



## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category (circle one):** Iranian Religion/Ceremony **History** Prayer Gathas  
Comparative Religion Shahnameh

**Age Group (circle one):** PreK-K Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 **Grades 6-8** Grades 9-12

**Lesson #:** Pre-Achaemenid Empire-Lesson 8

**Subject of the Lesson:** Pre-Aryan Civilization in Today's Iran

Focus: Burnt City, Susa, Elam, scientific discoveries

### Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

#### Lesson Objective:

Examples will be shown in this lesson to familiar students with and demonstrate that Iran had a successful civilization before the Aryan migration into the Iranian plateau.

Lesson Duration: approximately 1- 1.5 hours

#### Burnt City (Shahr-i Sokhta):

Recognized a UNESCO world heritage site in 2014, is located near Zabol in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, the ancient site of Shahr-i Sokhta ("Burnt City") is one of the largest and richest Bronze Age sites in Iran and the Middle East. It is believed by some to have been the capital of an ancient civilization that flourished on the banks of the Helmand River around 3,200 BCE. However, **the latest excavations** have provided a different story. Carbon 14 dating of charcoal collected from kilns and hearths at the site now suggests that Shahr-i Sokhta is about three to four centuries older than previously believed.



Archaeologists have found that Shahr-i Sokhta was in fact a trade center for merchants from **Mesopotamia**, the Indus Valley, and Central Asia. It represents the emergence of the first complex societies in eastern Iran. It exhibits a transition from village habitation to an urbanized community from the late Chalcolithic to the early Bronze Age (third millennium BCE). Shahr-I Sokhta was burnt down three times and not rebuilt after the last fire in around 1800 BCE.

Some of the findings at Burnt City:

1. Remains of a woman in her late 20's who died between 2900-2800 BCE was discovered buried with an ornate bronze mirror and what researchers believe to be an artificial eyeball made of bitumen paste and gold. It was once held in place with fine thread. Microscopic examination showed that the artificial eye socket left an imprint in the eye socket, a sign that it was there for a long period of time before her death.



2. Skull of a 13–14-year-old girl was found that anthropologists believe might have been the first evidence of brain surgery in prehistoric Iran dating to about 5000 years ago. From the development in the skull scientists know that this girl was still alive 6-9 months after the surgery.
3. Oldest animation in history. By quick turning the vessel in circles, the painted animal would seem to jump up and down.



4. Evidence indicating women in charge of financial matters.
5. People with different beliefs lived together and used the same cemetery to bury their departed.
6. One of the outstanding discoveries of the Burnt City is a **backgammon board with pieces (checkers) and two dice**. This backgammon made of ebony was found in tomb no. 761 (Fig. 1–A) (5). The backgammon board was fashioned by 20 snake coils taking the tail into its mouth.



Backgammon board with pieces and two dice

There is evidence of trading ties between Burnt City and other civilizations to the East and West of the region. One of these great civilizations to the east of Burnt City was Elam. Elamite accounting tablets were found in Burnt City, **showing** evidence of trading ties between the two great civilizations.



Elamite accounting tablet found in Burnt City, Iran

### **Elam (2700 BCE – 539 BCE) and Susa (c. 4200 BCE-1218 CE):**

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE, the earliest kingdom arose in south-western Iran, called Elam. The Elamite kingdom lasted for a long time, and eventually they lost their power to a new group of people in the region called the Persians.

About ancient civilizations in Iran, most scholars talk about the Assyrians, the Hittites, the Medes, the Persians, etc. However, the Elamites ruled in this region around 2000 years before the Achaemenids in the Iranian plateau.

Elam, also called Susiana, was the region in southwestern Iran approximately equivalent to the modern-day *Khuzestan*. Susa was Elam's capital and political center. Susa, a UNESCO world heritage site, was one of the oldest cities in the world until destroyed by the invading Mongols in 1218 CE, however, part of the site is still inhabited as Shush, Khuzestan province of Iran. Evidence of a continuous occupancy in Susa has been estimated to be around 4395 BCE, however, there is evidence of dwellings in Susa dating back to 7000 BCE. Susa was the principal city of the Elamite, the Achaemenids, and the Parthians. It was originally known to the Elamites as *Susan* or *Susun*.

Archaeologists have discovered a variety of artefacts and artifacts that helped them reconstruct the history of Susa.



Above: Map of Elam and city of Susa

The Elamite period lasted from about 2400 BCE to Cyrus the Great's seizure of power in 539 BCE. This span of almost two thousand years of Susa's history is inseparable from that of Elam. Excavations of Susa and its surrounding area have enabled archaeologists to establish Elamite history.

A rough description of the city of Susa has been made possible by archeological excavations and Elamite inscriptions. The city appeared to be divided into three separate sectors: **The Acropolis, the Palace, and the city proper with its living quarters.**



The city of Susa in Persia/Iran, Province of Khuzestan

The Acropolis is referred to as the High City. It included a sacred sector referred to as high temple, belonging to the Royal Palace. The palace complex was surrounded by luxurious homes, which belonged to the nobles.

