

Akkad

The **Akkadian Empire** ^[2] was an [empire](#) centered in the city of [Akkad](#) ^[3] and its surrounding region in ancient [Mesopotamia](#) which [united](#) all the indigenous Akkadian speaking [Semites](#) and the [Sumerian](#) speakers under one rule.^[4]

During the 3rd millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the [Sumerians](#) and the [Semitic](#) Akkadians, which included widespread [bilingualism](#).^[5] [Akkadian](#) gradually replaced Sumerian as a spoken language somewhere around the turn of the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC (the exact [dating](#) being a matter of debate).^[6]

The Akkadian Empire reached its political peak between the 24th and 22nd centuries BC, following the conquests by its founder [Sargon of Akkad](#) (2334–2279 BC). Under Sargon and his successors, Akkadian language was briefly imposed on neighboring conquered states such as [Elam](#). Akkad is sometimes regarded as the first empire in history,^[7] though there are earlier Sumerian claimants.^[8]

After the fall of the Akkadian Empire, the Akkadian peoples of [Mesopotamia](#) eventually coalesced into two major Akkadian speaking nations; [Assyria](#) in the north, and a few centuries later, [Babylonia](#) in the south.

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City of Akkad

Main article: [Akkad \(city\)](#)

The precise archaeological site of the city of [Akkad](#) has not yet been found.^[9] The form *Agade* appears in Sumerian, for example in the [Sumerian King List](#); the later Assyro-Babylonian form *Akkadû* ("of or belonging to Akkad") was likely derived from this. The etymology and meaning of Akkad (written a.ga.dè^{KI} or UR^{KI}) are unknown. Centuries later, the neo-Babylonian king [Nabonidus](#) mentioned in his archaeological records^[10] that Ishtar's worship in Agade was later superseded by that of the goddess [Anunit](#), whose shrine was at [Sippar](#)—suggesting proximity of Sippar and Agade. Despite numerous searches, the city has never been found. One theory holds that Agade was situated opposite Sippar on the left [bank](#) of the Euphrates, and was perhaps the oldest part of the city of Sippar. Another theory is that the ruins of Akkad are to be found beneath modern [Baghdad](#). Reputedly it was destroyed by invading [Gutians](#) with the fall of the Akkadian Empire.^[11]

The first known mention of the city of Akkad is in an inscription of [Enshakushanna](#) of [Uruk](#), where he claims to have defeated Agade—indicating that it was in existence well before the days of [Sargon of Akkad](#), whom the Sumerian King List claims to have built it.^[12] Akkad is mentioned once in the [Tanakh](#)—[Book of Genesis](#) 10:10: *And the beginning of his [Nimrod's] kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar* ([KJV](#)). The [Greek](#) ([LXX](#)) spelling in this passage is *Archad*.

History

Origins

Speakers of the [Akkadian language](#) seem to have already been [present](#) in Mesopotamia at the dawn of the historical period, and soon achieved preeminence with the first Dynasty of [Kish](#) and numerous localities to the north of Sumer, where rulers with Akkadian names had already established themselves by the 3rd millennium BC. Sargon has often been cited as the first ruler of a combined empire of Akkad and Sumer, although more recently discovered data suggests there had been Sumerian expansions under previous kings, including [Lugal-Anne-Mundu](#) of [Adab](#), [Eannatum](#) of [Lagash](#), and [Lugal-Zage-Si](#).

