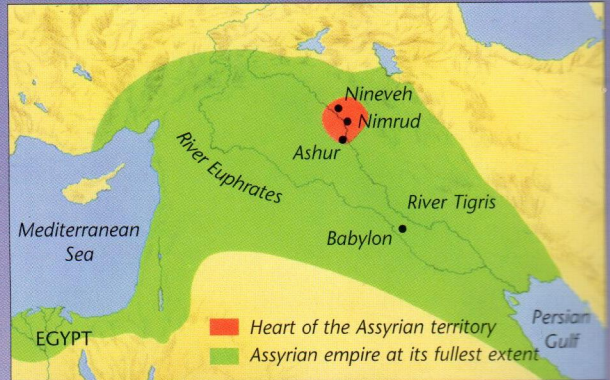


# THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

The people we now call Assyrians came from a small area on the fertile banks of the Tigris in northern Mesopotamia. Their capital city was Ashur, named after their chief god, Ashur. At times Assyria was small and weak, but it also became a powerful empire with a fearsome

reputation for cruelty and violence.



Map showing the smallest and largest areas of Assyrian control



This colossal statue of a lion is 2.5m (8.5 feet) tall. It comes from an Assyrian temple that was next to the palace of the king.



Riches from around the empire were used to create fabulous jewels, like this bangle, for Assyrian kings and queens.

## EARLY YEARS

The early Assyrians were rather unimportant, dominated by the nearby civilisations of Sumer and Akkad. But the collapse of Ur (see page 25) made them independent, and they established themselves firmly in northern Mesopotamia.

## THE AMORITES

Around 2000BC, the Amorites, who had earlier conquered Ur, attacked Assyria and became its new rulers. The most famous of them was Shamshi-Adad, who ruled from 1813 to 1776BC. He conquered the lands around Assyria and built up trade and an empire which covered most of northern Mesopotamia. Historians usually refer to this period as the first Assyrian empire.

## CHANGING HANDS

Around 1740BC, the Babylonians took over and ended the first Assyrian empire. In the years that followed, the Assyrians were sometimes independent, and sometimes ruled by the Babylonians or others. From around 1500 to 1350BC, the Mitanni took control in the area. At its height, their empire stretched to the Mediterranean, but they were eventually wiped out by the Hittites.