had been the major factor that contributed to the emergence and development of cities. However, the culture of those cities had its roots in the culture of village-settlements of the New Stone Age. The faith system rooted in the agricultural way of life continued in the urban way of life too. The social life and festivals based on agricultural faith systems became more elaborate in cities that had prospered because of the rise in trade. Grand temples were built in many cities. Chiefs of those temples became chief administrators of those cities. Later, the positions of the temple head and that of the king went to the same individual. This was the beginning of the ancient urban civilizations of the world. We will learn more about them in the next lesson.

Exercises

1. From the chart below, find out the names of the three periods into which ancient objects are classified and use them to match the three classes given below.

S	I	G	P	M	I
C	O	P	P	E	R
A	E	C	O	L	O
S	T	O	N	E	N

(a) Stone tools : ---------- Age.

(b) Copper tools and other copper objects : ---------- Age.

(c) Iron tools and other iron objects : ---------- Age.

2. Arrange the following in chronological order.

(a) (1) Copper (2) Gold (3) Iron

(1) -------- (2) ------- (3) --------

(b) (1) Copper Age (2) Iron Age (3) Stone Age

(1) -------- (2) ------- (3) --------

3. Write about the consequences of the following events.

(a) Discovery of copper : ---------

(b) Invention of the wheel : ---------

(c) Use of script : ---------

4. Write notes.

(a) Use of metals

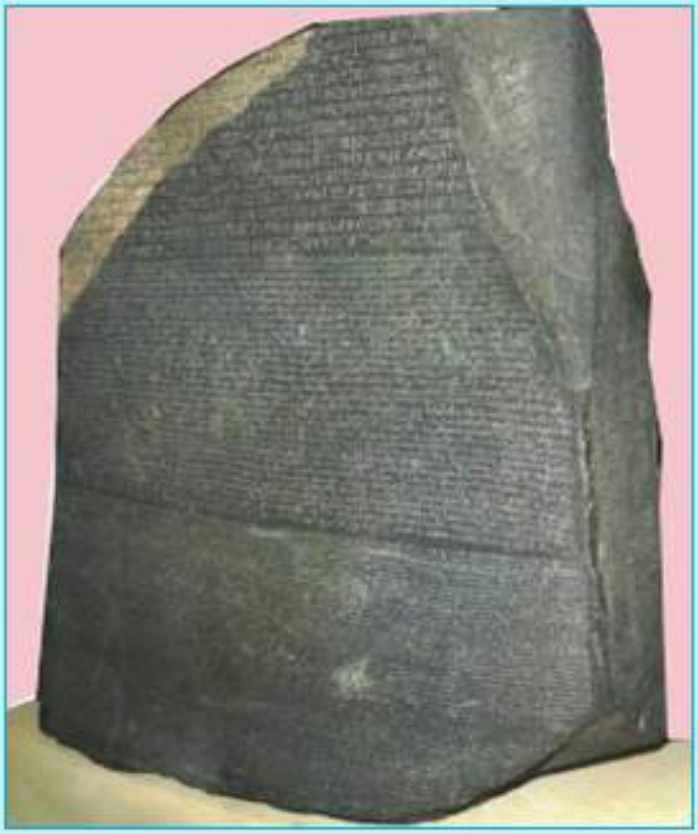
(b) Social organization in the ancient cities

Activities

(a) Make a list of various objects in your house mentioning the material they are made of.

(b) Collect passages from magazines in various languages, paste them in a notebook and make a note of your observations about the various scripts used.

Do you know this?



(1)

(2)

(3)

The Rosetta Stone

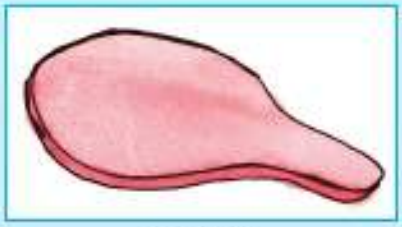
The inscription known as the 'Rosetta Stone' was discovered in 1799 AD. As the stone is broken, only a section of the original inscription is seen on it. The inscription is in the Egyptian language. Today, the Rosetta Stone is kept in the British Museum in London. At first sight, it appears to have three different inscriptions in three sections. But actually, the inscription consists of the same matter in three different scripts. The script in the topmost section is ancient Egyptian script known as 'hieroglyphs'. It means 'the script of gods'. The script in the middle section was used for routine documents and is known as the Demotic script. It was a simplified form of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The script in the bottom section is Greek.

This inscription announces the ascension of the new king Ptolemy V to the throne. This inscription has special importance as a source of Egyptian history because it became possible to read the forgotten Egyptian hieroglyphic script with the help of the other scripts on it. The name ' Ptolemius' written in the Demotic script was read first with the help of the Greek script. Later, a French teacher, Jean Francois Champollion was able to read the entire inscription. On reading the word Ptolemius, he realized that other names in the inscription from foreign countries or cultures could also be read in the same way. Hence, he first read all foreign names in the inscription and based on that work, prepared a chart of all the hieroglyphic letters. Thus, Champollion succeeded in reading the forgotten Egyptian hieroglyphic script.

There is evidence that copper was in use even 7000 years ago. In regions where copper was rare, it was not possible to use copper in large quantities. Therefore, people in such regions kept using mainly stone tools and implements even though they knew how to use copper. Copper objects are found at the ancient sites in such regions but only in very small numbers. Therefore, such sites are called 'Chalcolithic' sites and not as 'Copper Age' sites. 'Chalcos' means 'copper'. 'Lithos' means 'stone'. Thus the age of copper and stone is the Chalcolithic Age.

Although copper is harder than gold, it is still too soft for making objects from it. However, when tin is added to it, it becomes sufficiently hard. The mixture or 'alloy' of copper and tin is known as bronze. As people in the New Stone Age had begun to use bronze in the making of various objects, the New Stone Age is also known as the 'Bronze Age.' Metals must be melted to make an alloy. Knowledge of how to melt zinc and tin dates back to almost 1000 years before the making of bronze.

A pitcher



A mirror

A plate

Articles made from Copper - Indus Civilization

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