A map of the area around Gasur, near Kirkuk in northern Iraq, drawn up some time in the Sargonic period (2200 BCE). The central area, below the Rahium river, is described as irrigated gardens belonging to Arala.
Mesopotamia, Ancient Greek Μεσοποταμία, "between rivers" (Euphrates and Tigris)

The Sumerian civilization appeared before 3500 BCE - cradle of civilization

Cities, irrigation systems, a legal system, administration, and even a postal service. **The first writing script developed.** Sumerians and Akkadians (including Assyrians and Babylonians) dominated Mesopotamia until the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE, when it was conquered by the Achaemenid (Old Persian) Empire.
First Work of Literature

- The *Epic of Gilgamesh* originated with Sumerian poems dating from the Third Dynasty of Ur (around 2100 BCE).
- The 11th tablet describes the meeting of Gilgamesh with Utnapishtim. Like Noah in the Hebrew Bible, Utnapishtim had been forewarned of a plan by the gods to send a great flood. He built a boat and loaded it with all his possessions, his kith and kin, domesticated and wild animals and skilled craftsmen of every kind.
First Code of Laws

- King Hammurabi established the Old Babylonian state. Mathematical culture flourished in this period.
- According to tradition, Hammurabi received the code from Shamash, the patron Sun god of Babylon
First Bureaucracy

• The highly centralized Sumerian and Accadian states required large bureaucracies.

• “They recorded aspects of the quantitative measurement of land, livestock, and labour, not only to account for what had already been acquired or produced but also to make short-term predictions of costs and yields” - E. Robson

• Pedagogical curricula started to develop to train scribes more effectively
Cuneiform

- The cuneiform culture in Mesopotamia was coextensive with the mathematical culture.
- Cuneiform was incised on virtually indestructible clay tablets.
- One of the earliest known systems of writing
- The original Sumerian script (4th millennium BCE) was adapted for writing in Akkadian and other languages just like the Roman alphabet is now used for many languages, not just Latin. Sumerian was the first language in the world to be written down. It became completely extinct around 1 BCE.
- By the 2nd century CE all knowledge of how to read cuneiform was lost until its decipherment in the 19th century. About half a million cuneiform tablets have been excavated. Only about 1/10 of them have been read in modern time as there are only a few hundred qualified cuneiformists in the world.
In 1835, Henry Rawlinson, a British East India Company army officer, visited the Behistun Inscriptions in Persia. Carved in the reign of King Darius of Persia (522–486 BCE), they consisted of identical texts in the three official languages of the empire: Old Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite. The Behistun inscription was to the decipherment of cuneiform what the Rosetta Stone was to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs.