THE GREAT COURSES®

Topic
History

Subtopic
Civilization & Culture

Ancient Mesopotamia

Life in the Cradle of Civilization

Course Guidebook

Professor Amanda H. Podany
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

PUBLISHED BY:

THE GREAT COURSES

Corporate Headquarters
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500
Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299
Phone: 1-800-832-2412
Fax: 703-378-3819
www.thegreatcourses.com

Copyright © The Teaching Company, 2018

Printed in the United States of America

This book is in copyright. All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of The Teaching Company.

Amanda H. Podany, PhD

Professor of History

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Amanda H. Podany is a Professor of History at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where she has taught since 1990. She earned her BA in Anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), after which she obtained her MA in the Archaeology of Ancient Western Asia from the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London. Professor Podany returned to UCLA in 1982 and received her PhD in Ancient Near Eastern History from the school in 1988. Her dissertation was a study of the history and chronology of the ancient Hana kingdom in present-day Syria.

Professor Podany has continued to publish her findings about the Hana kingdom and its contributions to the understanding of the chronology of the 2nd millennium BCE. She has also published in the fields of scribal tradition, international relations in the ancient Near East, and ancient legal practices. Professor Podany has been an invited speaker at several international symposiums in her field and is working on a study of the relationships between kings and their subjects in the Late Bronze Age.

In 2013, Professor Podany was the recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support her research. Her book *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East* was awarded the Norris and Carol Hundley Award by the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. Professor Podany is also the author of *The Ancient Near East: A Very Short Introduction* and *The Land of Hana: Kings, Chronology, and Scribal Tradition.* She was the co–general editor of The World in Ancient Times (with Ronald Mellor), a series of nine books on ancient history for secondary students. Professor Podany wrote *The Ancient Near Eastern World* (along with Marni McGee) for that series. She has also worked extensively in providing professional development for teachers and received a certificate of recognition from the California Department of Education. ■

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

LECTURE GUIDES

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

LIFE IN THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

In this course, we'll explore the Mesopotamian world from the era of the first settlements more than 12,000 years ago to the earliest cities in the 4th millennium BCE. We'll end up in the 6th century BCE, when Mesopotamia was conquered by the Persian Empire during the reign of Cyrus the Great. At that point, the people were no longer ruled by a government within their own land.

This course will look at religion—which pervaded everyone's understanding of the universe—and at kingship, society, agriculture, trade, justice, literature, art, warfare, daily life, and more. We'll encounter some extraordinary people: kings like Sargon, who created the world's first empire; Ur-Namma, who developed the first written laws; and Tushratta, who maintained an affectionate correspondence with the pharaohs of Egypt.

Others were religious leaders, like Enheduanna, a priestess who survived an attempt to expel her and wrote hymns about her experiences. We'll meet princesses like Kirum of Mari, who was so miserable in her marriage that she threatened to jump off the roof of her husband's palace. We'll also meet authors like Sin-leqe-unnini, who wrote the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Some of the people who illuminate this era would never have guessed that they'd be remembered so many thousands of years later. These include Amat-Shamash, a woman who bequeathed her house to her daughter, only to have her brothers contest it in court after her death. A written will, spoken testimony, and justice prevailed on behalf of the younger woman in the face of her more powerful uncles.

All of these people—and millions of others like them—lived, loved, worried and celebrated during the long centuries of Mesopotamia's power. They cared about the events of their day with the same passion that we have for events in our own lives.

Each person was an actor in this vast panorama of history, responding to the events of their time. The documents and objects and buildings that survive give us a window into their lives. We can read their words, stand in their houses, admire their sculptures, and try our best to reconstruct their world—and to understand them. ■

1

UNCOVERING NEAR EASTERN CIVILIZATION

Mesopotamia is the ancient name for what's now Iraq. People have often heard of it because it was home to a lot of firsts: the world's first cities, the earliest writing, the first written laws, the first diplomatic relationships—along with a host of other things. That's all true. However, Mesopotamia was much more than a place of firsts. Its civilization was rich and long lasting, surviving for more than 3,000 years. This lecture starts this course's work of uncovering ancient Mesopotamia.

STUDYING MESOPOTAMIA

- The study of Mesopotamian history began relatively recently, with the decipherment of their writing system about 170 years ago. This was accompanied by a flurry of archaeological excavations in Iraq, Iran, and Syria—work that has continued ever since. The excavations revealed cities of great sophistication that thrived in an era long before the Greeks, Romans, and Israelites.

- More than a quarter of a million documents have been found—most of them still unpublished. Many haven't even been read yet. Therefore, being a Mesopotamian historian is like being an explorer of uncharted waters.

- Luckily, the Mesopotamians wrote on clay. That's fortunate because paper, papyrus, and parchment all disintegrate over time. Papyrus documents typically survive only in desert areas. As a result, there are giant gaps in our knowledge of ancient civilizations that used organic substances to document their lives.

- Although many documents do survive from ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Israel, these are the ones that were considered so important that they were copied over and over again. Usually missing are records of daily life—the letters, administrative lists, contracts, court records, and so on that would give us a deeper understanding of their cultures. These are exactly the kinds of documents that we do have in huge numbers from Mesopotamia.

- Some ancient clay tablets were baked on purpose, to preserve them. Others were baked by accident, when buildings burned down. Baked tablets are usually well preserved. They're like bricks. Other tablets were left out in the sun to harden. They might still survive in the ground, but often they fall apart easily and need to be pieced together and conserved.

CUNEIFORM

- Fortunately, we can read these ancient words relatively easily today. This is thanks to the efforts of a number of 19th-century scholars who deciphered cuneiform almost 2,000 years after it was last used. Of course, it's hard to decipher a script or language without a bilingual text that includes the same document in a known language along with an unknown one.

- For Egyptian hieroglyphs, the key was the Rosetta Stone. This is a stone inscription from Egypt, bearing the decree of a Ptolemaic king. It includes the same text in Greek and in two forms of Egyptian so that all literate Egyptians could read it. The Greek version provided the key to understanding the hieroglyphic inscription.

- For cuneiform, one document that served this same purpose was the Behistun inscription. Unlike the Rosetta Stone, it's never been located in a museum. It's a giant carving on the side of an inaccessible mountain in Iran.

Behistun inscription

RAWLINSON AND HINCKS

- In 1836 and 1837, an intrepid scholar and adventurer named Henry Rawlinson climbed the mountain face several times. He made copies of part of the inscription. He even made some molds of some sections. He realized that there were three separate versions of the text, all in cuneiform. He guessed—rightly, as it turned out—that they might be in three different languages.

- By 1838, Rawlinson and an Irishman named Edward Hincks had deciphered the easiest of the three languages, with the help of an international group of scholars. Hincks had worked on cuneiform previously, and Rawlinson used some of his insights. This part of the Behistun inscription turned out to be in an ancient version of the Persian language.

- It used an alphabetic cuneiform script with 43 characters. Old Persian was enough like Middle and Modern Persian to be understandable. The text proved to be a royal inscription by the Persian king Darius I (ca. 550–486 BCE).

- The second version of the inscription had 131 different characters, and was in an ancient language called Elamite. It was deciphered later by a different group of scholars. The last version of Darius's Behistun inscription turned out to be in Akkadian, the language that was spoken and written in Mesopotamia for centuries. It was much harder to decipher.

- Rawlinson went back to Behistun in 1847 to work on this third version of the text. However, Edward Hincks had already completed a lot of the decipherment, using different trilingual inscriptions, also from Iran. It was known that this form of cuneiform represented a Semitic language.

- Hincks recognized that every cuneiform sign could be read as a complete syllable. Each one could be read as a consonant plus a vowel, or a vowel plus a consonant, or a combination of consonants and vowels; however, not one of them represented a consonant all by itself. He was right about all of this.

- Though Rawlinson disagreed with Hincks at first, by 1857, Rawlinson had come around to agreeing with Hincks's conclusions. They and two other scholars identified the values of hundreds of cuneiform signs, and they mastered most of the grammar of the Akkadian language as well.

- In the same year, the Royal Asiatic Society in London came up with a test to see if the decipherment was successful. They gave a newly discovered cuneiform inscription to all four men and had them translate it independently of one another. Their translations turned out to be largely the same. The code had been cracked.

AKKADIAN, SUMERIAN, AND DOCUMENTS

- Linguists can't be sure of every detail, but Akkadian is enough like later Semitic languages for scholars to be pretty confident about how it sounded. The script regularly reflects not just the consonants but also the vowels. In this, it's different from Egyptian hieroglyphs and from later alphabetic scripts like Phoenician and early Hebrew.

- Once Akkadian was deciphered, it was possible to decode some of the other ancient languages that were written in cuneiform. One of the most important of these was Sumerian. This was the language of ancient Sumer, the southern part of Mesopotamia. It was probably the language of the ancient inventors of the writing system.

- Sumerian was used in literature and religion long after it had ceased to be a spoken language. Ancient scribes had long lists of Sumerian words and their Akkadian equivalents. These helped with the modern decipherment.

- Once cuneiform was understood, a great deal of work was done in translating Mesopotamian documents. This provided a lot of the groundwork for those who have come after the early scholars. They introduced scholars to great kings like Sargon of Akkad and Hammurabi of Babylon. They produced editions of law codes and royal inscriptions.

MESOPOTAMIAN ORDER

- Despite the longevity of their civilization over thousands of years, Mesopotamians faced constant threats. These could take the form of warfare, natural disasters, disease, infections, crop damage, famine, and deaths of loved ones. The Mesopotamians could control none of these.

- Therefore, they treasured what order they could maintain. They had close communities, and they valued and supported their friends and families. They developed a judicial system. They expected contracts and treaties to be upheld and obligations to be met, and they emphasized kindness and civility in their interactions.

READINGS

- Cathcart, "The Earliest Contributions to the Decipherment of Sumerian and Akkadian."
- Chavalas, "Terqa and the Kingdom of Khana."
- Robinson, Andrew. *Lost Languages*.
- Walker, *Cuneiform*.

QUESTIONS

- Why do decipherers usually need a bilingual text in order to rediscover the meaning of an ancient language?
- What types of study are possible for Mesopotamia that are difficult for other ancient cultures, and why?

2

NATUFIAN VILLAGERS AND EARLY SETTLEMENTS

More than 14,000 years ago—in a region that includes parts of modern Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan—people belonging to what we call the Natufian culture lived in built shelters and made the best use of the resources in their region. The area where the Natufians settled got plenty of rainfall, and was where the wild ancestors of modern wheat, barley, rye, peas, lentils, sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle resided. This lecture looks at how their lifestyle shifted from hunting and gathering to farming.

THE NATUFIANS

- In some ways, the Natufians were lucky. They had more than just the makings of a healthy diet; they also had access to a group of species that they would end up being able to manipulate. Not many animals are particularly suited to domestication. For example, zebra don't like to be ridden, and gazelles don't follow one another in herds. Therefore, in some parts of the world, no amount of human intervention would have succeeded at domestication.

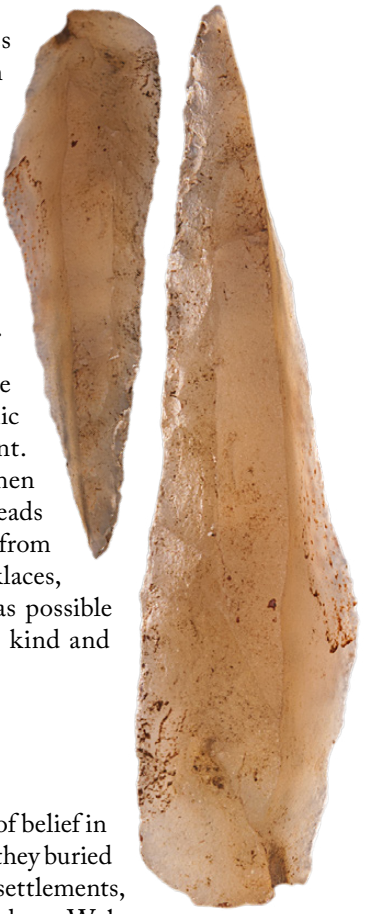
- But in the eastern Mediterranean area known as the Levant, domestication wasn't a problem. Wild sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle were particularly domesticable. That lay far in the future, however, from the Natufian world in about 12,500 BCE.

- Excavations from Natufian sites show that these people created houses by digging circular pits, building walls of stone or wood, and roofing them with reeds or hides. Smaller pits dug near the houses were lined with limestone and allowed the early settlers to store food—such as wild wheat and barley—for long periods of time. As many as 100 people lived near one another in villages made up of these round houses.

- Besides benefitting from the wild grains that grew in the area, villagers also hunted birds and gazelle. Vast amounts of gazelle bones have been found at some of the Natufian sites. There seems to have been plenty to eat.

TOOLS AND CRAFTS

- In order to hunt and to harvest wild plants, the people developed complex and beautiful stone tools. This was long before anyone thought up the technology necessary to make metal tools. The Natufians had not even invented pottery yet. They had fire for cooking and warmth, but its potential was still relatively unharnessed. All man-made objects had to be shaped by hand, and this was an exacting and time-consuming process.



- The stoneworkers made tiny flint blades one to three centimeters long, with perfectly straight edges for slicing or fine serrations for cutting. These are known as microliths, and they would have been fitted into bone hafts, or handles, to make sickles, arrowheads, and knives. Each shape of blade had a specific purpose. The Natufian people also made bone tools, such as hooks for fishing and needles for weaving.

- The baskets, mats, and fabrics they wove have long since disintegrated, as all organic materials do in a humid environment. However, it's likely that women and men developed advanced skills in these areas. Beads were popular too—especially beads made from seashells—and these were strung into necklaces, bracelets, and headdresses. All of this was possible without farming because the climate was kind and natural resources were abundant.

DEATH PRACTICES

- The people might even have had some sort of belief in a life after death. We can guess this because they buried their loved ones in cemeteries near their settlements, accompanied by flowers and, sometimes, dogs. Wolves were domesticated to become dogs around this time.

- One dramatic Natufian burial—in a pit inside a cave in Israel—included the body of a 45-year-old woman who was buried with all sorts of surprising things, including 50 tortoise shells, the pelvis of a leopard, and a severed human foot much larger than her own. A ring of stones surrounded her grave and separated it from 27 others.

- The excavator concluded she was probably a shaman—someone who practiced healing and was viewed as holy in some way. Shamans probably were effective in their practice. What we now think of as the placebo effect would have worked well then, too. People who believe they will get well often do; their bodies rally to fight off infection. The shamans might also have found cures for pain or illness among the many plants available to them.

THE SHIFT TO FARMING

- All in all, life in a Natufian village probably seemed pretty good, at least for the first couple of thousand years. Food and water were plentiful, and men and women developed sophisticated skills in making tools, buildings, clothes, and baskets. They could defend themselves against wild animals and protect themselves from the elements. They probably told stories in the evenings, and—being human—sang songs. This must have seemed to be the way that life had always been and always would continue to be.

- Eventually, though, there came a shift: The people began to farm. The fact that they did so is clear. A few thousand years later, the distinctly transformed shapes of domesticated grains, pulses (like lentils and peas), and animals show that these species had become dependent on humans for their existence. Farmers gradually chose and bred plants with bigger seeds, sheep with longer wool, and so on.

- Unfortunately, the physical changes that mark plants and animals as domesticated took place a long time after domestication started. Therefore, it's not possible to mark an exact date when the process began.

THEORIES

- One popular theory as to why people started to farm is that they were spurred to do so by a change in the climate. Around 11,000 years ago, the weather in the Near East became colder and dryer than it had been. The plants and animals that had reliably appeared in the past became scarcer.

- Some communities gave up and moved. Others clung on, perhaps supplementing their diets by beginning to plant the foods that they depended on or by keeping young animals that would grow and be useful to them. Some of the animals that were native to this area had temperaments that lent themselves to being herded—sheep, goats, and cattle, for example.

- The process was extremely gradual, according to this theory. Although the domestication of plants and animals is often referred to as the agricultural revolution, it happened so slowly that it was probably invisible to the people living through it.

- Another theory is that settlements themselves caused the problem that ended up being solved (to some extent) by domestication. The villagers had always focused their attention on the immediate area, which created environmental stress. Intense foraging and hunting destabilized the natural environment. In this case, a small trigger could suddenly limit resources dramatically. This could be a sudden increase in plant pests, for example. Farming and herding would have helped protect the villagers against disasters.

- Perhaps, according to yet another theory, the Natufian villagers were so successful that they grew too numerous for their local environments. Continuing to hunt and gather in the immediate vicinity couldn't support the growing population, so they might have started farming right where they lived in order to increase the food supply.

- A combination of theories is also possible. Perhaps climate change added to the stress on a population that had grown too large for the resources available. This population would have already been subject to destabilization because of the overutilization of the natural resources.

- Most scholars believe that people didn't outright choose to be farmers. Instead, over thousands of years, they came to depend more on the foods that they nurtured themselves and less on the foods that they gathered in the wild. No one would have any recollection of what it was like to be a pure hunter/gatherer by the time they were totally dependent on farming. Even then, they still hunted and gathered.

GÖBEKLI TEPE

- For now, it's impossible to know which of the many theories about the origins of the domestication of plants and animals is correct. Scholars disagree. One remarkable piece of recent evidence, though, has shaken up our image of the hunters and gatherers in the Near East. It turns out they were not only intelligent, but also organized—and passionate about their beliefs—in a way that was completely hidden before.

The discovery is at a site called Göbekli Tepe in southeast Turkey. About 12,000 years ago—long before farming, when humans were just beginning to settle in hunting and gathering communities—a group of people erected a monument at Göbekli Tepe to their gods. It consisted of huge circles of standing stones.

Göbekli Tepe

- One of the circles is 65 feet across, and the largest of the stones weigh 16 tons. These stones are T-shaped and engraved with images of predatory and poisonous animals. The engravings are not of the prey the people of this time hunted. There are no images of gazelles, or sheep, or goats. Instead, they carved lions, scorpions, vultures, snakes, and foxes.

- There doesn't seem to have been a settlement nearby. According to the excavators, hundreds of people must have been involved in the construction. They had to quarry the stones, drag them into position, and stand them upright. Then they engraved the images and built the walls. This took organization—someone was in charge. The project must also have required food and water for the workers, and perhaps shelter.

- Klaus Schmidt, a German archaeologist who directed the excavation, proposed yet another reason for the development of agriculture. He theorized that perhaps in order to feed the workmen on this project, it was not enough to hunt and gather; they needed a more reliable source of large amounts of food, perhaps growing it themselves.

- Nobody invented writing for another 7,000 years after Göbekli Tepe was built, so the people of this era had no way to tell why the site was built. People certainly must have visited the site after it was built, perhaps traveling from hundreds of miles away. There's archaeological evidence of feasts taking place—huge stone bowls that would have held 40 gallons of liquid (perhaps beer) and giant piles of animal bones.

To sum up, farming and herding completely changed the course of human history, but they didn't necessarily present an obvious advantage to the first farmers. Farming also developed independently in China, the New World, Africa, and other regions. And in each case, it was probably a lengthy process—all but invisible to each subsequent generation. People probably thought they were doing things just the same way they always had. But after 3,000 years of very slow change, once agriculture dominated the economy—things began to change more quickly.

READINGS

- Akkermans and Schwartz, *The Archaeology of Syria*, chapters 2 and 3.
- Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza, *The Neolithic Transition and the Genetics of Populations in Europe*.
- Bar Yosef and Valla eds., *The Natufian Culture in the Levant*.
- Bryner, "Female Shaman's Grave Loaded with Goodies."
- Curry, "Gobekli Tepe."
- Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race."

QUESTIONS

- What would life have been like for Natufian villagers before farming developed?
- Which of the theories for the origins of farming do you find most convincing, and why?
- What might have been some of the religious beliefs of the pre-Neolithic peoples, judging from the archaeological remains?

3

NEOLITHIC FARMING, TRADE, AND POTTERY

The Neolithic era, which lasted from about 9000 to 5000 BCE, got its name partly from the sophistication of the stone tools that people were using. Humans had begun to plant seeds and herd animals, and they were becoming farmers. This lecture takes a look at lifestyle changes and trade during this time.

COMMUNITIES AND MOVEMENT

- Early on, farming became common throughout northern Mesopotamia and the Levant where enough rain fell. This was still before the invention of pottery, in an era known as the Pre-Pottery Neolithic. One remarkable discovery from the period comes from the site of Jericho.

- This Neolithic community of about 300 people was built in the desert next to a gushing spring, which made life possible there. The inhabitants were able to devise ways to water their crops as well as to use the water for drinking and washing. They even built a stone wall around their town that was 9 feet thick and 12 feet high as well as a large tower.

- Stable and somewhat larger communities like this one developed new technologies. Extensive contacts between communities spread the new technologies widely. Examples of the same type of microlithic stone tools are found in archaeological sites distributed over hundreds of square miles.

- Other things were transported far away from their places of origin as well. Seashells are found hundreds of miles from the sea, and marble bracelets were popular in many places. Bitumen from Mesopotamia was also traded across hundreds of miles. Bitumen is a sticky tar substance, like asphalt, that could be used for waterproofing boats and baskets.

- DNA studies have shown that 80 percent of Europeans are descended from ancient Near Eastern farmers. This fact means that ancient Near Eastern farmers traveled in the Neolithic period and settled in new places, bringing their sheep, goats, wheat, and barley with them.

- The DNA of European cattle shows that they, too, had a Near Eastern origin. Millet—which is a grain or cereal crop—spread from as far away as China, coming to Eastern Europe at around the same time. A lot of people were moving around, bringing new technologies, new domesticated animals, and new ideas with them.

PLASTER

In the Neolithic era, people began using fire to change natural materials like stone and clay into other forms. The first of these was plaster. The ancient Pre-Pottery Neolithic people in the Levant discovered this and used lime plaster to coat floors and walls, which would have been a marked improvement over mud floors. It could be formed into sculptures, like the human figures found at the site of Eyn Gazal in Jordan . These are half-life-size, with painted clothing and hair, and cowrie shells inlaid for the eyes.

Ain Ghazal Statues

- The Neolithic people in the Near East also used plaster to commemorate the dead. At many sites, archaeologists have found skulls separated from skeletons, with the facial features reproduced in plaster; and sometimes with cowrie shells in the eye sockets.

- They also experimented with making containers out of plaster. These are called white ware. A white ware vessel is like a stone bowl, but these didn't have to be laboriously carved and ground into shape. It could be molded and left to set. Once dry and solid, it could hold water or other liquids and foods. But it had a problem—it couldn't be used for cooking. It was a good invention, but another one was coming along that was even better.

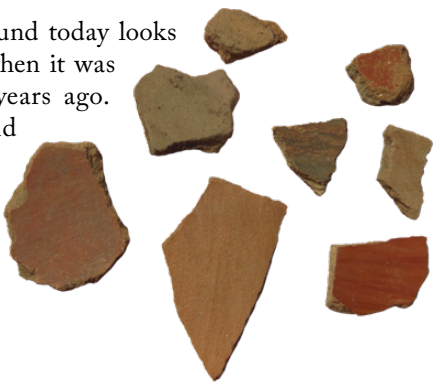
Neolithic cutlery and foodstuffs

POTTERY

- After plaster, the next great fire-related invention was pottery. This was truly revolutionary. Pots are fine over flame—they don't break or decompose. Whole new culinary possibilities now opened up to the ancient villagers. People could now make porridge from grain, and they could make soups and stews. Meat was not just roasted any more. They also used clay to build beehive-shaped ovens, and they baked flat bread inside. These ovens—which are called tanurs —are found in ancient villages and are still used across the Middle East.

- Pots weren't just useful for the ancient people; they're also really useful for modern archaeologists. Unlike organic materials—like baskets and bags—potsherds (broken pieces of pots) don't decompose. Unlike metal objects (which were invented later), they don't corrode and they can't be melted down and reused.

- A potsherd found in the ground today looks almost exactly the same as when it was thrown away thousands of years ago. When archaeologists find broken pieces of pottery all over the ground, in places where ancient people lived, they can use these potsherds to figure out when a site was occupied.



CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

- Most Neolithic settlements were still small villages, but the villagers began to experiment with new construction techniques. In the 8000s BCE, even before pottery was invented, people had begun to use bricks for construction and built their houses in rectangular shapes. Square corners allowed more houses to be built next to one another.

- An extreme case of this is seen in the city of Çatalhüyük in Turkey. Çatalhüyük is a remarkable place—a veritable town of maybe hundreds of inhabitants that thrived around 6000 BCE. That was a time when most other communities were just the size of villages. Çatalhüyük had rectangular buildings all jammed up against one another without doors and without streets in between. People had to enter their homes by using ladders from the roofs. The ladder was almost always on the south side of the building, for some reason, with the hearth and oven under the entry hole in the ceiling.

- This lack of doors and streets might have been good for the town's protection, whether from other people, animals, or the elements. It gets very cold on the Anatolian plateau in the winter and very hot in the summer. All those adjacent walls would have served as insulation against the weather extremes. However, this also meant that people had to learn how to live peacefully with one another in very close quarters.

Reconstruction of a "shrine" at Çatal

FARMING SETTLEMENTS

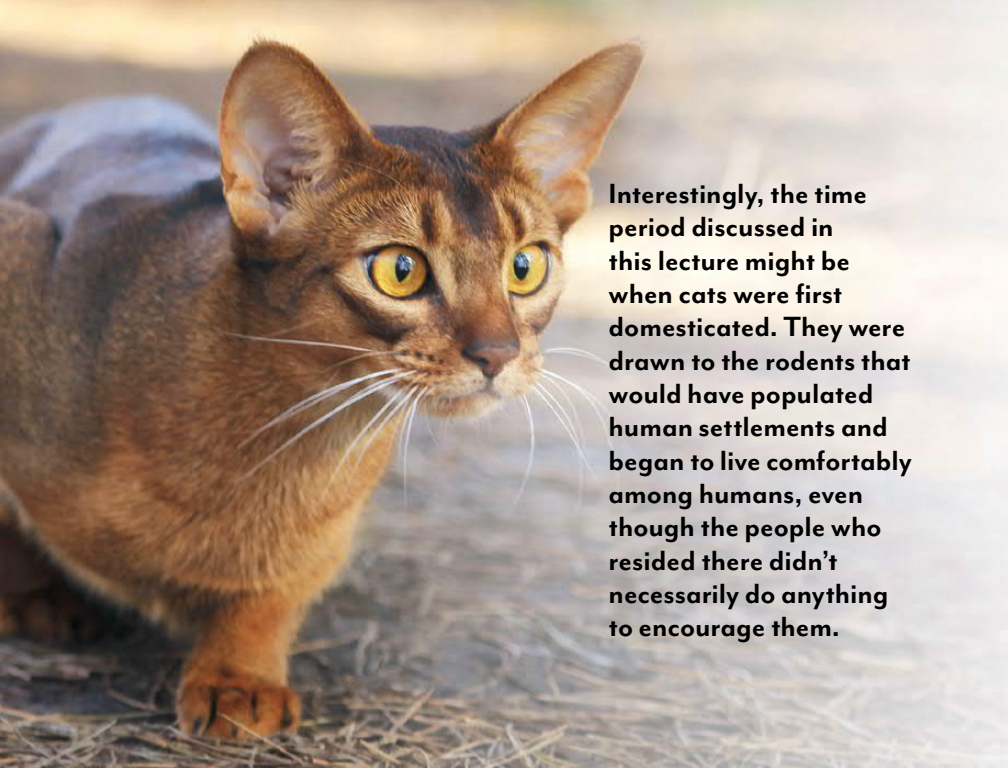
- Most of Mesopotamia—modern Iraq—was pretty much uninhabited at this time. It's just too hot and dry. Some recent excavations, though, show there were a number of early Neolithic farming settlements in the far south, around the Persian Gulf. One theory is that what is now the Persian Gulf wasn't filled with water until about 14,000 years ago. It was a deep valley, and ancient hunters and gatherers lived there in the so-called Gulf Oasis.

- Then—between 14,000 and 8,000 years ago—sea levels rose and swamped more than 100,000 square kilometers of land with sea water. Even after this inundation, there was still much more dry land around the gulf than today, and Neolithic villages prospered. The cattle that they herded had local origins, but their sheep had come from farther north.

- Around 6000 BCE, farmers began to move south from the foothills into the flood plain of Mesopotamia as they figured out how to dig irrigation canals to water their crops. The Mesopotamian plain is very flat. It consists of thousands of years of silt laid down by the floods of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This silty soil is rich and fertile when watered, so the irrigated fields would have produced plenty of food.

- The situation in ancient Egypt was similar, but with some important differences. In Egypt, the annual flood arrived right before the sowing season. As soon as the waters receded, farmers planted their seeds, and the ground was wet enough to need minimal additional irrigation. The land produced abundant crops, with little need for human intervention beyond sowing, tending, and harvesting.

- Mesopotamian farmers had a much more difficult situation, as they tried to use the river water to irrigate their fields. One difference from Egypt is that the Mesopotamian rivers were, in places, higher than the land. This was an advantage in a way. If farmers breached the natural levee on either side, some of the river water flowed downhill into their fields.



Interestingly, the time period discussed in this lecture might be when cats were first domesticated. They were drawn to the rodents that would have populated human settlements and began to live comfortably among humans, even though the people who resided there didn't necessarily do anything to encourage them.

- However, when the annual floods came and river waters spilled over the banks, there was no guarantee that the river would end up flowing along the same course as before. If a village was near the banks of a river—which almost all of them were—villagers could be out of luck if the river rerouted itself after the flooding receded.

- Another problem for farmers in Mesopotamia was that the flood came at the wrong time of year. Seeds needed to be sowed in the spring, but the flood came in the early summer. The floodwaters would have washed away the young plants.

- Therefore, Mesopotamians who moved into the river valleys needed to find ways to control the rivers. This meant that the villagers needed to join forces to do some pretty big construction projects, such as reinforcing and raising levees on both banks of the river, and protecting fields with dikes and reservoirs. These efforts became a constant feature of Mesopotamian life.

THE SAMARRAN CULTURE

- Some of the earliest communities to spread into central Mesopotamia from the north belonged to the Samarran culture (which is named after the site of Samarra where their pottery was first identified). Samarran pottery is very distinctive, with a matte finish, and it's often decorated with drawings of animals and humans in black paint. The Samarran people also used clay to make figurines.

- The site of Tell es-Sawwan is probably the best-known Samarran site. It's in an area that sometimes had enough rainfall for agriculture, but the weather was unreliable. Early farmers were able to use the annual flooding of local streams to supplement the rainfall. Later, they seem to have dug irrigation canals, and began the long Mesopotamian struggle to bring their rivers and streams under control.

- The buildings at Tell es-Sawwan were T-shaped and surprisingly large. The exterior walls had some niches and buttresses, which later became characteristic of Mesopotamian architecture. Almost all of these houses were the same size and shape, probably with one dwelling per family. There's no sign that anyone was particularly rich or poor.

- The people there grew several kinds of wheat as well as barley. Bones found at the site show they herded sheep and goats (which no doubt provided wool and milk), and owned cattle. They also hunted wild gazelle, deer, and boar, and fished as well.

THE HALAF CULTURE

- A culture that flourished after the Samarran is known as the Halaf. The Halaf culture flourished across northern Mesopotamia—and even into Syria and southern Anatolia—from around 5700 to 5000 BCE. This whole region had enough rainfall for agriculture, so they didn't need to irrigate their fields. The Halaf people built both round and rectangular houses, and mostly lived in small villages, where they farmed the same crops and herded the same animals that we've come across elsewhere in this lecture.

- The Halaf people made incredibly beautiful ceramics. The pots were handcrafted in elegant shapes, with detailed and meticulous designs. They seem to have been traded far and wide, or perhaps they were made by potters who moved from town to town.

- By 5000 BCE, the farmers of the Neolithic period had spread right across the Near East. They also traded with one another over very long distances for valuable goods like sea shells for jewelry, bitumen for waterproofing, obsidian for stone tools, and even handmade goods like beautiful pots.

A few of the villages grew to the size of towns—such as Jericho and Çatalhüyük —with hundreds of residents. But most communities were still relatively small. Although some people must have specialized in particular crafts, there doesn't seem to have been any distinctions between rich and poor people yet. That, however, was about to change.

READINGS

- Akkermans and Schwartz, *The Archaeology of Syria*, chapters 3 and 4.
- Banning, "The Neolithic Period."
- Byrd, "The Natufian."
- Hodder, *The Leopard's Tale*.
- Moore, "Syria and the Origins of Agriculture."
- Peregrine and Ember, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Prehistory*, volume 8.
- Rose, "New Light on Human Prehistory in the Arabo-Persian Gulf Oasis."
- Simmons et al., "'Ain Ghazal."
- Troy et al., "Genetic Evidence for Near-Eastern Origins of European Cattle."
- Wengrow, "'The Changing Face of Clay.'"

QUESTIONS

- In what ways did the Neolithic peoples begin manipulating their environment, and why might they have done this?
- What evidence has been found to show that people cooperated with one another at this time?

4

ERIDU AND OTHER TOWNS IN THE UBAID PERIOD

The Mesopotamian people of the Halaf culture lived mostly in small villages in the 6th millennium BCE. They farmed and used simple irrigation canals to water their fields. They herded sheep and goats. They prized exotic goods from far away—things like obsidian and seashells—and used exquisite pottery and fine stone tools made by highly skilled craftsmen.

By 6000 BCE, some big changes were taking place, and these continued for the next 2,000 years. This is what archaeologists call the Ubaid period, named for the site where the culture was first identified, in the far south of Mesopotamia.

ERIDU

- Scholars first started to understand this period in an area just to the north of the Persian Gulf, in what is now southern Iraq. One village there was later known Eridu, and this might already have been its name in 6000 BCE. There was a community at the site since as early as 8000 BCE.

- When people first settled around Eridu, it was a swampy area where the fresh water from the Tigris River and Euphrates River spread out into marshes, not far from the saltier waters of the gulf. Until about 12000 BCE, the area was a wide valley. It flooded gradually—the process took about 6,000 years—and by 6000 BCE, the gulf was at its highest point, stretching considerably farther north than today.

- It used to be thought that towns in this region started to grow because people discovered how to dig and manage large irrigation canals. A number of researchers have turned this theory on its head. They think that extensive farming was made possible by the water already in the swampy soil, and that this gave rise to larger communities than had been possible anywhere else.

- In this view, only when the wetlands began to dry out did the people have to find some other way to keep their fields productive, so as to feed the large numbers of people who were already living in the new towns. At that point, communities would have turned to irrigation, which would've required labor- and planning-intensive canals.

- Eridu must have been an attractive place to live. It had plenty of fields and food. It was also home to a major god. Perhaps people felt safer knowing that this god, Enki, was right there in the community with them. Enki was viewed as a benevolent, providing god.

- At the beginning of the Ubaid period, when Eridu was still a small community, the shrine to this god was modest—just a square brick room with an altar at the end, and an offering stand in the middle. Over time, as the town got bigger, the temple was rebuilt on grander scales, but always on exactly the same sacred spot. Other towns had temples with similar characteristics.

LIVING SITUATIONS

- Eridu—home to the beloved god Enki and his temple—was surrounded by lush fields that must have seemed like a miracle in the dry south. The community had a thriving, growing population. The men who lived here would have been called up not just to keep expanding the canal system, but also to build each new iteration of the temple. The area became a magnet to merchants and traveling craftsmen who brought goods from distant places.

- Houses in Ubaid-period communities like Eridu began to vary in size. Some were bigger than others. Some graves were richer than others as well. These are early hints of social stratification: Some people were clearly wealthier than others.

- Any number of causes could have been behind this. Some fields produced abundant crops because they were closer to the canals, benefitting the owner more. Some craftsmen made better items and perhaps were able to bargain for more goods in exchange. Some people began to wield more power, perhaps because they were serving as foremen on the construction projects or as priests or priestesses of the gods.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

- More technological advances accompanied the growth of towns. One was in the use of copper, which isn't found in southern Mesopotamia. It had to come from a great distance—from what is now Turkey in the north or from Oman in the south—but it was imported this early, and it's found in Ubaid period sites like Eridu.

- The metalworkers seem to have discovered that native copper became brittle the more they pounded it, and that it became more flexible again when heated in the fire. This is called annealing. It's a long way from the more modern practice of smelting copper out of ore, but perhaps it got them thinking about how fire might transform other materials, just as it transformed soft pliable clay into hard pottery.

- The Ubaid people used clay for a lot of things, not just pottery and bricks. They formed clay into crescent shapes, baked it hard to give it a sharp edge, and used the resulting object as a clay sickle for cutting grain. They also formed the clay into balls, baked them hard, kept these balls in piles, and used them as weapons in slingshots.

- The pottery in the Ubaid period was quite distinctive. This is helpful to scholars because it allows them to know if a site was occupied or how to date a level within a site. The pots weren't as fine or delicate as earlier Halaf ceramics had been, but they were attractive. Ubaid pots of all shapes often had dark geometric patterns.

TRAVELING INNOVATIONS

- Ubaid-style pottery is found all over the Near East—from Turkey in the west to Iran in the east, and as far south as southeastern Arabia, in what is now the United Arab Emirates. Ubaid pots spread over thousands of miles. Everything from this period that appears far from its point of origin had to be carried over land or sea and passed from one person to another. A whole group of innovations seem to have spread as a result of interactions between people who were traveling farther afield than before.

- A site called Bahra, in Kuwait, shows a lot of influence from the Ubaid people of southern Mesopotamia. Their buildings were even similar. Some archaeologists think that perhaps people moved there from Mesopotamia. Others believe that the local people admired and imitated Mesopotamian culture, including its architecture.

- Another site—called Wadi Debay'an, farther south in what is now Qatar—has Ubaid pottery along with some other remarkable imports, including obsidian, that came all the way from the Taurus Mountains in Turkey. Excavators have found Ubaid pottery at about 60 archaeological sites in the Arabian Peninsula. The pottery seems to have been a luxury.

- Archaeologists have found that the Ubaid people of southern Mesopotamia also had contact with regions hundreds of miles to the north of them. Here, though, the culture seems, in some ways, to have been even more sophisticated than in the southern region where the Ubaid culture was first discovered. This was not a provincial area.

- One of the sites, Tepe Gawra, is near Nineveh, outside modern-day Mosul in northern Iraq. Tepe Gawra was excavated in the mid-20th century, and archaeologists working there could see right away how closely it was related to the Ubaid culture. Its monumental buildings were constructed with the same design as in the south, with external niches and buttresses and a tripartite form. The builders at Tepe Gawra even used the same standard Ubaid cubit of 72 centimeters in their design and construction.

SYRIAN SITES

- Three sites in Syria, far to the west of Tepe Gawra and far to the north of Eridu, have given us even more evidence for this period. One is Tell Zeidan, another is Tell Brak, and the third is Tell Hamoukar.

- Tell Zeidan is the farthest to the west, on the east bank of the Balih River. The other two, Brak and Hamoukar, are in a region known as the Habur Triangle. This is in northern Syria, near what is now the Turkish border. Many small rivers flow south across a wide triangular region, joining together to form the Habur River, which flows south to the Euphrates. The Habur Triangle extends about 100 miles from west to east. It gets enough rainfall for agriculture, but the rivers provide added irrigation water when needed, so it has always been a rich, productive area.

- All three sites were occupied during the Ubaid period, and have Ubaid-style pottery and architecture. However, they weren't dependent on the south for inspiration. Tell Zeidan, for instance, has some of the earliest evidence of copper smelting. This set the stage for the enormously important development of bronze.

- Copper is too soft for weapons and for most tools, but once someone smelts copper from ore, rather than just hammering native copper into shape, it's a much smaller step to add arsenic to the mix to make a harder metal, called arsenic bronze. Later, arsenic was replaced with tin. Tin was more difficult to obtain because it came from farther away but, unlike arsenic, it wasn't toxic when smelted.

- By 5000 BCE, the people of Tell Zeidan had built a big wall around their settlement. The town grew to be as large as Eridu—30 acres. That's about the size of five and a half city blocks in New York City. Zeidan is estimated to also have had about the same population as Eridu: 3,000 inhabitants. This was immeasurably bigger and more complex than the villages that preceded it.

- Two other finds from Zeidan give a sense of this complexity. One is the discovery of eight large kilns for firing pottery. These were probably owned by a town institution—perhaps the temple—for firing very large quantities of pots.

- Even more notable was the discovery of stamp seals and sealings. These weren't used in the south yet, but were found at Tell Zeidan, Tell Brak, and Tell Hamoukar. Each seal probably was used by an important person, and was stamped into lumps of clay to seal goods or doorways. A sealed doorway wasn't necessarily locked, but it couldn't be opened without breaking the seal, so people would know that someone had been in the room.

- Seals of this kind are found as early as 7000 BCE in the north, but they were unknown at this point in the south. Perhaps the towns of the north had more complex administrations and hierarchies.

- Luxury goods came to these northern sites through trade. The people were importing copper and obsidian from Anatolia and bitumen from Iraq. A particularly fine example of an object made from imported materials was found at Tell Brak.

- It came from a context that the excavators date to around 4000 BCE, towards the end of the Ubaid period. They called it a chalice because of its tall, elegant, fluted shape. It had a black obsidian cup on a white marble base, with the two pieces cemented together with the sticky tar substance, bitumen.

Bitumen at the top might have cemented a gold inlay into a groove, but the gold (if that's what it was) was missing by the time the excavators recovered the chalice. It is an example of a very high level of workmanship. In contrast, many of the pots and plates found at Tell Brak were crudely made. The excavators see this as clear evidence of social stratification.

READINGS

- Bahrani, "The Search for Origins."
- Carter, "Boat Remains and Maritime Trade in the Persian Gulf during the Sixth and Fifth Millennia BC."
- Charvát, *Mesopotamia Before History.*
- Kubba, "The Ubaid Period."
- Lawlor, "Report of Oldest Boat Hints at Early Trade Routes."
- Nieuwenhuyse et al., eds., *Interpreting the Late Neolithic of Upper Mesopotamia.*
- Nissen, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East.*
- Oates et al., "Early Mesopotamian Urbanism."
- Rothman, "Tepe Gawra."
- Wilford, "Civilization's Cradle Grows Larger."

QUESTIONS

- What were some of the possible reasons for the growth of Eridu and other early towns?
- Why might social stratification have begun to be more pronounced during this era?

5

URUK, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CITY

This lecture covers a crucial moment in human history: the early development of urban civilization. The place to start exploring this era is the city of Uruk, not far from Eridu in southern Mesopotamia. Scholars generally agree that by 3500 BCE, it was the biggest city in the world. It was surrounded by an immense brick wall that enclosed about 642 acres, the size of a big university. That doesn't sound big for a city today, but it was huge for its time.

THE LAYOUT AND LIFESTYLE OF URUK

- Uruk had two major temple precincts, with a temple at the center of each and surrounding courtyards and buildings. One was dedicated to the goddess Inanna (who was the goddess of love). The other was dedicated to Anu (the god of the heavens).

- The number of people called on to build these temples must have been enormous. One theory suggests that the temples took about 100 years to build and were immediately rebuilt as soon as they were finished to keep the population constantly employed.

- As many as 25,000 people lived in the city of Uruk at this time. The whole economy was based on farming, and most of the citizens would have owned, or worked on, farmland around the city. This was true throughout Mesopotamian history. Most Mesopotamian city dwellers walked out to the fields in the morning, spent their days farming, and returned to the city when it got dark.

- The efficiency of farming improved during the Uruk period, with the invention of the plow. No longer did farmers have to dig holes in the ground and poke seeds into these openings in the earth. The blade on a plow—drawn by an ox or donkey—could turn the soil much more effectively, and the farmer could plant the seeds as he walked behind.

- Canals had also improved since the Ubaid period, which had lasted from about 6500 BCE to 3800 BCE. Now, the Mesopotamians could build canals big enough to sail boats in. The soil in the fields was naturally fertile—it was made up of silt that had washed down the Euphrates River over the eons. With effective irrigation and the plow, the fields became even more productive.

- Uruk peoples also improved bronze production, and invented wheel-made pottery, wheeled transport, the cylinder seal, and a writing system. They also created an effective system of centralized government, though they still don't seem to have been ruled by kings.


Uruk, Iraq

GOVERNMENT AND WRITING

- Perhaps the two most important developments of the Uruk period were the creation of a form of government capable of administering a state and the invention of writing. Unfortunately, we don't know all that much about the government, other than that it existed and that it used the new writing system extensively to keep records.

- There are no paintings or statues of kings, but there are some small sculptures of bearded men wearing belts. They don't seem to be gods. Gods almost always wore horned helmets in Mesopotamian art. They might well be priests, and perhaps they were in charge of Uruk.

- Powerful men might have been in charge of each of the major cities that were growing during this period, but these men may well have ruled as representatives of the gods, rather than as kings. Each city had a particular god that was believed to live there and watch over it. Perhaps the rulers had a close tie to the city god.

- Writing was a real breakthrough. The first written signs weren't attempts to represent language. They seem to have been memory aids. Just as a cylinder seal could give evidence of the identity of a man who had sent off a shipment, a picture of a cow or a bushel of wheat could record what was in that shipment.

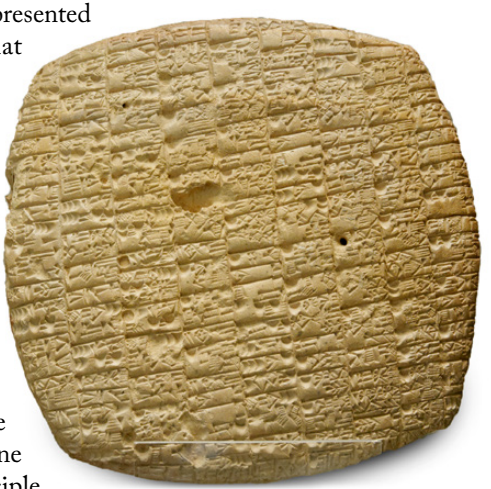
- Two marks next to a picture of a cow could indicate that two cows were sent, and so on. For hundreds of years—from about 3200 BCE onwards—this was the type of writing that was done. There's no way to know what language was being represented. A picture of a cow could be read as the word *cow* in any language at all.

PROTO-CUNEIFORM

- With a way to keep track of numbers and commodities, the administration could record taxes, or tribute to the temples, or rations—anything that was coming in or going out from places of storage. This form of script is known as proto-cuneiform, and it was written down on the same material that had long been used for impressing seals: lumps of clay. The signs were drawn into the clay, using a sharp stick or reed.

- The earliest proto-cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia were well made, divided neatly into rectangles with straight lines and filled with the carefully drawn signs that represented numbers and commodities. Faced with the impossible task of memorizing mind-numbing sequences of objects and numbers, people invented a tool that eliminated the need for memorization. With writing, they had an easy method with which to recall these things.

- One problem, though, was that the writing system initially couldn't record the names of people. An ingenious solution was to use the rebus principle, which is an allusional device. Someone's name could be broken up into syllables, with each syllable represented by a picture of the thing that had that name. For example, if a person's name in English was Barbie, they could write the name with a picture of a bar and of a bee.



- The Sumerian language—which was common in Sumer, the southern part of Mesopotamia —happens to be supremely well suited to writing this way because almost all the words were one syllable in length. This principle made it possible to write just about every word in Sumerian.

- With signs for sounds—as well as signs for whole words—the writing system could be used to list commodities, record who sent them, what was still owed, and who had fulfilled a work obligation. It covered all the details that helped a newly urban society to run smoothly. That, for ages, was enough for writing to do. Centuries passed before anyone thought of writing for a more literary purpose.

CONSISTENCY AND ABSTRACTION

- Throughout Mesopotamian history, most people never learned how to write. A particular group of professionals, scribes, mastered the process and were employed in keeping records for the leaders of the community. It must have become clear early on that writing needed to be consistent.

- Each scribe couldn't invent their own sign for *cow*, so someone must have chosen among the signs that had been created and streamlined the system, rejecting many signs and bringing uniformity. Over many generations, writing did become consistent.

- It also became more abstract. Gradually, the early picture-signs evolved into simpler signs made up of straight lines with wedges at the ends, which could be written much more quickly. Scribes made the wedge-shaped lines by pressing a reed with a rectangular end into the clay at a slight angle. The Latin word for a wedge is *cuneus*. This is why scholars called the Mesopotamian writing system cuneiform.

- Any cuneiform sign could be read as a syllable or as representing a whole word, called a logogram. Early writing didn't have any punctuation, and scribes didn't put spaces between words. Cuneiform was originally written in rectangular boxes, each of which contained a phrase or coherent unit, such as a number and a commodity. This form of writing included hundreds of signs, each of which had several possible values, depending on the context.

- The scribes seem also to have made their own writing materials: Each scribe needed to know where to obtain fine, consistent clay, and how to cleanse it so not the smallest impurity would get in the way of the tiny cuneiform signs to be impressed on the tablet surface. He also needed to know how to shape the clay into tablets that would be just the right size for his work, and how to determine the exact moment when it was still soft enough to write on, but not so soft that it would end up covered with fingerprints.

TRAINING

- Faced with the need to master this vast amount of knowledge and skill, someone must have thought of creating schools in which scribes would be trained. This was probably initially a type of apprenticeship. Just as boys learned from their fathers or from an expert how to farm or make tools, some boys now learned how to write in cuneiform.

- Very early on, a shared curriculum with the same texts was used in cities from Syria to the Persian Gulf. Long lists of words were put together, forming the core of what each scribe needed to learn in school. These lexical lists have been found in many archaeological excavations, often with the words in exactly the same order. The lexical lists also provide us with a window into the Mesopotamian conception of knowledge. The words defined the world, society, and the universe.

- They were not organized alphabetically—there was no standard order for cuneiform signs. However, some lists were organized based on sound: Words that sounded the same in Sumerian (yet might have had different meanings) were grouped together. Other words that started with signs that looked similar were also grouped together. A third type of list had a conceptual framework, grouping words in categories.

EXPANSION

- Archaeologists have found a remarkable fact about this period: The ancient people from around Uruk seem to have set up colonies right across Syria, Iran, and Turkey. There are sites in these distant lands with Uruk-style architecture and pottery, as well as cylinder seals and tools.

- Unlike the typical interaction in the earlier Ubaid period—when people were merely influenced by one another—the Uruk people seem to have physically moved and settled in the new colonies. They were not building an empire. That didn't happen for centuries.

- Instead, these early colonies were probably designed to facilitate trade—to get obsidian, copper, lapis lazuli, wood, building stone, and so on—back to the southern Mesopotamian people who really needed it. Three different types of colonies developed. Some southern Mesopotamians built settlements in unoccupied areas. Others conquered existing settlements, and yet others lived peaceably with locals in the places they moved to.

- Hamoukar—an Ubaid-period town in Syria—was one of the places conquered by Uruk people from the south. Archaeologists have found evidence of buildings that were burned down and walls that toppled. An excavator described the scene vividly. He said: "The attack must have been swift and intense. Buildings collapsed, burning out of control, burying everything in them under vast piles of rubble." The excavator noted that this is the earliest-known evidence of organized warfare, and that it helped the Uruk people take over. New buildings were built in the Uruk style on top of all that debris.

- Amazingly, the Uruk people seem even to have been in contact with Egypt, hundreds of miles away. Around this time, Egyptian tombs were built using the Mesopotamian niche-and-buttress style of architecture. Egyptians also began to use cylinder seals, and Mesopotamian boats appeared in Egyptian art. Egypt was rich in gold, which might have made it an appealing place to Mesopotamian traders. It's unlikely that the Uruk people tried to set up a colony there, but they do seem to have been in contact.

- For some reason, this brief flurry of contact ended quickly. For centuries after the Uruk period, the Egyptians and Mesopotamians appear to have been weirdly unaware of one another's existence.

READINGS

- Akkermans. and Schwartz, *The Archaeology of Syria*, chapter 6.
- Algaze, *The Uruk World System*.
- ——, *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization*.
- Collon, *First Impressions*.
- Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*.
- Glassner, *The Invention of Cuneiform*.
- Lawlor, "The Everlasting City."
- Rothman, ed., *Uruk Mesopotamia and Its Neighbors*.
- Walker, *Cuneiform*.

QUESTIONS

- Why do you think so many technological innovations accompanied the growth of major cities?
- What might explain why writing was used only for administration when it was first invented?

6

MESOPOTAMIA'S FIRST KINGS AND THE MILITARY

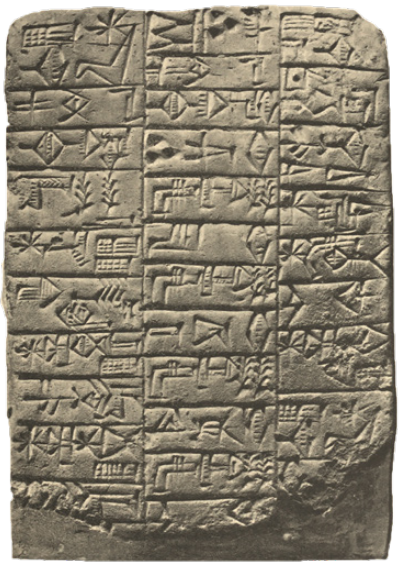
The world's first kings ruled in the ancient Near East, in Mesopotamia or Egypt. It's hard to tell which because both happened around the same time. If Egypt had the first kings, then perhaps the Mesopotamians borrowed the idea. After all, they were in touch with Egypt in the period immediately before the first kings during the Uruk era, from about 3800 BCE to 3100 BCE. Perhaps the influence went the other way. Regardless, this lecture looks at those early kings as well as military activities and diplomacy.

NEW POWERS IN CHARGE

- Before the first kings, priests seem to have been in charge of organizing the population in the earliest cities. This makes sense: They were thought to represent the gods, and so it stood to reason that they could figure out what the gods wanted.

- That begs the question: How did someone without that special relationship come to be in charge? One theory is that the earliest kings held the post for only brief periods of time, and only when they were needed for military campaigns. Perhaps a strong, charismatic man led the troops to battle against some neighboring city, and stepped down when he was no longer needed.

- If the battles became more frequent, then perhaps the king didn't feel the need to step down. Perhaps he took the lead in negotiating with the enemy. Perhaps his troops felt a special loyalty to him, different from what was felt towards the priests. Perhaps the king's son took the role from him because that's what sons did in the ancient world: They took the same jobs and responsibilities as their fathers.



- This is guesswork, but it does seem as though there were kings in Mesopotamia by around 2900 BCE. Once the role of king was invented, it became an inherited position, and never went away—at least not until modern times. People came to expect the rule of kings; they were as much a part of life as one's family and one's gods. The man with the most convincing claim on the position was the son—usually the eldest son—of the previous king.

- The time of Mesopotamia's earliest kings is known as the Early Dynastic period. It lasted for about 600 years, from around 2900 BCE. Unfortunately, scribes didn't really start writing anything useful about kingship until about 400 years after the first kings started to rule. The Mesopotamians had a writing system, but before 2500 BCE, they used it almost entirely to keep track of accounts.

KINGLY ACTIVITIES

- By the end of the Early Dynastic period, the king's duties would have included, among other duties, planning and leading military campaigns, levying taxes, identifying the best men to serve as officials, planning building programs, and forging alliances with neighboring states. They also had to choose the ideal wife, who had the most strategically useful father, and make useful marriage alliances for their daughters. It was a lot to learn.

- Monarchs in all eras have shared one additional concern: maintaining a relationship with their subjects that provided the best odds that they would be able to stay on the throne. In the modern world, this mostly entails being popular.

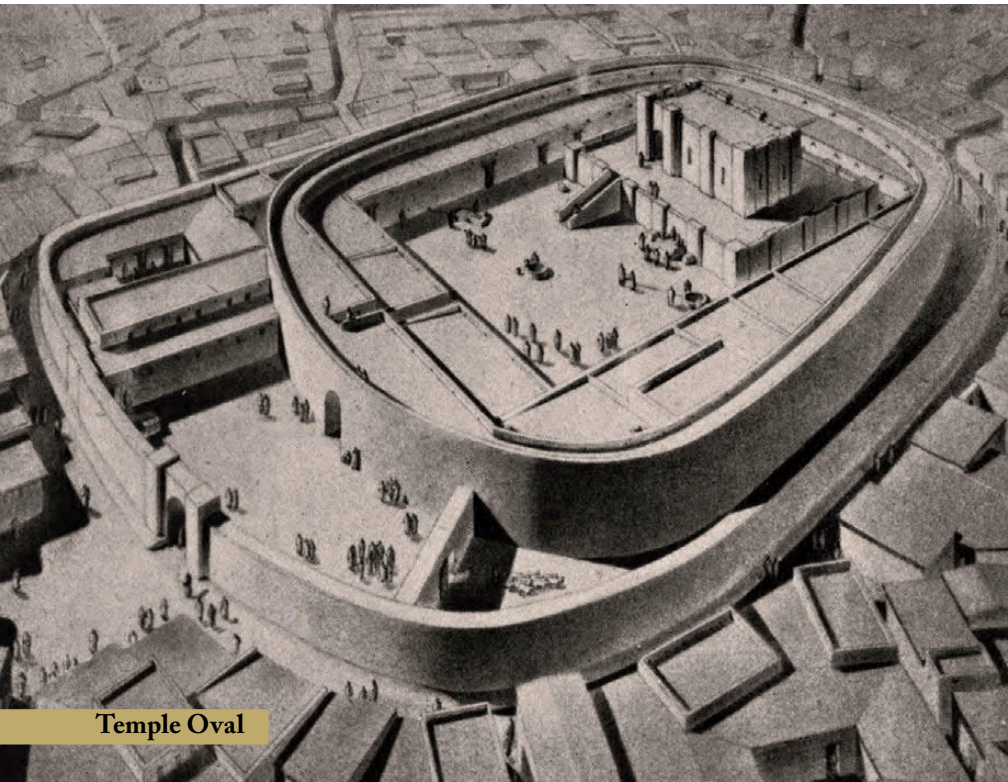
- In the ancient Near East, the relationship between ruler and ruled was more complicated. No one doubted that there should be kings. The tension they experienced was between accepting the rule of one particular monarch and supporting someone who wanted to overthrow him. The reigning king had to maintain a relationship with his subjects that discouraged rebellion and made any usurper seem less attractive.

- The king had only two choices. He could terrify his people into submission, or he could win them over by providing for them, protecting them, and convincing them that he was on their side. Either way—whether he was feared or loved, or a bit of both—a king had a two-way relationship with his subjects.

- Subjects had to provide for their king, just as he provided for them. They had to pay their taxes, and they were required to show up not just for military service but also for corvée labor duty, a type of national service work done by free men when canals needed to be dug or maintained, or buildings needed to be constructed. The subjects had to follow the king's directives and obey his orders as well as those of his officials.

KINGDOMS

- In the Early Dynastic period, the kingdoms in Mesopotamia were relatively small. They're often described as city-states. Each king ruled a small state with one or two major cities and a number of smaller towns and villages.



Temple Oval

- They were all located along rivers—either the Tigris or the Euphrates, or a tributary—because the people needed the river water for everything: irrigation, transportation, drinking, bathing, fishing, and so on. Around the cities and villages were fields and orchards that produced crops. Beyond those were steppe lands that supported herds of sheep and goats. These were the basis of the economy.

- In each city-state, the king and his family lived in the capital, which was also home to the local god. For example, the moon god Nanna lived in the city of Ur, and the goddess Inanna lived in the city of Uruk. The god or goddess had a grand temple, usually near the center, not far from the king's palace. The god was believed to literally be present, taking the form of a statue.

- Each god was believed to be in at least two places at once. The sun god, for example, was up in the sky—visible to everyone—but also present in human form, in his statue in the city of Larsa. He needed all the things a human ruler needed—a home, clothing, food, and adulation. His home was the temple. Clothing and food were presented to each of the gods on a regular basis. The priests and priestesses provided all of these, along with incantations and hymns of praise.

- The kings of the Early Dynastic city-states credited the city gods with their prosperity, and with their victories over neighbors. However, they and their subjects didn't think the gods of the other cities were false. They believed in the power of all Mesopotamian gods. They also all recognized the superior power of the king of the gods, Enlil, who lived in the city of Nippur.

UR-NANSHE

- The lecture now turns to a particular king—Ur-Nanshe—and his successors. Around 2500 BCE, Ur-Nanshe founded a dynasty that ruled the city-state of Lagash, in southern Mesopotamia. Lagash was rich not just because of its crops and herds but also because it was located on a trade route that led to the powerful land of Susa in the east.

- We know from images of King Ur-Nanshe that he shaved off his hair and beard. This bald, clean-shaven look was common among Mesopotamian priests at this time, though Ur-Nanshe wasn't a priest. King Ur-Nanshe, in his most famous relief sculpture, is shown with a basket of bricks on his head. This relief is made of limestone, and it's now in the Louvre, in Paris. It's unlikely the king actually carried bricks, but he used this image to remind people that he was a builder. This sculpture was probably created when he was dedicating a shrine to the city-god Ningirsu.

- King Ur-Nanshe's reign wasn't entirely peaceful. He fought and defeated the kings of two neighboring city-states: Ur and Umma. These battles were the start of a long series of conflicts that carried on after Ur-Nanshe's death, especially with the land of Umma. Ur-Nanshe's successors controlled Lagash for almost 200 years. Nine of his descendants ruled the region, one after another, in a remarkably stable dynasty. And almost all of them ended up fighting against Umma.

CONFLICT

- Lagash and Umma each claimed the right to control a territory in between their two city-states called the Gu'edena. Most surviving inscriptions are from excavations of buildings that belonged to Lagash. As a result, we have a rather one-sided story about this dispute. No doubt, the kings of Umma felt equally righteous about their cause, and felt that their god supported them and wanted them to control the Gu'edena.

- One of Ur-Nanshe's successors—a king named Eanatum, who came to power around 2450 BCE—memorialized his victory over Umma with an impressive stone inscription, known as the Stela of the Vultures. It's largely broken, but we can still make out some of the main features.

- One side shows what seem to be historical events. At the top, the king is leading his troops into battle on foot. The soldiers are equipped with identical pikes, shields, and helmets. They're lined up in a phalanx formation, with their shields protecting them. This isn't a primitive band of warriors, but a well-trained, well-equipped, and coordinated army. The king probably didn't actually stand in front of the warriors—he would have been far too vulnerable—but it's likely he did fight with them.

- In the second register, the victory seems to have been achieved, and the soldiers might be marching in a victory parade with Eanatum in a chariot as their leader. The third register is broken, but it seems to show a pile of dead soldiers and a bull. The bull was probably about to be sacrificed.

- The back of the stela shows the religious interpretation of this historical victory. The god Ningirsu holds a huge net full of dead enemies from Umma. The king is giving credit for his victory to the god of his city-state—Lagash.

- The text of the inscription is even more interesting. It gives a historical account of past conflicts with Umma, along with details of the recent battle—Eanatum's victory. The border between Umma and Lagash was reestablished as a result of this war. The Gu'edena region was once again inside the borders of Lagash.

- Eanatum didn't kill the king of Umma. Instead, he forced him to swear an oath. The religious object—in front of which the oath was sworn—was the "battle net of Enlil." Enlil was a greater god than either the city god of Umma or the city god of Lagash—a fact both kings would have acknowledged. When the king of Umma swore to Enlil that he wouldn't dispute the border, Eanatum might have had some hope that the border would last.

LATER EVENTS

- A later king—Eanatum's nephew, Entemena—continued to have problems with Umma. In one inscription, he mentions that he sent envoys to the king of Umma to negotiate. Here again, relations were complicated between these enemy countries. The kings negotiated truces at the end of each round of battles and spoke to one another through envoys.

- Entemena also had other troubles. He was worried about the king of another city-state—Lugalkiginedudu of Uruk—who had conquered a previous enemy of Lagash in the form of the city-state of Ur. Lugalkiginedudu seemed to be trying to take control of much of southern Mesopotamia. Entemena perhaps worried about whether Lagash would be the next city-state to be attacked by Lugalkiginedudu.

- Entemena worked to make sure this didn't happen. In several inscriptions, he boasts that he was able to conclude a treaty of "brotherhood"—that is, an alliance—with Lugalkiginedudu of Uruk. This is one of the earliest peace treaties that we know of.

- It wasn't only in the south that kings made treaties with one another and sent envoys to negotiate. In Syria—hundreds of miles northwest of Lagash—kings of a city-state named Ebla did many of the same things. Ebla, too, had a long-lasting rivalry with a neighboring country. In this case, it was Mari, downstream along the Euphrates. The two kingdoms went to war over and over again, but they also made treaties with one another and other cities.

Ebla, Syria

EARLY DIPLOMACY

- As soon as the Mesopotamians had kings—and as those kings started engaging in organized wars against one another—they also created a formal way of engaging in diplomacy. Early diplomacy had five specific components:
  - The first was the regular exchange of messengers.
  - The second was the agreement to abide by treaties that governed relations between the city-states (including treatment of the messengers).
  - The third was the exchange of letters between the kingdoms; these were carried by messengers.
  - The fourth was giving luxury goods to one another in the form of gifts that the messengers brought almost every time they went to a foreign court. These gifts could be in answer to specific requests.
  - The fifth was the tradition of marrying an ally's daughter, or a king sending his own daughter to marry an ally or a vassal.

These five conventions helped create orderly international relations for more than 1,000 years.

READINGS

- André-Salvini, "Tello (Ancient Girsu)."
- Archi, "Ebla Texts."
- ——, "The Royal Archives of Ebla."
- ——, "Trade and Administrative Practice."
- Aruz, ed., *Art of the First Cities*.
- Cooper, "International Law in the Third Millennium."
- ——, *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions*.
- Magid, Glenn. "Sumerian Early Dynastic Royal Inscriptions." in Chavalas 2006, 4-16.
- Matthiae, Paolo. "Ebla."
- ——, "Ebla and the Early Urbanization of Syria."
- Michalowski, Piotr. "Sumerian King List." in Chavalas 2006, 81-85.
- ——, "Third Millennium Contacts."
- Milano, "Ebla."

QUESTIONS

- How and why did the Early Dynastic city-states go to war, and what alternatives were there to warfare?
- How did kings justify their right to rule?

7

EARLY DYNASTIC WORKERS AND WORSHIPERS

The world must have seemed very different to people who lived 5,000 years ago.

Many things in life and nature were completely chaotic and sometimes terrifying. Crippling disease or infection could kill a loved one with no explanation, death at childbirth was somewhat common, and natural disasters could take crops or homes. Since the natural world was almost unbearably unpredictable, it seems as though people didn't want their personal lives to be unpredictable. The early Mesopotamians created an orderly social world in which people could count on others to behave in predictable and civil ways. Almost everyone seems to have followed unwritten rules. This love of order pervaded everyday life in the Early Dynastic period, from around 2900 to 2300 BCE.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

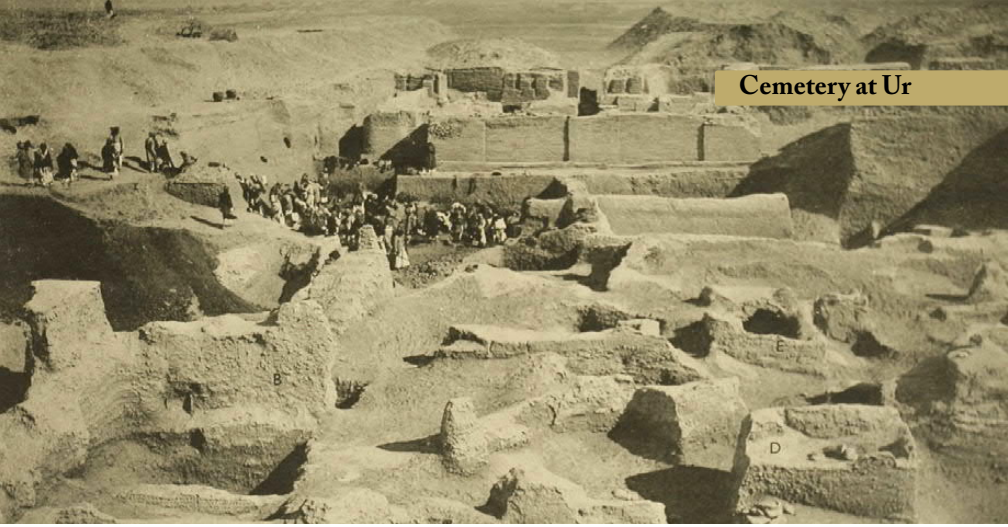
- One place where the desire for order was apparent was in religious beliefs. The Mesopotamians believed the gods had control over chaos and order in the universe. The natural world might have seemed completely unpredictable, but they could explain this. They believed that gods and goddesses—wildly powerful individuals who shared our human virtues but had our weaknesses as well—were in charge of all of it.

- When the gods were angry, they could wreak havoc, causing all manner of natural disasters. When they were happy they could be stable—maybe even loving. When the gods were content, crops were abundant, herds of sheep expanded, women gave birth to healthy babies, and the rivers rose predictably and didn't overflow their banks. It was up to human beings to try to keep the gods happy.

- Being like humans—but on a much bigger scale in every way—the gods needed houses, food, drink, and gifts. Yet there were no guarantees. According to the Mesopotamian flood story, the king of the gods—whose name was Enlil—decided to wipe out human beings because they were just too noisy, and he couldn't sleep. (He wasn't successful. Another god, Enki, saved humankind by telling a man to build a boat to escape the flood with his family.)

- One of the Mesopotamians' firmly held beliefs was that cosmic order was written on a document—a clay tablet—in the realm of the gods. It was known as the Tablet of Destinies. On the fabled tablet (presumably written in cuneiform) were written different aspects of cosmic order, which they called the *me*.

- So long as a wise god like Enlil controlled the Tablet of Destinies, all was well with the world. On the other hand, chaos broke loose when the tablet ended up in the hands of an evil deity. Several myths describe how the good gods would get it back. The Mesopotamians just longed for structure and predictability in their lives, and prayed that the tablet would stay safely in the hands of the father of the divine family.



Cemetery at Ur

- The Mesopotamian religion wasn't congregational and wasn't dogmatic. People didn't gather together to worship. They didn't expect to get spiritual guidance in a temple, and religious leaders didn't preach. Normal people worshiped the gods privately, in their houses or in small neighborhood shrines. Families were devoted to particular gods, and each individual believed that he or she had a personal god and goddess to watch over them.

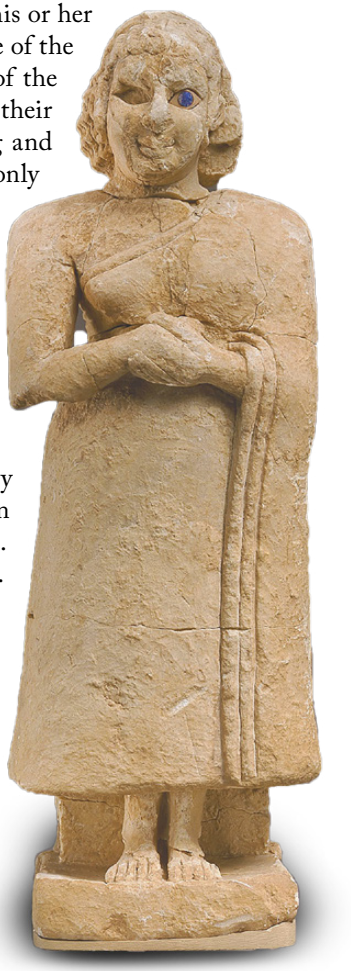
- Mesopotamians didn't go to big-city temples to pray. A temple was the residence of a god. Where the god actually lived—that is, the sanctuary in the heart of the temple, where his or her statue was located—was as private as the house of the king. It was off-limits to almost everyone except for the high priests and priestesses.

WORK AND FOOD

- One thing many people did do in a temple was work. By the Early Dynastic period, the temples to the great gods had turned into economic powerhouses. They owned vast estates, with fields, orchards, and herds of sheep and goats. The priests hired hundreds of workers to farm the lands and herd the animals. Other workers processed the harvested wheat and barley into bread and beer. Many women worked for the temples to turn wool into textiles.

- Textiles produced by women working in the temples and palaces became some of Mesopotamia's most important exports. In the Early Dynastic period and for thousands of years after that, people were willing to pay high prices for Mesopotamian fabrics. In Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder*, there's a reference to a Mesopotamian tapestry in Roman times.

- Workers were paid in rations of barley, oil, and wool—enough to support not just the worker but his or her family as well. The workers would use some of the barley to make bread and beer, and some of the wool to make clothes, rugs, blankets for their families. Vegetable oil was used for eating and for light (this was before candles—they had only oil lamps).



- Sometimes, the workers would have rations left over after using what their families needed. They could use this surplus to trade with other people for things they needed, like salt, cooking utensils, and tools.

- Although grain was the only type of food they received in their rations, the Mesopotamian workers' diet didn't consist solely of bread. They also ate vegetables from their gardens. We know from later recipes that they were particularly fond of onions. They also fished in the rivers and made stews of the meat of wild birds. At religious festivals they might eat beef or goat meat, though a goat, sheep, or ox was more useful alive than dead. Dates from date palms, which grow across Mesopotamia, were the sweetest items in their diets. The Mesopotamians cooked dates in bread to make dessert.

- Mesopotamians drank beer all the time. It was safer than drinking water because the fermentation process sterilized it. The beer had calories—that is, a source of energy—and a low alcohol content. It was considered to be one of the most important aspects of civilization. People sometimes drank this beer through straws from big communal pots at banquets. The straws helped people avoid the sediment, barley husks, or even insects that might have fallen in.

- Women were often involved in brewing throughout Mesopotamian history. The female innkeeper was a common figure in Mesopotamian life. All in all, women could work in a number of professions. One of the most important roles was as a priestess. A high priestess had many duties, and most of them weren't religious. She could be responsible for running an entire temple estate.

- Just as large numbers of people worked in the great temples of the gods, many were also employed in the royal palaces and estates. The king of each city-state had a palace in his capital city. He owned extensive agricultural land and herds of sheep and goats. His wife did as well.

WARS

- Sometimes, wars between the cities broke out, and men were called up to fight. There was no standing army at this time, so battles were fought during the months between harvest and planting, when farmers could leave their fields to fight.

- The palaces drew up lists of men recruited for military service; sometimes these were lists of whole towns. They standardized arms and armor, and organized a hierarchical system of generals. They even invented the phalanx formation thousands of years before the Greeks used it. This probably took away the possibility of individual acts of heroism but made the army stronger.

- Mesopotamian artworks that depict warfare from the Early Dynastic period shows that everything (at least on the winning side) seems to be going according to plan. Identical soldiers line up with their identical shields, helmets, and spears, presenting a united front to the enemy. The enemies are always shown in disarray. They're bleeding, naked, and trampled under the feet of the victors.

- In reality, a Mesopotamian battle wouldn't have looked like this, with one side robbed of all their clothing and dead or captured and the other still in perfect formation and unscathed. Battles would have been brutal, with many casualties inflicted on both sides. Deaths in battle and deaths afterwards from infected wounds added to ancient fears of chaos. War wasn't inevitable, though: The elaborate diplomatic system provided a way to try to solve crises without bloodshed.

UNCOVERING THE PAST

- Unfortunately, the lives of ancient commoners can be hard to reconstruct. They were almost always illiterate, so they didn't leave records, and their homes have rarely been excavated. Archaeologists have traditionally focused more on temples and palaces.

- The structures are never complete—and that's true of all buildings. Usually, excavators find only the bottoms of walls or foundations. The buildings were abandoned at some point, and the owners almost always removed any valuable goods inside so that only trash was left on the floors. Then the walls fell down, the whole thing was eventually leveled, and a new building was constructed on top of the ruins. This happened over and over, so archaeologists usually find layers of ancient floors, foundations, hearths, broken pots, and food debris.

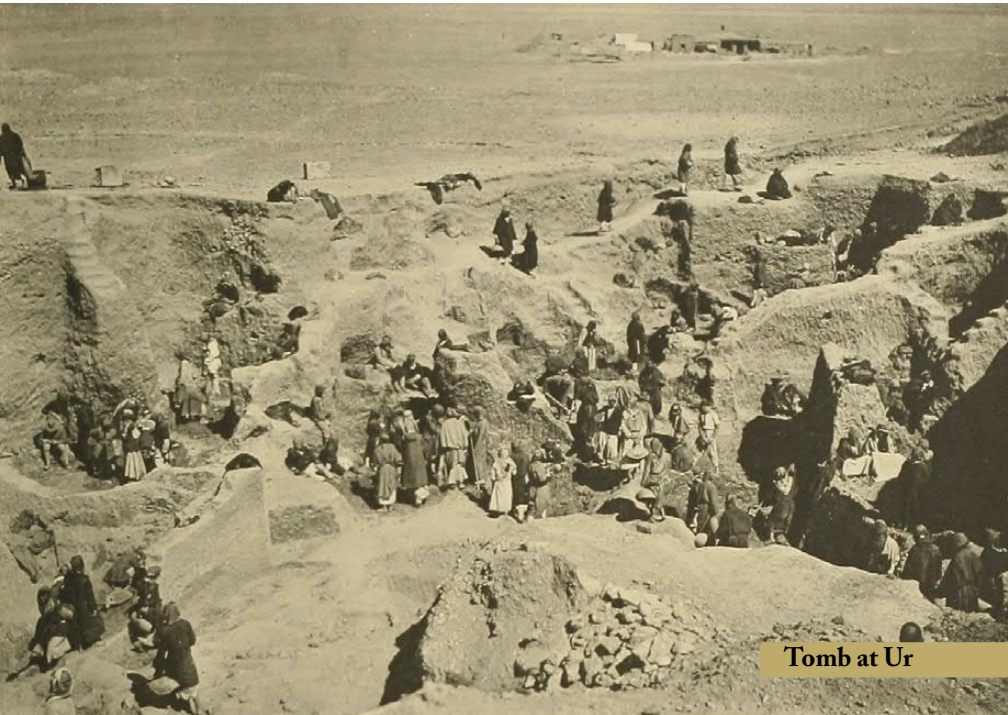
- Fires did preserve some evidence. When a building burned down, fire would bake clay tablets, so every written document in a burned building is left just as it was. The fire also carbonized wood and other organic materials. Sometimes, there's evidence of wooden doorposts or baskets.

Pots and food waste of everyday life are often left there, too, just where they were when the fire happened.

- Another window into ancient life appears when archaeologists uncover a tomb that hasn't been robbed. People were often buried with things they thought would be useful in the afterlife. Often, they were dressed in their finest clothes and jewelry.

AN EXCAVATION

- Late in 1922, a British archaeologist named Sir Leonard Woolley began leading an excavation at the city of Ur, about midway between modern-day Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. Woolley had a giant team of workmen, and they found evidence of some extraordinary tombs from the Early Dynastic period, as well as buildings and temples from later periods of Mesopotamian history.



Tomb at Ur

- By 1927, the team had discovered about 1,850 burial pits of commoners, and 17 much more elaborate and rich tombs. They were from the Early Dynastic period—maybe around 2600 BCE. Somehow, they had gone unnoticed by tomb robbers for thousands of years, so they were found with everything exactly as it had been when the burials took place.

- These elaborate tombs are very mysterious. According to Woolley, some of the tombs weren't for just one person. He recounted one with "6 men on the entrance side and 68 women in court dress." These people were attendants who had either killed themselves or been killed to be buried with the main person in the tomb. There were 17 of these "royal tombs," as Woolley called them. Each one, he wrote, was the "resting place of the semi-divine ruler."

- After the death of the leader, a large pit was dug, and a one-room building was constructed at one end. Inside the building, the body of the leader was placed and surrounded with luxury goods. Outside the tomb building, the doomed attendants walked down a ramp into the pit, standing in orderly lines. In some cases, a wagon was backed down the ramp, accompanied by soldiers in helmets and armor. These attendants were all killed, after which the pit was covered up.

- The objects buried in the tomb would have been worth a fortune, even back then. There were musical instruments—mostly lyres and harps—and chariots, armor, weapons, sculptures, and bowls. Many objects were made from luxury materials that had been imported.

All of this suggests the Mesopotamians had a belief in the type of afterlife that the Egyptians also looked forward to, one in which people could be as rich and powerful after death as they were in life. Perhaps the attendants believed they were going to a glorious afterlife with their leader. At this early time, there were no written records of what the Mesopotamians believed about the afterlife, but it's interesting to note that later legends did not make it out to be a pleasant place at all.

READINGS

- Bottero, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World*.
- Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*.
- Damerow, "Sumerian Beer."
- Foster, "A New Look at the Sumerian Temple State."
- Hansen, "Royal Building Activity at Sumerian Lagash in the Early Dynastic Period."
- Moorey, *Ur "of the Chaldees."*
- Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*.
- Pollock, "Ur."
- Woolley, "The Royal Graves of Ur."

QUESTIONS

- How might the Mesopotamians' belief that they existed only to serve the gods have influenced their view of life?
- Why might attendants have been willing to die and be buried with their leaders?

8

LUGALZAGESI OF UMMA AND SARGON OF AKKAD

The ancient Mesopotamian king Lugalzagesi of Umma, who came to the throne around 2350 BCE, was perhaps the most ambitious ruler the world had seen up to that time. His successor, Sargon, was even more powerful and set the model for being an emperor. This lecture takes a look at these two important rulers.

LUGALZAGESI'S RULE

- At the time Lugalzagesi ascended to power, the city-state of Umma had been feuding with the neighboring kingdom of Lagash for generations. In stone inscriptions, one Lagash king after another boasted of his victories over Umma.

- Lugalzagesi changed that. A later writer described how Lugalzagesi swept into Lagash and attacked 20 temples, shrines, and palaces. He set fire to seven of the buildings and did major damage to 12 others. He also looted their treasuries.

- Lugalzagesi wasn't done after his conquest of Lagash. He was out to rule what he called "the Land"—not just a couple of city-states. At this point, there was no word for all of Mesopotamia because it had never been politically united. It was just "the Land." Later, it would be known as Sumer and Akkad. Then, the Greeks called it Mesopotamia. Today, we know it as Iraq.

- Until Lugalzagesi, the only type of king who existed in Mesopotamia was the king of a city-state. Lugalzagesi had bigger ideas. When he said he was king of "the land," he was claiming to rule all the city-states. Lugalzagesi made this statement in an inscription on a vase found in Nippur, which was thought of as the religious capital of Mesopotamia.

- Interestingly, he doesn't mention conquests in this inscription. Although a writer describes him as having destroyed Lagash, Lugalzagesi doesn't brag about his military power in the inscription commissioned for him. Instead, he goes on and on about all the gods who supported him—13 of them. He'd been given the kingship by Enlil himself, he said. And the god of heaven, An, watched him with "a steadfast eye." The god Enki had given him understanding. The sun god Utu had pronounced his name, and so on. He then says that everyone he ruled was happy, and in good cheer.

- The final part of the inscription is a blessing and prayer, asking Enlil to watch over him and his people, and asking for peace and prosperity. Lugalzagesi calls himself the "shepherd" of his people—not the victorious conqueror. Perhaps he didn't want to mention the destructive side of his actions.

- Some scholars think this suggests that he was a good diplomat who had managed to bring at least six city-states together as a confederation, without conquering them all. Others think the inscription just wasn't the place where one would mention conquests, because it commemorated the peaceful quality of the kingdom he'd created. Either way, Lugalzagesi had done something important for the history of Mesopotamia. He'd thought of a state that was bigger than his home city and the land around it.

- The last known mention of Lugalzagesi is very different from his impressive portrayal in the earlier inscriptions. An even more powerful king brought Lugalzagesi's reign to an end. This was King Sargon, whose royal inscription states:

> Sargon, king of Agade, solicitor of Ishtar, king of the universe, anointed priest of An, king of the Land, governor of Enlil.
>
> He won in battle with Uruk…. He conquered the city, and tore down its walls.
>
> And he captured Lugalzagesi, king of Uruk, in battle, and led him in a neck-stock to the gate of the temple of Enlil.

- This was an ignominious end for Lugalzagesi—to be brought in a neck-stock as a prize of war, completely humiliated. Still, King Lugalzagesi had set a precedent by claiming to rule from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, even if he didn't actually achieve it. He'd united a group of city-states under his rule. His successor seems to have been influenced by this. Perhaps he wanted to accomplish what Lugalzagesi had only bragged about.

SARGON

Bronze head of an Akkadian king

- Sargon said he was king of Agade. This was a new city, somewhere to the north of Sumer, in the region where the Tigris River and Euphrates River flow closest together. Archaeologists haven't found the city of Agade yet. This area of Mesopotamia came to be called Akkad.

- The main language spoken there was Akkadian, which was different from the Sumerian spoken in the south. Akkadian is a Semitic language, related to modern Arabic and Hebrew. Akkadian began to be written down in Sargon's time, using the same cuneiform script also used to write Sumerian.

- Sargon was a warrior king who spoke Akkadian. The inscription calls him "king of the Land"—which was the same title that Lugalzagesi had taken. However, he also called himself something even more impressive. It can be translated as "king of the universe. " There's some debate about the translation, but regardless, the term meant something bigger than "the Land."

- Sargon also states that he had relationships with three gods. Here, he makes some fairly conventional claims. The gods had chosen him to rule his land, and he served them in religious and political roles.

It's notable that Sargon says nothing about his father. If he had inherited the throne, presumably he would have said so. His name, Sargon, means "the king is legitimate" or "true king." This suggests that it wasn't his birth name.

SARGON'S EMPIRE

Sargon wasn't the kind of ruler who'd be celebrated in the modern world, if he appeared today. Modern states and their subjects don't approve of leaders who stage coups, take power and make unprovoked attacks on their neighbors. However, Sargon was remembered by later generations as a great king. The later Mesopotamians seem to have almost completely forgotten Lugalzagesi—and all the other Sumerian kings of Lagash and Umma—but Sargon's name and reputation were passed down for thousands of years.

- In his inscription, Sargon described the cities he conquered as he headed beyond Uruk. First, there was Ur, where he tore down the walls. Ur had been where the rulers were buried with much of their wealth, and with sacrificed men and women to serve them in the afterlife. Then, he went on to Lagash, and continued "down to the sea." This was the Lower Sea—the Persian Gulf.

- When he got there, he states that he "washed his weapons in the sea." This was such a symbolic gesture that it captured the imagination of Sargon's successors. From this time on, a king who claimed to rule all of Mesopotamia often said that he had washed his weapons in both seas.

- Sargon used much the same wording as Lugalzagesi to describe why he'd been successful. He said that "Enlil did not give him a rival, but he gave him indeed the Upper Sea and the Lower Sea." This took 34 battles, apparently.

- After all his conquests, Sargon was ruler of an empire. Strictly speaking, this was the world's first empire. The Egyptian kings had ruled an area almost this extensive—at least in length, though not in square miles—for hundreds of years. But Egypt was one country. The people there all spoke the same language, worshiped the same gods, and shared the same culture. The Nile was a natural unifying feature, and ever since about 3000 BCE, the default situation in Egypt was that it was ruled by a single king.

- This was never true in Mesopotamia, which tended to break up into smaller kingdoms. Sargon's empire was full of people with different traditions, different languages, and a long history of independence. The people Sargon conquered wouldn't have felt automatic allegiance to him. Their loyalty was to their local kingdom.

- They don't even seem to have thought of themselves as Sumerian, or Mesopotamian, or Syrian. They thought of themselves as citizens of Mari, Lagash, or Ur. That brings up the question: Why should they submit to a foreign war leader who had come in and destroyed their buildings and city walls, and then asked them to pay taxes to him?

- Sargon had to come up with some mechanisms to make this new system work to ensure that he didn't spend his entire reign leading troops from one place to another, endlessly putting down rebellions. The ideas that he came up with set a pattern for all later Mesopotamian empires, and, after that, for the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman empires that ruled this same region.

SARGON'S ACTIONS

- Marlies Heinz, a German archaeologist at the University of Frieburg, has looked at Sargon's reign as a classic example of a successful rebellion against an established order. He did a number of things that a rebel leader often does. He moved fast in his early conquests, not giving people time to fully realize what was going on. He was quick to put previously powerful leaders into embarrassing and humiliating situations—like dragging Lugalzagesi home in a neck-stock.

- He took away some of the land that traditionally had belonged to temples and sold it or used it as gifts to reward people who supported him. He resettled some people whom he had conquered in new areas. These people might have rebelled against Sargon if they were left in their homelands, but in their new settlements, they would have to focus on making a living, so they wouldn't have much energy left to form a resistance movement.

- Sargon created a new capital that didn't have any old allegiances or traditions. Power was now focused in just one place—his capital city of Agade—and he could demand the goods he wanted from around the empire as taxes and tribute, rather than paying for them. This was one of the great advantages of his new system—at least to him and his officials. Enormous amounts of wealth flowed in, and not much flowed out.

- In each region that he conquered, Sargon said the local god had given him control there, even if he also admitted he'd fought for it. This probably wasn't entirely cynical. He likely believed it himself.

- His very success proved his legitimacy, and demonstrated all the divine support that he had. Only if the gods had chosen him to build the empire could he possibly have succeeded. The people probably believed this, as well. It might have made rebelling a little riskier—the gods might be against rebels.

MORE MOVES BY SARGON

- Sargon put one of his family members in an important religious post in the south. Ur was one of the greatest of all cities, and home to the moon god, whose name was Nanna in Sumerian (and Sin in Sargon's Akkadian language). The temple of the moon god was huge and wealthy, and headed by a powerful high priestess. Ur might well have become a center of resistance against Sargon's new imperial system.

- Sargon appointed his daughter to be the new high priestess of the moon god at Ur. She could keep an eye on things for him politically, while also working to keep the moon god on his side. We don't know what the daughter's original name was, but it would have been an Akkadian name. In Ur, she adopted a Sumerian name, Enheduanna, matching the language of the people there.

- Another of Sargon's strategies for dominating was to have a group of soldiers available year-round. Up until this time, battles were fought when people weren't farming. The men called up for military service were farmers, and they needed to be at home for most of the year. For a few months, though—between harvest and the planting season—they could serve the king.

- Wars, therefore, tended to be fairly short. This was acceptable for a ruler battling with the neighboring city-state over where the border should be drawn, but not very helpful if a ruler wanted to put down a distant rebellion. In one of Sargon's inscriptions, after listing a series of conquests, he wrote that "5,400 men daily eat in his presence." Historians have speculated that these men were his elite troops, supported (and fed) by the king.

SARGON'S LEGACY

- There's a debate among scholars about whether Sargon's conquests really constituted an empire. However, a historian at Yale University, Benjamin Foster, has made a convincing argument that it was an empire. For one thing, Sargon and his successors attempted to standardize a number of things, including the writing system, and he introduced the same type of record keeping across the empire.

- Foster also looked at the place names that show up on clay tablets from sites like Lagash. Before Sargon's time, these tablets mostly mentioned local places in Sumer, and they referred to some diplomatic contact with lands to the east like Elam. After Lagash was conquered by Akkad, all kinds of new places are mentioned in the tablets—cities as far away as western Syria and Iran, and the countries of Dilmun, Magan, and Meluhha.

- Syria and Iran were within the Akkadian Empire, but Dilmun, Magan, and Meluhha were distant lands that Sargon claimed to have ties to. The tablets found in the ground back up Sargon's claims for his wide conquests and contacts. What he and his successors achieved really was unprecedented.

- After Sargon's death, he was succeeded by two sons, one after the other. The first one, Rimush, was faced with rebellions all over the empire, which he had to put down. This was a fairly common occurrence in the ancient world. The transfer of power between kings seems to have been an ideal time to break away from their control.

Rimush's brother, Manishtushu, took over next. He, too, was a fighter. He put together a fleet of ships and campaigned in Magan—modern Oman. He claimed in an inscription that 32 cities of Magan "assembled for war, and he vanquished [them] and smote their cities. He felled their rulers and captured their fugitives as far as the silver mines." Sargon's successors kept right on fighting, trying to expand their areas of control. As founder of the empire, Sargon had created the mold for what it meant to be emperor.

READINGS

- Allen, "Egypt and the Near East in the Third Millennium B.C."
- Foster, *The Age of Agade*.
- Franke, "Kings of Akkad."
- Heinz, "Sargon of Akkad."
- Kramer, *The Sumerians*.
- Maeda, "Royal Inscriptions of Lugalzagesi and Sargon."
- Morgan, Christopher. "Late Traditions Concerning Sargon and Naram-Sin."
- Powell, "The Sin of Lugalzagesi."
- Westenholz, "Heroes of Akkad."

QUESTIONS

- How did Sargon attempt to overcome the problems of controlling an empire?
- In what ways was Sargon different from Lugalzagesi, who ruled before him?

9

AKKADIAN EMPIRE ARTS AND GODS

The Akkadian period, from about 2350 BCE to 2150 BCE, was a time of great innovation in many different aspects of life. The kings of ancient Mesopotamia and their officials were trying new ways of governing. Contacts with distant lands introduced exotic goods and new ideas. Artisans and craftsmen experimented with more naturalistic depictions of humans and the natural world. Authors wrote about the gods with new emotion and devotion. This was a classical period for the arts in Mesopotamia, and also an interesting time for religion.

THE CITY OF AGADE AND RELIGION

- The Akkadian Empire's capital city of Agade must have been an impressive place. A later literary text describes it as having been almost impossibly wealthy. The boats it mentions were from many places, including distant lands. There were boats from Dilmun—modern-day Bahrain—bringing copper, ivory, tin, and timber. From Magan—modern-day Oman—came copper and an igneous rock known as diorite for sculpture.

- Many people living within the empire—people like soldiers, traders, and administrators—would have been exposed to new ideas, new fashions, new languages, and even new and surprising animals. One thing that probably made an impression on them was the difference in the religious beliefs they encountered. But they didn't conclude that the foreign beliefs were false.

- When Mesopotamians met people who worshiped different gods from them, they assumed that these were real gods, too. They just hadn't known about them before. Some of the gods might be useful and could be absorbed into their own culture and worshiped. Others were evidently the same gods they already worshiped, but under different names. For example, there's only one sun, so, logically, there's only one sun god. The Sumerians called him Utu, the Akkadians called him Shamash, and the Egyptians called him Re or Ra, but he was the same god.

- The safest way to live was to believe in all of the gods and to give offerings and say prayers to the ones with the biggest impact on a person's life. If a person moved to a distant land, or even traveled through a land with different gods, the obvious thing was to worship those gods along with the person's own.

- The Mesopotamians were obviously not in charge of the universe—the gods were. If the people's job was to take care of the gods' needs, as they believed, then that's what they would do. Their religion wasn't about spirituality or heaven or righteousness; it was about keeping the gods happy and living to see another day.

- This doesn't mean that the Mesopotamians were especially pessimistic or glum. They loved banquets and parties, and had close friendships and loving families. They had something of a carpe diem attitude, and they made sure to make the best of things. Part of this attitude seems to have included an appreciation for beautiful art, such as elaborate textiles and jewelry.

MESOPOTAMIAN ART

- The quality of art and craftsmanship changed considerably during the time of the Akkadian Empire. Before Sargon's time, Sumerian art of the Early Dynastic period, around 2900 to 2350 BCE, was initially highly stylized. Stone statues were blocky and squat. The figures had large, pointed noses and big, staring eyes that were usually inlaid with dark stones.

- The artists don't seem to have been aiming for naturalism. Instead, they had mastered a distinct style to represent the human form, and they used it widely. At least at the beginning of the era, the faces and bodies were all much the same, though they changed the figures' hairstyles and clothing.

- During the Early Dynastic period, reliefs, mosaics, and even the scenes on cylinder seals were organized in registers, with the figures standing or walking along a line that marked the bottom of the scene. Here again, there seems to have been a standard formula for portraying offering-givers, soldiers, and so on.

- Artists during the Akkadian period broke with these traditions. It would be fascinating to know what inspired them. The artwork made during this period is seen as some of the finest of any Mesopotamian era, but we don't know who the artists were. The identity of an individual artist was unimportant. The important factor was the king who commissioned his work, or the god whom it was designed to appeal to.

- Art seems to have been somewhat magical to the Mesopotamian mind. A representation of a person or a god was called an image—which was *salmu* in Akkadian—and it took on some part of the thing it depicted, almost at though it had captured a bit of the person's soul. In sculpting the rock or the clay into a human figure, the artist gave it a kind of life. A ritual called "opening of the mouth" completed this transformation.

- Just as a statue of a god kept in the god's temple was the god, a statue of a king or even a commoner was, in some way, part of that person. A statue of a man or woman set up in front of a statue of a god could pray to the god on the person's behalf. We know this because of inscriptions on the statues.

- A statue of a king could act on the king's behalf as well. Like a statue of a commoner, it could be set up in a temple to pray to the gods for the king's well being. Many royal statues were in temples and received offerings. The statue could also help the king rule, enforcing his power and making sure the people obeyed him. In later eras, and possibly during the Akkadian period as well, people swore oaths in front of the statue of a king (just as they did in front of statues of the gods). They believed they'd be punished if they broke their oath.

SCULPTING BREAKTHROUGHS

- In the Akkadian era, an important technological breakthrough came into play: the lost wax technique of bronze casting, in which molten metal is poured into a mold formed from a wax model. Under this process, a clay core was covered with wax and sculpted to the shape of the desired object.

- Then, the core and the wax sculpture were encased in another layer of clay, and baked in a kiln. The wax melted and was poured out, and molten copper was added. When the metal cooled, it had assumed the shape of the wax model inside the clay shell. The clay shell was then chipped away.

- The sculpture was hollow, and much lighter than a solid copper object of the same size would have been. It could be larger, too. The earliest lost wax sculptures in the world were made in Mesopotamia. Some really extraordinary sculptures began to be created. They tend to be referred to as bronzes, even though—strictly speaking—they were copper alloys.

- Akkadian sculptors were able to make bronzes that were much more naturalistic than the Early Dynastic sculptures had been. They managed the same naturalism when carving in stone.

- A regal bronze head of a king is probably the best-known piece from this era. We don't know which king it was. It was perhaps Manishtushu, who ruled from about 2269 to 2255 BCE, or Naram-Sin, who ruled after him. Unfortunately there's no inscription to tell us.

- Unlike earlier Sumerian sculptures, this one seems to have been an attempt to portray a real man, with his detailed hair and beard, smooth skin, and realistic and determined expression. It's almost life size, and would have had inlaid eyes made of stone.

- Artists were just as attentive in their creations of stone sculptures. There's a truly extraordinary statue of Manishtushu, wearing a long plain skirt. Unfortunately, the whole top half of the king's body and his head are missing . But the skirt seems to be swaying with his movement. The soft folds have been carved perfectly naturalistically, curving around his legs. This was achieved in spite of the fact that the statue is carved from one of the hardest stones—diorite.

CYLINDER SEALS

- The makers of cylinder seals were also breaking new ground at this time. Cylinder seals were very small—usually only an inch or two high—and had to be made meticulously. Tiny figures were carved carefully in relief and laid out so that the scene exactly filled the cylindrical surface, sometimes even including minute details of faces and muscles.

- These seals were carved with the most creative and eye-catching images. They depicted boats, goats and their herdsmen, oxen, mythical scenes, and so on. The Akkadian artists seem to have been particularly interested in scenes of intense struggle, often between heroes and animals or monsters. They frequently included inscriptions, written in reverse—that is, in mirror writing—so that when rolled on clay, the inscriptions turned out the right way. These gave the name of the owner of the seal and his titles.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

- The Akkadian period also provides the first glimpses of the myths and legends that inspired the Mesopotamians. We know about these literary works because apprentice scribes copied the stories down in school.

- The world's first author came from this time period. This was Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon who became high priestess of the moon god. She wrote hymns and identified herself as their author, something that hadn't been done before. The writers of previous hymns, myths, and legends were all anonymous.

- Enheduanna didn't put her name on the cover page, per se. She was part of the action of the hymn. For example, in one poem she wrote this:

  Yes, I took up my place in the sanctuary dwelling,

  I was high priestess, I, Enheduanna …

  I am Enheduanna, let me speak to you in prayer,

  My tears flowing like some sweet intoxicant.

- Enheduanna clearly was very powerful. A lesser priestess probably wouldn't have used her name over and over in a hymn. Curiously, the three hymns attributed to her aren't directed to the god she served—the moon god. They're addressed to the deity that her family seems to have been especially dedicated to: the goddess Inanna, who was also known by her Akkadian name, Ishtar.

- Enheduanna seems to have turned to Inanna in a time of crisis. For example, she wrote in a hymn that a man named Lugalanne was the source of her problems. This particular individual tried to drive her out of the office of high priestess.

- Typically for this era, Enheduanna would have seen her difficulties as the gods' doing rather than as an act of the people. Maybe she had to go into exile. So she prayed to the goddess Inanna—the Sumerian goddess of war and love—to help her.

- By the end of the composition, things had apparently been sorted out: "The almighty queen who presides over the priestly congregation, she accepted her prayer." This means that the goddess responded to Enheduanna's prayer. The text continues and states that "Inanna's sublime will was for her restoration" to her position in the temple.

READINGS

- Aruz, ed., *Art of the First Cities*.
- Bahrani, "Art of the Akkadian Dynasty."
- Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*.
- Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*.
- Collon, *First Impressions*.
- Potts, "Distant Shores."
- ——, "The Gulf, Dilmun and Magan."
- Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*.
- Stieglitz, "Long-Distance Seafaring in the Ancient Near East."

QUESTIONS

- How did the Mesopotamian people view their own gods and those of other cultures? Why might this have been true?
- How did technological advances perhaps influence changes in the artwork during this period?

10

THE FALL OF AKKAD AND GUDEA OF LAGASH

The Akkadian Empire of ancient Mesopotamia is of particular interest to historians because it was the world's first empire, and its kings—Sargon and Naram-Sin—have been remembered for thousands of years. The Mesopotamians themselves were sure the gods were behind the eventual collapse of the empire, around 2150 BCE. In their eyes, the gods were responsible for absolutely everything.

The fact is that the capital city of Agade was attacked, and its rule over Mesopotamia came to an end. This must have seemed incomprehensible at the time. The Akkadian Empire was a huge power; its king was believed to be a god. Yet the empire collapsed, and the land ended up being divided into smaller kingdoms.

BLAME

- A later poem called "The Curse of Agade" blamed King Naram-Sin for angering the gods and bringing about the empire's destruction. Naram-Sin was the grandson of Sargon, and—like his grandfather—Naram-Sin spent a lot of time fighting, putting down rebellions, and trying to keep the empire together. Unlike some earlier kings, Naram-Sin didn't want to be remembered as a shepherd of his people. He preferred to be feared.

- According to the authors of the poem, Naram-Sin broke all kinds of taboos, including destroying a temple. Naram-Sin had destroyed the old temple, but he did so as part of a magnificent renovation project. He built a brand-new temple in its place, decorated with incredible amounts of gold, silver, and copper statues and fittings. It was an act of devotion, not sacrilege.

- But the poem's authors believed the god Enlil was furious at what Naram-Sin had done. They wrote "Enlil, because his beloved Ekur [temple] had been destroyed, what should he destroy in turn for it?" They believed that the answer was that Enlil decided to punish King Naram-Sin by destroying his capital city of Agade.

- Specifically, the authors said the god summoned foreigners—Gutians—from the mountains to swarm down into the Mesopotamian river valley. Other records confirm the attack on Agade was indeed by the Gutians who came from the Zagros Mountains. However, it didn't happen until quite a while after the reign of Naram-Sin, which ended around 2218 BCE. Additionally, the Gutians weren't the barbarians that the poem described. They had an organized military and a king to lead them.

- Of course, modern historians don't think the empire fell because Enlil was angry. Something else is required to adequately explain things. Even though every empire eventually falls, each one does so for different reasons. When examining the Akkadian Empire, the reasons for its failure are fascinating to explore.

THE COLLAPSE

- Rebellions were quite common throughout the time of the Akkadian Empire, and some are well known. King Naram-Sin himself boasted about putting one of them down. Therefore, loyalty to the empire was probably always limited. The provincial leaders would have been unlikely to fight on behalf of the Akkadian kings if those kings seemed weak.

- In 1993, an archaeologist at Yale University named Harvey Weiss published an important article in the journal *Science*. Weiss and six co-authors proposed a new explanation for the collapse of the Akkadian Empire. They had been working at Akkadian-period sites in northern Syria—an area where ancient farming was based on rainfall.

- They found that many cities there had been abandoned starting around 2200 BCE because of a period of intense drought. They believed as many as 100,000 people might have become refugees because of this climatic change, and these people presumably would have moved south into Mesopotamia.

- Weiss and his colleagues also proposed that the Akkadian Empire was dependent for much of its grain on this region of north Syria, and that the drought could have had a powerful economic impact on the imperial administration. Even the Gutian invasion might have occurred due to the Gutians being affected by the drought and being forced to move away from their dust bowl farms.

- Even more striking was the authors' suggestion that this drought didn't just cause the end of the Akkadian Empire. It might also have brought an end to the Old Kingdom in Egypt and the Harappan civilization in the Indus River Valley. It could have caused the collapse of states in the Aegean region and the southern Levant as well.

- There's plenty of evidence for the drought now. It definitely happened between 2200 and 1900 BCE. Since the time the article came out, researchers have studied sediment cores from the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Dead Sea, and other bodies of water, and they've found a spike in wind-blown dust during this period. Wind-blown dust would have been a symptom of a loss of vegetation, which would have been caused by the drought.

- A big question, though, is: What caused the drought? In the original article, the scientists described evidence of volcanic dust and glass at a number of sites in Syria. An analysis showed parallels to dust from volcanoes to the north, in what is now Turkey. A big volcanic eruption can change the local climate for decades, and this might be what happened.

- In any event, most archaeologists and historians who study the ancient Near East are united in thinking that the many states that collapsed around 2200 BCE might have had environmental crises to deal with, not just political ones. We are still left with questions, but research has gone in many different directions in recent years, and historians and archaeologists are working closely with scientists. More evidence will no doubt emerge and will help researchers understand what was going on.

FRAGMENTED TERRITORY

- In creating an empire, Sargon and his descendants were in uncharted territory, and it's hardly surprising that the state they created was rather fragile. Perhaps the surprise isn't that this civilization fell, but that it had survived for any length of time at all before falling.

- After the reign of Shar-kali-sharri—the last of the Mesopotamian kings—and the invasion of the Gutians around 2100 BCE, it's unclear who ruled in the region around Agade. When the dust settled, the region was no longer unified, but a much smaller kingdom was still centered on Agade and was ruled by a king named Dudu. The Gutians had a separate state. Other independent kingdoms dotted the region that had previously been subject to Agade.

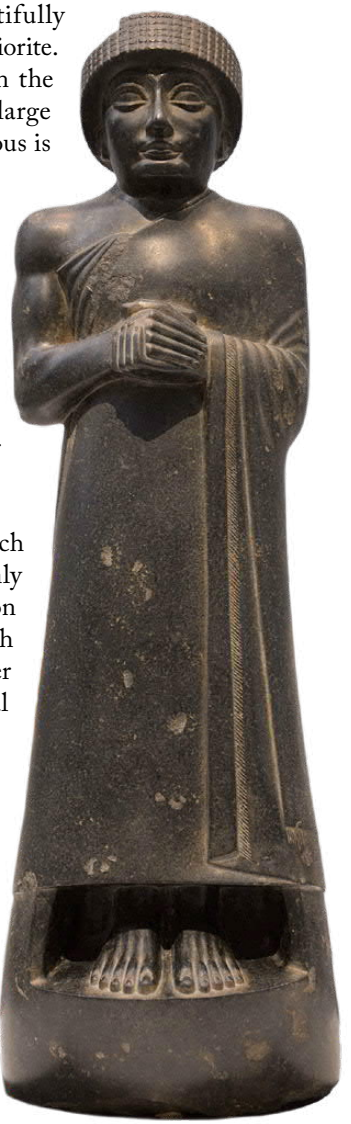
- At the end of the Akkadian Empire, the drought in the north certainly made life more difficult in that region, but the same doesn't seem to have been true in the south. If anything, the people of southern Mesopotamia seem to have been better off economically towards the end of the Akkadian period than they'd been during its height. New leaders came to power and life went on.

LAGASH

- One such dynasty of new leaders came to power in the southern kingdom of Lagash in the 22nd century BCE. It's known as the second dynasty of Lagash to distinguish it from the previous time when Lagash had been dominant, which was between around 2500 and 2300 BCE. The capital by this time wasn't the city of Lagash but another city called Girsu.

- One of the kings who ruled during the second Lagash dynasty is particularly well known to modern scholars. His name was Gudea. To describe himself, he didn't use the term king—which was *lugal* in Sumerian. He called himself *ensi*—governor. It's not that he was subject to a greater king. He was in charge. But he was a very pious man, and he saw his main role as being the representative on earth of his god Ningirsu.

- Statues of Gudea are in lots of museums around the world. Almost all of them are beautifully sculpted out of the shiny black stone called diorite. They show the king standing or seated, in the prime of life. He's portrayed as having a large head on a fairly short body. The most famous is known as Statue B.



- Dozens of other Gudea statues have also been found, and he was said to have built innumerable temples. Researchers know of 30 temples that he claimed to have built in just the city of Girsu. He also commissioned buildings in many other cities, including in Ur, Nippur, and Uruk. Gudea must have controlled quite a lot of southern Mesopotamia.

- Gudea ruled for perhaps 20 years, after which his son, Ur-Ningirsu, took the throne. Only a few statues of Ur-Ningirsu survive. Soon after his reign, the second dynasty of Lagash was conquered by a king who had taken power in the city of Ur. He founded a powerful royal family, the third dynasty of Ur.

- Gudea is important because he was so different in the way he presented himself to his subjects from the Akkadian kings who came before him. He didn't try to seem terrifying. He didn't claim to be the king of the universe. He didn't tear down city walls. He wanted to protect his subjects, and he loved his gods. This is a model of rule that seems to have influenced many kings who came after him.

READINGS

- Bahrani, "Gudea."
- Hansen, "A Sculpture of Gudea."
- Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once*.
- Klein, "From Gudea to Šulgi."
- McMahon, "The Akkadian Period."
- Rubio, "From Sumer to Babylonia."
- Weiss et al., "The Genesis and Collapse of Third Millennium North Mesopotamian Civilization."
- Yoffee, "The Evolution of Fragility."

QUESTIONS

- How do ancient explanations for the fall of the Akkadian Empire differ from modern explanations? Why are they so different?
- What are some of the benefits of having scientists, historians, and archaeologists working together on a problem like the reasons for the end of the Akkadian Empire?

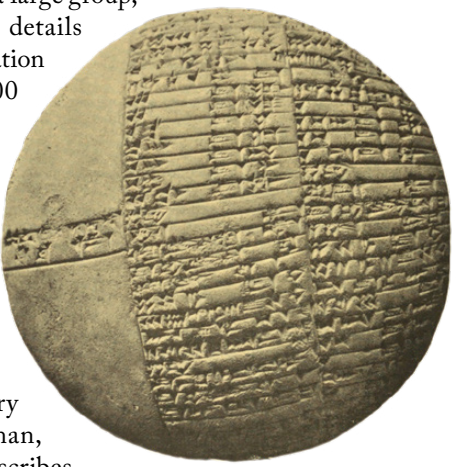
11

UR III HOUSEHOLDS, ACCOUNTS, AND ZIGGURATS

The cuneiform writing system is among the most important cultural contributions of Mesopotamian society. The number of cuneiform documents surviving from the Early Dynastic period—the time of the earliest city-states, from around 2900 to 2350 BCE—is relatively small. More survive from the time of the Akkadian Empire and the second dynasty of Lagash, which followed. But when we come to the next major era of Mesopotamian history, the documentation positively explodes. This was a period when Mesopotamia was dominated by a dynasty that ruled from the city of Ur, in the southern part of modern-day Iraq. It's known as the third dynasty of Ur—the Ur III period, for short—and it lasted a little more than a century, from around 2112 to 2004 BCE. That dynasty is the subject of this lecture.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

- Not many of the Ur III–period cuneiform texts record poems or hymns or myths. Instead, most are administrative. A huge number of them come from the Ur III period. Studied as a large group, these documents reveal amazing details about the economy and administration of the era. In fact, more than 120,000 cuneiform tablets written during the time are estimated to have been found so far.



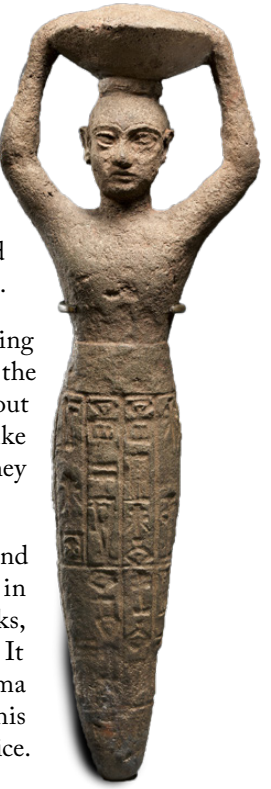
- The Ur III texts reveal that thousands of men and women worked for different aspects of the central and provincial administrations in some way or another. They worked in the military or as builders, farmers, herdsman, religious functionaries, officials, scribes, artisans, or servants.

- Each province in the kingdom paid taxes to the central government, but the provinces didn't all owe their taxes the same day. Instead, each province was responsible for paying during a particular month. These taxes supported the government for that month. In the next month, it was the turn of another province. This meant that wealth was coming in year-round.

- Taxes were paid in goods, not in silver. The administration built a whole town to cope with the goods coming in and the goods going out. It was called Puzrish-Dagan, and was close to the religious capital city of Nippur. A huge number of tablets survived from the main offices there. Boats were constantly being unloaded, herds of animals shepherded around, and granaries filled and emptied. Every item that arrived or left Puzrish-Dagan was recorded, and these records were filed and later compiled.

KINGS

- Although the third dynasty of Ur was a time when a lot of changes took place, the kings didn't rule with an iron hand. They had to work within an existing system that included powerful temples and governors with whom the king's administration negotiated.



- The first king of the Ur III dynasty was named Ur-Namma. He and his son Shulgi built an empire. It was the first one since the Akkadian Empire, which had been built by King Sargon in the 24th century BCE. Ur-Namma and Shulgi took over much of southern and central Mesopotamia and extended the borders of their land to the region around the ancient city of Susa, in what is now western Iran.

- Mesopotamia wasn't easily unified, and each aspiring emperor had difficulties in maintaining control of the lands he conquered. Ur III kings didn't boast about territorial conquests, and in this they were nothing like King Sargon. Instead, the Ur III kings claimed that they "liberated" the lands they took over.

- They promoted this image by creating a new kind of royal inscription that was probably displayed in public. It's usually called a law code in history books, but it wasn't called a law code when first created. It started with a prologue, all about King Ur-Namma and his great achievements. The statement ended this way: "I eliminated enmity, violence, and cries for justice. I established justice in the land."

- The king emphasized how good he was to his people. Then, he added a new type of statement to the inscription. Immediately after the prologue, he wrote: "At that time, if a man commits a homicide, they shall kill that man." And a few lines later: "If a man divorces his first-ranking wife, he shall weigh and deliver 60 shekels of silver." These are laws.

- The Ur III kings also tried other new things to claim their legitimate right to rule, without terrorizing the population as the Akkadian kings had done. It's during this period that a compilation of the names of kings and the cities they ruled from, known as the Sumerian King List, seems to have been written. It isn't historically accurate, presenting an idealized past in which Mesopotamia was always unified.

STANDARDIZATION AND BUILDING

- Ur-Namma boasts in the prologue to his laws that he standardized weights and measures. This was another way to promote order and unity across the land and make the kingdom run more smoothly.

- In their drive to standardize things, the central administration even seems to have unified building techniques. There were standardized types and sizes of bricks, and innovations in the construction of public buildings. The builders started baking bricks for the exterior walls, instead of just drying them in the sun. They added strategic holes in the structures to allow the interior bricks, which were sun dried, to continue to dry out even after the building was constructed.

- The kings sponsored the construction of huge, pyramid-shaped temple towers in many cities. These were called ziggurats and were constructed next to the great temples of the gods. Each ziggurat was a solid mass of brick built in four or five giant steps, probably with a small shrine on the top. They were built on a scale that had never been seen before in Mesopotamia.

HOUSEHOLDS AND DIVINE KINGS

- In trying to convince the population to support them, the Ur III kings reinstituted an idea that had begun with Sargon's grandson, King Naram-Sin of Akkad. Starting with King Shulgi, rulers had scribes write a divine symbol in front of their names because they wanted to be viewed as gods. They even claimed to have superhuman powers.

- Even though the Ur III kings supposedly were divine, they still had to work with all the other parts of government and society to make things run smoothly. They didn't simply proclaim commands and assume they would be done. Mesopotamia didn't work that way.

- Mesopotamia, at the time, was a conglomeration of households. At the family level, the household is easy to conceive of. A typical Mesopotamian household consisted of a married couple and their children living together. With them were elderly relatives along with unmarried aunts and maybe some servants. The oldest male relative—the grandfather or father of the family—was the head of the household.

- The house was an economic unit, not just a social one. If the family owned fields or animals, then those provided food. If the family was involved in some other profession—as artisans, scribes, or merchants—then the work was often performed in the home. Even officials who worked for the court seem to have done at least some of their work at home, rather than in an office at the palace.

- Governors of provinces were also patriarchs of their own households—their palaces and the estates. A governor had considerable autonomy in ruling his province and was perceived as the father of this giant household.

MERCHANTS

- Holding a lot of this economy together, in an interesting way, was a group of merchants. There were at least 20 of them at the city of Umma during the Ur III period. They worked directly for the governor's administration. They traveled, acquired valuable goods in distant lands, and brought them back to Umma.

- They also had other important responsibilities. They seem to have been in charge of collecting and processing fruits, vegetables, and fish for the governor. In the hot climate of southern Mesopotamia—without refrigeration—these foodstuffs would have gone bad very quickly. It seems that merchants were particularly adept at getting perishables from the farm or the river to the consumer as fast as possible.

- The merchants also were willing to make loans to private individuals. Banking hadn't been invented, but people sometimes needed to borrow grain to sow their crops or to borrow silver to buy something. Merchants had extra grain and silver on hand and could fill this need.

- One merchant who lived in Ur towards the end of the Ur III period was named Lu-Enlilla. He was employed by the temple of the moon god and regularly traveled by boat all the way to Magan (which is now Oman) to buy copper. This was a well-established trade route. He took wool and textiles to pay for the metal.

DIPLOMATIC TIES

- The land of Magan might have been a diplomatic partner of the kings of Ur. Until the Ur III period, the exchange of envoys and peace treaties,

dynastic marriages, and diplomatic correspondence seem to have taken place only among states within Mesopotamia and Syria.

- However, King Shulgi received a gift of gold dust from the king of Magan, according to an administrative text. Luxury gifts were often a sign of diplomacy. Another clue is found in a slightly later text mentioning the arrival of someone named Wedum, who is described as the courier of the governor of Magan.

- The Ur kings had close contacts with the lands to the east of Mesopotamia. They directly controlled the city of Susa and had diplomatic ties with other population centers in the same general area of Elam in southwestern Iran. The names of Elamite envoys show up in the administrative texts. They received gifts and attended important festivals. Additionally, princesses from Ur were sent to marry Elamite kings to cement the alliances.

- The city of Ur was a cosmopolitan place. Envoys, merchants, and other visitors from distant lands were not an uncommon sight on the streets. In one text, it sounds as though there might even have been south Asians who lived together and worked alongside native Mesopotamians. They are described as men from a "Meluhha village." Meluhha was the Indus Valley.

CONCLUSION

- The Ur III kings tried a different approach to running their empire than had been seen before. The extended-household economy flourished and was well organized and effective. In addition, the Ur III rulers created something of a cult of the kings. They emphasized their greatness and encouraged people to believe that the kings were on their side.

- Even in modern times, there's been a tendency to see Shulgi as one of the great kings of Mesopotamian history. As it turned out, the empire lasted for little more than a century. The Ur III kings had trouble holding onto their empire in the end.

READINGS

- Averbeck, Studevent-Hickman, and Michalowski, "Late Third Millennium BCE Sumerian Texts."
- Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts (BDTNS), http://bdts.filol.csic.es/
- Englund, "Hard Work."
- Garfinkle, "Was the Ur III State Bureaucratic?"
- Lafont, "Women at Work and Women in Economy and Society during the Neo-Sumerian Period."
- Michalowski, *The Correspondence of the Kings of Ur.*
- ——, "The Ur III Literary Footprint and the Historian."
- Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia.*
- Nissen, Damerow, and Englund, *Archaic Bookkeeping.*
- Oppenheim, "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur."
- Parpola, Parpola, and Brunswig Jr., "The Meluhha Village."
- Potts, "Distant Shores."
- Snell, *Life in the Ancient Near East.*
- Van De Mieroop, "Democracy and the Rule of Law, the Assembly, and the First Law Code."

QUESTIONS

- How did the kings of the Ur III period try to convince their subjects of their legitimate right to rule?
- Why are so many cuneiform tablets found from the Ur III period?

12

MIGRANTS AND OLD ASSYRIAN MERCHANTS

Mesopotamia was a place where people spoke many languages. It started with Sumerian, which was dominant in the south, and Akkadian, which was spoken more often in the center and north. The early people of Ebla in modern-day Syria spoke a language that we refer to as Eblaite, and there was also a large population of people in northern Syria who spoke a language called Hurrian. Akkadian and Eblaite were Semitic languages. Then, down from the Zagros Mountains came the Gutians, who invaded at the end of the Akkadian Empire. They spoke yet another language, as did the Elamites, who lived in what is now Iran, to the east. The point is, Mesopotamia was a big melting pot of people who came from different parts of the Near East and spoke different languages. This lecture looks at some of those groups.

NEW ARRIVALS

- Sometimes, when a new group showed up speaking an unknown language, they were viewed with suspicion at first. Take the Gutians, who were even described in literary works as not quite human. However, they almost always ended up settling down and becoming part of the culture, and often they took leading roles and headed new dynasties. Quite quickly, they stopped being viewed as foreigners and became part of the community.

- One of these new groups started showing up during the Ur III period in the late 3rd millennium BCE. By the end of that dynasty, the kings of Ur seem to have been increasingly worried about them. The new arrivals were called the Amorites. A high official wrote to one of the last Ur III kings, named Shu-Sin, that "The Amorites have repeatedly raided the territory" in the north.

- He reminded the king of what he had been instructed to do: "You ordered me to rebuild the fortification, to cut off their infiltration route, to prevent them from swooping down on the fields through a breach in the defenses between the Tigris and Euphrates."

- King Shu-Sin did build a wall to keep the Amorites out, just as the official described. The wall might have been erected at the point where the Tigris and Euphrates flow closest together, but it doesn't seem to have been successful. Immigrants continued to move into Mesopotamia from different regions.

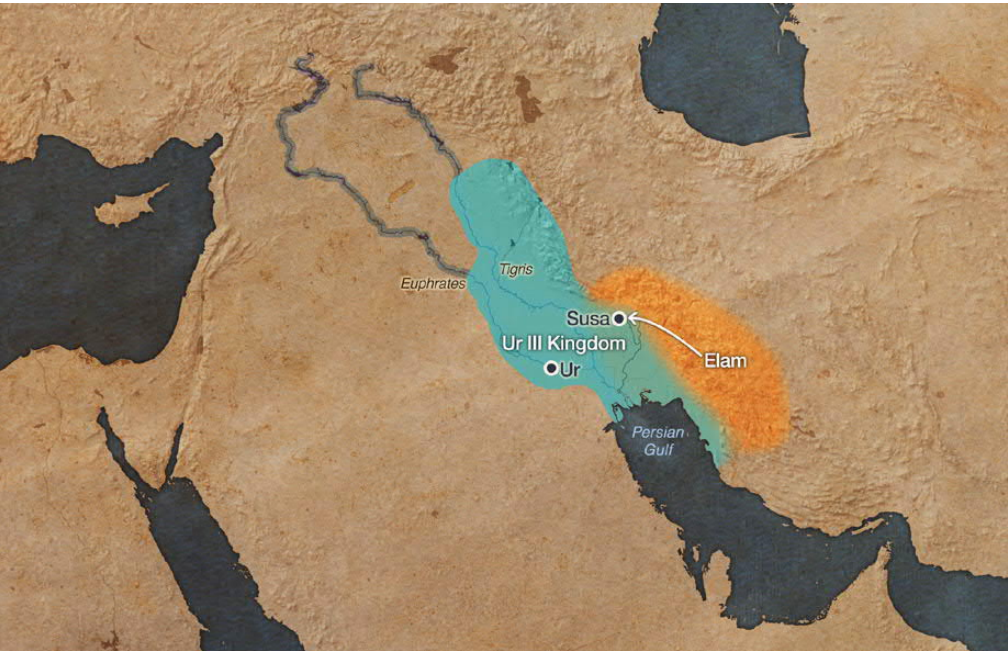
BLAME AND ATTACKS

- The Mesopotamians believed that the Amorites had started out as nomads rather than farmers, traveling seasonally with their sheep and goats. Scholars thought for some time that the conflict in the late Ur III period was a result of these nomadic Amorites wanting to settle in the agricultural lands of Mesopotamia.

