

## PART I EARLIEST CIVILIZATIONS

### Chapter 1 Mesopotamia

#### I. The City-State Culture

1. Urbanization, with its specialization of the arts and professions, and trade with distant regions, vastly enriched life.
2. The first cities were established around 3400 B.C. during which time the celestial-based calendar, the first writings, and monumental architecture were developed.
3. Canal and irrigation projects fostered the creation of geometry, arithmetic, and surveying.
4. By 2900 B.C. the banks of the Euphrates River were occupied by at least 12 fiercely independent city-states.
5. There were a variety of ethnic groups in the region but the Sumerians dominated in the cities.
6. In Sumer, the city represented the principal unit of organization, ruled by a king elected by a council of elders.

#### II. Sumerian Architecture and Art

1. High walls of hard clay bricks enclosed individual private houses, shops, streets, shrines, and temples.
2. An inner courtyard served as the center of family life.
3. Pottery pipes carried away sewage; oil lamps provided light.

##### A. The Temple

1. Early temples were small freestanding shrines.
2. Each city belonged to a particular deity.
3. Temples were the household of a god or goddess and were walled and separated from the rest of the city.
4. Temple complexes evolved into the *ziggurats* or temple towers.
5. The *ziggurats* represented a sacred mountain.
6. The *ziggurats* were decorated with colored tiles and planted trees graced the upper terraces.

##### B. Sumerian Art

1. Sumerian artifacts provide a useful artistic language.
2. These relics were not art objects in the modern sense but do convey the meaning of significant events and the relationships between the subjects depicted.
3. Artistic renderings were central to Sumerian religious and civic observances.

#### III. Sumerian Mythology, Religion, and Worship

##### A. Concepts of Myth and Mythology

1. *Myth*, as used by anthropologists, psychologists, or literary critics, is different from the ordinary everyday usage of the term, which is something that is not really true though perhaps popularly believed.
2. Myths, in the scholarly or anthropological sense, refer to stories which have been passed down orally, based on historic events, but that exist outside historic time.
3. Students of mythology call this “sacred time.”
4. Myths represent a society’s deepest form of truth, which is made manifest and preserved through ritual.

## B. Mesopotamian Religion

1. Mesopotamian gods were numerous and varied.
2. Afterlife in the Mesopotamian religion was a diminished “shadow” existence, a place of neither punishment nor reward.
3. Temple statues of the gods were regarded as incarnate and had to be served and even fed regularly.
4. Humans were created to serve the gods, and if they faithfully carried out their duties, the gods would deliver prosperity and power to the city.

## IV. Sumerian Music

1. Dancing and music were considered one of the joys of city life.
2. Music was also important to religious life.
3. Music served as an accompaniment to poetry during daily religious rituals as well as to important civic and secular occasions.
4. The Sumerians had no written music notation system, and the melodies were considered priestly secrets to be handed down orally.

## V. Literacy and Literature in Mesopotamia

1. Mesopotamia developed the art of writing in about 7000 B.C.
2. The first writing of words on tablets began in 3200 B.C.
3. Dominated by wedge shapes, Sumerian writing is called *cuneiform*.
4. Writing was done on soft clay tablets with a reed stylus.
5. Writing was used for legal transactions, receipts, and historical records.
6. In the course of their training, scribes copied text from the traditional writings of Mesopotamia: myths, laments, songs, and proverbs such as *The Instructions of Shurppak*.

### B. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the most important work of Mesopotamian literature.
2. The earliest known version of the tale is written on clay tablets from 2100 B.C.
3. It is the oldest written epic and perhaps the oldest written story in the world.
4. An epic recounts the heroic (superhuman) deeds of a mortal hero who undergoes great trial usually involving gods, the underworld, or the dwelling place of the gods.

## VI. The Mesopotamian Empire

### A. The Akkadians at Agade (2340–2150 B.C.)

1. The Akkadians assumed control of Mesopotamia a few decades after the region was first united by the Sumerians.
2. The Akkadian king Sargon conquered Northern and Southern Mesopotamian and expanded his empire to include Syria and Anatolia (Eastern Turkey).
3. The Akkadians held sway over the region for about two hundred years.

### B. Babylon, 1800–1600 B.C.

1. Hammurabi was the first ruler of the Babylonian Empire.
2. Babylon was a center of international trade.
3. Babylon’s most lasting legacy is 282 laws written on an eight-foot block of basalt stone—the Hammurabi Code.

C. Assyria, 1000–600 B.C.

1. Babylon fell to the Hittites who invaded from Syria but assimilated pre-existing Mesopotamian culture into the society..
2. The Assyrians, a tough and warlike people from Northern Mesopotamia, supplanted the Hittites' regional control.
3. The Assyrians amassed one of the largest empires of the ancient world.
4. Iron weapons, horses (used for cavalry), and other military inventions as well as massive deportations and an unmatched ruthlessness helped the Assyrians maintain and consolidate power.
5. The Assyrian ruler Sargon II built the vast Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad.
6. The Assyrians were in a constant state of war with one or another of its many subjected peoples and were eventually defeated by an alliance of the Medes and Babylonians.

D. The Second Babylonia, 612–550 B.C.

1. The victorious Babylonian/Mede alliance divided the Assyrian Empire with the Medes taking the area east and north of the Tigris.
2. Nebuchadnezzar II built a magnificent palace for his Median wife.
3. The city, with a population of about 100,000, was five times larger in area than Athens.
4. The Babylonians from this era made lasting contributions to the science of astronomy.

E. Babylonian Music

1. Babylonian music had a strong religious significance.
2. Music was based on mathematical ratios, which were also considered theologically important.
3. Musical training was rigorous and included instruction in the ancient Sumerian language which was no longer in everyday use.

F. The End of Mesopotamian Civilization

1. Mesopotamia was a powerful cultural force in the world for 3,000 years.
2. When Mesopotamia was conquered by Cyrus of Persia in 550 B.C., its importance dwindled and was never regained.
3. Mesopotamia's lasting legacy includes innovations in the fields of architecture, science, technology, literature, writing, and law.
4. Mesopotamia had a strong influence on the emerging civilizations of Egypt, Crete, Greece, and others that followed.