Sargon and his sons



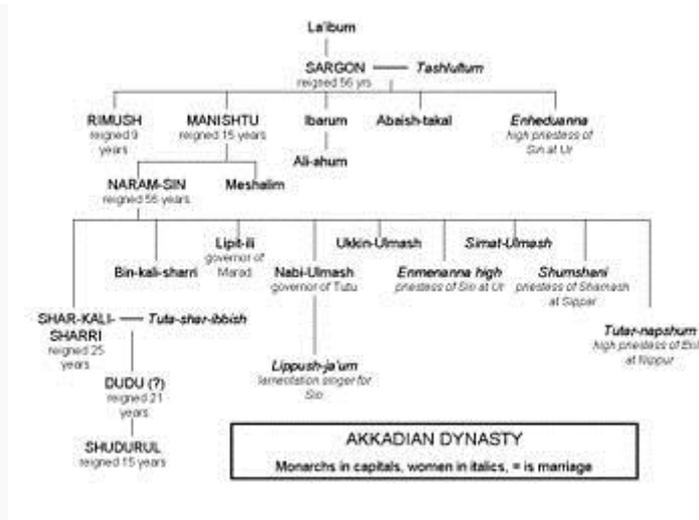


Bronze head of an Akkadian, probably an image of Manishtusu or Naram-Sin; descendants of Sargon ([National Museum of Iraq](#))

Sargon of Akkad (*Sharru-kin* = "legitimate king", possibly a title he took on gaining power) defeated and captured Lugal-Zage-Si in the [Battle of Uruk](#) and conquered his empire. The earliest records in the Akkadian language date to the time of Sargon. Sargon was claimed to be the son of La'ibum or Itti-Bel, a humble gardener, and possibly a [hierodule](#), or priestess to [Ishtar](#) or [Inanna](#). One legend related of Sargon in Assyrian times says that

"My mother was a changeling (?), my father I knew not. The brothers of my father loved the hills. My city is Azurpiranu (the wilderness herb fields), which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates. My changeling mother conceived me, in secret she bore me. She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid. She cast me into the river which rose not over me. The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water. Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me. Akki the drawer of water, appointed me as his gardener. While I was gardener Ishtar granted me her love, and for four and (fifty?) ... years I exercised kingship."^[13]

. Later claims on behalf of Sargon, that his mother was an "entu" priestess (high priestess). The claims might have been made to ensure a descendency of nobility, considering only a high placed family can be made such a position.^[14]



Kings of the Akkad Dynasty

Originally a cupbearer (*Rabshaqe*) to a king of Kish with a Semitic name, [Ur-Zababa](#), Sargon thus became a gardener, responsible for the task of clearing out irrigation canals. This gave him access to a disciplined corps of workers, who also may have served as his first soldiers. Displacing Ur-Zababa, Sargon was crowned king, and he entered upon a career of foreign conquest.^[15] Four times he invaded [Syria](#) and [Canaan](#), and he spent three years thoroughly subduing the countries of "the west" to unite them with Mesopotamia "into a single empire."

However, Sargon took this process further, conquering many of the surrounding regions to create an empire that reached westward as far as the [Mediterranean Sea](#) and perhaps [Cyprus](#) (*Kaptara*); northward as far as the mountains (a later Hittite text asserts he fought the [Hattite](#) king Nurdaggal of [Burushanda](#), well into [Anatolia](#)); eastward over [Elam](#); and as far south as [Magan](#) ([Oman](#)) — a region over which he reigned for

purportedly 56 years, though only four "year-names" survive. He consolidated his dominion over his territories by replacing the earlier opposing rulers with noble citizens of Akkad, his native city where loyalty would thus be ensured.^[16] Trade extended from the [silver](#) mines of Anatolia to the [lapis lazuli](#) mines in [Afghanistan](#), the [cedars](#) of [Lebanon](#) and the [copper](#) of [Magan](#). This consolidation of the city-states of Sumer and Akkad reflected the growing economic and political power of Mesopotamia. The empire's breadbasket was the rain-fed agricultural system of northern Mesopotamia ([Assyria](#)) and a chain of fortresses was built to control the imperial wheat production.

