THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

THE STATE
IN THE ANCIENT
NEAR EAST AND
MEDITERRANEAN

Edited by

PETER FIBIGER BANG

and

WALTER SCHEIDEL

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CHAPTER 3

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CITY-STATES

STEVEN J. GARFINKLE

INTRODUCTION

In most standard introductions to world history, we learn that civilization began in the city-states of the ancient Near East. The urban revolution that took place in fourth millennium BCE Mesopotamia was one of the few examples of the pristine development of complex civilization and its attendant characteristics, such as the rise of the state. My goal is to analyze the nature and operation of the city-state in the ancient Near East. The enduring significance of these urban centers throughout later antiquity adds to the value of this study. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, the development of the territorial and regional polities that replaced city-states did not do away with the "city-centered" view of the populace. Moreover, the centers of power in those great kingdoms, such as Babylon and Assyria, were the previously independent city-states of our era.

My discussion of city-states in the ancient Near East is divided into the following sections. In the next section, I define the city-state in both social and spatial terms. The following section is devoted to a survey of our source material. We are far removed in both time and space from the ancient Near East; therefore it is necessary not only to examine the varied sources for our study but also to understand their limitations. The fourth section is a brief survey of the development of the city-state, especially in the historical periods of early Mesopotamia. The following sections are devoted to discussion of four related aspects of social power: the development of the ideology of the city-state, the appearance of kingship and the institutions of government, the administration of an integrated economy, and

the legal and military apparatuses that supported this administration. In the final section, I look at the collapse of the city-state system and the growth of territorial kingdoms in Mesopotamia.

WHAT IS A CITY-STATE?

The city-state is defined here as an independent social, economic, and political entity that first appeared in southern Mesopotamia during the "urban revolution" in the fourth millennium BCE. The city-state included an urban core plus its surrounding agricultural hinterland: The walled city was surrounded by suburbs, harbors, orchards, and fields (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 65). The urban center itself was at the top of a hierarchy of smaller settlements, essentially agricultural towns and villages, which clustered around the city and viewed it as both cult center and socioeconomic organizer. The rapid growth of urban centers in the late fourth millennium BCE meant that these cities often relied on the exploitation of rural communities to support the subsistence of city residents who were not engaged in food production (Pollock 2001, 194–195). This distinct combination of settlements was ideally autarkic. Certainly, these cities did not, and could not, exist in isolation; but, as far as subsistence was concerned, they were able to function independently. This was true for the majority of the successful city-states in the ancient Near East in spite of great emphasis placed on "foreign" trade and on competition with neighboring states. Over the long history of the ancient Near East, there were exceptions, and these were usually caravan cities that sat astride important trade routes and were often not as agriculturally independent as other city-states. These settlements were also usually a secondary development responding to the growth of neighboring city-state systems.

City-states most often were not culturally distinct but rather existed among a network of otherwise independent city-states that shared a common language, material culture, and religion (Trigger 2008, 56). This was true throughout the Near East in antiquity. The most obvious examples were the Sumerian and Akkadian city-states of southern Mesopotamia, the Canaanite city-states in Syro-Palestine, and later the Phoenician city-states on the Levantine coast. In this respect, the poleis of the Greeks, with which we are often more familiar, paralleled the earlier Near Eastern city-states. These city-state systems were quite extensive. We can identify at least fifteen major Sumerian city-states and similar numbers for the Canaanites and Phoenicians.

By the beginning of the third millennium BCE, the city-state was the dominant form of political community throughout the Near East. This included the area of the modern Middle East and parts of Turkey and Iran, but it did not include ancient Egypt (for Egypt, see above, chapter 2). In the rain-fed areas of the Fertile Crescent itself, the city-states tended to be more dispersed, while in Mesopotamia

we encounter denser clusters of city-states. (The Fertile Crescent is defined here as the arc of land surrounding Mesopotamia that had sufficient rainfall to support dry-farming.)

The city-state in the Near East was a complex polity that usually stood at the center of a cluster of smaller settlements. What additional features separated a city from a village in antiquity? Certainly size was important, but precise demographic information is often unavailable even for well-documented periods of antiquity; and the ancients themselves did not differentiate on the basis of size. In both Sumerian and Akkadian the words for "city" could be used to describe both small towns and mighty urban centers. Without knowing the exact population of these ancient centers, we can propose several criteria for what constituted a city, and hence the core of a city-state, in the ancient Near East: city walls, monumental public architecture, settlement hierarchy, a professional class of craftsmen, and a complex and integrated agrarian economy over which an administrative elite exercised control (Pollock 1999, 46–51). ♥

As we will see below, the origins of these city-states in the Near East lie in periods that began long before the advent of writing. I will discuss these developments, but I will focus most of my attention on the historical periods when we have access to a variety of evidence including both texts and material remains.

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CITY-STATE

Our evidence for the city-states of the ancient Near East is rich and diverse, including physical remains, written sources, and, more recently, comparative studies of early communities. The evidence may be copious, but it is also unevenly distributed over time and space. For the earliest periods of city-state formation, we have access exclusively to the archaeological evidence and to anthropological and economic studies of state formation in more recent eras. From the beginning of the third millennium BCE onward we have access to the textual data preserved on clay tablets and stone monuments.

The study of urban centers in the Near East has benefited from both intensive excavation of cities such as Uruk, Ur, and Ugarit and extensive surface surveys. The last two decades of unrest and disruption in Iraq have also meant that archaeologists have paid increasing attention to the peripheral areas, such as Syria and Anatolia, which had been the focus of less excavation and scholarship.

The texts from the era of city-states, mostly preserved on clay tablets, were written in numerous languages, including Sumerian, Akkadian, and various West Semitic languages such as Eblaite and Ugaritic. The written sources, though they are unevenly preserved, document most of the activities of the urban elite in the

city-states of the Near East (on the limits of these sources, see Van De Mieroop 1997b). Unfortunately, the documentary evidence becomes most prolific in the Near East just when the city-states were eclipsed by the formation of larger territorial states. The trickle of texts becomes a torrent by the end of the third millennium BCE. This was not the result of an explosion of literacy but rather a consequence of the rise of the state and the desire to document the various activities it oversaw. Hence, there was a proliferation of literary texts and hymns, many of which extol the virtue of the city and its ruler. We find a complementary rise in the number of royal inscriptions, especially those describing the king's building activities; and, of course, there was tremendous growth in administrative texts relating to the management of the economy and the judicial and military apparatuses of the state.

