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Sargon of Akkad

Sargon of Akkad, «*SAHR gon of AK ad or AH kahd*», was a king who founded the first great empire in history. He reigned from 2334 to 2279 B.C. His imperial city, Akkad, has never been located.

Sargon built his empire by conquest in Mesopotamia (now mostly Iraq) in the 2300's B.C. He may have extended his military operations over even more of southwestern Asia. Sargon's own inscriptions tell us that he conquered major rivals at Kish, Umma, and Lagash. Kish, Umma, and Lagash were *city-states* (cities that governed themselves and their surrounding territory) in Sumer, a region in southern Mesopotamia. Sargon also claimed to have led his soldiers to victories as far east as present-day Iran and as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. It is not unlikely that he established sea trade with India.

Sargon was an able administrator. He appointed "men of Akkad" to serve as civil governors of conquered cities alongside old local families and Akkadian generals. He was one of the first kings to maintain a permanent army. Despite frequent revolts in Sumer, Sargon's *dynasty* (family of rulers) remained in power until about 2200 B.C.

A Semitic language known as Akkadian became the administrative language for much of Sargon's empire. Formerly, Sumerian had served as the main language of the region. However, Sumerian religious customs and literature continued.

Stories about Sargon were composed and modified for nearly 2,000 years. According to one legend, Sargon began his political career as a high court official under King Ur-Zababa of the Sumerian city-state of Kish. According to another legend, Sargon was discovered as an infant in a basket among the rushes lining the banks of the Euphrates River.

See also [Babylonia](#); [Semites](#); [Sumer](#).

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