Images of Sargon were erected on the shores of the Mediterranean, in token of his victories, and cities and palaces were built at home with the spoils of the conquered lands. Elam and the northern part of Mesopotamia ([Assyria/Subartu](#)) were also subjugated, and rebellions in [Sumer](#) were put down. Contract tablets have been found dated in the years of the campaigns against [Canaan](#) and against [Sarlak](#), king of [Gutium](#). He also boasted of having subjugated the "four quarters" — the lands surrounding Akkad to the north (Assyria), the south (Sumer), the east (Elam) and the west ([Martu](#)). Some of the earliest historiographic texts ([ABC 19, 20](#)) suggest he rebuilt the city of Babylon (*Bab-ilu*) in its new location near Akkad.^[17]

Sargon, throughout his long life, showed special deference to the Sumerian deities, particularly [Inanna \(Ishtar\)](#), his patroness, and [Zababa](#), the warrior god of Kish. He called himself "*The anointed priest of Anu*" and "*the great ensi of Enlil*" and his daughter, [Enheduanna](#), was installed as priestess to [Nanna](#) at the temple in [Ur](#).

Troubles multiplied toward the end of his reign. A later Babylonian text states;

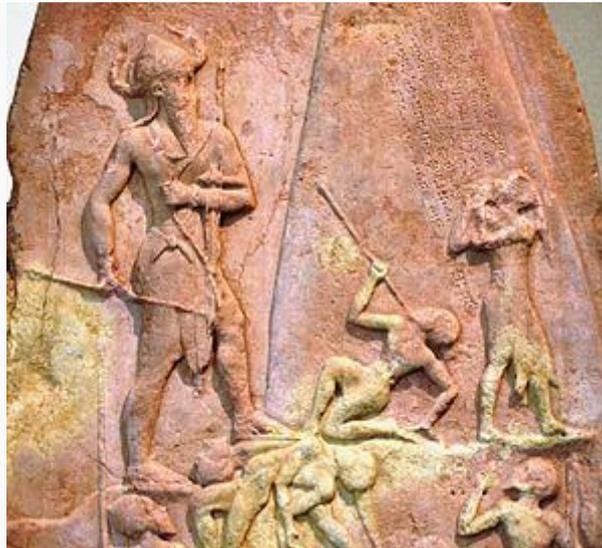
"In his old age, all the lands revolted against him, and they besieged him in Akkad (the city)" ...*but* "he went forth to battle and defeated them, he knocked them over and destroyed their vast army".

It refers to his campaign in "Elam", where he defeated a coalition army led by the King of Awan, where he forced the vanquished to become his vassals.^[18] Also shortly after, another revolt had been made;

"the Subartu (mountainous tribes of Assyria) the upper country—in their turn attacked, but they submitted to his arms, and Sargon settled their habitations, and he smote them grievously".

Sargon had crushed opposition even at old age. These difficulties broke out again in the reign of his sons, where revolts broke out during the 9-year reign, [Rimush](#) (2278–2270 BC), who fought hard to retain the empire, and was successful until he was assassinated by some of his own courtiers. Rimush's elder brother, [Manishtushu](#) (2269–2255 BC) succeeded and reigned for a period of 15 years. The latter king seems to have fought a sea battle against 32 kings who had gathered against him and took control over their country of what is today the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Despite the success, similarly to his brother, he seems to have been assassinated in a palace conspiracy.^[19]

Naram-Sin



Stele of [Naram-Sin](#),^[20] celebrating victory against the [Lullubi](#) from [Zagros](#) 2260 BC. He is wearing a horned helmet, a symbol of divinity and is also portrayed in a larger scale in comparison to others around to display his superiority.^[21] Brought back from [Sippar](#) to [Susa](#) as war prize in the 12th century BC

Manishtushu's son and successor, [Naram-Sin](#) (2254–2218 BC) (Beloved of [Sin](#)), due to vast military conquests, assumed the imperial title "King Naram-Sin, **king of the four quarters**" (*Lugal Naram-Sîn, Šar kibrat 'arbaim'*), the four quarters as a reference to the entire world. He was also for the first time in Sumerian culture, addressed as "the god (Sumerian = DINGIR, Akkadian = *ilu*) of Agade" (Akkad), in opposition to the previous religious belief that kings were only representatives of the people towards the gods.^{[22][23]} He also faced revolts at the start of his reign,^[24] but quickly crushed them.