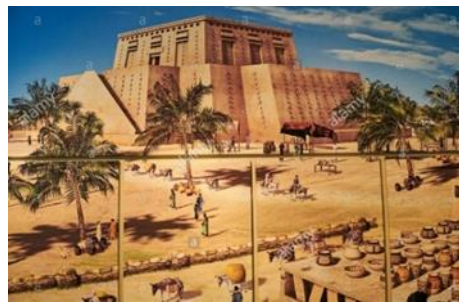
#### LITTLE PALACES:

These homes, which were in fact little palaces, provided great comfort. There were fireplaces in them, the most frequent type being intended for heating, while the rest were used for cooking. There were also sanitary installations, such as baths and latrines. In this part of the Royal City, the earliest buildings are dated around 1700 BCE (while on the Acropolis, they date to at least 4000 BCE).

Much later, housing for small shopkeepers, artisans, and workers were located to the east on several hills. But these broad sectors are yet little known, for the archeologists have only explored a small part of them.



Susa, Iran – UNESCO



Susa painting- National Museum of Art

#### VILLAGE PERSE-ACHAEMENID:

The most interesting site is called the “Village Perse-Achaemenid,” which provided a neo-Elamite tablet and two documents from the Achaemenid period. Just like everywhere else, people started learning to read and to write. There are numerous school tablets illustrating the work of students.

Artistic crafts are also abundantly illustrated in the excavations. The inhabitants of Susa were distinguished in their exceptional quality of stonework, metalwork, and work on clay.

#### NATURE AND FOOD:

Finally, Susa and its surroundings enjoyed a climate that allowed for various kinds of agriculture and the breeding of cattle, sheep, and goats. The surrounding environment was effectively used for fishing and hunting, which provided a considerable addition to their food supply.

Susa later became the administrative capital of the Achaemenian King Darius I and his successors from 522 BCE.

Susa is one of the most important cities of the world’s ancient civilizations.

### Wine Making:

Archaeological findings show that the earliest wine in the world was made in Iran at Godin Tepe in Western Iran in the fourth millennium BCE. The Godin Tepe was situated along the east-west trade route plays along with the story of Shiraz grape having been taken to the West from this area. We see evidence of cultural wine drinking during the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BCE) in form of long drinking vessels known as *rhyton*. During the Sassanid Dynasty, and the reign of Khosrow I, there is evidence of various kinds of wine being distinguished by their color and filtering technique. The importance of wine culture has continued in Iran to this day evident in Iranian paintings and poetry.



Above: Sample images of rhythons



Above: Wine residue found in discovered vessels



Above: Wine in Iranian art

### Lesson for Student:

1. Use the material to make a PowerPoint to share with students.
2. The lesson can be enhanced by YouTube videos:
  - a. Burnt City (Shahr-i sokhta)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTHCQNct0Bw>
  - b. Elam  
[The Elamites - The Early History of Elam and its People \(Part 1\) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjfaafRjHvA)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjfaafRjHvA>)
  - c. Susa today  
[Susa - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt97ahE2pG4) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt97ahE2pG4>)

### Activity for Student:

1. Have the students draw a moving animation like that found in burnt city.
  - a. Take 6 flash cards paper and staple them together.
  - b. Have students choose a theme in motion and draw each stage on one corner of each flash card so that at the end by quickly shuffling the cards one can visualize a cartoon.
2. Have a blank map of Mesopotamia and Iran.
  - a. You can use the link below to acquire the map.  
<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://c8.alamy.com/comp/2C29H1T/world-map-of-arabian-peninsula-middle-east-saudi-arabia-iraq-persian-gulf-the-emirates-geographic-chart-2C29H1T.jpg&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1662676382194085&usg=AOvVaw0eWHOLpwcEY60PCo4EzNm2>
  - b. Have students mark the location of the civilizations they learned about on the map.
  - c. Include geological obstacles such as mountains and deserts.
  - d. Talk about how these geological features helped them or played against them.
3. Make a Kahoot Game
4. Make a *rhython* using clay.

**Sources:**

1. Google
2. Encyclopedia Iranica
3. Encyclopedia Britannica
4. <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/strange-ritualistic-burials-001891>
5. [http://www.parstimes.com/history/burnt\\_city\\_findings.html](http://www.parstimes.com/history/burnt_city_findings.html)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTHCQNct0Bw>
7. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1456/>
8. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/468385/Elamite-clay-tablet-uneearthed-in-mysterious-Burnt-City>
9. <https://www.worldhistory.org/susa/>
10. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1456/>
11. <https://www.worldhistory.org/susa/>
12. [https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Culture/wine\\_good.htm](https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Culture/wine_good.htm)

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