

Civilization in Ancient Mesopotamia

The earliest known **civilization**, Sumer, and the world's first **empire**, the Akkadian Empire, both developed in Mesopotamia.

- The Sumerians developed the first written language and the first laws. They also **traded** with places as far away as Egypt and India.
- Each Sumerian city-state was independent. Each had its own ruler, own special god, and own army.
- People from the neighboring region of Akkad later conquered Sumer and the rest of the area around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Once conquered, city-states were simply **cities**.



A During the Bronze Age, Sumerians fought using bronze weapons and chariots pulled by donkeys. This image is of Sumerians crushing an enemy.

WRITING & LANGUAGE

Sumerians Develop Writing, 7000–3000 BCE

Word	Token 7000 BCE	Pictograph 3500 BCE	Cuneiform 3000 BCE
Sheep			
Metal			

B People in Mesopotamia first used objects, or tokens, to record trades. Sumerians then scratched the same shapes on clay tablets. Later they used triangular reeds to scratch these shapes. These wedge shapes, or cuneiform, became the basis of written languages in Mesopotamia.

Is it a city or is it a state?

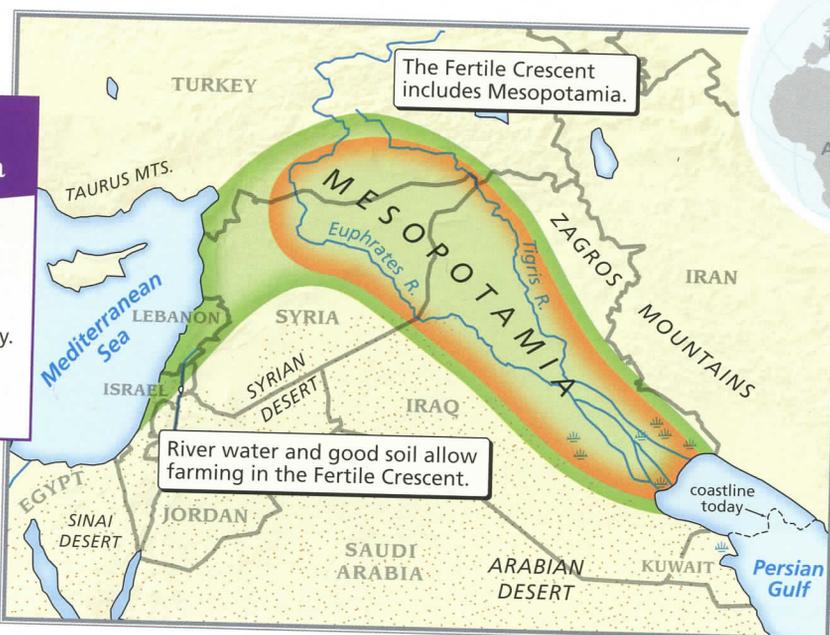
Early civilizations were not part of a large **country**. Instead, people were governed by their own **city-state**. A city-state included a city and the surrounding countryside. There are a few city-states today, such as Monaco in Europe and Singapore in Asia.

