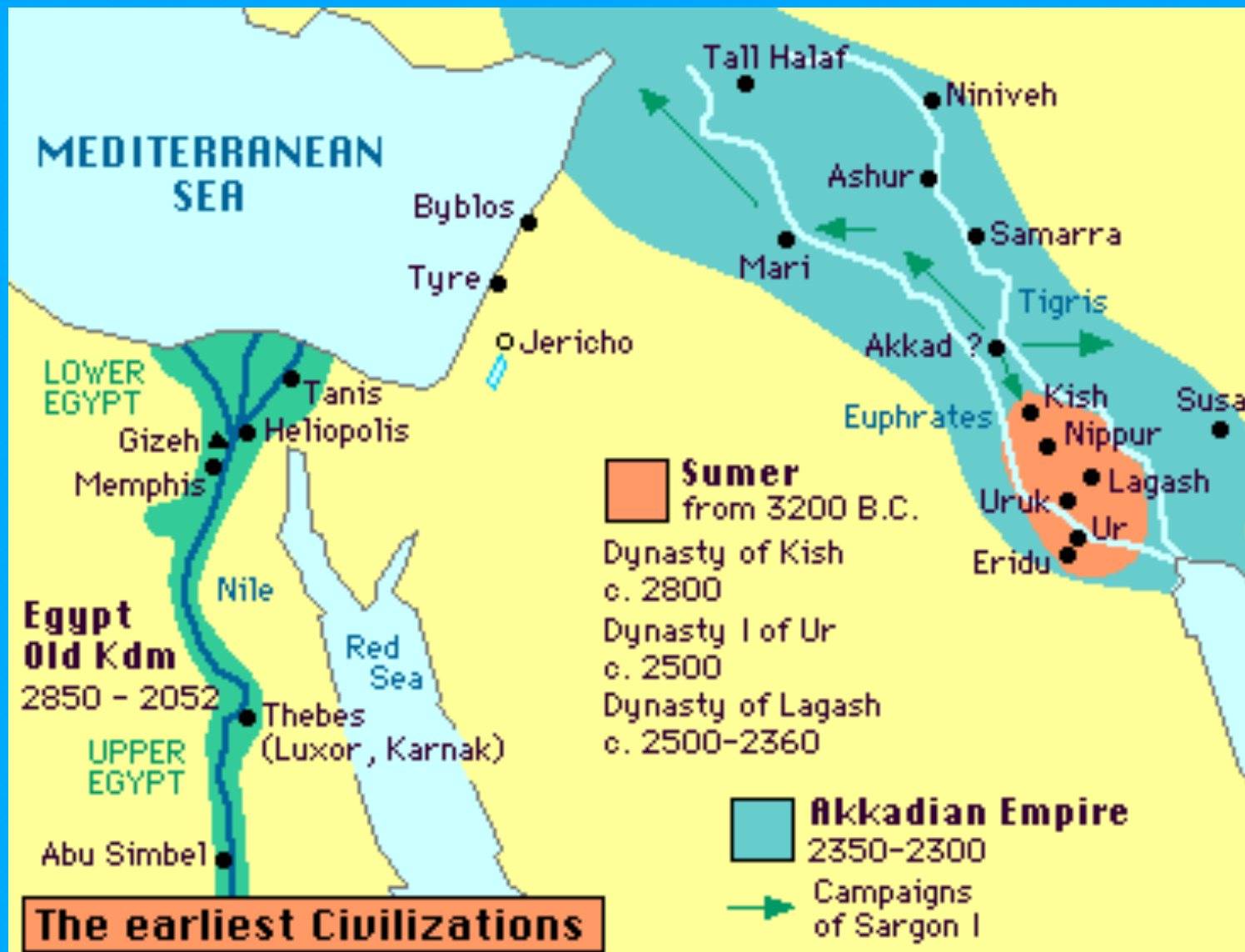


City-States in Mesopotamia

Chapter Two Section One

The Fertile Crescent

- The Fertile Crescent is an arc of land found between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in SW Asia.
- The Fertile Crescent is also called Mesopotamia- the land between two rivers.
- The Tigris and Euphrates rivers flooded Mesopotamia at least once a year
- The silt left behind by the floods created rich new soil every year so farmers could plant and harvest huge amounts of wheat and barley.
- The surpluses from their harvests allowed villages to grow.



