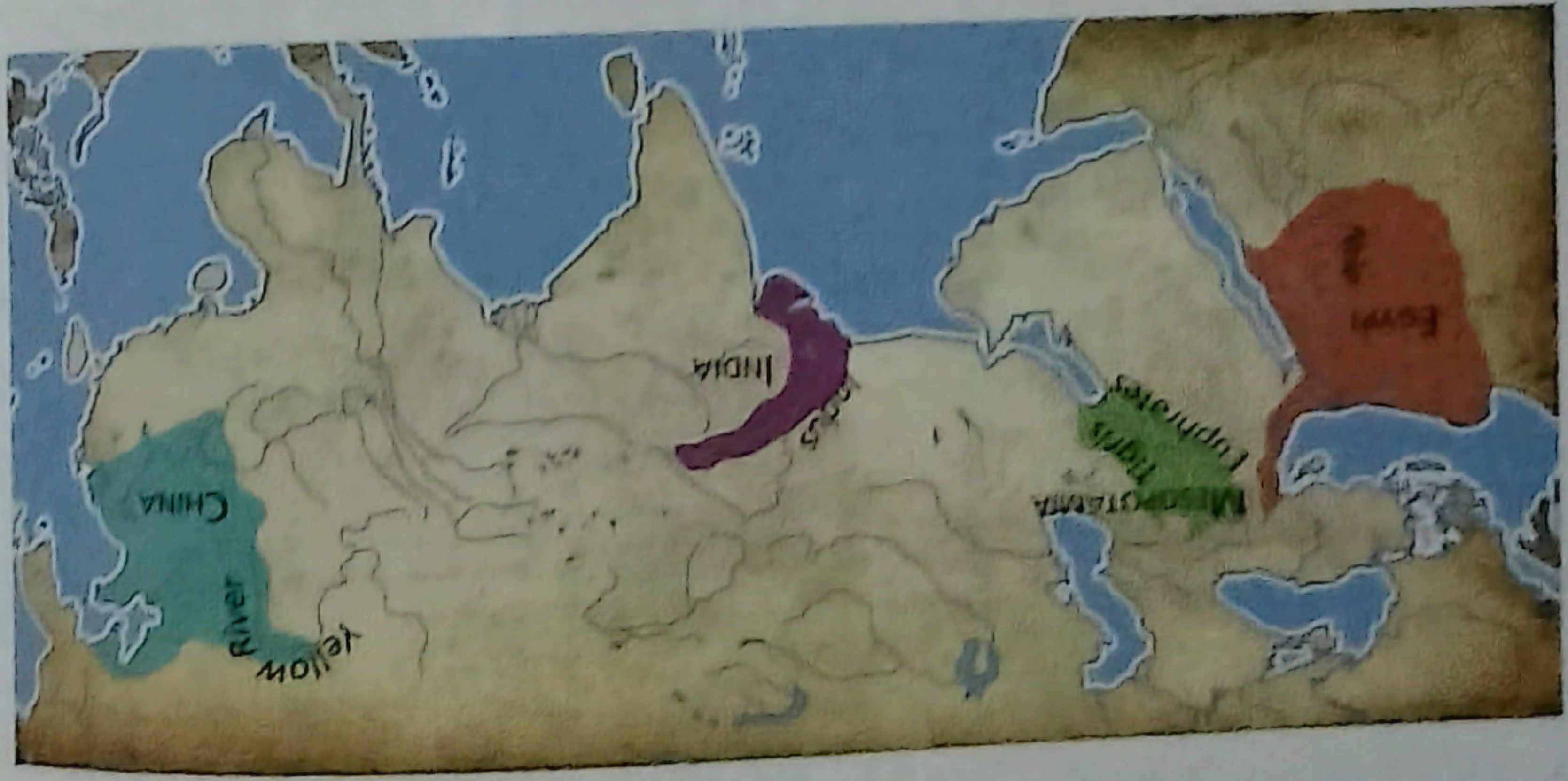
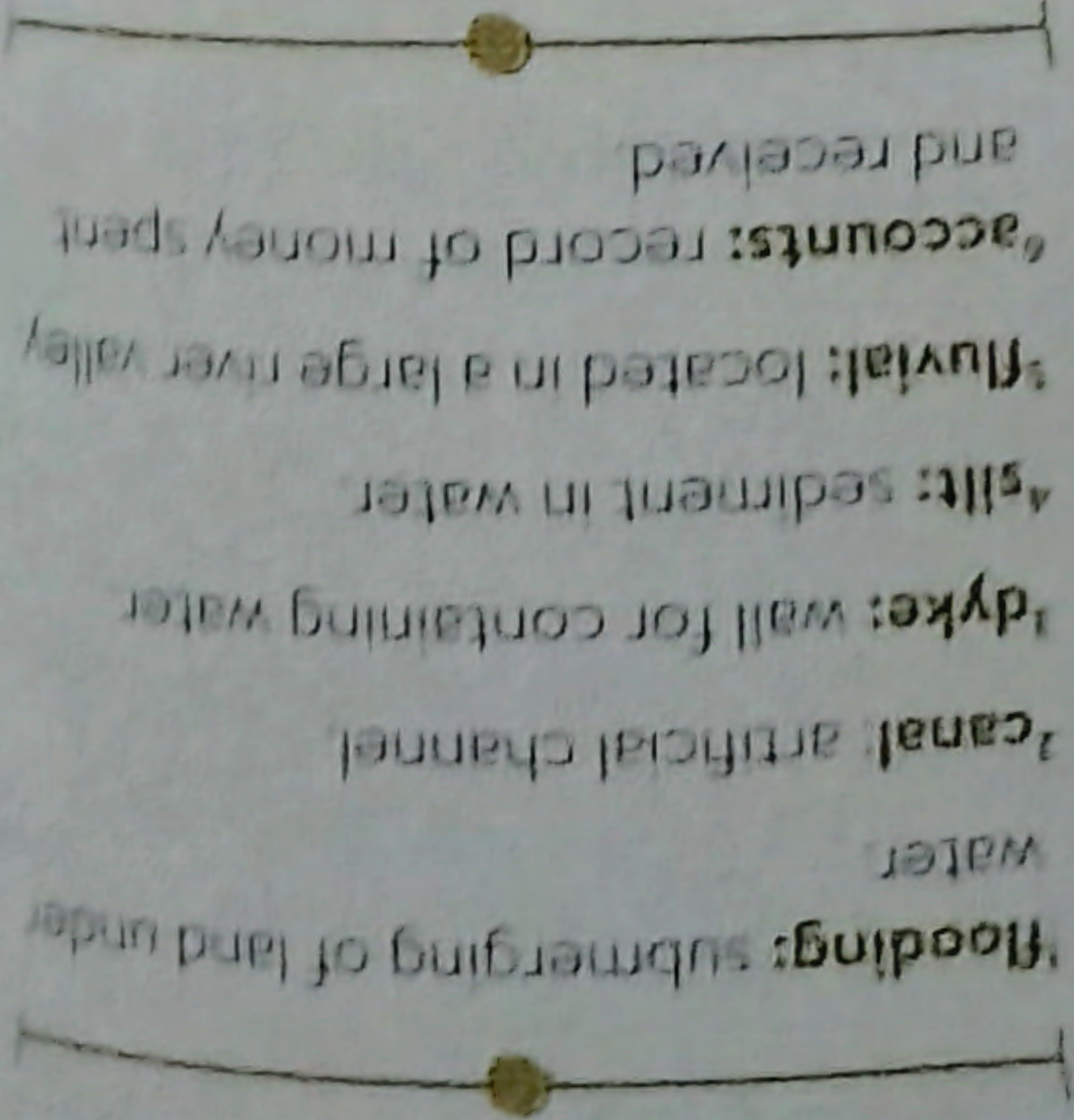


