

Mesopotamia: The Land between the Rivers



Ziggurat at Ur

Mesopotamia Modern Political Map

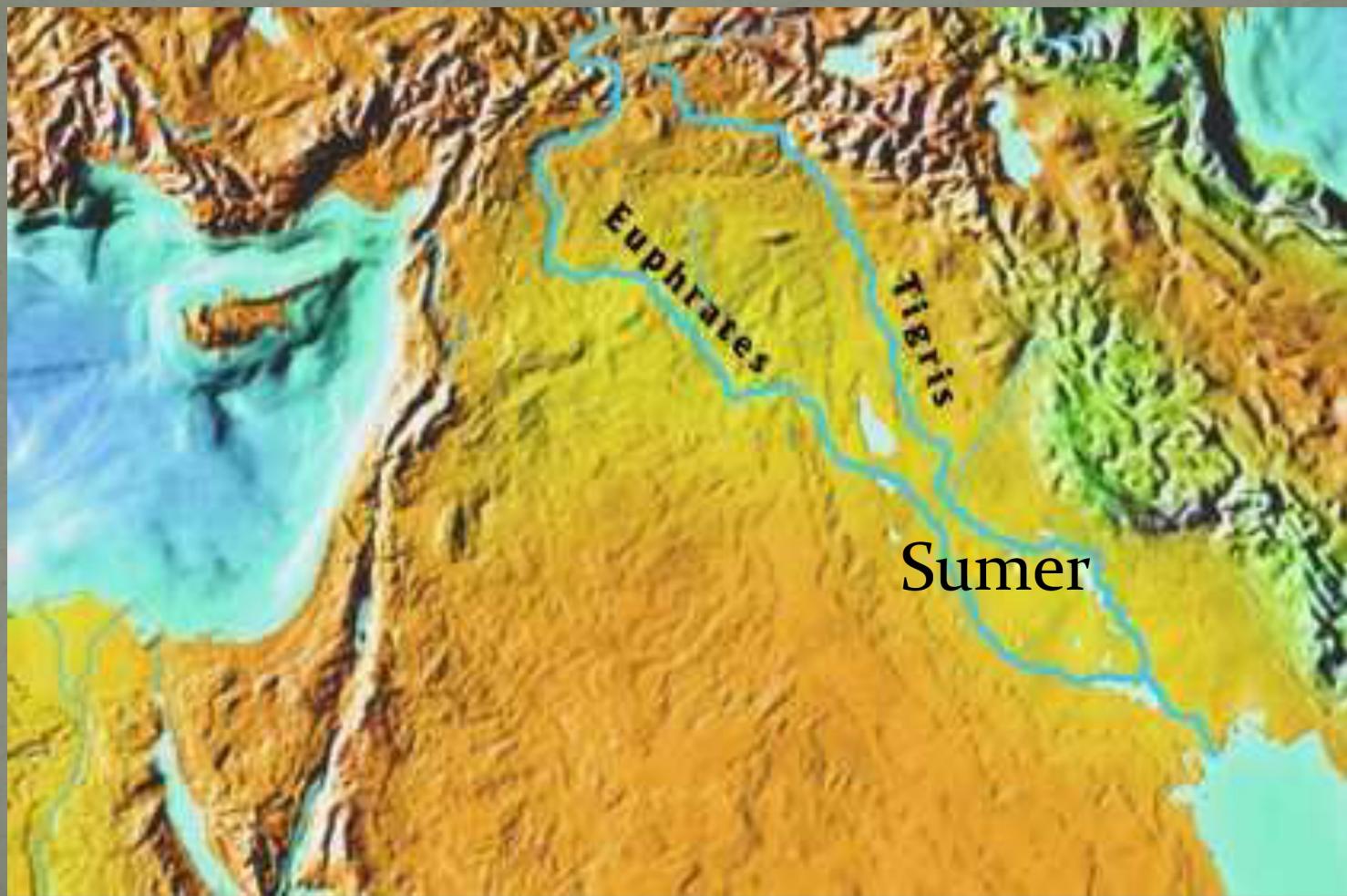


Mesopotamia

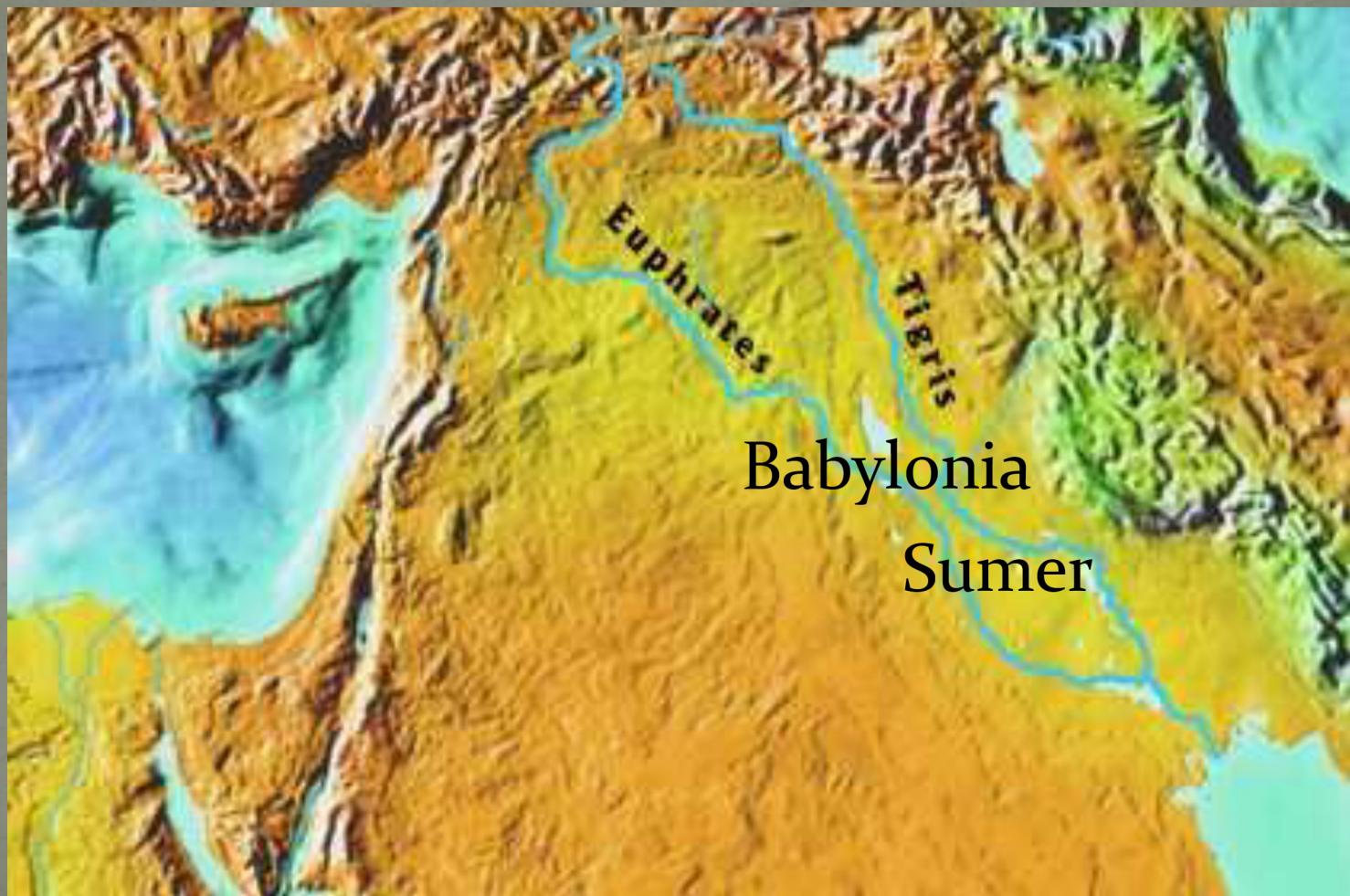
Geographical Features



Regions of Major Civilizations



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Ancient Cities of Mesopotamia



Sumer about 3000-2300 B.C.



Mesopotamia about 1200 B.C.



