

California World History Studies Weekly

GRADE 6

Sargon of Akkad

Sargon the Great ruled the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia for 55 years. Sargon is also known by the name Sarru-Kan, which means “true king.” The Akkadians were a Semitic-speaking group and were named after the ancient city of Akkad. Semitic languages came from Middle Eastern countries and spread to parts of Asia and Africa. Sargon’s rule began in 2334 B.C.E.

Historians who want to learn more about Sargon face a serious challenge. The city of Akkad was destroyed, and its ruins have never been found. Without the city, archaeologists cannot find the artifacts and clues that tell us about the city or its people. Experts have to rely on stories and folktales that were written and passed down. Many of those stories are incomplete, and we have to make guesses about Sargon and his early life. A man named Sir Henry Rawlinson found one of these legends in 1867. He helped uncover the ancient city of Nineveh in Upper Mesopotamia. While working, Rawlinson found a tablet covered in cuneiform writing. The Sumerian tablet shared details of Sargon’s life.

According to the tablet, Sargon was not born into a powerful family. He was an orphan who was found floating on a river. A gardener named Akki found and rescued the baby from drowning. Sargon grew up to be a hard worker. He became a cupbearer for King Ur-Zababa. A cupbearer was an important position. Sargon became a powerful leader in the military. Many different stories state that he won an important battle against the Sumerian city-states. He declared himself the king of Mesopotamia and chose the goddess Inanna to be his protector. Inanna was the goddess of love and warfare. Sargon ruled his empire from the city of Akkad, which was on the banks of the Euphrates River.

TIMELINE

4500 B.C.E. – King Enmerkar founds city of Uruk

3000 B.C.E. – Sumerians develop earliest form of writing known as cuneiform

2700 B.C.E. – King Gilgamesh rules Uruk

2334 B.C.E. – Sumerian cities united by King Sargon of Akkad

2150 B.C.E. – Epic of Gilgamesh is begun

1750s B.C.E. – Code of Hammurabi is recorded

1750 B.C.E. – Rise of the Assyrian Empire begins with death of King Hammurabi

Connections

The Crypt of Civilization

Mark this date on your calendar: May 28, 8113. Oh, wait. You don’t have a calendar for 8113 yet, do you? On that date, an amazing time capsule at Oglethorpe University in Georgia will be opened. What’s inside? Historians and anthropologists who study human cultures chose hundreds of items to leave in the capsule for future citizens to find.

During the 1930s, Dr. Thornwell Jacobs realized that we really didn’t know much about very early civilizations of the world. He wanted people in the future to know a lot more about us. So he collected as many items as possible and sealed them in a large crypt (an underground storage space). He put in 200 famous books and hundreds of photographs. He included a

movie script from “Gone With the Wind” and recordings of dozens of famous people’s voices. There are even tools to teach English to those who open it, in case the language is no longer spoken!

The crypt is 20 feet long, 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. Its floor is 2 feet thick, and it is under a stone roof that is 7 feet thick. On May 28, 1940, the door was sealed shut in a very big ceremony. So if you aren’t busy in about 6,000 years, be sure to head to Oglethorpe University for the opening of the time capsule.



(right) Dr. Thornwell Jacobs and (left) the Crypt of Civilization

The Akkadian Empire of Mesopotamia

Last week, we learned about the Sumerians who lived in Lower Mesopotamia. This week, we will expand our study to include the Akkadians who first lived in Upper Mesopotamia.

Geography

The people of the Akkadian Empire first lived in northern Mesopotamia. Their army marched south and took control of cities along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The empire spread until it covered all of Mesopotamia. Upper Mesopotamia begins in the foothills of the mountains of present-day Turkey. Those mountains are also where both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers begin. The region is full of gentle hills and flat, alluvial plains. Alluvial plains are created when rivers deposit rich soil to an area over time. Upper Mesopotamia is also home to one of the world's largest salt flats, the Sabkhat al-Jabbul. Salt flats form in areas like deserts, where water evaporates at a rate greater than precipitation falls.

Religion

The Akkadian people were polytheistic, so they worshipped a group of gods. The gods and goddesses were thought to have human forms and emotions. Gods could become happy or angry. Akkadians believed they needed to serve the gods and keep them happy. The people also believed that their king was their gods' representative. This belief meant kings like Sargon were very powerful. Rulers often became even more powerful by appointing friends and family members to powerful positions. Last week you read about Enheduanna, a high priestess and poet. She was also Sargon's daughter! Inanna was the goddess of love and war. She was also known by the name Ishtar. Inanna was worshiped as the Queen of Heaven. People wrote many hymns, myths and poems about her.

