

2.2

The Assyrians and the Chaldeans



For 1,000 years after Hammurabi, Mesopotamia came

under the rule of empire after empire.

Then around 1000 B.C., the region shook with the sounds of an approaching army: marching feet, pounding hooves, frightening war cries. The Assyrian army had arrived.

MAIN IDEA

The Assyrians and then the Chaldeans conquered Mesopotamia.

mt THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

The Assyrians (uh-SIHR-ee-uhnz) were a people of northern Mesopotamia who developed a different culture. They were united by their worship of the god Ashur, for whom the Assyrian capital was named. (See the map in Lesson 1.5.) A strong agricultural economy and a large professional army helped the Assyrians conquer all of Mesopotamia, parts of Asia Minor, and even the rich state of Egypt by 650 B.C.

Destructive iron weapons gave Assyrian armies an advantage over their enemies, whose weapons were made of a weaker bronze. The armies also had horse-drawn chariots and soldiers who used bows and arrows while riding horses. Assyrian

soldiers were experts at capturing cities. It was not uncommon for soldiers to kill or enslave captured people and then burn their cities to the ground.

Villages, towns, and cities answered to the unforgiving Assyrian king, who held absolute power. Even the highest officials were closely watched. The government sometimes forced rebellious people to move to faraway lands. In time, however, the Assyrian Empire grew too big, and its subjects became tired of being treated so unfairly and violently. By about 626 B.C., the Assyrians were weakened by internal power struggles. This made it possible for a people known as the Chaldeans (kal-DEE-unz) to eventually defeat them.

CHALDEANS OVERTAKE THE ASSYRIANS mt

The Chaldeans were a seminomadic people who originally came from southern Babylonia. After overthrowing the Assyrians in 612 B.C., the Chaldeans became the ruling power of Babylon and extended their rule over all of Mesopotamia. **Nebuchadnezzar II** (ne-byuh-kuhd-NE-zuhr) was the most famous Chaldean king. Under his rule, which lasted for 43 years, the New Babylonian Empire included Mesopotamia and all of the Fertile Crescent.

Though he was often cruel, Nebuchadnezzar also made improvements to Babylon by rebuilding the city and adding incredible beauty to it. From miles away, the Tower of Babel, a soaring seven-story multicolored ziggurat, inspired awe. Visitors entered the inner city through the colorful Ishtar Gate with its gleaming blue-glazed bricks and images of dragons and bulls.

The king's most famous accomplishment was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Pumps operated by slaves irrigated a large, leveled terrace of trees and plants. The terrace formed a green mountain that seemed to float in the city. Although his empire outlasted him by fewer than 25 years, Nebuchadnezzar had built a monumental city fitting its name: Babylon, Gate of God.

Critical Viewing This painting shows what the Hanging Gardens of Babylon might have looked like. What reaction might the gardens have inspired in visitors?