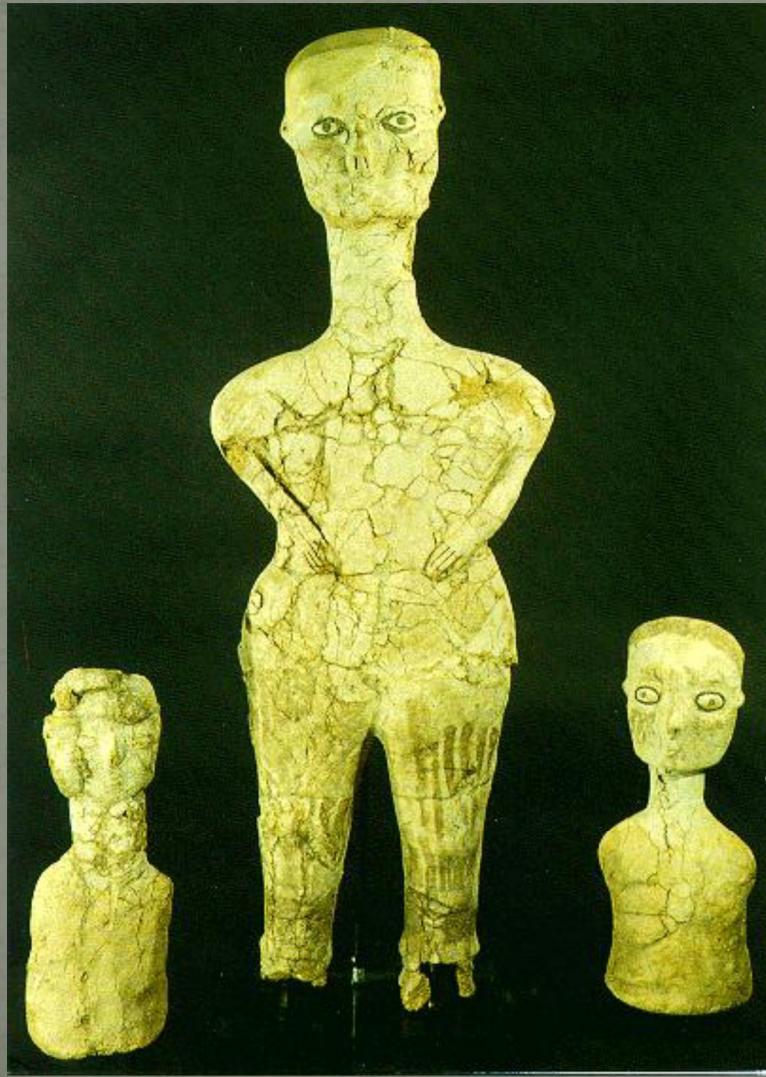
Assyrian Empire about 650 B.C.



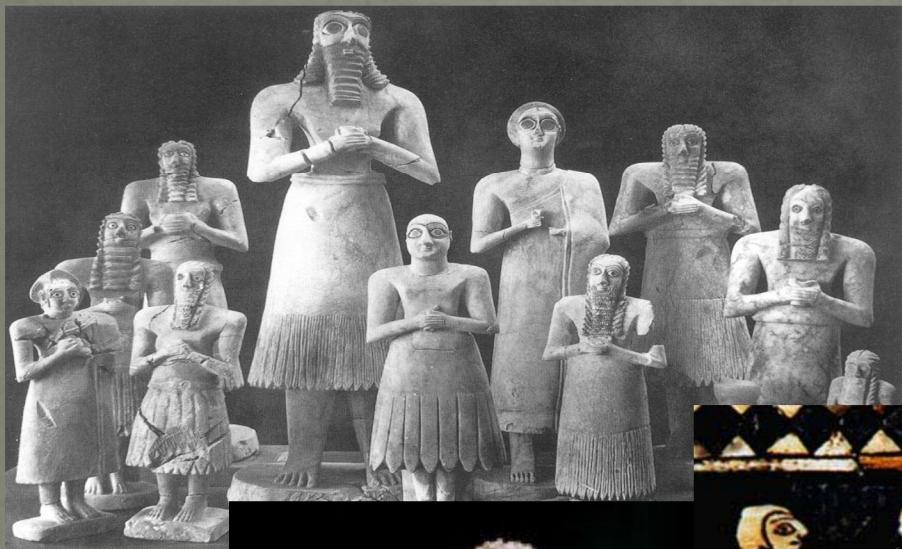
Neo-Babylonian Empire about 550 B.C.



