



Unit 3 Overview - Early Agrarian Societies

This period saw massive changes in the ways we organized ourselves into communities, with the development of more complex societies in the form of villages, cities, and the first states.



<p>0:03</p> <p><i>Series of several photos, including: the ruins of an ancient city, a map of the Babylonian Empire, a carved stone depicting Hammurabi receiving a scroll, and a clay tablet</i></p>	<p>I'd like to introduce you to a boy named Iddin-Sin. Iddin-Sin was a real person. He was a student from a wealthy family 3,800 years ago. He lived in the Mesopotamian city of Larsa, part of the Babylonian Empire. His father worked for King Hammurabi. Iddin-Sin was studying to become a scribe, or a priest, or maybe a government official like his father. He wrote this letter on a clay tablet and sent it home to his mom:</p>
<p><i>An individual writes on a clay tablet, using cuneiform script</i></p>	<p>May the gods Shamesh, Mardok, and Ilabrat keep you forever in good health, for my sake. From year to year the clothes of the young gentleman here become better, but you let my clothes get worse from year to year. Indeed, you persisted in making my clothes poorer and more scanty. At the time when in our house, wool is used up like bread you have made me poor clothes. The son of Adad-iddinam, whose father is only an assistant of my father, has two new sets of clothes, while you fuss even about a single set of clothes for me. In spite of the fact that you bore me, and his mother only adopted him, his mother loves him while you, you do not love me!</p>
<p>1:28</p> <p><i>Montage of photos depicting the ruins of ancient cities</i></p>	<p>Iddin-Sin's letter is evidence that there are some constants in human societies, like the importance of looking good, and the relationship between children and parents. But it's also evidence of several changes underway, at the time he was writing.</p>
<p><i>Series of images depicting ancient cities, an Egyptian merchant ship, and an ancient world map; image of the Unit 3 Driving Question: How did early agrarian societies develop and how did they impact humans inside and outside these communities?</i></p>	<p>At the beginning of this period there were no cities, no states, and no long-distance trade. Yet, by 100 CE, societies across much of the planet had changed radically. Cities, states and long-distance trade networks spread across many regions. How did these complex political and economic systems develop? How did they impact the people who lived in and near them?</p>
<p>2:16</p> <p><i>Series of paintings depicting early agrarian societies and cities around the world; illustrated scroll depicting individuals working as priests, administrators, and scribes; Egyptian painting depicting the process of production and distribution</i></p>	<p>The Agricultural Revolution transformed human societies. Some communities began to settle in permanent villages. Many continued to forage. But increasingly, people relied on farming. Agrarian societies could create surplus food, that meant that they produced more than they needed, so not everyone had to farm. Eventually, some Villages became densely populated, covered larger areas, and became more urbanized. They became cities like the one Iddin-Sin called home. Bigger populations meant that new forms of leadership were needed to make decisions. Specialists like soldiers, scribes, priests, and administrators, including Iddin-Sin's father, assisted rulers in maintaining control. Cities transformed the production and distribution of goods. Some farmers stopped farming and became specialists, making goods like leather, parchment, iron tools, or clothes, like Iddin-Sin's mother.</p>



<p>3:18</p> <p><i>Series of images depicting the benefits and drawbacks of living in early cities; photo of an early water canal</i></p>	<p>Life in cities offered many benefits, such as protection from raiders, a reliable food source, and in some places, even running water. Yet these comforts came at a cost. Early cities were dirty, and ruled by kings and elites. Residents had to pay taxes, and when a famine or war struck, the results were often catastrophic.</p>
<p>3:50</p> <p><i>Montage of various artworks depicting local trade in city centers and regional trade by camel and sea</i></p>	<p>As cities grew, so did networks of trade. The most important networks were local. Different villages, cities, and nomadic communities produced and needed different things. They traded with nearby communities who had access to different types of food and goods, but over time, trade routes grew and spread across longer distances. People began trading for things they wanted, rather than only things they needed. Long-distance trade routes moved luxury goods to wealthy people who could afford them, like Iddin-Sin's family and the king they served.</p>
<p>4:26</p> <p><i>Egyptian paintings depicting the benefits and drawbacks of long-distance trade, highlighting both the wealth and conflict that was created</i></p>	<p>As with life in cities, long-distance trade came with benefits and drawbacks. It made some people very rich, but that created inequity. Trade moved ideas and technologies to new places, improving life for many, but sometimes carrying the risk of disease and conflict.</p>
<p>4:50</p> <p><i>Montage of images depicting the growth of states and the emergence of political leaders with large armies and religious leaders who have the ear of the king</i></p>	<p>As cities and the networks connecting them grew, states developed. Larger populations required stronger governments to manage them. Often priests religions emerged to support rulers. There are lots of definitions for state, but the term refers to the organized way a territory is ruled. States make and enforce laws, levy taxes, and manage armies. Some rulers of states, like King Hammurabi, conquered other cities and other states and created the first empires, like the one Iddin-Sin called home.</p>
<p>5:25</p> <p><i>Photo of the tablet Iddin-Sin sent home to his mother; series of artworks depicting an individual bowing down to a king, members of nobility wearing fancy clothing, and people reading and writing</i></p>	<p>Iddin-Sin's life, and the things he cared about, help us understand his world. He lived in a city. He believed in gods. He hoped to serve the king, rather than grow crops. As a member of a wealthy class, his social status depended on fancy clothes. Unlike most people at the time, he could read and write. Writing added complexity to human society, and made the job of historians possible, preserving information for us to read 3,800 years later, telling us a story about a world that was very different from ours in some ways, but eerily similar in others.</p> <p>When future historians read what you've written, what will they learn about your life?</p>



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