



Mesopotamia

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #3

1

Four things today

- The City-State
- Gilgamesh
- Writing
- Sumer

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Responses

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Questions about whatever



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Agricultural Revolution


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Neolithic: Agricultural revolution

- 10,000 – 3000 BCE
- Slow development of agricultural practices and technology
- Crop yield must increase to build an urban civilization

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Conversion to agriculture

- Sites across Eurasia and North Africa
- Many do not last

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Neolithic sites

- Homes clustered together in a "proto-city"
- No planning, centralized rule, or specialized labor
- Inhabitants farm surrounding lands by day and then return

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The City-State

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The city-state

- Economically independent
 - Urban center—skilled labor and manufacturing
 - Surrounding farmlands—part of central market and identity
- Politically autonomous
- Monumental building
- Patron deity



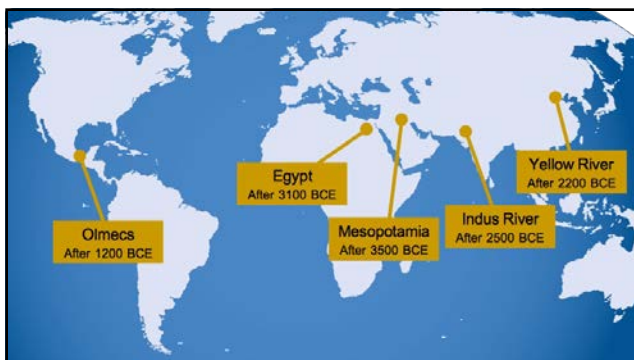
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City-state culture

- Shared...
 - Culture
 - Heritage
 - Language
 - Religion
- Rivalry for limited resources



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Civilization as social revolution

- Complex social structures
 - Division of labor
 - Class
 - Forms of government
 - Citizen and noncitizen
- The responsibilities of the citizen
 - The individual is subordinated to the community
- The responsibilities of gender
 - Male: public/present; Female: private/future

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Forms of government

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Democracy | δῆμος 'people' + κράτος 'power' | • Citizen | CIVITAS 'city-dweller' |
| • Republic | RES PUBLICA 'public matters' | • Constitution | CONSTITUTIO 'settled, agreed upon' |
| • Oligarchy | ὀλίγος 'few' + ἄρχων 'leader' | • Empire | IMPERIUM 'power to command, compel' |
| • Autocracy | αὐτός 'self' + κράτος 'power' | | |
| • Tyranny | τύραννος 'lord and master' | | |
| • Monarchy | μόνος 'alone' + ἄρχων 'leader' | | |
| • Dynasty | δύναμαι 'to be able, strong enough' | | |
| • Theocracy | θεός 'deity' + κράτος 'power' | | |

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Mesopotamia

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The Epic of Gilgamesh

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King Gilgamesh

- Named in the Sumerian list of kings
- Used as a legendary figure
- Story explores Sumerian ideas of humanity and community

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The Epic of Gilgamesh

- Written on clay tablets
- Cuneiform writing

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Cylinder seals

- Another way of seeing the Gilgamesh legend
- Image different for each important family
- Used as a signature or to notarize documents

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Ways of looking at the Epic

- Gilgamesh as a priest-king
- Gilgamesh as a hero
- Gilgamesh as a mortal
- Gilgamesh as a man



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Characters

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| • Gilgamesh | king of Úruk | • Shámash | sun-god |
| • Ninsun | his divine mother | • Humbába | forest guardian |
| • Enkidu | his friend | • Íshtar | great goddess |
| • Shámhat | a prostitute in Úruk | • Úta-napishti | survivor of the Flood |

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Tablet 1

- Gilgamesh as king
- The creation of Enkidu
- Shamhat and Enkidu
- Gilgamesh and Ninsun

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Writing

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Forms of writing

PICTOGRAPHS

Each character represents a word or a concept



Cuneiform



Hieroglyphs

SYLLABARIES

Each character represents a syllable (consonant + vowel)