1 Early urban civilisations

- In the 4th millennium B.C., technological advances enabled the civilisations that lived near large rivers to control flooding. They did this by building the canals and dykes. The rivers deposited silt during the flooding, making the riverbanks very fertile. As a result, the people obtained large harvests. These villages developed into cities, and trade and craftwork grew. These became the first urban civilisations. They constructed large buildings and important changes occurred in politics, economics and culture.
- Mesopotamia, the earliest 'fluvial' civilisation, developed near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers around 3200 B.C.
- Egypt developed on the banks of the river Nile in 2850 B.C.



- Both were located in the Fertile Crescent, where the Neolithic Period began, and they established relationships with each other.
- In India, the Harappa civilisation developed near the Indus River in 2500 B.C.
- In China, a civilisation emerged near the Yellow River from the Xia dynasty (2000 B.C.) and the Shang dynasty (1500 B.C.).

Learn +

The development of writing marks the end of Prehistory and the beginning of Ancient History. Writing first developed in Mesopotamia and Egypt around the 4th millennium B.C. It originated for practical purposes such as keeping accounts and recording commercial transactions. The government officials who specialised in writing were called scribes. The invention of writing is very important. Today these written records provide a valuable source of information about our past.

- Why did writing develop? Which two periods does this invention divide history into?

CLIL activities

- 1 Answer the question in your notebook.
 - a. Why did the first urban civilisations appear next to large rivers?
 - b. Why did silt improve the harvests?
- 2 Copy and complete the table.

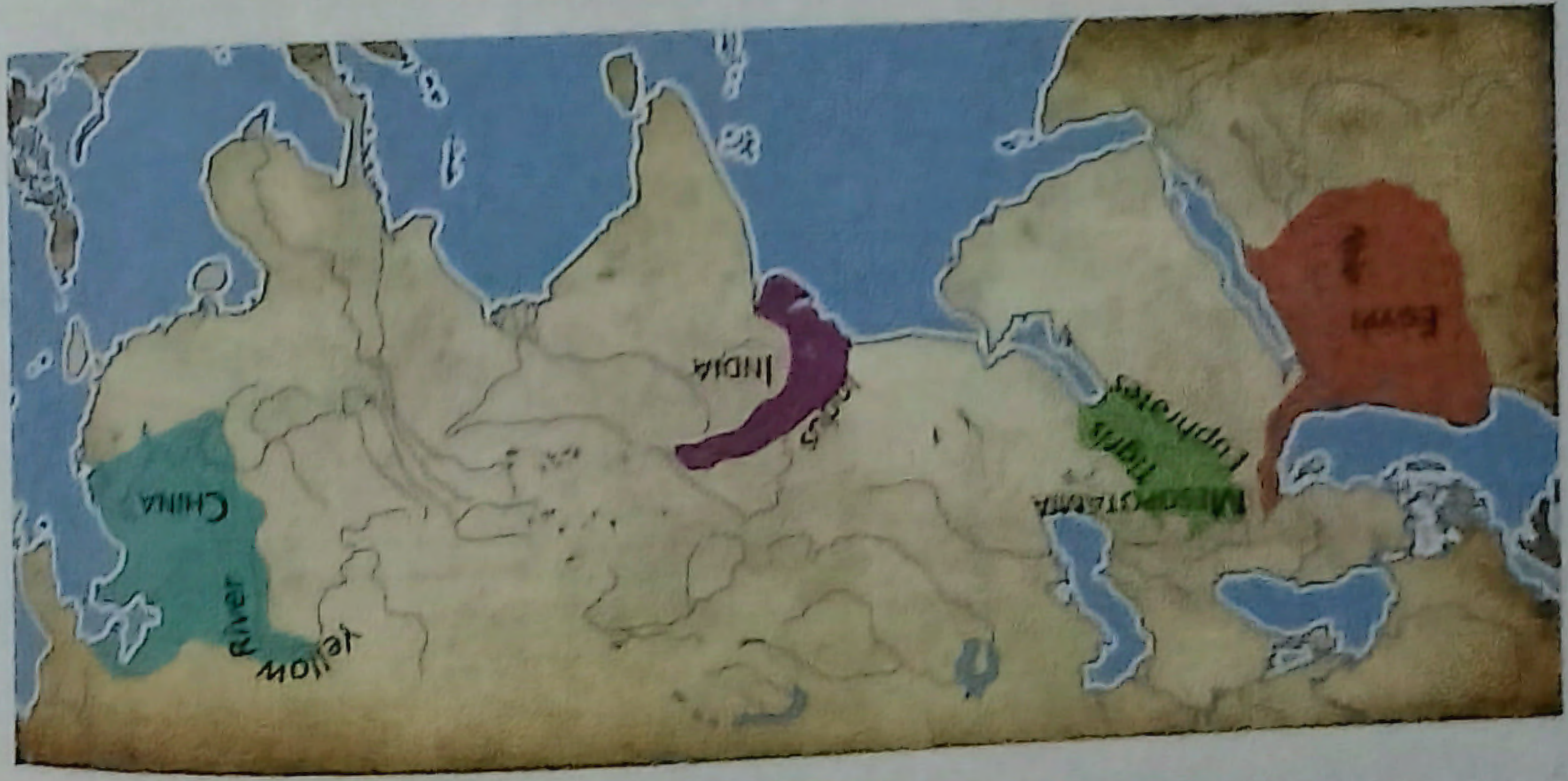
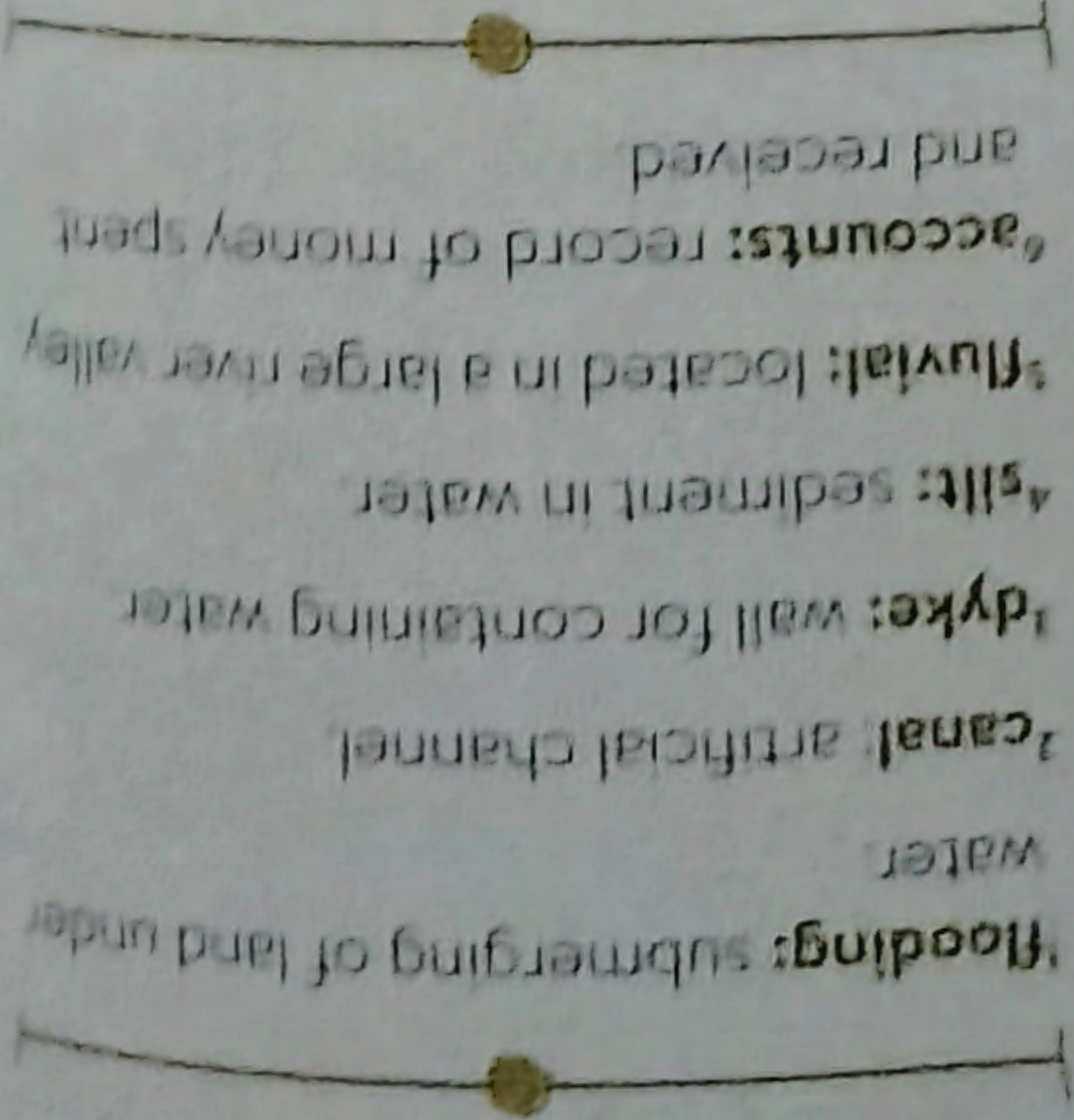
Place	Date	River	Writing
Mesopotamia			
Egypt			
China			

