

TASK AND FATE FACTS

PRIEST/PRIESTESS



Study the Task and Fate Facts for your role each day. The facts will give your clan members information to help complete Tasks and make decisions when confronted by Fate. Be prepared at all times to contribute what you know to help your clan.

Organized Religion

The first civilizations in the Fertile Crescent were *polytheistic*, meaning the people believed in many gods. They believed that different gods and goddesses controlled every aspect of their existence. They thought that some gods controlled the weather. They believed that other gods controlled their health or the success of their crops. Still other gods protected them from their enemies. Ancient people believed that pleasing the gods was essential to the survival and success of their society. Each city-state believed that one certain god or goddess would provide special protection for the inhabitants. They built great pyramid-like temples called *ziggurats* in honor of that god or goddess. A ziggurat was usually the center of worship in the city.



Fear and Sacrifices

These ancient people did not understand the cause of deadly storms, earthquakes, droughts, or floods. They believed that natural disasters happened because their gods were angry. Therefore, the most

important duty of every citizen was to please the gods and keep them happy. They were sure that happy gods would provide good crops, good health, and success in trade or war. Some citizens became priests and priestesses. They developed complex ceremonies and rituals. They hoped that these rituals would please their gods. They led the people in worship of the gods. They taught the proper dances, songs, and prayers. Most early civilizations offered sacrifices to their gods to keep them happy. The sacrifices were usually small animals, but sometimes they were human.

Rulers and Religion

Rulers in Mesopotamia claimed that their power and authority came from their city-state's god or goddess. They were often the leaders of the religion as well as the city-state. The rulers often performed religious ceremonies along with their priests or priestesses. Most rulers expected to be revered as if they were gods themselves. The claim of divine authority protected these leaders from questions or challenges.



The sacrifice of a young lion before the Hittite god, Teshub. Teshub, the figure with upraised arm at the left, appears to be taking a very lively part in the ceremony himself. A Hittite relief from Carchemish.