



Akkadian Empire

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The **Akkadian Empire** /əˈkɛdiən/^[1] was the first ancient Semitic-speaking empire of Mesopotamia, centered in the city of Akkad /ˈækæd/^[2] and its surrounding region, also called Akkad in ancient Mesopotamia in the Bible. The empire united Akkadian and Sumerian speakers under one rule. The Akkadian Empire exercised influence across Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Anatolia, sending military expeditions as far south as Dilmun and Magan (modern Bahrain and Oman) in the Arabian Peninsula.^[3]

During the 3rd millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the Sumerians and the Akkadians, which included widespread bilingualism.^[4] Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as a spoken language somewhere between the 3rd and the 2nd millennia BC (the exact dating being a matter of debate).^[5]

The Akkadian Empire reached its political peak between the 24th and 22nd centuries BC, following the conquests by its founder Sargon of Akkad.^[6] Under Sargon and his successors, the Akkadian language was briefly imposed on neighboring conquered states such as Elam and Gutium. Akkad is sometimes regarded as the first empire in history, though the meaning of this term is not precise, and there are earlier Sumerian claimants.^{[7][8]}

After the fall of the Akkadian Empire, the people of Mesopotamia eventually coalesced into two major Akkadian-speaking nations: Assyria in the north, and, a few centuries later, Babylonia in the south.

History of research

The Bible refers to Akkad in Genesis 10:10 (<https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Genesis%2010:10&version=nrsv>), which states that the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was in the land of

Akkadian Empire

c. 2334 – 2154 BC



Map of the Akkadian Empire (brown) and the directions in which military campaigns were conducted (yellow arrows)

Capital	<u>Akkad</u>
Common languages	<u>Akkadian</u> <u>Sumerian</u> <u>language</u> (declining)
Religion	<u>Akkadian</u>
Government	<u>Monarchy</u>
Šarrum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">c. 2334–2279 BC <u>Sargon</u> (first)c. 2170–2154 BC <u>Shu-turul</u> (last)
Historical era	<u>Bronze Age</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">EstablishedConquests of <u>Sargon of Akkad</u>Disestablished	<ul style="list-style-type: none">c. 2334 BCc. 2340 – 2284 BCc. 2154 BC

Akkad. Nimrod's historical identity is unknown, but some have compared him with the legendary Gilgamesh, founder of Uruk.^{[9][10]} Today, scholars have documented some 7,000 texts from the Akkadian period, written in both Sumerian and Akkadian. Many later texts from the successor states of Assyria and Babylonia also deal with the Akkadian Empire.^[10]

Understanding of the Akkadian Empire continues to be hampered by the fact that its capital Akkad has not yet been located, despite numerous attempts.^{[11][12]} Precise dating of archaeological sites is hindered by the fact that there are no clear distinctions between artifact assemblages thought to stem from the preceding Early Dynastic period, and those thought to be Akkadian. Likewise, material that is thought to be Akkadian continues to be in use into the Ur III period.^[13]

Many of the more recent insights on the Akkadian Empire have come from excavations in the Upper Khabur area in modern northeastern Syria which was to become a part of Assyria after the fall of Akkad. For example, excavations at Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh) brought to light a sealing of Tar'am-Agade, a previously unknown daughter of Naram-Sin, who was possibly married to an unidentified local *endan* (ruler).^[14] The excavators at nearby Tell Leilan (ancient Shekhna/Shubat-Enlil) have used the results from their investigations to argue that the Akkadian Empire came to an end due to a sudden drought, the so-called 4.2 kiloyear event.^[15] The impact of this climate event on Mesopotamia in general, and on the Akkadian Empire in particular, continues to be hotly debated.^[16]

Excavation at the modern site of Tell Brak has suggested that the Akkadians rebuilt a city ("Brak" or "Nagar") on this site, for use as an administrative center. The city included two large buildings including a complex with temple, offices, courtyard, and large ovens.^{[17][18]}

Dating and periodization

The Akkadian Period is generally dated to either: c. 2334 BC – c. 2154 BC (according to the middle chronology timeline of the Ancient Near East), or c. 2270 BC – c. 2083 BC (according to the short chronology timeline of the Ancient Near East.) It was preceded by the Early Dynastic Period of Mesopotamia (ED) and succeeded by the Ur III Period, although both transitions are blurry. For example: it is likely that the rise of Sargon of Akkad coincided with the late ED Period and that the final Akkadian kings ruled simultaneously with the Gutian kings alongside rulers at the city-states of both: Uruk and Lagash. The Akkadian Period is contemporary with: EB IV (in Israel), EB IVA and EJ IV (in Syria), and EB IIIB (in Turkey).^{[10][19]}

