

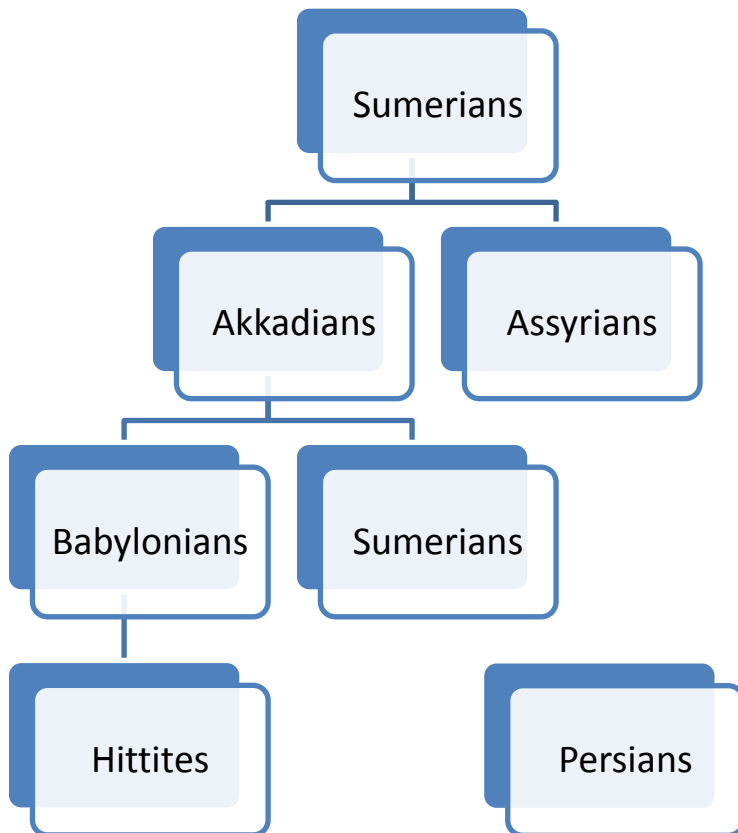
# The Middle East: Beginnings – Sumer/Babylon/Assyria/Persia

World History: Week 29



# Descent and Timeline

## Descent:

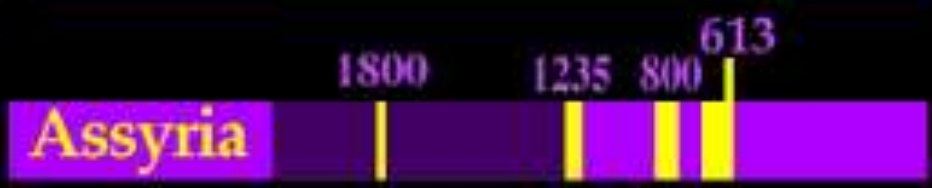
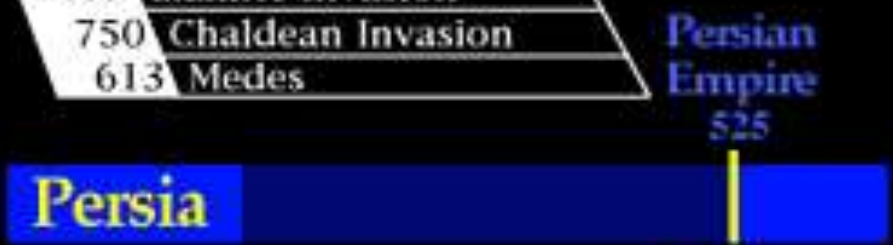


## Timeline:

- **4000** Sumerians arrive in Mesopotamia
- **2340** Sargon (a Sumerian in the city of Kish) overthrows the Sumerian king of Nippur; Sargon's new kingdom is called Akkad; Sargon extends his kingdom to Syria
- **2320** Sargon conquers Sumer [[EAWC](#)]
- **2230** Akkadian dynasty ends
- **2150** Nomadic Gutians overrun Akkadians and Sumer, but Sumer revives
- **2130** Sumer regains independence from Akkadian rule
- **2000** Hittites migrate to Asia Minor
- **1950** Amorites go to Babylon to create colonies with Ashur as center of a kingdom that will be called Assyria
- **2000-1600** - First Dynasty of Babylon
- **1753** Amorite King Hammurabi conquers all of Sumer; Hammurabi rules to 1750; His empire lasts until 1600,
- **1593** Hittites sack Babylon and end Hammurabi's dynasty
- **1365** Ashur the Great, King of Assyria marries his daughter to a Babylonian
- **1300** The Assyrians control all of Mesopotamia
- **1200** Hittites' capital Hattusas is wiped out (plague); Phrygians move in
- **1050** Cosmopolitan area, with tolerance for diverse ethnicity
- **1000** Assyrian Empire.



Akkadians before 3000
2112 Gutian Invasion
2200 Amorites
1595 Hittites sack Babylon
1200 Arameans
1159 Elamite Invasion
750 Chaldean Invasion
613 Medes



## Mesopotamia:

An ancient region of southwest Asia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day Iraq. Probably settled before 5000 B.C.



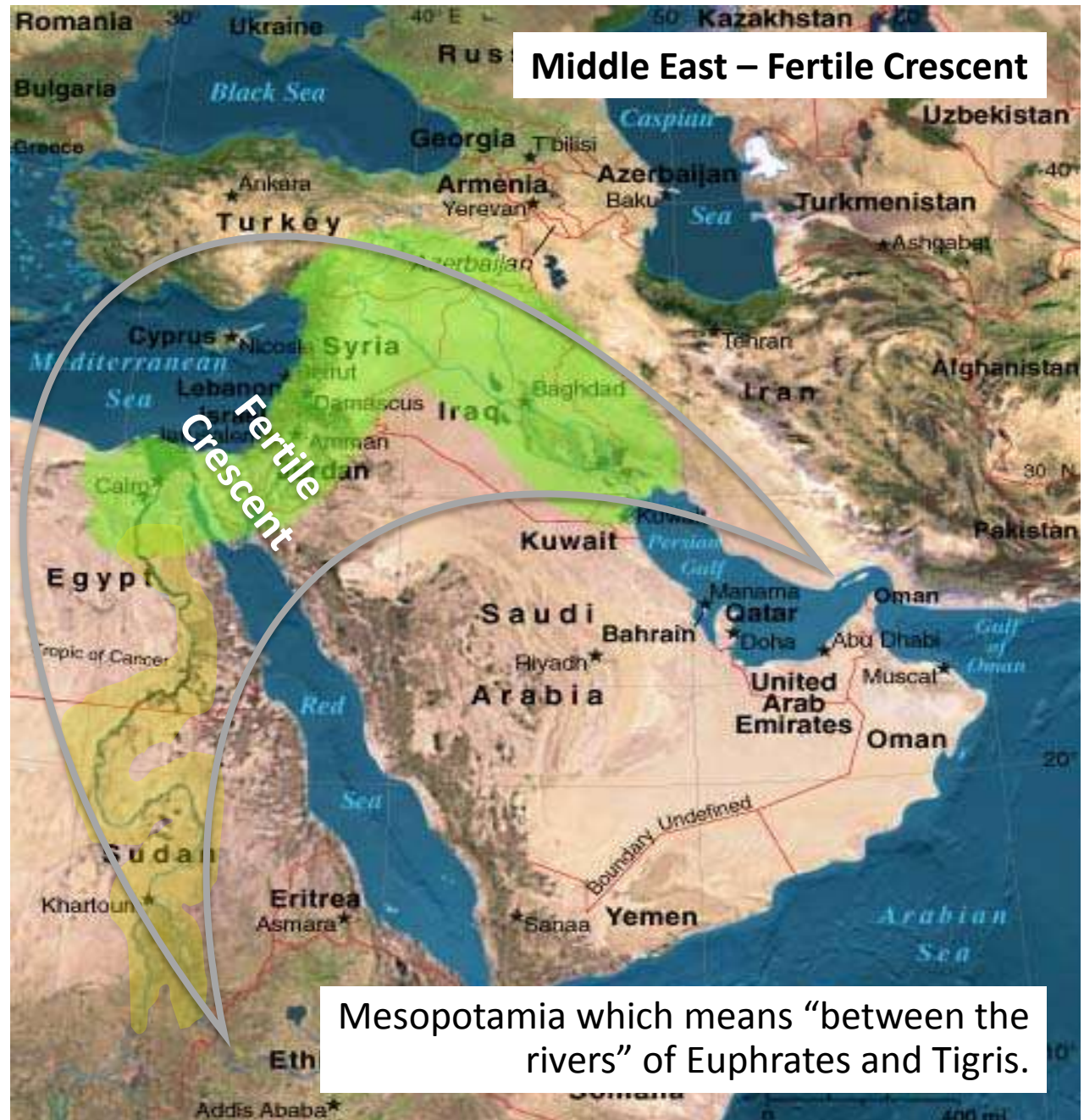
Home of **numerous** early civilizations, including Sumer, Akkad, Babylonia, and Assyria.