This symbol right here represents... I drew the symbol like this because...

- Imagine that you don't know how to write and you have to record these products which have arrived on a boat: five fish and three chickens.
- Record this information in drawings.
- Simplify the drawings as much as possible and convert them into symbols.
- Explain to a classmate what each symbol means. Can they understand what you've written? What's this type of writing called?

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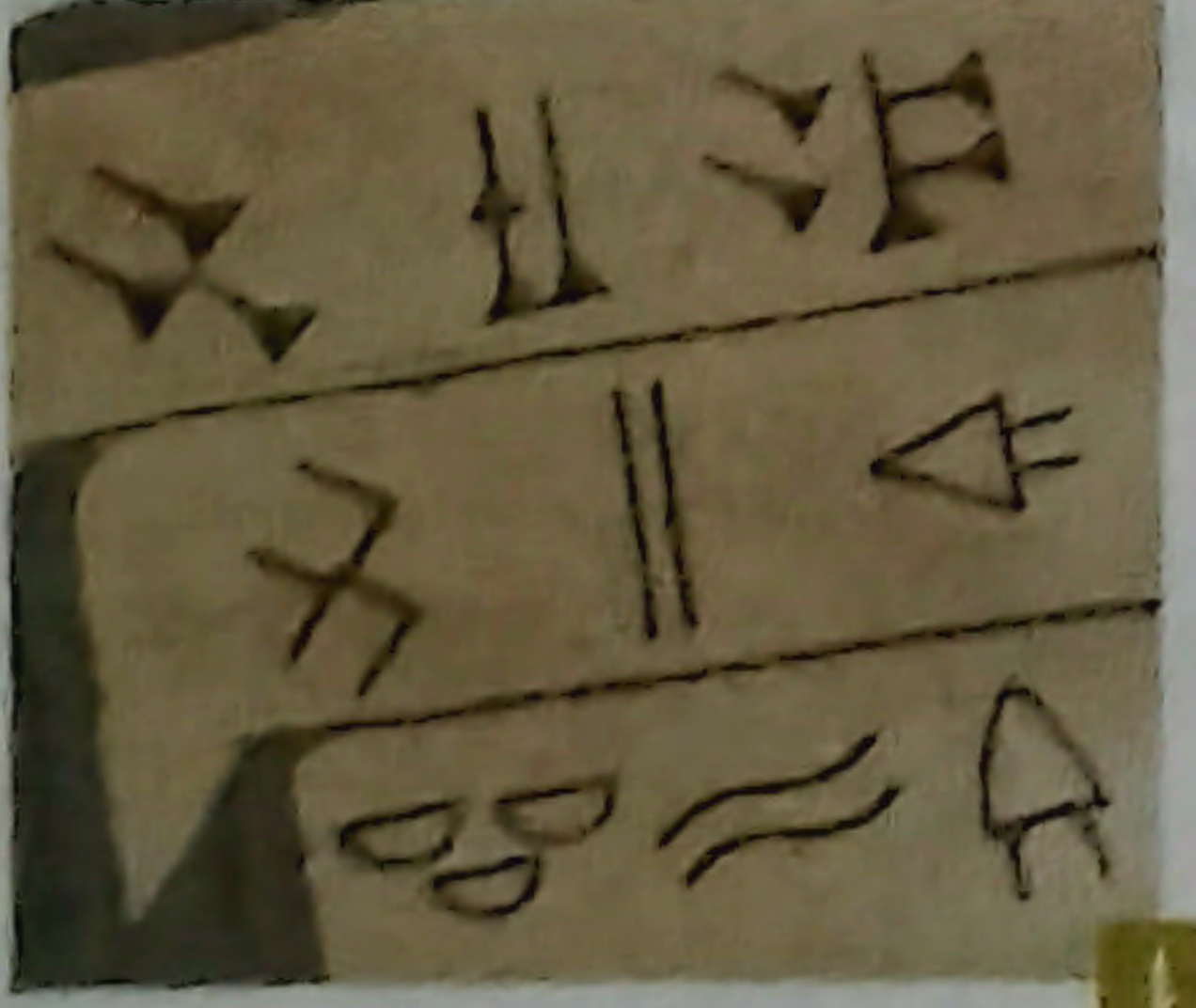
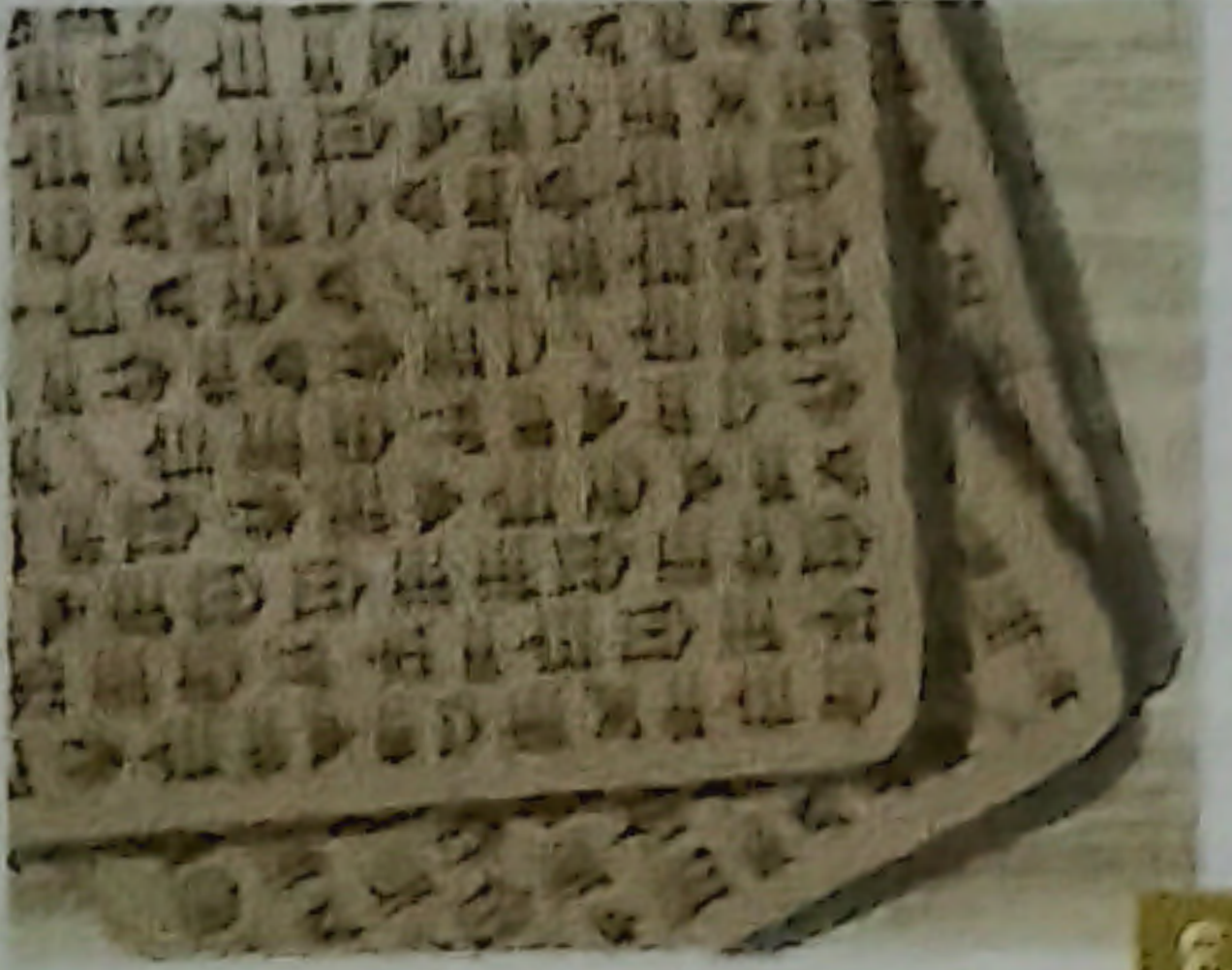
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MESOPOTAMIA