Timeline of rulers

The relative order of Akkadian kings is clear. The absolute dates of their reigns are approximate (as with all dates prior to the late Bronze Age collapse c. 1200 BC).^[20]

Preceded by	Succeeded by
<u>Early Dynastic Period</u>	<u>Gutian Period (Sumer)</u>
<u>Second Mariote Kingdom</u>	<u>Third Mariote Kingdom</u>
<u>Umma</u>	

Ruler	Middle Chronology All dates BC	Short Chronology All dates BC
<u>Sargon</u>	2334–2279	
<u>Rimush</u>	2278–2270	
<u>Manishtushu</u>	2269–2255	
<u>Naram-Sin</u>	2254–2218	
<u>Shar-Kali-Sharri</u>	2217–2193	
<u>Interregnum</u>	2192–2190	
<u>Dudu</u>	2189–2169	
<u>Shu-turul</u>	2168–2154	

Development of the empire

Pre-Sargonic Akkad

The Akkadian Empire takes its name from the region and city of Akkad, both of which were localized in the general confluence area of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Although the city of Akkad has not yet been identified on the ground, it is known from various textual sources. Among these is at least one text predating the reign of Sargon. Together with the fact that the name Akkad is of non-Akkadian origin, this suggests that the city of Akkad may have already been occupied in pre-Sargonic times.^{[11][21]}

Sargon of Akkad

Sargon of Akkad (*Sharru-kin* = "legitimate king", possibly a title he took on gaining power) defeated and captured Lugal-zage-si in the Battle of Uruk and conquered his empire. The earliest records in the Akkadian language date to the time of Sargon. Sargon was claimed to be the son of La'ibum or Itti-Bel, a humble gardener, and possibly a hierodule, or priestess to Ishtar or Inanna. One legend related of Sargon in Assyrian times says that

My mother was a changeling, my father I knew not. The brothers of my father loved the hills. My city is Azurpiranu (the wilderness herb fields), which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates. My changeling mother conceived me, in secret she bore me. She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid. She cast me into the river which rose not over me. The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water. Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me. Akki the drawer of water, appointed me as his gardener. While I was gardener Ishtar granted me her love, and for four and (fifty?) ... years I exercised kingship.^[22]

Later claims made on behalf of Sargon were that his mother was an "entu" priestess (high priestess). The claims might have been made to ensure a descendency of nobility, considering only a high placed family can be made such a position.^[23]

Originally a cupbearer (Rabshakeh) to a king of Kish with a Semitic name, Ur-Zababa, Sargon thus became a gardener, responsible for the task of clearing out irrigation canals. This gave him access to a disciplined corps of workers, who also may have served as his first soldiers. Displacing Ur-Zababa, Sargon was crowned king, and he entered upon a career of foreign conquest.^[24] Four times he invaded Syria and Canaan, and he spent three years thoroughly subduing the countries of "the west" to unite them with Mesopotamia "into a single empire".

However, Sargon took this process further, conquering many of the surrounding regions to create an empire that reached westward as far as the Mediterranean Sea and perhaps Cyprus (*Kaptara*); northward as far as the mountains (a later Hittite text asserts he fought the Hattian king Nurdaggal of Burushanda, well into Anatolia); eastward over Elam; and as far south as Magan (Oman) — a region over which he reigned for purportedly 56 years, though only four "year-names" survive. He consolidated his dominion over his territories by replacing the earlier opposing rulers with noble citizens of Akkad, his native city where loyalty would thus be ensured.^[25]

Trade extended from the silver mines of Anatolia to the lapis lazuli mines in modern Afghanistan, the cedars of Lebanon and the copper of Magan. This consolidation of the city-states of Sumer and Akkad reflected the growing economic and political power of Mesopotamia. The empire's breadbasket was the rain-fed agricultural system of Assyria and a chain of fortresses was built to control the imperial wheat production.

