

FOOTPRINTS OF CIVILIZATION

You don't stumble upon your heritage.
It's there, just waiting to be explored and shared.

6 x 48 min.

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Premise

Modern cultures owe a great deal to the ancient civilizations that developed over millions of years of human evolution. We draw much more from their legacy than we generally realize. The Inca, Mesopotamian, Persian, Greek, Chinese, Egyptian, Roman, and Indus civilizations all still exert deep influences. In this series we will explore how, and to what extent these ancient Civilizations have contributed to our world. Architecture, Science, Society, Communication, Agriculture, Art & Culture, Exploration and The Art of War are the themes.

What remains of these ancient civilizations? What persists today? What did our predecessors invent, create or build in terms of science, communication, economics, politics and social relations? What are the universal influences that came from different cultures and civilizations? We will discover these influences, and explore how they are still at work today in modern cultures all over the world. This compelling series will dig deep, exploring discoveries that changed the course of history, and are still very much in use in contemporary society.

Concept

We will explore and celebrate exactly how much and in which way ancient civilizations have contributed to our development and growth. We will discover how many inventions, constructions, and their underlying philosophical, social and political ideas, and even strategic military ideas are still intact and in currently daily use.

The wheel. We take it for granted, use it daily, it keeps society turning. It has been part of civilization for over 5000 years. The basis of mathematics, studied by children study all over the world, lies in ancient India where the first use of decimal system was recorded. An integral and celebrated core of western society's daily existence, democracy, was developed by the ancient Greeks. The Romans developed the concept of the republic and senate. Written language developed independently in China in 5000BC, in the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia and in Mesoamerica around 3100 BC, and subsequently in Egypt in 300BC. Paper was invented around 100BC in China. A paper making industry began there in 100AD.

We will feature interviews with experts in mathematics, astronomy, architecture, sociology, politics, economics and history. Interviews that will give us insight into where and how technological, social and philosophical ideas and developments made by ancient civilizations remain embedded deep at the heart of our modern world. We will learn how much we owe to, and have inherited from these civilizations.

Inventions, monuments, structures, technology, concepts and our perception of the world and universe we inhabit, will all be explored as we delve into the great and living legacy of the ancient civilizations that surrounds us and permeates our daily lives in ways we often don't realize.

We will blend unique and extraordinary footage with expertinterviews and superb CGI graphics, to lead our audience on a journey of exploration through time and history to discover and understand, the long road we have travelled as mankind, developing and honing our technologies and ideas.

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The Episodes

Episode 1: Architecture

Whether in terms of new materials, techniques or simply vision, some civilizations gave more to Architecture than others. In this episode, we explore the predecessors of our enormous skyscrapers, and explain which ancient architectural inventions are still in use today. We visit ancient architectural wonders, and investigate and wonder at how our ancestors accomplished their design and construction without access to modern tools.

The Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Etruscans all built monumental architectural buildings. In these civilizations, buildings were designed to be impressive when viewed from outside. Roman architecture differed fundamentally from this tradition. The discovery and development of concrete allowed them to experiment and exploit it in different ways, building arches and vaults. Through these innovations, from the first century C. E, the Romans were able to create interior spaces that had previously been unheard of and build structures that have lasted for centuries. Even today, in the second millennium, we can walk across the beautiful Roman Alcantara bridge over the river Tagus in Spain. It was built by order of the Emperor Trajan between 104 and 106 AD.



Episode 2: Science and Technology

The invention of wheel in Mesopotamia. The great philosophers and thinkers of ancient Greece. The invention of gunpowder in China. Astronomy and the knowledge of the stars of the Incas. Zero and decimals, the basis of mathematics in ancient India. Whether for peaceful purposes, greater understanding of the world around us, or for military use, since the dawn of mankind, human beings have been developing and perfecting technology and science wherever we are. These innovations and breakthroughs have contributed to the development of modern technological society. Many of the inventions still remain, are in use, and changed in form over the course of time. The alarm clock has been around since Plato in 428–348 BCE. Whatever its purpose or use every invention or theory has pushed society forward to innovate and develop.



Episode 3: Society

In this episode we will look at the great philosophers who radically changed our ways of thinking. Their ideas have influenced and changed the way ordinary people have lived, and understood their world. Ideas that have often brought philosophical hope and purpose to life. The humanism of Chinese philosophy, and understanding of role of the individual and their place in society as expressed by Lao Tzu, Confucius and Mencius.

