

but he keeps silent regarding the fact that Moab's emancipation from Israel was only made possible by the victories of Hazael of Damascus, and that he himself was probably a vassal of Damascus.

For theological history, the Mesha stele is a significant witness to the kind of "deuteronomistic" theologoumena that, as early as the 9th century BCE, were common to Syro-Palestinian religion: the practice of the "ban," the notion of God's wrath, and of the intervention of the national god in political and military affairs ("God's action in history").

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**Mesmer, Franz Anton** (May 23, 1734, Iznang on Lake Constance – Mar 5, 1815, Meersburg), physician and natural scientist, and the founder of what is known as "animal magnetism" (Mesmerism). After studying theology in Dillingen and Ingolstadt, Mesmer began to study medicine in Vienna in 1759. In his dissertation of 1766, he outlined his theory of the magnetic fluid which permeates the entire created world. Illness, according to this theory, is a congestion of this cosmic energy, while healing is the restoration of its natural flowing state. Disagreeing with the virulent belief of the time in the healing power of the magnet, Mesmer began to develop new types of therapy which he called "animal magnetism" and which he propagated in his publications. Unlike the mineral magnet therapy, which relied on the power of the magnet, Mesmer postulated the existence of an animalistic-magnetic force which is allegedly inherent in all living beings. The physician with the necessary talent, he claimed, only needs his hands for healing. Spectacular healing successes made Mesmer famous, but also raised suspicions that he was a charlatan. He moved to Paris in 1777, where he gathered "disciples" and founded "societies of harmony." Mesmerism soon became fashionable throughout Europe. Mesmer moved to Switzerland in 1803 and spent his last years on Lake Constance. His teaching belongs to the formative stages of → psychoanalysis and still plays a key role in the concepts of healing therapy. It has repeatedly given rise to sects such as → Christian Science and has proved a rich source of inspiration for literature.

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## Mesopotamia

I. Geography – II. History – III. Society – IV. Religion – V. Literature and Art

### I. Geography

The name Mesopotamia, Greek "(land) between the rivers (i.e. Euphrates and Tigris)," originally only denoted the territories between the bend of the Euphrates near Baghdad and the Khabur River, i.e. the area known as Ġazīra ("island") in Arabic; the meaning of the name was later extended to include the entire land between the Persian fringe mountains in the east (Zagros) and the Syro-Arabian desert in the west, as well as between the Taurus Mountains and the Persian Gulf, and was finally reduced in scope again to designate only the southern part of modern → Iraq. Northern Mesopotamia in the broad sense belongs to the so-called Fertile Crescent, where rain-fed agriculture is largely possible; in its eastern part, between the Tigris and the Greater Zab River, lay the heartland of Assyria with the main settlements → Ashur and → Nineveh; judging from a large number of archaeological sites such as Tell Halaf (close to the Turkish border) and → Mari (on the right bank of the Euphrates), the now sparsely populated western part of Mesopotamia extending into → Syria was a major cultural landscape until the Roman period. Separated from the latter by a wide, desert-like strip of land, the south is taken up by the postglacial alluvial plain of Babylonia, in which the Euphrates and the faster-flowing Tigris (which carries more water on account of several confluents such as the Zab and the Diyala) form a complex river system that was regulated through canals by the 3rd millennium and brought agricultural prosperity, which in turn enabled numerous cities to emerge. The ancient Near Eastern land name "Sumer and Akkad," which was replaced by "→ Chaldea" around the middle of the 1st millennium, originally mirrors an ethnic and linguistic duality, but is also relevant in a geographical sense: Akkad refers to the northern part with the principal settlements Sippar, → Babylon, and Kish, while Sumer designates the south with → Uruk (in the Old Testament: Erech), Lagash, and → Ur. The latter city was a coastal seaport until the 2nd millennium, as the coastline once lay much further inland as a result of the postglacial fluctuations of the sea level; the advance of the coastline to its present-day