

Publisher's Note

Defining Documents in American History series, produced by Salem Press, consists of a collection of essays on important historical documents by a diverse range of writers on a broad range of subjects in American history. This established series offers a dozen titles ranging from Colonial America to Post War 1940s.

This volume, *Defining Documents in World History: Ancient World* is the first *Defining Documents* title that broadens the scope of the series to include world history. *Ancient World* surveys key hieroglyphic writing and documents produced from 2700 B.C.E. to c. 500 C.E., organized under six broad categories:

- Mesopotamia
- Egypt and Environs
- Asia: China and India
- Greece
- Rome
- Distant Lands

Historical documents provide a compelling view of ancient world history. Designed for high school and college students, the aim of the series is to advance historical document studies as an important activity in learning about history.

Essay Format

Ancient World contains 40 primary source documents – many in their entirety. Each document is supported by a critical essay, written by historians and teachers, that includes a Summary Overview, Defining Moment, Author Biography, Document Analysis, and Essential Themes. Readers will appreciate the diversity of the

collected texts, including journals, letters, speeches, political sermons, and laws among others. An important feature of each essay is a close reading of the primary source that develops evidence of broader themes, such as the author's rhetorical purpose, social or class position, point of view, and other relevant issues. In addition, essays are organized by section themes, listed above, highlighting major issues of the period, many of which extend across eras and continue to shape life as we know it around the world. Each section begins with a brief introduction that defines questions and problems underlying the subjects in the historical documents. A brief glossary included at the end of each document highlights keywords important in the study of the primary source. Each essay also includes a Bibliography and Additional Reading section for further research.

Appendixes

- **Chronological List** arranges all documents by year.
- **Web Resources** is an annotated list of web sites that offer valuable supplemental resources.
- **Bibliography** lists helpful articles and books for further study.

Contributors

Salem Press would like to extend its appreciation to all involved in the development and production of this work. The essays have been written and signed by scholars of history, humanities, and other disciplines related to the essay's topics. Without these expert contributions, a project of this nature would not be possible. A list of contributor's names and affiliations appears in the front matter of this volume.

Editor's Introduction

Mesopotamia and Egypt

The earliest form of writing occurred in the Middle East in the third millennium BCE. The favorable conditions in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile River valleys gave birth to the world's earliest civilizations and continued to support them for hundreds or thousands of years. To some extent, the civilizations of Mesopotamia, along the Tigris-Euphrates, and ancient Egypt, along the Nile, were rivals.

Mesopotamian civilization first emerged as several Sumerian city-states in the fourth millennium BCE. An imperial system embracing much of the region developed around 2350 BCE under Sargon of Akkad. The remainder of Mesopotamian history consists of successive empires, differing ethnically and politically but developing along lines similar to the Sumerian-Akkadian pattern. Throughout the era, and despite political changes, an active merchant class existed that made use of cuneiform writing on clay tablets. Additional works on astronomy, mathematics, and "history" (of the legendary/mythical kind) also were produced. The greatest literary work of the era is undoubtedly the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a c. 2100-BCE work about a hero-king from Sumer.

The outlines of Egyptian civilization were formed during the period known as the Old Kingdom (2664–2180 BCE). It changed very little until the rise of Christianity in the later Roman Empire. Hieroglyphic writing was applied to objects, structures, and papyrus. The Book of the Dead, developed between 1700 and 1600 BCE and functioning as a funerary resource, is perhaps Egypt's main claim to literary fame. Although portions of Egypt occasionally fell to foreign conquerors, native dynasties persisted as political institutions until the Persian conquest of Cambyses I (reigned 529–522 BCE). Other, smaller civilizations, such as those of the ancient Israelites, Ethiopians, and Kushites, also existed. The Persian Empire, of present-day Iran, was the last and greatest of the major Middle Eastern empires of old. It extended to virtually the whole region and was notable for the degree of local political autonomy it allowed. Persian rule came to end when Alexander the Great of Macedon (356–323 BCE; reigned 336–323 BCE) embarked on a world-conquering tour of the Middle East and beyond, ultimately going as far as northwestern India.