- However, this doesn't seem to have any basis in fact. There were some Amorites who were nomads, but there were others who seem to have always lived in cities. The Amorites were blamed by some later Mesopotamians for the end of the Ur III kingdom, but the real situation was much more complex. Even before any invasions, there was a famine that severely affected the kingdom.

- Inflation seems to have skyrocketed, and people were desperate for food. A high official named Ishbi-Erra took advantage of the weakness of Ibbi-Sin, the last Ur king. This official, Ishbi-Erra, stopped working for the king and set himself up as an independent leader in the southern city of Isin.

- Then, around 2004 BCE, Ur was invaded, but not by Amorites. Instead, the attack came from Elam, to the east. First, the Elamites took over the city of Susa. This was an economic blow to the Ur III kingdom, since Susa and the lands in that eastern region were important for the trade routes that flourished there. The Ur III kings had already overextended themselves and broken important diplomatic ties.



- A few years later, the Elamites destroyed the capital of Ur and took King Ibbi-Sin as a hostage back to Elam. For a few years, the Elamites ruled Ur, but they were forced out in the end by Ishbi-Erra, that former official who had set up his own kingdom in Isin.

- Ishbi-Erra did found his own dynasty in Isin, but he didn't control all of the territory that had been subject to the Ur III kings. Instead, it splintered into a number of smaller kingdoms. In some ways, the beneficiaries of the dissolution of the Ur III kingdom ended up being the Amorites, even though they weren't the ones who had caused it.

AFTER THE DYNASTY

- The two centuries that followed the end of the third dynasty of Ur were full of wars. The new kingdoms each had a king who ruled from a major city and who was supported by a number of vassal kings in smaller cities. Their armies fought one another frequently. The various kings made alliances, broke them, and made new alliances, only to break these, too.

- During these turbulent times, people seem to have looked back on the third dynasty of Ur as a long-lost period of peace and comfort. Lamentations were written about the destruction of the great cities of Ur, Uruk, Nippur, and Eridu that had happened at the end of the Ur III period.

- In these lamentations, the destruction wasn't blamed on the Elamite invaders. Instead, the people, as always, blamed the gods, and thought that the invaders had simply been carrying out the will of the gods. They even thought that the city god of Ur—the moon god Nanna—was responsible for the destruction. Nanna had abandoned his people, and that was why the Elamites had been successful.

- Right after the Ur III dynasty, the people might have thought that their civilization was coming to an end. However, this wasn't an end at all. It was the prelude to a time of prosperity and renewed vitality, known as the Old Babylonian period.

AMORITE KINGS

- During the era of widespread warfare that followed the Ur III period, many cities had new kings on the throne; these were kings who founded new dynasties. Many of these dynasties were of Amorite descent. These Amorite kings were especially common in the center and northwest of Mesopotamia.

- One Amorite dynasty began to rule the previously unimportant city of Babylon and successfully passed the throne from father to son for centuries. Among the kings of Babylon was the famous Hammurabi, who ruled from about 1792 to 1750 BCE. Other important kingdoms of the era were Qatna and Yamhad in the west, Mari in the northwest, Ekallatum in the north east, Eshnunna in the east, and Isin and Larsa to the south of Babylon. These eight kingdoms were the squabbling successors to the third dynasty of Ur.

- Yamhad was the biggest of them. Its capital city was in Aleppo, in the north of modern-day Syria near Turkey. Aleppo has been continuously occupied since ancient times, so the Old Babylonian remains lie under the debris of all the intervening periods: the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Persian Empire, Hellenistic Greek empire of Alexander the Great, Roman Empire, the early Islamic period, right up to the present day.

Citadel of Aleppo, Syria

MERCHANTS

- One group of Mesopotamian merchants has left us an amazing record of their lives and their businesses. Oddly enough, their records weren't found in Mesopotamia. They were found in Turkey.

- In the early 20th century, a number of cuneiform tablets began appearing on the worldwide antiquities market. They included letters that had clearly been written by Assyrian merchants from the city of Assur and were said to have been found in Turkey, at the site of an ancient city called Kanesh.

- Turkish archaeologists went to dig there beginning in 1948. Their excavations uncovered no cuneiform tablets at all. Finally, a villager gave away the secret: The tablets that other villagers had found and sold hadn't come from the mound at all, but from a particular place in the fields nearby. The excavators turned their attention there.

- This area turned out to be a sort of suburb of the main city—a neighborhood of private houses. Its inhabitants called it the *karum*. Many houses in the karum belonged to these Assyrian traders, and they kept their records stored in the houses. For example, one house excavated in 1993 contained 178 letters, 69 loan contracts, 38 records of legal proceedings, and 102 personal accounts. In total, 17,700 tablets have come out of the excavations, and almost 5,000 more came from the site before the excavations started. These tablets give us a vivid picture of what life was like for an Assyrian merchant in the 20th and 19th centuries BCE.

A NEW SYSTEM

- Unlike merchants of earlier times, these men weren't representing a temple, or a king, or any other major institution. The government of Assur hadn't sent them, and the king seemed to have almost no control over them. Instead, the traders were organized as families, and these merchant families acted largely on their own. The merchants even drew up a treaty with the king of Kanesh, which protected both parties and facilitated trade between them.

- The merchants were insured against theft: The king of Kanesh pledged to replace stolen goods if a thief couldn't be found (but only if the merchant was willing to swear an oath that he'd been robbed). The king of Kanesh had to swear that he wouldn't try to take their goods or to force them to sell the goods cheaply to him. On the other hand, the merchants pledged to pay taxes to him—one-tenth of what they were selling.

- It seems to have been a good arrangement, and they all benefited. The Assyrians lived among the Anatolians with the blessing and support of the local king, and no violence seems to have been involved in the Assyrians' occupation in Kanesh.

- The Assyrians didn't have to invade. They had goods for sale that the Anatolians wanted, so they were welcome. The most desirable items they sold were tin and textiles. In exchange, the Anatolians had a ready supply of silver. The Assyrians needed silver because it had become the medium of exchange throughout Mesopotamia and because there were no known mineral resources or metal ores in Mesopotamia at the time.

- The Assyrians hadn't come to impose their culture. They were just long-term visitors. However, some of them did marry Anatolian wives. Most Assyrian men had just one wife, but a trader living away from home was allowed to have two wives, one in each city, so long as the families were kept separate.

- The women of the merchant families were often very involved in trade. They didn't just do some of the weaving; they also often helped run the business when their husbands were away.

- Not all the merchants stayed in Kanesh once they arrived. Some of them went on to other towns and cities in Anatolia, selling their textiles and tin wherever they went. The silver that they were paid weighed very little, even though it was so valuable. They didn't need donkeys to ship the silver back home, so they sold the donkeys as well.

The return journey to Assur must have been faster and easier than the journey to get there. The silver acquired in Anatolia was then put to use in paying for business expenses and in buying a whole new shipment of goods to send back. This trading cycle continued for more than 100 years.

READINGS

- Günbatti, "Two Treaty Texts found at Kultepe."
- Larsen, *The Old Assyrian City-State and Its Colonies.*
- ——, "The Old Assyrian Merchant Colonies."
- Michel, "Women of Aššur and Kaniš."
- ——, "Women Work, Men are Professionals in the Old Assyrian Archives."
- Stratford, *A Year of Vengeance.*
- Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and its Terminology.*
- ——, "Kanesh."

QUESTIONS

- Why might the Ur III kings have been unsuccessful in keeping immigrants from moving into Mesopotamia?
- How might our understanding of Mesopotamian history be different if it were possible to excavate the early levels of settlement in Aleppo?
- What might have been some of the advantages to the Assyrians of trading as far away as the Anatolian plateau?

13

ROYALTY AND PALACE INTRIGUE AT MARI

A powerful king named Shamshi-Adad was able to build a short-lived empire in northern Mesopotamia and Syria during the early 18th century BCE, after the Near East had been in turmoil for some time. Seven or eight major kingdoms had been fighting one another: battling over borders, maneuvering to gain alliances, and stealing one another's vassals. Early in his reign, his land of Ekallatum had been conquered by a neighboring kingdom, forcing Shamshi-Adad to flee to exile in Babylon. He was able to recapture Ekallatum not long after, and then kept going, taking over the city of Assur, which was home to the Assyrian merchants who traded in Anatolia. He went on to the Habur River and managed to conquer the kingdom of Mari on the Euphrates in Syria. This lecture picks up Shamshi-Adad's story there.

SHAMSHI-ADAD'S EMPIRE

- Shamshi-Adad's empire extended from the Euphrates River to the Tigris River, just to the south of what is now Turkey. This included some rich agricultural land.

- Shamshi-Adad had a rather grandiose sense of his own importance. Instead of giving a name to his empire, he took the title of king of the universe. In doing so, he was following in the footsteps of Sargon and the other great Akkadian kings who came before him, even though his empire was considerably smaller.

- Shamshi-Adad's older son was named Ishme-Dagan, and the younger one was Yasmah-Addu. They were already adults when Shamshi-Adad had completed his empire, and their father decided to bring them into his administration to help him rule. He would be the great king, but his sons would be kings as well.

- Each son was set up in a palace in a major city. Ishme-Dagan's palace was in Ekallatum, the dynasty's original capital. This was in the Tigris region. Yasmah-Addu's palace was in Mari. Shamshi-Adad created a new capital city for himself—between the other two cities, and to the north of them. He called it Shubat-Enlil. All three kings, in turn, had vassal kings who answered to them. This was a new approach to ruling an empire, but it wasn't entirely successful.

- Yasmah-Addu was in a position to help his father with an important ally—the king of Qatna, a kingdom to the west, near the Mediterranean. Yasmah-Addu would wed the king of Qatna's daughter in a diplomatic marriage.

- In Yasmah-Addu's case, we can see the actual stages of the marriage. A whole sequence of letters was found in the palace at Mari about his marriage to Princess Beltum of Qatna. It seems that Yasmah-Addu didn't have a lot of say in the matter. It was all arranged by his father, Shamshi-Adad, and by Beltum's father, the king of Qatna.

CO-REGENCY

- One problem with the co-regency was that Beltum's father-in-law, Shamshi-Adad, tended to micromanage his sons' administrations. Researchers can guess that this was true for the elder son Ishme-Dagan in Ekallatum, but scholars don't have those letters. The letters to Yasmah-Addu show that Shamshi-Adad sent messengers to Mari all the time, and that he could be very demanding. He wanted to know why an official hadn't been replaced, or to complain about servants who had fled the palace, and so on.

- Shamshi-Adad worried that Yasmah-Addu was immature and that the young king started projects without giving them enough thought. He also accused Yasmah-Addu of spending too much time "drinking and dancing" with servants. He even made sure that particular officials were present when the letters he sent were read aloud to his son. However, there's no sign that Yasmah-Addu was disloyal to his father.

- Ishme-Dagan, on the other hand, was much more like his father. Like Shamshi-Adad, the older son was often on campaign. Shamshi-Adad sometimes shamed Yasmah-Addu by pointing out that he should be more like his older brother.

CAMPAIGNS AND DIPLOMACY

- Throughout virtually all of Shamshi-Adad's reign, the great king's armies were out campaigning against neighboring kingdoms and fighting to maintain control of the region he'd already claimed. It wasn't a stable empire and wouldn't survive long after Shamshi-Adad died in 1776 BCE. Ishme-Dagan became the great king in his father's place, but he had to immediately organize campaigns against Aleppo in the west and Eshnunna in the east.

- Although scholars don't know what happened to Yasmah-Addu, soon after Shamshi-Adad died, the local dynasty took control of Mari again. The new king, Zimri-Lim, took up residence in the palace, though he kept some of Yasmah-Addu's letters in the archives. Archaeologists found them there, still in Zimri-Lim's archive room, when they excavated the Mari palace centuries later.

- Ishme-Dagan proved to be less brilliant than he'd seemed to his father. He made some clumsy mistakes, including a ham-fisted attempt at diplomacy with the king of Qatna. He asked his younger brother's father-in-law for two horses. It was quite normal to ask for gifts—as a king, it was a way of getting luxury goods that one needed. Then, the king would send something of equal value in exchange.

- The king of Qatna sent the two horses. In return, Ishme-Dagan sent back 20 pounds of tin, apparently thinking this was a fair exchange. However, the king of Qatna was furious. The horses were worth vastly more than the tin. He wrote a devastating letter, telling Ishme-Dagan that "when you sent me this paltry amount of tin, you had no desire to have honorable discourse with me."

- Ishme-Dagan's career didn't improve, and his kingdom shrank. The ultimate humiliation was that Zimri-Lim—the king who took over control of Mari, which had been one of Ishme-Dagan's provinces—was now higher up in the pecking order than Ishme-Dagan himself. Ishme-Dagan was now a minor king.

MARI

- Zimri-Lim took the throne in Mari in 1775 BCE and established a new administration. The palace at Mari has been excavated—it's one of the most important excavations in Syria and one of the most important finds for this whole era. In its time, it was famous for being a particularly spectacular royal residence. The palace had been conquered and burned, so the mud bricks in the walls were baked hard from the fire, and the walls still stood as much as 13 feet tall when the archaeologists found them.

Mari palace, Syria

- We get an amazing glimpse of what royal life was like during the Old Babylonian period not just from the Mari palace, but also from the objects and cuneiform tablets found in it. The palace was vast. It had more than 260 rooms, divided up into sectors. There were workshops, storerooms, private apartments, kitchens, public spaces, offices, archives, a throne room, bathrooms, and even a temple.

- At the heart of the palace was a courtyard—planted with palm trees—and beyond it, the throne room where King Zimri-Lim received visitors and messengers. The walls were painted brightly with murals. One showed a procession of sacrificial animals accompanied by high officials. Another showed an investiture scene, in which the king stood in front of the goddess Ishtar to receive the symbols of his authority—a rod and a ring.

- King Zimri-Lim ruled for only 13 years, from 1775 to 1762 BCE, but the 22,000 cuneiform tablets found in his archives make it one of the best-known eras in all of Mesopotamian history. The king was constantly in touch with his officials, governors, and family members. Letters were dictated by the king, written down by scribes, and carried across the kingdom by messengers. Letters that arrived in reply were read aloud to him and then archived.

- Unfortunately, the letters weren't dated, so it can be challenging to reconstruct the order of the events they describe. However, the overall impression they give is that Zimri-Lim was a careful diplomat, a strong commander, a meticulous administrator, and a caring husband and father.

THE ROYAL WOMEN OF MARI

- Unlike Yasmah-Addu, the previous ruler of the Mari region, King Zimri-Lim was away on campaign often. The wars of Shamshi-Adad's time hadn't come to an end. When Zimri-Lim was gone, his wife, Queen Shiptu, was in charge of the palace affairs, and she wrote frequently to her husband to let him know anything of importance that took place.

- Zimri-Lim in turn wrote to the queen, asking her in some letters to take care of various administrative needs and in others to consult prophets or oracles, or to meet him at a different city in the kingdom. It's clear that the queen was not just his wife but also a highly trusted advisor and surrogate.

- Zimri-Lim was surrounded by women during his lifetime. He had several wives and at least 11 daughters. No sons are mentioned in the letters. Many of the daughters were married off to Zimri-Lim's allies and vassals, along with high officials like governors and controllers. He counted on his daughters to be loyal to him and to keep him up to date with news.

- Two of the king's daughters were thoroughly unhappy in their marriages and not at all afraid to tell their father about it. They dictated frank letters to their messengers to be carried to the king. Princess Inib-sharri, for example, was first married off to a tribal leader, who soon died. Then, she was married to another of her father's vassals. Her letters are full of the misery of her life because her second husband neglected her and preferred another wife.

- Another of Zimri-Lim's daughters, Kirum, was married to a violent and reckless king who threatened to kill her. This husband was also married to another of Zimri-Lim's daughters, whom he much preferred. As Kirum's situation worsened, even her servants were taken away.

- It's unclear whether Zimri-Lim ever rescued her. He certainly tried at least once, but a letter about it says her husband refused to release her. One can only hope that both of the unhappy princesses, Inib-sharri and Kirum, obtained divorces and eventually returned to the safety of Mari.

HAMMURABI

- Among Zimri-Lim's allies was King Hammurabi of Babylon. Zimri-Lim and Hammurabi shared common enemies and sometimes sent troops to support one another. However, Hammurabi was becoming more aggressive to his neighbors, and Zimri-Lim began to worry about his motives.

- Zimri-Lim wrote a letter to Shiptu asking her to consult with the various prophets and diviners at the palace to find out about Hammurabi's intent and future. Shiptu's answer was somewhat reassuring. She said that she'd had a man take a potion, and he'd had a revelation from the gods, which indicated Hammurabi would fall.

- Unfortunately for both Shiptu and Zimri-Lim—and for the whole land of Mari—this prediction was wrong: Hammurabi led his troops to Mari and conquered the city. He seems to have robbed the palace thoroughly, sending the jewelry, textiles, statues, and other valuable goods back home. He even had his men go through the palace archives, removing many of the letters that pertained to his own affairs.

Then, the palace was set on fire. The wooden roof beams, door and window frames, and the remaining textiles burned readily. The walls of the upper story collapsed, and the great palace was abandoned. It gradually was covered with windblown dirt and sand and was left untouched until 1933, when some local villagers discovered a statue there. A French team of archaeologists excavated the site for decades, gradually bringing Zimri-Lim and his world back to life.

READINGS

- Fleming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors*.
- Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari*.
- Lafont, "The Women of the Palace at Mari."
- Margueron, Jean-Cl. "Mari" in Aruz 2008, 27-33.
- Sasson, Jack M. *From the Mari Archives*.
- ——, "Thoughts of Zimri-Lim"
- ——, "Texts, Trade, and Travelers."
- Villard, "Shamshi-Adad and Sons."

QUESTIONS

- Why might Shamshi-Adad's system of using viceroys to rule parts of his empire have been unsuccessful in the long run?
- How did Queen Shiptu help in the administration of the palace at Mari?
- Was it an advantage or a disadvantage to Zimri-Lim that he had so many daughters?

14

WAR AND SOCIETY IN HAMMURABI'S TIME

Hammurabi of Babylon claimed that by fighting, he brought peace. He was a king who built an empire by conquering neighboring lands in the 18th century BCE. He described himself as a ruler who "spreads light over the lands of Sumer and Akkad, king who makes the four regions obedient." To the ancient Mesopotamians, the "four regions" constituted the whole world. The reign of Hammurabi is an interesting time to look at in the context of war and diplomacy between states, and personal relationships between common people, because so many documents from this era are available for study.

HAMMURABI'S REIGN

- Hammurabi used both war and diplomacy in his relationships with neighboring lands. He had messengers and diplomats constantly on the move around Mesopotamia, visiting other courts, delivering and receiving letters and gifts, making deals, and negotiating treaties. However, he also led large armies on military campaigns, and he seems to have had a gift for inspiring people.

- Hammurabi came to power in Babylon in the usual way: inheriting the throne from his father. At the time, the kingdom wasn't extensive. It was one of several medium-sized states in Mesopotamia and Syria. Like all Mesopotamian kings, he proclaimed a new name for the year. It would now be called "the year Hammurabi became king."

- After that, every year of Hammurabi's long reign had a different name, and each of the year names mentioned some great thing that he had achieved in the previous year. These year names help scholars to follow the events of his reign and the events that he thought were important to commemorate.

- Hammurabi's second year was the one in which he "established justice in the land." Hammurabi has a reputation as a lawgiver, so one might think this was the year in which he issued his law code, but that didn't come until much later.

- The act of establishing justice that Hammurabi referred to was different. In Akkadian, the term is *mesharum*. It's a type of decree that releases people from their debts. This was a popular thing for kings to do. A lot of debts were owed to temples, and interest rates could be crushing—as high as 33 percent a year.

- For the next four years of his reign, Hammurabi's year names commemorated religious acts and building projects. He restored walls and made thrones for gods. Then, between years 7 and 11, he became more militaristic, campaigning against neighboring lands.

- After that, things settled down. For the next 18 years, Hammurabi bragged in his year names that he commissioned statues, dug canals, rebuilt city walls, and had various objects made for the deities. He engaged in no fighting worthy of a year name. His messengers were busy corresponding and negotiating with neighboring lands, and Babylonian merchants were busy with trade.

A CHANGE

- Hammurabi was on the throne for 30 years before events brought a complete change to his reign and ambitions. When he was in his 50s, or maybe older, his kingdom came under attack by a powerful neighbor to the east: the army of the king of Elam and a mass of Elam's allies.

- Hammurabi was able to defeat this formidable foe. The name he gave to the year took up lines and lines of writing. Hammurabi saw his victory as evidence that the gods were on his side. This might have given him confidence to go on the offensive against an old rival, Larsa, a kingdom just to the south of Babylon.

- Hammurabi's subsequent victory in Larsa gave him even more momentum. He started going on annual campaigns to overthrow one former ally after another, including Zimri-Lim of Mari. In just nine years, he built an empire that extended from the Persian Gulf north to Mari, encompassing virtually all of what is now Iraq and part of eastern Syria. It was the biggest empire since the time of Sargon of Akkad in the 23rd century BCE.

- Hammurabi lived for several more years after conquering his empire. Ultimately, he ruled for 43 years, having taken Babylon from its status as one of several kingdoms to an empire that had conquered many of them. In spite of his military conquests, he still cast himself in the mold of earlier kings like Ur-Namma or Gudea. He portrayed himself as a pious shepherd of his people who brought peace and justice, not an oppressor who tore down their walls.

- Toward the end of his reign, he proclaimed the laws for which he's so famous. He had them carved on several stone stelas and set them up in a number of places across his empire.

Code of Hammurabi

LIFE IN HAMMURABI'S TIME

- Documents from this era give a vivid view of how most people lived in Hammurabi's time. Although different social classes existed in ancient Mesopotamia, it can be hard to figure out the class of a particular individual. The classes mentioned in the texts are *awilum*, *mushkenum*, and *wardum*, with the awilum being the highest and wardum the lowest.

- The term *wardum* is usually translated as "slave," but Mesopotamian slavery was different from slavery in other lands. Unlike in Rome, the slaves were not put to work on large agricultural estates. They could be bought and sold and were often enslaved as prisoners of war.

- The term *mushkenum* is often translated as "commoner," but that makes it sound as though awilums were rich. Sometimes they weren't. The difference might be that an awilum owned property, even a small house or field, while a mushkenum was a renter, a tenant farmer, or a hired laborer.

- In any event, the class system wasn't very rigid. There were no rules against intermarriage, for example. The laws suggest that society and the courts might have been generous to the poorer people. A physician was expected to charge patients on a sliding scale, charging less to a mushkenum than to an awilum. A fine owed by a mushkenum was often less than a fine owed by an awilum.

FAMILIES

- Throughout the lives of Mesopotamians, their families were their first priorities. Within a family, children grew up with routines. In farming families (which constituted the vast majority), boys worked alongside their parents from an early age, sowing seeds, weeding, harvesting, and tending domestic animals.

- Each day, girls helped their mothers grind flour, bake bread, spin wool, weave cloth, and take care of their siblings. These children learned, early on, what was and what was not permitted within the household—and, by extension, in society.

- By the time a girl reached adolescence, arrangements would have begun for her marriage. Boys grew up knowing that they would eventually become the heads of households of their own. They emulated the men in their families and began learning a trade or profession (usually the same one as their father) as soon as they could.

- Many babies and children died of illness, but those who survived were crucial to the economy of a family. Couples who were unable to have biological children were quick to adopt. In the adoption contracts that were drawn up, the parents swore that their adopted son had the same rights that a biological son would have had.

- When and if parents reached old age, their grown children were expected to support them. Even after death, children were important—they continued to provide gifts and prayers at the parents' tomb.

- Families were close, but not all relatives lived in the same house. In a couple's immediate household were their children, unmarried sisters, and perhaps the husband's parents, if they were still alive. Plenty of other relatives were usually close by.

LAWS AND ARCHIVES

- Family archives from this era are fascinating. Most likely, a family archive was originally kept in a pot or a basket in a storage room, and could include various documents to be saved for the future. These could include personal letters, name lists, or school exercises, but mostly they were made up of contracts. Examples include wills, marriage contracts, contracts from when servants were hired or slaves were bought, a canceled loan contract, the contract for the purchase of the house, or other contracts for the purchase or lease of fields or orchards.

- All of these were legally binding, and drawing them up required witnesses who were listed at the end of the document. Usually, each person was identified by his profession or the name of his father. These witness lists are full of brothers and neighbors of the main parties to the contracts. Sometimes, sons are listed too.

- It's rare, though, to find a man's father named as a witness. That's probably because few people lived to old age, though some reached 90 or 100 years of age. Life, for most adults, was cut short by forces beyond the control of the Mesopotamians: disease, infection, accident, childbirth, or disaster. A man who had the good fortune to live a long life was respected and retained his position as head of the household until his death.

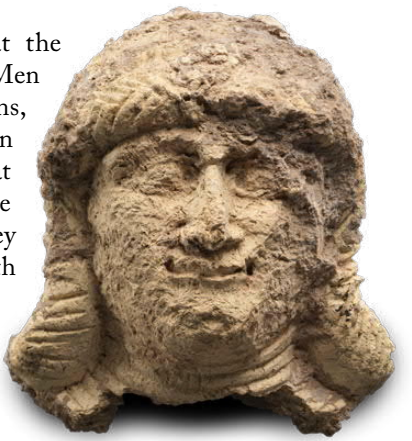
- The power of the father was limited, though, because of law and custom. He couldn't, for example, decide to disown one of his sons simply because he was annoyed with the boy, or because he felt like it. Two of Hammurabi's laws make sure that the son was treated fairly.

- Men and women alike owned property, and a woman's property remained her own even after she got married. When either parent died, their wealth was divided up as equally as possible among their children, with the oldest son getting an extra share. Adopted children received the same proportion as biological children. So did the children of concubines if their father acknowledged them as his own.

- If a daughter married before her parents died, she received her inheritance early, as a dowry. For all children, their inheritance was often in the form of fields, a house, farm animals, or furniture. Owning such things made it possible for a young man to marry and support a household. That might have been impossible while his father was still alive.

- The division of an estate could get messy and emotional. Sometimes, scribes were hired to negotiate among the grown children to make sure the inheritance division was fair. Still, people also often went to court to contest what they'd been awarded.

LIFE FOR WOMEN



- Old Babylonian documents show that the Mesopotamian world was patriarchal. Men were the leaders of almost all institutions, including private households. Women didn't get to choose their husbands, or at least not their first husbands. Women were expected to run their households and obey their husbands. However, compared with many other ancient cultures, they had surprising freedoms.

- Women could own property and pass it on to their children. They didn't have to wear a veil and had active lives outside the home. They could give evidence in court and serve as witnesses, especially if the case involved another woman. They could own businesses and work for the palace or the temple as independent employees, quite separate from the men of their families.

- Women were listed in administrative texts as beer-makers, textile weavers, animal keepers, cooks, and wool spinners, among other positions, and they received salaries in their own names. This compensation came in the form of rations of wool, oil, and flour.

- Priestesses and queens were some of the most powerful people in the land, and they administered extensive estates and workshops. Women could also dedicate themselves to the service of the gods by taking on a number of religious roles.

- A woman could get a divorce under some circumstances, in which case she had a right to her original dowry. If a woman's first husband died, she could marry again, choosing her second husband. Even in arranged marriages, the ideal was that love would develop between the husband and wife. Proverbs, lullabies, and letters attest to the love that parents had for their children.

READINGS

- Charpin, *Hammurabi of Babylon.*
- Horsnell, *The Year-Names of the First Dynasty of Babylon*.
- Soltysiak, "Antemortem Cranial Trauma in Ancient Mesopotamia."
- Van De Mieroop, *King Hammurabi of Babylon*.
- Van Koppen, "Old Babylonian Period Inscriptions."

QUESTIONS

- Why might the early Old Babylonian kings have avoided mentioning their military successes in their inscriptions?
- Why might the kings have chosen to name the years of their reigns, rather than numbering them?
- In what ways were families central to Mesopotamian society? What roles did they play?

15

JUSTICE IN THE OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD

Scholars have much evidence for how the legal system functioned during the Old Babylonian period, from around 1900 to 1600 BCE. There are many records of court cases, several collections of laws, and thousands of legal contracts. Plenty of personal letters also refer to litigation. There's even a story of a woman named Nin-dada, whose murder case was decided by the men of the Assembly of Nippur. Turning on her silence as evidence of guilt in her husband's murder, the case resulted in the death penalty. This lecture takes a look at other workings of the justice system in the Old Babylonian period.

RECORDS

- The Mesopotamians and Syrians in the Old Babylonian period kept copious records of their legal activities. If someone bought or sold something important—like a house, orchard, field, or slave—he or she often had a written contract drawn up that listed all the terms of the sale along with the witnesses who were present.

- The same was true when a child was adopted, a marriage was negotiated, a servant was hired, or a loan was made. These contracts, written on clay tablets, were kept in the person's house and were available to be consulted later if anyone challenged the terms or claimed to have a right to the property. If someone did contest a contract, then the legal system kicked in. Because the Mesopotamians kept so many records, often researchers get a sense of what happened.

- For example, take an inheritance dispute in the city of Sippar. In that city, there was an extensive temple complex dedicated to the sun god Shamash. The complex was home to a group of religious women known as *naditu*s. The naditus prayed to the sun god for the welfare of their families.

- One such woman, Amat-Shamash, owned a very small house in the temple complex. When she died, the house passed to her adopted daughter. This was typical and uncomplicated. However, Amat-Shamash was also survived by two brothers who claimed that her daughter—their niece—had no right to the house.

COURT PROCEEDINGS

- The men went to court. Their claim was that "Amat-Shamash did not bequeath to you any house whatever, and executed no document in your favor; upon her death, you yourself drew up such a document." In other words, they were asserting that the will was fake.

- The daughter had kept her mother's will, which, like all contracts, was written on a clay tablet. In it, her mother had bequeathed the house to her. She also had the names of witnesses who had been present when the document was drawn up. When she found them, she asked them to come to the trial.

- The court record reveals that when the day arrived, the trial took place in the Shamash temple complex where the daughter lived. She probably walked a short distance from her home to the proceedings, taking with her the inscribed clay tablet on which the will had been written out long before. Her witnesses were in attendance, along with her uncles and a panel of five judges, led by the chief judge of Sippar.

- After the uncles made the assertion that their niece had fabricated the will, the judges no doubt looked at the cuneiform document. They wondered: Did it show any signs of having been written just recently?