The Sumerians

- Around 3500 B.C. the Sumerians arrived in southern Mesopotamia and mixed with local farmers.
- Nobody is quite sure where the Sumerians came from
- Good soil for farming attracted the Sumerians to Mesopotamia
- There were three disadvantages to their new homeland.
 - 1. The flooding of the rivers was unpredictable sometimes it came in April sometimes in June. After the flood the land became almost desert-like
 - 2. Sumer was a small region and the villages were clusters of huts standing in the middle of an open plain. With no natural barriers for protection they were almost defenseless
 - 3. The natural resources of Sumer were very limited. There were no natural materials for tools or buildings.

Solutions to Sumer's problems

- Over time the Sumerians came up with solutions to their problems.
 - 1. They dug irrigation ditches that carried water to their fields and allowed them to produce a surplus of crops
 - 2. They built defensive walls around their cities that were made of mud bricks
 - 3. They established a system of trade with the mountain and desert people for the products they lacked. They traded grain, cloth and tools for the stone, wood, and metal they needed

Sumer gets organized

- In order to solve their three big problems the Sumerians had to get organized
- Leaders were needed to plan the irrigation projects and supervise the building.
- Laws were written to settle disputes over how land and water would be distributed.
- These leaders and laws were the beginnings of organized government.
- The Sumerians were one of the first groups of people to form an organized civilization

What makes Sumer special?

- Five characteristics distinguish Sumer from other human societies that had existed earlier.
 - 1. Advanced cities
 - 2. Specialized workers
 - 3. Complex institutions
 - 4. Record keeping
 - 5. Advanced technology

Advanced Cities

- By 3000 B.C. the Sumerians had built a number of cities that developed their own governments each with its own rulers
- Each city and the surrounding land it controlled formed a city-state
- A city-state functioned much as an independent country does today
- The center of all Sumerian cities was the Ziggurat.
- At the Ziggurat Sumerian priests appealed to the gods for the well-being of the city-state.
- The Ziggurat also served as a city hall. From there the priests managed the irrigation system and demanded a portion of every farmer's crop as taxes.







Monarchs take control

- In a time of war the priests did not lead the city
- The men of the city would choose a tough fighter who would command the city's soldiers
- At first a commander's power ended as soon as the war was over but eventually as wars became more and more frequent Sumerian commanders gained permanent control over standing armies.
- Eventually military leaders became full time rulers or monarchs.
- Monarchs passed their power on to their sons who would then pass it down the line to their own heirs
- A series of rulers from the same family was called a dynasty
- Between 3000 and 2500 B.C. many Sumerian city-states became dynasties.

Spread of Sumerian cities

- Sumerian city-states grew prosperous from the surplus crops produced on their farms.
- The surpluses allowed Sumerians to increase long-distance trade
- As population and trade expanded the Sumerians came into contact with other peoples
- The Sumerian idea of living in cities began to spread and new cities were popping up all over the Fertile Crescent
- The Sumerians absorbed religious beliefs from neighboring cultures.
- This process of the spreading of new ideas from one culture to another is called cultural diffusion

Sumerian Religion

- The Sumerians believed that many Gods controlled the various forces in nature.
- Polytheism is the belief in many gods.
- The most important Sumerian God was Enlil the god of clouds and air
- The lowest Sumerian gods were the demons known as the Wicked Udugs who caused disease, misfortune, and every kind of human trouble.
- The Sumerians believed in roughly 3000 gods
- Sumerian gods were human-like in that they did human things like falling in love, getting married, having kids etc...but they were also immortal and all powerful.
- Humans were nothing but servants to Sumerian gods.