Images from Earliest Times



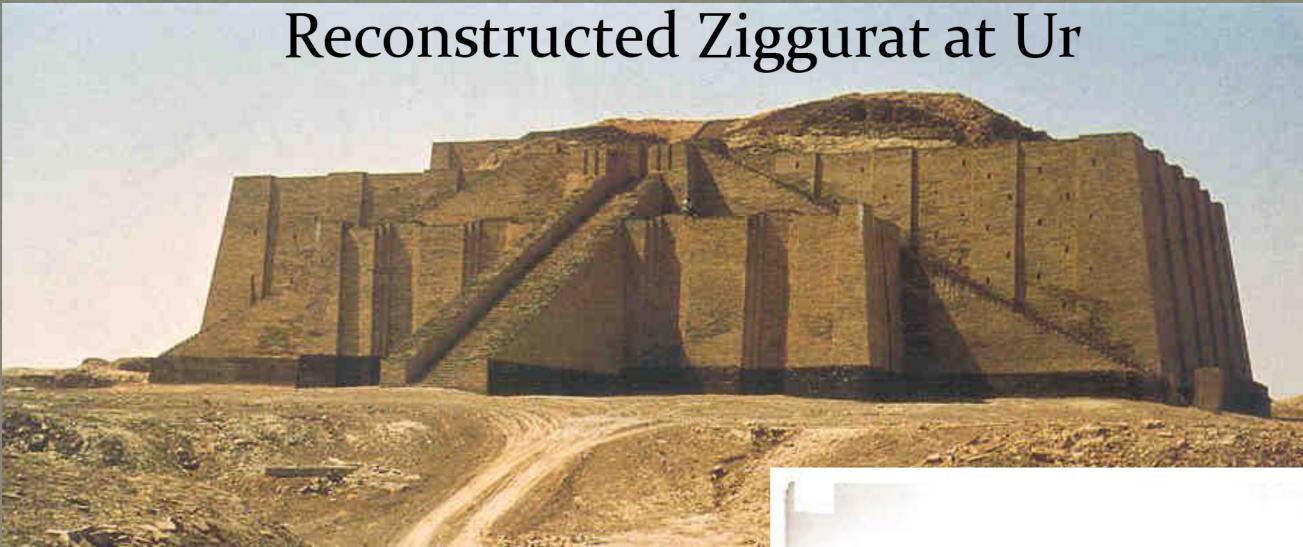
Ancient Sumer



Ziggurat

A Brick Mountain

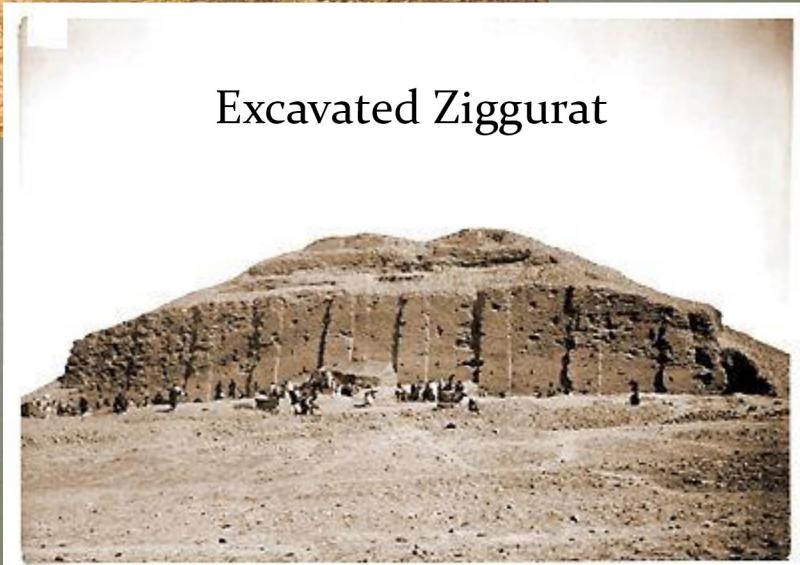
Reconstructed Ziggurat at Ur



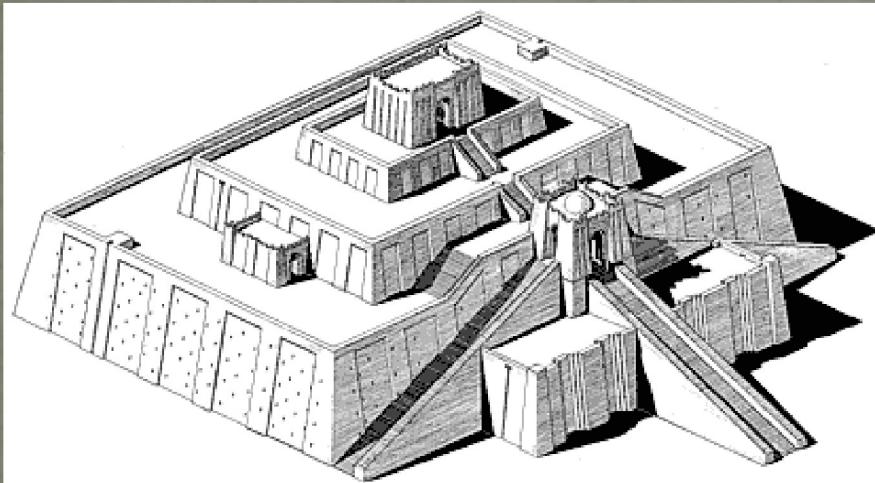
Corner of Ziggurat
before Excavation



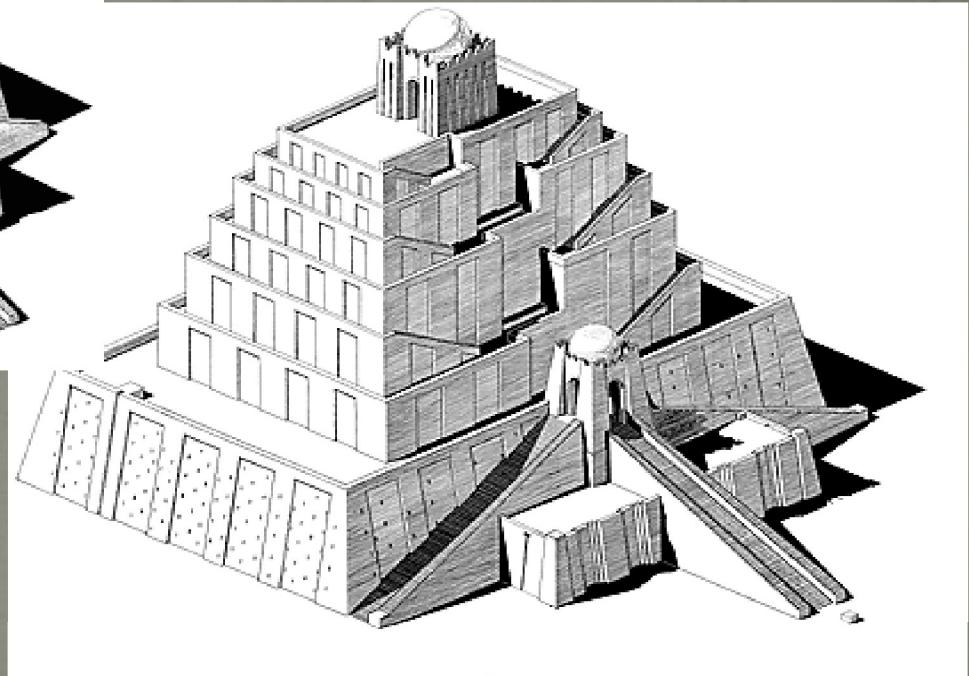
Excavated Ziggurat



The Ziggurat at Ur



Rendering of
reconstructed ziggurat
with temple on top of
successive platform
layers from earlier
times



How the ziggurat may have
appeared at latest stage of
construction

Mesopotamian Religion



Marduk

- Polytheistic, with patron deities in each city
- Syncretistic—blend of Sumerian and Akkadian influences
- Gods and goddesses had human shapes and human personalities, including human failings
- Afterlife: no definite concept of reward or punishment
- Similarities with Hebrew tradition: Creation, Garden of Eden, Flood, Tower of Babel

Cuneiform (Wedged Shaped) Writing

- Earliest writing was for commercial purposes, something like keeping tallies
- Pictograms > logograms > syllabic and phonetic symbols
- Changed over time as Sumerian language died out and the writing system was adapted for use in other languages (compare adaptation of Chinese writing for use with Japanese)
- Complexity of cuneiform writing justified a special profession
- Cuneiform persisted until Roman times and was replaced by phonetic alphabets
- Cuneiform began to be deciphered in the 1800s