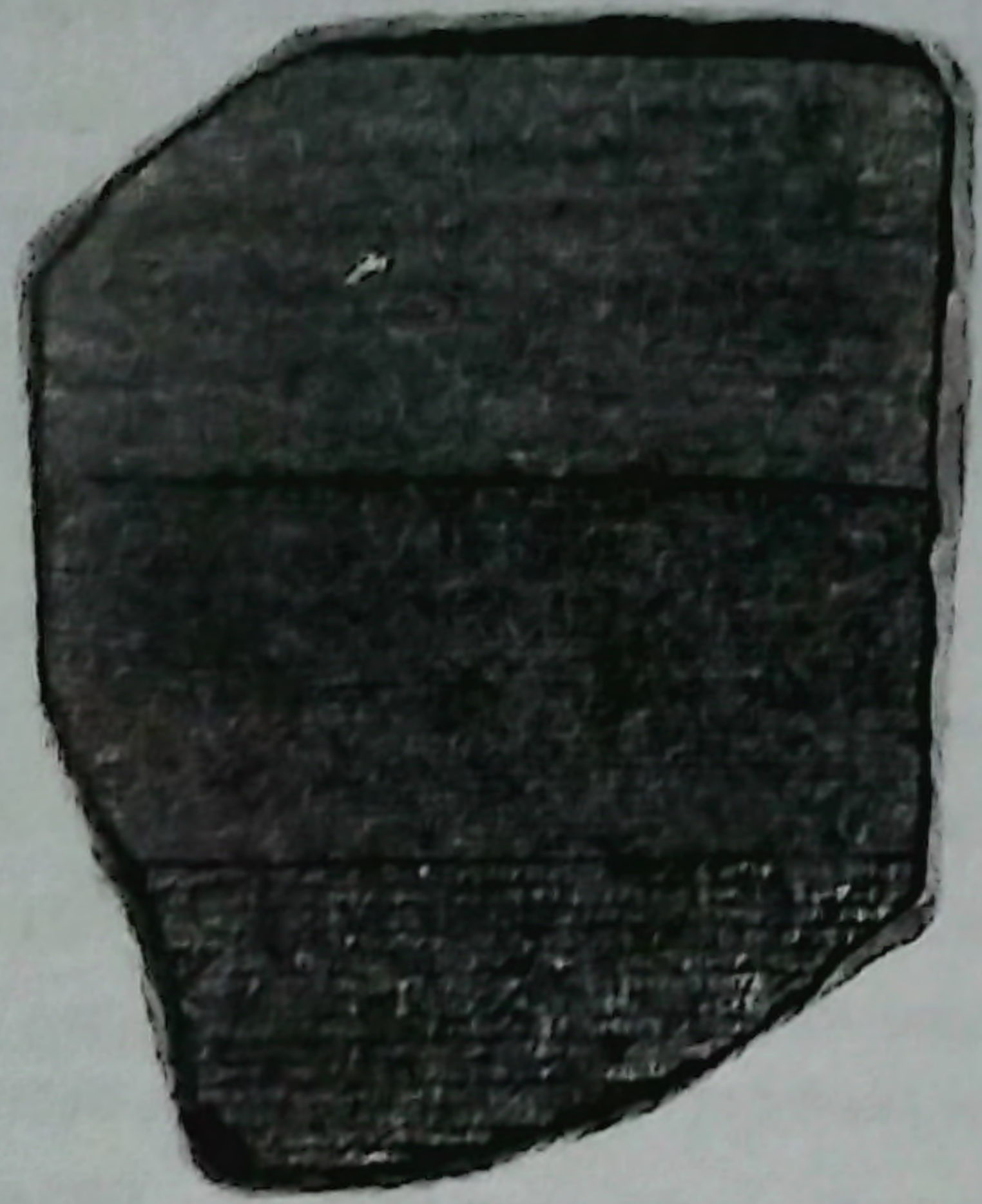
1. At first, people made schematic drawings of the objects they wanted to represent. Little by little, these became more schematic (pictograms).
2. They drew wedge-shaped signs on wet clay tablets. This is called cuneiform.
3. They joined pictograms to express ideas (ideograms). This is called ideographic writing. Scribes had to memorise thousands of symbols. Most people couldn't read or write because it took a lot of time to learn all the symbols. This gave the scribes an increased social status.
4. First people wrote from top to bottom and later on they wrote horizontally. They baked the tablets in an oven to harden them.

