

MESOPOTAMIA



The history of Mesopotamia is measured in millennia rather than centuries. For three thousand years (beginning in 3500 b.c.), kingdoms rose and fell, empires expanded and contracted, outsiders conquered and were repelled. During that time, three dominant civilizations held center stage at various times: **the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians.**

3 ASSYRIA 1115-612 B.C.

In hilly northern Mesopotamia, the small city-state of Assyria slowly grew to become a powerful kingdom. Using chariots, battering rams, and armored horses, the Assyrians conquered Babylon in 689 B.C., as well as other independent states, uprooting the people they conquered and forcing them into slave labor. However, in 612 B.C., Chaldean people from southern Babylonia, who had gained control of Babylon, joined the Medes people from Iran and sacked the capital Nineveh. The Assyrian empire never recovered.



Assurnasirpal II, king of Assyria.



Statue of King Gudea, who developed long-distance trade in timber and metal artistry

2 BABYLONIA 1792-539 B.C.

The city of Babylon inherited the culture of Sumer and, under Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.), became the seat of a strong central government and a great cultural and religious center. Babylonians created the 60-minute hour, a calendar with 12 lunar months, and advanced multiplication tables. Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylonia in 539 B.C., ending its glory days forever.

Bronze statue of Hammurabi, ruler of Babylonia



1 SUMER 3500-2006 B.C.

The first civilization developed in Sumer, the marshy area at the southern end of the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Sumerians developed a system of writing, enabling people to keep records and transmit knowledge. They also developed metal working and were early users of the wheel. Sumer, however, became weakened by constant warfare. It was overrun by invaders in 2006 B.C., and the region splintered into small kingdoms.

