

SUMERIAN LIFE



Sumer was settled in about 4500 BC in the southern area of Mesopotamia. However, the Sumerian society didn't truly develop until around 3000 BC. Calling themselves the "Sag-giga" or the black-headed ones, the Sumerians built the first human civilization. The fascinating world of the Sumerians included many accomplishments such as creating one of the oldest written languages, impressive architecture, and a governing system.

Sumerians enjoyed living in an area of the world full of natural resources. Taking advantage of the nearby rivers, Sumerians developed complex irrigation systems using levees and canals. Clay, which was abundant in the region, was used for writing and making pottery items. Sumerians are also credited with inventing the wheel. In addition, the Sumerians farmed in order to have enough food to eat.

Sumerians were among the first to build large structures. One of their greatest and most well-known architectural achievements was the building of ziggurats, which were temples. These were pyramid-like structures that were either square or rectangular. These temples began to appear around 2200 B.C. Prior to the ziggurats, Sumerians built other constructions for religious purposes. Many of the buildings included sophisticated, decorative features, such as bronze accents, mosaics, and paintings.

Sumer was not one large city. Instead, it was divided into several city-states. Each city-state consisted in a large city surrounded by a wall. Outside each city, smaller villages developed. However, the city-states shared a similar culture.

The city-state's existence were tied closely to religion, as each city-state featured a temple dedicated to a god or goddess in the center. The Sumerians were polytheistic and worshipped many gods.

People who lived in Sumer belonged to one of three groups: nobles, commoners, (or craftsmen) and farmers (or slaves). Most people were farmers or slaves. Slaves worked in construction.

The Sumerians may have been the first empire. An empire is a group of states or countries that are all under the same rule. There were many important leaders in Sumer, beginning with Etana of Kish, the first king.

WHILE YOU'RE READING...

MARK WITH SYMBOLS

! when you find something interesting.

? when you are unsure or confused by something.

***** when you find something important.

HIGHLIGHT WITH COLORS

yellow power words or key terms

orange key phrases and definitions



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Question 1: What are some of the "firsts" Sumerians achieved?

Question 2: Describe Sumerian architecture.

Question 3: What was a Sumerian city-state?