wedge: shape with a narrow end



EGYPT

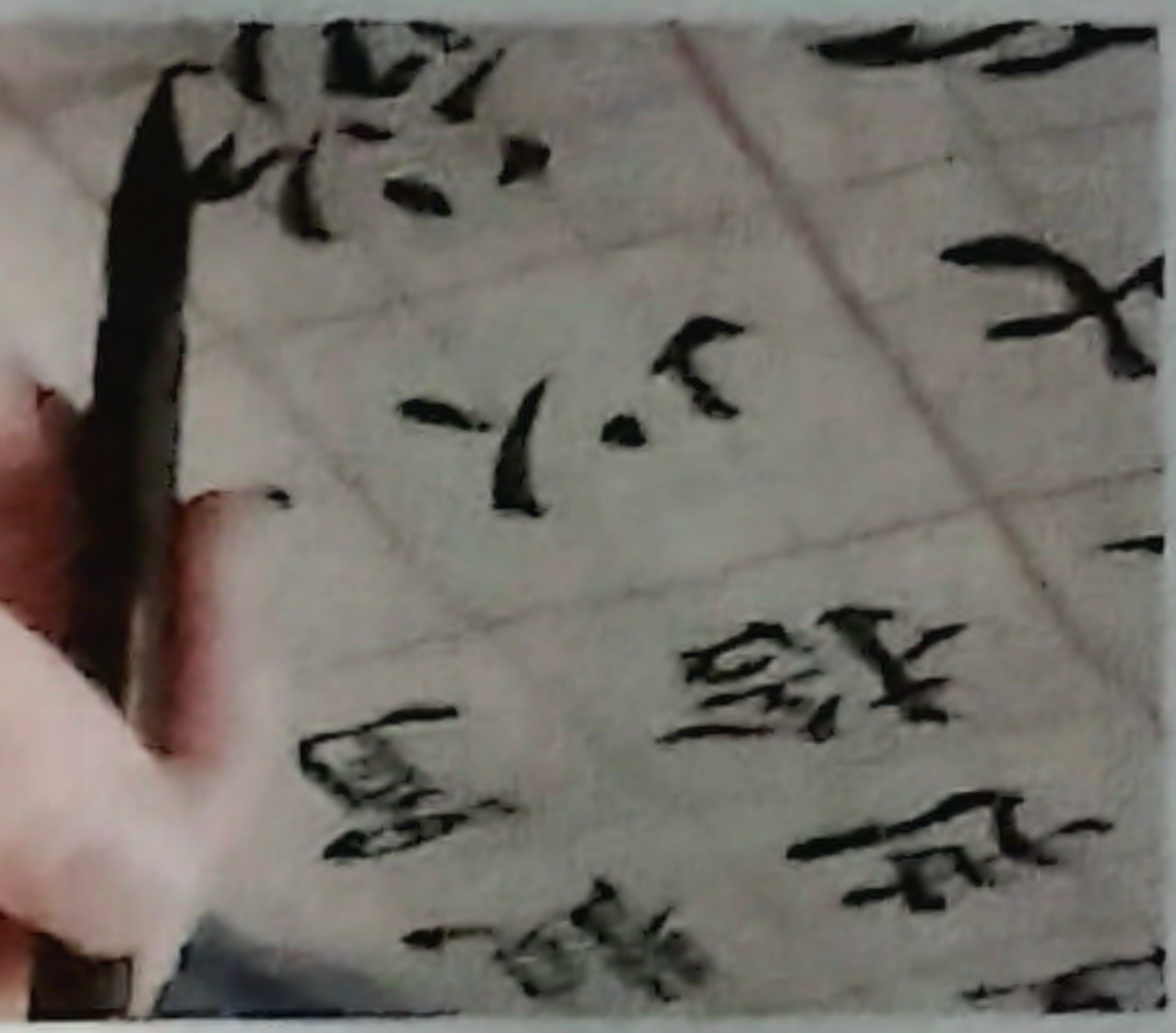
- The Egyptians used ideographic writing, called hieroglyphics. They wrote on stone (in temples and burial constructions), on wooden tablets and on papyrus (paper made from a plant that grows on the banks of the Nile). For administrative documents and routine tasks, the Egyptians used simplified writing: first hieratic script and later demotic script.
- Jean-François Champollion deciphered hieroglyphics in the 19th century thanks to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, where the same text appears in hieroglyphics, demotic script and Greek.