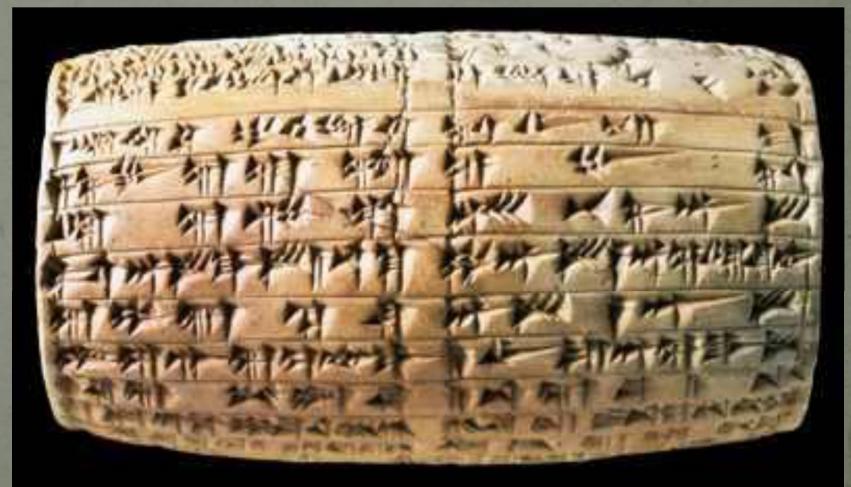
Cuneiform



Early
Pictographic
Tally

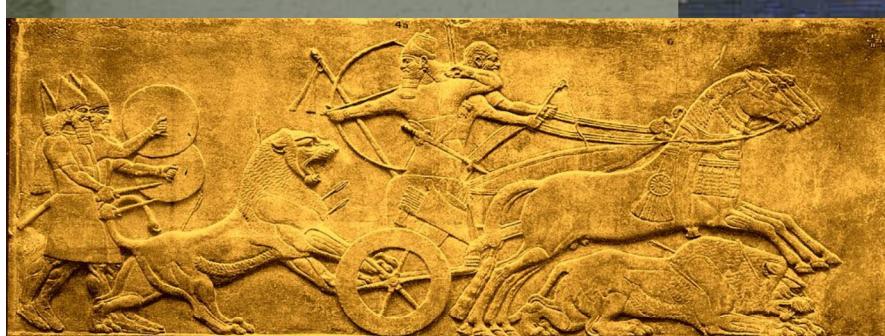
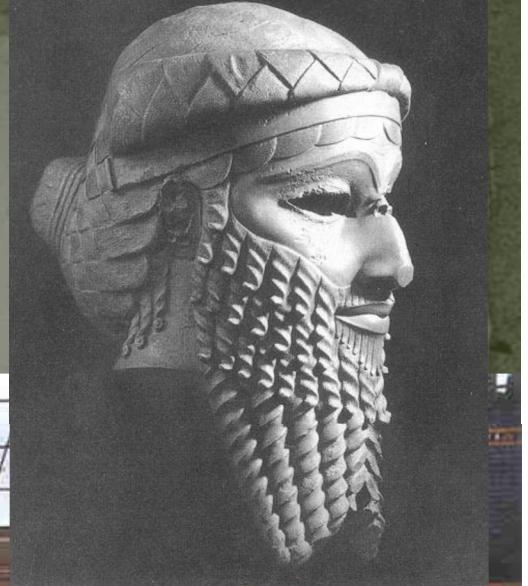


Archive for Clay Tablets



Clay Cylinder

Babylonia



Hammurabi's Stele



Stele Detail—A god gives Hammurabi the Law



Basic Timeline

3500 3200 2900 2600 2300 2000 1700 1400 1100 800

Sumerians 3500-2340 BC

Babylonian Empire
1900 - 1100 BC

Akkadian Empire
2370-1900 BC

Assyrian 1100-
612 BC

4000 BC

Farming villages

3500 BC

Sumerian city-states

3250 BC

Earliest cuneiform writing

2750 BC

Gilgamesh, legendary king

2500 BC

First Dynasty of Ur

2350 BC

Sargon and Akkadian Empire

1790 BC

Hammurabi reunites Mesopotamia

721 BC

Assyria conquers the kingdom of Israel

Later Mesopotamian Rulers

- Babylonians and Medes, about 620 BC
- Persians, about 520 BC
- Greeks, about 320 BC to 250 BC
- Parthians (Persians), about 240 BC
- Romans, 115 BC
- Sassanian Persians, 2nd century AD
- Muslims, 8th century AD