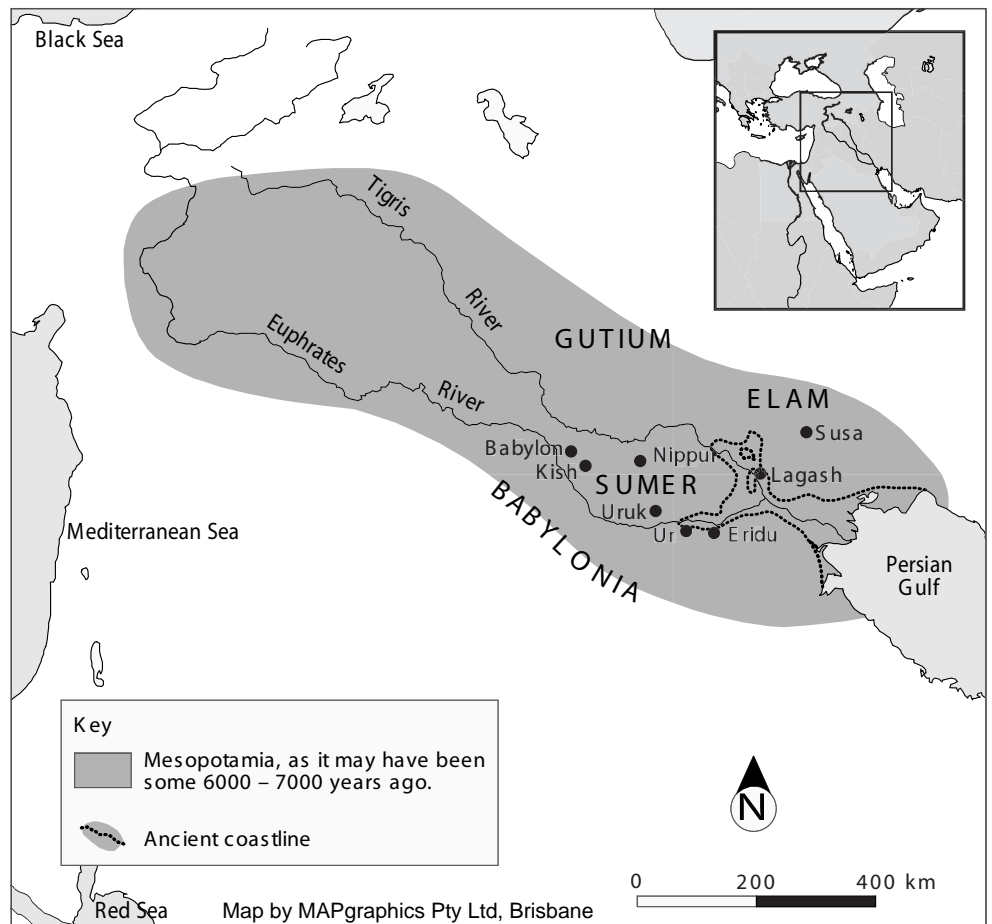


Ancient Mesopotamia

The world's first true civilisation developed in an ancient land called Mesopotamia. The bustling heart of this region lay in the fertile floodplains between the mighty Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Traces of civilisations dating back to 7,000 BC have been found in the northern part of this region, while scattered remains of villages and ziggurats (stepped pyramids) have been found to the south. This southern region was once called Sumer.

The Sumerians built the first cities, invented the wheel and used the world's first known form of writing called cuneiform. Their words were made from wedge-shaped symbols pressed into clay and thousands of written clay tablets have been found. Once the language was deciphered and translated, these tablets revealed a lot of information to historians about the region's laws, religion and understanding of astronomy, medicine and other subjects.

Mesopotamia was annexed by the Persian empire in 539 BC. About 200 years later it became part of the Macedonian empire when it was conquered by Alexander the Great. By AD 1534, it was part of the Turkish Ottoman empire. Today, most of what was once Mesopotamia lies within the country of Iraq.



1. In what part of the country did the heart of ancient Mesopotamia lie? Suggest why this might have been the case.

.....

.....

.....

2. Compare the map above with a modern atlas of Iraq. Which modern Iraqi towns or cities would have been underwater (i.e. part of the Persian Gulf) during ancient times? (*Hint: Look at the ancient coastline*).

.....

.....

3. Use the map scale above to measure the approximate length of the Mesopotamian region:

4. Suggest why the region of Sumer is sometimes referred to as the 'cradle of civilisation'.

.....

.....

.....

5. What three famous empires has the region that was once called Mesopotamia been a part of?

1. 2. 3.

References: SOSE Alive 1, pp18-19 • SOSE for Qld 1, pp22, 34-45 • SOSE Alive History 1, pp18-19