Images of Sargon were erected on the shores of the Mediterranean, in token of his victories, and cities and palaces were built at home with the spoils of the conquered lands. Elam and the northern part of Mesopotamia (Assyria/Subartu) were also subjugated, and rebellions in Sumer were put down. Contract tablets have been found dated in the years of the campaigns against Canaan and against Sarlak, king of Gutium. He also boasted of having subjugated the "four quarters" — the lands surrounding Akkad to the north (Assyria), the south (Sumer), the east (Elam), and the west (Martu). Some of the earliest historiographic texts (ABC 19, 20) suggest he rebuilt the city of Babylon (*Bab-ilu*) in its new location near Akkad.^[26]

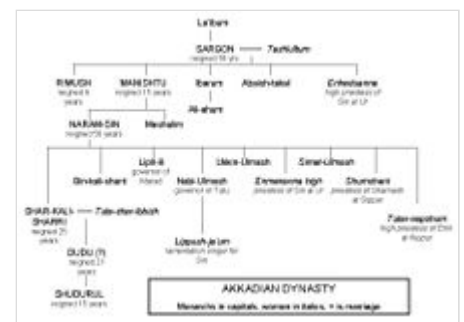
Sargon, throughout his long life, showed special deference to the Sumerian deities, particularly Inanna (Ishtar), his patroness, and Zababa, the warrior god of Kish. He called himself "The anointed priest of Anu" and "the great *ensi* of Enlil" and his daughter, Enheduanna, was installed as priestess to Nanna at the temple in Ur.

Troubles multiplied toward the end of his reign. A later Babylonian text states:

In his old age, all the lands revolted against him, and they besieged him in Akkad (the city) [but] he went forth to battle and defeated them, he knocked them over and destroyed their vast army.



Bronze head of an Akkadian, probably an image of Manishtusu or Naram-Sin; descendants of Sargon (National Museum of Iraq).



Kings of the Akkad Dynasty.

It refers to his campaign in "Elam", where he defeated a coalition army led by the King of Awan and forced the vanquished to become his vassals.^[27]

Also shortly after, another revolt took place:

the Subartu (mountainous tribes of Assyria) the upper country—in their turn attacked, but they submitted to his arms, and Sargon settled their habitations, and he smote them grievously.

Rimush and Manishtushu

Sargon had crushed opposition even at old age. These difficulties broke out again in the reign of his sons, where revolts broke out during the nine-year reign of Rimush (2278–2270 BC), who fought hard to retain the empire, and was successful until he was assassinated by some of his own courtiers. Rimush's elder brother, Manishtushu (2269–2255 BC) succeeded him. The latter seems to have fought a sea battle against 32 kings who had gathered against him and took control over their pre-Arab country, consisting of modern-day United Arab Emirates and Oman. Despite the success, like his brother he seems to have been assassinated in a palace conspiracy.^[28]

Naram-Sin

Manishtushu's son and successor, Naram-Sin (2254–2218 BC), due to vast military conquests, assumed the imperial title "King Naram-Sin, king of the four quarters" (*Lugal Naram-Sîn, Šar kibrat 'arbaim*), the four quarters as a reference to the entire world. He was also for the first time in Sumerian culture, addressed as "the god (Sumerian = DINGIR, Akkadian = *ilu*) of Agade" (Akkad), in opposition to the previous religious belief that kings were only representatives of the people towards the gods.^{[30][31]} He also faced revolts at the start of his reign,^[32] but quickly crushed them.

Naram-Sin also recorded the Akkadian conquest of Ebla as well as Armanum and its king.^[33] Armanum location is debated; it is sometimes identified with a Syrian kingdom mentioned in the tablets of Ebla as Armi, the location of Armi is also debated; while historian Adelheid Otto identifies it with the Citadel of Bazi – Tall Banat complex on the Euphrates River between Ebla and Tell Brak,^{[34][35]} others like Wayne Horowitz identify it with Aleppo.^[36] Further, if most scholars place Armanum in Syria, Michael C. Astour believes it to be located north of the Hamrin Mountains in northern Iraq.^[37]



Victory Stele of Naram-Sin,^[29] celebrating victory against the Lullubi from Zagros 2260 BC. He is wearing a horned helmet, a symbol of divinity, and is also portrayed in a larger scale in comparison to others to emphasize his superiority.^[30] Brought back from Sippar to Susa as war prize in the 12th century BC.