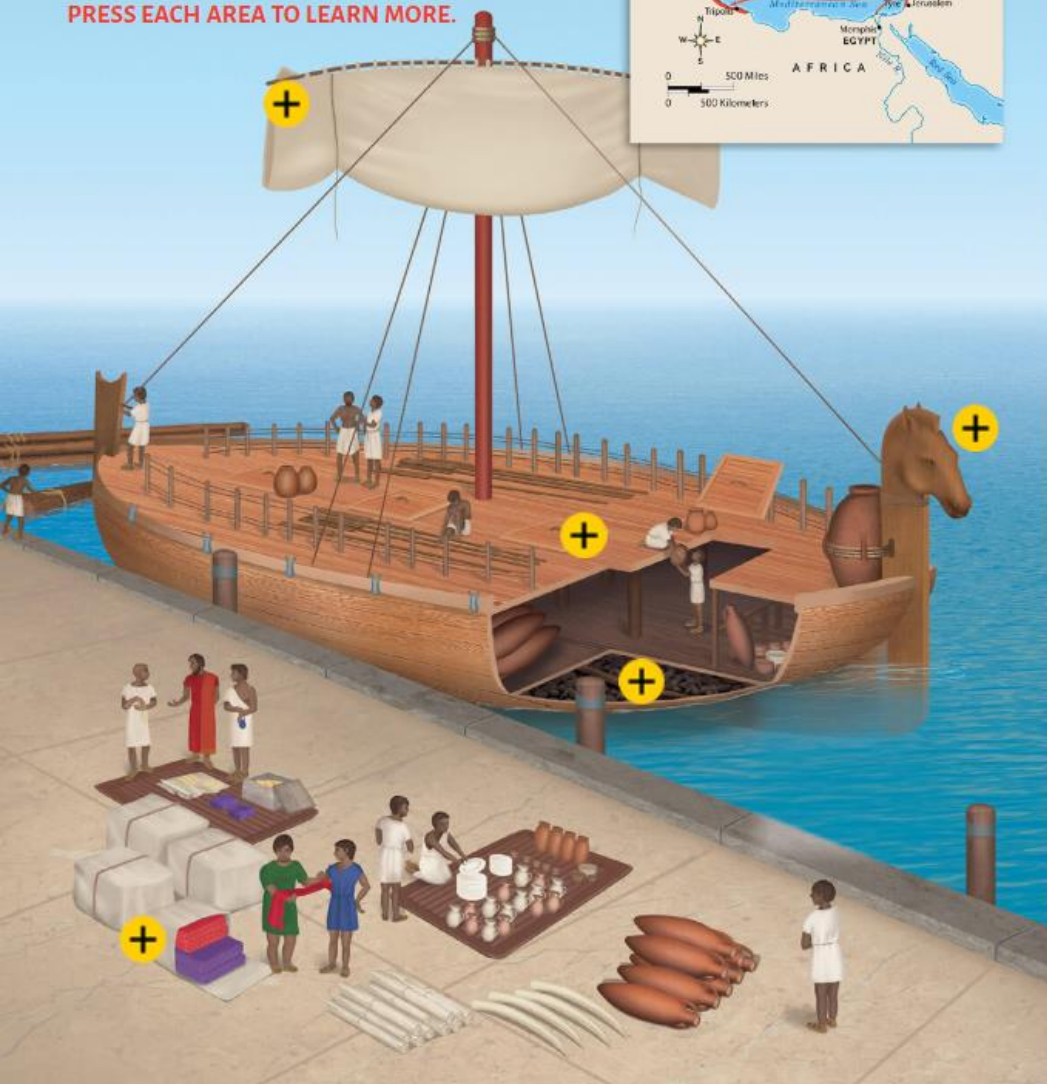
REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** In what ways were the rule of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans similar and different?
- 2. MAKE INFERENCES** Why do you think the two empires did not last very long?
- 3. ANALYZE LANGUAGE USE** What does "the terrace formed a green mountain that seemed to float in the city" mean?

PHOENICIAN SHIP

The Phoenicians sailed their ships in the Mediterranean and beyond. Through trade, the Phoenicians also had contact with Mesopotamia. They established **colonies**, or outposts of people from one land who live in another land, in places as far away as Spain. Phoenicia's most famous colony was Carthage in North Africa.

PRESS EACH AREA TO LEARN MORE.



2.3

The Phoenicians



Do you have a well-traveled friend who always has interesting information about places you've never been? You can think of the Phoenicians as this worldly friend. While conducting trade throughout the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, the Phoenicians spread cultural practices from one stop on their trade route to the next.

MAIN IDEA

Through their extensive trade network, the Phoenicians spread different cultures throughout the Mediterranean and beyond.

mt A TRADING PEOPLE

The narrow strip of coast along the eastern Mediterranean (present-day Lebanon) contained many natural resources and had good harbors. This combination was perfect for the development of industry and trade. About 1000 B.C., independent city-states emerged in the area. They shared cultural similarities, including language and a trading economy. The Greeks called the people from

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** What goods and ideas did the Phoenicians spread through their sea trade network?
- 2. ANALYZE VISUALS** Why might ballast have been important to the condition of goods transported by ship?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** Why would the Phoenicians have established trading colonies in faraway places?

these city-states Phoenicians (fih-NEE-shuhnz), which means "purple dye people." The Phoenicians processed local shellfish into a purple dye used to color fabric. This dye was their most famous trade good. They exported wood from their highly desired cedar trees to Egypt and Mesopotamia. From other lands, they imported **raw materials**, or substances from which other things are made. Phoenician artisans crafted these materials into luxury goods for trade.

Phoenicia's most important export was its culture. To record trade transactions, the Phoenicians used their own 22-letter alphabet, which was adapted from Sumerian cuneiform. Each symbol from the Phoenician alphabet stood for a sound. First the ancient Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet, then the ancient Romans modified it to form the basis of our modern Western alphabet.

SHIPBUILDERS AND SEAFARERS mt

The Phoenicians were also skilled shipbuilders and sailors. They built strong, wide ships. Powered mainly by wind and a large, square sail, these ships carried huge cargoes thousands of miles. The Phoenicians became one of the first Mediterranean peoples to sail on the Atlantic Ocean. They sailed north to Britain, west to the Azores (nine volcanic islands located in the mid-Atlantic), and possibly even around Africa.

Despite their talents and enormous wealth, the Phoenicians were militarily weak and were eventually absorbed into the New Babylonian Empire. However, they performed a valuable service by spreading different cultures from one area to another. Their accomplishments show the importance of trade in building civilizations.