- The judges then had three holy objects brought into court from their shrines—two symbols of the sun god Shamash and one of the goddess Ishhara. These would have been made of precious metals, and they substituted for the god and goddess in cases like these. Shamash was the god of justice and Ishhara was the goddess of oaths. Both could be expected to know who was telling the truth.

- The men and women who had witnessed the contract being drawn up were asked to swear an oath in the presence of these powerful symbols. They had to swear that Amat-Shamash "while still alive had bequeathed the house to the defendant and drawn up the document." The men and women did so willingly.

- This fact alone doomed the uncles' case. The Mesopotamians believed the gods would punish anyone who swore a false oath. At the same time, swearing honestly about something that one had witnessed kept one in the good favor of the gods.

- Evidently, the uncles had no witnesses to back up their claim. The judges decided in the woman's favor and told the men that they couldn't bring the complaint again. This ruling also applied to any other brothers who might have similar ideas of cheating their niece out of the house. The house now officially belonged to the daughter of Amat-Shamash.

- It's interesting to note what was not mentioned in the court record. There were no lawyers and no jury. Those roles hadn't yet been invented. No fine appears to have been imposed on the men who brought the case—no one was punished.

- As was often the case in Mesopotamian court records, the judges decided not in favor of the more powerful party (the uncles). Instead, the judges supported the weaker party—the adopted daughter. Their concern seems to have been on the side of truth and justice, not of power or political favor.

- There's also no reference to the judges consulting the law codes. The witnesses and the written contract, and the presence of the gods, were enough to decide the case. In fact, there are almost no references in Old Babylonian court records to the judges consulting written laws. The laws played an ambiguous role in the judicial system. Written laws were less important, at the time, than the judges, evidence, courts, contracts, and lawsuits.

HAMMURABI'S LAWS

- Hammurabi of Babylon wasn't the first lawgiver, though people often have the impression he was. The honor is actually held by King Ur-Namma, who ruled several centuries earlier. However, Hammurabi's laws are the best known from Mesopotamia. In part, this is because he inscribed the laws on an impressive seven-foot-high polished stone stela, with an eye-catching depiction at the top of himself with the god Shamash.

- This stela was placed in a public square for all to see. Hammurabi wrote in the inscription that he'd established the laws because the god Marduk told him to, and doing so would bring "appropriate behavior" and "enhance the well-being of the people." That was his goal—the protection of well-behaved people.

- The monument was later stolen by the neighboring Elamites when they sacked Babylonia. Thousands of years later, it was excavated by French archaeologists in the Elamite city of Susa, in modern-day Iran. It ended up in the Louvre Museum.

- Of the approximately 282 preserved laws that Hammurabi proclaimed, many deal with circumstances that can't really be described as crimes at all. They govern such circumstances as:
  - When a divorce was permitted.
  - Compensation for property losses resulting from storms or negligence.
  - Who could ransom a captured soldier.
  - What to do if an ox gored someone.
  - What the punishment should be for failing to pollinate a date orchard when hired to do so.

MORE SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

- Only 25 of the laws—about nine percent of Hammurabi's collection—address violent crimes. Of these, 10 are the often-quoted "eye for an eye" laws that pertain to a man breaking another man's bone, striking a man's cheek, blinding an eye, or knocking out a tooth. Most of these sound like the results of fistfights, and no weapons are mentioned.
- Interestingly, the accused is always assumed to be a member of the upper class, called an *awilum*. If one of these men broke the bone of a member of his own class, then his own bone would be broken, as well. This is the so-called *lex talionis*—the law of retaliation—which is also found in the Bible.
- However, if the aggressor broke the bone of a commoner—that is, a *mushkenum*—then the upper-class man had to pay a fine. This sounds as though it's unfair: Why did the commoner receive silver instead of having the pleasure of knowing that his assailant's bone had been broken?

- However, a commoner would probably want the money more than vengeance. The amount that a commoner received from his attacker was 60 shekels of silver. Since a laborer earned around one shekel a month, this was five years' salary. It's doubtful that most commoners thought this was an unfair deal.

- Six of Hammurabi's laws address punishments for striking a pregnant woman and causing a miscarriage or the woman's death—probably as a result of domestic violence. One law directly addresses a son striking his father, for which his hand was supposed to be cut off. Researchers don't know of any case in which this was actually enacted.

- Five of the laws punish what we would call rape, though in only one of them is the woman clearly described as the unwilling victim. In that case, she was not to be punished. Her rapist, on the other hand, was to be put to death for his crime. The other four laws dealt with sexual assaults in a family: A man was punished for having sexual relations with his daughter, mother, or son's fiancée. The woman probably was unwilling in these cases as well, but that isn't specified.

- Two other laws address deaths during crimes. In one, a victim was beaten to death while detained by a creditor. In another, someone was killed during the course of a robbery. Finally, a single law concerns premeditated murder when a woman had her husband killed because she was having an affair with another man.

GAPS AND SYSTEMS

- Hammurabi didn't include a law to determine what happened when a man murdered another man, or if a man murdered a woman, or if a woman murdered a man for a reason other than an affair. These scenarios aren't covered.

- There are many gaps like this. The laws don't even try to be comprehensive. They appear, instead, to be a collection of past legal decisions that the king wished to support. Judges might use them for guidance, perhaps, but they don't exactly represent a code of law.

- Clearly, people worried about marriage and sex. Many of the laws governed what happened, for example, when someone accused a woman of adultery; or when a man wanted to take a second wife, if he'd been unable to have children with his first wife; or when a man had debts before marriage and hadn't paid them off; or when a man broke off his engagement. Hammurabi also included plenty of rules about inheritance—who had the right to inherit, and who didn't.

- The court records tell much the same story. There was a great deal of litigation about property and inheritance and divorce, but not much mention of criminal behavior. Very few known court cases ended in capital punishment. The judges tended to be more lenient than the laws might lead one to expect.

- There were no prison sentences because there was no concept of prison as we have it today. For the most part, if someone could continue to participate in society, he was fined. If he was a danger to society, he was killed.

OTHER LAWS AND LEGACY

- Hammurabi's laws provide intriguing insights into the legal system. Several of them mention the "River Ordeal." This was a way of determining the truth if there were no witnesses to put under oath, a situation when only the gods could know who was telling the truth. For example, "If a man's wife should have a finger pointed against her in accusation involving another male, although she has not been seized lying with another male, she shall submit to the River Ordeal for her husband."

- In theory, the accused woman would be required to jump into the river. If she drowned, then the gods were showing that she was guilty of adultery. If she survived, the gods had saved her because she was innocent. She was not bound in any way, so if she could swim, she stood a good chance of survival.

- In practice, the mere threat of the River Ordeal was often enough to reveal the truth. An innocent person would agree to it readily, knowing she would survive. A guilty person would rather confess than be drowned in the river—the penalty the gods would undoubtedly impose. Therefore, the person's reaction to being sent to the river was often enough to prove guilt or innocence. They didn't necessarily have to be subjected to the ordeal.

- Other laws in Hammurabi's collection deal with the issue of taking an oath. If someone was willing to swear an oath—to give evidence "before the god"—it was considered proof that the person wasn't lying. No one would be crazy enough to lie in front of the gods because they were believed to be so powerful. The oaths and the River Ordeal reflect the deep faith that the Mesopotamian people had in their gods, and they helped the judges determine the truth of a case.

- The laws were all conditional in structure. None simply stated that one should not do something (that would be an absolute law). They all noted that if someone did a particular thing, then a certain punishment would be imposed. They reflect a basically law-abiding community, in which people sometimes gave in to their baser instincts, but in which everything could be worked out.

The laws and the courts in Mesopotamia were designed to reach just decisions, and to allow even the weak in society to obtain justice. It was an effective system that lasted hundreds of years. It also inspired many later legal systems around the world.

READINGS

- Barmash, "Blood Feud and State Control."
- Charpin, *Writing, Law, and Kingship in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*.
- Harris, *Ancient Sippar*.
- Jacobsen, "An Ancient Mesopotamian Trial for Homicide."
- Nakata, "Economic Activities of *naditum*-Women of Šamaš Reflected in the Field Sale Contracts."
- Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*.
- ——, "Mesopotamian Legal Traditions and the Laws of Hammurabi."
- Westbrook, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, volume 1.

QUESTIONS

- What are the main differences between the trial of Nin-dada and the trial of Amat-Shamash in the ways in which a decision was reached? What might account for these differences?
- What were the roles of oaths, witnesses, and the River Ordeal in court trials?

16

THE HANA KINGDOM AND CLUES TO A DARK AGE

In the 250 years after King Hammurabi of Babylon died in 1750 BCE, the Near East changed a great deal. By 1500 BCE, new peoples—speaking languages called Hittite, Hurrian, and Kassite—were playing important roles. There were big, new imperial kingdoms and capital cities. Yet the whole region was also coming out of a mysterious dark age—about 100 years long—when it appears few records were kept. This dark age is fascinating; it's an era that leaves us with more questions than answers. Researchers do know that the lands that dominated the Near East at the end of this era inherited many traditions of the Old Babylonian period while also making many changes.

THREE PEOPLES

- The Kassites were immigrants who were mentioned periodically through five generations—and 150 years—of Hammurabi's successors. Some scholars think they came from the mountains northeast of Mesopotamia, though that's debated. A dynasty of Kassite kings took control in southern Mesopotamia and had a remarkably successful regime that lasted centuries.

- Their language is unlike any other Mesopotamian tongue. The only things that seem to have been written in their own language were personal names and gods' names. A lot of their names end in "ash." The names of some of their kings show this: Abi-rattash, Burna-buriash, Gandash, Kara-hardash, Kashtiliash, and so on. These names are distinctive, and clearly not native to Mesopotamia.

- The Hittites lived in what is now Turkey—ancient Anatolia—and they were the inheritors of the Anatolian civilization that had existed for hundreds of years in that region. The Hittites' ancestors had traded with the Assyrians of northern Mesopotamia for textiles and tin, providing silver in exchange.

- Hittite was one of the Indo-European family of languages, so it's related to English, German, French, Latin, and so on, as well as to some Indian languages like Sanskrit. The Hittites adopted the cuneiform writing system late in the Old Babylonian period, around 1650 BCE, and—unlike the Kassites—they did use it to write their own language.

- A third new powerful group of people spoke Hurrian, which wasn't Semitic or Indo-European, and wasn't related to Sumerian either. In other words—like Kassite—Hurrian wasn't related to the dominant languages of Mesopotamia. However, it had been spoken in northern Syria for centuries. Hittites, Hurrians, and Kassites are all mentioned in texts from the later years of King Hammurabi's dynasty, though they weren't playing major roles yet.

END OF AN EMPIRE

- Hammurabi had built an empire that extended north beyond what is now the border between Iraq and Syria. The kingdom of Mari, in the eastern part of Syria, seems to have marked the northern limit of this empire. Hammurabi's successors struggled to maintain it.

- While dealing with rebellions, Hammurabi's son lost a lot of land to the south of Babylon. However, he was victorious against a Kassite incursion. When he chose the name for his ninth year on the throne, he commemorated this victory. Still, during the years leading up to 1595 BCE, the empire shrank considerably.

- After the end of Hammurabi's empire, scholars are confronted with something of a mystery. Mesopotamian scholars are dependent on cuneiform texts to provide evidence of the historical events of each era. If tablets aren't found in the ground, they simply can't know what was going on.

- That's the situation for the 16th century BCE. In Mesopotamia and in Syria, very, very few documents have been discovered that can be dated to the period from 1595 to 1500 BCE. It's a classic dark age.

THE HANA KINGDOM

- By the end of this dark age, many things had changed. It wasn't just that the Kassites were now ruling Mesopotamia; there were also two powerful new empires in the north. The empire of the Hittites was growing in Anatolia. An empire called Mittani—dominated by the Hurrians—was expanding across northern Mesopotamia and Syria.

- By 1500 BCE, even the Egyptians had become imperialistic. Previously, they had largely kept to the Nile Valley, but now they started campaigning into the Levant. That brings up the question: How did everything change? This lecture attempts to answer that through the perspective of the Hana

kingdom. It was one of the few kingdoms that seems to have managed to survive from the later years of Hammurabi's dynasty, through the dark age, and into the time of the new empires that followed.

- Hana was centered on the city of Terqa on the Euphrates River in Syria. In the time of the Old Babylonian kingdom of Mari, during the 18th century BCE, Terqa was one of Mari's provincial capitals. So for now, here's some of what we know about Hana, and how it fits into the big picture.

- After Hammurabi's reign—and just to the north of his imperial border—some local kings ruled Hana, which was about the same size as Mari's old kingdom and included much of the same territory. These kings ruled from Terqa, their capital.

LIFE IN TERQA

- Scholars know from the contracts and letters found in the houses that life in Terqa, at this time, was a lot like life in Hammurabi's empire. People bought and sold houses and fields. They lived near their relatives. They farmed and took out loans. They worshiped gods in local shrines.

- During the reign of Hammurabi's son, Samsuiluna, they seem to have been attacked by the Babylonian forces. Afterward, a king with a foreign name took the throne at Terqa. He was named Kashtiliashu. This is definitely a Kassite name, but it was about 200 years after this that the Kassites took control of Babylon.

- On this basis, many historians have speculated that Terqa was home to a Kassite kingdom ruled by Kashtiliashu, while Hammurabi's successors were still ruling in Babylon. However, that claim is shaky. That's because among all the names in the Hana documents that survive from his time, Kashtiliashu had the only Kassite name. Everyone else had Amorite and Akkadian names. If this had been a Kassite kingdom, one would expect at least some other Kassite people to have lived there besides the king.

- This course's theory is that he was a local king who admired the Kassites and took the name of one of their war leaders. After all, the Kassites had recently been giving trouble to the king of Babylon, and the people of Hana probably supported them, since they'd also fought against Babylon.

A NEW THREAT

- By 1650 BCE, just a few decades after the reign of Kashtiliashu, there was a new threat on the horizon. Maybe the people of Hana were aware of it. North up the Euphrates from Terqa was the kingdom of Yamhad, with its capital city of Aleppo, in Syria. Quite suddenly, around 1630 BCE, Aleppo was attacked from the north by a Hittite king and his troops. Yamhad was able to repulse the attacks, but the people there were no doubt worried.

- The next Hittite king tried again to conquer Aleppo, and, unlike his father, he was successful. This must have been a terrifying time for the Mesopotamians and the Syrians. They were familiar with one another's kingdoms. They fought one another from time to time, but they understood the rules of combat and the reasons for the battles. They also had diplomatic relationships and treaties.

- The Hittites, however, weren't part of the diplomatic system. Hana wasn't that far away from Yamhad, so the people there almost certainly had heard about the Hittite attacks on Aleppo.

- The next move by the Hittites changed Near Eastern history. The same king who'd destroyed Aleppo now launched an offensive right down the Euphrates. It was the attack that brought an end to Hammurabi's dynasty.

Hadad Temple, Syria

- The Hittite king raided the city, presumably destroyed lots of buildings, and went back home, taking the statues of the city gods with him. He left a power vacuum behind. The Kassites ended up filling this power vacuum.

- With the conquest of Babylon in 1595 BCE came the aforementioned dark age. It wasn't until around 1450—150 years later—that cuneiform documents started being written again in any significant numbers. By then, the Kassites had been ruling central Mesopotamia for ages. From around the same time, scholars have documents from the new Hurrian kingdom of Mittani in the north.

RELATIONS

- One inscription supposedly tells scholars something about what went on toward the beginning of the Kassite dynasty, during the dark age. The inscription is credited to a king named Agum. The problem with this inscription is that it's known from a much, much later copy, and some scholars think it was a fake—made by a later king to justify his control of certain lands.

- However, it could also be a genuine copy of an inscription from the time of Agum. There are some details in the inscription that later scribes almost certainly wouldn't have known about.

- Agum celebrates in his inscription because he brought about the return of the statues of the god Marduk and his divine wife to Babylon. This would have been a huge achievement and a way to convince the Babylonians to view him as a true successor to the dynasty of Hammurabi. When the statues were away in the land of the Hittites, the Babylonians would have felt their city was missing its gods. A king who could bring them back must have had the gods' support.

- Meanwhile, the Hittites would have been respectful to the Babylonian statues while they had them. Like the Mesopotamians, the Hittites

thought the gods lived inside their statues, and they definitely would have believed in the power of Marduk.

- Agum says he sent an ambassador to negotiate for the return of the statues. His negotiations were successful, and arrangements were made for the statues to be returned. Curiously, he didn't say that this emissary went to the Hittite capital. Instead, he says, "I sent to a far-off land, to the land of the Hanaeans, and Marduk and Sarpanitum did they conduct to me."

- Therefore, they came back not from the land of the Hittites but from the land of the Hanaeans—meaning Hana. Unfortunately, researchers don't know which of the Hana kings was involved in these negotiations. However, the inscription seems to confirm the idea that Hana continued to thrive during the dark age, since Agum lived during that time.

- One striking thing about this episode is that the Kassite King Agum used long-distance diplomacy to get the statues back, and he probably initially had to negotiate with the Hittites.

- The Hittites hadn't been part of the diplomatic network up to this point. Afterward, they took to diplomacy in a big way. The Hittites adopted all the diplomatic techniques that the Mesopotamians and Syrians had developed over hundreds of years. They used messengers, treaties, diplomatic letters, gifts, dynastic marriages, and so on.

MITTANI AND IMPERIALISTIC AIMS

- Another great new power, the kingdom of Mittani, also began to emerge in the dark age. Mittani dominated northern Mesopotamia for about 150 years, starting around 1500 BCE. It had a largely Hurrian-speaking population. By the end of the dark age, Mittani was a powerful empire, ruling an area that eventually stretched about 500 miles from east to west. It ran from the eastern edge of northern Iraq across much of Syria, reaching to what is now southeast Turkey.

- By 1500 BCE, the kings of Mittani and their troops were aggressively fighting in both the east and west. Around this time, a Mittanian king caused problems for a minor western king named Idrimi. He ruled from Aleppo around the end of the dark age and was forced into exile when the city was attacked, though it's unclear who the attackers were.

- Idrimi ended up as a vassal of the Mittani king and swore an oath to support him. This story might have been typical of the time of expansion in Mittani. Former enemies of the empire were willing to become vassals because they were allowed to raid and loot in the areas where they fought.

- Before this time, the area that Idrimi ruled and raided had been controlled by the Hittites. The Hittites were now in a weak position and had lost quite a bit of land to Mittani, though they would gain strength again.

- However, Mittani had another enemy as well—one that seemed to come out of nowhere. In 1504 BCE, according to records from Egypt, Egyptian troops charged into Mittani, fighting all the way to the Euphrates River. Egyptian forces had never made it this far north before.

- By 1500 BCE, there were four major powers in the Near East—the Hittites, Egyptians, Mittanians, and Kassite Babylonians—and three of them had imperialistic aims. Only the Kassites seem to have been uninterested in expanding their kingdom. Worse yet, the Hittites, Mittanians, and Egyptians all wanted to control the same coastal area of western Syria. They all had strong armies and powerful kings.

It's unclear where Hana was in all of this. It might have been a vassal state of Mittani or perhaps a vassal of Babylon. Maybe it was hanging on as an independent power. Hana had survived through the dark age, but it never again seems to have played an important role in international affairs. Hopefully, more evidence about Hana's fate will emerge in the future.

READINGS

- Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*.
- Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati, "Terqa."
- Cancik-Kirschbaum and Brisch, *Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space*.
- Eidem, "International Law in the Second Millennium."
- Hunger and Pruzsinszky, eds., *Mesopotamian Dark Age Revisited.*
- Lafont, "International Relations in the Ancient Near East."
- Paulus, "Foreigners under Foreign Rulers."
- Podany, "The Conservatism of Hana Scribal Tradition."
- ——, *The Land of Hana*.
- Richardson, "The Many Falls of Babylon and the Shape of Forgetting."

QUESTIONS

- What might account for the huge decrease in the number of cuneiform tablets during the 16th century BCE?
- What factors might have contributed to the Hittites' success in conquering Babylon in 1595 BCE?
- How did the Mittanian kings expand their empire?

17

PRINCESS TADU-HEPA, DIPLOMACY, AND MARRIAGE

Around 1500 BCE, toward the beginning of what is known as the Late Bronze Age, the major Near Eastern powers were at war with one another. Hatti had expanded south to the Syrian coast. Mittani had expanded east to fight for control over that same region. The Egyptians had begun to take over the Levant and to raid lands ruled by Mittani. The armies of all these great powers were fighting for control of the same area on the Mediterranean coast. This lecture looks at how diplomacy came into play in this and other situations.

AMBASSADORS

- The Egyptian kings claimed in their royal inscriptions that, after they had raided Mittani, several ambassadors from distant lands showed up in Egypt with gifts for the king. This had never happened before. These ambassadors came from Hatti, Assyria, and Babylonia, among other places.

- These kingdoms had, for a long time, enjoyed diplomatic relationships with one another (even during times of war), and now they were trying to tame the new imperial power—Egypt. They didn't want Egypt to raid and conquer into their own territories, but they could see that Egypt was rich and powerful. Amazingly, their diplomatic efforts worked.

- By about 1420 BCE, Egyptian raids to the north had stopped and peace treaties seem to have been negotiated on all sides. First, the pharaoh probably agreed to peace with Mittani, then with Hatti and Babylonia. These four, centered in what are now Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, were the great powers of the time. They were largely equal in military and economic power but, for now, incapable of conquering one another.

- The truly remarkable aspect of Egypt's agreement to join the international community is that the Egyptian kings were willing to adopt the Syro-Mesopotamian diplomatic system as a whole, just as it already existed. They didn't demand to be viewed as greater than the other kings (even though Egypt was arguably the richest of the great powers).

- However, the pharaohs did resist one detail of the diplomatic system: They would accept foreign princesses as wives, but they would never send any of their daughters away from Egypt to marry another king. Amenhotep III put it this way: "From of old, a daughter of the king of Egypt has never been given to anyone." The other kings seem to have grudgingly accepted it.

1420 TO 1200 BCE

- The era from around 1420 to 1200 BCE is remarkable for the long periods of time when the great powers were at peace with one another as a result of the diplomatic relationships and marriages between them. There were some military conflicts, but fewer than in most other eras. The kings seem to have thrived in this atmosphere. They enjoyed peace and diplomatic relations with their allies and sent envoys and letters to one another regularly.

- Researchers know about all this because they can read and analyze letters written by the kings themselves. Many letters from rulers of the great kingdoms of Mittani, Babylonia, Hatti and Egypt were saved in the archives of Pharaoh Akhenaten in his capital city at Amarna in Egypt. This era is often called the Amarna period.

- The great kings' letters to one another were full of gripes and insinuations, but, at least in the early years of this era, they never threatened military action. Their main concerns were the value of the gifts they sent and received, the treatment of their messengers, and the details of the marriages they arranged between their families.

KING TUSHRATTA

- One of these kings, Tushratta, played a big role internationally. He was a king of Mittani in the mid-14th century BCE. One letter from Tushratta to the pharaoh showed that he'd had a tough childhood. His father had been king of Mittani for some time and, after his father died, Tushratta's brother became king.

- This brother was soon murdered, and the assassin took control of the country. He didn't try to make himself king; instead, he placed young Tushratta on the throne as his puppet. The assassin became the regent, so he made the rules. Tushratta seems to have had no choice but to obey. One of the demands was that Tushratta had to cut off connections with his allies, including the king of Egypt.

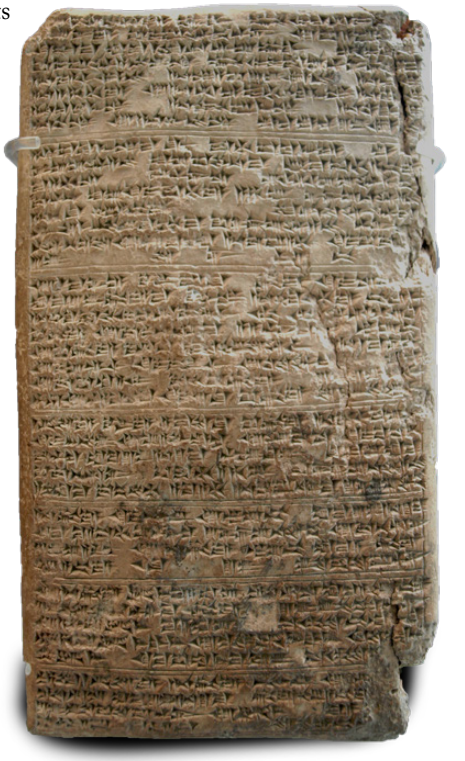
- The Egyptian king was married to Tushratta's sister (along with many, many other women), so he might well have been alarmed when diplomatic letters stopped coming from Mittani. Eventually, Tushratta grew up and was able to get his revenge on his brother's assassin.

- After killing his enemy, Tushratta had to deal with an attack by the Hittites. Tushratta and his army were victorious, and the Hittites retreated. That was when Tushratta decided to re-establish his alliances with other great powers, his father's former allies. He reached out to Amenhotep III in Egypt, and he may have written to the king of Babylon as well.

A ROYAL MARRIAGE

- His first letter to Amenhotep III didn't ask for much, just a renewal of diplomatic ties. Soon after that first contact, though, the two kings started negotiations for a royal marriage.

- One of the Amarna documents is now in the Vorderasiastische Museum in Berlin, and it contains a letter from Tushratta to Amenhotep III around this time. It's a fascinating document that reveals a great deal about the international situation of the time, and also about the ways that ambassadors made the whole diplomatic system work.



- Tushratta had a daughter named Tadu-Hepa, who was engaged to marry Amenhotep III. The couple had never met. The whole engagement had been arranged by letter, with a lot of help from the Egyptian ambassador.

- This was how it had happened: Some time before, the pharaoh had sent a letter asking the Mittanian king if he could marry one of the Mitannian princesses, and King Tushratta had been delighted. He'd agreed at once: What could be better than to be related by marriage to his ally, the king of Egypt?

DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS

- The Mittanian king was not quite ready to send the princess to Egypt. A high-ranking Egyptian ambassador named Mane had arrived from Egypt to pick her up. King Tushratta composed a letter to send back to the pharaoh in order to try to buy himself a little more time. This is the letter that's preserved in Berlin.

- He had good news and bad news. He began the letter with some of the good news: The Egyptian ambassador Mane, who had traveled back and forth between Egypt and Mittani before, had arrived safely in the capital city of Mittani! Hearing this must have been a relief to the pharaoh.

- King Tushratta gave the pharaoh some more good news. Amenhotep III had included some instructions in a letter Mane took to Tushratta, and the Mittanian king promised to "carry out every word of my brother that Mane brought to me."

- He continued, "In this very year, now, I will hand over my brother's wife, the mistress of Egypt, and they will bring her to my brother." Note that a princess who moved away to marry a foreign king had important roles to play. She represented her father in her husband's court. She sometimes wrote letters to her father with information about his ally, she symbolized the uniting of the two lands, and she might even be the mother of the next king in that land.

- However, Amenhotep III, had a lot of wives. Not only was he already married to the sister of the Mittanian king, he also had married daughters of a number of his allies and vassals. The pharaoh wasn't particularly good at keeping track of his wives. He wrote one very defensive letter to the king of Babylon who wanted to know if his sister had died. She was married to Amenhotep III; surely he must know whether or not she was alive.

- Amenhotep III blustered about in his letter, blaming the Babylonian king for not sending an ambassador who actually knew the Babylonian princess and could recognize her. The pharaoh had presented the Babylonian envoys with his wives and left it up to them to figure out which one the Babylonian princess might be.

BAD NEWS

- King Tushratta eventually had to share some bad news in his letter: Not everything was ready for the princess's departure. It would be another six months before he was ready to send her because, he said, of all the work he still had to do on her dowry and on the gifts for the pharaoh. This meant that he had to detain Mane, the ambassador. As the Mittanian king put it, "because of this, Mane will be delayed for a bit."

- The Mitannian king tried to soften the blow. He switched the topic in his letter to talk about his daughter. She wasn't a child anymore. "She has become very matured," he said, and the pharaoh "will desire her. She is formed according to my brother's desire." Plus, he would be sending many gifts.

- However, King Tushratta wasn't done with the bad news. This letter is fairly typical of diplomatic correspondence of this era, tipping back and forth between reasons for celebration, excuses for not fulfilling requests, boasts, and complaints. The king's letters were full of assurances of love for his brother king in Egypt, but there was always one thing that was really bothering him. Almost always, it had to do with gifts.

- King Tushratta had asked the pharaoh for a great deal of gold when he last sent a messenger to Egypt, and he obviously anticipated the awe that the gold would inspire in his attendant guests. However, when the packages were cut open, there was something wrong with the gold. The guests looked at the supposedly lavish gifts and said, somewhat snidely, "Are all of these truly of gold?"

- He included this embarrassing episode in his letter to the pharaoh for a reason. He really wanted gold, and he wanted the pharaoh to know that whatever had been sent from Egypt was just not enough. Much of this was about appearances: King Tushratta badly wanted all of the officials and foreign guests around him to be impressed.

- Finally, he reminded the pharaoh of the basic rules of diplomacy. He wrote: "May I fulfill my brother's heart's desire forever. And may my brother fulfill my own heart's desire." He was saying that each side would send what the other wanted. This was what made the whole diplomatic system valuable to all sides—it made them rich and impressive and gave them things they could get no other way.

- This letter was one of many diplomatic letters found in Egypt from this period, and it reveals so much about the diplomatic system of the time: the types of letters that passed back and forth between kings, the gifts that were expected to accompany them, and the way that the kings thought of themselves as brothers and were determined to be treated as equals. It also reveals the choice of Akkadian as the language of correspondence, even when (as in the case of Mittani and Egypt) it wasn't the native language of either king; the sparring over gifts and perceived slights; and the princess who, like so many other princesses, made the one-way journey to live in the land of her father's ally as his wife.

- The story of the royal marriage ends happily. When Princess Tadu-Hepa finally left for Egypt, the amount of wealth that changed hands would have been truly staggering.

READINGS

- Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East*.
- Cohen and Westbrook, eds., *Amarna Diplomacy*.
- Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East*.
- Holmes, "The Messengers of the Amarna Letters."
- Kozloff et al., *Egypt's Dazzling Sun*.
- Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*.
- Moran, *The Amarna Letters*.
- Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*.
- Rainey, *The El-Amarna Correspondence*.
- Sayce, "The Discovery of the Tel El-Amarna Tablets."
- Wilhelm, "The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second Millennium Upper Mesopotamia."

QUESTIONS

- What might have inspired the great kings of Hatti, Egypt, Babylonia, and Mittani to agree to peace between one another, rather than continuing to fight? What were the benefits of peace?
- What were some of the roles of the ambassadors and envoys in maintaining the peaceful relationships between the great powers?

18

LAND GRANTS AND ROYAL FAVOR IN MITTANI

The kingdom of Mittani—controlling most of what is now northern Iraq and Syria— was at its height from around 1450 to 1350 BCE. This lecture takes a look at diplomacy and political machinations during this time.

A LETTER

- At some point during this time, a Mittanian king wrote a letter to one of his vassals in the eastern part of the empire. It concerned a queen named Amminaia. He began the letter like this: "To Ithiya, speak. So says the king: [With regard to the district of] Paharrashe, which I previously gave to [Queen] Amminaia, now from its confines I have assigned a town to Ugi."