To better police Syria, he built a royal residence at Tell Brak, a crossroads at the heart of the Khabur River basin of the Jezirah. Naram-Sin campaigned against Magan which also revolted; Naram-Sin "marched against Magan and personally caught Mandannu, its king", where he instated garrisons to protect the main roads. The chief threat seemed to be coming from the northern Zagros Mountains, the Lulubis and the Gutians. A campaign against the Lullubi led to the carving of the "Victory Stele of Naram-Suen", now in the Louvre. Hittite sources

claim Naram-Sin of Akkad even ventured into Anatolia, battling the Hittite and Hurrian kings Pamba of Hatti, Zipani of Kanesh, and 15 others. This newfound Akkadian wealth may have been based upon benign climatic conditions, huge agricultural surpluses and the confiscation of the wealth of other peoples.^[38]



Inscription of Naram Sin found at the city of Marad in Iraq, c. 2260 BC

The economy was highly planned. Grain was cleaned, and rations of grain and oil were distributed in standardized vessels made by the city's potters. Taxes were paid in produce and labour on public walls, including city walls, temples, irrigation canals and waterways, producing huge agricultural surpluses.^[39]



Naram-Sin Rock Relief at Darband-i-Gawr, Qaradagh Mountain, Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Iraqi Kurdistan

In later Assyrian and Babylonian texts, the name *Akkad*, together with *Sumer*, appears as part of the royal title, as in the Sumerian LUGAL KI-EN-GI KI-URI or Akkadian *Šar māt Šumeri u Akkadi*,^[40] translating to "king of Sumer and Akkad".^[41] This title was assumed by the king who seized control of Nippur,^[40] the intellectual and religious center of southern Mesopotamia.

During the Akkadian period, the Akkadian language became the lingua franca of the Middle East, and was officially used for administration, although the Sumerian language remained as a spoken and literary language. The spread of Akkadian stretched from Syria to Elam, and even the Elamite language was temporarily written in Mesopotamian cuneiform. Akkadian texts later found their way to far-off places, from Egypt (in the Amarna Period) and Anatolia, to Persia (Behistun).

Collapse

The empire of Akkad fell, perhaps in the 22nd century BC, within 180 years of its founding, ushering in a "Dark Age" with no prominent imperial authority until Third Dynasty of Ur. The region's political structure may have reverted to the *status quo ante* of local governance by city-states.^[42]

Shu-Durul appears to have restored some centralized authority, however he was unable to prevent the empire eventually collapsing outright from the invasion of barbarian peoples from the Zagros Mountains known as the Gutians.

Little is known about the Gutian period, or how long it endured. Cuneiform sources suggest that the Gutians' administration showed little concern for maintaining agriculture, written records, or public safety; they reputedly released all farm animals to roam about Mesopotamia freely, and soon brought about famine and rocketing grain prices. The Sumerian king Ur-Nammu (2112–2095 BC) cleared the Gutians from Mesopotamia during his reign.

The Sumerian King List, describing the Akkadian Empire after the death of Shar-kali-shari, states:

Who was king? Who was not king? Irgigi the king; Nanum, the king; Imi the king; Ilulu, the king—the four of them were kings but reigned only three years. Dudu reigned 21 years; Shu-Turul, the son of Dudu, reigned 15 years. ... Agade was defeated and its kingship carried off to Uruk. In Uruk, Ur-

ningin reigned 7 years, Ur-gigir, son of Ur-ningin, reigned 6 years; Kuda reigned 6 years; Puzur-ili reigned 5 years, Ur-Utu reigned 6 years. Uruk was smitten with weapons and its kingship carried off by the Gutian hordes.

However, there are no known year-names or other archaeological evidence verifying any of these later kings of Akkad or Uruk, apart from a single artifact referencing king Dudu of Akkad. The named kings of Uruk may have been contemporaries of the last kings of Akkad, but in any event could not have been very prominent.

In the Gutian hordes, (first reigned) a nameless king; (then) Imta reigned 3 years as king; Shulme reigned 6 years; Elulumesh reigned 6 years; Inimbakesh reigned 5 years; Igeshuash reigned 6 years; Iarlagab reigned 15 years; Ibate reigned 3 years; ... reigned 3 years; Kurum reigned 1 year; ... reigned 3 years; ... reigned 2 years; Iararum reigned 2 years; Ibranum reigned 1 year; Hablum reigned 2 years; Puzur-Sin son of Hablum reigned 7 years; Iarlaganda reigned 7 years; ... reigned 7 years; ... reigned 40 days. Total 21 kings reigned 91 years, 40 days.