# Cradle of Civilization



## Fertile Crescent:

A region of the Middle East arching across the northern part of the Syrian Desert and extending from the Nile Valley to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.



# The Geography Of Mesopotamia

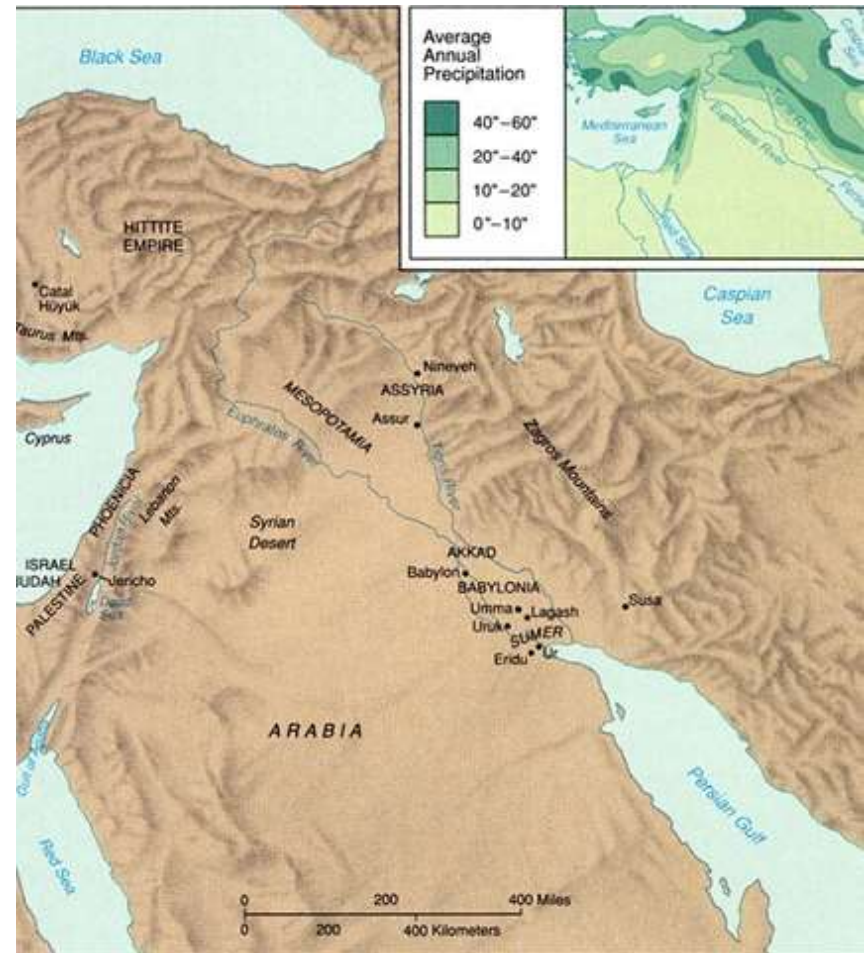
- Contemporary Iraq occupies the territory that historians traditionally have considered the site of the earliest civilizations of the ancient Near East.
- Geographically, modern Iraq corresponds to the Mesopotamia of the Old Testament and of other, older, Near Eastern texts.
- In Western mythology and religious tradition, the land of Mesopotamia in the ancient period was a land of lush vegetation, abundant wildlife, and copious if **unpredictable** water resources.
- As such, at a very early date it attracted people from neighboring, but less **hospitable** areas. By 6000 B.C., Mesopotamia had been settled, chiefly by migrants from the **Turkish** and **Iranian** highlands.





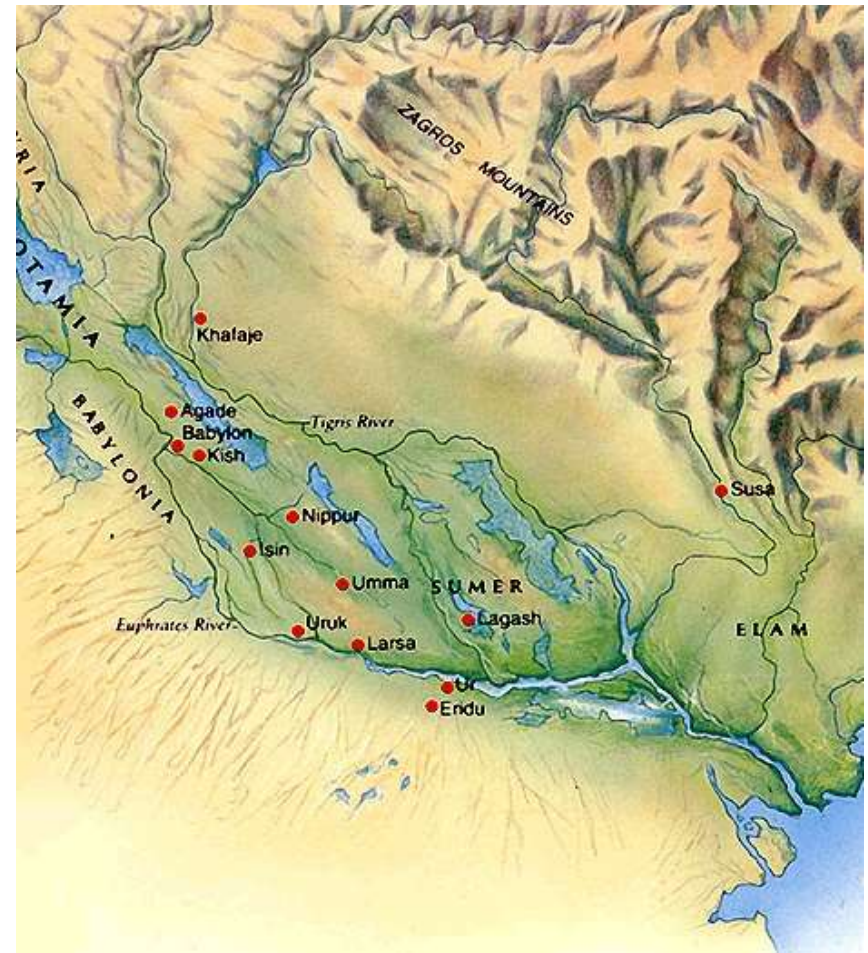
# Geography and Specialization

- The civilized life that emerged at Sumer was shaped by two conflicting factors: the unpredictability of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which at any time could unleash devastating floods that wiped out entire peoples, and the extreme **fecundity** of the river valleys, caused by centuries-old **deposits of soil**.
- Thus, while the river valleys of southern Mesopotamia attracted migrations of neighboring peoples and made possible, for the first time in history, the growing of **surplus** food, the volatility of the rivers necessitated a form of **collective management** to protect the marshy, low-lying land from flooding.
- As surplus production increased and as collective management became more advanced, a process of **urbanization** evolved and Sumerian civilization took root.



# Regional History










- Sumer is the ancient name for southern Mesopotamia. Historians are divided on when the Sumerians arrived in the area, but they agree that the population of Sumer was a **mixture** of linguistic and ethnic groups that included the earlier inhabitants of the region.
- Sumerian culture mixed foreign and local elements. The Sumerians were highly innovative people who **responded creatively** to the challenges of the changeable Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
- Many of the great Sumerian legacies, such as writing, irrigation, the wheel, astronomy, and literature, can be seen as **adaptive** responses to the great rivers.