Fertile Crescent and Mesopotamia

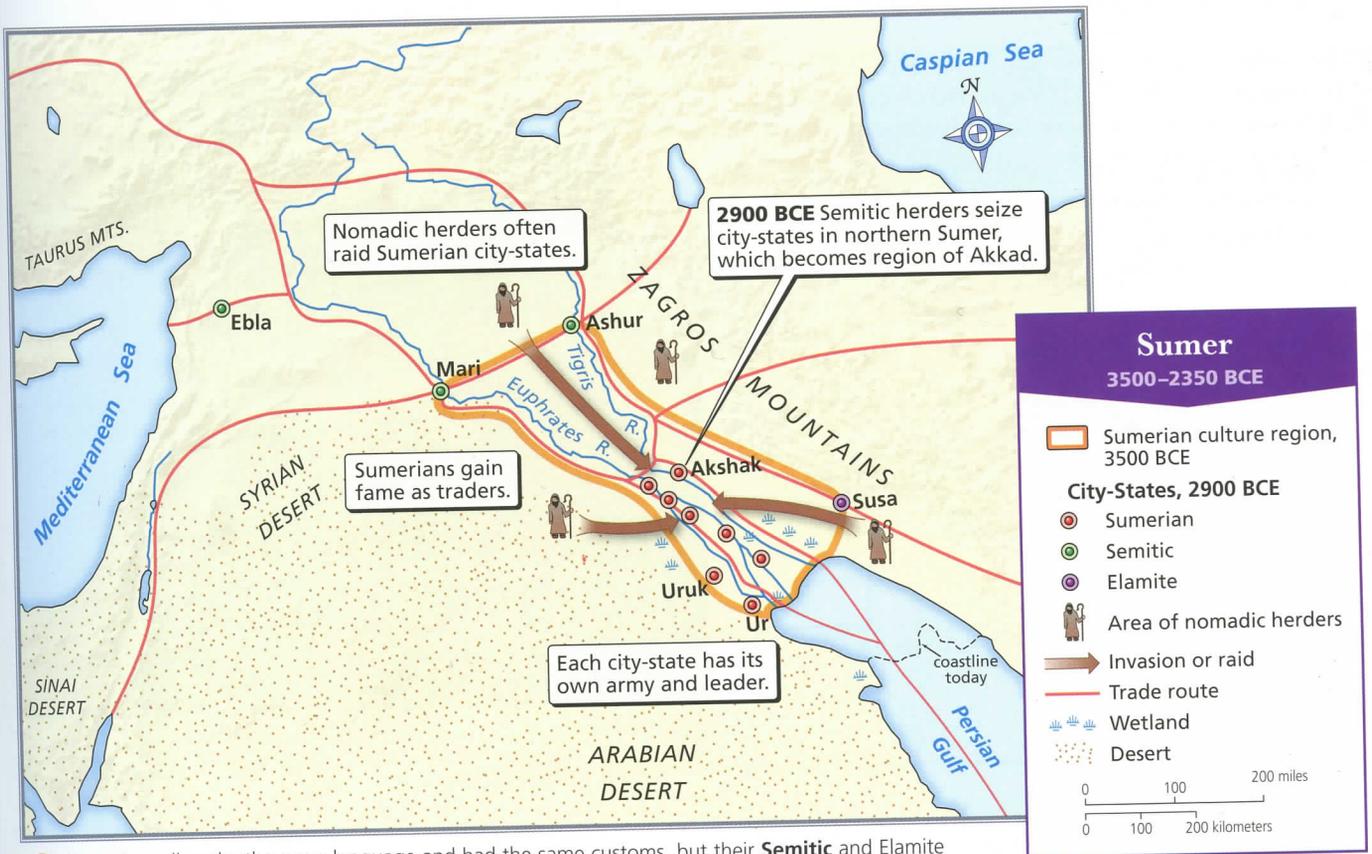
-  Fertile Crescent
-  Mesopotamia

Map shows present-day boundaries and names in gray.