Naram-Sin also recorded the Akkadian conquest of [Ebla](#) as well as Armanum and its king.^[25] Armanum was located on the Euphrates River between Ebla and [Tell Brak](#), most likely at the Citadel of Bazi – Tall Banat complex.^{[26][27]} To better police this area, he built a royal residence at Tell Brak, a crossroads at the heart of the [Khabur River](#) basin of the [Jezirah](#). Naram-Sin campaigned against Magan which also revolted; Naram-Sin, "*marched against [Magan](#) and personally caught Mandannu, its king*", where he instated garrisons to protect the main roads. The chief threat seemed to be coming from the northern Zagros Mountains, the Lulubis and the Gutians. A campaign against the [Lullubi](#) led to the carving of the famous "Victory Stele of Naram-Suen", now in the [Louvre](#). [Hittite](#) sources claim Naram-Sin of Akkad even ventured into [Anatolia](#), battling the Hittite and [Hurrian](#) kings [Pamba](#) of [Hatti](#), Zipani of [Kanesh](#), and 15 others. This newfound Akkadian wealth may have been based upon benign climatic conditions, huge agricultural surpluses and the confiscation of the wealth of other peoples.^[28]



Inscription of Naram Sin found at the city of [Marad](#) in [Iraq](#), ca. 2260 BC

The economy was highly planned. Grain was cleaned, and rations of grain and oil were distributed in standardized vessels made by the city's potters. Taxes were paid in produce and labour on public walls, including city walls, temples, irrigation canals and waterways, producing huge agricultural surpluses.^[29]

In later Assyrian and Babylonian texts, the name *Akkad*, together with *Sumer*, appears as part of the royal title, as in the Sumerian [LUGALKI.EN.GIR^{KI} URU^{KI}](#) or Akkadian *Šar māt Šumeri u Akkadi*,^[30] translating to "king of Sumer and Akkad". This title was assumed by the king who seized control of [Nippur](#),^[30] the intellectual and religious center of southern Mesopotamia.

During the Akkadian period, the Akkadian language became the [lingua franca](#) of the Middle East, and was officially used for administration, although the Sumerian language remained as a spoken and literary language. The spread of Akkadian stretched from Syria to Elam, and even the [Elamite language](#) was temporarily written in Mesopotamian [cuneiform](#). Akkadian texts later found their way to far-off places, from [Egypt](#) (in the [Amarna Period](#)) and [Anatolia](#), to [Persia \(Behistun\)](#).

Collapse of the Akkadian Empire

The Empire of Akkad collapsed in 2154 BC, within 180 years of its founding, ushering in a period of regional decline that lasted until the rise of the [Third Dynasty of Ur](#) in 2112 BC. By the end of the reign of Naram-Sin's son, [Shar-kali-sharri](#) (2217–2193 BC), the empire had weakened. There was a period of anarchy between 2192 BC and 2168 BC. [Shu-Durul](#) (2168–2154 BC) appears to have restored some centralized authority, however he was unable to prevent the empire eventually collapsing outright from the invasion of barbarian peoples from the [Zagros Mountains](#) known as the [Gutians](#).

Little is known about the Gutian period, or how long it endured. Cuneiform sources suggest that the Gutians' administration showed little concern for maintaining agriculture, written records, or public safety; they reputedly released all farm animals to roam about Mesopotamia freely, and soon brought about [famine](#) and rocketing grain prices. The decline coincided with severe [drought](#), possibly connected with climatic changes reaching all across the area from Egypt to Greece. The Sumerian king [Ur-Nammu](#) (2112–2095 BC) cleared the Gutians from Mesopotamia during his reign.