China and India

Chinese civilization spread from the Huang River valley sometime around 3000 BCE. By the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, early Chinese literature and philosophy, which had existed since about 1500 BCE, began to mature. Descriptions of nature and historical figures became more elaborate. Anecdotes and observations were tied together in illuminating philosophical commentaries. Of the various schools of philosophy that emerged during this period, two of them, Confucianism and Taoism, became major sources of spiritual guidance and understanding for centuries to come. The Confucianist accepts humanity's fate as directed by some invisible power beyond the present world, yet he or she does not seek to grasp the nature of that power. Rather, humankind's way of knowing and becoming are established by humanity itself and epitomized by the ideal human sage. Much of Chinese literature of the Confucian variety is informed by a kind of humanistic worldliness, or the recognition of character as formed through correct behavior (*li*); loyalty to one's nature (*zhong*); mutuality, or reciprocal care of others (*shu*); and filial piety (*xiao*). So influential was Confucianism that it became the state ideology of China in the second century BCE and remained so until the twentieth century CE.

As for Confucius (c. 551–479 BCE) himself, he is thought to have written little. Exactly *what* he wrote continues to be reviewed, but we do know that his aphorisms and a short dissertation were recorded by some of his disciples in the *Analects*. An additional two works by his followers—*The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*—serve to present his philosophy in a more systematic form. In the later Han period, Ban Zhao (45 CE–c. 116 CE) was both the first female Chinese historian and the author of the Confucian tract *Lessons for Women*.

The Taoist school, reputedly founded by Laozi (or Lao Tzu; c. 604–531 BCE), takes the Confucian message as a foil in order to develop an alternative philosophy. A key text of this school, *The Canon of the Way and of Virtue* (*Tao Te Ching*), shows that Taoism emerged sometime before the late 400s BCE. Under Taoism, a higher power called the way or *tao* is considered to exist above the physical universe. The *tao* is not a god, per se, but rather a transcendental force beyond hu-

man existence that makes itself known through the natural order of things. It is both an absolute, supreme good and that which humanity must strive to attain. For the Taoist, all worldly discriminations are artificial and all common virtues are paired with common evils. (A sample passage runs, “Not until the Sage is forever dead can the Bandit be completely put out.”) Thus, Taoist-influenced thought fosters a spirit of freedom from convention—yet this freedom is a demanding kind constrained by the perfection of the *tao*. Literature from this school reveals poets and writers cultivating a sense of self-abandonment while also offering insights into the natural world.

Similarly, in India, the nation’s spiritual creativity has always been accompanied by a distinctive and subtle philosophy. In fact, spirituality and philosophy are never rigorously separated in Indian cultural tradition. According to the Rig Veda, compiled before 1000 BCE, the gods enforce a system of order (*rita*) on earth and in the heavens. The demons, meanwhile, live in darkness and chaos beneath the earth and seek to undermine *rita* and oppose the will of the gods. Both gods and demons are anthropomorphic figures and personifications of forces and phenomena in the world. Thus, in later literary works in ancient India, when the subject is not a direct confrontation between gods and demons, it is human characters, historic or legendary, engaging in analogous battles. The Upanishads, a series of texts written between 500 BCE and 500 CE, were the first works to develop the notion of *karma*, or the doctrine of rebirth and retribution for one’s deeds in succeeding existences. In the Bhagavad Gita (first or second century CE), an extended dialogue takes place between the warrior Prince Arjuna and the charioteer Krishna, an avatar of the deity Vishnu. The Bhagavad Gita explores the nature of god and reality and offers various methods for transcending the limitations of the physical world.

