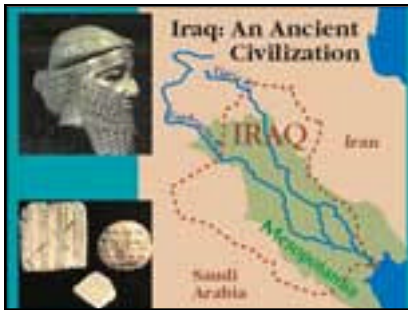


Iraq: An Ancient Civilization



FRAME 1

One of the world's oldest civilizations began in what is now Iraq.

BASIC LEVEL

About 10,000 years ago, people settled along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what is now Iraq. The rivers would overflow making rich soil for farming.

About 7,000 years ago, the settlers had formed a civilization. **What is a civilization?** (*People who live under some kind of law, have writing, and so on.*) The shaded area shows you where this ancient civilization was located. **From the map, what was this civilization called?** (*Mesopotamia.*) The dotted line is an outline of Iraq. The pictures here show you some things about ancient Mesopotamia. The top picture shows you the head of Sargon the Great, who 4,300 years ago was king of a part of Mesopotamia called Sumer. The lower picture shows you some cuneiform, the kind of writing used in Sumer. The Sumerians used sticks to make the cuneiform writing on soft clay tablets. NEXT PICTURE

GENERAL LEVEL

Iraq is in the news every day now, but did you know that some of the earliest cities in the ancient world started in this region? As early as 10,000 years ago people had settled along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and formed communities. The land between the rivers is now known as one of the world's "cradles of civilization." **How would you describe a civilization?** (*A group of people who have a government, a common culture, laws, writing, and so on.*) The shaded area shown here is the site of this early civilization. **What is this area called?** (*Mesopotamia.*)

The rivers often overflowed and left a rich layer of soil in the area, which was very good for farming. The farmland made it possible for many people to live there and to grow more crops than they needed. But the people had to work together to build dams and irrigation canals to control the flooding. By 3500 BCE, the people who lived in Sumer, in the southern part of Mesopotamia, had developed a form of writing. You see an example of this writing in the picture on the lower left. It's called cuneiform and is made by scratching and pressing sticks on soft clay tablets. The writing was used to record business deals as well as poetry. The Sumerians also developed the plow and the wheel. **Does it surprise you that people were this advanced so many thousands of years ago?** The other picture shows Sargon the Great, who was king of the Mesopotamian city of Akkad. In 2334 BCE, he conquered Sumer, and then sent his troops to places as far away as North Africa to build an empire. NEXT PICTURE

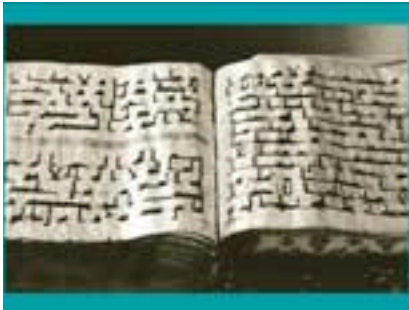
ADVANCED LEVEL

Iraq is the site of one of the world's oldest civilizations. The region was part of the Fertile Crescent, which extended from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Ancient peoples were drawn to the rich farmland along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They came together in communities at least partly to build irrigation canals and waterworks to fight the same flooding that had left behind fertile soil.

Sumer arose in the lower part of Mesopotamia nearly 7,000 years ago. The name Mesopotamia means the land between two rivers. This area is often called "the cradle of civilization." **What does that phrase mean to you?** The Mesopotamians developed the wheel, the plow, a lunar calendar, and an early form of writing. You see an example of the Sumerian writing in the picture at the lower left. It was produced by scratching or pressing sticks on soft clay tablets. **What is this kind of writing called?** (*Cuneiform.*) Some of the antiquities recently destroyed from the National Museum in Baghdad came from Sumer. **Do you think this looting could have been prevented?**

As the Sumerian civilization evolved, its government became more powerful. Its kings held their position for life and appointed people to collect taxes and make laws. The Sumerian city-states fought each other, and the more powerful rulers enlarged their kingdoms. The picture at the upper right shows a sculpture of a head of Sargon the Great, who conquered all of Sumer around 2330 BCE. He was Sumer's first empire builder, sending his army as far away as Egypt and Ethiopia. NEXT PICTURE

Iraq: An Ancient Civilization (continued)



FRAME 2

Mesopotamia became an Islamic country in the seventh century.

GENERAL LEVEL

Ancient Mesopotamia would be invaded and conquered many times. The Amorites were one of these conquerors. An Amorite king named Hammurabi is famous for establishing the first known code of law in the late 18th century BCE. The Assyrians from the north also took over Mesopotamia and destroyed its capital city, Babylon, in 669 BCE. The Caldean king Nebuchadnezzar the Second rebuilt Babylon into one of the most beautiful cities of the time. In the 4th century BCE, the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, invaded the region. The Persians took over 300 years later.

In the seventh century, invaders from the Arabian Peninsula defeated the Persians, and changed Mesopotamia forever. The Arabs followed the Islamic religion, which most Iraqis follow today. **Do you know what the followers of Islam are called?** (*Muslims.*) This picture shows the Muslim holy book. **Who can name it?** (*The Quran.*) Muslims believe the Quran contains the words of God, as told to the prophet Mohammed. He was born on the Arabian Peninsula about 570. When he was about 40, he believed that an angel of Allah — God — called on him to be a prophet and to spread the word of Allah. **What is a prophet?** (*A messenger.*) The Muslims soon took over much of the Middle East, North Africa, and even part of Spain. Many people in these conquered land became Muslims by choice or force.

Mohammed died in 632, and the Muslims argued over who should be their leader. This fight caused the Muslims to split into two main branches, the Shiite and the Sunnis. Members of the two branches still don't get along in Iraq. NEXT PICTURE

ADVANCED LEVEL

Iraq would be invaded many times over the centuries. Some of the invaders not only made a lasting impact on the country, but also left a legacy to the modern world. One example is the king Hammurabi, who ruled the Amorite people. He conquered the Mesopotamian kingdoms and ruled from 1792 to 1750 BCE. He made Babylon his capital. He unified the city-states further by establishing one of the first written collection of laws, known as the Code of Hammurabi. **Why do you think a single set of laws helps to unify a region?** Later invaders divided Mesopotamia into Assyria in the north and Babylonia in the south. The Assyrians invaded Babylonia and destroyed Babylon. The Caldeans defeated the Assyrians, and in the sixth century BCE, the Caldean king Nebuchadnezzar the Second rebuilt Babylon. Under Alexander the Great, the Greeks conquered Iraq, and the Persians took the region from the Greeks.

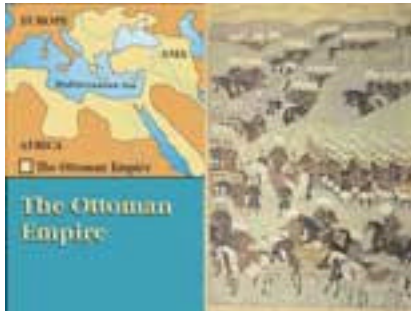
In the seventh century, Arabs, inspired by the teachings of the prophet Mohammed, defeated the Persians in the Middle East. **What religion did Mohammed establish?** (*Islam.*) Muslims believe the word of God was revealed to Mohammed and preserved in the Quran. Most of the peoples conquered by the Muslim Arabs were forcibly converted to Islam. Arab immigrants to Iraq also brought Islam to that region. It was also in Iraq that the greatest schism of Islam occurred. After Mohammed's death, Muslims fought over who should lead them. The fight led to the founding of the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam. NEXT PICTURE

BASIC LEVEL

Many different groups of people conquered ancient Mesopotamia. The Assyrians took over this rich area about 2,700 years ago. About 2,500 years ago, the Greeks captured it, then the Persians drove out the Greeks. In the seventh century, people from present-day Saudi Arabia invaded Mesopotamia. The Arabs brought the Islamic religion to the region. **Do you know what followers of Islam are called?** (*Muslims.*)