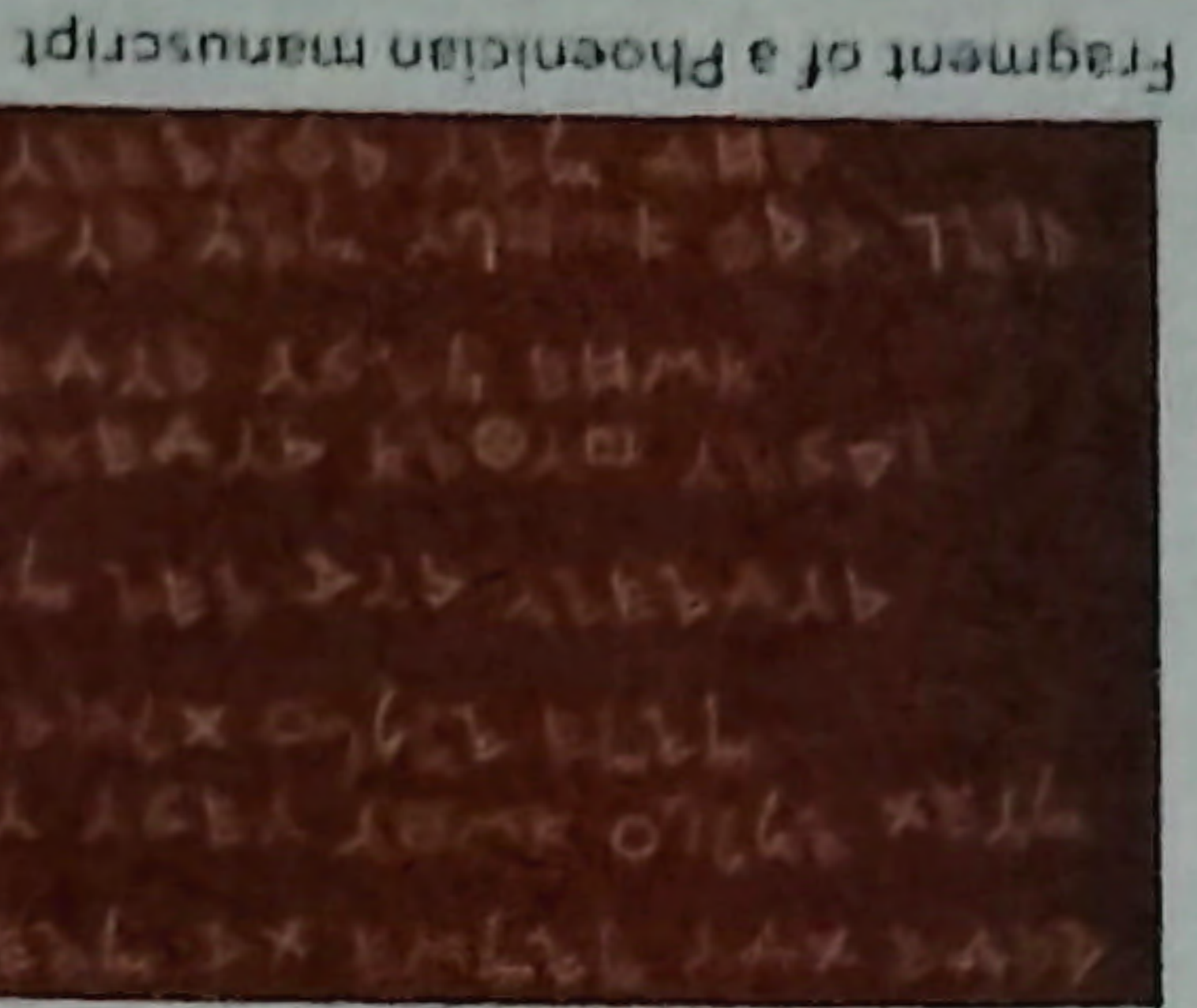
The Rosetta Stone was key to deciphering Egyptian writing.

THE INVENTION OF THE ALPHABET

Around 1200 B.C. the Phoenicians invented the alphabet. The characters didn't represent ideas and weren't stylised drawings. They represented sounds and reproduced the language, not the concept. Most modern languages use an alphabet for writing.



Chinese writing



Fragment of a Phoenician manuscript

The emergence of writing

Political organisation

These new civilisations needed strong governments to control their lands and govern the people who lived there. As a result, **monarchies** emerged.

A divine **king** or **emperor** governed through:

- the laws they created.
- the royal or imperial government, consisting of officials who carried out a range of judicial and administrative tasks. These included implementing the law and collecting taxes.
- a large army, which kept order, defended the city walls and borders, and conquered enemy lands.

Society

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, increased agricultural production and trade resulted in prosperity. This prosperity led to greater social differences and the creation of a **hierarchical society**.

The large landowners passed down their wealth to future generations. A small minority belonged to this social group (the privileged), who were above the majority (the unprivileged).

Society consisted of these groups.

- The **privileged minority** were the rich, powerful families. They lived in large houses or palaces and didn't need to work. The king in Mesopotamia and the pharaoh in Egypt held the most powerful position. The royal family and the large landowners formed the aristocracy. Military generals came from this group. The next most influential group was the priests. They performed religious duties to maintain social stability. They also used their knowledge to increase their own economic and political power.

- The **unprivileged majority** worked for the privileged minority and lived modestly in small houses. They were farmers, herders, fishermen, merchants and craftworkers.

- Slaves** were the property of other people and had no rights. They worked in domestic service, in the mines and in the fields. Most slaves were prisoners of war or their descendants. Poor people who couldn't pay their debts also became slaves.

#ForABetterWorld

Women's rights

In early civilisations, women had few rights. They had to follow the orders of their fathers or husbands.

However, some women became important historical figures, obtaining great influence in the royal courts. The court was based in the royal palace and was the centre of power. Egyptian women obtained greater freedom, and a few became queens with the same powers as men, such as **Hatshepsut**. She ruled for 22 years, from 1490 to 1480 B.C.

herder: person that looks after groups of livestock

debt: money one person owes to another person.



The privileged social groups are smaller than the unprivileged. Therefore, we usually represent human societies with a pyramid consisting of different levels.



Sphinx of the Pharaoh-queen Hatshepsut (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

The first laws

One of the early civilisations' most important inventions was **law**: a set of rules to reduce social conflict and promote stability. The kings in Mesopotamia and the pharaohs in Egypt displayed the laws in public places so that everyone knew about them.

The oldest surviving set of written laws is the **Code of Hammurabi**, produced in the Babylonian Empire in the mid-18th century B.C. It contained 282 laws to end personal conflicts and establish rules for property, family, contracts and punishments for slaves. It was very strict, punishing many crimes with the death penalty. Its main principle was *lex talionis* ('an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'). Laws made distinctions between the privileged (free men), unprivileged (common people) and slaves, who they treated as property.

These civilisations created **courts of law** to administer justice. People could appeal to the king if they thought the court's decision was unfair.

Working with sources

Law 198: If a free man takes out the eye or breaks the bone of a common person, he will pay him one mine² of silver.

Law 199: If he takes out the eye or breaks the bone of a slave belonging to a free man, he will pay him half the slave's value.

Law 229: If a builder constructs a house which collapses and kills the owner, he will receive the death penalty.

Law 230: If the owner's son dies, his own son will receive the death penalty.

Law 231: If he kills the owner's slave, he will give the owner another slave.

Code of Hammurabi (Translated and adapted)

What's the Code of Hammurabi? In this code of law, do the punishments only depend on the type of crime the person committed? Do today's laws function in the same way?

CLIL activities

- In your notebook, write which social groups these people belong to.

- I'm in the army and I control the soldiers.
- I work the land and look after sheep and goats.
- I'm the property of my owner.
- I'm married to the king's sister and I don't have to work.

- Listen and make notes about the role of women in Mesopotamia. Which women had power?
- Discuss the questions with a classmate.

- Why do we use a pyramid to represent society?
- What do you think 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' means?

receive punishment crime equal to



- Look at the picture and answer the questions.
- Which social group can you identify?
- Describe the characteristics of that group.

The Babylonians wrote the Code of Hammurabi in cuneiform on a stone block called a stele. At the top, King Hammurabi is standing in front of Shamash, the Mesopotamian god of justice, who's sitting on his throne. He commissioned Hammurabi to write the laws for his subjects.

