

Mesopotamia

Birth of Civilisation

by

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1 Introduction

The game simulates the ebb and flow of peoples in ancient Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean, from the dawn of civilisation in Sumeria to just before the arrival of the Persians.

1.1 Object

Mesopotamia is a game played by up to five players in five Epochs (or Turns). Each Epoch details one period of ancient history. In each Epoch, players run one People from that time period, *together with their Peoples from previous Epochs*. Each People expands across the map, later falling as new Peoples take their place.

The object of the game is to conquer the most territory through the course of the game. This is measured by Victory Points (VPs). The Player with the most VPs at the end of the game wins.

1.2 People Cards

Each Epoch, players receive a People Card. It has a number, which represents when the People moves within the game. Here the Sumerians are People 1, showing they move first in every Epoch.

The card also shows that the Sumerians receive eight counters in Epoch 1 in the Start Area called Uruk; and four extra in Epoch 2. They have a special property, Urbanisation.



I admit freely that the basic system is inherited from that great game, *History of the World* (HOTW).

[Text in blue shows changes from the last version.](#)

The game finishes before the arrival of the Persians because they conquered almost every area on the entire map. Not much point in simulating that, eh what?

Note this significant change from *HOTW*.

Some Peoples have two People Numbers. For example, the Egyptians are People 3 and People 12. Their card notes that they move as People 12 in Epoch 3.

This means that the Egyptians normally move as the third People in each Epoch. However, in Epoch 3 (only) they will move twelfth in order.

This recreates the resurgence of the Egyptians (New Kingdom) late in Epoch 3.

1.3 Playing Counters (Tribes)

Each player uses counters with the same symbol. These counters represent the component tribes of each people. The symbols for each player are:

- Brooch
- Head
- Mask
- Statue
- Urn



The colour and number shown on the piece shows which Epoch it is first used in.

For example, say that the Statue player is the Egyptians in Epoch 1. He or she uses the blue Statue pieces marked '1' in Epoch 1 for the Egyptians. When the Egyptians grow or get reinforcements in later Epochs, the Statue player continues to use the blue '1' pieces for the Egyptians.

If the Statue player drew the Medes in Epoch 5, he or she would use the red '5' Statue pieces in that Epoch to represent the Medes.

1.4 Setting up the Game

- Each player takes all the pieces with the same symbol.
- Separate the People cards into the five Epochs.
- Randomly assign one People from Epoch 1 to each player.
- Place the Victory Point markers on the zero places on the Victory Point Track.

2 Playing the Game

The game is played in five Epochs or turns. Each Epoch is divided into two segments:

- New People Allocation Segment
- Strategy Segment

2.1 New People Allocation Segment

In this segment, Players receive one People card each.

Skip this segment in Epoch 1. Each Player already has a People.

Shuffle the Peoples due to appear this Epoch and place the pack face down.

Peoples are drawn by players in reverse order of VPs, that is, starting with the player with fewest VPs. If there is a tie, resolve it in favour of the player who had the lower People number last turn.

The first Player to draw takes a card from the deck and looks at it, keeping it concealed.

The drawing player decides whether to retain the card, and play that People in this Epoch, or pass it to another Player. If you pass the card, the Player receiving it will play that People in this Epoch. A player getting a passed card cannot examine it until all the cards have been distributed.

The draw continues until every player has drawn a card. Clearly, a player who has been given a People earlier on cannot retain the People card they draw, and must pass it on.

2.2 Strategy Segment

The strategy segment consists of a set of People rounds, one round for each People in play. Play proceeds People by People (**not** player by player), starting with People 1. Each People attempts to expand into adjacent Areas.

On Epoch 1 each player will play one People, on Epoch 2 each will have two Peoples in play and so on. Each player will therefore usually play several People rounds in a turn, one of which will be a new People, and the rest Peoples from previous Epochs.

Some Peoples change their People number. See the note above.

Note for *History of the World* players: The fact that Peoples remain active is a fundamental difference to *HOTW*.

2.3 The People Round

In each People round, you:

- Collect Tribes to form your Tribal pool.
- Expand your People by placing Tribes on the map.
- Count the Victory Points gained by the People, adding them to your existing Victory Points.

2.3.1 The Tribal Pool for a New People

1. The People card lists the number of tribes available to the People. Take this number of counters: they are your Tribal pool.
2. Place one Tribe in the listed start Area. If there is a Tribe of another People already there, that Tribe can move to an adjacent Area that is either (i) empty, or (ii) occupied by a Tribe of its own People. If there is no such Area, the Tribe is removed from the board.
3. Follow the Expansion rules in the next section.

Example: The Hyksos take 6 tribes, placing the first in Sinai.

Exception

A People starting in the Great Green places its first Tribe in any adjacent Area.

2.3.2 The Tribal Pool for an Old People

Peoples of previous Epochs can continue to expand. They receive new Tribes in one of two ways:

- **Growth.** An existing People receives one new Tribe for every three Areas they occupy. Round to the nearest whole number.
- **Reinforcements.** As well as normal growth, some Peoples receive extra tribes. These are listed on the People card.

Take the appropriate number of counters. They are your Tribal pool. You can only expand up to the counter limit.

