

Mesopotamia

I. The Fertile Crescent

A. Geography

1. Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (Mesopotamia)
2. fertile arc from Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf
3. dry, hot climate
4. annual floods – unpredictable
5. floods partially controlled by irrigation systems and drainage ditches
6. silt – rich soil – abundant crops
7. cities

II. City – States

Region consisted of three peoples – Assyrian, Akkad, Sumerians

A. Sumerians

1. by 3000B.C. Sumerians est. independent cities; Eridu, Ur, Uruk
Expanded to control surrounding countrysides;
2. walled cities
6 miles of wall – Uruk; towers spaced 35 ft.
50,000 popul. By 2700B.C.
3. buildings constructed of sun-dried mud bricks; little wood or stone
arch, dome, some of largest brick buildings

B. Religion and Rulers

1. What does religion offer? Answers to questions about life;
gods and goddesses permeated the universe
3000 gods and goddesses
Polytheistic
aroused fear and uncertainty; tied to unpredictability of floods?
Serve and obey
2. Temples
 - a. on top of ziggurats – massive stepped towers;
 - b. specific gods associated with temples and towns; god of a place;
 - c. consumed much wealth and resources
 - d. central location
3. theocracy – government est. and ruled by divine authority;
kings as agents of the gods

C. Economy and Society

1. Traditional economy based chiefly on farming
2. Also trade and industry – woolen textiles, pottery and metalwork

- a. copper, gold and silver used for jewelry
 - b. tin + copper + bronze
 - c. bartered wool, barley, dried fish, wheat and metal goods for imported copper, tin and timber;
 - d. invention of the wheel
 - e. around 3000BC; wheeled carts; transport of goods;
3. Three major social groups
- a. nobles(royal and priestly officials), commoners(farmers, merchants, fishers and craftspeople) and slaves(belonged to palace official and rich landowners; used for building projects and farming)
 - b. 90+ % farmers