

A large, ancient Mesopotamian ziggurat, likely the Ziggurat of Ur, is shown against a clear blue sky. The structure is built of reddish-brown bricks and features a prominent central staircase. The foreground is a flat, sandy or gravelly area.

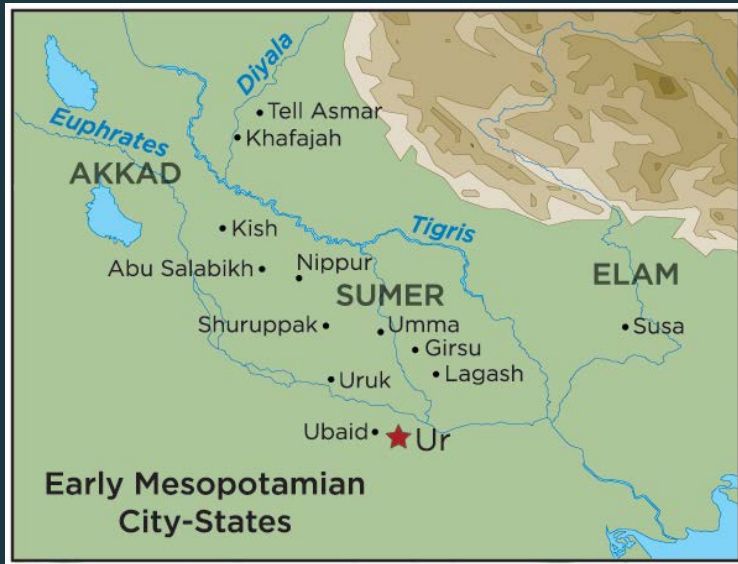
Mesopotamian Civilizations

Mesopotamia

- Fertile Crescent
- "The Land between the Two Rivers"
 - Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
 - Fertile farmland from silt left by floods
 - Floods unpredictable
- Lack of natural barriers allowed frequent migrations of people and invasions
 - Cultural diffusion
 - the exchange of ideas, customs, and goods between cultures