The picture here shows an ancient copy of the Quran, Islam's holy book. Muslims believe the Quran contains the words of God, as told to the prophet Mohammed. Mohammed started the Islamic religion. He believed that an angel of Allah — the Muslim name for God — brought him the word of God. Mohammed's followers soon conquered most of the Middle East, North Africa, and Spain. Many of the people in these areas are still Muslims today. NEXT PICTURE

Iraq: An Ancient Civilization (continued)



FRAME 3

Ottoman Turks took over the Middle East in the 1500s.

GENERAL LEVEL

In the eighth century, Iraq became the center of the Muslim empire. The city of Baghdad was built on the Tigris River. Farming and trade made the region rich. Scholars and scientists made great advances in science and medicine. Great works of art, literature, and music were produced. However, religious and political quarrels weakened the empire, opening it to more invasions.

One of the most destructive invading forces came from the east. The Mongols captured Baghdad in 1258. They sacked the city and killed some 800,000 people. Iraq hadn't recovered from this invasion before another band of Mongols overran it in the 14th and 15th centuries. They destroyed Baghdad again. During this period of chaos, various tribes rebelled against the central government. **What is chaos?** (*Confusion, disorder.*) Iraq was conquered again in the 1500s by invaders from Turkey. The picture here shows these invaders. These were the Ottoman Turks, and they would control Iraq for nearly all of the next 400 years.

Here you see a map of the region that the Ottoman Turks controlled in the 1600s. **What was this region called?** (*The Ottoman Empire.*) After the Ottoman Turks took over the Middle East, they converted to Islam, becoming Sunni Muslims. Eventually, the Ottoman government built new roads, established schools, and made other improvements in Iraq. However, Iraq was an unimportant part of the Ottoman Empire. **How do you think the Iraqis felt under Turkish rule?** END OF SECTION

ADVANCED LEVEL

In the late eighth century, the golden age of Mesopotamia began. Abu al-Abbas became the caliph, or ruler, of the region. He moved his capital from Damascus to Baghdad, and the city regained its former glory, becoming a great intellectual, artistic, and trade center. **Do you know anything about the Arab science and arts of this period?** However, religious disputes would eventually weaken the caliphate.

In the 13th century, Mongols conquered Baghdad, sacked the city, and slaughtered some 800,000 people. The country hadn't really recovered from this devastation when a second band of Mongols stormed into the region 150 years later.

In the 1500s, the Ottoman Turks from Turkey seized control of Mesopotamia, and the Ottomans controlled the region for most of the next four centuries. The picture here shows the forces of the Ottoman leader, Suleyman the Magnificent, who captured Baghdad in the 1530s. The map shows the extent of the Ottoman Empire about 1600. The Ottomans had lost much of their empire by the early 20th century, but they held onto Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. Although the Ottomans converted to Islam, becoming Sunni Muslims, Iraq became a backwater region in their empire. The Turkish authority built roads and schools were in Iraq, but the people of the Middle East were eager to throw off the Ottoman rule. **Why do you think Iraq wasn't an important part of the Ottoman Empire?** END OF SECTION

BASIC LEVEL

Iraq became a great country under Muslim rule. Its people created beautiful art, music, and literature. Cities, roads, and canals were built. But in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, Mongols from the east destroyed its cities and killed its merchants and scholars. These were sad times for Iraq.

In the 1500s, a people from Turkey took over much of the Middle East and parts of Asia. These people were the Ottoman Turks. The picture here shows part of their army. The map shows the land that they conquered in yellow. **What was this area called?** (*The Ottoman Empire.*) By 1900, the Ottoman Turks had lost much of their empire, but they still had control of Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. Although Mesopotamia had once been a center of Islamic culture, it was an unimportant country under the Turks. **How do you think the Iraqis felt under Turkish rule?** END OF SECTION