It has recently been suggested that the regional decline at the end of the Akkadian period (and of the [First Intermediary Period](#) that followed the [Ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom](#)) was associated with rapidly increasing aridity, and failing rainfall in the region of the Ancient Near East, caused by a [global centennial-scale drought](#).^{[31][32]} H. Weiss et al. have shown "Archaeological and soil-stratigraphic data define the origin, growth, and collapse of Subir, the third millennium rain-fed agriculture civilization of northern Mesopotamia on the Habur Plains of Syria. At 2200 B. C., a marked increase in aridity and wind circulation, subsequent to a volcanic eruption, induced a considerable degradation of land-use conditions. After four centuries of urban life, this abrupt climatic change evidently caused abandonment of Tell Leilan, regional desertion, and collapse of the Akkadian empire based in southern Mesopotamia. Synchronous collapse in adjacent regions suggests that the impact of the abrupt climatic change was extensive."^[33] Peter B. deMenocal, has shown there was an influence of the North Atlantic Oscillation on the stream flow of the Tigris and Euphrates at this time, which led to the collapse of the Akkadian Empire".^[34]

The Sumerian King List, describing the Akkadian Empire after the death of Shar-kali-shari, states:

"Who was king? Who was not king? Irgigi the king; Nanum, the king; Imi the king; Ilulu, the king—the four of them were kings but reigned only three years. Dudu reigned 21 years; Shu-Turul, the son of Dudu, reigned

15 years. ... Agade was defeated and its kingship carried off to Uruk. In Uruk, Ur-ningin reigned 7 years, Ur-gigir, son of Ur-ningin, reigned 6 years; Kuda reigned 6 years; Puzur-ili reigned 5 years, Ur-Utu reigned 6 years. Uruk was smitten with weapons and its kingship carried off by the Gutian hordes.

However, there are no known year-names or other archaeological evidence verifying any of these later kings of Akkad or Uruk, apart from a single artifact referencing king [Dudu of Akkad](#). The named kings of Uruk may have been contemporaries of the last kings of Akkad, but in any event could not have been very prominent.

In the Gutian hordes, (first reigned) a nameless king; (then) Imta reigned 3 years as king; Shulme reigned 6 years; Elulumesh reigned 6 years; Inimbakesh reigned 5 years; Igeshuash reigned 6 years; Iarlagab reigned 15 years; Ibate reigned 3 years; ... reigned 3 years; Kurum reigned 1 year; ... reigned 3 years; ... reigned 2 years; Iararum reigned 2 years; Ibranum reigned 1 year; Hablum reigned 2 years; Puzur-Sin son of Hablum reigned 7 years; Iarlaganda reigned 7 years; ... reigned 7 years; ... reigned 40 days. Total 21 kings reigned 91 years, 40 days.



"Cylinder Seal with King or God and Vanquished Lion" (Old Akkadian).^[35] The Walters Art Museum.

Evidence from [Tell Leilan](#) in Northern Mesopotamia shows what may have happened. The site was abandoned soon after the city's massive walls were constructed, its temple rebuilt and its grain production reorganised. The debris, dust and sand that followed show no trace of human activity. Soil samples show fine wind-blown sand, no trace of earthworm activity, reduced rainfall and indications of a drier and windier climate. Evidence shows that skeleton-thin sheep and cattle died of drought, and up to 28,000 people abandoned the site, seeking wetter areas elsewhere. Tell Brak shrank in size by 75%. Trade collapsed. [Nomadic](#) herders such as the [Amorites](#) moved herds closer to reliable water suppliers, bringing them into conflict with Akkadian populations. This climate-induced collapse seems to have affected the whole of the Middle East, and to have coincided with the collapse of the [Egyptian](#) Old Kingdom.^[36]

This collapse of rain-fed agriculture in the Upper Country meant the loss to southern Mesopotamia of the agrarian subsidies which had kept the Akkadian Empire solvent. Water levels within the Tigris and Euphrates fell 1.5 metres beneath the level of 2600 BC, and although they stabilised for a time during the following Ur III period, rivalries between pastoralists and farmers increased. Attempts were undertaken to prevent the former from herding their flocks in agricultural lands, such as the building of a 180 km (112 mi) wall known as the "Repeller of the Amorites" between the Tigris and Euphrates under the Ur III ruler [Shu-Sin](#). Such

attempts led to increased political instability; meanwhile, severe depopulation occurred to re-establish [demographic equilibrium](#) with the less favorable climatic conditions.^[37]

