



MESOPOTAMIA



CH. 4 VOCABULARY

VOCABULARY

Silt: fine particles of fertile soil

Irrigation: A system that supplies dry land with water through ditches, pipes, or streams

Surplus: an amount that has been left over after a need is met

City-State: a city that governs itself and its surrounding territory

VOCABULARY

Polytheism: a belief in more than one god

Ziggurat: a pyramid-shaped structure with a temple at the top

Cuneiform: a system of writing developed by the Sumerians that used wedge-shaped marks made in soft clay

Scribe: a person who copies or writes out documents; often a record keeper

VOCABULARY

Epic: a long poem that records the deeds of a legendary or real hero

Empire: a large territory or group of many territories governed by one ruler

Tribute: a payment made to a ruler or state as a sign of surrender

Province: a territory governed as a political district of a country or empire

VOCABULARY

Caravan: a group of merchants traveling together for safety, usually with a large number of camels

Astronomer: a person who studies planets and stars



CH. 4.1 THE SUMERIANS

THE FIRST CIVILIZATIONS OF MESOPOTAMIA

Mesopotamia was the earliest known civilization, developed in southern Iraq

Means “the land between the rivers” in Greek

Began on the plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

Was located on the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent

Fertile Crescent was a curving strip of good farmland

Extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf

EARLY VALLEY DWELLERS

The first settlers were hunters and herders

Settled around 7000 B.C.E.

By 4000 B.C.E. some groups moved to the plain of the Tigris and Euphrates
valley

Built farming villages along the two rivers

TAMING THE RIVERS

Early farmers used water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to water fields

In the summer little or no rain fell causing the water levels to be lower

This caused there to be not enough water to plant crops in the fall

During the spring harvest, rains and melting snow caused rivers to overflow
which flooded the plains

Unexpected and violent floods swept away crops, homes and livestock

Floods were helpful though

Deposited silt on the plains

TAMING THE RIVERS

Over time people learned to build dams to control the floods

Dug canals that let water flow from the rivers to the fields

This is called irrigation

Irrigation let early farmers grow surpluses

When food was plentiful, not everyone needed to farm

People became artisans and specialized in different jobs

As artisans made more goods peoples lives changed

They began to live in places that favored trade

Villages grew into cities

By 3000 B.C.E. several cities developed in Sumer, a southern region of
Mesopotamia

SUMER'S CIVILIZATION

Sumerians built the first cities in Southwest Asia

Ur, Uruk and Eridu were centers of civilization in the lower part of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys

Sumer's cities were surrounded by mudflats and scorching deserts

Each city was largely cut off from its neighbor

As a result these cities became independent

Gained political and economic control over lands around them

These city-states had their own government and were not apart of any larger governing state

SUMER'S CIVILIZATION

Historians believe each Sumerian city-state was protected by a large city wall

Because stone and wood were in short supply, Sumerians used mud from the rivers as the main building supply

Often city-states went to war with each other

Fought over resources and political borders. Sometimes to win glory or more territory

During times of peace they traded with each other

Also agreed to alliances to help protect common interests

GODS, PRIESTS AND KINGS

Sumerian people worshipped many gods, polytheism

These multiple gods played different roles

Some controlled natural events, while others guided what people did

They honored whatever god would help their activity

Although they honored all gods, each city-state claimed one of their own

To honor its god they built a large temple called a ziggurat

Means to “rise high” in the ancient Akkadian language

GODS, PRIESTS AND KINGS

At the very top was a holy place

It was the god's home and only special priests could enter

In the early days these priests ruled the city-states

Eventually they became monarchies

Summerian kings claimed their power came from the city's god

First kings were probably war heroes

Over time rule came from heredity

SOCIAL GROUPS

People were divided into social groups

Kings, priests, warriors and government officials

Merchants, farmers, fishers and artisans

Enslaved, criminals and those who couldn't pay debt

Women and men had different roles

Men were the head of the home

Boys went to school and were trained for a job

Women ran the home and taught their daughters to do the same

Had a few civil rights

Some owned businesses

Law required parents to care for children and adult children to care for parents

FARMERS AND TRADERS

Most people in Sumer were farmers

Grew wheat, barley and dates

Raised sheep, goats and pigs

Trade was another important part

Didn't have all the goods they needed

Traded with places as far away as Egypt and India

CONTRIBUTION TO WRITING

Their writing system was the earliest known system in the world

Used a system called cuneiform

Contained about 1200 different characters

Represented things such as names, physical objects and numbers

Made by cutting wedge-shaped marks into damp clay with a sharp reed

Only a handful of people learned how to read and write

These people were called scribes

Recorded all important events

TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS

Were the first people to use the wheel

Also developed the sailboat, wooden plows and potter's wheel

Were the first to make bronze out of copper and tin

Also studied math and astronomy

Used geometry to measure the size of fields and to plan buildings

Created a place value system of numbers based on 60

Came up with the idea for the 60-minute hour, 60-second minute and 360 degree circle

