

Ancient Civilizations of the Middle East—Mesopotamia

Section 4



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Babylonians conquered Mesopotamia and created a code of law.
2. Invasions of Mesopotamia changed the region’s culture.
3. The Phoenicians built a trading society in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Key Terms and Places

Babylon important Mesopotamian city-state near present-day Baghdad

Hammurabi’s Code the earliest known written collection of laws, comprising 282 laws that dealt with almost every part of life

chariot a wheeled, horse-drawn battle car

alphabet a set of letters that can be combined to form written words

Section Summary

THE BABYLONIANS CONQUER MESOPOTAMIA

By 1800 BC, a powerful city-state had arisen in **Babylon**, an old Sumerian city on the Euphrates. Babylon’s greatest monarch (MAH-nark), Hammurabi, conquered all of Mesopotamia.

During his 42-year reign, Hammurabi oversaw many building and irrigation projects, improved the tax collection system, and brought prosperity through increased trade. He is most famous, however, for **Hammurabi’s Code**, the earliest known written collection of laws. It contained laws on everything from trade, loans, and theft to injury, marriage, and murder. Some of its ideas are still found in laws today. The code was important not only for how thorough it was, but also because it was written down for all to see.

On what river was the city of Babylon located?

Why do you think it is important for laws to be written down?

INVASIONS OF MESOPOTAMIA

Several other civilizations developed in and around the Fertile Crescent. As their armies battled each other for Mesopotamia’s fertile land, control of the region passed from one empire to another. The Hittites of Asia Minor captured Babylon in 1595 BC with strong iron weapons and the skillful use of the

Name four groups that conquered all of Mesopotamia after the Babylonians.

Section 4, continued

chariot on the battlefield. After the Hittite king was killed, the Kassites captured Babylon and ruled for almost 400 years.

The Assyrians were the next group to conquer all of Mesopotamia. They ruled from Nineveh, a city in the north. The Assyrians collected taxes, enforced laws, and raised troops through local leaders. The Assyrians also built roads to link distant parts of the empire. In 612 BC the Chaldeans, a group from the Syrian Desert, conquered the Assyrians.

Nebuchadnezzar (neb-uh-kuhd-NEZ-uhr), the most famous Chaldean king, rebuilt Babylon into a beautiful city. According to legend, his grand palace featured the famous Hanging Gardens. The Chaldeans revived Sumerian culture and made notable advances in astronomy and mathematics.

Which older Mesopotamian civilization did the Chaldeans admire and study?

THE PHOENICIANS

Phoenicia, at the western end of the Fertile Crescent along the Mediterranean Sea, created a wealthy trading society. Fleets of fast Phoenician trading ships sailed throughout the Mediterranean and even into the Atlantic Ocean, building trade networks and founding new cities. The Phoenicians' most lasting achievement, however, was the **alphabet**, a major development that has had a huge impact on the ancient world and on our own.

On what body of water were most Phoenician colonies located?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Make a time line with approximate dates showing the various empires and invasions that characterized the history of Mesopotamia up to the time of the Chaldeans.