2.4

Persian Leaders



Palaces in the Persian Empire were built with diverse materials: bricks from Mesopotamia, timber from Phoenicia, ebony and silver from Egypt. This mix of materials was a deliberate celebration of the Persian Empire's rich ethnic diversity—a diversity that was encouraged by the wise leadership of two men.

MAIN IDEA

Under the rule of Cyrus and Darius I, the Persian Empire united different peoples and cultures.

mt CYRUS THE GREAT

The region of Persia was located in what is present-day southwestern Iran, just east of Mesopotamia. Around 700 B.C., the Persians were ruled by a people called the Medes (meedz). Then in 550 B.C., a Persian king known as **Cyrus the Great** led a successful uprising against the Medes. In 539 B.C., he captured the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus continued to add to his empire until it stretched from Afghanistan to the Aegean Sea, including Mesopotamia. Under Persian rule, these lands enjoyed 200 years of peace and economic well-being.

The secret of Cyrus's success was **tolerance**, or sympathy for the beliefs and practices of others. After winning a war, he showed mercy

to conquered kings by allowing them to keep their thrones. Cyrus demanded only tribute that defeated people could afford, sparing them great hardships. He also honored local customs, religions, and institutions. His tolerance won him widespread respect and acceptance from conquered subjects.

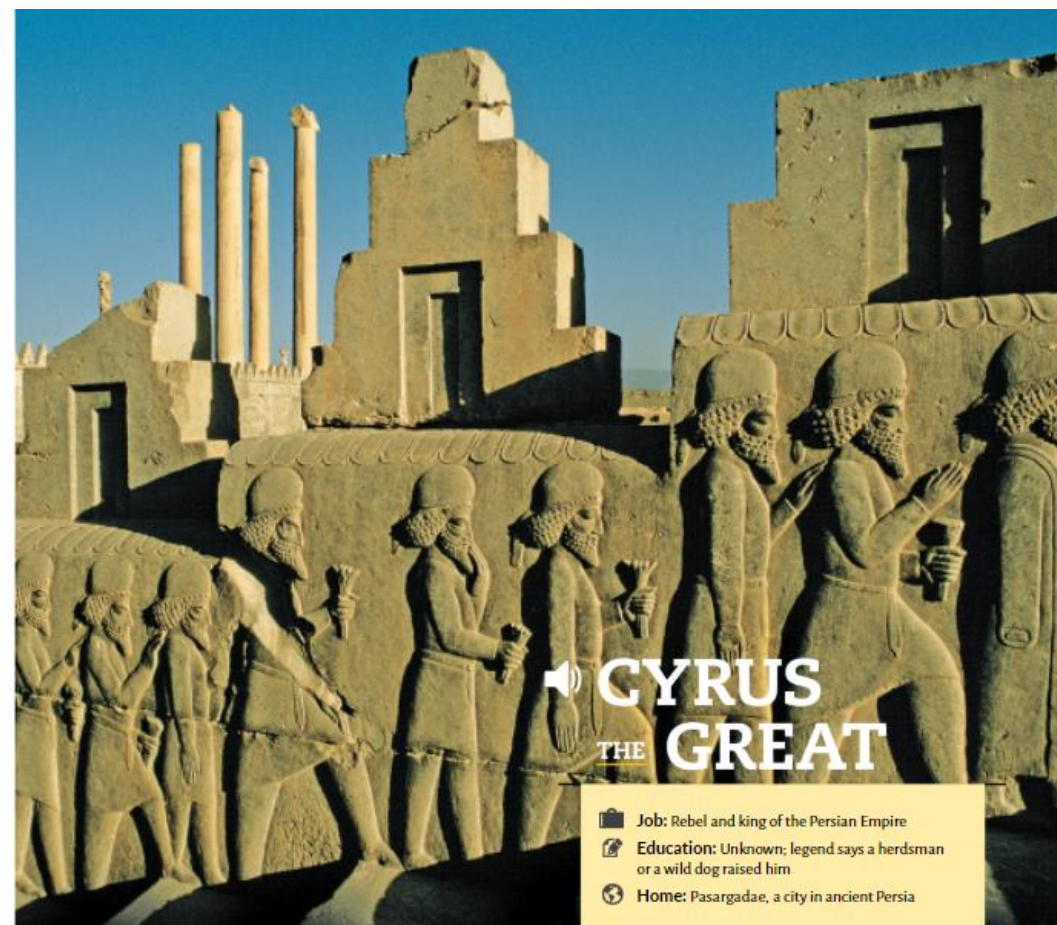
DARIUS EXPANDS THE EMPIRE mt

After Cyrus's death around 529 B.C., his son Cambyses (kam-BY-seez) became king and added Egypt and Libya to the empire. The next king, **Darius I** (duh-RY-uhs), ruled Persia at its height. Darius expanded the empire until it grew to about 2,800 miles, stretching from India in the east to southeastern Europe in the west, with the Fertile Crescent in the middle.