Greece and Rome

Classical Greek civilization, which emerged from the ruins of Mycenaean culture after 1000 BCE, left an extensive literature. In the period of the developed city-state (500–404 BCE), Greek explanations of natural and social phenomena were essentially mythical; even thereafter, myth remained central in Greek poetry; philosophy; and, to a lesser extent, science. The method was key to the earlier Homeric works the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (ninth or eighth centuries BCE). These works celebrated individual action in an age when tribal tradi-

tions enmeshed the individual in a circle of clan, village, and cult. By the time of Herodotus (c. 484–c. 430 BCE), historical writing had begun to take the form a critical narrative illuminated by digressions and anecdotes. Thucydides (c. 460–400 BCE) strove further to turn history into “an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future.” Both authors wrote works that have stood the test of time. Xenophon (c. 430–c. 350 BCE), too, extended the tradition, notably by injecting autobiographical elements into his firsthand historical accounts.

Philosophical developments in Greece ran parallel with various schools of thought, the most well known one being the line that connected Socrates (c. 469–399 BCE) to his disciple Plato (c. 428–c.347 BCE) and to Plato’s student Aristotle (384–322 BCE), in turn. All of these thinkers, who contributed importantly to virtually all areas of philosophy, from metaphysics to ethics, continue to be studied widely (Socrates only through what has been communicated about him by Plato) and remain sources of insight, analysis, and interpretation.

The period from the death of Alexander the Great (in Babylon, at the age of 32) to the Roman conquest of Greece, approximately from 320 BCE to 150 BCE, is known as the Hellenistic Age. It has also been called the Alexandrian Age, however, because of the influence of the great library at Alexandria (Egypt) organized by the Ptolemies, the Greek dynastic rulers in Egypt after the death of Alexander. (Cleopatra was a Ptolemaic pharaoh.) While major cultural advances were made, toward the end of this period, there was a decline in Greek literature and Greek culture generally. One outcome was the Roman conquest of the Hellenic eastern Mediterranean between the second and first centuries BCE. During this period, some authors continued to work with established literary forms; some interpreted Greek thought for Roman (Latin) readers; and still others wrote about Roman matters in Greek. Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE) was somewhat unique in that he did all three—and quite expertly. His main work, *Parallel Lives of Greeks and Romans*, explored history and biography as demonstrations of both scholarly method and ethical learning. Numerous other Greek poets, writers, and orators remained active in this period, though by now, the bulk of cultural innovation was on the Roman side.

For hundreds of years during its classical phase, Rome was the center of Western culture. Roman control brought a measure of prosperity to the vast Mediterranean, Western European, and Near Eastern lands

it administered. Early historians of Rome catalogued its rise, writing primarily in Greek until Cato the Elder (234–149 BCE) made Latin fashionable in scholarly circles. Shortly after Cato's time, Rome confronted an extended social, economic, and political crisis (133–31 BCE) that led ultimately to the collapse of the early Roman Republic and the establishment of the principate under Octavian (Emperor Augustus; 63 BCE–14 CE), which launched the period of the Roman Empire, or the Golden Age. Vergil's *Aeneid* (written between 29–19 BCE), an epic poem often regarded as the finest example of Latin literature, explores Rome and its destiny as an imperial power at the start of this era. From the reign of Vespasian (9–79 CE; ruled 69–79 CE) through that of Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE; ruled 161–180 CE), the emperors kept firm control over the armies and ruled the vast empire through them. The prosperity of the empire rested on the masses of slaves, peasants, and urban poor, whose lives were often desperate. Boundaries between classes were established by law, although the system was subject to manipulation. Moreover, the apex of the Golden Age did not represent the high-water mark of Latin literature; that came earlier with Vergil as well as the philosopher-orator Cicero (106–43 BCE), the historians Livy (c. 64 BCE–17 CE), the philosopher-statesman Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE), and the poets Horace (65–8 BCE) and Ovid (43 BCE–c. 17 CE), among others. In fact, during the empire period Greek literature enjoyed a revival, of sorts, with Lucian (125–180 CE) and Emperor Aurelius preferring it to Latin.