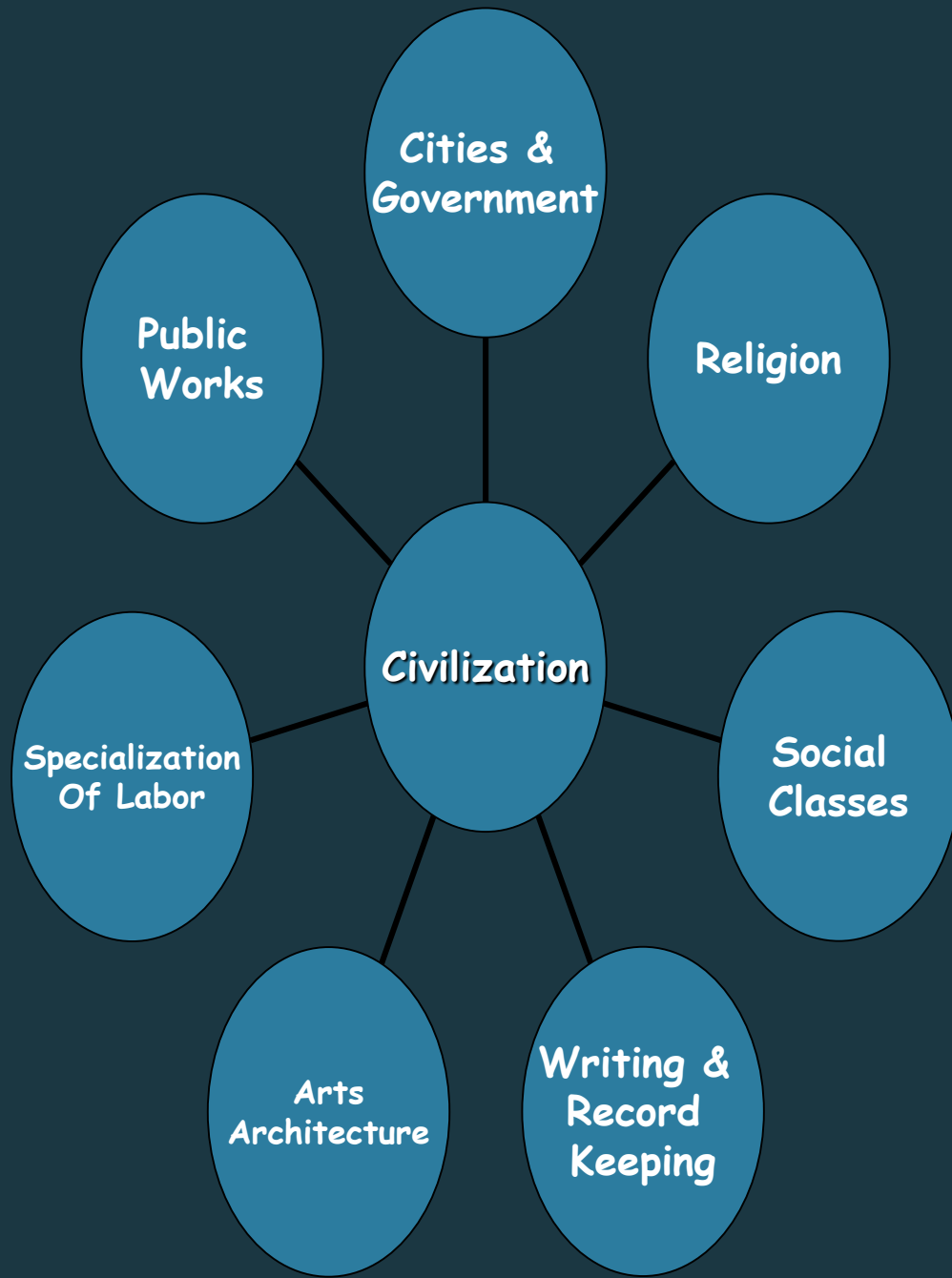


Sumer



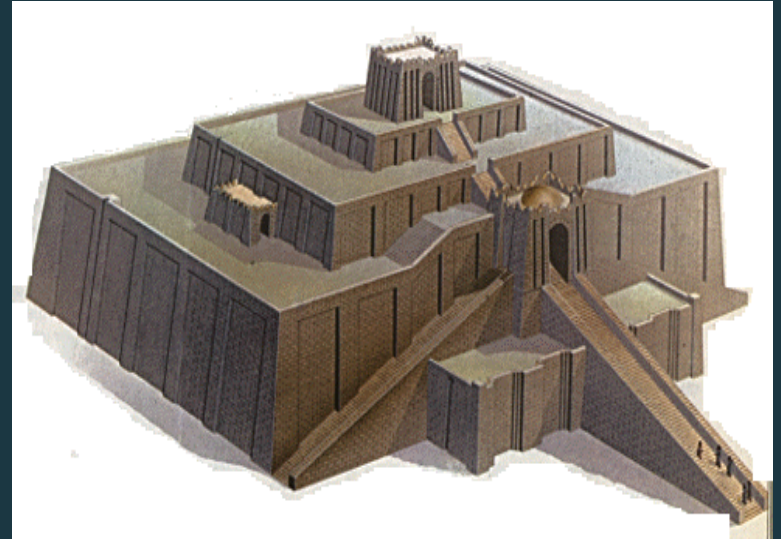
- The first civilization to develop in Mesopotamia
 - 5,500 B.C.E
- City-States along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers
 - An independent political unit with its own government
 - Ur, Uruk, Kish, Lagash
 - protected by defensive walls





Sumer

- Ziggurats were found at the center of each city
 - A large, tiered, structure
 - Built for the god or goddess of each city