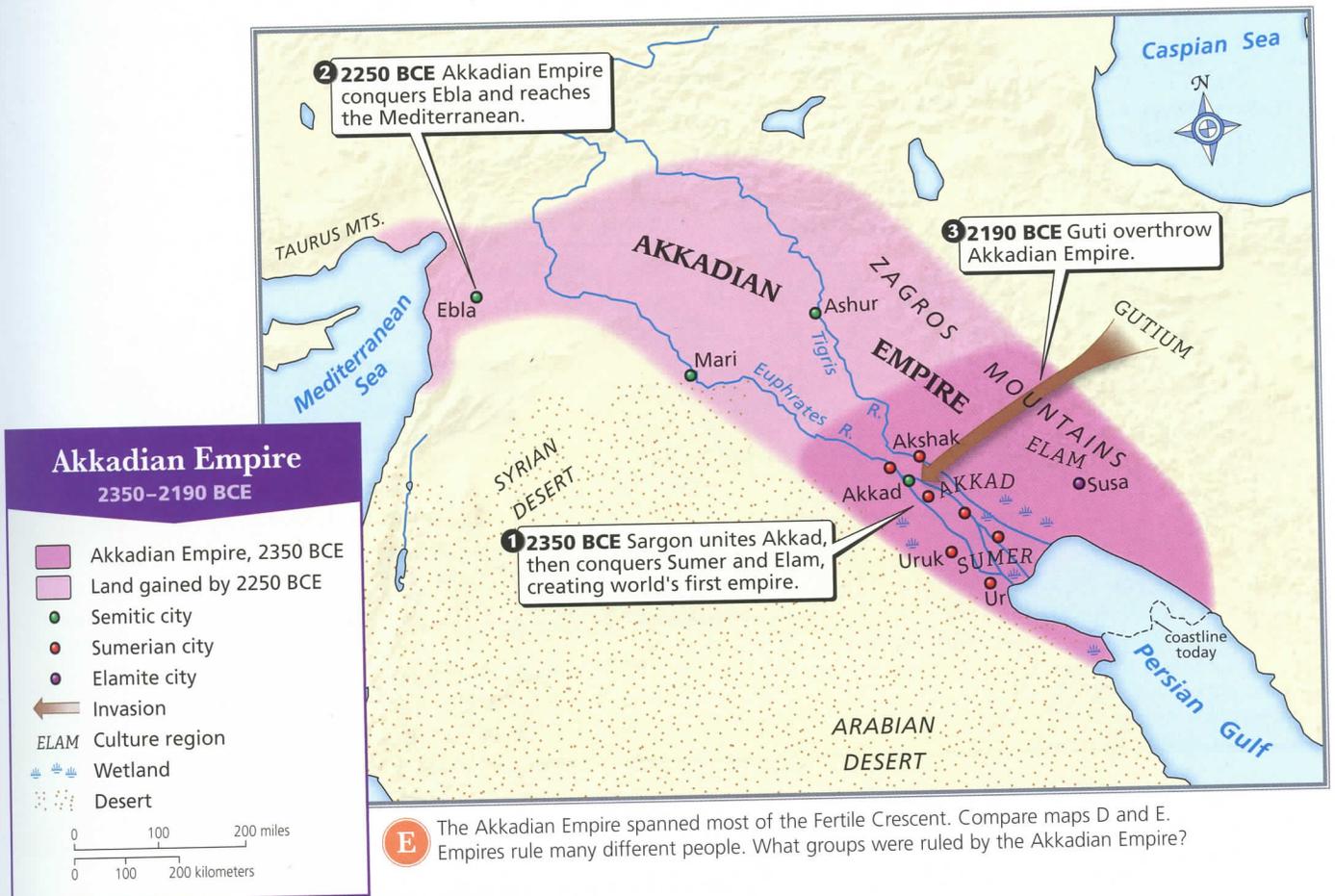
0 100 200 miles
0 100 200 kilometers



C Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, means "between the rivers." Mesopotamia was part of an area of good farmland, called the Fertile Crescent.



D Sumerians all spoke the same language and had the same customs, but their **Semitic** and Elamite neighbors spoke different languages and had different customs. Even so, trade was common.



E The Akkadian Empire spanned most of the Fertile Crescent. Compare maps D and E. Empires rule many different people. What groups were ruled by the Akkadian Empire?

Babylonia and Assyria

After the Akkadian Empire fell, two groups struggled for control of the Fertile Crescent. Babylonians from Babylon and Assyrians from Ashur became the major powers in the region.

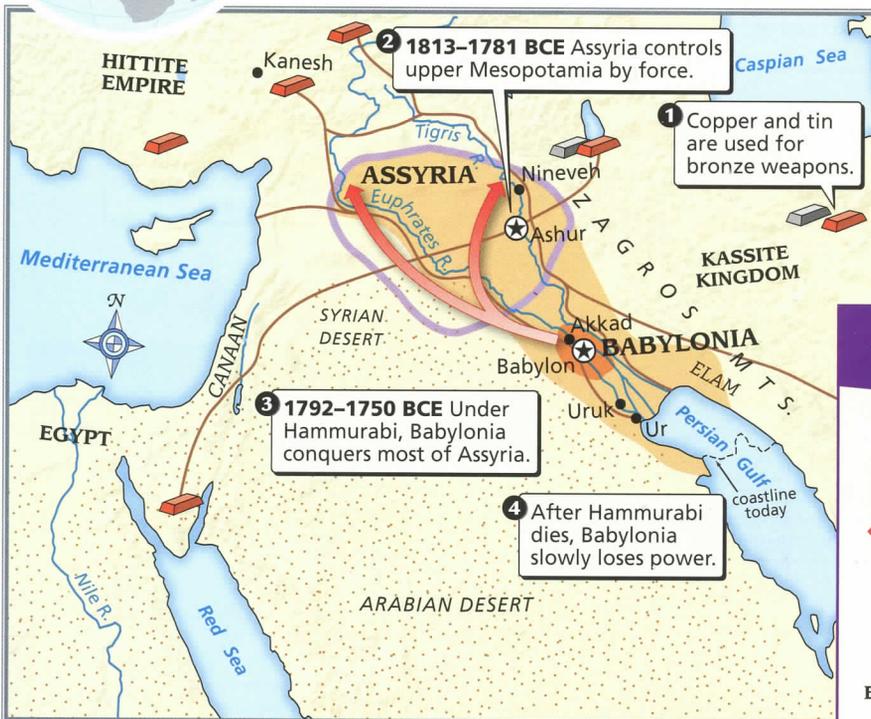
- Babylon was long known as a center of learning. Babylonian science and literature were admired and imitated throughout the Fertile Crescent.
- In contrast, Assyria was known for its fierce army.
- Babylonia and Assyria fought each other often over the course of a thousand years. Each conquered the other more than once.



