**History and civilization(H-106)**

**Mid-Semester Assignment**

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1. Where did the word ‘history’ come from? What is historiography?

# HISTORY:

# The general and commonly known term "History" basically refers to the knowledge of events that have taken place in past. This branch of knowledge encompasses past events accumulated via various means such as memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events.

# If we look back to its evolution, the term ‘history’ has evolved from an ancient Greek verb ‘historia’ that means ‘to know’. The word ‘historia’ originally meant inquiry and the knowledge that comes out of inquiry.

# HISTORIOGRAPHY:

# The historiography of a topic is the sum total of the interpretations of a specific topic written by past and current historians. Over the time various interpretations of a past event are made by various historians and they are not consistent with each other and differ from person to person hence in order to truly understand an event we have to study different interpretations at the same time. This involves critical examination of the facts presented by a particular historian and how they have interpreted them and to consult arguments and to reach a suitable conclusion. Therefore only by comparing various theories and interpretations one can truly understand a past event.

# This could be explained by taking an example:

# "The historiography of the decision to use the atomic bomb on Hiroshima changed over the years as new research questioned the former consensus view that the decision to drop the atomic bomb was predicated on the necessity to save American lives”

# 2. How did Carr differentiate between facts of the past and facts of history?

# According to Carr, history is an endless process of interaction; a dialogue between the historian in the present and the facts of the past and the relative weight of individuals and social elements on both sides of the equation. This means that history is highly influenced by the views of the historians and it is not to be considered very accurate.

# According to Carr facts could be broadly divided into two sub categories:->

# 1)Facts of the past

# 2)Facts of the history

# Facts of the past: According to the analysis done by Carr facts of the past are those facts which we know are consistent. Facts of the past do not change over the years.

# Facts of the history: According to Carr facts of the history are the interpretations of the facts of the past made by various historians over the years and they could differ from each other and can also be inconsistent. Facts of the history can change over the years as new interpretations are made regarding the event in question.

# This could be understood by taking an example:

# The decision to use the atomic bomb on Hiroshima by America is a fact of the past but the reason why America decided to use the bomb is a fact of history and has changed over the years as fresh interpretations have been made and one of them is as new research questioned the former consensus view that the decision to drop the atomic bomb was predicated on the necessity to save American lives.

# So, we can say that history by contrast is the interpretation of crude facts done by various historians therefore history is not just what happened in the past but also how the historians interpreted it on their own.

# 4. What are the benefits and pitfalls of using written/ textual sources of history?

# Benefits of using written/ textual sources of history:

# 1) As it is very easy to transport written form of history, so the detailed information can be easily distributed all over the world to the people living in various countries.

# 2) The written sources of history provide much more detailed and accurate information about the events of the past than what is being provided by the vocal sources .

# 3) Written material can be easily translated to different languages hence more and more people can enhance their knowledge and language doesn’t act as barrier for people having different dialects.

# 4)They are very important to attain knowledge about believes, traditions, ideologies and various other aspects of the lives of various civilizations that used to exist in the past and are no longer present.

# 5)Written sources are very important as they could be preserved easily and knowledge could be passed from one generation to another.

# Pitfalls of using written/ textual sources of history:

# 1)It is an expensive process to store history in the form of written records because purchasing materials required to produce them is an expensive process.

# 2) Another major disadvantage of written sources is that it can only provide the knowledge to literate people.

# 3) Written form of history could be easily misinterpreted.

# 4) These are based on the opinion of the historian and hence they can be biased.

5. What are the main characteristics of civilization according to V. Gordon Childe?

Gordon Childe gave a list of 10 attributes that distinguished a civilisation from other kind of societies. He divided them into two categories namely primary characteristics and secondary characteristics.

Primary Characteristics:

1. Urban settlements: It has an area which is densely populated with human-created structures.
2. Full-time specialists who are not involved in agriculture: It means that the society has people who are indulged in various professions and perform different jobs to ensure proper functioning of the society.
3. Concentration of surplus production: surplus is systematically extracted from the peasant masses and gathered into central royal or temple granaries for later use.
4. Class structure: People are to be divided into various classes based on economic or social conditions.
5. Government: People need to be governed by a body which makes laws and enforces them.