Religion

- Were polytheistic
 - Believed Gods controlled natural events
- Viewed their gods as hostile and unpredictable
 - Similar to their environment
- Priests held high status in Sumer
 - Worked to keep the gods pleased



Sumerian Priests



The early city-states were ruled by priests. The job of priests were to:

- control irrigation

- settle arguments

- store and distribute surplus

- collect taxes in the form of goods

- make sacrifices and pray to the unpredictable gods of Mesopotamia

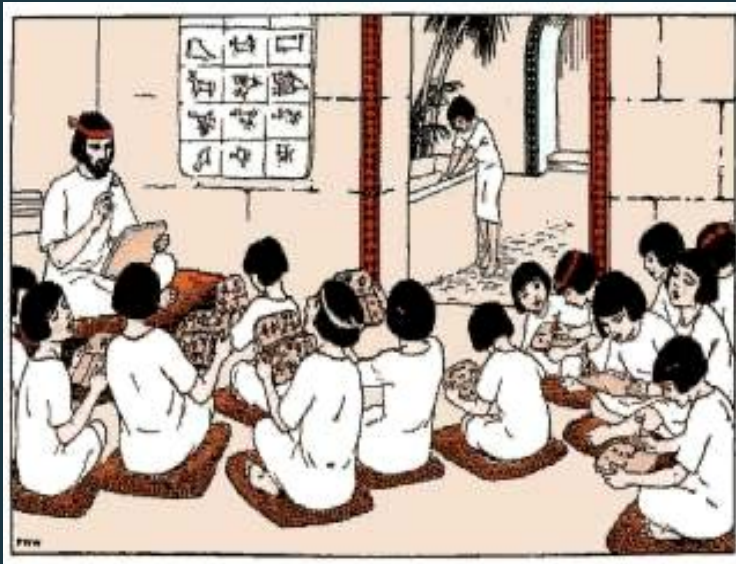


Writing



- Cuneiform

- Form of writing that used sharp tools to make wedge shaped symbols on clay tablets
- Scribes had a high place in society



Development of Cuneiform, 3000 B.C.–600 B.C.

Meaning of Pictograph

Ear of Barley

Head and Body of Man

Fish

Bird

Bowl of Food

Stream of Water

Pictographs

c. 3000 B.C.

B.C.E.



Rotated

Position

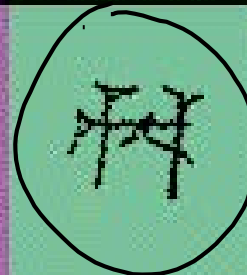
Pictographs

c. 2800 B.C.

