

THE FIRST CITY-STATES

By about 3000BC, some Sumerian towns, like Kish, Eridu, Nippur and Ur, had grown into vast cities - even bigger than Uruk. Over time, these cities began to control more and more of the surrounding land and villages, and eventually developed into independent city-states.

TAKING OVER

Early Sumerian towns had been governed by elected officials. But, as towns grew into cities, the small local organizations that had looked after daily life grew into huge governments, with hundreds of officials. These began to be appointed directly by powerful men, without consulting anyone.

KINGS AND WARLORDS

City-states squabbled with each other over valuable farmland, and petty disputes sometimes grew into full-blown wars. So rulers built strong fortified walls around their cities. In wartime, people moved inside the walls for protection, and a warlord, or lugal, was chosen to lead the fighting. As wars grew more frequent, lugals stayed in power longer. Eventually, they were recognized as kings and when they died, their sons took over.

This is how the great Sumerian city of Ur would have looked at the height of its power.

This is the huge ziggurat of Nanna, the moon god.

Throng of people processed up the temple steps, bringing gifts.

The temple staff lived in houses built inside the temple walls.

