



Mesopotamia: Late Bronze Age

1. Why did the Sumerian city states decline?

Ans: About 2400 B.C. the power of Sumer started to fade. New civilizations began to develop in Mesopotamia as conquerors moved in from nearby areas.

Sargon I: Sargon I was a ruler from an area in northern Mesopotamia known as Akkad. About 2300 B.C. he moved his armies south and began to conquer the city states of Sumer one by one. He united the conquered city states with Akkad and became as king of Sumer and Akkad. Thus, Sargon I (Sargon the great), king of Akkad unified Mesopotamian city states and established the first territorial state (2334-2193 BCE). Sargon I ruled his empire for more than 50 years. Shortly after his death, the empire fell.

2. How did the Sumerian territorial states vary from city states?

Ans: **Sumerian city state:** Sumerian city state is a city with estates or farmlands also has its own government.

Sumerian territorial state: Sumerian territorial states had much wider territory much larger population and more powerful rulers than a city state.

Decline of city states happened due to competition for limited resources, increasing population, struggle for power. Decline of the city states followed by the rise of territorial states.

3. Who were the Akkadians?

Ans: **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 who spoke languages like, Hebrew, Arabic, and Amharic etc.). The Akkadians had huge achievements in architecture, art and literary works. Under **Sargon I** Akkadian became the language of the people. Sumerian was used only for religious purposes. The Akkadians however worshipped the Sumerian gods. They also wrote their language in Sumerian cuneiform. They even adopted Sumerian farming technique.

4. Why did Sumer (southern Mesopotamia) decline?

Ans: Sumer declined because:

- i) Food production was reduced due to environmental changes like drought, loss of soil fertility because of intensive farming and increasing river & land salinity etc.
- ii) Conquerors moved in from nearby areas.

5. Who created the (old) Babylonian kingdom?

Ans: During 1800 B.C a new group of people called Amorites entered the Tigris Euphrates valley and built cities of their own. One of these cities was Babylon. The king of Babylon, Hammurabi conquered Akkad

and Sumer. He became the ruler of great new empire. He was the most famous Babylonian king.

6.What was the foundation of Hammurabi's code of Law?

Ans: Hammurabi was a great conqueror and as a ruler he became most famous for his code of law. Each city-state had its own code.

Hammurabi took what he felt the best laws from each code. He put these together and then issued one code by which the entire empire was to live. He had artisans carve nearly code of 282 laws inscribed on a stone pillar placed in the public hall for all to see. Hammurabi Code was an origin to the concept of “An eye for an eye”. For example: 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. Hammurabi wanted to make sure that his code was carried out fairly and justly. For that he appointed royal judges. Judges who were not honest and witnesses did not tell the truths were punished.

Hammurabi's code covered almost everything in daily life. A person was believed innocent until proven guilty. Once proven guilty the person was punished. The punishments ranged from fines to death. There were no prison sentences. Members of the upper class were punished more severely than the members of the middle or lower classes.

7. Was the code fair to all?

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8. What do you know about the epic of Gilgamesh?

Ans: Gilgamesh ruled over ancient Uruk around 2700 BCE and later became mythical hero. It was believed that he was 2/3 god and 1/3 human but he too had to die someday just like a mortal. Epic were

written at different times by Sumerians, Akkadians and Babylonians on his heroic adventures. It is known as the oldest literary text.

In the story of Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, they travel the world performing great acts of courage. When Enkdu dies Gilgamesh searches for a way to live forever but he learns that only gods can live forever and people must die someday. Part of the Gilgamesh story tells how a great flood occurred on the banks of Euphrates and how some people and animals survived on a seven storied boat. It was very much like the biblical story of “Noah and the ark”.

9. Who was Nebuchadnezzar II?

Ans: Chaldeans founded the new Babylonian kingdom in 612 BCE. The most famous ruler of it was Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE). He developed the art and architecture of the new Babylonian empire. The “Hanging Garden” of Babylon is a perfect example of it. Persian invasion in 539 BCE ended the Mesopotamian civilization.