The period between c. 2112 BC and 2004 BC is known as the Ur III period. Documents again began to be written in Sumerian, although Sumerian was becoming a purely literary or liturgical language, much as Latin later would be in Medieval Europe.^[22]

One explanation for the end of the Akkadian empire is simply that the Akkadian dynasty could not maintain its political supremacy over other independently powerful city states.^{[44][42]}

Drought

One theory associates regional decline at the end of the Akkadian period (and of the First Intermediary Period following the Old Kingdom in Ancient Egypt) was associated with rapidly increasing aridity, and failing rainfall in the region of the Ancient Near East, caused by a global centennial-scale drought.^{[45][46]} Harvey Weiss et al. have shown "Archaeological and soil-stratigraphic data define the origin, growth, and collapse of Subir, the third millennium rain-fed agriculture civilization of northern Mesopotamia on the Habur Plains of Syria. At 2200 BC, a marked increase in aridity and wind circulation, subsequent to a volcanic eruption, induced a considerable degradation of land-use conditions. After four centuries of urban life, this abrupt climatic change evidently caused abandonment of Tell Leilan, regional desertion, and collapse of the Akkadian empire based in southern Mesopotamia. Synchronous collapse in adjacent regions suggests that the impact of the abrupt climatic change was extensive."^[15] Peter B. deMenocal, has shown "there was an influence of the North Atlantic Oscillation on the stream flow of the Tigris and Euphrates at this time, which led to the collapse of the Akkadian Empire".^[47]

Excavation at Tell Leilan suggests that this site was abandoned soon after the city's massive walls were constructed, its temple rebuilt and its grain production reorganised. The debris, dust and sand that followed show no trace of human activity. Soil samples show fine wind-blown sand, no trace of earthworm activity, reduced rainfall and indications of a drier and windier climate. Evidence shows that skeleton-thin sheep and



"Cylinder Seal with King or God and Vanquished Lion" (Old Akkadian).^[43]
The Walters Art Museum.

cattle died of drought, and up to 28,000 people abandoned the site, seeking wetter areas elsewhere. Tell Brak shrank in size by 75%. Trade collapsed. Nomadic herders such as the Amorites moved herds closer to reliable water suppliers, bringing them into conflict with Akkadian populations. This climate-induced collapse seems to have affected the whole of the Middle East, and to have coincided with the collapse of the Egyptian Old Kingdom.^[15]

This collapse of rain-fed agriculture in the Upper Country meant the loss to southern Mesopotamia of the agrarian subsidies which had kept the Akkadian Empire solvent. Water levels within the Tigris and Euphrates fell 1.5 metres beneath the level of 2600 BC, and although they stabilised for a time during the following Ur III period, rivalries between pastoralists and farmers increased. Attempts were undertaken to prevent the former from herding their flocks in agricultural lands, such as the building of a 180 km (112 mi) wall known as the "Repeller of the Amorites" between the Tigris and Euphrates under the Ur III ruler Shu-Sin. Such attempts led to increased political instability; meanwhile, severe depression occurred to re-establish demographic equilibrium with the less favourable climatic conditions.^{[48][49][50]}

Richard Zettler has critiqued the drought theory, observing that the chronology of the Akkadian empire is very uncertain, and that available evidence is not sufficient to show its economic dependence on the northern areas excavated by Weiss and others. He also criticizes Weiss for taking Akkadian writings literally to describe certain catastrophic events.^[51]

According to Joan Oates, at Tell Brak the soil "signal" associated with the drought lies below the level of Naram-Sin's palace. However, evidence

may suggest a tightening of Akkadian control following the Brak 'event', for example the construction of the heavily fortified 'palace' itself and the apparent introduction of greater numbers of Akkadian as opposed to local officials, perhaps a reflection of unrest in the countryside of the type that often follows some natural catastrophe.

Furthermore, Brak remained occupied and functional after the fall of the Akkadians.^[52]

Government

The Akkadian government formed a "classical standard" with which all future Mesopotamian states compared themselves. Traditionally, the *ensi* was the highest functionary of the Sumerian city-states. In later traditions, one became an *ensi* by marrying the goddess Inanna, legitimising the rulership through divine consent.

Initially, the monarchical *lugal* (*lu* = man, *gal* = Great) was subordinate to the priestly *ensi*, and was appointed at times of troubles, but by later dynastic times, it was the *lugal* who had emerged as the preeminent role, having his own "*é*" (= house) or "palace", independent from the temple establishment. By the time of Mesalim, whichever dynasty controlled the city of Kish was recognised as *šar kiššati* (= king of Kish), and was considered preeminent in Sumer, possibly because this was where the two rivers approached, and whoever controlled Kish ultimately controlled the irrigation systems of the other cities downstream.