More on Sumerian religion

- Sumerian gods could become angry and send floods or war to destroy cities at any moment.
- To appease their gods the Sumerians built ziggurats for them and offered sacrifices of animals, food and wine.
- Sumerians believed that the souls of the dead went to "the land of no return" a dismal gloomy place between the earth's crust and the ancient sea.
- No joy awaited souls in the "land of no return"

The Epic of Gilgamesh

- The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest works of literature in the world.
- The story is an long poem that describes the adventures of Gilgamesh a legendary king of Sumer and his quest for immortality.

Sumerian social classes

- With the Sumerian civilization we see the beginnings of the social class system.
- Priests and Kings were the highest level of Sumerian social class
- Wealthy merchants were second
- Third were the vast majority of Sumerians who worked with their hands in the fields and in workshops.
- The lowest level in Sumerian society were slaves.
- Some Sumerian slaves were prisoners who had been captured in war, others were Sumerians who had been sold into slavery as children to pay the debts of their poor parents.
- It was possible for a slave to earn freedom through hard work.

Women in Sumerian society

- Sumerian women could work most any job from merchant to farmer to artisan.
- Women could hold property in their name
- Women could join the lower ranks of the priesthood
- Because women are not mentioned much in Sumer's written records it is assumed that they didn't get a formal education like upper class males did.
- Sumerian women had more rights than women in many later civilizations.

Science and Technology

- Sumerians invented the wheel, the sail, and the plow
- They were the first to use bronze
- They developed the first system of writing- Cuneiform
- One of the first known maps was made in 2300 B.C. by the Sumerians.
- Some of the oldest written records of the scientific investigation of astronomy, chemical substances, and symptoms of disease
- Sumerians developed a number system in base 60
- Sumerian building techniques included using bricks and mortar.
- Their architectural innovations included arches, columns, ramps, and the pyramid shaped design of the ziggurat.

Fall of Sumerian Empire

- From 3000 to 2000 B.C. the city-states of Sumer were almost constantly at war with one another
- The Sumerian city-states were weakened by this constant warfare and could not fight off attacks from peoples from surrounding lands
- The Sumerians didn't recover from the attacks on their cities but the accomplishments of their civilization continued on through succeeding rulers.

The Akkadians

- 2350 B.C. Conqueror named Sargon defeated the city-states of Sumer.
- Sargon came from Akkad a city-state north of Sumer.
- The Akkadians were Semitic-they spoke a language related to Arabic and Hebrew
- The Akkadians had adopted many aspects of Sumerian civilization and Sargon's further conquests helped to spread Sumerian culture even further.

Sargon of Akkadia

- Sargon took control of both Northern and Southern Mesopotamia
- Because he united several previously independent nations under his rule Sargon created history's first empire.
- At its peak the Akkadian Empire extended from the Mediterranean coast to present day Iran.
- Sargon's dynasty lasted 200 years and declined due to internal fighting, invasions, and severe famine.

Babylonian Empire

- In about 2000 B.C. nomadic warriors known as the Amorites invaded Mesopotamia
- The Amorites overwhelmed the Sumerians and established a capital at the city of Babylon on the Euphrates river.
- The Babylonian Empire reached its peak during the reign of Hammurabi from 1792-1750 B.C.
- Hammurabi's most enduring legacy is the code of laws he put together

Hammurabi's Law Code

- Hammurabi recognized that a single uniform code of laws for his entire empire would help to unify the diverse groups within his empire
- The code lists 282 specific laws dealing with everything that affected the community including family relations, business conduct, and crime. The laws that tell us a great deal about the values and beliefs of Hammurabi's people
- The code applied to everyone and set different punishments for rich and poor and men and women
- The code reinforced the principle that the government had a responsibility for what occurred in society
- 200 years after Hammurabi's reign the Babylonian Empire fell to nomadic warriors