



T 4: Mesopotamia: Late Bronze Age

Emergence of territorial states

- **Territorial State:** with much wider territory, much larger population and more powerful rulers than a **city state**
- Decline of city states due to: competition for scarce resources, increasing population, struggle for supremacy
- Decline of city states followed by the rise of territorial states

First territorial state

- **Sargon I** (*Sargon the Great*), King of **Akkad** unified Mesopotamian city states and established the first territorial state (2334 – 2193 BCE)
- **Akkadians** were **Semitic** (people speaking languages like Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic etc.)
- Immense achievements in architecture, art and literary works
- Spoke Akkadian language instead of Sumerian, but adopted various Sumerian religious and farming practices

Sargon I of Akkad and his “Empire”



Decline of Sumer

After Akkad, century-long **Ur III** (Neo-Sumerian) and **Elamite** rule, followed by gradual decline of Sumer

- Causes: reduced food production due to environmental changes like drought, loss of soil fertility due to intensive farming, and increasing river & land salinity etc.
- Foreign invasions by **transhumant migrants** and **nomads** from Zagros Mountains and Syrian Desert

Rise of Babylonian kingdom

- Created by Amorites (Semitic) – from western Mesopotamia
- Restored law and order, sponsored art and architecture, established schools
- Combined tribal traditions with dynastic rule
- The most famous Babylonian king was **Hammurabi** (1792-1750 BCE)

Code of Hammurabi

- Hammurabi famous for his code of law
- 282 sections covering most aspects of daily life
- Severe punishment – followed the old Sumerian ‘Lex Talionis’ (law of retaliation - ‘an eye for an eye’)
- No punishment without trial
- Restoration of order in the kingdom

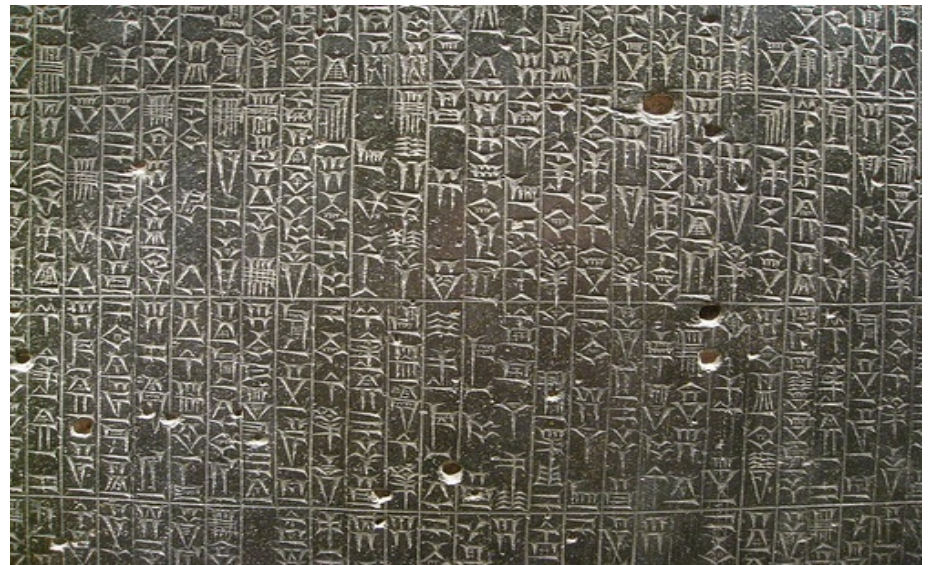
Code of Hammurabi



Photo taken by M A Kawser
at Louvre Museum, Paris



Photo taken by
M A Kawser
at Louvre Museum
Paris



Code of Hammurabi (cont)

- **An eye for an Eye**

“If a builder has built a house for a man and has not made his work sound, so that the house he has made falls down and causes the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death. If it causes the death of the son of the owner of the house, they shall kill the son of that builder”

- **Inequality** before the law
- No distinction between accidental and intentional offences
- **Fairness** in some cases

Epic of Gilgamesh

- **Gilgamesh** ruled over ancient Uruk around 2700 BCE - later became a **mythical hero**
- **Epic** written at different times by Sumerians, Akkadians and Babylonians on his heroic adventures
- **Oldest literary text** known so far
- Among other things, it narrates how a great flood occurred on the banks of Euphrates, and how some people and animals survived on a seven-storied boat (reminiscent of Noah's Arc)

Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians)

- Chaldeans founded the new Babylonian kingdom in 612 BCE
- Most famous ruler was **Nebuchadnezzar II** (604-562 BCE)
- Developed art and architecture - “Hanging Gardens”
- Persian invasion in 539 BCE ended the Mesopotamian civilization