Then follow the Expansion rules in the next section.

2.4 Expansion in the People Round

Play consists of placing a People's Tribes or counters on the map. A People commences from a Start Area listed on their card, and expands into adjacent Areas. Expansion rules are the same regardless of whether the Tribes are due to growth, reinforcement or the arrival of a new people.

Tribes of different Peoples cannot occupy the same Area at the end of each People round. The rules ensure that this cannot happen.

2.4.1 Placing Tribes

You take Tribes from your Tribal pool, placing them one at a time.

You can place a Tribe in an Area already occupied by the People, or in an Area adjacent to one occupied by the People.

If you place a counter in a hostile area, you immediately conduct combat (that is, before placing another Tribe).

2.4.2 Seas

You cannot place Tribes in a sea Area. There is one sea Area on the map: The Great Green.

Some Peoples begin in the Great Green. They can place their initial Tribes in any areas adjacent to the sea. Note that they cannot finish the round with any Tribes left in the sea area.

The following areas function as normal land areas: Alishiya, Knossos, Khania, Islands.

2.4.3 Uninhabited Areas

You cannot expand into Uninhabited areas.

2.4.4 The Desert: Aramaea and Kaldu

Kaldu and Aramaea are desert Areas that are uncrossable. They are surrounded by a thick boundary. A People with a Tribe in Kaldu or Aramaea can expand out of these into adjacent Areas as usual.

A People with no Tribes on the map cannot grow or receive reinforcements.

Slow Growth special ability

These Peoples receive one Tribe only.

Fast Growth special ability

These Peoples receive one Tribe for every two Areas (round up).

Once placed, a Tribe never moves.

You can place up to three Tribes in the one Area. You might want to do this to protect valuable Areas.

An area is not adjacent if it touches an area only on a corner.

Seafaring special ability

If a People with this special ability occupies an area adjacent to the Great Green, it can place a Tribe in any other adjacent area. For example, if the Minoans have Knossos, they can expand to Canaan.

The history of Mesopotamia is awash with Semitic invasions

Aramaea can expand **out** of these into adjacent Areas, as usual. However, a People cannot expand across the boundary *into* Kaldu or Aramaea.

launched out of the desert.

2.5 Combat during Expansion

Combat occurs when you attempt to expand into an occupied Area.

Place your Tribe in the Area. Combat is resolved like this:

- You (the Attacker) roll two dice. Keep the higher number.
- The other player (the Defender) rolls one dice.

The player with the higher number wins. The losing Tribe is removed from the map. **In the case of a tie, each player removes a Tribe.**

If you lose the attack, you can try again, provided you have Tribes left in your Tribal pool.

Military special ability

A People with this ability adds one to each dice roll when attacking.

Urbanisation special ability

A People with this ability wins ties (in attack or defence).

2.5.1 Difficult Terrain Attacks

Some boundaries between Areas are designated as difficult terrain. These are usually mountains. If you attack across such a boundary, the Defender gets to roll two dice, keeping the higher number, just like the Attacker.

The difficult terrain symbol must be in the Defender's area. For example, in an attack from Ashur into Gutium, the Defender in Gutium rolls two dice. But an attack from Gutium into Ashur is just a normal attack.

In some cases, a border has the difficult terrain symbol on both sides. For example, attacks between Kanesh and Kizzuwatna are difficult in both directions.

2.6 Ending the People Round: Counting Victory Points

At the end of each People round, count the Victory Points gained by the People. Add these to the points already on your Victory Point Track. You get Victory points as follows:

- Two points for each purple Area (double-points area).
- One point for each other Area.
- Double the points for occupying the Area listed as a Bonus Area on the People card (this could be two or four points).

Double-value Areas:

Knossos, Kanesh, Ugarit, Byblos, Subartu, Memphis, Thebes, Babylon, Ur

2.7 Ending the Game

The game ends after the People Round of the Medes at the end of Epoch five.

			Tribes Received				
Name	Origin	Order	1	2	3	4	5
Sumerians	Uruk	1	8	4			
Elamites	Elam	2	5				
Egyptians (1)	Avaris	3	4	4	See below		
Akkadians	Akkad	4	12				
Guti	Gutium	5	5				
Amorites	Aramaea	6		8			
Minoans	Knossos	7		6			
Phoenicians	Byblos	8		5			
Kassites	Gutium	9		5	5		
Hittites	Arzawa	10		5	5		
Hyksos	Sinai	11			6		
Egyptians (2)	-	12			6		
Hurrians	Nisibis	13			7		
Mycenaeans	Thrace	14			9		
Assyrians (1)	Ashur	15			5		See below
Sea Peoples	Great Green	16			6		
Phrygians	Ahhiyawa	17				6	
Lydians	Lukka	18				5	7
Dorians	Thrace	19				6	
Chaldeans (1)	Kaldu	20				7	See below
Aramaeans	Aramaea	21				7	
Philistines	Canaan	22					4
Hebrews	Canaan	23					3
Uartians	Urtu	24					5
Cimmerians	Urtu	25					9
Assyrians (2)	-	26					12
Chaldeans (2)	-	27					9
Medes	Media	28					12

Blue indicates the People's original number of Tribes. Yellow indicates reinforcements.