The biases in our surviving sources are especially relevant to the study of the city-state. Both the ancient literate elite and the modern scholarly investigator have shown a distinct preference for the preservation and study of the urban environment and its concerns. The cities have received the most attention from modern scholars precisely because they stand out so prominently in the archaeological record. Cities are easier to find, they leave behind a more permanent imprint, and they are the source of the magnificent objects that have always attracted more attention. As we will see below, this was also a preference expressed by the ancient residents of the Near East. They focused their resources and attention on the urban environment, and this had a decisive influence on what traces of their civilization have survived (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 1–2).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITY-STATES IN THE NEAR EAST

Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, has long been popularly known as the cradle of civilization. It was in the neighboring regions, however, where there was enough rainfall to support dry-farming, that the first permanent settlements were established in the ancient Near East. Already by the ninth millennium BCE, the settlement at Jericho had walls. Such walls attest to the development of an economy no longer based entirely on subsistence labor. A surplus existed to allow some labor to be allocated toward the building of the wall. Moreover, an authority existed to determine how and where that wall would be built and by whom. The earliest sedentary communities in the Levant were able to support themselves prior to the agricultural revolution because they were well situated to take advantage of an abundance and variety of local resources in regions where there were numerous wild plant and animal species. Communities like Jericho facilitated the agricultural revolution by making it possible for the residents in the region to become familiar with the local flora and fauna, leading
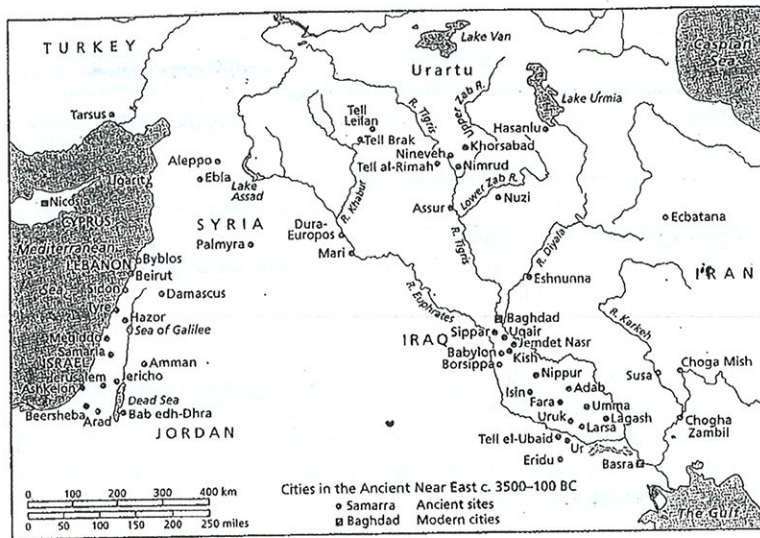
Map 3.1 Cities of the Ancient Near East, circa 3500–100 BCE.

to domestication. Craft specialization became increasingly important during the Neolithic period, leading to significant developments such as the advent of pottery. Archaeological evidence also suggests the early existence of vast trade routes connecting the ancient Near East. Obsidian, a glass-like volcanic rock, was highly desired for making tools and as a decorative item. Modern researchers can determine the specific origins of a particular piece of obsidian. As a result, we know that during the Neolithic period obsidian from ancient Anatolia was traded all over the Near East. Sites like Jericho and Chatal Huyuk, an Anatolian settlement of the later Neolithic period, grew in size to between 7 to 15 hectares and supported populations in excess of a thousand people. Of course, these were not yet cities as we have defined them above.

By the end of the sixth millennium BCE there were towns and villages spread across the Near East. The settlement patterns were similar across the region as well. As the adoption of farming and animal husbandry became more widespread, settlements appeared of increasing size and complexity. This was especially true in Mesopotamia beginning in the Ubaid period (Table 3.1). Increasing social complexity and improved technological abilities were hallmarks of the Ubaid communities in Mesopotamia. At the same time, most of these sites, like those in surrounding areas of the Near East, were no larger than 10 to 15 hectares in size.

Mesopotamia, where large cities first began to appear in the fourth millennium BCE, was characterized by two broadly different environmental zones (see Map 3.1). In southern Mesopotamia, roughly from the area of modern Baghdad down to the marshy delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, we find a broad, flat alluvial plain.

Table 3.1 Standard Periodization of Early Mesopotamia

Name	Years BCE
Ubaid Period	6000–4200
Uruk Period	
Early/Middle Uruk	4200–3300
Late Uruk	3300–3100
Jemdet Nasr	3100–2900
Early Dynastic Period	
Early Dynastic I	2900–2750
Early Dynastic II	2750–2600
Early Dynastic III	2600–2350
Dynasty of Akkad	2350–2150
Ur III Period	2112–2004
Old Babylonian Period	
Isin-Larsa Dynasties	2000–1800
First Dynasty of Babylon	1800–1600

In that zone, which would later be traversed by the numerous canals built by the Sumerians and Babylonians, there is no appreciable rainfall, and all farming must be assisted by irrigation. The topography also meant that the river channels could rapidly shift their course over the plain. In southern Mesopotamia there were three complementary ecological zones: irrigated land, which could produce enormous farming yields; desert steppe, which was used to graze vast herds of sheep and goats; and marshland, which yielded reeds, fish, and waterfowl. Due to the area's topography, the relationship between these zones was not fixed and there was tremendous variability over short distances of both time and space. The archaeologist Elizabeth Stone has described this environment for the city of Nippur:

> These three different ecological niches should not be thought of as distinct zones but rather were interlocking. The land is so flat that there are few geographical factors that dictate their location. The site of Nippur was in the midst of a marsh when it was first excavated by the University of Pennsylvania in the 1890s, was surrounded by desert in the mid-1970s, and is within the cultivated zone today, and this situation is typical for much of Iraq. (Stone 2005, 143)

These complementary zones allowed for a richness of agricultural development, and the variety of resources available for subsistence tended to alleviate short-term seasonal instability in one or the other of these agricultural regimes.

Of course, outside of this ecological diversity, southern Mesopotamia was famously devoid of other natural resources, with no appreciable deposits of metals and little available sturdy wood. Northern Mesopotamia, the area that would later develop into the Assyrian kingdom and empire along the upper Tigris River, lay within the dry-farming zone and was characterized by less proximate ecological diversity.

Throughout the sixth and fifth millennia BCE, these two regions of Mesopotamia developed in parallel (Stone 1995; Algaze 2008). Both were home to growing permanent communities in regions that would later develop into strong city-states, especially the areas around Nippur and Uruk in the south and Nineveh in the north. At the end of the Ubaid period this began to change as the size and density of settlements in southern Mesopotamia grew substantially. Ultimately, the urban revolution that took place in southern Mesopotamia was on a scale that dwarfed all earlier settlement patterns in the Near East. This expansion of cities should be imagined in three ways. First, the size of the individual settlements grew exponentially. Second, the number of cities in close proximity to each other increased substantially; in densely populated southern Mesopotamia, the walls of one great city were visible to its closest neighbors. And finally, the percentage of the population that lived within the urban environment expanded tremendously.

Ancient Mesopotamia in the Uruk period has been called the "heartland of cities" (Adams 1981). I have already introduced some of the environmental factors that favored the growth of cities in southern Mesopotamia. These were joined with a number of technological innovations in the Uruk period that led to further growth in these communities. Improvements in irrigation, the use of draft animals to draw seeder plows, and better tools for harvesting and processing grain all allowed for a tremendous growth in productivity in southern Mesopotamia (Liverani 2006, 16–19).

Moreover, the environment continued to shape agricultural innovation in direct ways. In the extreme south in Mesopotamia, the predominant agricultural unit was a long narrow field (Liverani 1997; Liverani 2006, 15–16). These fields, positioned alongside canals, were particularly well suited for irrigation agriculture and for the use of the seeder plow. The maintenance of this system of fields required intensive management. This combination of a favorable environment and technological innovations led to increased surpluses that not only allowed for greater craft specialization but also created an increased need for administration. Hence, specifically urban professionals arose, those administrators who managed the growing institutions of the state. This is a category that included priests, military officials, surveyors, judges, accountants, and eventually scribes. Note that I will repeatedly use the term "administrator" in preference to the term "bureaucrat." This is in recognition of some of the fundamental distinctions between ancient institutional management and more recent notions of rational bureaucracy (Garfinkle 2005; 2008a).