Plato, Aristotle, the Greek thinkers and their invention of the republic. The Olympic games, the great unifying event that has brought people of all races and religions together in peace through sport originated in Greece. The Roman creation of political instruments still in use today such as the senate. We explore all of these ideas and realities and look at how they have entered into and influenced the fabric of human social life and thought as they have developed and transformed societies in their long journey from inception in ancient civilizations.



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Episode 4: Communication

Every great civilization has developed and relied on effective means of communication. From the first Sumerian cuneiform writings on limestone tablets in Mesopotamia dating back to 3500 BC, through Egyptian hieroglyphs, only a few hundred years later, to the ancient Chinese system of symbols dating back to 1200 BC, developed societies have used writing to record events and develop ideas. The initial spread of literacy in Europe was the result of Roman expansion through the continent. When the Romans conquered and colonized a territory, their sophisticated way of life influenced and transformed the area, enriching it with their inventions and language.

As Christianity spread, and manuscripts were copied by monks in their monasteries, the process accelerated. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1440 finally introduced reading to masses. The privilege of education and simple literacy was finally moving away from the control of the church. Ultimately, the goal of communication is to connect and bring people together through ideas. We will explore and discover how the most significant, different forms written language have developed and led to our complex communication driven modern global society.



Episode 5: Agriculture

Great agricultural innovations developed out of the need to feed growing societies. This episode focuses on the need to take care of millions of people, and make their lives easier. The Sumer civilization of Mesopotamia invented the plough. A simple tool that is in use today, tilling the land all over the world, whether pulled by horses, buffalo or giant modern tractors. The ancient Egyptians developed agricultural irrigation. They had always used the seasonal flood waters of the Nile to nourish their crops in a barren and inhospitable land.

The development of irrigation canals allowed them to direct and control the water, to produce sustainable annual crops. The verdant ribbon of the Nile delta is irrigated by the direct descendants of these canal builders to this day, as it slices through the scorching arid desert. Remains of watermills that were in use in ancient Greece have been found. The principle of generating power through the movement of water has not changed to this day, and can be seen at work in modern water turbines.



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Episode 6: Art & Culture

Each culture and society is unique in its distinctive location and time. In India art forms such as painting, architecture and sculpture evolved in a unique way. The Kama Sutra, famed for its illustrations and a text that proposes gracious living, discusses the nature of love, family life and how to gain pleasure in daily life focuses in part on the techniques and courtesies of sexual relations and union. Its graphic images and poetic text led many to view it as one of the world's great works of art. Copper working was recorded as having been worked in Babylonia, modern day Iraq, as early as 2000 BC. Copper working spread all over the world. The Terracotta warriors, an assembly of 8,099 individual life-size terracotta figures, infantry, cavalry, horses, chariots, archers, and military officers are one of ancient China's most famous historic treasures. These stunning artifacts were buried in the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the First Qin Emperor, in 210 BC.

The Olmec Bird Vessel and bowl are considered among ancient America's most striking artworks. They are both ceramic and date to circa 1000 BC. They and most Olmec ceramics were produced in kilns capable of generating heat that exceeded around 900 °C. The only other ancient culture known to have achieved such high temperatures in their pottery kilns was that of Ancient Egypt. Through these and other artworks we will explore the heritage that has travelled with them through the ages, influencing our multicultural perception of life and human values, teaching the lesson of social coexistence in peace and prosperity.



Alternative Episode: Exploration & The Art of War

From the dawn of civilization, innate curiosity has led people to question and explore the world and universe. Exploration pushed the boundaries of the known world, and created a new interpretation of the workings of the cosmos. As man wandered farther from home, he discovered new resources and civilizations, travelling far and wide across land and sea, bringing back exotic plants, goods, and ideas. Exploration and trade between tribes and peoples initiated a growing curiosity and demand for goods. The desire for power and security led the growth of military might.

Human history is often said to have been written in blood, as combating tribes and societies faced each other, and the weakest often faced eradication before the military might of their stronger more numerous neighbors. This fueled the art and process of war, which in turn gave birth, as it still does, to technological advances and the use of civil technology in war. Strategy and technology combined to create fighting machines. There is continuity from the chariot's wheel to the tank's tracks. Both the armored vehicles of their time, developed and grew from the same seed. The military strategies of the Roman imperial army still inspire, and are used by military leaders in today's 20th century conflicts.



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Conceived and Developed by Max Serio
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