Economy

Like the Sumerians they conquered, the Akkadians relied on agriculture in their economy. The alluvial plains of Upper Mesopotamia had enough rain and were fertile enough to grow many different types of grain. The Akkadians also used the wealth and land of the people they invaded to the south. Fields in southern Mesopotamia were irrigated, and they produced enough food for trade. Akkadians who moved into the area

built friendships and trading deals with people in many different places. Many of these people spoke both the Sumerian and Akkadian languages. This made it easier to build roads, a postal system and a calendar. These all became useful tools that made the economy even stronger.

Political and Social Structure

Sargon established the idea of an Akkadian dynasty. A dynasty is a series of rulers that come from the same family. His idea was that the power to rule the empire should be passed down from father to son. This idea worked for around 140 years before the empire declined and collapsed. Five different kings ruled during that time. Sargon and his descendants built and maintained the empire by using military power. Female relatives were given positions of religious influence, such as high priestesses. Sons and male family members became governors and leaders. They were appointed to manage land, control trade and oversee the growth of communities. They also made sure that laws were followed. Experts do not know much about how the rest of society worked. Historians think people were divided into different social classes that had different amounts of power. The ideas that advanced the Akkadians combined with the economic, political and social structures of the day resulted in new patterns that would be repeated throughout history. Can you think of what some of those patterns might be?

1) This is the Mask of Warka, one of the earliest depictions of the human face. It was made in Uruk. It is most likely of Inanna, as are the star and sculptures to the right. 2) This murex (a type of sea snail) shell was traded to make purple dyes. The shell has the name "Rimush" carved on it. Rimush was the second Akkadian king. 3) Naram-Sin stands in victory over his conquered enemies. Naram-Sin was the fourth king of Akkad.

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The City of Uruk

It makes sense that a place that was home to so many early civilizations is also where we can find one of the most important early cities. The early Mesopotamian settlers were resourceful. They adapted to their environment and learned how to farm. Next, they turned their attention to building one of the largest and most powerful cities in the world.

The first Sumerian ruler, King Enmerkar, built the city of Uruk just to the east of the Euphrates River around 4500 B.C.E. In the Aramaic language of the region, the city was called Erech. Scholars believe this is where the name "Iraq" first came from.

By 3200 B.C.E., Uruk had become the largest city in southern Mesopotamia. Three hundred years later, it was the largest city in the world. Historians think that between 50,000 and 80,000 people lived behind the city's massive walls. Uruk's most famous citizen, King Gilgamesh, is said to have built those walls. Can you imagine what life was like for all those people?

An archaeologist from England named William Kennet Loftus found the ruins in 1849. He worked with others to uncover the great stone buildings. Some experts think those structures are some of the very first examples of architecture. Art and decorative mosaics were carved into the mud and clay walls. The walls are also covered with pictographs that may be the earliest type of cuneiform writing. Another important discovery made in Uruk was the cylinder seal. The seal was a way for citizens to make a mark on any items they owned. This meant that people in the city valued things as property.

Uruk remained a busy city through many governments and cultures. It was eventually deserted, or abandoned, after 600 C.E.

1. William Kennet Loftus
2. This is a mosaic made out of cones in Uruk.
3. This is a cylinder seal from Uruk depicting monster-like animals.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Culture

King Gilgamesh is the best known of ancient Mesopotamian heroes. The Epic of Gilgamesh is a Sumerian-Babylonian poem telling of his accomplishments and adventures. It is recorded on 12 clay tablets. Gilgamesh was reported to be the fifth king of Uruk, and the date of his reign is not known, but scholars estimate it at around 2700 B.C.E. Legends surrounding Gilgamesh include the story of the Great Flood and Gilgamesh's relationship with the gods. He was a great leader, builder and warrior. Near the end of his life, he sought immortality by obtaining a plant from a survivor of the Great Flood. The Epic of Gilgamesh was written sometime between 2150 and 1400 B.C.E., and it tells the story of the heroic king's life this way:

Once, a great Sumerian king named Gilgamesh traveled the world with his friend Enkidu. Together they killed Humbaba, the monster that guarded the cedar forest, and cut down the trees to build a gate for the city of Uruk. When the Bull of Heaven attacked

Uruk, they killed the bull, as well. The gods were angry at so much killing. They punished Enkidu by making him suffer greatly for 12 days, before allowing him to die. Seeing his friend suffer and die sent Gilgamesh on a search for a way to live forever. He met a man who claimed to be immortal and said that a flower at the bottom of a certain lake would make Gilgamesh immortal too. Gilgamesh found the flower only to watch an evil serpent devour it when he set it down next to the lake. Gilgamesh realized humans can never have eternal life, and he returned to his city as a wiser man and king.

Enkidu

Gilgamesh

The Code of Hammurabi

Although the Code of Hammurabi is not the oldest written set of laws, it is probably the best preserved. Toward the end of his life, King Hammurabi, the ruler of the Babylonians from 1792-1750 B.C.E., collected all of the ancient Sumerian laws and ordered the laws be written on a huge black stone. More than 6 feet tall, the stone pillar is called a stela and was placed where everyone could see the laws, even though few people could read. Many legal historians consider it to be a primitive or ancient constitution.