All that is solid melts into air, however. After Aurelius's death and the appointment of his son Commodus (161–192 CE; ruled 177–192 CE) as emperor, the principate began a long decline. There were manpower shortages brought about by plague, insurgencies in the peripheries of the empire, increasing numbers of non-Roman "barbarians" in the army itself, excessive government bureaucracy, economic collapse in the peasant-farming sector, class hostilities, widespread lead poisoning (owing to the use of lead water pipes), a general breakdown of social norms, and many and various other ills to which historians have pointed as causes. The period from 305 to 313, in particular, was one of great confusion and political chaos, with no firm claimant to the emperorship (or "augustus"). Finally, Constantine (c. 272–337 CE) emerged as ruler of the western portion of the empire and introduced Christianity; he eventually became sole emperor and transferred the

capital from Rome to Byzantium, or Constantinople. By the fifth century, the Roman Empire in the West had fallen to barbarian invaders (Goths, Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Franks, and, later, Huns, Slavs, and others). Only the East managed to survive, as the Byzantine Empire, lasting until the fifteenth century.

Other Regions

The "barbarians" of Europe were labeled as such both because they were semi-nomadic, as opposed to having permanent settlements, and because they were either entirely nonliterate or had only a rudimentary system of symbolic inscription. They were also prone to military encounters with neighboring peoples and the use of armies for conquering new territories. (These last two features could describe Rome, as well.) Thus, it is no surprise that as the Roman Empire declined, the barbarian presence increased. In the western reaches of Europe, the Celtic peoples—or Gauls (*Galli*), as Romans called them—had an oral literary tradition, but left no written record other than symbolic elements in their material culture. Even the Druids, a Celtic learned class of priests and teachers, are known through what others wrote *about* them, not through what they wrote about themselves. Outside of ancient Mediterranean Europe, the Near East, North Africa, India, and China, the only other developed writing system during this era is found in Mesoamerica, where the Mayans recorded the succession of kings and other calendrical events. The Maya also maintained an oral tradition of myths and legends that passed down through the generations. The Popol Vuh is one such document, first written down in the 1500s by K'iche' (Quiché) Mayans, yet surviving only through a later copy and a Spanish translation, as the original was lost. By the time of Popol Vuh's inscription and translation, the ancient world as a whole was already a distant memory.

Michael Shally-Jensen, PhD

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■ Umma and Lagash, Sumer

Date: c. 2400 BCE

Geographic Region: Sumer

Translator: Based on a translation by George A. Barton

Summary Overview

The document presents an account of ancient Sumerian conflicts as recorded on a clay cone most likely uncovered from the city-state of Lagash, in what is now southeastern Iraq. The writing describes the ongoing conflict between the city-states of Lagash and Umma, neighbors who fought for control of the surrounding region between 2500 and 2350 BCE. This sources records events from around 2400 BCE.

Defining Moment

The people who came to be known as the Sumerians migrated to the region of Mesopotamia, located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, around 3300 BCE. There, they farmed and established a civilization that came to be known for its city building, its writing system, and its complex system of religious beliefs. Around the time of the writing of this document, Sumer was made up of around twelve city-states, walled cities that dominated the surrounding agricultural lands. Sumerian society centered on the city, which in turn centered on a temple to the city deity. Each city had its own patron god or goddess. The temple, and in time the ruling king, who doubled as a divine representative, largely directed the government and economy of each city-state.

Around 2800 BCE, the king of Kish united the city-states in some fashion, but that union collapsed as the city-states vied for control of fertile lands and trade. It was in this environment that Lagash and Umma struggled to exert their supremacy over southern Sumer, particularly over a valley known as Gu'edena, from about 2500 to 2400 BCE.