B The Babylonians and Assyrians built monuments to show their wealth and power. Above is a replica of Babylon's Ishtar Gate. The wealth came from conquests and taxes.



A The Babylonian Empire expanded under Hammurabi, one of Babylonia's most important kings. He is also remembered for his extensive law code.



Why do empires fail?
*Akkad, Babylon, and Ashur all produced **empires**, ruling distant lands with languages and customs unlike their own. Such differences make empires hard to govern.*

Assyria and Babylonia
 1800-1600 BCE

- Assyria, 1800 BCE
- Babylonia, 1800 BCE
- Babylonian gains by 1750 BCE
- Babylonian conquest
- Trade route
- Copper
- Tin
- Capital

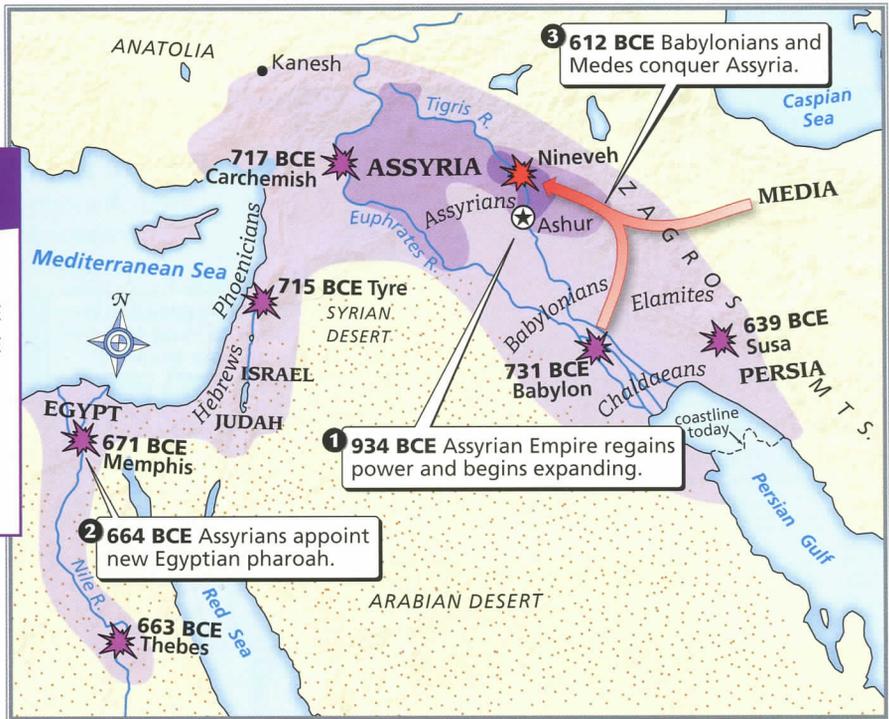
EGYPT Independent empire or state
 ELAM Culture region
 Desert

0 200 400 miles
 0 200 400 kilometers

New Assyrian Empire 934–612 BCE

- Assyria, 911 BCE
- Assyrian gains by 824 BCE
- Assyrian gains by 664 BCE
- Babylonian conquest
- Assyrian conquest
- Babylonian conquest
- Capital

Assyrians Culture group



C Centuries later, Assyrian armies again terrified the entire Fertile Crescent. They conquered the Babylonians, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Egyptians, and others.



New Babylonian Empire 612–539 BCE

- Babylonian Empire, 600 BCE
- Babylonian conquest
- Persian conquest
- Babylonian conquest
- Persian conquest
- Capital

Assyrians Culture group

D Chaldeans from Babylonia conquered Assyria. The New Babylonian Empire was the last of the Mesopotamian empires. Compare its size with that of Babylonia's original empire, shown on map A.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Babylonian Contributions

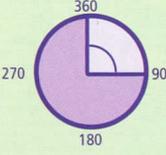
Time

- Divided a year into 12 months.
- Divided a day into 24 hours.
- Divided an hour into 60 minutes.



Mathematics

- Split circle into 360 degrees.



Astronomy

- Accurately predicted dates of eclipses.



E Babylonians liked numbers that could be evenly divided by many other numbers. Notice how such numbers are used in Babylonian contributions to time and mathematics.