The stone was covered with 282 paragraphs of laws written in cuneiform. The laws showed that there were different classes of people and different punishments depending on your class. The code was used as a basis for some modern laws. It covers legal decisions about family law, such as marriage and divorce, and economic laws about trade, taxes and prices. It also covers criminal law about such things as theft and violence, and civil law about things like slavery. In fact, these historical codes are so well-respected that a wall of the U.S. Supreme Court Building shows an image of Hammurabi

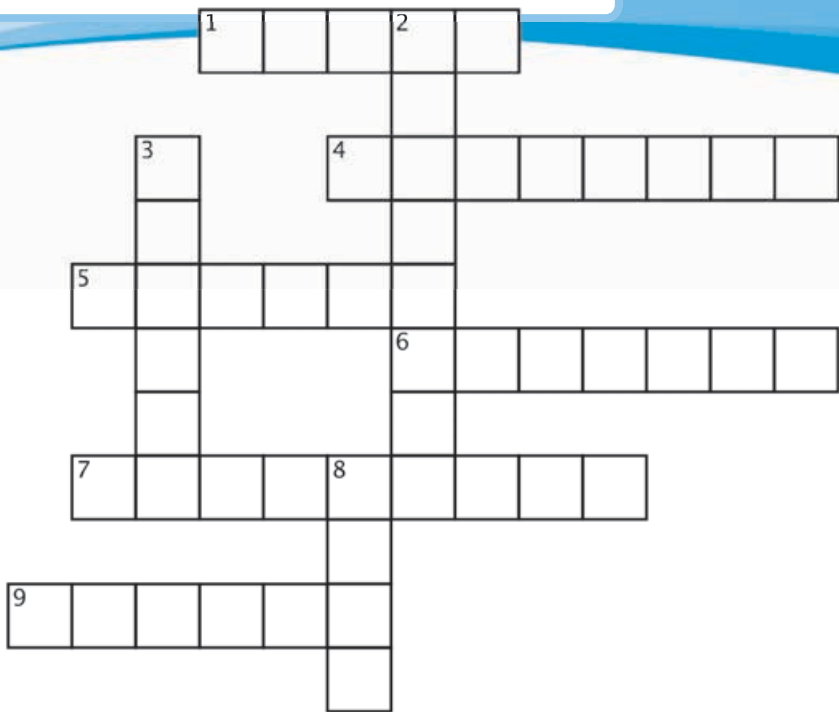
receiving them. The Code of Hammurabi was excavated in 1901 by a French archaeologist named Jean-Vincent Scheil. The discovery was made far away from Hammurabi's kingdom, near the ancient city of Susa in modern-day Iran. It seems an enemy king had carried the monuments off as a war trophy. Today, it can be seen in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Some say the laws were very harsh. For example, if a man puts out the eye of a noble person, his eye shall also be put out. If a boatman loses another man's goods, he must pay for them. If a man breaks the bone of a common man, he shall pay one large piece of silver. If a son strikes his father, his hands will be cut off. What do you think? Do the punishments fit the crime?

Code of Hammurabi

Jean-Vincent Scheil

Name _____



ACROSS

- 1. another name for Uruk
- 4. landforms created by rich deposits from rivers: _____ plains
- 5. first ruler of the Akkadian Empire
- 6. a series of rulers from the same family
- 7. collector of laws
- 9. Gilgamesh's friend

DOWN

- 2. The _____ seal allowed people to mark their property.
- 3. goddess of love and war
- 8. largest city in the world at one time



As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

Code for a New Civilization



King Hammurabi collected laws and decided punishments for his citizens. Imagine you have traveled to the first settlement on Mars. What will be the rules and punishments for your civilization? Working with a classmate or in a small group, develop a list of the 10 most important "laws" or rules for the civilization. Next, discuss and assign a consequence for the violation of each law. Be prepared to share the reasoning behind your consequences. Fill out the two columns of laws and consequences. If time and your teacher permit, you may also review the Code of Hammurabi and our own U.S. Constitution for inspiration.

LAWS	CONSEQUENCES

Think&Review

- 1. How have we learned about Sargon of Akkad? Why have historians had a hard time learning more about Sargon and the city of Akkad?
- 2. How did Gilgamesh hope to obtain immortality?
- 3. Why has the Code of Hammurabi remained so important in history? What types of laws are covered in the Code of Hammurabi?
- 4. Describe the religion and economy of the Akkadian Empire.

Let's Write

The Akkadians built a ruling dynasty based on family inheritance. They believed that power should be passed down from one generation to the next. Men became governors and kings, while women became high priestesses. Do you think this was a good way to organize societies at the time? Why or why not? Write a paragraph to explain your opinion. Be sure to use appropriate spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage.

If you'd like to make any editorial comments about our paper, please write to us at support@studiesweekly.com.