- The king skipped the usual niceties that he'd use if he'd been writing to a great king like himself. He had given a district known as Paharrashe to someone, and he was now reassigning a town within that district to someone else. This practice of giving land to high officials was common in this period. The great king could take the land away as easily as he had given it.

- Another point of interest is that the land had been given to a woman from the local royal family—Amminaia. The letter was found in her house, so scholars know quite a bit about her. In the letter, the king goes on to say that he'd instructed an official to determine the new boundaries of the land held by Queen Amminaia and of the land given to the man named Ugi.

- The letter ends with a notice of how Amminaia would be compensated for the loss of her land to the man named Ugi. The king wrote that he had told another local official: "Your own town I have assigned to the district of Amminaia." She would still have control of the same number of towns. The king was just switching one for another.

QUEEN AMMINAIA

- Amminaia lived in a kingdom called Arrapha in the eastern part of the Mittani kingdom. Its capital city lies under the modern city of Kirkuk, Iraq, so it can't be excavated.

- Arrapha was closer to Assur than to the heart of Mittani. Later, it would be part of the kingdom of Assyria, but during this period—the late 15th and early 14th century BCE—Assyria was subject to the Mittanian empire. A king named Saushtatar had probably been responsible for conquering the region.

- Amminaia apparently didn't live in the capital city of Arrapha, at least not all the time. She had a house in the small, nearby town of Nuzi, which was home to about 1,600 people. Archaeologists excavated Nuzi from 1925 to 1931, and uncovered about 5,000 cuneiform tablets. These have provided wonderful details about this era.

- The situation in the kingdom of Arrapha was somewhat typical for the Mittanian empire. It was a relatively peaceful era, so there are few records in Nuzi of any military activity. Arrapha was a wealthy kingdom. Even the mayor of Nuzi had an opulent palace, with more than 100 rooms.

- Archaeologists have noticed that there was a significant divide between rich and poor in Nuzi, and in some of the other vassal kingdoms of Mittani. Vast houses shared neighborhoods with the much smaller dwellings of the poor.

- Not all of Mittani's small kingdoms were like this. Some cities were not dominated by palaces, and in those cities, there was less of a divide between rich and poor—the houses are much more similar to one another in size. Several sites near the Euphrates in Syria are like this.

LAND GRANTS

- Scholars have records of many royal land grants in this era, and not just in Mittani. Back in the Old Babylonian period, between about 1900 and 1595 BCE, kings had provided some of their officials and soldiers with fields so that they could support their families. During the following era, the Late Bronze Age, royal gifts of land to officials got much bigger, including whole towns and the lands around them. Most of these land holdings were much larger than any one household would need.

- The stage between these two extremes can be seen in some of the documents from the kingdom of Hana, in eastern Syria. In the period between about 1600 and 1450 BCE, before the time of Amminaia's archive, quite a few contracts have been found in Hana that record royal grants of land. Some of these are for many fields, but some are just for a small property—a single house, in one case.

- There were a number of clauses to these land grant contracts. They started with a description of the land itself—its size, where it was located, and who owned the lands around it. The land around the fields being given by the king is often described as belonging to the palace. The kings seem to have been claiming control of more and more of the land in the kingdom. It was probably less possible than before for private individuals to buy and sell property.

- The next clause noted who owned the land. In a private sale, this is where one would find the name of the seller. In the land grants, however, the current owner was the king. He wasn't the sole owner—the scribe listed the king and a number of local gods as the owners. Then, there was an oath sworn in the names of these same gods.

- This was followed by a threat of punishment on anyone who broke the contract. These types of punishments were almost always found on contracts for the sale of land in the Hana kingdom. This protected the buyer from the seller denying the legality of their transaction.

- The list of witnesses came next, and these were almost all high officials, often with the king's son as the first witness. One final detail is that the Hana kings always sealed the land grant contracts with their elaborate royal cylinder seals. That means the kings probably were physically there when the contract was drawn up, which would've involved a ceremony.

- Starting around 1500 BCE, kings from several other kingdoms adopted this same idea of granting extensive lands to important civil servants and religious leaders. Grants like this happened in Hatti, Mittani, and Babylonia.

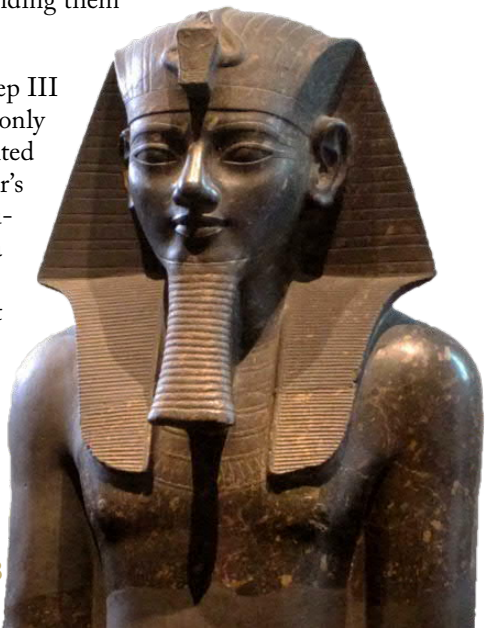
MITTANI'S LIFE CYCLE

- Mittani thrived for more than a 150 years, but toward the middle of the 14th century, things started to go downhill. We get a glimpse of this in the correspondence of King Tushratta of Mittani with the kings of Egypt.

- Tushratta's daughter, Tadu-Hepa, had married the pharaoh Amenhotep III. At that time, Tushratta asked a favor of his Egyptian ally. He wanted a gold statue of Tadu-Hepa. This request for a statue of his daughter had a precedent. When Amenhotep III had married a Babylonian princess, he'd sent a statue of that princess to her father, the king of Babylon. Perhaps the statue could serve as a physical confirmation of the marriage relationship between the two kings.

- Later, Tushratta added to the request. Now he wanted a statue of himself as well as one of his daughter Tadu-Hepa. Scholars know from royal letters found in the late 19th century in Amarna, in Egypt, that Amenhotep III had the statues made. He made sure that the Mittanian diplomatic corps saw them and could attest to their existence. However, the pharaoh didn't get around to sending them before he died.

- At the time of his death, Amenhotep III had been married to Tadu-Hepa for only two years. His son Akhenaten inherited the throne and some of his father's wives. Akhenaten married Tadu-Hepa, which meant that Tushratta was still the father-in-law of the king of Egypt. Tushratta hoped that their relationship would be just as close as the bond he'd had with Akhenaten's father. He expressed this repeatedly in his letters.



- Akhenaten turned out not to be a reliable ally or correspondent. For Tushratta, the big change in their relationship was all wrapped up with the issue of the gold statues. Akhenaten simply didn't send them. The gift that was eventually transmitted was something less than the Mittanian king had been anticipating.

- Tushratta described what happened. "[Akhenaten] sent me statues [made] of wood." They were gold plated, but they weren't solid gold statues, which is what Amenhotep III had promised. He wrote to Egypt over and over to complain about how he'd been snubbed. He even wrote to Akhenaten's mother, Tiye, asking her to put in a word with her son to convince him to send the gold statues.

- Tushratta was obsessed with Akhenaten's failure to send the statues, not because he just wanted more gold, but because he clearly felt himself to be slipping out of Egyptian favor. He depended on his alliances. The physical proof of them was seen in the regular exchange of letters, gifts, and messengers.

- As far as researchers know, the gold statues never arrived. Mittani's relationship with Egypt never returned to the warm friendship Tushratta had shared with Amenhotep III. Akhenaten was no longer interested in maintaining close ties with Mittani.

- Meanwhile, the Hittites were gaining in power and becoming more aggressive. They had never been friendly with Mittani, even at the best of times. Tushratta was getting worried, and he was right to. Mittani's days as a great power were almost over.

READINGS

- Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design*.
- Liverani, "The Late Bronze Age."
- Maidman, "Nuzi."
- Morrison, "The Family of Šilwa-Tešub *Mâr Sarri*."
- Owen and Wilhelm, *Nuzi at Seventy-Five*.
- Paulus, "The Babylonian Kudurru Inscriptions and their Legal and Sociohistorical Implications."
- Podany, *The Land of Hana*.
- Sassmannshausen, "The Adaptation of the Kassites to the Babylonian Civilization."
- Sommerfeld, "The Kassites of Ancient Mesopotamia."
- Stein, "A Reappraisal of the 'Saustatar Letter' from Nuzi."
- ——, "Nuzi."
- Wilhelm, "The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second Millennium Upper Mesopotamia."

QUESTIONS

- What might have been some advantages to the system of royal land grants in the Late Bronze Age?
- Why might palace-based cities in Mittani have had a wider distinction between rich and poor than was found in cities without palaces?
- Why might Tushratta have reacted so strongly when he wasn't sent the gold statues by Akhenaten?

19

THE LATE BRONZE AGE AND THE END OF PEACE

More than 3,000 years ago, a ship left the island of Cyprus with 20 tons of cargo and royal gifts. It was probably heading for Greece. The wooden craft was 49 feet long and sturdily built, but off the coast, at a place now known as Uluburun in Turkey, the crew faced a crisis and the ship sank. It stayed on the sea floor until underwater archaeologists discovered it in 1982. Over the next decade, the archaeologists were able to recover many objects from the wreck and to begin to piece together a surprisingly vivid picture of ancient Near Eastern trade. This lecture looks at what the Uluburun shipwreck and other discoveries reveal.

THE SHIPWRECK

- The shipwrecked crew's possessions consisted of objects from all over the place, including an Egyptian gold scarab, Mycenaean pots from Greece, and sets of Canaanite weights. The ship's hold was packed with 10 tons of copper from Cyprus, in the form of 354 ingots. There was no obvious single source for the goods onboard.

- The director of the excavation concluded that the crew was probably mostly from Syria and Canaan. Four of the passengers appeared to be merchants who brought along sets of balance weights so that they could weigh gold and silver payments or bulk goods that they might be buying. Someone—presumably the captain of the ship—had a Canaanite sword.

- The boat wasn't just a trading vessel, though. Two other men on board appear to have been ambassadors. Some of the goods in the hold might have been luxury gifts for their king in Greece, perhaps received from the king of Alashiya in what is now Cyprus. This was during the Mycenaean period in Greece, hundreds of years before the classical era.

- The ship must have picked up some goods in Canaan—things like terebinth, tin, and glass ingots—and then moved on to Cyprus. There, perhaps, the Mycenaean ambassadors joined the crew after having visited the Alashiyan court, and the boat was loaded with copper. The vessel was probably on its way to Greece when it sank.

- It's unclear if the crew, the merchants, and the envoys survived. No skeletons were found, and the boat was only 60 yards from shore, so perhaps they did.

THE WORLD DURING THE SHIPWRECK

- The Uluburun shipwreck is like a time capsule, frozen the way it was before sinking. Researchers know from letters between kings of this time that vast amounts of gold, copper, and other luxury goods were regularly sent from one court to another, and the shipwreck shows how some of these goods were transported.

- The Akkadian language of Mesopotamia was the lingua franca of the age, and letters written in Akkadian passed regularly between the courts of the Near Eastern kings. Only a tiny fraction of what was written has survived, and just a couple of shipwrecks have been found, but they hint at a time of unprecedented international cooperation.

- The Uluburun shipwreck provides a clue that the Mycenaean Greeks were part of this diplomatic world. The ship and its passengers were probably taking a circular route around the eastern Mediterranean. After unloading the goods and letting off the ambassadors in Greece, the vessel would have gone on to Crete, then across the Mediterranean to Egypt, and back along the coast eastwards to Canaan.

- Ships on this route probably also stopped at the city of Ugarit, on the north Syrian coast. This was one of the great international ports of the Late Bronze Age, the period from around 1600 to 1200 BCE.

- Ugarit was in the orbit of Egyptian power, but it wasn't a vassal of Egypt. Its people didn't pay tribute. Documents found there are written in almost all the languages of the region: Akkadian, Egyptian, Hurrian, Hittite, Cypro-Minoan, and Ugaritic. This indicates that people who lived and worked there came from many locations.

- The international system of trade and diplomacy between independent states worked smoothly for centuries. If someone wanted glass, they got it from Canaan or Egypt. Silver came from Anatolia. Copper came from Cyprus, which was ancient Alashiya. Horses came from Mittani, in Syria. The best textiles came from Babylonia, in what is now Iraq; olive oil and perfume came from Greece; ivory and ebony arrived from Africa; incense originated from Arabia; and gold came from Egypt. However, this system did not thrive forever.

Royal Palace of Ugarit, Syria

PROBLEMS BEGIN

- One of the first things to go wrong with the international system didn't end up destroying it, but was still a shock. In Anatolia during the 14th century BCE, a Hittite prince named Suppiluliuma swore allegiance to his brother, who was king, and then had his brother killed so that he could take the throne. This was a heinous crime—not just the murder, but also the fact that Suppiluliuma had broken an oath to the gods.

- Suppiluliuma was a contemporary of King Tushratta in Mittani, the pharaoh Akhenaten in Egypt, and a king named Burna-buriash I in Babylonia. He eventually launched a military campaign that devastated some of Mittani's cities, though he was unable to capture the capital.

- The whole campaign upended the assumptions that populations in small cities and vassal kingdoms had about their safety. The leaders of the port city of Ugarit decided to side with him rather than risk invasion.

- Tushratta of Mittani died soon after this, killed by one of his sons. A relative then claimed the throne, while another of Tushratta's sons fled to Suppiluliuma for help. The Hittite king agreed and gave him troops to help him seize the throne. After his victory, though, this Mittanian prince was no longer independent.

- The western half of Mittani now belonged to Hatti, and the eastern half declared its independence as the kingdom of Assyria. Then, things began to settle down somewhat. The new king of Assyria made an alliance with the king of Babylon, and, as usual, negotiated a diplomatic marriage. Assyria replaced Mittani as a great power in the brotherhood of kings.

UNUSUAL EVENTS

- An unusual diplomatic marriage almost happened at around this same time. A queen of Egypt wrote to Suppiluliuma, stating that her husband had died and she had no sons to succeed him. She'd heard that Suppiluliuma had many sons, and asked him to send her one to become her husband.

- Scholars can't be sure of the Egyptian queen's name, but she was probably the widow of Tutankhamen or Akhenaten. This request was totally unprecedented. She would have viewed anyone outside the royal family as a servant. That was something of a problem, because, as she explained, she didn't want to marry "a servant."

- The Hittites were allies, and she must have decided that a Hittite prince would do. Suppiluliuma was so shocked that he sent an envoy to Egypt to find out answers to questions like: Did the Egyptian queen really want to marry a Hittite prince? Would his son really become pharaoh?

- The Hittite envoy returned several months later with a curt reply from the queen: Any Hittite prince that Suppiluliuma sent would become king of Egypt. Suppiluliuma chose his son Zannanza and, presumably, organized bridal gifts and the wedding party, then sent them off to Egypt.

- On the way, though, Zannanza was murdered. Relations between Egypt and Hatti collapsed. Suppiluliuma sent troops into a part of Canaan that Egypt controlled. Earlier in his reign, he'd sworn by the gods to abide by a peace treaty with Egypt, so Suppiluliuma was breaking another oath.

- In taking prisoners of war and riches from Canaan, Suppiluliuma got something else: The prisoners he captured were infected with plague. The illness spread terribly through Hatti, eventually killing the king himself.

- To ancient eyes, the reason for this was obvious: Suppiluliuma had broken his oaths to the gods. Of course, the gods would kill him. This was what Suppiluliuma's son wrote in a prayer to the gods in hopes of making the plague go away. He pleaded with them to spare the rest of the people. Too many had died. Eventually, the plague did end.

A BATTLE AND ITS FALLOUT

- Through all of this, tensions stayed high between Egypt and Hatti until their armies met in battle in 1274 BCE. This was at Qadesh, located on the border between their empires, in the western part of Syria. The Egyptian king now was Ramses II, who went on to rule for more than 60 years. In his account of the battle, he claimed the Egyptians were completely victorious, but the Hittites also claimed to have won.

- The Hittites kept control of the city of Qadesh, but mostly it was a stalemate. Neither side was going to gain the upper hand. After a while, in 1258 BCE, the two sides agreed to an alliance and cemented it—as always—with a peace treaty and a diplomatic marriage. Ramses II married a Hittite princess. From that time on, Egypt and Hatti had a peaceful relationship, right up until both empires came to an end about a century later.

The Battle of Qadesh

END OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE

- The reason the Late Bronze Age ended has been discussed a great deal because it was so dramatic. Once things started going wrong, it was like a domino effect. The Late Bronze Age, from around 1600 to 1200 BCE, had been stable and prosperous. The empires of Hatti and Egypt and the Kassite kingdom of Babylonia lasted much longer than most previous kingdoms. Soon, it was all gone. The Hittite empire completely collapsed by 1185 BCE, and the citadel of the capital city burned down.

- A few years later, in 1155 BCE, the Babylonian kingdom was invaded by the Elamites of modern-day Iran. The kingdom of Assyria—which had expanded when Mittani was conquered—shrank back to an area around the capital city of Assur. Egypt's long, stable period came to an end as well by 1070 BCE, after more than 400 years.

- Besides the big kingdoms, the smaller kingdoms of the Mediterranean region also suffered. Several Mycenaean cities of Greece were destroyed. After the cities along the coast of Syria and Canaan gained independence from Hatti and Egypt, many of them were destroyed as well.

THE SEA PEOPLES

- There aren't many clues as to what happened in texts from this time. In most places, it seems that documents just stopped being written. However, in the Syrian trade port of Ugarit, archaeologists found some letters that seem to have been written right before the city was destroyed by invaders.

- In one letter, the king of Ugarit, Ammurapi, wrote urgently to the king of another city. He said that there were "ships of the enemy" visible at sea, and he needed help. It's not immediately clear who these enemies were, and his ally didn't send reinforcements. The enemy ships did enormous damage to rich, unprotected Ugarit.

- King Ammurapi survived and was still in Ugarit when a letter arrived from the island of Cyprus. This was from the king of Alashiya, who was asking him for help. Alashiya was also being attacked. Ammurapi wrote back that he couldn't be of any assistance.

- These unidentified enemies seem to have continued south along the coast, destroying and looting as they went. Their destination seems to have been Egypt, the richest of all the Mediterranean lands. Fortunately for researchers, the Egyptian king recorded the invaders' attack, and his response.

- This was Ramses III, who later claimed to have achieved a glorious victory over the intruders. He covered the walls of his mortuary temple with relief sculptures and descriptions of the events. His story indicated the invaders were from islands:

> The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. … No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya on, being cut off at one time. …Their confederation was the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen, and Weshesh, lands united.

- The enemy invaders have come to be known as the Sea Peoples. The Egyptian army and navy were able to repulse the foreigners, and some settled just to the north of Egypt on the coast of Canaan. The group known as the Peleset show up in the Bible as the Philistines, and gave their name to that area of the Levant: Palestine.

- Many archaeologists agree the origin of the Sea Peoples was, indeed, across the sea. Some of the Sea Peoples were probably Mycenaean Greeks. Others were probably from Cyprus and southern Anatolia.

- That still leaves the question: Why were they on the move? One possibility is that drought or earthquakes sent them on the move. There's some evidence for a drought not just in Greece but across the northern Mediterranean, which may have damaged food production and caused people to flee.

OTHER FACTORS

- Another explanation for the fall of the Late Bronze Age is that the extreme gap between the rich and poor of the time might have resulted in the poor rising up. The elites in the Late Bronze Age lived in great luxury and depended on the poor to provide much of their wealth. Some people do seem to have resisted the amount of work they were called upon to perform for the palaces and temples. In Canaan, there was a group of outlaws known as the *habiru* who seem to have abandoned urban life.

- Another factor was that in peace treaties of the time, one of the main concerns was always with the extradition of fugitives who left one land and tried to live in another. This wouldn't have been a major negotiating point if it hadn't been an ongoing problem. A significant number of people must have fled their cities and debts—and the demands the state put on them—to try to live somewhere else.

- The destruction of palaces and citadels at some sites might have been the work of unhappy local subjects rather than invaders. There's no confirmation of this, but it would help explain why some cities were destroyed, while others had no destruction at all, and why in some cities only the citadel was destroyed while private houses were untouched.

- Once the seeds of rebellion were sown—or an armed migration of refugees was unleashed—it seems that other things began to break down. It's not that the Sea Peoples showed up everywhere, but instead that similar types of destruction spread across the region.

- For example, there's no sign that the Sea Peoples made it to Hatti, even though the palaces of the Hittite capital were destroyed. The capital city was far inland, hundreds of miles from the route of the Sea Peoples. The attackers of the Hittite capital might have come from closer to home—perhaps the neighboring Gasga people. This destruction might also have been a result of social unrest among the Hittite population.

- The Sea Peoples didn't directly cause the reversals in Assyria and Babylonia, either. The likely cause of events is that many things got out of balance. Whatever the first trigger was—whether drought, rebellion, earthquakes, or all three—the system began to disintegrate.

DISINTEGRATION

- Some people took to the roads or to the sea to pursue life elsewhere. Raiders looted and burned buildings. People couldn't travel safely to trade or deliver messages any longer. Great kings lost contact with one another and had no source for the expensive foreign goods they wanted. Ships like the one found at Uluburun no longer could peacefully tie up at ports around the Mediterranean and expect a civil welcome.

- All around the Mediterranean coast, small states now replaced the big empires. In Greece, for example, people were much poorer than before—with simple grave goods replacing elaborate ones. Overseas trade seems to have stopped. The Mycenaeans had used a writing system that modern scholars call Linear B, but it too was forgotten. All over the place, there were fewer big cities and many more people living in the countryside.

- Battles took place regularly between the various small kingdoms. This period—from about 1155 to 972 BCE—is often referred to as a dark age because not much documentation survives to help scholars understand what was going on.

- In spite of all the gaps in knowledge about this era, there is one giant source of information for history in the Levant during this time, and that's the Hebrew Bible. This era was when the kingdom of Israel formed. It was the time of Israel's battles against the Philistines and the Canaanites, and of its first kings.

- Regardless, the long era of peace and international cooperation between major kingdoms had come to an end. Once the system started to break down, it was impossible to save it. The old empires were divided up into smaller squabbling kingdoms. If these kingdoms kept many records, they don't seem to have survived.

READINGS

- Astour, "Ugarit and the Great Powers."
- Bass, "A Bronze Age Shipwreck at Ulu Burun (Kas.)"
- Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*.
- Beckman, "Hittite Treaties and the Development of the Cuneiform Treaty Tradition."
- Bryce, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*.
- Cline, *1177 B.C.*
- Koehl, "Aegean Interactions with the Near East and Egypt during the Late Bronze Age."
- Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*.
- Pulak, "The Uluburun Shipwreck and Late Bronze Age Trade."
- Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of Ramesses II*.
- Yon, *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*.

QUESTIONS

- Why is a shipwreck like the one at Uluburun particularly informative for our understanding of international relations in the Late Bronze Age?
- In what ways did the reign of Suppiluliuma mark a break with the past?
- Why might the great powers of the Late Bronze Age have been unable to recover from the disruptions of the 12th century BCE?

20

ASSYRIA ASCENDING

The empire of the Assyrians was centered on the Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia. The Sumerians and Akkadians of southern Mesopotamia would be forgotten for thousands of years—they had to be rediscovered in the 19th century—but the Bible and Greek and Roman authors immortalized the Assyrians. They were never forgotten. When archaeologists first started digging in Iraq during the mid-19th century, it was evidence of the Assyrian Empire that they were looking for. They found it, and it was just as impressive as they had imagined.

BACKGROUND ON ASSYRIA

- Assyria existed long before the time of the Bible. Until the 14th century BCE, it was just one state among many in Mesopotamia. In fact, through much of the 15th and 14th centuries BCE, Assyria was subject to the kingdom of Mittani, the great power that dominated northern Mesopotamia. However, western Mittani was subsumed into the Hittite empire around the 1330s BCE, and Assyria gained its independence.

- For the next 700 years—until the end of the 7th century BCE—Assyria played a huge role in Mesopotamian history. It was led by one of the most stable dynasties in all of history, with the throne passing from father to son over and over again.

- Eventually, the Assyrians created an empire on a huge scale. It set the basic model for how an empire should be run. All later ancient empires in the Near East and Mediterranean regions—the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans—all learned from the Assyrians.

- The Assyrians called their country Assur. Their capital city was also known as Assur. The god of the city and land of Assur was also named Assur. The god Assur wasn't a cosmic god; he was physically present in the city of Assur as the rock formation on top of which his temple was built, towering above the river.

- The people of Assur absolutely believed in the power and supremacy of their god. They still worshiped the whole pantheon of Mesopotamian of gods, but in their minds, Assur—not Enlil—was the most powerful of the gods. In any event, to make things a little less confusing, scholars now refer to their country as Assyria rather than Assur.

THE LANDS

- The heartland of Assyria—that is, the area that always remained subject to this long dynasty of kings—was mostly located along the Tigris River. Its southern edge was in the area around the city of Assur. Assur remained the religious capital of Assyria even after the political capital was moved farther north up the Tigris River, first to the city of Kalhu and ultimately to Nineveh.

- Nineveh was next to present-day Mosul, and north of Assur by about 60 miles. It marked the northern edge of the heartland. In the east, closer to the Zagros Mountains, was the city of Arbela, about 60 miles northeast from Assur and 50 miles east of Nineveh. People who lived anywhere in this triangle at any time through the 7th century BCE were in the land of Assyria.

- The lands beyond the triangle were sometimes under the control of other kingdoms, but there was no obvious boundary to Assyria. It didn't have a coastline and wasn't right next to a mountain range, so the Assyrian kings always felt vulnerable to attack.

PERIODS OF ASSYRIA

- The era of the Assyrian kingdom that thrived during the late second millennium BCE is known as the Middle Assyrian period. It was at its height from around 1365 to 1076 BCE. This was around 500 years after the end of the Old Assyrian period, when Assyrian merchants traded and set up colonies in what is now Turkey. That period lasted from around 1974 to 1807 BCE.

- The Middle Assyrian period is also distinct from the later Neo-Assyrian period, which lasted from around 911 to 610 BCE, when the Assyrians built a truly vast empire. The Middle Assyrian kings managed to expand their kingdom all the way to the Euphrates River in the west. In a way, the Middle Assyrian kings were the ones who created the mold for later rulers to follow.

- The Middle Assyrian army had a large infantry and a smaller force of chariots. Most of the soldiers were Assyrian farmers who were free to fight only about three months a year. This was during the summer, between the harvest and the sowing season. That changed in later centuries, when kings eventually created a standing army. The army's organization stayed much the same over time, with divisions of 10, 50, and 100 men.

- Middle Assyrian military leaders also came up with the idea of deporting conquered peoples from one part of the empire to another. Although this was probably incredibly unpopular with the people being deported, it wasn't a death march. The deportees were given shoes and provisions, and, when they arrived at their destinations, they were also given land. Deportation was a way to settle people in under-populated parts of the empire that could be opened up for farming.

- It was also a benefit, in the kings' minds, to integrate the population so that the newly conquered peoples might begin to think of themselves as Assyrian. Of course, these peoples were less likely to rebel if they were busy making new lives for themselves far away from their original homelands.

TRACKING EVENTS

- The Assyrian kings didn't name the years of their reigns after their glorious successes, as the southern Mesopotamian kings had done for centuries. Instead, each year was named for an official, called a *limmu*. The man who held the post of limmu during the year had the whole year named after him. Scholars use these year names to figure out when events happened.

- Assyrian lists of limmu names and lists of kings have helped historians count backward from known dates, so that they can assign BCE dates to historical events. From the 12th century BCE onward, historians can be pretty sure that the dates are correct for the main Mesopotamian kingdoms. Dates before that are less certain.

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD

- The end of the Middle Assyrian period was a turbulent time. Between 1200 and 1100 BCE, the kingdom of Hatti collapsed, Egypt went into decline, and Assyria suffered, too. Many lands that had been ruled by the Middle Assyrian kings gained their independence, and Assyria shrank back to its heartland. However, the Assyrian people didn't forget about their glorious past.

- In the late 10th century BCE, an Assyrian king named Adad-nirari II came to the throne. Throughout his reign, he set about reconquering the lands in Syria that Assyria had lost control of more than 200 years before. Every summer, his troops went off on campaign to fight, and raid, and conquer.

- If a land rebelled against him, then the troops would show up again and put down the rebellion. Earlier Mesopotamian kings fought only when they needed to. Adad-nirari II started the tradition of campaigning every single year. Adad-nirari II began the period when Assyria was its most powerful—the Neo-Assyrian period. It lasted for almost exactly 30 years.

ASHURNASIRPAL II

- Adad-ninari's grandson was one of the most influential of all Assyrian kings. His name was Ashurnasirpal II, and he ruled from 883 to 859 BCE. Ashurnasirpal II moved the capital city from Assur up the Tigris to Kalhu, which is better known by its modern name of Nimrud. He didn't move the temple of Assur; its home in the city of Assur was sacred. Regardless, the Assyrian government never returned to Assur after the reign of Ashurnasirpal II.

- Assyrian architects, builders, and sculptors worked for 15 years to transform Kalhu into the most impressive city anyone could imagine. A new city wall enclosed almost 900 acres. This urban center had nine new temples, along with a giant pyramid-shaped stepped tower—the city's ziggurat—and several palaces. In the center of the city, Ashurnasirpal had his workers construct a new citadel. In an inscription, he claimed the foundations underneath it were very deep: 120 layers of brick.

- The city's crowning achievement was the king's palace, which is known today as the Northwest Palace. It covered at least seven acres. Ashurnasirpal came up with a plan for decorating the walls of his palace that surpassed all earlier attempts. In the public areas of the palace, all the brick walls were faced with giant stone panels made of a type of local gypsum.

- Each panel was as much as 14 feet in length and 8 feet high. Quarrying this stone and getting it into place would have been quite a feat. Many of the panels weigh a ton each. The panels were then decorated with elaborately detailed relief sculptures that were brightly painted. Unfortunately, the paint is long gone; only tiny fragments of it survive.

- Some of the relief sculptures show the king being protected by the gods. Other reliefs showed life-sized images of people bringing tribute to the king. These lined the palace walls near where actual dignitaries would have walked, bringing their own gifts.

- There are many scenes of the king hunting lions and of the king and his army fighting enemies. These progress like a graphic novel, from one panel to the next. A visitor to the palace could follow what happened in a war by walking along beside the sculptures.

THE STANDARD INSCRIPTION

- Across every stone panel, there's a cuneiform inscription. This is almost always the same one. It's known as Ashurnasirpal's Standard Inscription. It proclaims the king's greatness, the support he had from the gods, and the victories he achieved in battle.

- When his palace was complete, Ashurnasirpal threw a huge party to celebrate. He invited almost 70,000 people from across Assyria and from lands beyond the empire. His guests were given food, beer, and wine, and they were entertained for 10 days. Among the guests, 16,000 were citizens of Kalhu itself. These people had all moved there from around the empire.

- Meanwhile, the Assyrian Empire had been expanding. The Standard Inscription, written all over the palace, describes how this was achieved. The relief sculptures show details of tactics that the Assyrian military used for battles and sieges.

