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## **BASIC ACTIVITIES OF CIVILIZATION**

### **1. TOOL MAKING**

All civilizations develop tools. A plow is a tool used to alter the environment for agriculture. Boats, and weapons are also examples of tools. Eating utensils may also be classified as tools. The gold miners in West Africa developed tools.

### **2. PRODUCING, CONSUMING, EXCHANGING**

People along river valleys used plows to turn the land and grow crops. This provided them not only with enough to feed themselves, but a surplus that could be traded. Some cultures mined natural resources that they traded for other goods. An example of this type of producing and exchanging is the salt/gold trade of the West African Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay.

### **3. TRANSPORTATION**

Geography determines the method of transportation in many societies. Trade goods in ancient Africa were transported in boats along great rivers, by carts over land, and, and by camel caravan through the desert. The largest caravans in the Saharan Sudanic region carried the gold-salt trade and pilgrims to Mecca.

### **4. COMMUNICATION**

Early writing developed in order to mark the contents of storage vessels, and to record trade transactions. It later recorded great deeds of the rulers and kings and their gods, and provided a systematic way of communicating with others. The writings of Ibn Battuta chronicled the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa and told of the great wealth of the Empire of Mali throughout Africa, the Middle East, and even to Europe.

### **4. EDUCATION**

People need to be taught important knowledge about agriculture, trade, and writing, to insure that a civilization thrives. In ancient civilizations, not all people were taught to read and write. Some were only taught the skills of a particular trade. Education was controlled by priest-kings and scribes. The great Mali emperor, Mansa Musa established great Islamic learning centers at Timbuktu and Gao. The *griot* (story teller) of West Africa educated the people about the history of the great Mali Empire and its rulers Sundiata and Mansa Musa.

### **5. PROTECTING AND CONSERVING**

It was important to protect and conserve a kingdom's land, culture, way of life and its history. The history was inscribed on buildings and on early paper, history. In some cultures, the history was conserved through the oral tradition. In West Africa, the griot, story-telling tradition continues to this day. Trained armies protected the civilization, thus insuring the country was protected from foreign invasion. Armies could also increase the size of a kingdom through conquest. Mansa Musa's general, Sagmandia expanded the Mali empire by capturing Gao, the Songhai capital, which greatly expanded the Mali empire.

### **7. GOVERNING**

To provide order to the society, insure protection of political boundaries, and interact with other cultures, a framework of government was put in place. Governments established rules and laws for the people, and controlled interactions with other

cultures. The Mali empire was ruled by an emperor, called a *mansa*. Mansa Musa was a great Mali *mansa* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

8. **RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL AND MORAL BELIEFS**

A civilizations' beliefs become codified in ritual, and a system of right conduct, which is taught to all citizens, and social class and conduct developed. The religious beliefs generally mirror the geography and environment. Early river civilizations believed in many gods, which took both animal and human form. Some early civilizations were animistic, believing all things possessed a spirit. Sometimes, religion is brought as a result of trade or conquest. Islam was brought to the west African by traders in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 12<sup>th</sup> century the rulers and people of Mali worshiped Allah. The great Mali king, Mansa Musa's made a pilgrimage to Mecca. This pilgrimage was well documented by the Islamic traveler, Ibn Battuta..

9. **AESTHETICS**

Early civilizations began to use art in its pure form, as decoration. Art also appeared on functional objects such as pottery, on burial items, in body art, in jewelry, on paper, and in architecture. In the ancient city of Jenna, clay figures and pots have been unearthed. The architecture of the clay Mosques of Timbuktu were considered both unique and beautiful.

10. **RECREATION**

As civilizations developed and evolved, the use of tools increased man's ability to complete work in less time. This extra time ( leisure) was used for games and relaxation.