



# The Sumer

The Sumerians are believed to be the first human civilization. They lived between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in southern Mesopotamia, in the Middle East. Originally Nomads, the Sumerians formed towns and cities around 5000 BC when they settled in the fertile land to farm. Small villages became large towns, and eventually cities and city-states, independent cities that each had its own leader and ruled over its surrounding territories. Collectively, these city-states developed into the Sumer civilization.

Sumerian city-states were frequently at war with each other, so they build protective walls around their cities. People from the surrounding farmlands would run into the cities when threatened by invaders.

City-states each had their own gods, and in the center of each city there was a large temple called a ziggurat. These temples were steep pyramids with flat tops where priests would conduct religious rituals and sacrifices. The high priest was often the ruler of the city-state.

The ruler was supported by a government composed of officials who took care of city business. Citizens were required to follow laws and were punished if they did not. The Sumerians are often credited with inventing the concept of government. The Sumerians also invented the first form of writing, which was a number system. They made the first vehicles with wheels, the first bricks, and they created an irrigation system for their farms. They also kept a calendar based on their observations of the moon and stars.

This area of the world where the Sumer lived is often referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization". Why do you think that is?

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