Author Biography and Document Information

This document derives from sources transcribed and translated from a clay cone unearthed in the region. Many such cones, cylinders, and seals—in addition to other archaeological sources—were unearthed from the ruins of the city-states, including Lagash. Others were uncovered in sites scattered across the region. The Sumerians fashioned these cones and cylinders from clay and other hard mineral resources. They then carved pictographs and cuneiform symbols into the clay in order to record official documents and treaties, historical records, hymns to their deities, and more. Most of this work would have been done by a select group of professionals known as scribes, who devoted their lives to the mastery of written language. This particular cone would have been engraved by an archivist (or scribe) under the direction King Entemena (also rendered “Enmetena”), who ruled Lagash from about 2418 to 2391 BCE. Entemena succeeded his father, Enannatum, who had succeeded his brother (Entemena’s uncle), Eannatum, both of whom are mentioned in the document.

This translation is based upon an earlier translation by George Aaron Barton, a Canadian biblical scholar and professor of Semitic languages. That translation appears in Barton’s 1929 work *The Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*. Born in Québec, Barton attended school in New York before earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard University. Barton taught for more than thirty years in the fields of biblical studies, religious history, and Semitic language. He is perhaps best known for his treatise *Archaeology and the Bible*, first published in 1916.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

By the immutable word of Enlil, king of the lands, father of the gods, Ningirsu and Shara set a boundary to their lands. Mesilim, King of Kish, at the command of his deity Kadi, set up a stele in the plantation of that field.

Ush, ruler of Umma, formed a plan to seize it. That stele he broke in pieces, into the plain of Lagash he advanced. Ningirsu, the hero of Enlil, by his just command, made war upon Umma. At the command of Enlil, his great net ensnared them. He erected their burial mound on the plain in that place.

II

Eannatum, ruler of Lagash, brother of the father of Entemena... for Enakalli, ruler of Umma, set the border to the land. He carried a canal from the great river to Guedin. He opened the field of Ningirsu on its border for 210 spans to the power of Umma. He ordered the royal field not to be seized. At the canal he inscribed a stele. He returned the stele of Mesilim to its place. He did not encroach on the plain of Mesilim. At the boundary-line of Ningirsu, as a protecting structure, he built the sanctuary of Enlil, the sanctuary of Ninkhursag.... By harvesting, the men of Umma had eaten one storehouse-full of the grain of Nina, the grain of Ningirsu; he caused them to bear a penalty. They brought 144,000 gur, a great storehouse full. The taking of this grain was not to be repeated in the future.

Urlumma, ruler of Umma drained the boundary canal of Ningirsu, the boundary canal of Nina; those steles he threw into the fire, he broke in pieces; he destroyed the sanctuaries, the dwellings of the gods, the protecting

shrines, the buildings that had been made. He was as puffed up as the mountains; he crossed over the boundary canal of Ningirsu. Enannatum, ruler of Lagash, went into battle in the field of Ugigga, the irrigated field of Ningirsu. Entemena, the beloved son of Enannatum, completely overthrew him. Urlumma fled. In the midst of Umma he killed him. He left behind 60 soldiers of his force on the bank of the canal "Meadow-recognized-as-holy-from-the-great-dagger." He left these men—their bones on the plain. He heaped up mounds for them in 5 places. Then Ili Priest of Ininni of Esh in Girsu, he established as a vassal ruler over Umma.

III

Ili, took the ruler of Umma into his hand. He drained the boundary canal of Ningirsu, a great protecting structure of Ningirsu, unto the bank of the Tigris above from the banks of Girsu. He took the grain of Lagash, a storehouse of 3600 gur. Entemena, ruler of Lagash declared hostilities on Ili, whom for a vassal he had set up. Ili, ruler of Umma, wickedly flooded the dyked and irrigated field; he commanded that the boundary canal of Ningirsu; the boundary canal of Nina be ruined.... Enlil and Ninkhursag did not permit. Entemena, ruler of Lagash, whose name was spoken by Ningirsu, restored their canal to its place according to the righteous word of Enlil, according to the righteous word of Nina, their canal which he had constructed from the river Tigris to the great river, the protecting structure, its foundation he had made of stone....