The emerging cities offered a home and a market for farmers and craftsmen, provided a cult center for worship and for ideological identification, and housed an urban elite who organized "public" life and who were dependent on foreign trade goods to represent their high status. These features of urban life had their

reflection in both the archaeological and textual records. Moreover, these facets of the early city gave rise to numerous theories about its origins. The most prominent theories stress the role of the city as a ceremonial center, as a hub for trade, as a gathering place for surplus, and as the home for a redistributive authority (Algaze 2008; Liverani 2006; Trigger 2003; Van De Mieroop 1997a).

Regardless of their origins, the growth of city-states in the Near East over the course of the fourth millennium BCE was extraordinary. No doubt, the very proximity of so many cities in the south was a spur to their further development, and there was significant competition among them. By the Late Uruk period, there were cities in central Babylonia, such as Nippur, that approached 50 hectares in size, and the city of Uruk itself had grown to over 100 hectares in area. Including the surrounding settlements, a remarkable number of people were now living in urban centers in southern Mesopotamia. More significantly perhaps, the ideas of the city had spread well beyond that region in a process often labeled as "the Uruk expansion" (Algaze 1993; 2008). This entailed the spread of urban culture to surrounding areas on the Susiana plain (in modern Iran), across the Zagros mountains, and up into Syria and Anatolia. Some of these settlements may have been "colonies" directly inspired by the movement of Mesopotamians into these areas in pursuit of trade goods.

Many of the cities outside of southern Mesopotamia, such as Tell Brak in Syria, had already been established but now took on the characteristics of larger urban centers. By the Late Uruk period, these included monumental architecture, increased and public uses of art and sculpture, complex division of labor, redistributive administrations, and, by the end of the era, writing. We also have evidence for the beginnings of mass production. A feature of sites in the Near East during the Uruk expansion was the appearance of beveled rim bowls. These were shallow, mass-produced clay bowls that appear to have been used for the distribution of rations. Their standardization is a good indicator of centralized administration, and their wide geographic distribution throughout the Near East points to the spread of practices as well as ideas (see Map 2.2 in Van De Mieroop 2007).

The cities of the fourth millennium BCE were administered by city-state governments that arranged for public construction, for the manufacture of items like the beveled rim bowls, and for the distribution of rations. Writing developed in the city of Uruk by the end of the Late Uruk period. The earliest written documents display a concern primarily to store economic information and transfer it across space and time. In order to function effectively, one of the chief requirements of a writing system is its standardization. This is necessary so that a scribe in one part of the city, or in a year's time, will be able to unlock the information recorded by a scribe in another part of the city. Such standardization chiefly arose in the ancient world under the guidance of the great institutions. Therefore, both the presence of writing and the content of the earliest written documents attest to the growth of central authority in the city-states.

The earliest clay tablets record the goods, primarily agricultural produce, that were collected, stored, and distributed in cities like Uruk. At the beginning of the third millennium BCE writing started to appear in adjacent areas like Syria and

Iran. The advent of writing also called for the creation of a method for training scribes. These scribes would eventually form the basis for a literate and numerate class of early administrators (Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993; Robson 2007). Among the early cuneiform texts we find lists of signs designed to aid the scribes in their education. These lists are some of our best sources on the early history of state formation. The most expressive of these early texts listed the numerous professions found in the city. The professions were arranged in hierarchical order, informing us about both the division of labor and the division of authority within the city. The topmost position in the early version of the list is not clear to modern scholars, but the later Mesopotamians equated it with their word for kingship. The titles on the list cover numerous areas of authority in the city including justice and agricultural management (Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993). Lower down on the list we find gardeners, cooks, potters, and so forth. The list shows the social order for the whole of the city's inhabitants. These lists continued to be copied from the fourth millennium BCE all the way down to the Old Babylonian period in the first half of the second millennium BCE.

Art historical evidence can be used to deduce the same social developments in the Mesopotamian city-states. The Uruk Vase is among the most famous objects from early Mesopotamia and dates to the same era as these early texts (Bahrani 2002). The vase illustrates how individuals were conceived with respect to their environment and to each other. In the lowest three registers, the natural world was depicted in the form of its agricultural bounty, first water, then stalks of grain, and finally pairs of sheep. In the middle register, there is a long line of striding and naked male figures carrying jars and bowls. These were the dependent laborers. In the top register, a variety of clothed officials receive the produce of the community and dedicate that produce to the goddess Inanna, who appears in front of her symbols and who was among the foremost deities in the city of Uruk. One figure stands out the most since he is a giant among the officials. This figure is assumed to be the leader mentioned at the top of the archaic list of professions.

At the dawn of the historical era, the cities of southern Mesopotamia were already enormous. Again, the best known of these cities through archaeological excavation is Uruk. By the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2900 BCE), the walls of Uruk surrounded a city of more than 5 square kilometers, more than twice the size of fifth-century BCE Athens (Nissen 1988, 71–72). The physical size of the cities is an obvious testament to their importance, but the level of urbanization by the end of the Uruk period is equally astonishing. Estimates vary, but it appears that between 50 and 80 percent of the population of southern Mesopotamia actually lived in its cities (Algaze 2008, 106). The size of the different city-states could vary tremendously. What was significant for the conception of the city was that it possessed the characteristics identified above, such as a city wall, monumental public architecture, a settlement hierarchy, a professional class of craftsmen, and a complex and integrated agrarian economy over which an administrative elite exercised control. Based on the archaeological record, we are best able to estimate the size of an urban core that was surrounded by a city wall. Hence, in the third

millennium BCE, Abu Salabikh was a city of some 20 hectares while Uruk was nearly 500 hectares. Perhaps more normative were cities of between 60 and 75 hectares, like Ur and Mashkan-shapir in the south, and, later on, Shubat-Enlil in the north (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 94–95). We should note that in the later eras of Mesopotamian history, the capitals grew to enormous size, supported by the administrative and transportation systems of the imperial communities of Assyria and Babylonia. The size of the territory of the extraordinary city of Uruk was still rather small in comparative terms, supported by a zone of cultivated fields 14 kilometers wide (Adams 1981, fig. 24). There were a variety of factors that inhibited the territorial growth of city-states in the dry-farming zones of northern Mesopotamia and neighboring Syria, and they were likely limited to a radius of approximately 15 kilometers (Wilkinson 1994).

A good example of the size of these early states was Umma, which had a long and well-documented history as a major city-state in Mesopotamia. We are well informed about the size of Umma when it was incorporated as a province into the kingdom of the Third Dynasty of Ur at the end of the third millennium BCE. The territory of Umma, which included a number of smaller towns and villages, was approximately 2,000 square kilometers, roughly 40 x 50 kilometers (Adams 2008, 6). Umma was a prominent Sumerian city-state and probably among the larger territorial units, though smaller than the neighboring state of Lagash. The territory of Umma was crossed by numerous canals, however, only a fraction of the land was actually brought under active cultivation (Dahl 2007, 36). This highlights the fact that though these states were huddled closely together in Mesopotamia, there was often more than enough available land to support each state. The constraints on the size of these states had more to do with water and labor than with land.

The Early Dynastic Period was the heyday of the Mesopotamian city-state. This long period witnessed the growth of city-states and the increasing spread of writing. Beginning around 2600 BCE trade and contact increased between the city-states in Mesopotamia and the surrounding areas (Van De Mieroop 2002). The wealth created in these city-states is perhaps most evident in the royal tombs from Early Dynastic Ur. From the same era, we also find textual evidence for the spread of the city-state into other areas of the Near East.

In Syria, the cities of Mari and Ebla display evidence for complex social and political hierarchies, along with writing and extensive archives (see Map 3.1). These early archives already show evidence of highly organized states engaged in significant redistribution of resources through rations.