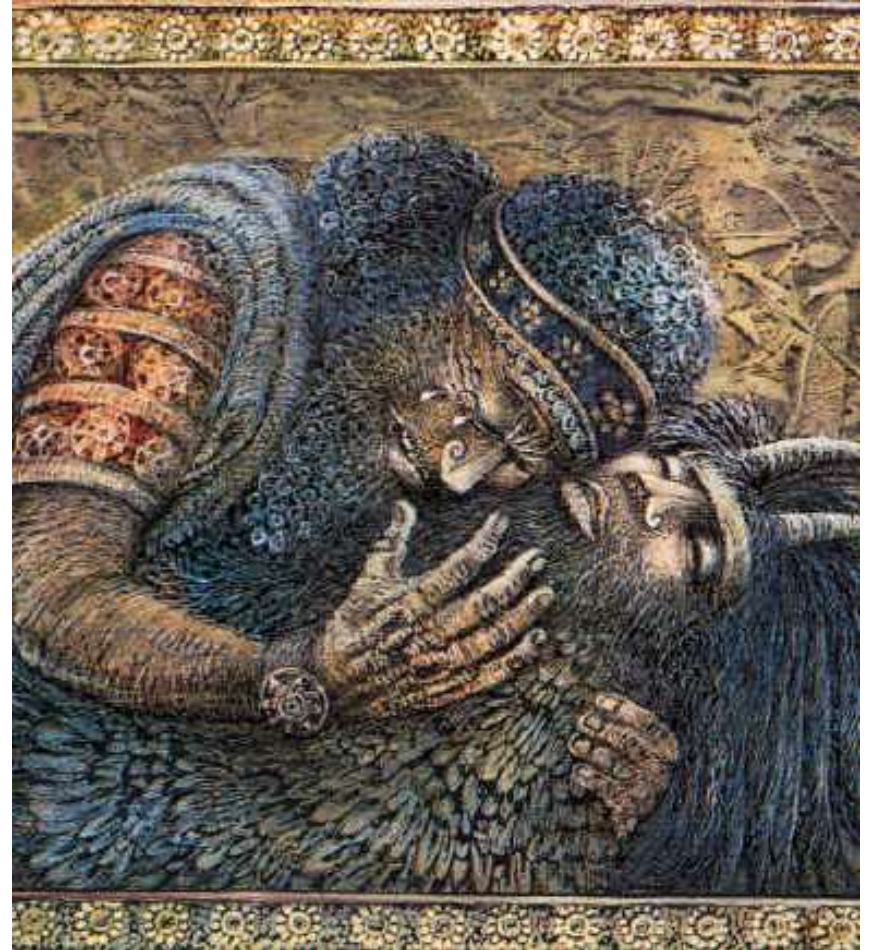
# Sumerian Cuneiform

- The Sumerians were the first people known to have devise a scheme of written representation as a means of communication.
- From the earliest writings, which were pictograms (simplified pictures on clay tablets), the Sumerians gradually created **cuneiform**--a way of arranging impressions stamped on clay by the wedge-like section of a chopped-off reed.
- The use of combinations of the same basic wedge shape to stand for phonetic, and possibly for syllabic, elements provided more **flexible** communication than the pictogram.
- Through writing, the Sumerians were able to **pass on** complex agricultural techniques to successive generations; this led to marked improvements in agricultural production.

PICTOGRAPHIC SIGN c. 3100 BC			
INTERPRETATION	Star	Stream	Barley
EARLY CUNEIFORM SIGN c. 2400 BC			
LATEL CUNEIFORM SIGN c. 700 BC			
MEANING	God, sky	Water, seed, son	Barley

# Gilgamesh

- Another important Sumerian legacy was the recording of **literature**. The most famous Sumerian epic and the one that has survived in the most nearly complete form is the epic of Gilgamesh.
- The story of Gilgamesh, who actually was king of the city-state of Uruk in approximately 2700 B.C., is a moving story of the ruler's deep sorrow at the death of his friend and of his consequent search for immortality.
- Other central themes of the story are a devastating flood and the tenuous nature of man's existence. Laden with complex abstractions and emotional expressions, the epic of Gilgamesh reflects the **intellectual sophistication** of the Sumerians, and it has served as the prototype for all Near Eastern inundation stories.





# Religious Centers

- The precariousness of existence in southern Mesopotamia also led to a highly developed sense of religion.
- **Cult centers** such as Eridu, dating back to 5000 B.C., served as important centers of pilgrimage and devotion even before the rise of Sumer.
- Many of the most important Mesopotamian cities emerged in areas surrounding the pre-Sumerian cult centers, thus reinforcing the **close relationship** between religion and government.





# Religion and Spirituality

- The Sumerians were **pantheistic**; their gods more or less personified local elements and natural forces.
- In exchange for sacrifice and adherence to an elaborate ritual, the gods of ancient Sumer were to provide the individual with security and prosperity.
- A powerful priesthood emerged to oversee **ritual practices** and to intervene with the gods. Sumerian religious beliefs also had important political aspects.
- Decisions relating to land rentals, agricultural questions, trade, commercial relations, and war were determined by the priesthood, because all property **belonged** to the gods.
- The priests ruled from their temples, called **ziggurats**, which were essentially artificial mountains of sunbaked brick, built with outside staircases that tapered toward a shrine at the top.



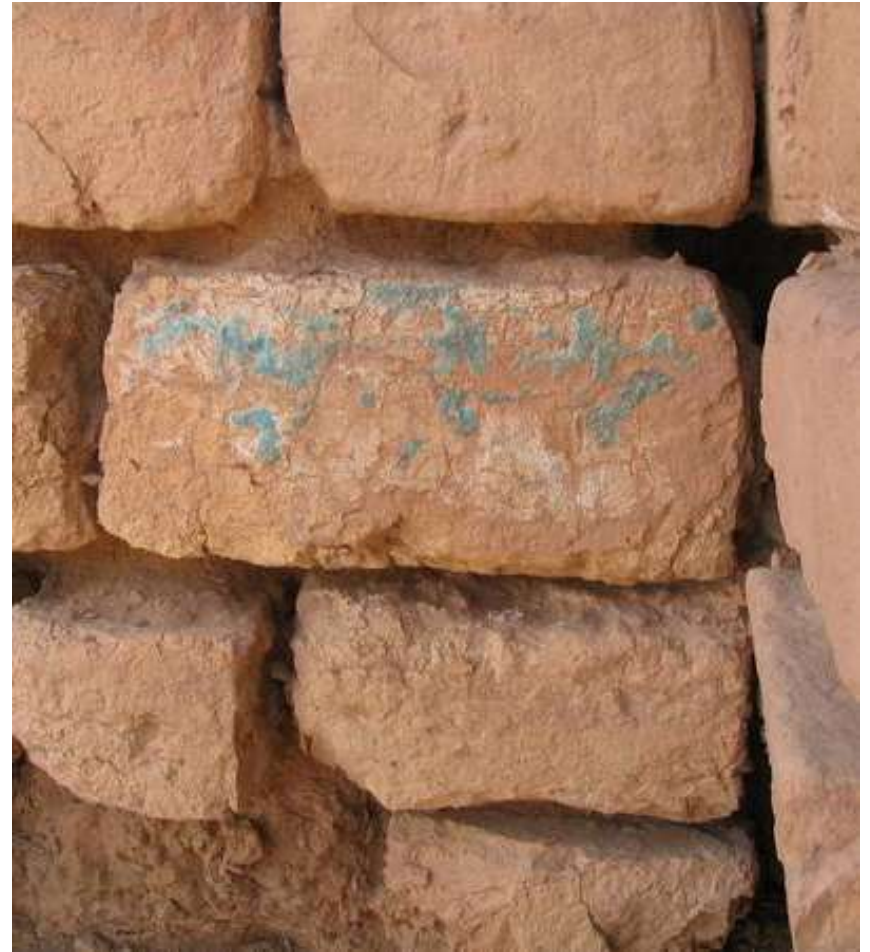
# Gods

- **An**, lord of heaven
- **Enlil**, god of air and storms
- **Enki**, god of water and wisdom



# Priests, Bricks and Cities

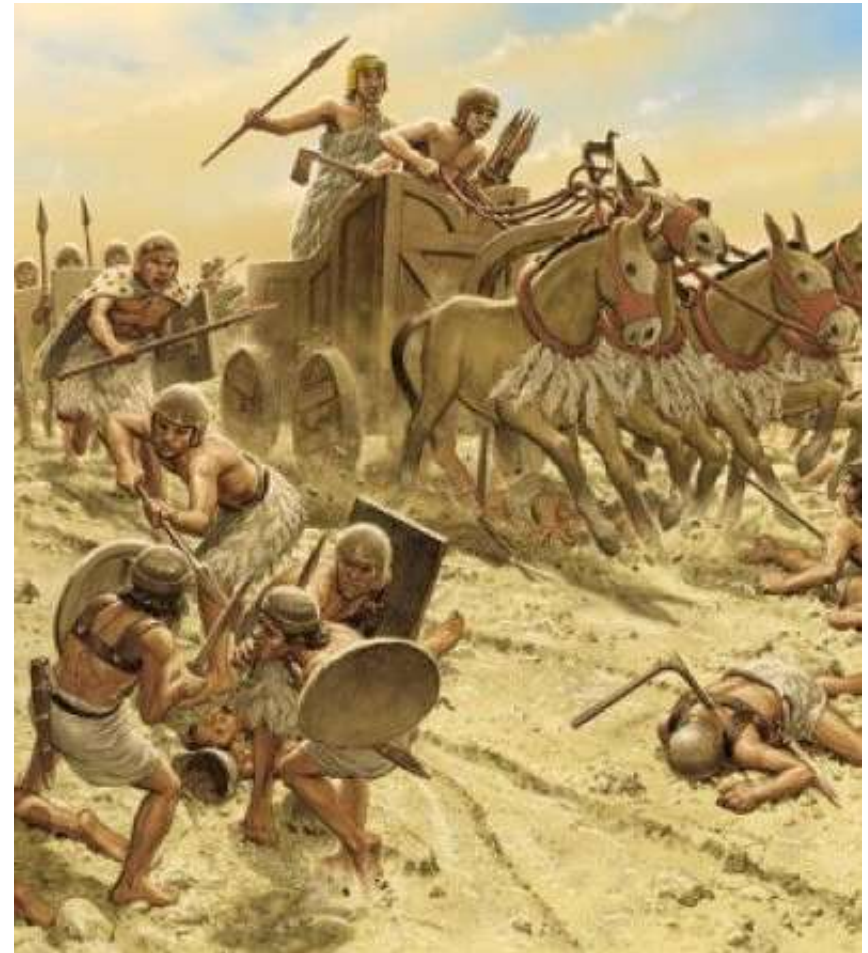
- Because the well-being of the community depended upon **close observation** of natural phenomena, scientific or proto-scientific activities occupied much of the priests' time.
- For example, the Sumerians believed that each of the gods was represented by a number.
  - The **number sixty**, sacred to the god An, was their basic unit of calculation. The minutes of an hour and the notational degrees of a circle were Sumerian concepts.
  - The highly developed **agricultural system** and the refined irrigation and water-control systems that enabled Sumer to achieve surplus production also led to the growth of large cities.
- The most important city-states were Uruk, Eridu, Kish, Lagash, Agade, Akshak, Larsa, and Ur (birthplace of the prophet Abraham).