GLOSSARY

dyke: to enclose, restrain, or protect by a dyke, which is a ditch or a bank of earth used to control water flow

Enlil: Mesopotamian sky god and god of agriculture

gur: a measure of volume, about 80 gallons

Kadi: goddess of justice

Nina: city-state in ancient Sumer, located southeast of Lagash; also the name of the goddess of that city-state

GLOSSARY CONTINUED

Ningirsu: god of rain and thunderstorms, patron god of Lagash

Shara: god of war, patron god of Umma

stele: an upright stone slab or pillar, usually carved with an inscription or design

vassal: a servant; a person granted usage or control of land in return for a pledge of loyalty

Document Analysis

Only about eighteen miles separated the rival city-states of Lagash and Umma, but that eighteen miles covered highly valued and contested land. Sometime around 2500 BCE, King Mesilim of Kish, located northwest of Lagash and Umma, established a treaty between the two warring city-states. The document opens by accounting for this treaty, which is set down on a stele (a stone marker, often with images and inscriptions carved on it), erected by Mesilim. That stele has been lost, but the text of the treaty was recorded on the Cone of Entemena, preserved by the Louvre in Paris, France. The treaty and its stele defined borders that separated lands ruled by Lagash and Umma, denoted in the text by their patron deities Ningirsu and Shara. The text also begins by invoking the Sumerian god Enlil, one of a triad of primary gods. The reference to all three deities in the opening lines demonstrates the central role of religion in Sumerian civilization.

The document goes on to detail the failure of the treaty to maintain peace. First, the ruler of Umma violated the agreement and marched on Lagash, and Lagash responded by attacking and defeating the forces of Umma. The text (which, again, was commissioned by Entemena, ruler of Lagash) lauds Lagash (again referred to as Ningirsu) as “the hero of Enlil, by his just command.”

The second part of the document explains how Eannatum, previous ruler of Lagash and Entemena’s uncle, reestablished the peace and set a new border marker. According to the document, Eannatum not only erected a new stele and treaty, but also reset the stele raised by Mesilim. Eannatum also built a sanctuary to the god Enlil to protect the boundary and had a canal dug to mark the border. The references to canals, irrigation, and dykes throughout the passage not only suggest the

importance of agriculture but also offer insight into the technological advancement of the Sumerians.

The source then details how the people of Umma took grains from the lands of Lagash. A penalty was exacted, and the document states, “The taking of this grain was not to be repeated in the future.” The taking of the grain suggests ongoing treaty violations by Umma, continuing through the successive reigns of Enannatum and then Entemena. Urumma, the ruler of Umma, is said to have drained the canal that marked the boundary and destroyed the treaty stele of Eannatum and Mesilim, as well as the sanctuary of Enlil and other buildings. Entemena then led the forces of Lagash to defeat the Urumma’s forces, killing Urumma in battle. Entemena then set up a priest named Ili to rule over Umma.

The third part of the document tells how Ili then apparently betrayed Entemena, again draining the boundary canal and stealing grain. The account concludes by stating that Entemena prevented further destruction and restored the canal. Again, praise goes to Lagash and its ruler with the phrases, “according to the righteous word of Enlil, according to the righteous word of Nina.”

Essential Themes

The main theme of the document reflects its purpose: to record the political and military conflict that occurred between the city-states of Lagash and Umma around 2400 BCE. The source focuses on the shifting patterns of control and the ongoing competition for lands in southern Sumer. It demonstrates not only the role of conflict in the region, but also the leadership of the Sumerian kings who ruled the various city-states. The focus on canals, irrigated lands, and grain also suggests the importance of agriculture in the region and the nature of fertile lands and water resources as a driving force behind conflict. Conflict in the region con-

tinued until around 2350 BCE, when the Akkadian king Sargon the Great united the Sumerian city-states under one rule and set out to conquer neighboring lands.

—Christina Dendy

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