Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush

Chapter 3
Geography of the Fertile Crescent
Mesopotamia

- Mesopotamia was part of a larger region called the Fertile Crescent.
- Hunter-gathers first settled in Mesopotamia more than 12,000 years ago & farm settlements formed around 7000 BC.
Geography of the Fertile Crescent

- Early people settled where crops would grow – which was near rivers.
- Regular floods made the soil rich.
- **Mesopotamia** means “between the rivers” in Greek.
- The **Tigris** and **Euphrates** rivers are the most important physical features of the region.
Geography of the Fertile Crescent

- Early settlements in Mesopotamia flooded because water was not controlled.
- People built canals to protect houses and move water to their fields.
- With irrigation, the people of Mesopotamia were able to grow more food.
Other Jobs in Mesopotamia

- **Food surpluses** allowed some people to stop farming and concentrate on other jobs, like gov’t workers, craftsman, religious leaders. This is called the **division of labor**.
The Growth of Cities & Trade

• Over time, Mesopotamian settlements grew and developed into cities around 4000 to 3000 BC.

• Most people were still farmers

• Cities were important places of trade, politics, religion, and economics.
• In southern Mesopotamia, a people known as the Sumerians developed the world’s first civilization and created an advanced society.
• Most people in Sumer were farmers living in the rural areas.
• The centers of society were the urban areas.
• By 2000 BC, some of Sumer’s cities had more than 100,000 residents.
• The basic political unit was called a city-state, consisting of the city & the countryside around it, depending on its military strength.
City-States

• City-states in Sumer fought each other to gain more farmland, thus building up strong armies and strong walls around the cities.

• Some of the more well-known city-states are Kish, Uruk, and Ur.

• One of Uruk’s kings, known as Gilgamesh, became a legendary figure in Sumerian literature.
Rise of the Akkadian Empire

• In time, the Akkadians developed along the Tigris & Euphrates.

• They lived north of Sumer – but were not Sumerians. They spoke a different language.

• The peace between them was broken in 2300 BC when Sargon sought to extend Akkadian territory.

• Sargon was the first ruler to have a permanent army and launched a series of wars defeating all the city-states of Sumer.

• Sargon established the world’s first empire, stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.
Fall of Akkad and Resurgence of Sumer

• Sargon ruled for 50 years, & his empire fell to tribes from the east within 100 years of his death

• Eventually, the city-state of UR rebuilt its strength, conquered Mesopotamia, and Sumerians once again became the powerful civilization in the region.
Religion Shapes Society

- Religion played a role in nearly every aspect of public and private life.
- Religion was the basis for all of Sumerian society
- The Sumerians practiced Polytheism
- Each city-state considered one god to be its protector
- Gods brought a good harvest or disastrous flood, illness or health, poverty or wealth.
- Success depended on pleasing the gods. Priests had great status, and performed religious ceremonies.
Sumerian Social Order

• Priests occupied a high level in Sumer’s social hierarchy.
  • Priests were just below kings.
  • Kings claimed to be chosen by the gods to rule
  • Below the priests were skilled craftspeople, merchants, and traders.
  • Then, farmers and laborers made up the working class.
  • Slaves were at the bottom.
Men and Women in Sumer

- Men held political power and made laws while women took care of the home and children.
- Education was usually reserved for men.
- Some upper class women were educated
  - Some educated women were priestesses.
- The daughter of Sargon, Enheduanna, wrote hymns to the goddess Inanna.
- She is the first known female writer in History
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<td>• Pictographs – picture symbols</td>
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<td>• Scribe – Keeper of records</td>
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<td>• Epics – long poems about heroes</td>
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<td>• Wheel – Carts – Wagons – Potters</td>
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Chapter 3 Section 4

Later Peoples of the Fertile Crescent
Mesopotamia
(Babylon)
Code of Hammurabi

- Hammurabi (King of Babylonian Empire from 1792 to 1750 B.C.) maintained control of empire by a code of law.
- Claimed the gods had chosen him “to promote the welfare of the people,... to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and evil, [so] that the strong might not oppress the weak, to rise like the sun over the people, and to light up the land.”
Hammurabi’s Code of Laws
Code of Hammurabi

1. High standards of behavior and stern punishments for violators

2. Death penalty for murder, theft, fraud, false accusations, sheltering of runaway slaves, failure to obey royal orders, adultery, and incest

3. Civil laws regulating prices, wages, commercial dealings, marital relationships, and the conditions of slavery
Code of Hammurabi

4. Relied on *lex talionis*—the law of retaliation

- Offenders suffered punishments resembling their violations
  - If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out. [An eye for an eye] (196)
  - If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken. (197)
  - If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out. [A tooth for a tooth] (200)
Code of Hammurabi

• Code of 282 laws inscribed on a stone pillar placed in the public hall for all to see

• Hammurabi Stone depicts Hammurabi as receiving his authority from god Shamash

• Set of divinely inspired laws; as well as societal laws

• Punishments were designed to fit the crimes as people must be responsible for own actions

• Hammurabi Code was an origin to the concept of “eye for an eye...” ie. If a son struck his father, the son’s hand would be cut off

• Consequences for crimes depended on rank in society (ie. only fines for nobility)
Later Peoples of the Fertile Crescent

- **Babylon** - city was located on what is today Baghdad, Iraq
- 1800 BC – Powerful government.
- 1792 BC – Hammurabi was the **Monarch**
  - Brilliant war leader who brought all of Mesopotamia into his empire.
  - Oversaw many building and irrigation projects
  - Improved tax collection system
  - Brought prosperity through increased trade
  - Most famous for his code of laws
- Ruled for 42 years –
- Babylon did not last long after his death
Invasions of Mesopotamia

- **Hittites** – ironworking and the chariot
- **Kassites** – defeated the Hittites and ruled 400 years
- **Assyrians** – Strong Army – well organized – Kings ruled through local leaders. Built roads to far away parts of the empire
Chapter 1 Review

• Mesopotamia is known as “the cradle of freedom.”
• Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world.
• Mud brick is a building material used by the Sumerians.
• Artisans are skilled workers who make medal products, cloth, and pottery.