# The Art of War

- The emergence of urban life led to further technological advances. Lacking stone, the Sumerians made marked improvements in **brick technology**, making possible the construction of very large buildings such as the famous ziggurat of Ur. Sumer also pioneered advances in warfare technology.
- By the middle of the third millennium B.C., the Sumerians had developed the wheeled chariot. At approximately the same time, the Sumerians discovered that tin and copper when **smelted** together produced **bronze**--a new, more durable, and much harder metal.
- The **wheeled chariot** and bronze weapons became increasingly important as the Sumerians developed the institution of kingship and as individual city-states began to vie for supremacy.



# Sumerian Periods

- In the first stage, which extended roughly from 3360 B.C. to 2400 B.C., the most important political development was the emergence of kings who, unlike the first priestly rulers, exercised distinct political rather than religious authority. Another important feature of this period was the emergence of warring Sumerian city-states, which fought for control of the river valleys in lower Mesopotamia.
- During the second phase, which lasted from 2400 B.C. to 2200 B.C., Sumer was conquered in approximately 2334 B.C. by Sargon I, king of the Semitic city of Akkad.

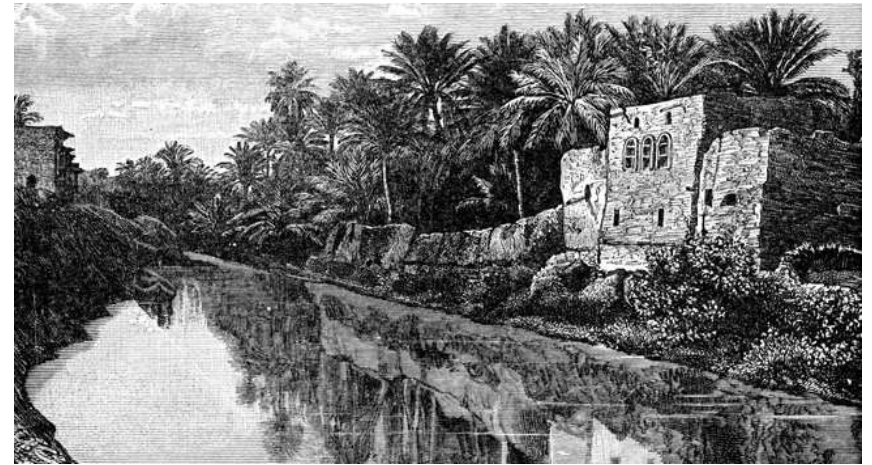
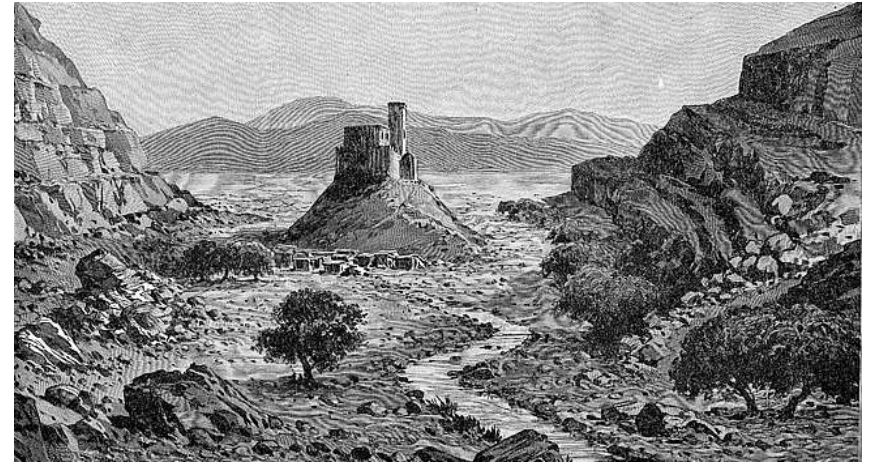


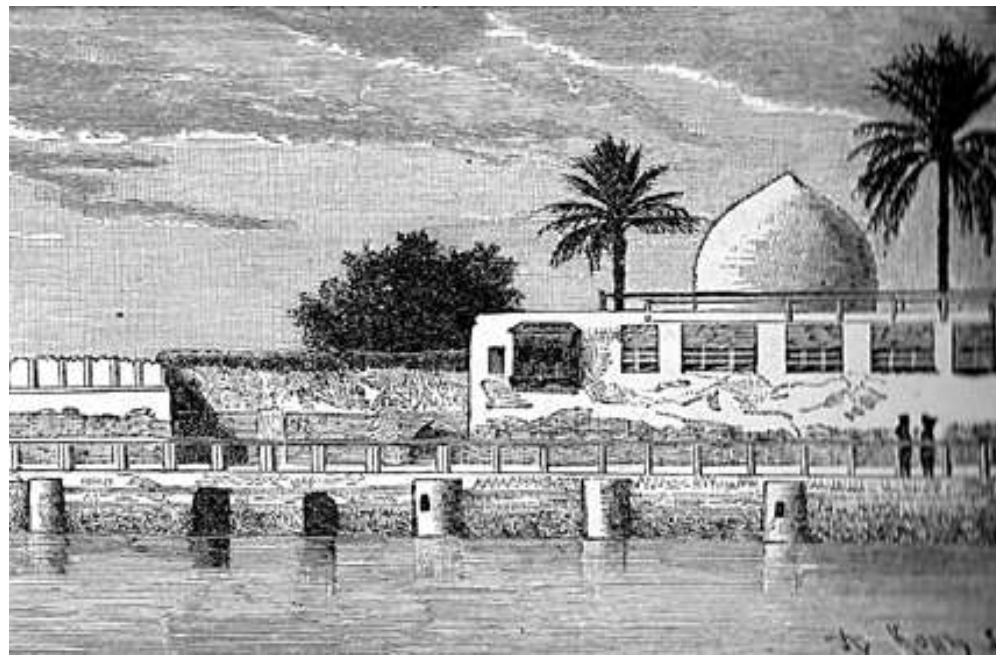
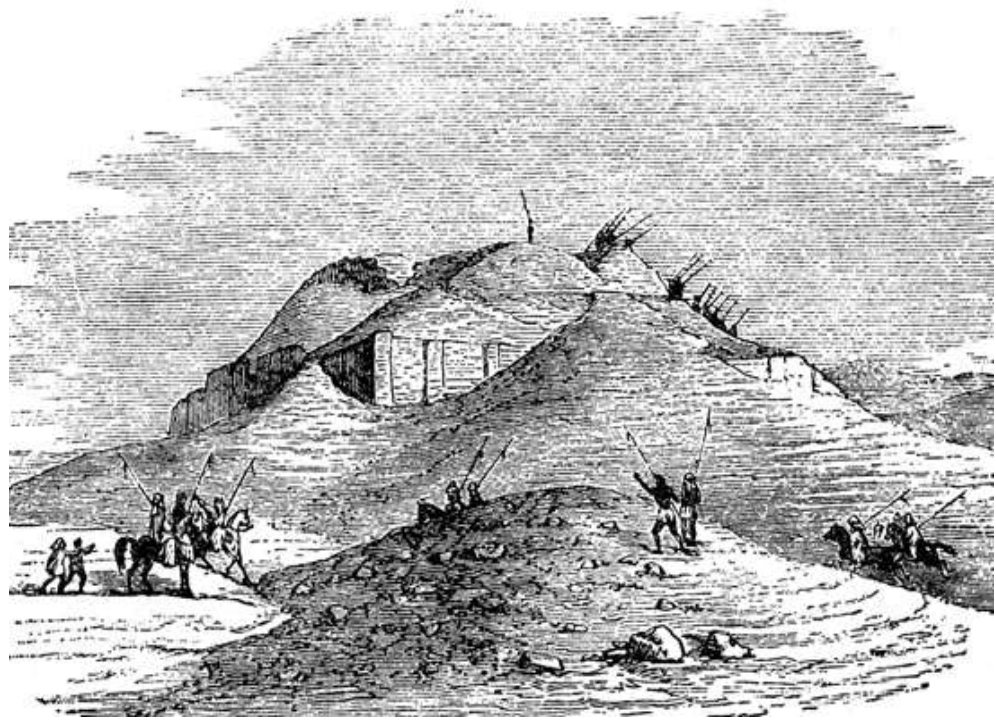
# Sumerians play Backgammon