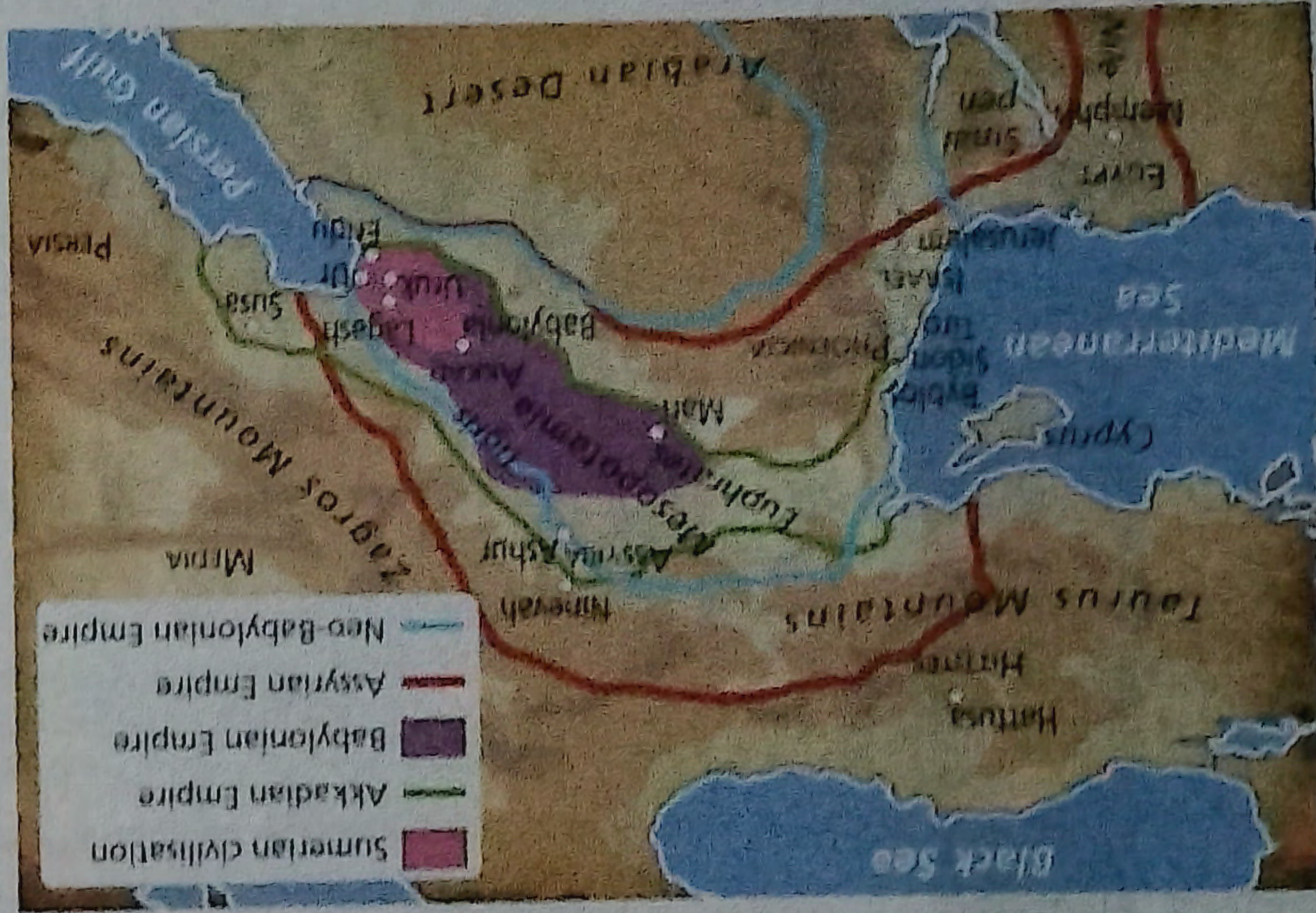


¹mine: ancient unit of currency

²appeal: ask for a review

The natural environment

Mesopotamia means 'land between rivers'. This is the name the Greeks gave the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Mesopotamia bordered the Persian Gulf to the south, the Syrian Desert to the west, the Zagros Mountains to the east and the Taurus Mountains to the north-west. It was originally a dry region. However, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers allowed its inhabitants to make the land fertile. This occurred when they developed the technology to construct irrigation systems. These fertile lands attracted migrations and invasions from communities in the mountains and nomadic tribes from the Syrian Desert.



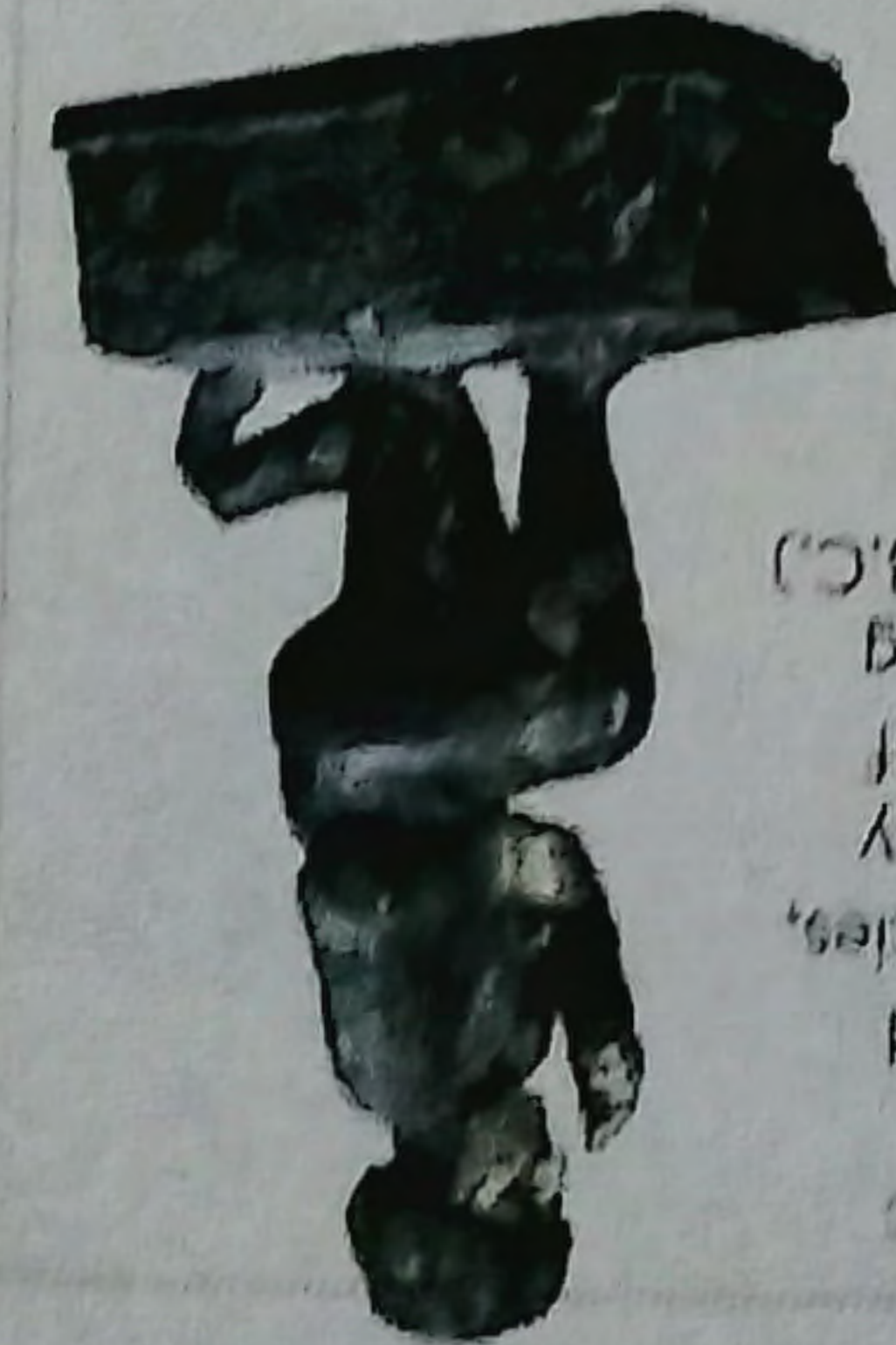
The Sumerians settled in the south of Mesopotamia and founded many independent city states such as Ur, Lagash, Eridu, Uruk, Kish and Umma. There were frequent conflicts between these city states over land and trade routes, so the cities had defensive walls. A king-high priest called the *ensi* or *patesi* governed each city. He held absolute religious, administrative and military power. Religion dominated society and each city had its own god, who competed with those of other cities. The inhabitants had to pay their taxes at the *ziggurat*, which became the centre of religious, economic and sometimes political activity. As the cities became richer and their populations grew, the kings created powerful armies. They used them to conquer the neighbouring cities and create empires. After the Sumerians, the Akkadians ruled Mesopotamia. They came from the north of the Sumerian cities. This began a conflict between north and south that lasted for centuries. The Babylonians (from the south) then replaced the Akkadians. The Assyrians (from the north) then followed, and then the Babylonians once more. Mesopotamia then became part of the Persian Empire in the 6th century B.C.