Our sources also indicate that at least from the middle of the third millennium BC there was a great deal of conflict between the cities in southern Mesopotamia.

Enlil, king of all lands, father of all the gods, by his authoritative command, demarcated the border between Ningirsu and Shara. Mesalim, king of Kish, at the command of Ishtaran, measured it off and erected a monument there. Ush, ruler of Umma, acted arrogantly: he smashed that monument and marched on the plain of Lagash. Ningirsu, warrior of Enlil, at his just command, did battle with Umma. (Cooper 1986, 54–55)

This text documents an episode in what modern scholars have labeled as the Lagash-Umma border conflict. This conflict lasted for approximately 150 years (2500–2350 BCE) and was recounted in numerous sources from Lagash (Cooper 1983). The two cities fought for control of some very fertile land along their border. This conflict was imagined by its participants as playing out among the gods as well. After all, the gods themselves represented their entire cities (Ningirsu for Lagash and Shara for Umma). Kish was a neighboring city-state to the north of Umma and Lagash, in central Babylonia. Clearly, at some point, its king was powerful enough to have acted as an arbitrator and to have established a border between the combatants. He did so at the command of his god, Ishtaran; and, of course, all of the actions were undertaken at the command of Enlil, the head of the Sumerian pantheon who made his home in the city of Nippur. The text captures the hierarchy that the Mesopotamians believed controlled their fates. The city itself was home to a god, and that god sanctioned the actions of the king.

The Sumerian King List, which was drafted toward the end of the long era of city-states, was commissioned by kings who hoped to supplant the ideology of the independent city-state. Most of the "history" documented by the list is set in the Early Dynastic Period, and the text stands out as a monument to the durability of the idea of the city-state. The list created a fictitious history of Mesopotamia in which kingship was always exercised over the whole region by one city. (For a translation, see the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk). This was the case by the latter stages of the third millennium BCE, but it was in no way normative. The kings depicted at the very end of the list did exercise such singular authority, and the text reflected the demise of the independence of the city-states. At the same time, it reinforced the notion of cities as the natural home of power (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 49).

In Mesopotamia the era of the city-state came to a contentious end in the early second millennium BCE after a long period of contest among different dynasties, each aiming to control the whole of southern Mesopotamia. A similar pattern emerged in northern Mesopotamia with the creation kingdoms along the Tigris and in northern Syria. Those northern kingdoms dominated even old city-states such as Mari on the great bend of the Euphrates. Further to the west, however, in coastal Syria and down through Lebanon and Israel, city-states such as Ugarit, Byblos, Hazor, and Megiddo continued to thrive.

Indeed, the city-state survived even as the power of the new territorial kingdoms grew. A famous letter from the eighteenth-century BCE Mari archives illustrates both aspects of this process.

> No king is truly powerful on his own. Ten to fifteen kings follow Hammurabi of Babylon, Rim-Sin of Larsa, Ibal-pi-El of Eshnunna or Amut-pi-El of Qatna, and twenty kings follow Yarim-Lim of Yamkhad. (Van De Mieroop 2005)

The letter documents a struggle for hegemony among several strong kings that was enacted through the control of numerous vassal kings, each of whom held power in his own city-state. In fact, the persistence of these city-states and smaller

kingdoms in Syro-Palestine helped to foster some of the patterns of the succeeding "international age." In the Late Bronze Age (1600–1200 BCE), the growing territorial kingdoms of the Near East (Egypt, Babylon, the Hittites, the Mittani, and, eventually, the Assyrians) usually contested control over the space beyond their borders through vassal states that more often than not remained city-states themselves. As we saw with the initial formation of the city-states in southern Mesopotamia, this turn of events was also heavily influenced by topographic and environmental factors.

The city-states of the Levant arose in dry-farming areas in which the cities themselves were more widely dispersed. Moreover, the topography of the Levant, with its mountainous regions and separated river valleys, made it more difficult for local monarchs to effectively create territorial states on anything more than a very small scale. The coastal cities in particular proved difficult to incorporate into larger kingdoms. This was true all the way down to the era of imperialism in the first millennium BCE, when the Phoenician cities, successors to the Canaanite cities of the Bronze Age, retained some measure of their independence even in the face of the might of imperial Assyria. In certain respects, these later city-states may have had a different economic basis than their earlier Mesopotamian predecessors. They were not based on irrigation agriculture, and they were often more consciously geared toward the organization of trade and interstate commerce. At the same time, the operation of these communities, and the functioning of their governments, remained quite similar to the earlier city-states. Even though they had to negotiate their existence among much larger states, the last city-states of the Near East show the continued influence of the idea of the vibrant and independent urban environment.

THE IDEOLOGY OF URBAN LIFE

> Come, I will lead you to Uruk-the Town-Square,
> to the sacred temple, the home of Anu!
> Enkidu, arise, let me take you
> to the temple Eanna, the home of Anu,
> where men are engaged in labours of skill,
> you, too, *like a man*, will *find a place for* yourself. (George 1999, 12)

With these words from Tablet II of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Shamhat invited Enkidu to follow her to the city of Uruk where he would become the companion of the king. Once there, her words make clear, he will become part of a community, indeed he will be able to fulfill his destiny as a man. As befits the original home of the city-state, ancient Mesopotamia was an urban society and the Mesopotamians developed a city-centered ideology that made possible the complex social developments associated with state formation. The Epic of Gilgamesh comes down to

us as an Akkadian composition that achieved its basic form in the early second millennium BCE, as the era of city-states was waning; but it had its antecedents in Sumerian stories about the legendary Gilgamesh that date back into the third millennium BCE and the apogee of the city-states.

The epic privileges those things, baking bread and brewing beer for example, that were crucial aspects of urban life in agrarian Mesopotamia. It is notable that these were also, along with oil and textiles, the primary rations provided by the redistributive administration of the central institutions of the city. Moreover, the process by which Enkidu was civilized can be described as both technological and spatial. He was introduced to the customs of urban society, eating, dressing, and grooming among them, as he was brought into closer proximity to the city itself.

At one point, the epic expressed some reservation about the redemptive qualities of city life. On his deathbed, the hero Enkidu lamented having left behind his carefree existence on the steppe, and he cursed Shamhat for bringing him civilization. The sun god Shamash, deity of justice and judgment, immediately corrected him.

> O Enkidu, why curse Shamhat the harlot,
> Who fed you bread that was fit for a god,
> And poured you ale that was fit for a king,
> Who clothed you in a splendid garment,
> And gave you as companion the handsome Gilgamesh?
> (George 1999, 58)

Our modern notion that the origins of civilization began with the creation of the city would therefore have been quite familiar to an ancient Mesopotamian. To the inhabitants of the ancient Near East, the city was the locus for virtually all significant activity.

The symbolic power of these cities was their ability to provide subsistence and protection. This protection was both human and divine. The city as seat of both secular and divine authority guaranteed its residents safety from an often hostile environment. Within the relatively flat environment in southern Mesopotamia, the cities themselves were the most prominent features of the landscape on the alluvial plain. Visible at great distances, the walls of the cities, and the temples that rose to even greater heights within them, were both landmarks and testaments to human achievement. It is small wonder then that Gilgamesh's greatest achievement, and the guarantee of his elusive immortality, was his building activity (George 1999, 2).

The focal point of the city in the ancient Near East was its cult centers. We also know from the archaeological record that these cult centers remained remarkably fixed in space over time. At the city of Eridu, archaeological investigation has uncovered a series of sixteen temples all built in the same place over a period from the late sixth millennium BCE to the end of the third millennium BCE, when the city was abandoned because of a shift in the course of the Euphrates River. Over this time, the temple grew from one room to a massive ziggurat rising high above the city and the surrounding plain (Postgate 1992, 25).