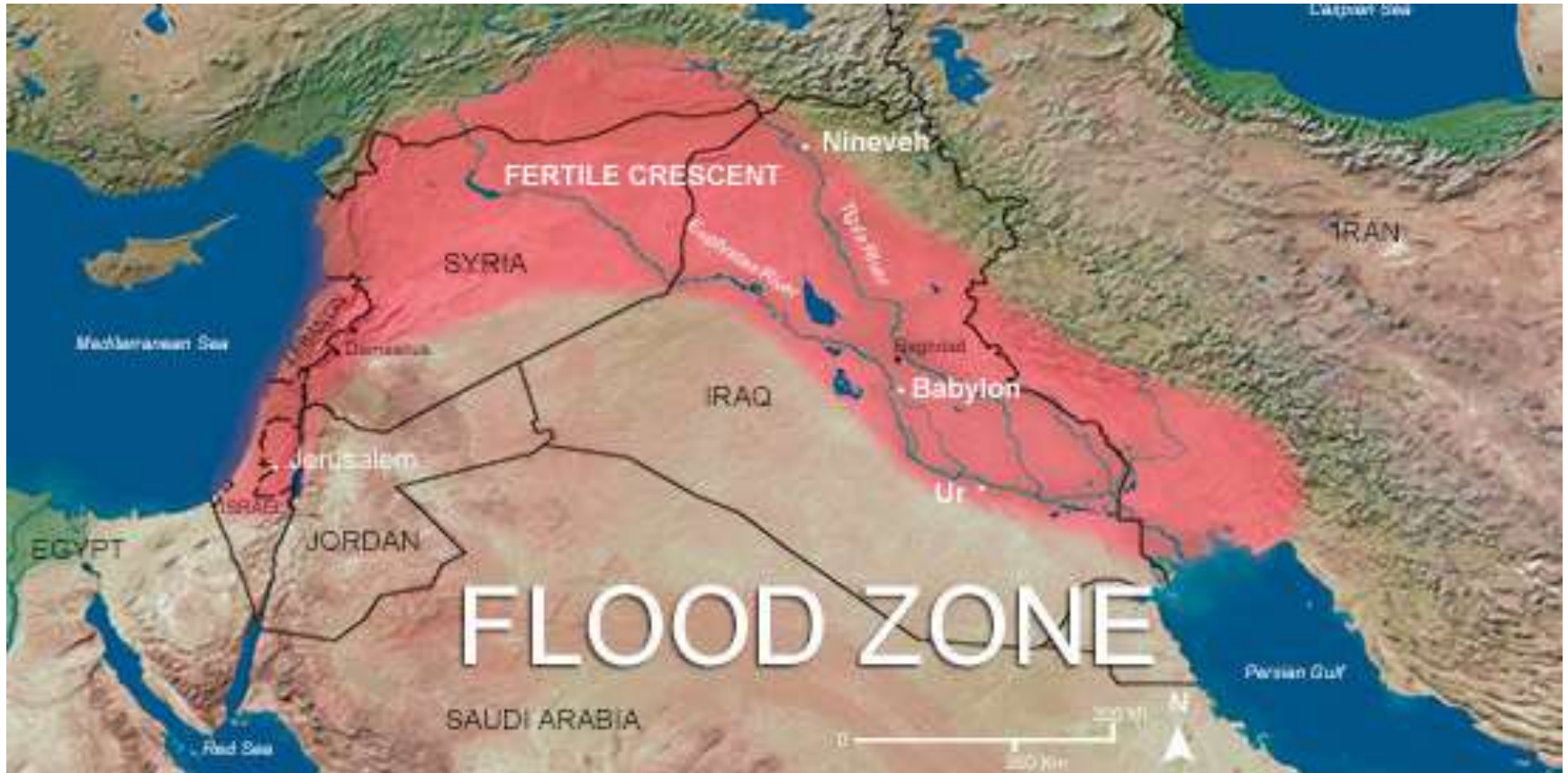
# Mesopotamia Landscapes







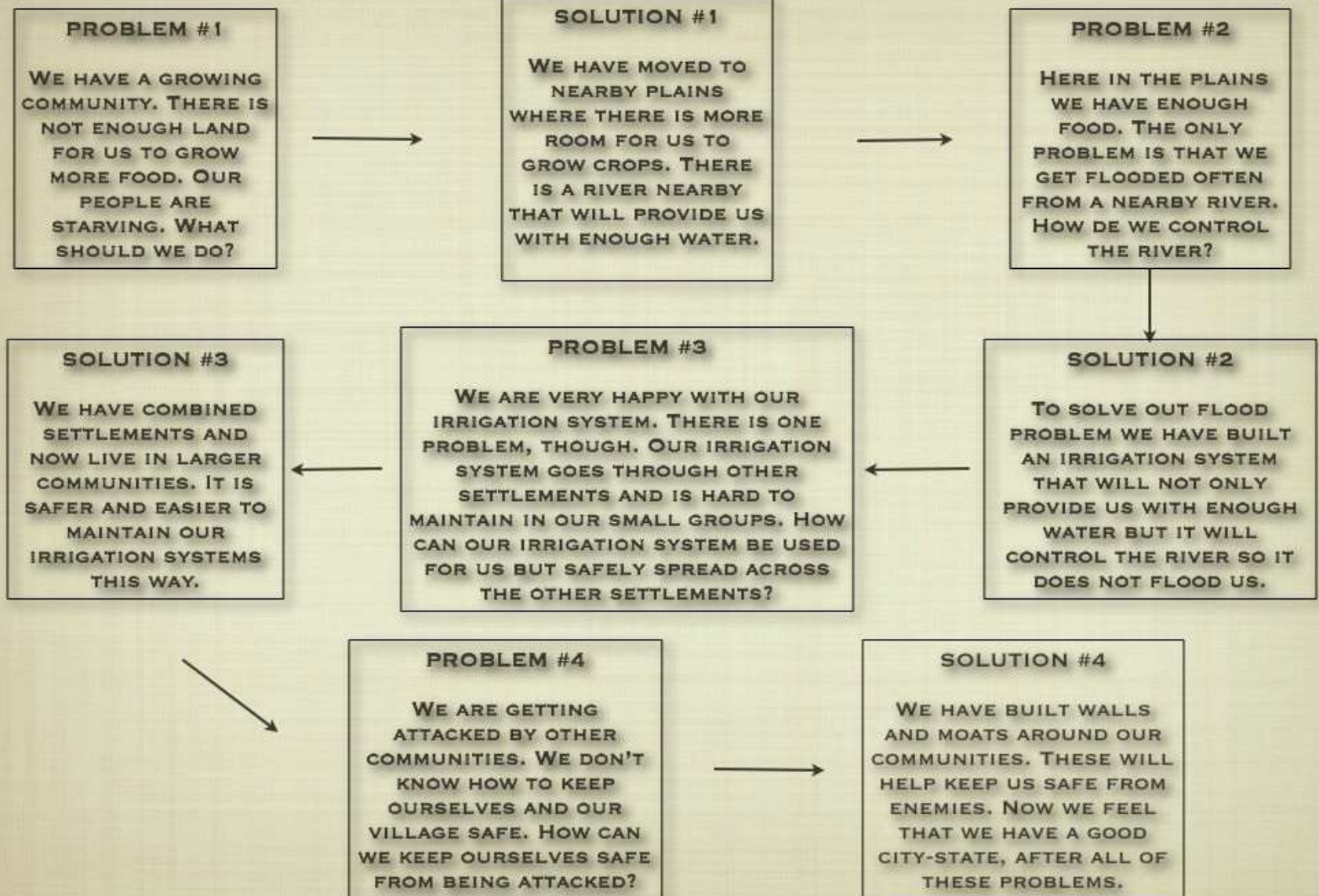
# Flooding: Tigris and Euphrates R.



Flooding impacted early Mesopotamian societal development from an **architectural** and an **agricultural** standpoint. Control and understanding of the rivers was paramount to any societies success in this region.