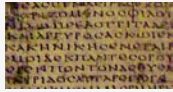
Linear B



Aramaic Cypriot

ALPHABETS

Each character represents a sound



Greek



Latin

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Cuneiform



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Hieroglyphs

- Roughly contemporary with cuneiform
- Used for formal writing and records



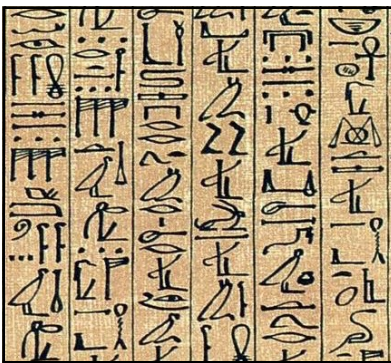
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Hieroglyphs: cartouche

- Within a cartouche, the first syllable is sounded out to make proper names

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From stone to papyrus

- Papyrus is made from woven reeds
- Fluidity of ink version leads to a more informal script
- Still difficult to learn

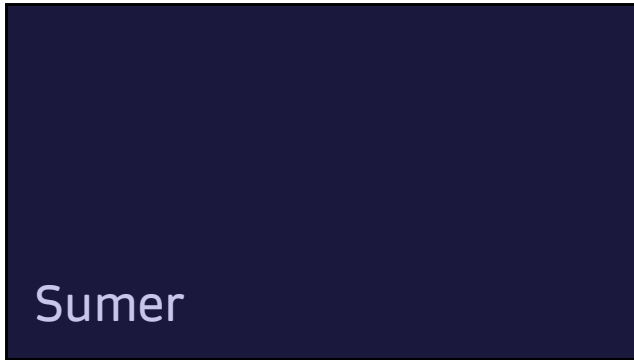
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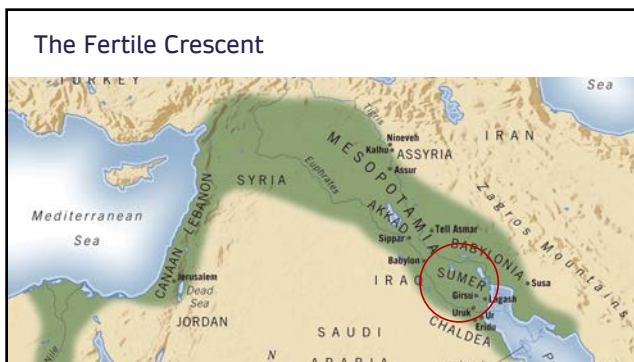
The phonetic alphabet

- Bronze Age scripts are pictographic or syllabic
- Many characters with a high learning curve
- No phonetic scripts until the Iron Age

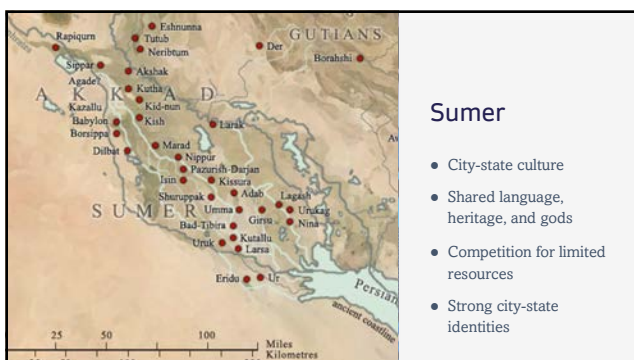
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Sumer

- City-state culture
- Shared language, heritage, and gods
- Competition for limited resources
- Strong city-state identities

Rivalry for resources leads to warfare



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Ziggurat

- Massive temple at the heart of a Sumerian city-state
- Sacred home of the patron god
- Visible focus of city-state identity

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The Deluge

- Massive flood destroys cities of Sumer
- Lone survivor separated from humanity
- Sumerian gods are sometimes nurturing, sometimes destructive
- Death is universal



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Life and afterlife

- Sumerian afterlife is a place of impotence
- Gods cannot be trusted
- The living must act
- Build to create a strong and enduring future

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