As Sargon extended his conquest from the "Lower Sea" (Persian Gulf), to the "Upper Sea" (Mediterranean), it was felt that he ruled "the totality of the lands under heaven", or "from sunrise to sunset", as contemporary texts put it. Under Sargon, the *ensis* generally retained their positions, but were seen more as provincial governors.

The title *šar kiššati* became recognised as meaning "lord of the universe". Sargon is even recorded as having organised naval expeditions to Dilmun (Bahrain) and Magan, amongst the first organised military naval expeditions in history. Whether he also did in the case of the Mediterranean with the kingdom of Kaptara (possibly Cyprus), as claimed in later documents, is more questionable.

With Naram-Sin, Sargon's grandson, this went further than with Sargon, with the king not only being called "Lord of the Four Quarters (of the Earth)", but also elevated to the ranks of the *dingir* (= gods), with his own temple establishment. Previously a ruler could, like Gilgamesh, become divine after death but the Akkadian kings, from Naram-Sin onward, were considered gods on earth in their lifetimes. Their portraits showed them of larger size than mere mortals and at some distance from their retainers.^[53]

One strategy adopted by both Sargon and Naram-Sin, to maintain control of the country, was to install their daughters, Enheduanna and Emmenanna respectively, as high priestess to Sin, the Akkadian version of the Sumerian moon deity, Nanna, at Ur, in the extreme south of Sumer; to install sons as provincial *ensi* governors in strategic locations; and to marry their daughters to rulers of peripheral parts of the Empire (Urkesh and Marhashe). A well documented case of the latter is that of Naram-Sin's daughter Tar'am-Agade at Urkesh.^[54]

Records at the Brak administrative complex suggest that the Akkadians appointed locals as tax collectors.^[55]

Economy

The population of Akkad, like nearly all pre-modern states, was entirely dependent upon the agricultural systems of the region, which seem to have had two principal centres: the irrigated farmlands of southern Iraq that traditionally had a yield of 30 grains returned for each grain sown and the rain-fed agriculture of northern Iraq, known as the "Upper Country."

Southern Iraq during Akkadian period seems to have been approaching its modern rainfall level of less than 20 mm (1 in) per year, with the result that agriculture was totally dependent upon irrigation. Before the Akkadian period the progressive salinisation of the soils, produced by poorly drained irrigation, had been reducing yields of wheat in the southern part of the country, leading to the conversion to more salt-tolerant barley growing. Urban populations there had peaked already by 2,600 BC, and demographic pressures were high, contributing to the rise of militarism apparent immediately before the Akkadian period (as seen in the Stele of the Vultures of Eannatum). Warfare between city states had led to a population decline, from which Akkad provided a temporary respite.^[56] It was this high degree of agricultural productivity in the south that enabled the growth of the highest population densities in the world at this time, giving Akkad its military advantage.

The water table in this region was very high and replenished regularly—by winter storms in the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates from October to March and from snow-melt from March to July. Flood levels, that had been stable from about 3,000 to 2,600 BC, had started falling, and by the Akkadian period were a half-meter to a meter lower than recorded previously. Even so, the flat country and weather uncertainties made flooding much more unpredictable than in the case of the Nile; serious deluges seem to have been a regular occurrence, requiring constant maintenance of irrigation ditches and drainage systems. Farmers were recruited into regiments for this work from August to October—a period of food shortage—under the control of city temple authorities, thus acting as a form of unemployment relief. Gwendolyn Leick has^[57] suggested that this was Sargon's original employment for the king of Kish, giving him experience in effectively organising large groups of men; a tablet reads, "Sargon, the king, to whom Enlil permitted no rival—5,400 warriors ate bread daily before him".^[58]

Harvest was in the late spring and during the dry summer months. Nomadic Amorites from the northwest would pasture their flocks of sheep and goats to graze on the stubble and be watered from the river and irrigation canals. For this privilege, they would have to pay a tax in wool, meat, milk, and cheese to the temples, who would distribute these products to the bureaucracy and priesthood. In good years, all would go well, but in bad years, wild winter pastures would be in short supply, nomads would seek to pasture their flocks in the grain fields, and conflicts with farmers would result. It would appear that the subsidizing of southern populations by the import of wheat from the north of the Empire temporarily overcame this problem,^[59] and it seems to have allowed economic recovery and a growing population within this region.