Throughout the literature of the ancient Near East we encounter the idea that the gods themselves built cities. Indeed, in order to cement the primacy of the city of Babylon in the territorial kingdom of the later second millennium BCE, the Babylon Epic of Creation has the gods themselves build the city as a home for Marduk, their newly crowned king. In particular, the temple was seen as the actual residence for the god, and therefore it imbued the city with a divine presence that was clearly visible. This idea was common to city-state cultures throughout the Near East. Within the literature of the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible stands out in its antipathy toward urban space. Indeed, even the usual admiration for the productive qualities of the farmer was subverted when Cain slew Abel. And yet, this can be viewed as a clear first millennium BCE response to the power of urban-based empires like Assyria and Babylonia. The great temple in the city of Jerusalem was a familiar symbol and an urban institution. The romantic association with pastoralism may be a reflection of a seminomadic past, either real or imagined, but the urban basis for the Israelite community shows an essential continuity with Canaanite ancestors in places like Ugarit, Byblos, and Tyre.

All activities within the city were viewed by its residents as promoting stability and upholding a divine order. The system was supported by a vast number of dependent laborers who performed most of the necessary agricultural work, and who formed the labor gangs that could be called upon for wall building, canal maintenance, and even military activity. The urban elite in these cities can accurately be called the "professional classes." Those individuals who were identified in our texts as having a profession make up the group of largely free individuals about whom we are best informed and who enjoyed all of the privileges of belonging to the urban community.

In times of political unrest, the urban centers themselves were remarkably stable. Archaeological surveys show that difficult times might have led to widespread abandonment of outlying sites, but not of the major cities. With a few exceptions (like Eridu at the end of the third millennium BC) the cities were extraordinarily durable over time even when the smaller settlements that surrounded them were not (Postgate 1994, 50). This permanence was not only physical but also ideological. Long after the independent cities of the Near East had been subsumed by larger states, the cities themselves continued to exercise tremendous political power and ideological significance.

KINGSHIP AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY-STATE

Outside of its monumental architecture, the most visible symbol of the ancient Near Eastern city-state was its king. The Sumerian legend of Gilgamesh and Akka proclaims, "You watch over Uruk, the handiwork of the gods, the great rampart.

You are its king and warrior, an exuberant person, a prince beloved of Anu." (Translation after the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, www-etcsl. orient.ox.ac.uk.) The king was the divinely chosen leader of the city. His decisions could be discussed but not questioned. As we have seen above, the evolution of this position of authority is unclear because its origins lay in prehistory. The association of the king with divine sanction shows that the origins of state power were associated with the growth of the power of cult centers. The coercive power of the monarch therefore proceeded directly from his association with the gods. The poorly understood sacred marriage ceremonies, in which kings of early Mesopotamia would perform sexual rituals with high priestesses, attest at the very least to this close connection (Bahrani 2002).

This does not, however, mean that we can return with comfort to the outdated notion of the temple city (Falkenstein 1974; Foster 1981; but see also Gelb 1971). While evidence like the Uruk Vase has been interpreted to support the idea of an early priest-leader, this is a speculative assumption in the absence of clearer evidence. The terminology for leadership in Sumerian did undergo some significant changes over the course of the third millennium BCE. The earliest city leaders were identified by the term en or lord, a title later reserved for the priesthood. By the middle of the third millennium BCE, the titles lugal and ensi had appeared as designations for the city rulers. The former term, meaning "great man" in Sumerian, is customarily translated as "king." The latter term is usually translated as "governor" (and perhaps best understood as "steward"; see Wilcke 2007, 28–30); and this title survived into the era of territorial states as a term for city governors subordinate to royal authority. This "evolution" of titles has also been adduced as evidence for the earlier prominence of the priest-leader.

Moreover, the palace as a physical location for kingship made a relatively late entrance into the archaeological record. The palace as a distinct architectural component of the city first appeared in the Early Dynastic Period, becoming visible to archaeologists around the middle of the third millennium BCE. Palaces were most often located at the edges of urban centers, implying that they developed rather late and were not accounted for in whatever initial urban planning may have taken place. This does not mean that a secular central authority did not exist earlier, but rather that the palaces may have been an expression of conspicuous consumption by the growing royal elite (Van De Mieroop 2002). As far as the historical record is concerned, secular authority always existed in the city-states of the ancient Near East.

The role of the king in the Near Eastern city-states was most often likened in texts to that of the shepherd. The king as shepherd protected his people from the world around them and from each other. This required first and foremost the maintenance of urban necessities, such as city walls and temple platforms, a process that illustrates the direct ways in which the ideology of urban life became central to expressions of royal authority. Only in the city could men realize their potential, and the city itself could only be maintained through the correct actions of the

king. It is hardly surprising then that the efforts made by kings to document these activities were so prolific. Indeed, texts honoring building (or rebuilding) activity are the most common royal inscriptions that survive from ancient Mesopotamia. The idea of the king as shepherd of his people went far beyond looking after the physical surroundings of the city and included a direct concern for the welfare of the city-state's inhabitants. One of the earliest expressions of this comes from the so-called reforms of Uru'inimgina, a ruler of Lagash (ca. 2400 BCE).

He cleared and canceled obligations for those indentured families, citizens of Lagash, living as debtors:

> Uru'inimgina solemnly promised Ningirsu that he would never subjugate the orphan and the widow to the powerful.
> In the same year, he dug the Tugirsu'ituka canal for Ningirsu...
> The canal is pure, its bed is clear—may it (ever) bring flowing water to Nanshe! (Cooper 1986, 73)

The king exercised power over both the social and the physical environment. He could forgive debts and also bring water to the fields and to the city. Clearly, the king had control over the administration of justice, the economy, and the military. To aid him in his various endeavors, a series of hierarchies developed that provided officials to enforce the will of the crown. This led to the creation of an urban elite dependent on the person of the king for its position. As a result, the king stood at the head of multiple organizations (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 119). In his most prominent role, amply documented in royal inscriptions and literary texts, the king was the state leader. The king was also the head of his own household, which was the chief social, economic, and military presence in the city, and to which many of the officials of the city-state belonged.

We can identify three groups of people in the city-states of the Near East, and each group can be precisely positioned by its relationship to the king's household. Below the king were the officials in charge of the various urban institutions of the state. These were priests, supervisors of granaries, overseers of various agricultural and craft activities, and so on. These officials often directly supervised the work of the dependent laborers who were at the bottom of the system. Between the officials and the dependent laborers was a large group of urban professionals and craftsmen, such as merchants, smiths, heralds, wealthier farmers, and others. Together with the officials, this group comprised the segment of society that we might consider to be analogous to citizens of the city-state. These were the free individuals who were clearly subordinate to royal authority but who were often free to operate beyond its direct control. The large class of semi-free dependent laborers can be distinguished from this group because they were supported to a great extent by the ration system that was at the center of the redistributive economy of these city-states. Of course throughout Near Eastern antiquity there were also chattel slaves in these communities, but both their social and economic impacts were minimal. Moreover, they played no political role.