Like Cyrus, Darius was a wise ruler. He avoided problems that had weakened other empires. For example, he divided his empire into 20 smaller **provinces**, or administrative districts, that were ruled by governors called **satraps** (SAY-traps). They helped him maintain control of his huge empire. Darius introduced regular taxation and fixed each province's tribute at only half of what the people could afford to pay. He also introduced a form of currency, which made it easier to pay taxes and buy goods.

Understanding that communications were essential to good government, Darius built the 1,500-mile-long Royal Road, running from Susa in Persia to Sardis in Anatolia (present-day Turkey). Other roads connected all 20 provinces so that messengers could carry his orders anywhere in under 15 days. The roads helped unify the blend of people and cultures that made up the Persian Empire.

Darius also built a new capital, called Persepolis, for his empire. Decorated with palaces and jeweled statues, Persepolis was meant to symbolize the magnificence of the Persian Empire—the largest, most stable, and most powerful empire of ancient Mesopotamia.



CYRUS THE GREAT

- Job:** Rebel and king of the Persian Empire
- Education:** Unknown; legend says a herdsman or a wild dog raised him
- Home:** Pasargadae, a city in ancient Persia

FRIENDS

Cyrus's friends included almost everyone he ruled.

TRIVIA

Cyrus remains a highly respected figure for modern Iranians, and his simple tomb is still visited by millions of people every year.

In this relief from ancient Persepolis, representatives from different regions of the Persian Empire carry gifts for the Persian king. The gifts are meant to symbolize their loyalty.

REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** How did Cyrus and Darius each rule diverse groups of people peacefully?
- 2. CONTRAST** In what ways did the governing policies of Cyrus and Darius differ from those of Assyrian rulers?
- 3. SEQUENCE EVENTS** Identify four significant events, in order, that occurred while Cyrus and Darius ruled.

2.5 The Legacy of Mesopotamia



As you check your calendar, text a friend, or ride your bike, you probably aren't thinking about the people who walked the earth more than 3,000 years ago. But if it weren't for the people of ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, you might not be able to do any of these things.

MAIN IDEA

Mesopotamian civilizations were responsible for major cultural and technological developments.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The advances developed in ancient Mesopotamia form the region's **legacy**—or the things, both cultural and technological, left to us from the past. Mesopotamia's cultural legacy touches our lives every day. For example, the written word took important leaps forward with Sumer's development of pictograph and cuneiform writing and then with the spread of the Phoenician alphabet.

Mesopotamia also left us a legacy in forms of government. The city-state unit that developed in Sumer, Babylon, and Phoenicia became an important governmental form in the ancient world. Equally important were the styles of government that emerged. Hammurabi highlighted the importance of

law. His Code of Laws influenced later legal systems. Cyrus the Great demonstrated the power of tolerance to future leaders. Finally, the use of provinces, governors, and good communications are still essential to modern governments.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

It is easy to take Mesopotamia's technological advances for granted because they seem so commonplace to us today. Yet at the time, Mesopotamian technology clearly furthered the development of human civilization. During the Bronze Age, tools and weapons became more effective than ever before. Strong axes, swords, and daggers were crafted from bronze.

Mesopotamian technology also had an impact on agriculture and on land and sea travel. The ox-drawn plow made it easier to cultivate large areas of land. Irrigation techniques pioneered by the Sumerians are still used around the world. The wheel revolutionized transportation and trade on land. Phoenician shipbuilding and navigation did the same at sea by spreading Phoenicia's Mesopotamian-influenced culture.

With advances like the abacus, people from Mesopotamia laid the foundations of mathematics and science. The abacus is a device that uses sliding beads for counting. The Mesopotamians were also among the first to perform complex calculations and develop a calendar. Additionally, they devised number systems based on 60, which is what we use today to keep track of time.

The application of mathematics made it possible for Mesopotamians to build larger and more complex buildings, including Mesopotamia's cultural and technological masterpiece, the ziggurat. So the next time you ride in a car, use a tool, or see a skyscraper, thank ancient Mesopotamia.

MATCH-UP: THEN AND NOW

These images show Mesopotamian inventions and their current forms—the ones we are familiar with today. Can you pair each Mesopotamian invention with its modern-day match?



REVIEW & ASSESS

- 1. READING CHECK** What are examples of Mesopotamia's cultural and technological legacy?
- 2. INTEGRATE VISUALS** What other modern items would you add to the images above to illustrate Mesopotamia's legacy?
- 3. FORM OPINIONS** Which cultural or technological advance from ancient Mesopotamia do you think is most important? Explain and support your choice.