Watched positions of stars to know when to plant

Created a 12 month calendar based on the moon cycles



MESOPOTAMIAN EMPIRES

THE FIRST EMPIRES

With all of the conflict occurring, Sumer's city-states were weakened

Powerful kingdoms arose in northern Mesopotamia and in Syria

Rulers of these kingdoms built empires

Through conquest and trade, these empires spread their culture over a wide
region

SARGON

The kingdom of Akkad developed in northern Mesopotamia

Sargon was the leader of these people

About 2340 B.C.E., Sargon moved his armies south

He conquered each Sumerian city-state one by one

He united the conquered territory with Akkad and became king

This formed the first empire

He extended it to include all peoples of Mesopotamia

His empire lasted more than 200 years

HAMMURABI

The Amorites lived in the region west of Mesopotamia

In the 1800s B.C.E. they conquered Mesopotamia and built their own cities

Babylon was the grandest of these new cities

It was on the eastern bank of the Euphrates

Around 1792 B.C.E. the Babylonian king Hammurabi began conquering cities
controlled by the Amorites

By adding these lands he created the Babylonian Empire

HAMMURABI CODE

Hammurabi was thought to be a just ruler

He is best known for creating a set of laws for his empire

He posted this code for everyone to read

The code dealt with everything from farming to crimes to family

This was stricter than the old Sumerian laws

The code demanded what became known as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”

Punishment for a crime should match the seriousness of the crime

Meant to limit punishment

Protected the less powerful

ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

The Assyrian Empire arose about 1,000 years after the empire of Hammurabi

Was a large empire extending into present day Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq

Built a large army

Around 900 B.C.E. began conquering the rest of Mesopotamia

ASSYRIAN ARMY

The army of Assyria was well trained and disciplined

In battle numbered around 50,000 soldiers

Fought with slingshots, bows and arrows, swords and spears

The Assyrians robbed people, set crops on fire and destroyed dams and towns

Took tributes from conquered people

Drove people from their homes

Stories of their brutality spread that people surrendered without a fight

Learned to make iron weapons from the Hittites from the north

KINGS AND GOVERNMENT

Assyria extended from the Persian Gulf to Nile River

Capital located at Nineveh

Kings divided the empire into provinces

Government built roads to connect them

Kings chose officials to collect taxes, and carry out laws

Soldiers stood guard at stations along road to protect traders

LIFE IN ASSYRIA

Lives of Assyrians were built on what was learned from other Mesopotamian peoples

Had law codes with harsher punishments

Based writing on the Babylonian style

Worshipped many of the same gods and built large temples

Wrote and collected stories

The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal built one of the world's first libraries

Held 25,000 tablets of stories and songs to the gods

Farming and trade were important

Brought in wood and metal to supply empire

CHALDEAN EMPIRE

For 300 years the Assyrians ruled

Because they were harsh rulers, people often rebelled

In about 650 B.C.E. fighting broke out over who would be the next ruler

With the Assyrians in turmoil, the Chaldeans took power

A NEW EMPIRE

About 1000 B.C.E. the Chaldean people moved into southern Mesopotamia

The Assyrians quickly conquered their small kingdom

The Chaldeans hated their rulers and were never completely under their control

When the Assyrians began fighting each other, the Chaldean king

Nabopolassar led a revolt

He joined forces with the Medes and defeated the Assyrian army and burned the capital of Nineveh down

His son Nebuchadnezzar created a new empire

Made Babylon their capital

GREATNESS OF BABYLON

Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon into the largest and richest city in the world

Grand palaces and temples were built

The palace had a giant staircase of greenery known as the Hanging Gardens

Were considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

A complex irrigation system brought water up

Created one of the first sundials to tell time

Were the first to follow a seven day week

FALL OF THE EMPIRE

When Nebuchadnezzar died, several weak kings took over

Poor harvests and slow trade weakened the empire

In 539 B.C.E. the Persians recognized the weakness and took over

Allowed the land to keep its culture