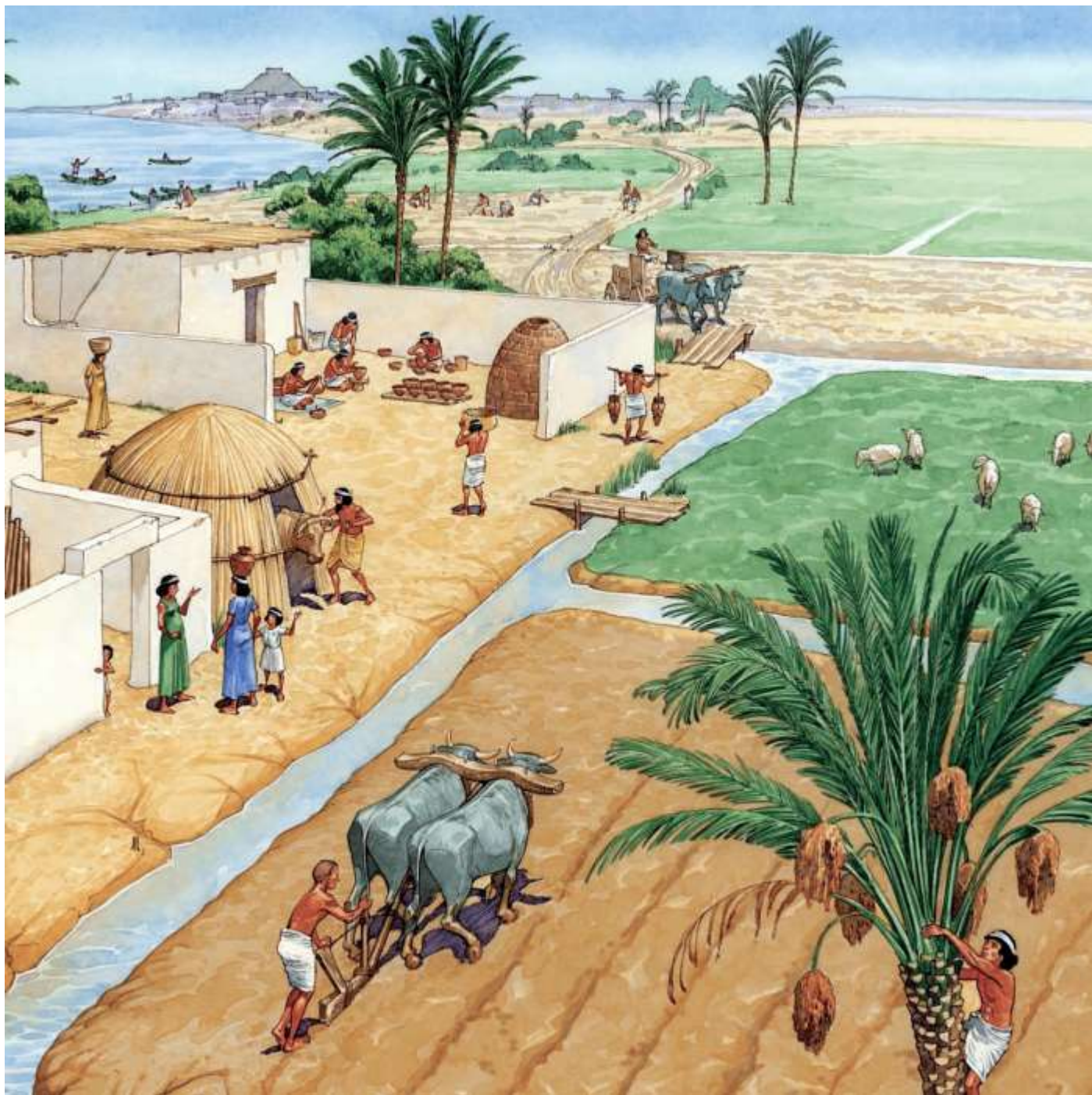
# HOW DID WE SOLVE GEOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES THAT HELPED US CREATE OUR CITY-STATES?



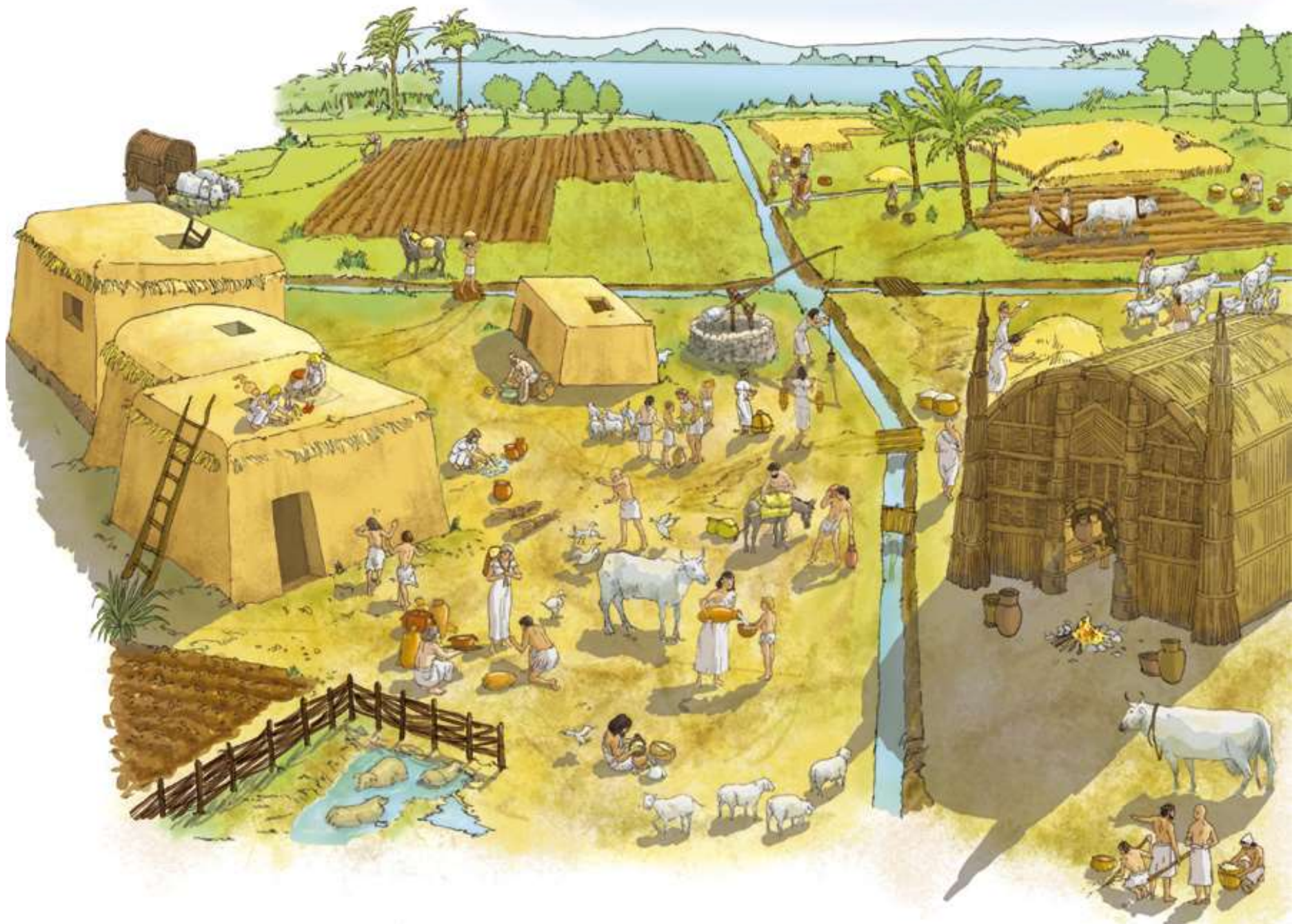
# Ancient kingdoms











# Jobs referenced in Ancient Sumer

Accountant	Cartwright	Governor	Physician	Stonecarver
Architect	Cavalryman	Harpist	Plowman	Tailor
Army commander	Chanter	Herald	Potter	Tanner
Astrologer	Chariot driver	Female herald	Priest	Tavernkeeper
Baker	Confectioner	Horse trainer	Prophet	Female tavernkeeper
Female baker	Cook	Leather dealer	Queen/King	Tax collector
Barber	Cup bearer	Limestone peddler	Royal bodyguard	Toll collector
Basket maker	Female cup bearer	Mayor	Scholar	Veterinarian
Boatman	Diviner	Merchant	Scribe	Vizier
Bowman	Exorcist	Mule stable attendant	Female scribe	Weaver
Brewer	Farmer	Musician	Shepherd	Female weaver
Brick maker	Fisherman	Female musician	Sheriff	
Butcher	Gardener	Perfume maker	Singer	
Carpenter	Goldsmith		Female singer	

What jobs listed above are still around today?

Do you notice anything about the classification titles?

Are there any jobs on this list that you aren't familiar with?