As a result, Sumer and Akkad had a surplus of agricultural products but was short of almost everything else, particularly metal ores, timber and building stone, all of which had to be imported. The spread of the Akkadian state as far as the "silver mountain" (possibly the Taurus Mountains), the "cedars" of Lebanon, and the copper deposits of Magan, was largely motivated by the goal of securing control over these imports. One tablet reads "Sargon, the king of Kish, triumphed in thirty-four battles (over the cities) up to the edge of the sea (and) destroyed their walls. He made the ships from Meluhha, the ships from Magan (and) the ships from Dilmun tie up alongside the quay of Agade. Sargon the king prostrated himself before (the god) Dagan (and) made supplication to him; (and) he (Dagan) gave him the upper land, namely Mari, Yarmuti, (and) Ebla, up to the Cedar Forest (and) up to the Silver Mountain".



Sea shell of a murex bearing the name of Rimush, king of Kish, c. 2270 BC, Louvre, traded from the Mediterranean coast where it was used by Canaanites to make a purple dye.

Culture

Art

In art there was a great emphasis on the kings of the dynasty, alongside much that continued earlier Sumerian art. Little architecture remains. In large works and small ones such as seals, the degree of realism was considerably increased,^[60] but the seals show a "grim world of cruel conflict, of danger and uncertainty, a world in which man is subjected without appeal to the incomprehensible acts of distant and fearful divinities who he must serve but cannot love. This sombre mood ... remained characteristic of Mesopotamian art..."^[61]

Language

During the 3rd millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the Sumerians and the Akkadians, which included widespread bilingualism.^[4] The influence of Sumerian on Akkadian (and vice versa) is evident in all areas, from lexical borrowing on a massive scale, to syntactic, morphological, and phonological convergence.^[4] This has prompted scholars to refer to Sumerian and Akkadian in the third

millennium as a *sprachbund*.^[4] Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as a spoken language somewhere around 2000 BC (the exact dating being a matter of debate),^[5] but Sumerian continued to be used as a sacred, ceremonial, literary, and scientific language in Mesopotamia until the 1st century AD.^[62]

Poet–priestess Enheduanna

Sumerian literature continued in rich development during the Akkadian period. Enheduanna, the "wife (Sumerian *dam* = high priestess) of Nanna [the Sumerian moon god] and daughter of Sargon"^[63] of the temple of Sin at Ur, who lived c. 2285–2250 BC, is the first poet in history whose name is known. Her known works include hymns to the goddess Inanna, the *Exaltation of Inanna* and *In-nin sa-gur-ra*. A third work, the *Temple Hymns*, a collection of specific hymns, addresses the sacred temples and their occupants, the deity to whom they were consecrated. The works of this poet are significant, because although they start out using the third person, they shift to the first person voice of the poet herself, and they mark a significant development in the use of cuneiform. As poet, princess, and priestess, she was a personality who, according to William W Hallo, "set standards in all three of her roles for many succeeding centuries"^[64]

In the *Exaltation of Inanna*,

Enheduanna depicts Inanna as disciplining mankind as a goddess of battle. She thereby unites the warlike Akkadian Ishtar's qualities to those of the gentler Sumerian goddess of love and fecundity. She likens Inanna to a great storm bird who swoops down on the lesser gods and sends them fluttering off like surprised bats. Then, in probably the most interesting part of the hymn, Enheduanna herself steps forward in the first person to recite her own past glories, establishing her credibility, and explaining her present plight. She has been banished as high priestess from the temple in the city of Ur and from Uruk and exiled to the steppe. She begs the moon god Nanna to intercede for her because the city of Uruk, under the ruler Lugalanne, has rebelled against Sargon. The rebel, Lugalanne, has even destroyed the temple Eanna, one of the greatest temples in the ancient world, and then made advances on his sister-in-law.^[65]

Curse of Akkad

Later material described how the fall of Akkad was due to Nara-Sin's attack upon the city of Nipper. When prompted by a pair of inauspicious oracles, the king sacked the E-kur temple, supposedly protected by the god Enlil, head of the pantheon. As a result of this, eight chief deities of the Anunnaki pantheon were supposed to have come together and withdrawn their support from Akkad.^[66]