Secondary Characteristics:

1. mental public buildings: The monumental public buildings serve as both symbols of wealth and power that came from control of agricultural surplus, and as anchors for city form.
2. Extensive trading networks: Trading networks are important so as to maintain the flow of necessary goods in the civilisation.
3. Writing: Writing is important to record and transfer information.
4. Monumental artwork: Monumental art gives expression to the idea contained in a building, ensemble, or architecturally organized space
5. Development of sciences: Sciences play an important in the growth of a civilization.

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# 6.What are the major theories of origin of civilization? Explain any one in detail.

# A civilization is any [complex society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complex_society) characterized by [urban development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_area), [social stratification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_stratification), a form of government and [symbolic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbol) systems of communication such as [writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing_system).

# Some of the major theories of civilization are:

# 1) The “social surplus” theory (V. Gordon Childe)

# 2) The “hydraulic hypothesis” (Karl Wittfogel)

# 3) The “circumscription” theory (Robert Carniero)

# 4) The “success in competition” theory (William Sanders and Barbara Price)

# 5) The “war finance” theory (David Webster)

# #THE WAR FINANCE THEORY

# The scenario starts with settlements that have come to be organized as chiefdoms. The chief’s position is the position of the leader and is considered to be a hereditary position that means it runs in family. The chief provides goods to his followers who in return provide him with support. As the population grows, the chances of conflicts between settlements also grow and when such a conflict happens the successful chief secures some land and goods which he further distributes to increase his power. His gains from raids or warfare “finance” his activities. As the goods procured are distributed further based on the services, he received from the people the wealth and status difference increase in the settlement because some people get these benefits while others don’t. The chief establishes a body of professional soldiers which in turn increases social stratification and develop classes in the settlement. The chief also sets up various interest groups for the people loyal to him. All the above leads to the origin of a new civilization.

# 7)Write a note on Egyptian pyramids.

# Pyramids have always been a part of the legacy of the Egyptian civilization and Egyptians have always been admired because of their architectural advancements.

# The Egyptian pyramids are ancient [pyramid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_(geometry))-shaped masonry structures located in [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). The shape of Egyptian pyramids is thought to represent the [primordial mound](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benben) from which the Egyptians believed the earth was created. These pyramids were built when the Egyptian civilisation was at the zenith of its power and was considered to be one of the most advanced civilisations.

# Antient Egyptians considered their King to be a messenger of god and they also believed that after death a part of soul remained intact with the body and it was their duty to take proper care of the body after death. Pyramids were considered to be the last resting place for the king and to properly care for the king’s soul, the corpse was mummified, and everything the king would need in the afterlife was buried with him, including gold vessels, food, furniture and other offerings. Antient Egyptians believed that they could take their riches to the afterlife. They also believed that the riches that were buried with them were also responsible to take care of their loved ones in the afterlife. The oldest known pyramid in Egypt was built around 2630 B.C. at Saqqara, for the third dynasty’s King Djoser.

# The pyramids of Giza are considered to be architectural marvels and are the most famous of all the pyramids .The Egyptians believed the [dark area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumpolar_star) of the [night sky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_sky) around which the stars [appear to revolve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diurnal_motion) was the physical gateway into the heavens. One of the narrow shafts that extend from the main burial chamber through the entire body of the Great Pyramid points directly towards [the center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celestial_pole) of this part of the sky. This suggests the pyramid may have been designed to serve as a means to magically launch the deceased pharaoh's(king’s) soul directly into the abode of the gods

# 8. Write a brief note on Mesopotamian script.

# One of the major advancements in the Mesopotamian civilization was the development of writing system called Cuneiform system. The earliest form of writing began as pictographs that involved the use of pictures to record and convey information . The earliest evidence of Mesopotamian pictographs dates back to 3200 BCE .

# Overtime the writing system in Mesopotamia evolved and the pictures transformed into symbols and these symbols were combined to form various words to convey messages.

# This system which used symbols to was named Cuneiform system. The word cuneiform means wedge shaped and this word wad used for this system because all the symbols were shaped like triangular wedges. Cuneiform writing was done on a clay tablet and a special tool called stylus was used for this task .

This system was use by the people to note down there day to say activities and was also used to write down stories. The most renowned literary work of the Mesopotamian civilisation was “the epic of Gilgamesh ” and it is perhaps the earliest known work of literature .

These Cuneiform tablets provide knowledge about the society , trade and economy of the Mesopotamian civilisation and have played a very important role in understanding this antient civilisation .