The period between ca. 2112 BC and 2004 BC is known as the Ur III period. Documents again began to be written in [Sumerian](#), although Sumerian was becoming a purely literary or liturgical language, much as Latin later would be in [Medieval Europe](#).^[38]

The Curse

Later material described how the fall of Akkad was due to Naram-Sin's attack upon the city of Nippur. When prompted by a pair of inauspicious [oracles](#), the king sacked the E-kur temple, supposedly protected by the god [Enlil](#), head of the [pantheon](#). As a result of this, eight chief deities of the [Anunnaki](#) pantheon were supposed to have come together and withdrawn their support from Akkad.^[39]

For the first time since cities were built and founded,
The great agricultural tracts produced no grain,
The inundated tracts produced no fish,
The irrigated orchards produced neither wine nor syrup,
The gathered clouds did not rain, the masgurum did not grow.
At that time, one shekel's worth of oil was only one-half quart,
One shekel's worth of grain was only one-half quart. . . .
These sold at such prices in the markets of all the cities!
He who slept on the roof, died on the roof,
He who slept in the house, had no burial,
People were flailing at themselves from hunger.^[40]

For many years, the events described in "The Curse of Akkad" were thought, like the details of Sargon's birth, to be purely fictional. But now the evidence of Tell Leilan, and recent findings of elevated dust deposits in sea-cores collected off Oman, that date to the period of Akkad's collapse suggest that this [climate change](#) may have played a role.^{[41][42]}

Government

The Akkadian government formed a "classical standard" with which all future Mesopotamian states compared themselves. Traditionally, the *ensi* was the highest functionary of the Sumerian [city-states](#). In later traditions, one became an *ensi* by marrying the goddess Inanna, legitimising the rulership through divine consent.

Initially, the monarchical *lugal* (*lu* = man, *gal* = great) was subordinate to the priestly *ensi*, and was appointed at times of troubles, but by later dynastic times, it was the *lugal* who had emerged as the preeminent role, having his own "é" (= house) or "palace", independent from the temple establishment. By the time of [Mesalim](#), whichever dynasty controlled the city of Kish was recognised as *šar kiššati* (= king of Kish), and was considered preeminent in Sumer, possibly because this was where the two rivers approached, and whoever controlled Kish ultimately controlled the irrigation systems of the other cities downstream.

As Sargon extended his conquest from the "Lower Sea" (Persian Gulf), to the "Upper Sea" (Mediterranean), it was felt that he ruled "the totality of the lands under heaven", or "from sunrise to sunset", as contemporary texts put it. Under Sargon, the *ensis* generally retained their positions, but were seen more as provincial governors. The title *šar kiššati* became recognised as meaning "lord of the universe". Sargon is even recorded as having organised naval expeditions to [Dilmun \(Bahrein\)](#) and Magan, amongst the first organised military naval expeditions in history. Whether he also did in the case of the Mediterranean with the kingdom of [Kaptara](#) (possibly [Cyprus](#)), as claimed in later documents, is more questionable.

With Naram-Sin, Sargon's grandson, this went further than with Sargon, with the king not only being called "Lord of the Four Quarters (of the Earth)", but also elevated to the ranks of the *dingir* (= gods), with his own temple establishment. Previously a ruler could, like [Gilgamesh](#), become divine after death but the Akkadian kings, from Naram-Sin onward, were considered gods on earth in their lifetimes. Their portraits showed them of larger size than mere mortals and at some distance from their retainers.^[43]