# Social Structure and Summary

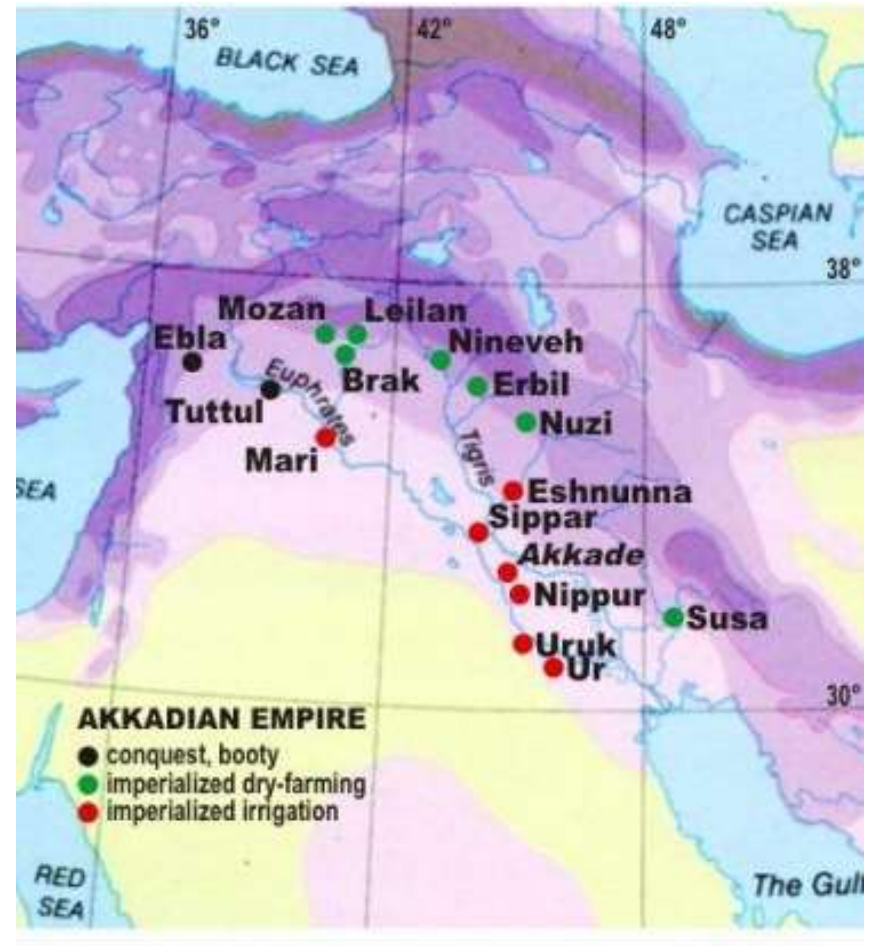
- Around 3200 B.C., the first Sumerian cities emerged in the southern part of Mesopotamia. They used earth and water to make **bricks** for building.
- Trade brought riches to Sumerian cities. The Sumerians were the first to make **wheeled vehicles**.
- In each Sumerian city-state, the ruler was responsible for maintaining the city walls and **irrigations systems**.
- Each Sumerian city-state had a distinct social hierarchy. Below the king or governor society had three distinct classes:
  - **Aristocratic nobles**, who were administrators, priests, and officers in the army rewarded with large estates;
  - **Middle class** of business people, school teachers, artisans, and farmers
  - Lowest being **slaves**, who had been captured in war or were dispossessed farmers or those sold by their families. Slavery was not stigmatized by race but was considered a misfortune out of which one could free oneself through service, usually in three years.

*At the base of society were the majority of people, peasant farms.*



# King Sargon I

- Sargon was the world's **first Empire-Builder**, sending his troops as far as Egypt and Ethiopia. He attempted to establish a unified empire and to end the hostilities among the city-states.
- Sargon's rule introduced a new level of political organization that was characterized by an even more clear-cut **separation** between religious authority and **secular** authority.
- To ensure his supremacy, Sargon created the first **conscripted army**, a development related to the need to mobilize large numbers of laborers for irrigation and flood-control works. Akkadian strength was boosted by the invention of the composite bow, a new weapon made of strips of wood and horn.



# The Akkadians

- Despite their military prowess, Akkadian hegemony over southern Mesopotamia lasted only 200 years.
- Sargon's great-grandson was then overthrown by the Gutis, a mountain people from the east. The fall of the Akkadians and the subsequent reemergence of Sumer under the king of Ur, who defeated the Gutis, ushered in the third phase of Sumerian history.
- In this final phase, which was characterized by a **synthesis** of Sumerian and Akkadian **cultures**, the king of Ur established hegemony over much of Mesopotamia. Sumerian supremacy, however, was on the wane.
- By 2000 B.C. the combined attacks of the Amorites, a **Semitic** people from the west, and the Elamites, a Caucasian people from the east, had destroyed the Third Dynasty of Ur. The invaders nevertheless carried on the Sumero-Akkadian cultural legacy.



# Hillah, Iraq - Babylon





Today...



# Turn of the century..





Hillah, Iraq (May, 29th 2003) -- A U.S. Marine Corps Humvee vehicle drives down a road at the foot of Saddam Hussein's former Summer palace with ruins of ancient [Babylon](#) in the background.





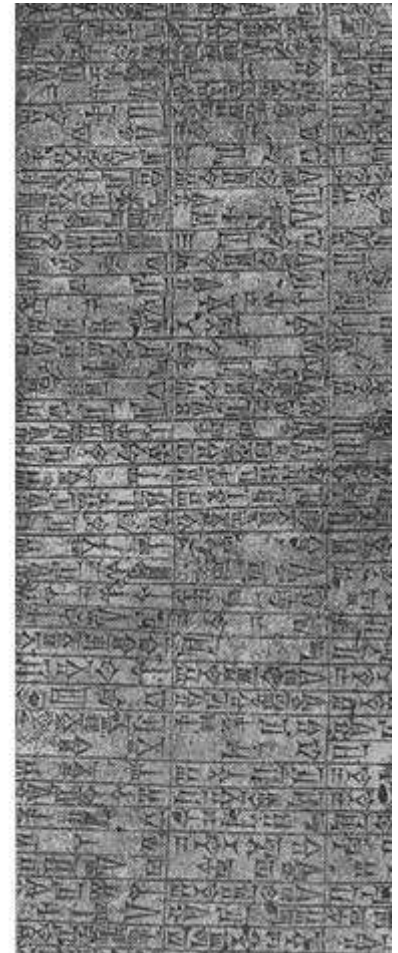
# The Amorites

- The Amorites established cities on the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers and made **Babylon**, a town to the north, their capital.
- During the time of their sixth ruler, King Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.), Babylonian rule encompassed a huge area covering most of the Tigris-Euphrates river valley from Sumer and the Persian Gulf in the south to Assyria in the north.
- To rule over such a large area, Hammurabi devised an elaborate **administrative structure**. His greatest achievement, however, was the issuance of a law code designed "to cause justice to prevail in the country, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong may not oppress the weak."
- The Code of Hammurabi, not the earliest to appear in the Near East but certainly the most complete, dealt with land tenure, rent, the position of women, marriage, divorce, inheritance, contracts, control of public order, administration of justice, wages, and labor conditions.



# The Code of Hammurabi

- In Hammurabi's legal code, the civilizing trend begun at Sumer had evolved to a new level of complexity. The sophisticated legal principles contained in the code reflect a highly advanced civilization in which social interaction extended **far beyond** the confines of kinship.
- The large number of laws pertaining to commerce reflect a diversified economic base and an **extensive trading network**. In politics, Hammurabi's code is evidence of a more pronounced separation between religious and secular authority than had existed in ancient Sumer.
- In addition to Hammurabi's legal code, the Babylonians made other important contributions, notably to the science of astronomy, and they increased the **flexibility** of cuneiform by developing the pictogram script so that it stood for a syllable rather than an individual word.



# Hammurabi's Code

- **Criminal laws** dealt with offenses against others. Hammurabi's Code limited personal vengeance and encouraged social order.
- **Civil Law** dealt with private rights and matters, such as business contracts, marriage, taxes, and divorce. Much of Hammurabi's Code was designed to protect the powerless.



# Hammurabi's Code

- Hammurabi's Code provided that the **punishment** should be similar to the crime. Under this principle, breaking another person's arm in anger is punished by having your own arm broken.
- For certain crimes people could be put to **death**. Many laws warned lawbreakers of what to expect.
- A person who accidentally broke the law was just as **guilty** as someone who meant to break the law.
- The code was carved into **stone** and placed in public places for all to see. The laws were meant to serve as a lasting way to keep order and prevent troubles in the future.

# Most Famous of Hammurabi's Codes?

- If any one steal the minor son of another, he shall be put to death.
- If any one is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death.
- If any one open his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water flood the field of his neighbor, then he shall pay his neighbor for his loss.
- If a surgeon causes the death of his patient, his hand shall be cut off.
- If a son strike his father, his hand shall be cut off.

# Caravans and Trade

- Babylon became rich due to trade. **Caravans**, traveled back and forth from the Sumerian cities in the south to the city of Akkad in the north. Along the way, they always stopped in Babylon to trade.
- Roads were built throughout the empire which made **travel** easier and encouraged trade.
- Babylon had special markets, called **bazaars**, that people could go to and buy cotton cloth from Egypt. They could also buy spices from India there.