The city-state was characterized by other institutions of government that were markedly less authoritarian than the crown. Assemblies were a prominent part

of daily life in the cities. They are attested to in the textual record in both our literary and administrative corpora. There is no word in Sumerian or Akkadian for "citizen," but there was clearly an understanding of residence in a city and of participation in the community that approximates our notion of citizenship (Van De Mieroop 1997a). This notion was based on participation in urban institutions such as the assemblies. Assemblies were a feature of early literary texts, like the story of Gilgamesh and Akka. In that tale, Gilgamesh was faced with a demand from Akka, the king of Kish, to submit to his authority. Gilgamesh presented this dilemma before two assemblies, that of the elders of the city and that of the city's able-bodied men. The episode parallels a similar event in the Epic of Gilgamesh when the same two bodies were consulted about Gilgamesh and Enkidu's quest to slay Humbaba. In both cases, there was a split decision with the younger body arguing for action, but in neither example was the king bound by the decisions of these deliberative bodies. Assemblies also appeared in mythical texts describing the divine community. Based in large measure on these literary references, Thorkild Jacobsen developed an influential theory of primitive democracy in Mesopotamia (Jacobsen 1943, 1957). He argued that assemblies had earlier held great authority in the Mesopotamian communities, but that the rise of kingship had rendered them impotent by the time of the historical eras.

We know from later administrative and legal texts that assemblies continued to play a role in Mesopotamia throughout antiquity (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 118–141, where he also addresses the difficult question of whether women could sit in these assemblies, for which there is no conclusive evidence; Fleming 2004; Seri 2005). The assemblies appear to have handled a variety of local issues, including the trying of certain crimes, on behalf of the king. In contrast to Jacobsen's vision of the assemblies as a holdover from an earlier, more consensual form of government, the assemblies, and the rights of urban residents, actually grew over time in the Near East. Marc Van De Mieroop has pointed out an increased influence of the urban populace on political decisions in later eras (Van De Mieroop 1997a). This is contrary to our expectations based on traditional evolutionary models for the understanding of political development in the ancient Near East; but it is a somewhat logical consequence of the growth and later eclipse of the city-states. At a time when royal authority resided in each of the urban centers of the Near East, there was a more limited range of activity and authority for the assemblies. When, in the era of larger polities, the king was a distant figure, he was compelled to rely more directly on these bodies.

Our view of the government of the city-state in the Near East remains focused most squarely on the king and his officials. The king was charged with building and maintaining the city and its surroundings, with protecting the city and its residents, and with the administration of justice. In order to accomplish this, the king stood at the center of a redistributive economy in which his control over the means of production was quite extensive. To oversee this system, the king relied on a large group of officials who owed their positions to the king himself.

The Administration of the Integrated Economy

The development of the city-state depended on the ability of predominantly agrarian communities to generate a surplus, and then on the elite to pioneer ways of appropriating that surplus for communal purposes. How these two things were accomplished determined much of the social organization of the city-state. The basic building-block of these communities was the household. The economic patterns of the Near Eastern city-states were based entirely on the interactions of the great and small households. The resulting social networks were the product of negotiations among these households. Often these negotiations were coercive, but they were also based on the shared ideologies of urban life that became established in Mesopotamia over the fourth and third millennia BCE.

The household (Sumerian é) was the essential socioeconomic unit for the whole of early Near Eastern antiquity. The significance of the household can be seen in the identification of temples as the house of the god (é DN), and in the identification of the palace as the big house or great house (Sumerian é-gal, composed of the term é plus gal meaning great). The ancient Mesopotamians modeled the divine world on their own communities. We have seen this already in the existence of the divine assemblies, but we can see it just as clearly in the fact that the gods lived in their "houses" and had to be provisioned. Indeed, just as the temples were imagined as households, the entire city was seen as the household of its patron deity. This notion of the household writ large fed directly into both the social and political organization of the city-states. Thus the secular authority of the king was understood to represent his stewardship of the city on behalf of the god.

This emphasis on the household can be seen in the literary traditions across the ancient Near East. In the Ugaritic Ba'lu myth, one of the main preoccupations is the absence of a house for one of the principal gods.

> You have good news Ba'lu!
> I bring you good news!
> They may build you a house like those of your brothers,
> A court like those of your kin.
> Summon a caravan to your house,
> Wares to your palace;
> Let the mountains bring you massive amounts of silver,
> Let the hills bring you the choicest gold,
> Then build a house of silver and gold,
> A mansion of purest lapis-lazuli. (Pardee 2003)

An individual's place in society was based on his association with a particular household. Most significant for individuals was membership in a familial

household. And for the heads of those households, this likely meant additional privileges and responsibilities, such as membership in the local assembly. Various officials, especially priests and military officers, belonged to one of the great institutional households, such as temple and palace, and therefore had more than one household affiliation.

In arguing for the development of tremendous central authority in the Mesopotamian cities at least as early as the Late Uruk period, I am not suggesting that the individual households lost or abdicated all of their ability to exercise agency in their socioeconomic relations with the urban community. At the same time, the very fact that the state controlled so much of the resources and social interactions in the city and its surroundings was a hallmark of state formation and of the creation of an elite. The city-states of the Near East were characterized by a tributary economy (Pollock 1999, 79). The extraction of resources from the surrounding land and villages allowed the crown to organize the productive capacity of the city. This led to the appropriation of much of the collective wealth and its redistribution. This did not mean, however, that all households were under the direct authority of the king. Throughout the ancient Near East urban professionals retained a significant amount of economic freedom, along with significant access to the various means of production. Figure 3.1 is a schematic representation of the various economic households and their interactions.

There was obviously more flexibility in the system than is implied here. Some craftsmen, such as potters, could be dependent laborers who worked part-time for institutional households and part-time for their own households. Chattel slaves were a part of many of these households, both the great institutions and the smaller individual households. Within the larger institutions, especially the temples, there were entire workshops of slaves, producing things like textiles. Moreover, there were circumstances under which the independent and smaller households could acquire access to dependent laborers through their relationships with the institutional households.

Each household, and each segment of the economy, had obligations to fulfill to the city-state's central authority. These obligations took numerous forms. Within the institutional economy most of the produce was reserved for official use and for redistribution. For the noninstitutional household, there were corvée labor responsibilities, as well as payments to be made to the crown in return for access to resources. All of this required the growth of the central administration to monitor economic activity and engage in planning. These officials often turned to other urban professionals to help them carry out their tasks. For example, most taxes were paid in kind. The great institutions then turned to professionals, such as merchants, to exchange bulk goods for other needed commodities or precious metals.

The growth of state power was accomplished in cooperation with local groups, such as shepherds and merchants, who often performed specialized functions. Critically, these individuals, often organized in professional groups, retained a great deal of independence from the crown. Membership in professional organizations was most often hereditary and professional hierarchies were based on criteria,
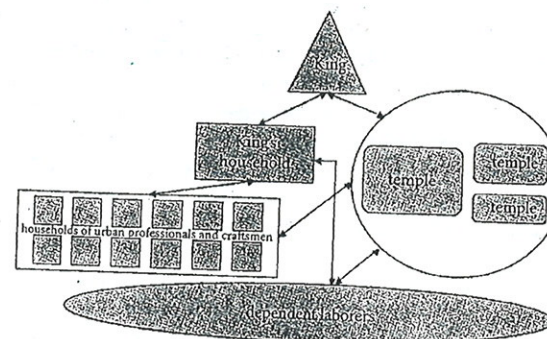
Fig. 3.1 A representation of the city-state economy.

like kinship ties, over which the state had no direct control. Even during those episodes of state growth that accompanied the formation of early territorial states, the royal household depended greatly on the local and regional groups to make its direction of the economy more efficient. We can see this very clearly in the operation of merchants at the end of the third millennium BCE (Garfinkle 2008b). Far from the imposition of a centralized and rational bureaucracy, what actually occurred was a growth in scale of the household of the king and its dependence on traditional means of administration. Therefore, the kings could never exercise the kind of authoritarian economic control of the city-states that is often ascribed to them.