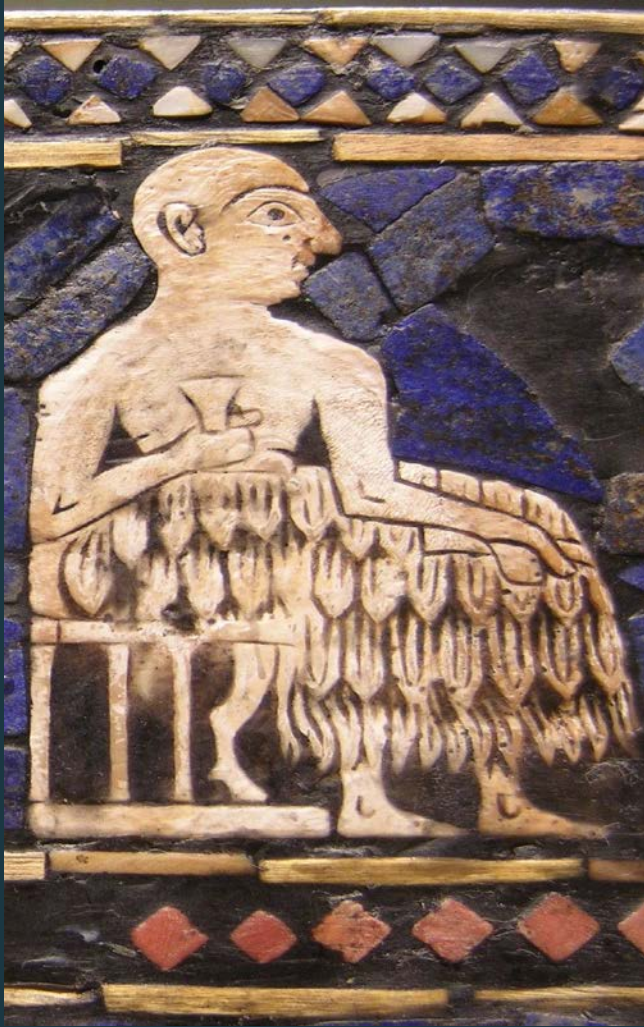


Cuneiform Signs

c. 600 B.C.



Government



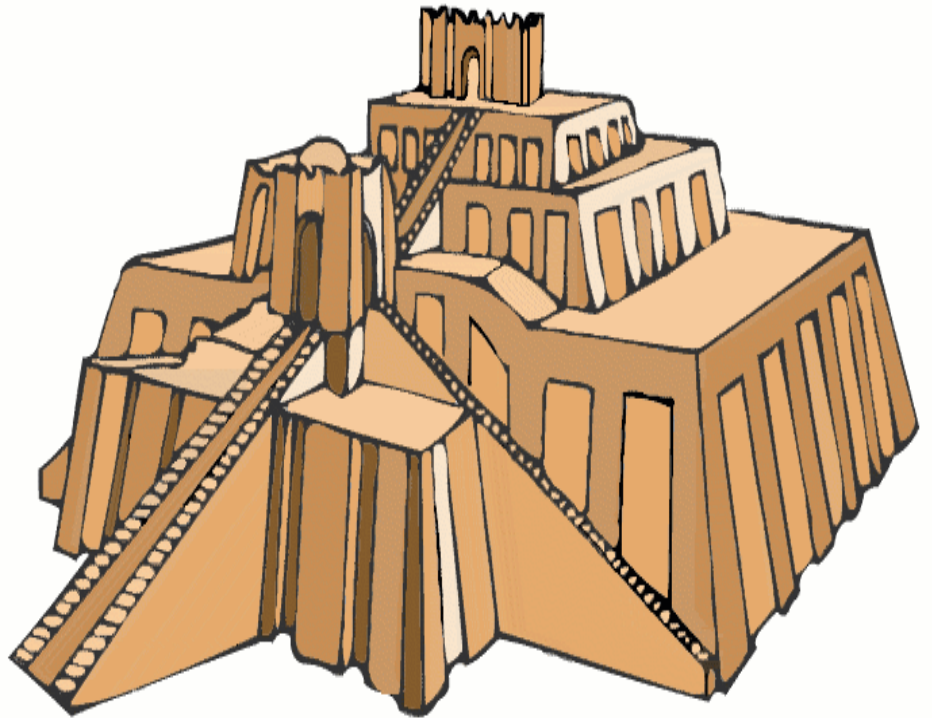
- War chiefs often became Kings
- Kings performed rituals to please the gods
- Theocracies - kings served as both government leaders AND high priests

Theocracy

Art:Literature

- The Gilgamesh Epic
 - One of the oldest surviving works of literature
 - 4,000 year old story
 - Sumerian hero who seeks immortality
 - Originally passed on through oral tradition





ZIGGURATS

Located in the center of the city-state.

