

## Ancient Mesopotamian Religion

Mesopotamian religion refers to the religious beliefs and practices of the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, particularly Sumer, Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia between circa 3500 BC and 400 AD, after which they largely gave way to Syriac Christianity. The religious development of Mesopotamia and Mesopotamian culture in general was not particularly influenced by the movements of the various peoples into and throughout the area, particularly the south. Rather, Mesopotamian religion was a consistent and coherent tradition which adapted to the internal needs of its adherents over millennia of development.

The earliest undercurrents of Mesopotamian religious thought date to the mid 4th millennium BC, and involved the worship of forces of nature as providers of sustenance. In the 3rd millennium BC objects of worship were personified and became an expansive cast of divinities with particular functions. The last stages of Mesopotamian polytheism, which developed in the 2nd and 1st millenniums, introduced greater emphasis on personal religion and structured the gods into a monarchical hierarchy with the national god being the head of the pantheon. Mesopotamian religion finally declined with the spread of Iranian religions during the Achaemenid Empire and with the Christianization of Mesopotamia.