The fundamental feature of the economy of the Mesopotamian city-state was the management of the agrarian economy, and within this sector the most critical factor was the procurement of labor, not land. There were both temporary and permanent solutions to the crises caused by the lack of availability of labor. On a temporary basis, virtually all residents of the city-state were subject to corvée labor. They would be called up, most often at those times of the year when the need for agricultural labor was lowest, to work on civic projects and to serve in the military. More permanently, a substantial percentage of the population was dependent laborers, bound to an institution that supported them with rations. Among the dependent laborers, many received rations for only part of the year and were otherwise expected to work on subsistence plots or to hire themselves out. Within southern Mesopotamia, particular attention must be paid to agricultural idiosyncrasies: barley fields could not be as productively managed in the noninstitutional sector, hence the prevalence of usufruct; whereas orchard land could be effectively run by noninstitutional households, hence the prominence of records of the alienation of such land (along with records of the sale of urban land for homes).

Alongside the constraints imposed by the local environment, the internal mechanisms of exchange were more of a determining factor in socioeconomic organization than other issues like foreign trade. Hence, the prominence of redistribution to provide for the vast system of dependent labor that characterized early Mesopotamia. This was an economy in which chattel slaves, in large part because

of the high cost of their maintenance, were not economically significant. And debt slavery, which was commonplace, was a source of grave concern to the central administration because it affected the availability of dependent laborers.

All of this led in essence to the tripartite social system that was later reflected in the Laws of Hammurabi: free man, commoner, slave (Roth 1997). Politically, as explained above, the royal officials and urban professionals constituted the first category, while the majority of the residents of the city would fall into the second category. The Akkadian word for "commoner" is a participle that translates directly as "someone who bows down before another," essentially shorthand for dependent laborer.

As the urban population grew, over the course of the fourth and early third millennia BCE, the central administration moved from an emphasis on organizing distribution of rural surplus and of trade goods, and the control of some corvée labor for the maintenance of canals and public buildings, to the management of production as well. This established the patterns for the tributary economy that remained characteristic of city-states throughout their history in the ancient Near East. The evidence also shows this to have been the case well outside of the area in southern Mesopotamia where it first developed. Even coastal centers, like Ugarit, took a similar approach to their agrarian hinterland (Heltzer 2003).

The literate functionaries of these administrative groups were not bureaucrats in the modern sense. This was not a rational bureaucracy but rather a patrimonial administration in which the organizing principles of the large households were extended in scale and authority (Garfinkle 2005, 2008a; Schloen 2001). This model also served to aid in the creation of the larger polities that developed in the ancient Near East. The growth of the territorial state was enabled through institutions, the military foremost among them, which were built on patrimonial models and bound to the households of the ruling families.

LEGAL AND MILITARY SYSTEMS IN THE CITY-STATE

As we have seen, the intersections of the institutional and noninstitutional economies, and the interactions among the numerous individual urban households, required the development not only of a concept of justice but also of a legal system to resolve competing claims. Concomitant with this need to protect residents of the city-state from each other was the need to protect these residents against outsiders. Outsiders might be residents of neighboring and competing cities, as we have seen with the Lagash-Umma border conflict of the mid-third millennium BCE, or they might be complete outsiders from the "uncivilized" lands beyond the margins of the city-state system. The city-state needed a military apparatus to support these needs, both defensive and offensive. Significantly, these needs created new elite

officeholders whose roles bound them ever more closely to the royal household and who buttressed the growing social power of kingship.

A feature of the ancient Near East, and of Mesopotamia specifically, is that it was relatively open to immigrants throughout its history (Yoffee 1988). This was the result of both geographic and social factors. The openness of the plains of Mesopotamia no doubt led to an emphasis on the massive fortification of the urban centers. It also created the need for a military to man those walls and to defend the gates of the city. The military in the city-states was based on the same principles of corvée labor service that the kings used for their public works projects. There is no evidence for large standing armies in the early city-states of Mesopotamia. We can imagine that within the king's household, the beginnings of an officer corps emerged to command the occasional levies of residents. Indeed, the military structure presents perhaps the biggest contrast between the organization of the city-states and that of the succeeding territorial kingdoms. The larger kingdoms pioneered the use of standing armies, and the army became a new pathway to elite status within the community. This was already the case in the twenty-fourth century BCE in the first great experiment with larger state formation in the Near East, that of Sargon of Akkad. He famously claimed that "5400 men daily eat in the presence of Sargon, king of the world, to whom the god Enlil gave no rival" (Frayne 1993, 29). This is often interpreted as evidence for a standing army. In the inscriptions of the kings of Akkad we find frequent reference to their battling numerous cities and their armies. The armies of those cities were drawn from levies among the able-bodied men serving their corvée labor obligations and under the direction of members of the king's household.

Sargon and his successors also claimed to have moored the ships of foreign lands, often from the Persian Gulf and beyond, at their docks. These claims echo those of the Early Dynastic city-state rulers. There was clearly a propaganda value to such claims, especially as they demonstrated that the king maintained access to often precious resources, such as timber, copper, and lapis lazuli. These assertions, however, should be understood as referring to trade rather than conquest.

Nonetheless, warfare for the city-states was economically significant. In their conflicts with neighbors, the city-states were defending the rich agricultural land upon which their prosperity was based. The century and a half of warfare between the cities of Lagash and Umma was the most extreme case. Indeed, part of the grievance of Lagash was based on the fact that Umma was supposed to pay interest to its neighbor for the right to harvest part of the boundary fields. The amounts owed were said to be enormous sums. Even allowing for a certain amount of hyperbole, we can see how the expansion of agricultural territory could be a critical factor in the creation of wealth for the city-state. Moreover, warfare led to the acquisition of booty and the protection of trade routes, both of which were features of state policy throughout the history of the ancient Near East.

The military allowed the kings of the city-states to fulfill their promise to protect the city from outsiders. As we have seen, the king was required to watch over the ramparts of the city and to project the image of powerful warrior. At the

same time, these kings made an equal claim to protect the weak within the city. This required the maintenance of an effective justice system and courts of law. A concern for justice is evidenced not only in prominent texts like the reforms of Uru'inimgina, but also in the presence of contracts and records of sale. The administration of justice was a shared responsibility between the king and civic institutions such as assemblies. The king's ability to fulfill this responsibility was one of the primary ways of judging the success of his reign. In his effort to convince the previously independent communities now under his authority of the appropriate nature of his rule, King Hammurabi proclaimed:

> At that time, the gods… named me by my name; Hammurabi, the pious prince, who venerates the gods, to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land. (Roth 1997, 76–77)

Collapse: The Growth of the Territorial State and the End of City-States in the Near East?

The growth of the territorial kingdom in Mesopotamia in the latter stages of the third millennium BCE brought about the end of the prominence of the city-state. Given the importance of the different urban centers and the firmly held ideologies of the city-state, it is no surprise that this was a lengthy process. There were several succeeding experiments with territorial states, and it took centuries for the idea to take root. As we have already seen, the Sumerian King List is a testament to the difficult ideological negotiations that took place. The success of the larger territorial states was dependent upon the new rulers' abilities to take proper care of the various urban centers within their states (Roth 1997, 76–81). Critically, the urban centers themselves remained just as prominent a part of both the social and physical landscape. The creation of larger polities was in fact dependent upon the ability of rulers to coerce, and in many cases co-opt, the urban elites of the former city-states. These elites had positioned themselves at the center of the ideological and redistributive networks of the cities, especially as priests, administrators, and military officers.