1. The Sumerians created the first civilisation in history, as it was the first to invent writing. Around 2340 B.C., the King of Umma, Lugalzagesi (2342-2318 B.C.), united the Sumerian cities. Sargon I, King of Akkad (2334-2279 B.C.), then conquered Sumar and established the first Sumerian rule followed. During this period the cities of Ur and Lagash were the most important.



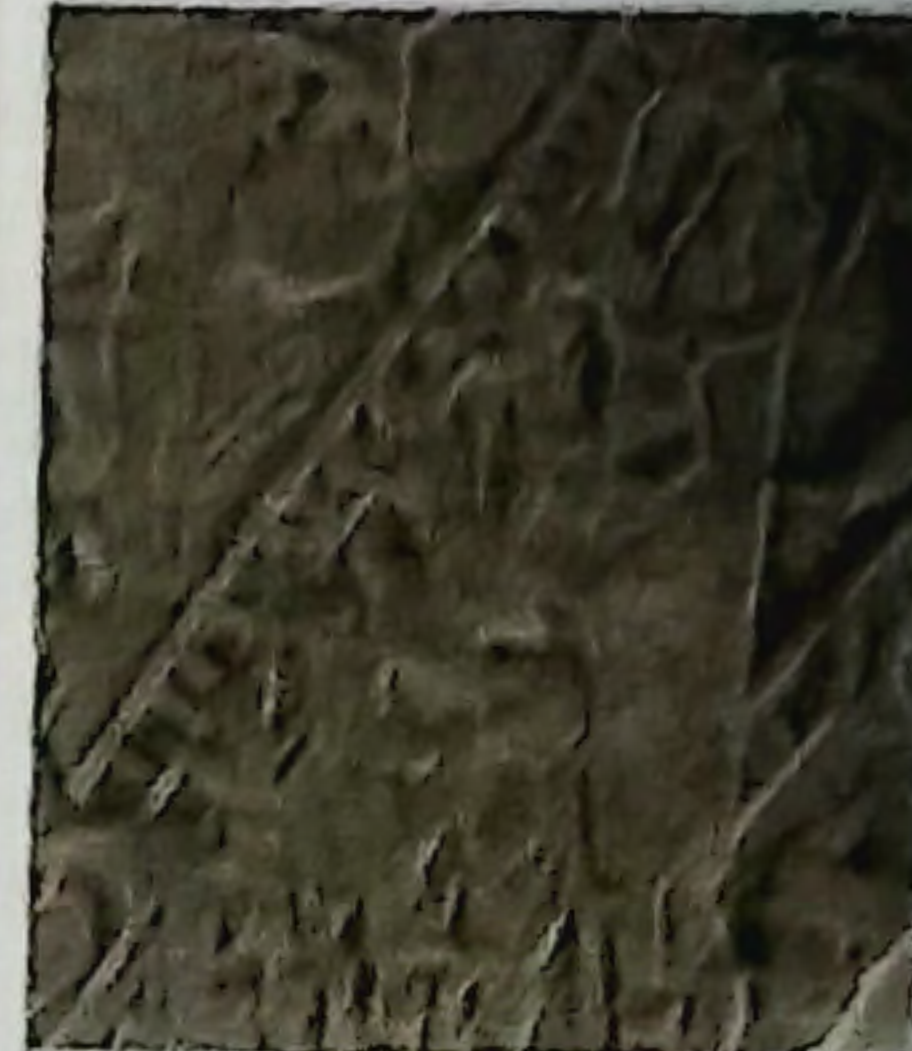
Bronze head of Sargon I of Akkad

2. The Sumerians, a nomadic people from the west, invaded Mesopotamia and took control of various cities, including Babylon. This city then became the capital of the new empire under King Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.).

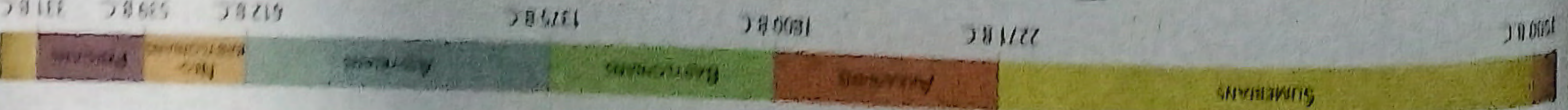


The worshipper of Larsa, a gold and bronze statue dedicated to King Hammurabi

3. The Assyrians had one of the most feared armies in the ancient world. Using iron weapons and war chariots, they controlled Mesopotamia for seven centuries. They pushed the borders to the south of Anatolia, Syria and the Mediterranean. Ashurbanipal (669-630 B.C.) even conquered the north of Egypt. Their most important cities were Ashur and Nineveh. They established the great library in Nineveh. In the library there were more than 22 000 clay tablets containing a great amount of knowledge. Assyrian relief of Ashurbanipal's campaign in Egypt



Assyrian relief of Ashurbanipal's campaign in Egypt



The political evolution of Mesopotamia

- CLIL activities
- Answer the questions in your notebook.
 - What's the difference between an empire and a city state?
 - What did the Sumerians invent? What was established as a result of this invention?
 - Why were there frequent conflicts between the Sumerian cities?
 - Listen to the documentary about the Sumerian city of Uruk.
 - How many people lived there? What buildings were there?
 - With a classmate, compare the map on page 224 to a modern world political map. Which modern-day countries were part of Mesopotamia's empires?
 - Research the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Write a short text explaining what they were, why they're called the Seven Wonders, which one possibly didn't exist and which one still exists today.

Curiosities

To discover the problem of unsustainable development. The water they used for irrigation dissolved the salt in the ground. The salt accumulated in the subsoil and reached the roots of the plants. This dried the plants and led to bad harvests. The solution was to water the fields more, but this made the problem worse. The salt came to the surface and grain production fell further. This led to a loss of political and economic influence and the decline of the Sumerians.