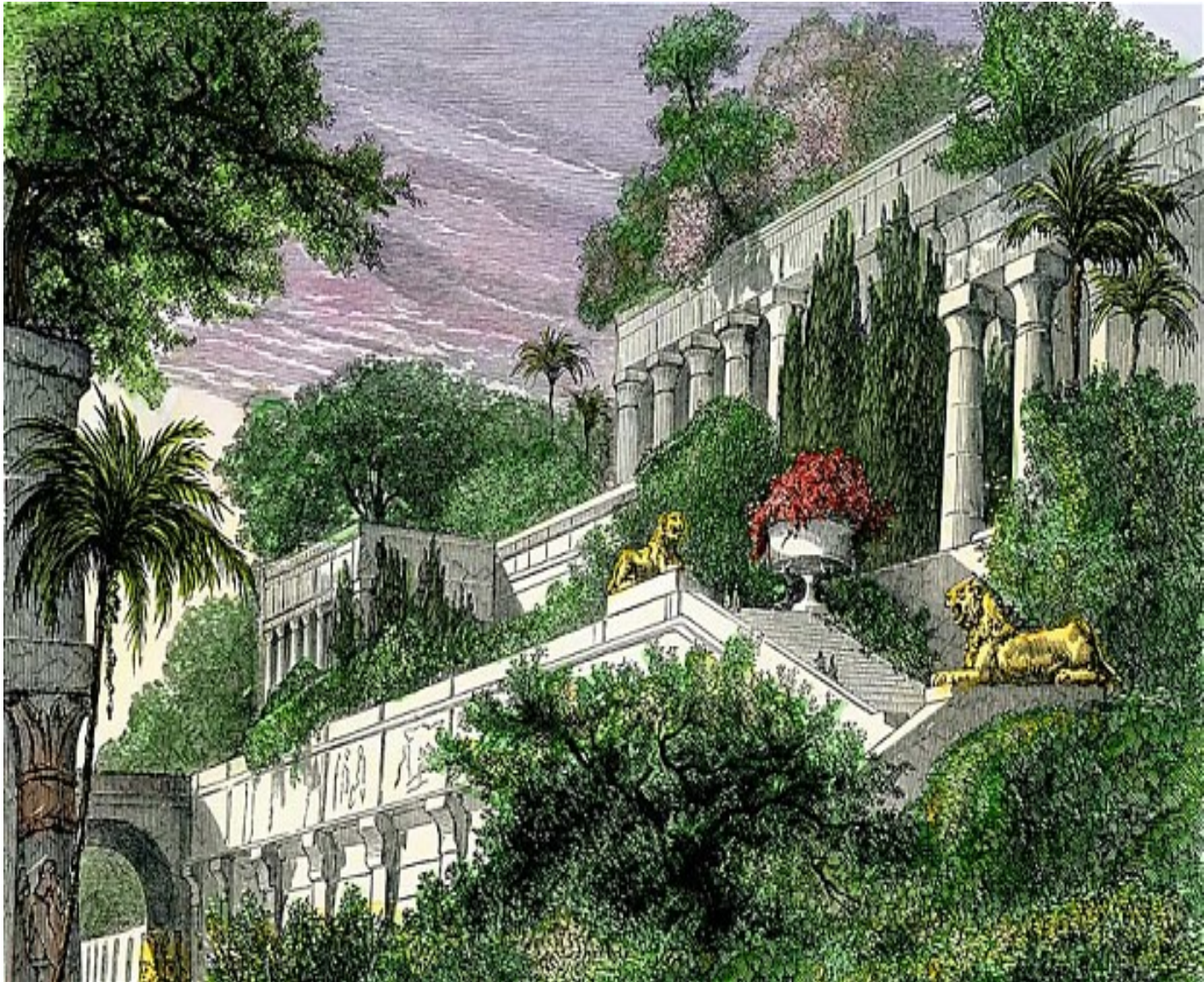
Neo-Babylonian Empire



New Babylonian art and architecture



The “Hanging Gardens” of Babylon



Study questions

- Why did the Sumerian city states decline?
- How did the Sumerian territorial states vary from city states?
- Who were the Akkadians?
- Why did Sumer (southern Mesopotamia) decline?
- Who created the (Old) Babylonian kingdom?
- What was the foundation of Hammurabi's Code of Law?
- Identify the main features of his code of law.
- Was the Code fair to all?
- What do you know about the Epic of Gilgamesh?
- Who was Nebuchadnezzar II?

Thank You