Home of the city's

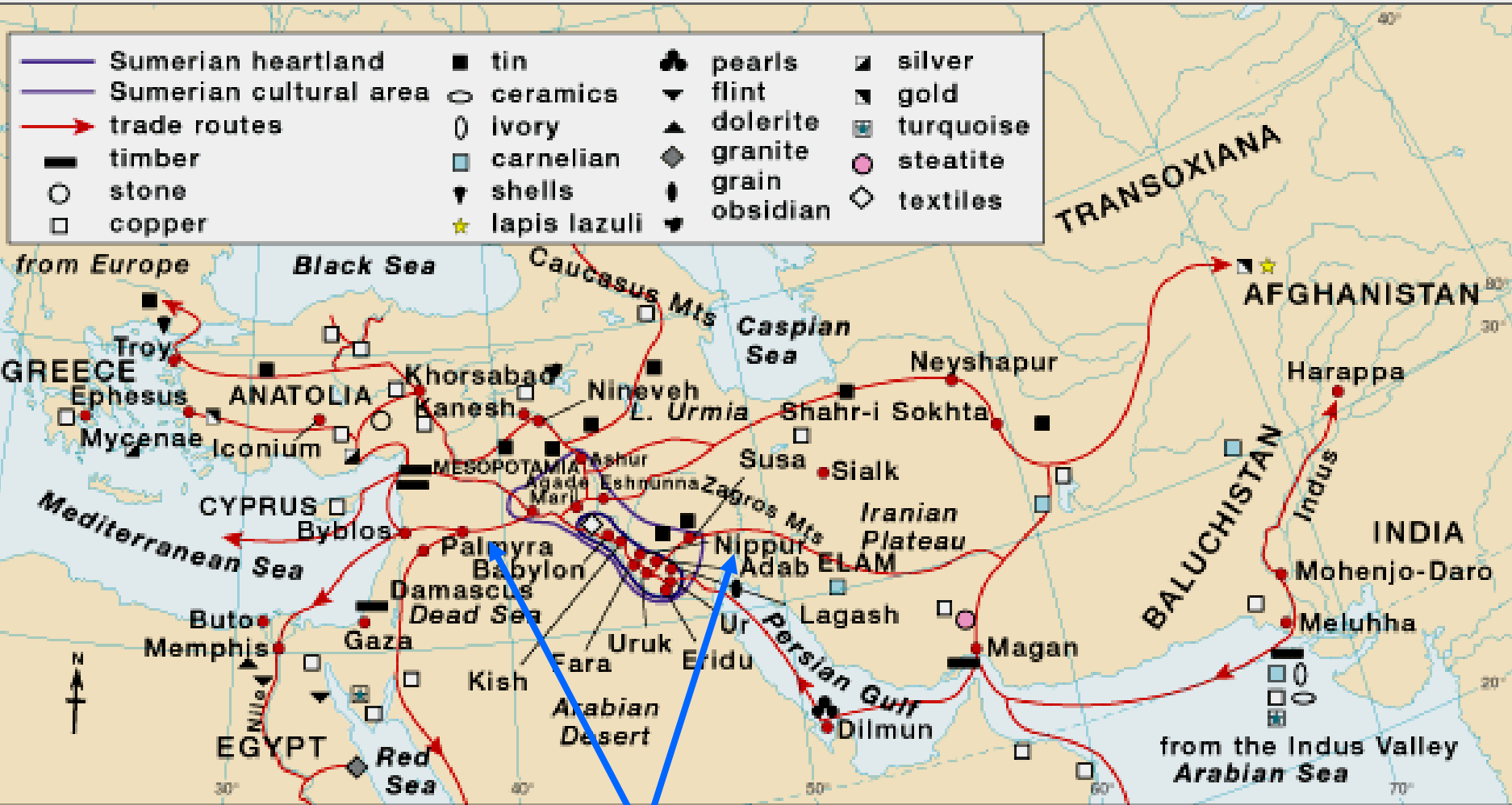
God

Irrigation

- Sumerians developed a system for controlling the flow and direction of water from the rivers.
- Canals and irrigation ditches were built to redirect the water to the fields.



Mesopotamian Trade



Trade

- Traded with people across Southwest Asia
 - Cultural diffusion
 - Lacked many natural resources
 - Traded for timber, stone, metals

