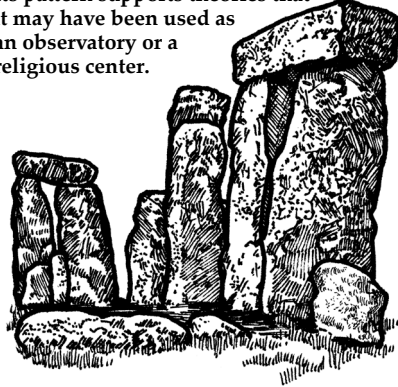




Sumerian Civilization Begins

3500-2500 B.C. One of the earliest civilizations recorded, located in southern Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). It is believed that the Sumerians invented the cuneiform system of writing.

Stonehenge c. 2700 B.C.
An unusual grouping of large stone megaliths surrounded by a circular ditch and embankment located on Salisbury Plain in southern England. Its pattern supports theories that it may have been used as an observatory or a religious center.

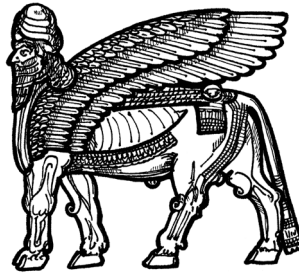


Sumerian Cuneiform

c. 2800 B.C. Earliest known writing. It is characterized by a composition of wedge-shaped formations and was used by the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. In the 1760s, Karsten Niebuhr brought back bricks with cuneiform from a dig in Egypt, Arabia, and Syria. In 1802, Georg Friedrich Grotefend, a German school teacher, was the first to decipher cuneiform.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

c. 2000 B.C. The oldest known epic that tells the tale of a world-wide flood, paralleling the story of Noah's Ark. The Babylonian tablets, written in Akkadian, were discovered in 1853 by Rassam, a colleague of Englishman Austen Henry Layard, who had begun excavating a buried library at Nineveh in 1839.



Akkadian Civilization

c. 2350-2100 B.C. The first regional state creating an empire in Mesopotamia and established by Sargon I. The dynasty of Akkad consisted of five rulers and its empire stretched across the entire region of southern Mesopotamia and along the Euphrates, possibly reaching Lebanon.



Menes

c. 3100 B.C. King of Egypt who, by unifying Upper and Lower Egypt, founded the first Egyptian dynasty.

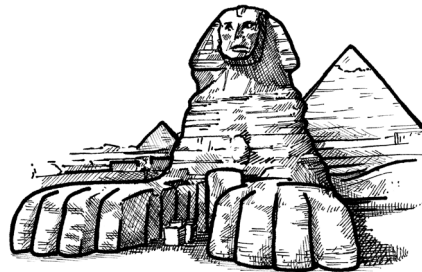
He was also the founder of Memphis. The first drawings of Upper and Lower Egypt and the Lower Nile were excavated by Napoleon and Denon in 1798.



Egyptian Civilization Begins

c. 2575-2500 B.C.

The approximate beginning of the first period of centralized rule in Egypt. One of the earliest known civilizations, this thriving kingdom is best known for its magnificent structures such as pyramids and sculptures, hieroglyphics, and its powerful pharaohs. The civilization began to decline after the 7th century due to various invasions and conquerors.



Cheops (Khufu)

c. 2600 B.C. Second Egyptian king of the 4th dynasty, he was known for building the Great Pyramid at Giza.



The Sumerian "Royal Standard of Ur"

c. 2500 B.C. A mosaic of shells and colored stones, found at the cemetery at Ur, showing life in Mesopotamia at that time. Various rows show a king and his courtiers, musicians, people bearing gifts, as well as people at war.



Ebla Civilization

c. 2500 B.C. A thriving culture of southwest Asia in Syria. Discovered cuneiform tablets describe the history of the civilization which centered around its city. Ebla was uncovered by archaeologist Paolo Matthiae of Rome University in 1964.