For the first time since cities were built and founded,
The great agricultural tracts produced no grain,
The inundated tracts produced no ostriches,
The irrigated orchards produced neither wine nor syrup,
The gathered clouds did not rain, the masgurum did not grow.
At that time, one shekel's worth of oil was only one-half quart,
One shekel's worth of grain was only one-half quart. . . .
These sold at such prices in the markets of all the cities!
He who slept on the roof, died on the roof,
He who slept in the house, had no burial,

People were flailing at themselves from hunger.^[67]

The kings of Akkad were legendary among later Mesopotamian civilizations, with Sargon understood as the prototype of a strong and wise leader, and his grandson Naram-Sin considered the wicked and impious leader (*Unheilsherrscher* in the analysis of Hans Gustav Güterbock) who brought ruin upon his kingdom.^{[68][69]}

Technology

Tablets from the periods reads, "*(From the earliest days) no-one had made a statue of lead, (but) Rimush king of Kish, had a statue of himself made of lead. It stood before Enlil; and it recited his (Rimush's) virtues to the idu of the gods*". The copper Bassetki Statue, cast with the lost wax method, testifies to the high level of skill that craftsmen achieved during the Akkadian period.^[70]



Bassetki Statue from the reign of Naram-Sin of Akkad with an inscription mentioning the construction of a temple in Akkad

Achievements

The empire was bound together by roads, along which there was a regular postal service. Clay seals that took the place of stamps bear the names of Sargon and his son. A cadastral survey seems also to have been instituted, and one of the documents relating to it states that a certain Uru-Malik, whose name appears to indicate his Canaanite origin, was governor of the land of the Amorites, or *Amurru* as the semi-nomadic people of Syria and Canaan were called in Akkadian. It is probable that the first collection of astronomical observations and terrestrial omens was made for a library established by Sargon. The earliest "year names", whereby each year of a king's reign was named after a significant event performed by that king, date from Sargon's reign. Lists of these "year names" henceforth became a calendrical system used in most independent Mesopotamian city-states. In Assyria, however, years came to be named for the annual presiding limmu official appointed by the king, rather than for an event.

See also

- Cities of the ancient Near East
- Religions of the ancient Near East
- History of Mesopotamia
- Timeline of the Assyrian Empire

Notes

1. Akkadian URU*Akkad* KI, Hittite KUR A.GA.DÈ.KI "land of Akkad"; Biblical Hebrew אַכַּד *Akkad*)
2. Sumerian: *Agade*
3. Mish, Frederick C., Editor in Chief. "Akkad" *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. ninth ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster 1985. ISBN 0-87779-508-8).
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6. Zettler (2003), p. 20. "Brinkman's chronology places Sargon's accession at 2334, his successors, Naram-Suen and Sharkalisharri, under whom the dynasty presumably collapsed, at 2254–2218 and 2217–2193, respectively, and the Third Dynasty of Ur at 2112–2004. however, Brinkman noted that if Hallo's 40 year Gutian interregnum is correct then the Dynasty of Akkade would have to be dated 2293–2113. The middle chronology, however, is under attack, with various scholars arguing strongly in favor of a low(er) chronology and for various reasons. Without going into detail, Boese has placed Sargon's accession at shortly after 2250 (1982), Gasche, Armstrong, Cole and Gruzadyan at 2200 (1998) and Reade at 2180 (2001), with the Third Dynasty of Ur moved according."
7. F Leo Oppenheim - Ancient Mesopotamia
8. Liverani (1993), p. 3. "The factual criticism is that empires existed even before Akkad: or more properly that the term and concept of 'empire' has been recently applied (on not worse grounds than in the case of Akkad) to other older cases, from the Uruk of the late-Uruk period to the Ebla of the royal archives, to the very state formations of the Sumerian south in the period called in fact 'proto-imperial'. In no case is the Akkad empire an absolute novelty [...] 'Akkad the first empire' is therefore subject to criticism not only as for the adjective 'first' but especially as for the noun 'empire'.
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External links

- [Iraq's Ancient Past \(http://www.penn.museum/sites/iraq/\)](http://www.penn.museum/sites/iraq/) — Penn Museum
 - [Year Names of Narim-Sin – CDLI \(http://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/HTML/T2K3.htm\)](http://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/HTML/T2K3.htm)
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 - [Site on Enheduanna at Virginia Tech University \(http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enheduanna.html\)](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enheduanna.html)
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