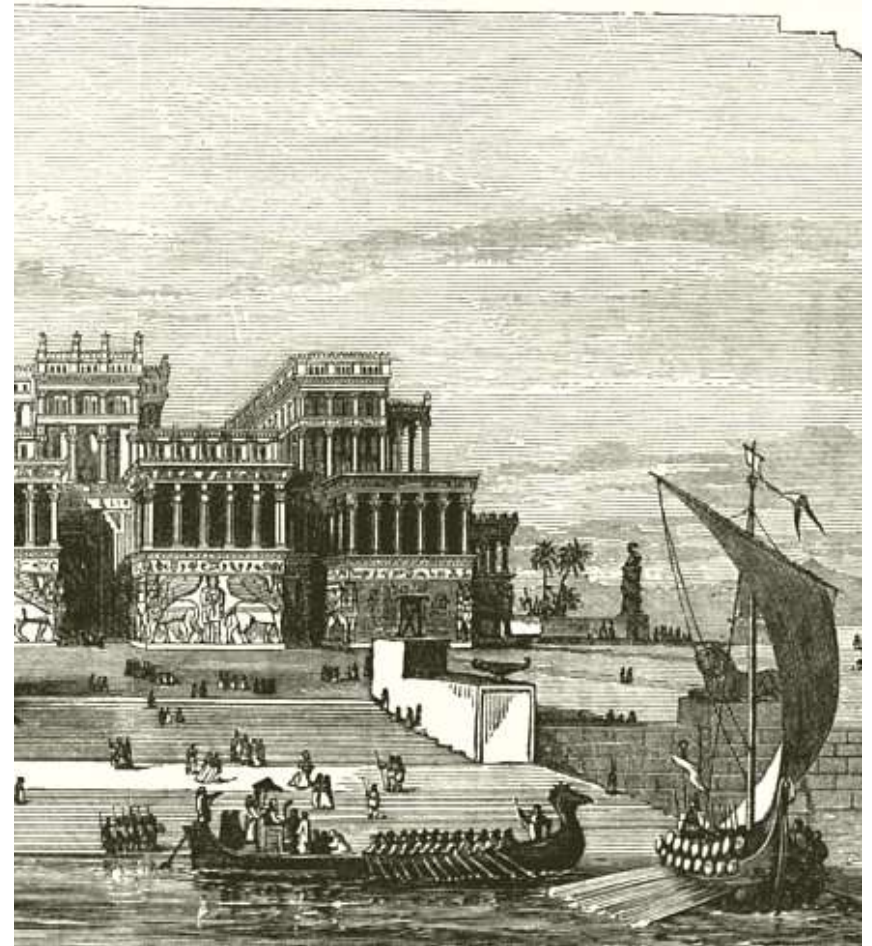
# The Hittites and Kassites

- Beginning in approximately 1600 B.C., **Indo-European**-speaking tribes invaded India; other tribes settled in Iran and in Europe.
- One of these groups, the **Hittites**, allied itself with the **Kassites**, a people of unknown origins. Together, they conquered and destroyed Babylon.
- Hittite power subsequently waned, but, in the first half of the fourteenth century B.C., the Hittites reemerged, controlling an area that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf.
- The military success of the Hittites has been attributed to their monopoly in **iron** production and to their use of the chariot. Nevertheless, in the twelfth century B.C., the Hittites were destroyed, and no great military power occupied Mesopotamia until the ninth century B.C.



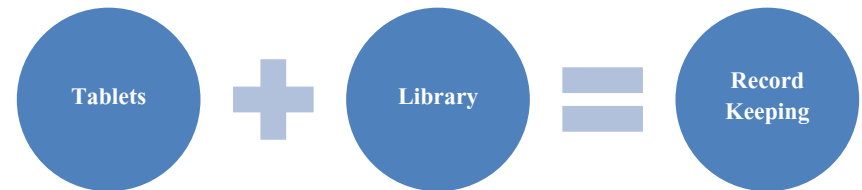
# The Assyrians

- One of the cities that flourished in the middle of the Tigris Valley during this period was that of Ashur, named after the sun-god of the Assyrians.
- The Assyrians were **Semitic** speakers who occupied Babylon for a brief period in the thirteenth century B.C. Invasions of iron-producing peoples into the Near East and into the Aegean region in approximately 1200 B.C. disrupted the indigenous empires of Mesopotamia, but eventually the Assyrians were able to capitalize on the new alignments of power in the region.
- Because of what has been called "the barbarous and unspeakable cruelty of the Assyrians," the names of such Assyrian kings as Ashurnasirpal (883-859 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser III (745- 727 B.C.), Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (669-626 B.C.) continue to evoke images of powerful, militarily brilliant, but brutally savage **conquerors**.



# Assyrian Learning

- The capital of the Assyrian Empire was a city called **Nineveh**.
- Nineveh became a great city of learning. It had a famous **library** that held thousands of clay **tablets** with writings from Sumer and Babylon.
- These **records** tell us a lot about life in Mesopotamia.





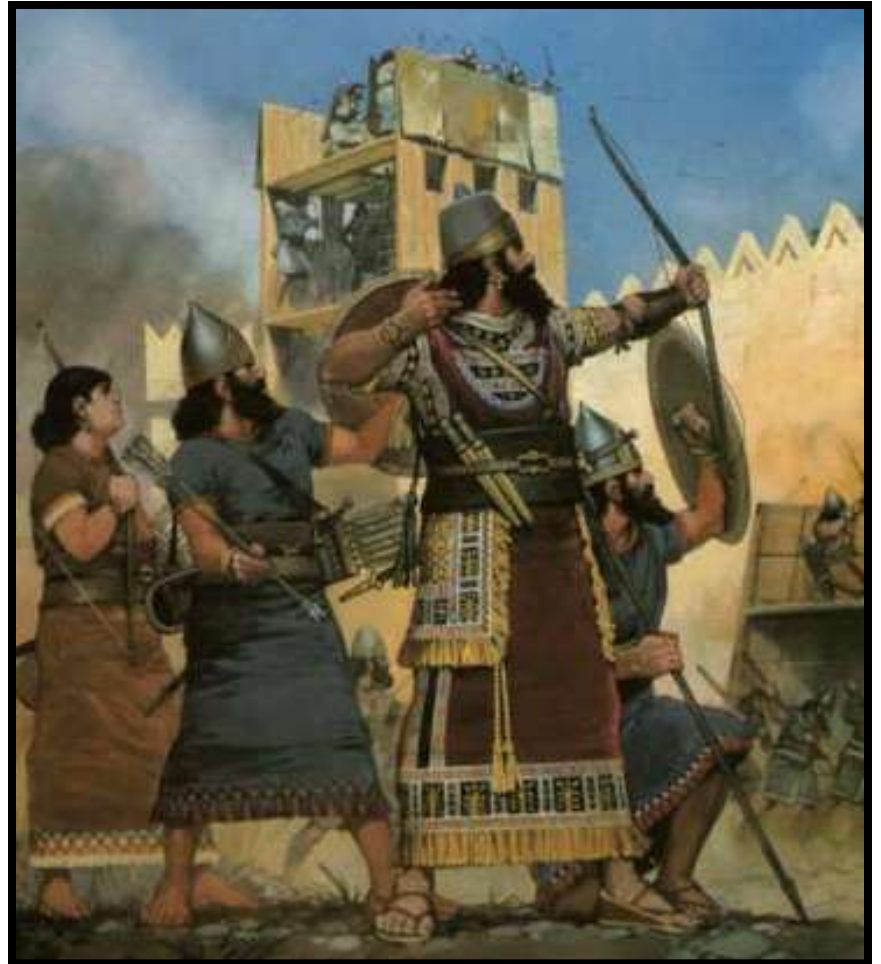
# Assyrian Expansion

- The Assyrians began to expand to the west in the early part of the ninth century B.C.; by 859 they had reached the Mediterranean Sea, where they occupied Phoenician cities.
- Damascus and Babylon fell to the next generations of Assyrian rulers. During the eighth century B.C., the Assyrians' control over their empire appeared tenuous, but Tiglath-Pileser III seized the throne and rapidly subdued Assyria's neighbors, captured Syria, and crowned himself king of Babylon.
- He developed a highly proficient **war machine** by creating a permanent standing army under the administration of a well-organized bureaucracy. Sennacherib built a new capital, Nineveh, on the Tigris River, destroyed Babylon (where citizens had risen in revolt), and made Judah a **vassal state**.



# Assyrian War Machine

- The Assyrians were geniuses at waging war. They invented the **battering ram**, which they used to pound down city walls.
- They used **catapults** to throw rocks at enemies, and they protected their **archers** with helmets and armor.
- **Chariots** were used to slash their way through enemy troops.



# The Medes and Chaldeans

- In 612 B.C., revolts of subject peoples combined with the allied forces of **two new kingdoms**, those of the Medes and the Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians), effectively to extinguish Assyrian power.
- Nineveh was razed. The hatred that the Assyrians inspired, particularly for their policy of wholesale **resettlement** of subject peoples, was sufficiently great to ensure that few traces of Assyrian rule remained two years later.
- The Assyrians had used the visual arts to depict their many conquests, and Assyrian friezes, executed in minute detail, continue to be the best artifacts of Assyrian civilization.





# The Chaldeans and Persians

- The Chaldeans became heir to Assyrian power in 612 B.C., and they conquered formerly Assyrian-held lands in Syria and Palestine.
- **King Nebuchadnezzar** (605-562 B.C.) conquered the kingdom of Judah, and he destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., sending the tribes of Judah into exile. Conscious of their ancient past, the Chaldeans sought to reestablish Babylon as the most magnificent city of the Near East.
- It was during the Chaldean period that the **Hanging Gardens of Babylon**, famed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, were created. Because of an estrangement of the priesthood from the king, however, the monarchy was severely weakened, and it was unable to withstand the rising power of Achaemenid Iran.
- In 539 B.C., Babylon fell to **Cyrus the Great** (550-530 B.C.). In addition to incorporating Babylon into the Iranian empire, Cyrus the Great released the Jews who had been held in captivity there.