One strategy adopted by both Sargon and Naram-Sin, to maintain control of the country, was to install their daughters, Enheduanna and Emmenanna respectively, as high priestess to Sin, the Akkadian version of the Sumerian moon deity, Nanna, at Ur, in the extreme south of Sumer; to install sons as provincial *ensi* governors in strategic locations; and to marry their daughters to rulers of peripheral parts of the Empire ([Urkesh](#) and Marhashe). A well documented case of the latter is that of Naram-Sin's daughter Tar'am-Agade at Urkesh.^[44]

Economy

The population of Akkad, like nearly all pre-modern states, was entirely dependent upon the agricultural systems of the region, which seem to have had two principal centres: the irrigated farmlands of southern Iraq that traditionally had a yield of 30 grains returned for each grain sown and the rain-fed agriculture of northern Iraq, known as the "Upper Country."

Southern Iraq during Akkadian period seems to have been approaching its modern rainfall level of less than 20 mm (1 in) per year, with the result that agriculture was totally dependent upon irrigation. Before the Akkadian period the progressive [salinisation](#) of the soils, produced by poorly drained irrigation, had been reducing yields of [wheat](#) in the southern part of the country, leading to the conversion to more salt-tolerant [barley](#) growing. Urban populations there had peaked already by 2,600 BC, and ecological pressures were high, contributing to the rise of militarism apparent immediately before the Akkadian period (as seen in the [Stele of the Vultures](#) of [Eannatum](#)). Warfare between city states had led to a population decline, from which Akkad provided a temporary respite.^[45] It was this high degree of agricultural productivity in the south that enabled the growth of the highest population densities in the world at this time, giving Akkad its military advantage.

The [water table](#) in this region was very high and replenished regularly—by winter storms in the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates from October to March and from snow-melt from March to July. Flood levels, that had been stable from about 3,000 to 2,600 BC, had started falling, and by the Akkadian period were a half-meter to a meter lower than recorded previously. Even so, the flat country and weather uncertainties made flooding much more unpredictable than in the case of the Nile; serious deluges seem to have been a regular occurrence, requiring constant maintenance of irrigation ditches and drainage systems. Farmers were recruited into regiments for this work from August to October—a period of food shortage—under the control of city temple authorities, thus acting as a form of unemployment relief. Some ^[who?] have suggested that this was Sargon's original employment for the king of Kish, giving him experience in effectively organising large

groups of men; a tablet reads, "Sargon, the king, to whom Enlil permitted no rival—5,400 warriors ate bread daily before him".^[46]



Sea shell of a [murex](#) bearing the name of [Rimush](#), king of Kish, ca. 2270 BC, [Louvre](#), traded from the Mediterranean coast where it was used by [Canaanites](#) to make a purple dye.

Harvest was in the late spring and during the dry summer months. Nomadic Amorites from the northwest would pasture their flocks of sheep and goats to graze on the stubble and be watered from the river and irrigation canals. For this privilege, they would have to pay a tax in wool, meat, milk, and cheese to the temples, who would distribute these products to the bureaucracy and priesthood. In good years, all would go well, but in bad years, wild winter pastures would be in short supply, nomads would seek to pasture their flocks in the grain fields, and conflicts with farmers would result. It would appear that the subsidizing of southern populations by the import of wheat from the north of the Empire temporarily overcame this problem,^[citation needed] and it seems to have allowed economic recovery and a growing population within this region.

As a result, Sumer and Akkad had a surplus of agricultural products but was short of almost everything else, particularly metal ores, timber and building stone, all of which had to be imported. The spread of the Akkadian state as far as the "silver mountain" (possibly the [Taurus Mountains](#)), the "cedars" of Lebanon, and the copper deposits of Magan, was largely motivated by the goal of securing control over these imports. One tablet reads "Sargon, the king of Kish, triumphed in thirty-four battles (over the cities) up to the edge of the sea (and) destroyed their walls. He made the ships from Meluhha, the ships from Magan (and) the ships from Dilmun tie up alongside the quay of Agade. Sargon the king prostrated himself before (the god) Dagan (and) made supplication to him; (and) he (Dagan) gave him the upper land, namely Mari, Yarmuti, (and) Ebla, up to the Cedar Forest (and) up to the Silver Mountain".