The era when the city-state was the dominant form of political community in the Near East lasted from the fourth millennium BCE down to the beginning of the second millennium BCE. Even after this long epoch, city-states remained a vital part of the Near East in peripheral and coastal areas in spite of the growth of territorial and imperial states. Indeed, while individual regimes in the Near East were often fragile, and frequently did not outlast a single dynasty, the cities themselves were the most durable expression of civilization. Uruk, the earliest and largest of

the Mesopotamian city-states, was still among the largest and most productive urban centers of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid empires 3,000 years after its entrance into the historical record.

References

Adams, R. McC. 1981. *The heartland of cities: Surveys of ancient settlement and land use on the central floodplain of the Euphrates.* Chicago.

Adams, R. McC. 2008 "An interdisciplinary overview of a Mesopotamian city and its hinterlands." *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 1.

Algaze, G. 1993. *The Uruk world system.* Chicago.

Algaze, G. 2008. *Ancient Mesopotamia at the dawn of civilization: The evolution of an urban landscape.* Chicago.

Bahrani, Z. 2002. "Performativity and the image: Narrative, representation, and the Uruk Vase." In E. Ehrenberg, ed., *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen,* 15–22. Winona Lake, IN.

Cooper, J. 1983. *Reconstructing history from ancient inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma border conflict.* Malibu, CA.

Cooper, J. 1986. *Sumerian and Akkadian royal inscriptions, I: Presargonic inscriptions.* New Haven, CT

Dahl, J. 2007. *The ruling family of Ur III Umma: A prosopographical analysis of an elite family in southern Iraq 4000 years ago.* Leiden.

Ehrenberg, E., ed. 2002. *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen.* Winona Lake, IN.

Falkenstein, A. 1974. *The Sumerian temple city.* Malibu, CA.

Fleming, D. E. 2004. *Democracy's ancient ancestors: Mari and early collective governance.* Cambridge.

Foster, B. 1981. "A new look at the Sumerian temple state." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24: 225–241.

Frayne, D. 1993. *Sargonic and Gutian periods (2334–2112 BC).* Toronto.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2005. "Public versus private in the ancient Near East." In D. C. Snell, ed., *A companion to the ancient Near East,* 384–396. Malden, MA.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2008a. "Was the Ur III state bureaucratic? Patrimonialism and bureaucracy in the Ur III period." In S. J. Garfinkle and J. C. Johnson, eds., *The growth of an early state in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III administration,* 55–62. Madrid.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2008b. "Silver and gold: Merchants and the economy of the Ur III state." In P. Michalowski, ed., *On Ur III times: Studies in honor of Marcel Sigrist,* 63–70. Boston.

Garfinkle, S. J., and J. C. Johnson, eds. 2008. *The growth of an early state in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III administration.* Madrid.

Gelb, I. J. 1971. "On the alleged temple and state economies in ancient Mesopotamia." *Studi in Onore di Edoardo Volterra* 6: 137–154.

George, A. 1999. *The Epic of Gilgamesh.* London.

Heltzer, M. 2003. "The Tithe in Ugarit." In W. W. Hallo, ed., *The context of scripture.* Vol. 3: *Archival documents from the biblical world,* 201–202. Leiden.

Jacobsen, T. 1943. "Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2: 159–172.

Jacobsen, T. 1957. "Early political development in Mesopotamia." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 52: 91–140.

Liverani, M. 1997. "Lower Mesopotamian fields: South vs. north." In B. Pongratz-Leisten et al., eds., *Ana šadi Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen: Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*, 219–227. Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Liverani, M. 2006. *Uruk: The first city*. London.

Lomas, K., et al., eds. 2007. *Literacy and the state in the ancient Mediterranean*. London.

Marcus, J., and J. A. Sabloff, eds. 2008. *The ancient city: New perspectives on urbanism in the Old and New World*. Santa Fe, NM.

Michalowski, P. 2008. *On Ur III times: Studies in honor of Marcel Sigrist*. Boston.

Nichols, D. L., and T. H. Charlton, eds. 1997. *The archaeology of city-states: Cross-cultural approaches*. Washington, DC.

Nissen, H. J. 1988. *The early history of the ancient Near East, 9000–2000 B.C.* Chicago.

Nissen, H. J. 2001. "Cultural and political networks in the ancient Near East during the fourth and third millennia B.C." In M. Rothman, ed., *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*. Santa Fe, NM.

Nissen, H. J., P. Damerow, and R. K. Englund. 1993. *Archaic bookkeeping, writing and techniques of economic administration in the ancient Near East*. Chicago.

Pardee, D. 2003. "Ugaritic Myths." In W. W. Hallo, ed., *The context of scripture*. Vol. 1: *Canonical compositions from the biblical world*, 242–283. Leiden.

Pollock, S. 1999. *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Cambridge.

Pollock, S. 2001. "The Uruk period in southern Mesopotamia." In M. Rothman, ed., *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*, 181–231. Santa Fe, NM.

Pongratz-Leisten, B., et al., eds. 1997. *Ana šadi Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen: Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*. Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Postgate, J. N. 1992. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and economy at the dawn of history*. London.

Postgate, J. N. 1994. "How many Sumerians per hectare?—probing the anatomy of an early city." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4: 47–65.

Robson, E. 2007. "Literacy, numeracy and the state in early Mesopotamia." In K. Lomas et al., eds., *Literacy and the state in the ancient Mediterranean*, 29–52. London.

Roth, M. 1997. *Law collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. 2nd ed. Atlanta.

Rothman, M., ed. 2001. *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*. Santa Fe, NM.

Sasson, J., ed. 1995. *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*. New York.

Schloen, J. D. 2001. *The house of the father as fact and symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East*. Winona Lake, IN.

Seri, A. 2005. *Local power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*. London.

Snell, D. C., ed. 2005. *A Companion to the ancient Near East*. Malden, MA.

Stone, E. C. 1995. "The development of cities." In J. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*, 235–248. New York.

Stone, E. C. 2005. "Mesopotamian cities and countryside." In D. C. Snell, ed., *A companion to the ancient Near East*, 141–154. Malden, MA.

Trigger, B. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations*. Cambridge.

Trigger, B. 2008. "Early cities: Craft workers, kings, and controlling the supernatural." In J. Marcus and J. A. Sabloff, eds., *The ancient city: New perspectives on urbanism in the Old and New World*, 53–66. Santa Fe, NM.

Van De Mieroop, M. 1997a. *The ancient Mesopotamian city*. Oxford.

Van De Mieroop, M. 1997b. "Why did they write on clay?" *Klio* 79: 7–18.

Van De Mieroop, M. 2002. "In Search of prestige: Foreign contacts and the rise of an elite in Early Dynastic Babylonia." In E. Ehrenberg, ed., *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen*, 125–138. Winona Lake, IN.

Van De Mieroop, M. 2005. *King Hammurabi of Babylon*. Malden, MA.

Van De Mieroop, M. 2007. *A history of the ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA.

Wilcke, C. 2007. *Early ancient Near Eastern law: A history of its beginnings*. Winona Lake, IN.

Wilkinson, T. 1994. "The structure and dynamics of dry-farming states in upper Mesopotamia." *Current Anthropology* 35: 483–520.

Yoffee, N. 1988. "The collapse of ancient Mesopotamian states and civilizations." In N. Yoffee and G. L. Cowgill, eds., *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*, 44–68. Tucson, AZ.

Yoffee, N., and G. L. Cowgill, eds. 1988. *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*. Tucson, AZ.