Culture

Language

See also: [Sumerian language](#)

During the 3rd millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the Sumerians and the Akkadians, which included widespread [bilingualism](#).^[5] The influence of Sumerian on Akkadian (and vice versa) is evident in all areas, from lexical borrowing on a massive scale, to syntactic, morphological, and phonological convergence.^[5] This has prompted scholars to refer to Sumerian and Akkadian in the third millennium as a [sprachbund](#).^[5] Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as a spoken language somewhere around the turn of the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC (the exact dating being a matter of debate),^[6] but Sumerian continued to be used as a sacred, ceremonial, literary and scientific language in Mesopotamia until the 1st century AD.^[47]

Poet – priestess Enheduanna

Sumerian literature continued in rich development during the Akkadian period (a notable example being Enheduanna). [Enheduanna](#), the "wife (Sumerian "*dam*" = high priestess) of [Nanna](#) [the Sumerian moon god] and daughter of Sargon"^[48] of the temple of Sin at Ur, who lived ca. 2285–2250 BC, is the first poet in history whom we know by name. Her known works include hymns to the goddess Inanna, the *Exaltation of Inanna* and *In-nin sa-gur-ra*. A third work, the *Temple Hymns*, a collection of specific hymns, addresses the sacred temples and their occupants, the deity to whom they were consecrated. The works of this poetess are significant, because although they start out using the third person, they shift to the first person voice of the poet herself, and they mark a significant development in the use of cuneiform. As poetess, princess, and priestess, she was a personality who, according to William W Hallo, "set standards in all three of her roles for many succeeding centuries"^[49]

In the *Exultation of Inanna*,

Enheduanna depicts Inanna as disciplining mankind as a goddess of battle. She thereby unites the warlike Akkadian Ishtar's qualities to those of the gentler Sumerian goddess of love and fecundity. She likens Inanna to a great storm bird who swoops down on the lesser gods and sends them fluttering off like surprised bats. Then, in probably the most interesting part of the hymn, Enheduanna herself steps forward in the first person to recite her own past glories, establishing her credibility, and explaining her present plight. She has been banished as high priestess from the temple in the city of Ur and from Uruk and exiled to the steppe. She begs the moon god Nanna to intercede for her because the city of Uruk, under the ruler Lugalanne, has rebelled against Sargon. The rebel, Lugalanne, has even destroyed the temple Eanna, one of the greatest temples in the ancient world, and then made advances on his sister-in-law.^[50]

Technology



[Bassetki Statue](#) from the reign of [Naram-Sin](#) with an inscription mentioning the construction of a temple in Akkad

One tablet from this period reads, "*(From the earliest days) no-one had made a statue of lead, (but) Rimush king of Kish, had a statue of himself made of lead. It stood before Enlil; and it recited his (Rimush's) virtues to the idu of the gods*". The [Bassetki Statue](#), cast with the [lost wax](#) method, testifies to the high level of skill of that craftsmen achieved during the Akkadian period.^[61]

Achievements

The empire was bound together by roads, along which there was a regular [postal service](#). Clay seals that took the place of stamps bear the names of Sargon and his son. A [cadastral](#) survey seems also to have been instituted, and one of the documents relating to it states that a certain Uru-Malik, whose name appears to indicate his Canaanite origin, was governor of the land of the Amorites, or *Amurru* as the semi-nomadic people of Syria and Canaan were called in Akkadian. It is probable that the first collection of [astronomical](#) observations and terrestrial omens was made for a library established by Sargon. The earliest "year names", whereby each year of a king's reign was named after a significant event performed by that king, date from the reign of Sargon the Great. Lists of these "year names" henceforth became a calendrical system used in most independent Mesopotamian city-states. In Assyria, however, years came to be named for the annual presiding [limmu](#) official appointed by the king, rather than for an event.