- The language Ashurnasirpal II used to describe himself was very different from that of some of the earlier Mesopotamian kings. He wasn't a kind shepherd to his subjects like the 18th-century-BCE Babylonian king Hammurabi. He didn't try to make sure that weak people were protected from strong people like the 22nd-century-BCE Sumerian king Ur-Namma.

- Here's what Ashurnasirpal said about himself: He had "no rival among the princes of the four quarters" and he was "a strong male who treads upon the necks of his foes, trampler of all enemies, he who smashes the forces of the rebellious."

ASSYRIAN MIGHT

- Ashurnasirpal's successors followed this same model. They also described themselves as tramplers, smashers, and subduers. They increased the Assyrian military might. Soon, they had standing armies that were available to campaign year-round. They recruited men with military expertise from across the empire, so that normal Assyrian farmers weren't called up to serve any more (though they still had to work on imperial building projects).

- In a way, the army became a reflection of the empire. The men spoke different languages and carried different local types of weapons and armor. Military divisions were stationed near the borders, ready to campaign at any time.

- Fighting techniques improved as well. For hundreds of years, the Assyrian army had consisted of foot soldiers and chariot soldiers. Now, the Assyrians added cavalry. The chariots got bigger and bigger, until four horses were needed to pull each one. Up to four men rode in each.

- After Ashurnasirpal, later Neo-Assyrian kings also decorated the walls of their palaces with relief sculptures of military campaigns. The reliefs often show attacks on cities. The warriors had battering rams that they could thrust against gates. The Assyrian attackers also set up siege towers. They tunneled under city walls or sapped the walls to weaken them. They rained arrows and threw flaming torches.

- However, sieges were long, and tough, and expensive, so the generals often tried to negotiate with the people of a rebellious city. If diplomacy didn't work, the Assyrians would terrify citizens by impaling prisoners on stakes, in public view. If those efforts didn't work, Assyrian soldiers were willing to spend months camped around a city, until the people inside were starving and sick.

REBELLIONS, TERROR, AND LIFE

- The Assyrian army was quite successful, but it wouldn't have been very popular. People in the provinces had to pay taxes and tribute. They had to fight for the Assyrian army, and they would have heard about the brutal ways the army treated rebels. In fact, the people who were subject to Assyria stood almost no chance of being able to rebel, and gain their independence.

- The Israelites tried to break free of the empire, but their rebellions were put down repeatedly. Eventually, according to the Bible, most of the Israelites were deported to other parts of the empire. The Judeans saw the Assyrians as harsh oppressors.

- The whole idea of how to maintain an empire was now very different than it had been in earlier times. Kings like Hammurabi, Shamshi-Adad, and Tushratta hadn't tried to terrify their subjects into submission. The Assyrians used terror frequently.

However, in spite of the Assyrians' reputation for brutality, it was entirely possible for someone to live a happy life under Assyrian rule. Thousands of everyday documents from this era show that. The Assyrians developed a form of empire that was stable and successful, even though their tactics for ruling it are shocking today.

READINGS

- Artzi, "The Rise of the Middle-Assyrian Kingdom."
- Bahrani, "Kassite and Assyrian Art at the End of the Bronze Age."
- Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum*.
- Curtis et al., eds., *Art and Empire*.
- Garfinkle, "The Assyrians."
- Lamprichs, "Aššur."
- Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*.
- Radner, *Ancient Assyria, A Very Short Introduction*.
- "Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period," http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/
- Scurlock, "Neo-Assyrian Battle Tactics."

QUESTIONS

- How might the structure and tactics of the Assyrian army have contributed to their success in empire building?
- What might be some difficulties in reconstructing the chronology of ancient Near Eastern history? Why is chronology so important?
- What might have been the logic behind the palace wall decorations in Kalhu?

21

ASHURBANIPAL'S LIBRARY AND *GILGAMESH*

One of the last great kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire was Ashurbanipal, who ruled from 668 to around 630 BCE. He was militaristic, but Ashurbanipal was also intellectual. He collected vast numbers of literary and religious works and organized them in a number of rooms in his palace at Nineveh, in the northern part of modern-day Iraq. This collection is considered to be one of the earliest libraries ever created. Since the documents were written on clay tablets, they survived for more than 2,500 years. This lecture looks at the contents of Ashurbanipal's library and a particularly important item found there, a copy of the poem known as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. When the library was rediscovered—during mid-19th-century excavations—the writings within provided modern scholars with an extraordinary window into the intellectual world of the Neo-Assyrians.

THE LIBRARY

- Ashurbanipal was deeply interested in scholarly learning. As a result, he was singularly focused on the creation of his library. It was a collection of written works for the king's use and for his court. Note that it didn't include much of what one might expect in a library, like works about history, current events, or scientific discoveries.

- Still, the shelves of Ashurbanipal's library were lined with tablets representing the most advanced knowledge at the time—knowledge useful to the king. There were tablets with long lists of words, used by scribes in school, and copies of royal inscriptions from the past. There were rituals and hymns, some of them in the dead language of Sumerian. There were texts describing medical conditions and the ways to treat them.

- Also present were thousands of omen texts, which listed a particular unusual event or sign and explained what supposedly would happen as a result of that sign. Only a few of the texts were what we would recognize as literary—stories about heroes and gods.

DISCOVERY

- The discovery of Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh in the 1850s created front-page headlines once its contents began to be revealed. The two archaeologists who excavated there were Hormuzd Rassam and Austen Henry Layard. Rassam was born in Iraq and educated at Oxford. Layard was a British lawyer, archaeologist, and diplomat.

- Layard, described the discovery of the library this way: "To the height of a foot or more from the floor [the rooms] were entirely filled with [cuneiform documents]; some entire, but the greater part broken into many fragments."

- Unfortunately, the archaeologists didn't really know what to do with so many cuneiform tablets. It was the first time that such a large collection of tablets had been uncovered, and the archaeologists didn't think to make notes of which ones were found in each location. They put the tablets in boxes and shipped them back to the British Museum. In the process, the library tablets got mixed up with others that had been found in the palaces at Nineveh.

- Once the tablets arrived in the British Museum, scholars set to work as if on a jigsaw puzzle—finding broken fragments that fit together and reconstructing the tablets. This work continues today. They also began to translate them. Cuneiform had only recently been deciphered, and there was—and still is—a lot of interest in what was written on these tablets.

- One man who made a big contribution to this effort was a British Assyriologist named George Smith. In December 1872—about 20 years after Ashurbanipal's library was re-discovered—George Smith addressed the Society of Biblical Archaeology at the British Museum. He had astounding news: While working on mythological texts from Nineveh, he'd found 80 fragments from a single long poem, written on 11 tablets.

- On tablet number 11, he discovered an account of a flood that was almost identical to the one in the Bible. Although the flood story got most of the press at the time, it was part of the remarkable poem called the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The poem is very long. Modern translations cover at least 40 pages. It's also the best-known work of literature from Mesopotamia. Researchers now have many more copies of it from other ancient sites, but it was first identified in the library at Nineveh.

THE *EPIC OF GILGAMESH*

- The epic's author was a man named Sin-leqe-unninni, who lived around 1200 BCE. Like the later Greek poet Homer, Sin-leqe-unninni took legends that had been passed down orally along with some earlier written versions of the epic. He rewrote them and put them together into a literary masterpiece. His work was copied over and over again and ended up in Ashurbanipal's library some 500 years later.

- Gilgamesh probably was a real king, who would have lived almost 2,000 years before Ashurbanipal. No evidence of him survives from his own time, but some people mentioned as being with Gilgamesh in various tales were real, so he probably was, too.

- The epic wasn't the only literary work to mention Gilgamesh. Already, in older stories, he was something of a superhero. They said that he was victorious over not just human enemies but monsters as well. He was thought to have had some divine blood. He even had conversations with gods, but he was still fundamentally seen as human. In early versions, his story had nothing to do with a flood.

- The Mesopotamians had told tales about a great flood, though, which they thought had happened tens of thousands of years in the past. The Mesopotamians' flood story was always similar to the one in the Bible. In earlier versions, the hero of the tale didn't always have the same name. Sometimes he was Atrahasis. Sometimes he was Ziusudra. By the time the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was written, he was named Utnapishtim.

- Sin-leqe-unninni took the Gilgamesh stories and the flood story, and combined them into a single epic. His hero, Gilgamesh, was haunted by one of the great human dilemmas. He realized that he was going to die, and he didn't want to. Gilgamesh also had plenty of flaws. He was brash and arrogant, and the people he ruled—in the city of Uruk, in southern Mesopotamia—were tired of him.

ENKIDU AND GILGAMESH

- At the beginning of the story, the citizens of Uruk ask the gods for relief from his demands, and the gods comply. They create a man who would be a match for the king. His name is Enkidu. After fighting to a draw with Gilgamesh, Enkidu becomes the king's close friend, and they go off together on further adventures.

- The two companions imagine that they will make names for themselves and gain immortality. They decide to do this by defeating a ferocious creature named Humbaba, drawing the attention of the gods.

- After a long battle, the heroes manage to defeat Humbaba. This makes the gods take notice. Gilgamesh even attracts the attentions of the goddess Ishtar, who was known for her passions. However, Gilgamesh rejects her.

- Ishtar is furious about Gilgamesh's rejection. She asks her father, the god Anu, to send a creature called the Bull of Heaven to punish Gilgamesh. Again, Gilgamesh and Enkidu prevail and are able to kill the Bull of Heaven. They cut out its heart and take it to the sun god. Now, Ishtar is even madder than before.

- The two heroes have become too self-confident. At this point, Sin-leqe-unninni changes the mood of his story, and shows how Gilgamesh and Enkidu will be punished for their hubris. Enkidu wakes up one morning, and tells Gilgamesh about a disturbing dream he's had. It was a vision of the afterlife, which he describes as dull and unpleasant.

- The Mesopotamians believed that dreams came from the gods, so clearly Enkidu has received a premonition of his own death. Sure enough, he grows weaker and sicker, and a few days later he dies. Gilgamesh is devastated, not only because his friend is dead, but also because it's apparent he can suffer the same fate.

- Still, Gilgamesh is undeterred. He has a plan. There's one mortal man he's heard of who has managed to live forever. If Gilgamesh can find this man, he will learn the secret of immortality. The man is Utnapishtim, the hero from the story of the flood.

THE FLOOD

- Eventually a woman who's a tavern keeper and a man who ferries people on boats help Gilgamesh find the distant land where Utnapishtim lives with his wife. This brings the story to the 11th tablet and the story of the flood. Although this had previously been a completely separate story, Sin-leqe-unninni now brings it into the epic as part of Gilgamesh's search for eternal life.

- Gilgamesh disappears from the narrative at this point, and Utnapishtim becomes the storyteller. The flood tale is told in his words; it's about how he survived in his boat. At the end—quite unlike the story of Noah—the god who'd caused the flood in the first place decides to give eternal life to Utnapishtim and his wife.

- Gilgamesh has heard this whole story, but how is it supposed to help him? Another flood isn't about to happen. Gilgamesh can't duplicate Utnapishtim's experience. In fact, he can't even stay awake for more than a day. Utnapishtim tests him, and Gilgamesh fails. If he can't keep sleep away, how can he possibly defeat death?

- Gilgamesh is disconsolate. After all that searching, he has nothing to show for it. He says to the central character of this epic narrative:

  O Utnapishtim, what should I do and where should I go?

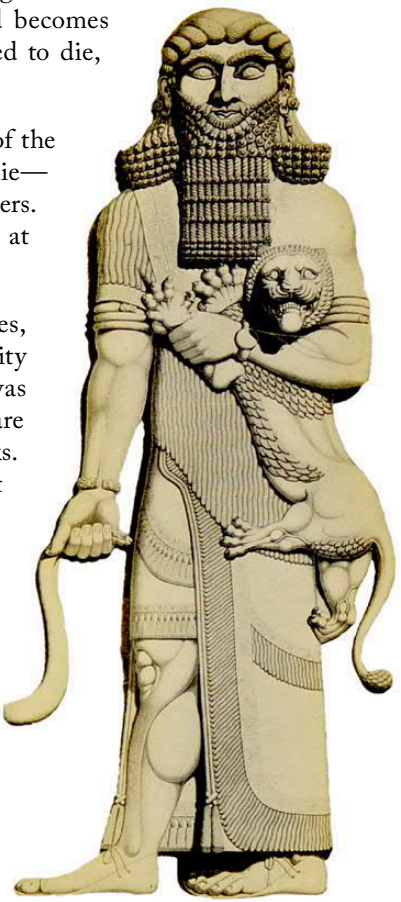
  A thief has taken hold of my flesh!

  For there in my bed-chamber Death does abide,

  And wherever I turn, there too will be death.

- Utnapishtim then presents Gilgamesh with an incredible gift—directions for finding a plant that will make him young again: the Plant of Heartbeat. Gilgamesh dives into the ocean to get the plant.

- However, Gilgamesh is careless. Before eating the plant, he leaves it by a pond while bathing. It's stolen by a snake, which sheds its skin and becomes young, while Gilgamesh is condemned to die, just as before.



- This seems like a tragedy. The moral of the story seems to be that everyone will die—even a hero who could kill divine monsters. However, there's a note of optimism at the end.

- Gilgamesh describes the city he rules, Uruk, and apparently with pride. His city was founded by the gods, and it was a wonder to behold—three and half square miles in extent and made of baked bricks. In Gilgamesh's time, it was the largest and most modern city on the planet. In making this speech, Gilgamesh seems to have reconciled himself to his earthly and mortal existence as a king of an impressive kingdom. He can stop wandering the earth, looking for immortality.

OTHER TEXTS

- King Ashurbanipal kept more than one copy of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in his library, but most of the library texts were more practical. The majority of them were records of omens and divination. When almost anything happened in the night sky—such as an eclipse of the moon—scholars consulted the omen texts to find out what this portended.

- By the time of Ashurbanipal, priests had kept accurate diaries of the movements of planets and stars for about a century. They were even able to predict when eclipses would take place (though not where they would be observed), and where the planets would appear in the sky. The Mesopotamians believed that the gods were sending messages that way.

- If the king wanted an answer to a particular question, he could ask his diviners to practice extispicy. This was figuring out the will of the gods by reading the internal organs of sacrificed sheep and goats.

- The diviners of Mesopotamia couldn't just make things up. Their discoveries were believed to be predictable and scientific. They had to look up old reference tablets to find out what had happened in the past when the same signs had been observed. Priests and officials often cited omens and oracles when they wrote to the king. It's quite possible that they consulted the royal library when they did so.

- Some tablets in the library had belonged to Ashurbanipal's father and grandfather. Others were copied in Nineveh by scribes employed by Ashurbanipal himself. Some were copied from tablets seized in Babylonia, or they were written by Babylonian scribes who had been captured. Ashurbanipal also commissioned scribes in other cities to copy texts and send them to him.

- Assyrians were interested in big questions of human existence. They systematically collected and organized knowledge, and made accurate astronomical observations. Their endeavors moved people a step closer to what we now know as philosophy and science. As king, Ashurbanipal seems to have been determined to have access to as much written knowledge as he possibly could—even while he also tried to rule according to the wishes of the gods.

READINGS

- Frahm, "Royal Hermeneutics."
- Frame and George, "The Royal Libraries of Nineveh."
- George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.
- Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC*.
- Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*.
- Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*.
- Livingstone, "Ashurbanipal: Literate or Not?"
- Pedersen, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East*.
- Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria.*
- Robson, "Reading the Libraries of Assyria and Babylonia."
- Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*.
- Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*.
- Zamazalová, "The Education of Neo-Assyrian Princes."

QUESTIONS

- Why and how did Ashurbanipal collect so many written works for his palace library?
- What similarities do you see between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and later epic poems and hero stories? What might account for these similarities?

22

NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, WARFARE, AND COLLAPSE

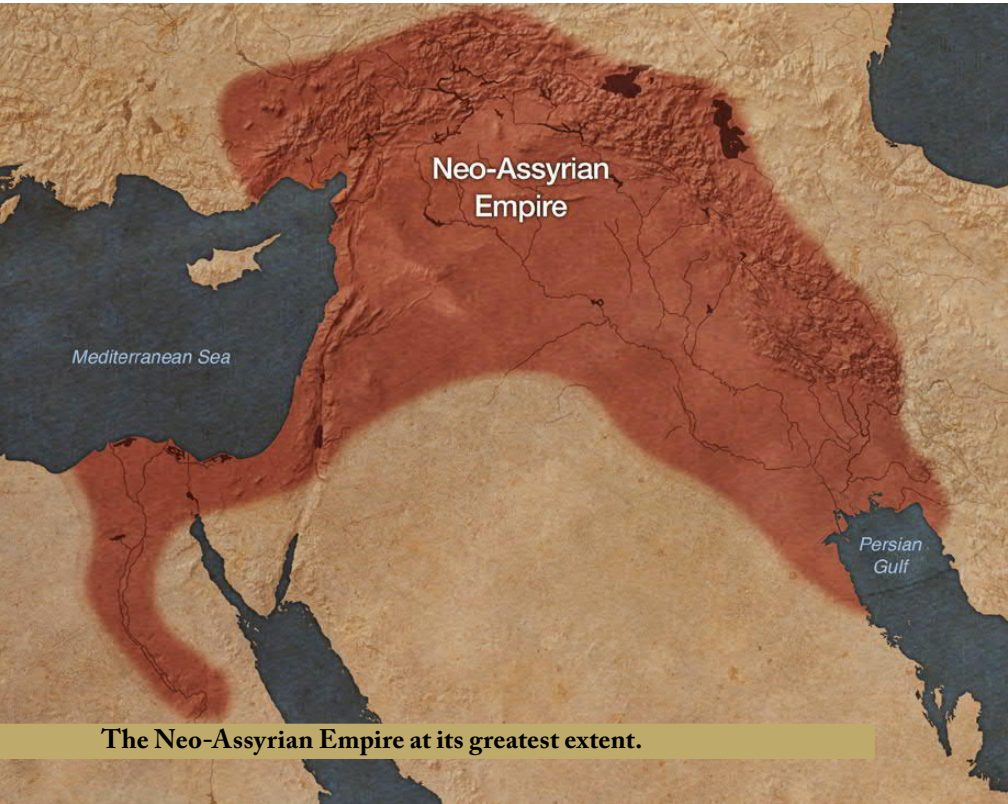
King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria might originally have been a rebel, or he might have been someone who suppressed rebels who were trying to usurp the legitimate dynasty. Either way, he hadn't been directly in line for the throne, and he benefited from a rebellion that broke out in the mid-8th century BCE. This chaotic time ultimately resulted in the legitimate king being deposed, and Tiglath-Pileser III taking the throne.

By this time, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the biggest empire the world had ever known. It extended across Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Levant, and included parts of Anatolia as well. However, the imperial structure was in some disarray. It had been set up more than a century earlier by one of Tiglath-Pileser's predecessors—King Ashurnasirpal II—and it now badly needed a reboot. This lecture looks at that reboot and subsequent events.

REBELLIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

- By the mid-8th century BCE, provincial governors had become quite independent, and rebellions had been occurring in many places. Once Tiglath-Pileser III took power, he instigated many changes, and the Assyrian administration finally mastered the running of an empire.

- The new king redrew the boundaries of provinces, making them smaller. His governors, who were now less powerful, depended on him for their positions. The king also created a fast system of communication, so that messages were passed between couriers riding on horseback. The messenger and his horse could rest after a day of riding, but the message continued on with a new carrier, so the messenger never had to pause.



The Neo-Assyrian Empire at its greatest extent.

- Tiglath-Pileser III also expanded the empire into areas that had never been subject to Assyria before. And he forced these lands to pay tribute. The economies of these vassal states were streamlined so that resources were used efficiently.

- With these reforms during the mid-8th-century BCE, the Assyrian Empire reached a period when it was at the height of its power. Then, only 135 years after Tiglath-Pileser III came to power, the empire fell.

BABYLONIA

- One of the foreign lands that Tiglath-Pileser took control of was Babylonia. The Babylonians didn't like being ruled by Assyria. They had been a great power for such a long time—more than 1,000 years by the time of Tiglath-Pileser—that they didn't think much of being subject to outsiders.

- From the time that Tiglath-Pileser took over, the Babylonian throne changed hands 20 times in 100 years. That's an average reign of just five years. Plus, the Babylonians had more than just the Assyrians to worry about. A group of people in the far south, called the Chaldeans, also often tried to take over Babylon.

SENNACHERIB

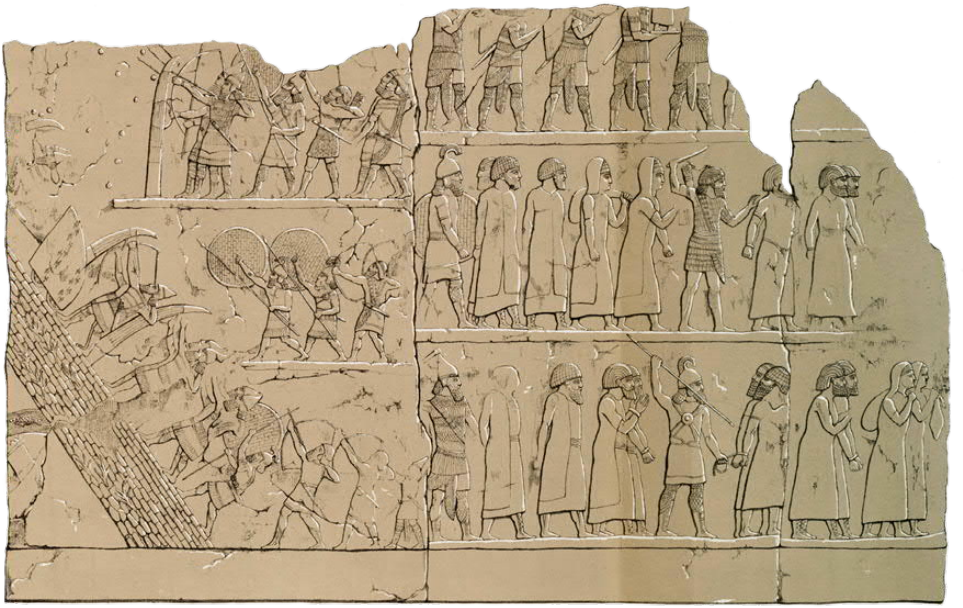
- Events came to a head during the reign of a king named Sennacherib, who ruled Assyria from 704 to 681 BCE. Although Sennacherib started out ruling Babylonia directly, the Babylonians might never have viewed him as legitimate.

- After repeated power struggles, in 690 BCE, Sennacherib took a huge army and attacked the capital city of Babylon. When the Babylonians didn't give up, the Assyrians set up a siege around the city.

- In 689 Sennacherib's forces entered Babylon. Assyrians destroyed temples, houses, and palaces, and they redirected the river so that water swamped parts of the city. They even took the statue of the god Marduk away from Babylon. This wasn't just seen as a statue. It was the god himself.

- The Babylonians saw the Assyrians' attack on the temples as blasphemy. Even some Assyrians would have worried; they worshiped Babylonian gods too. Soon after this, the Assyrians began rebuilding the city of Babylon, but the relationship between the two kingdoms was damaged. The Elamites were now aligned against Assyria, as well.

- Sennacherib had accomplishments besides invading. He'd moved the capital to the ancient city of Nineveh, near the modern city of Mosul, and sponsored a massive building program there, doubling the size of the city. Nineveh was absolutely enormous for an ancient city. It covered about 1,750 acres, and its population might have been as much as 230,000.



ESARHADDON

- In 681 BCE, Sennacherib was assassinated by one of his sons. The prince who took over the throne wasn't one of the deceased king's oldest sons, and he wasn't one of the assassins, either. He was the son of one of Sennacherib's favorite wives, Naqia, and he'd been named crown prince before the assassination.

- His name was Esarhaddon, and he had to fight his brother for the throne in a brief civil war, with the Assyrian army divided against itself. It was a foretaste of things to come. In the coming decades, civil wars in Assyria would become more frequent.

- Esarhaddon decided to expand his empire to its largest extent yet by conquering Egypt. Through thousands of years of civilization up to this time, Egypt had been one of the richest places in the world. It had abundant natural resources, including gold—which everyone else in the region wanted—and its fields produced vast amounts of grain.

- The Assyrians controlled much of the Levant already. Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BCE, and many of its people had been deported across the empire. This is recorded in the Bible as well as in the Assyrian records. However, the Assyrians' attempt to bring Egypt into the empire didn't go well.

- The first conquest, in 671, was successful, and Esarhaddon gave new Assyrian names to the Egyptian cities. The Assyrians sacked the northern capital city of Memphis, and a northern Egyptian ruler took on the role of being a vassal to Assyria. The southern part of Egypt wasn't happy with the arrangement, and soon after Esarhaddon left, there were rebellions.

- Esarhaddon and the Assyrian army headed back to Egypt in 669. At this point, Esarhaddon became ill and died en route. The Assyrians didn't keep going, and Egypt soon left the empire. Perhaps it was just too far away for the Assyrians to control.

- Although the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire was still 60 years in the future, seeds of its failure were sown. The Egyptian campaigns had been expensive. More importantly, they had been unsuccessful. Assyria had always seemed unstoppable before this. The Egyptian achievement in breaking away must have given hope to some people in the various provinces that perhaps they, too, might be able to successfully rebel.

UNHAPPINESS ELSEWHERE

- Meanwhile, the lands of Babylonia and Elam were unhappy with their situation. They had been attacked brutally by the Assyrian army in Sennacherib's time. Even though Esarhaddon spent a lot of wealth and manpower in rebuilding Babylon, the Assyrians still had enemies there. Furthermore, the civil war between princes when Esarhaddon took over had set a precedent.

- In planning his own succession, Esarhaddon made one of his sons, Ashurbanipal, crown prince. Another son, Shamash-shuma-ukin, was made the viceroy in Babylon. When Esarhaddon died, Ashurbanipal became king of Assyria. Shamash-shuma-ukin was king of Babylonia, but in a subordinate role to his brother.

- For 17 years, this system worked quite well. During this time, Ashurbanipal built up his library at Nineveh and attended to other issues in the northern parts of the empire. Even the Elamites were at peace with Assyria. However, in 653 BCE, Ashurbanipal went to war against his eastern neighbors and was victorious.

- A relief sculpture in his palace shows the king in a garden, relaxing on a couch. His wife is next to him, and they're both having a drink. Servants fan them, and birds are flying overhead. It all looks very tranquil except for a decapitated head hanging in the tree next to them. That head belonged to the Elamite king.

- A year after the war, the Assyrian king of Babylon, Shamash-shuma-ukin, launched a rebellion against his brother Ashurbanipal. The Elamites helped. Civil war erupted again, ending with Ashurbanipal's troops besieging Babylon for two years.

- Babylon finally fell in 648, and Shamash-shuma-ukin died. At this point, there's a problem: The records begin to dry up. Scholars don't even know the date of the end of Ashurbanipal's reign. It was probably around 630 BCE.

BABYLON AND THE MEDES

- In 612 BCE, 18 years later, Nineveh was conquered by a coalition of Babylonians and a people from Persia called the Medes. There aren't any Assyrian records to tell scholars what happened. The Babylonian sources aren't very helpful, either. The Medes seem to come out of nowhere.

- It does seem as though peace was restored after Ashurbanipal triumphed in the war against his brother. However, once Ashurbanipal died, yet another civil war erupted between two princes who both wanted to rule Assyria. There was a struggle for the throne in Babylonia as well. This was between two Babylonians, and the man who won was named Nabopolassar. He wasn't a member of the previous royal family.

- In Assyria, the prince who was victorious was Sin-shar-ishkun, a son of Ashurbanipal. Sin-shar-ishkun and Nabopolassar went to war against one another. By now, these civil wars and wars between Assyria and Babylonia had been going on for more than 100 years.

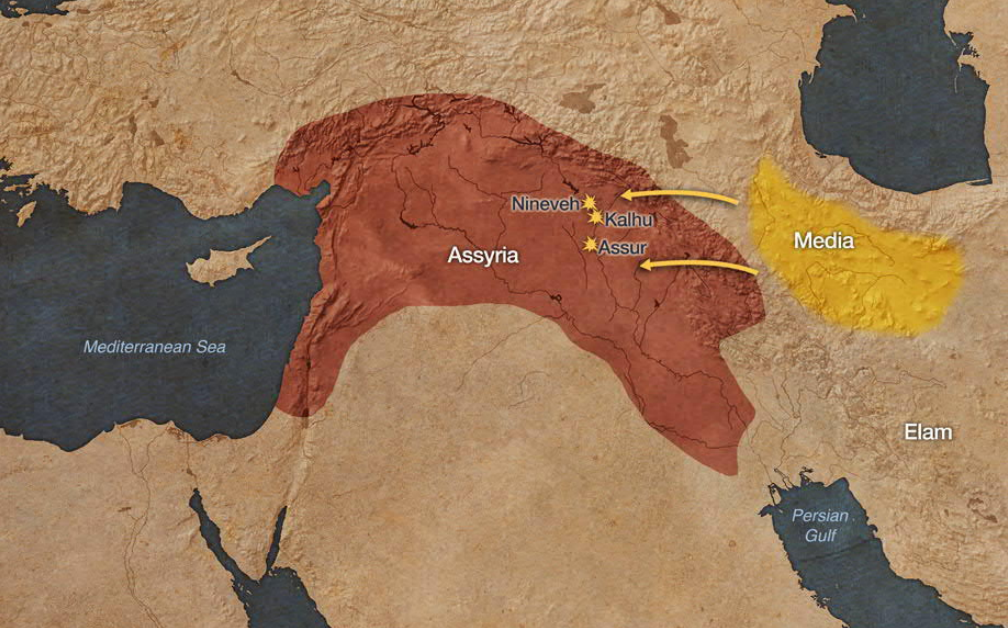
WAR IN ASSYRIA

- In all this time, whenever Babylonia and Assyria had been at war, the battles had always taken place in Babylonia. The Assyrian heartland hadn't been threatened. Eventually, the Assyrians had always won.

- However, in 617 BCE, Nabopolassar moved his army north up the Euphrates. He didn't threaten the Assyrian heartland yet, but he was able to conquer regions Assyria controlled in the west of the empire. For the Assyrians, this was even worse than losing Egypt because Egypt had only been under Assyrian control for a very short time. In comparison, the region on the Euphrates had been in the empire for centuries.

- Three years later, the Medes—from what is now Iran—went on the offensive in the Assyrian heartland. They attacked the big cities—Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh—and they conquered Assur, which had been the religious capital of Assyria for more than 1,000 years. The effect on the Assyrians was probably devastating.

- The Medes then joined forces with the Babylonians and the Elamites, and kept pushing into Assyria. Two diplomatic letters survive from this time, written by Sin-shar-ishkun of Assyria and Nabopolassar of Babylon. They show that the Assyrians were in a very bad position.



- Nineveh fell in 612 BCE, after a siege of only three months. The Assyrian army held on and made its last stand in the Syrian city of Harran three years after Nineveh fell. Regardless, the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire is usually dated to 612 BCE, with the destruction of Nineveh.

- The way the conquerors treated Assyria was horrific. Cities across the heartland were looted, burned, and leveled. Populations were killed, or they fled, and most cities weren't reoccupied for decades, if ever. That includes the great capital cities of Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh. It was much worse than the way the Assyrians had treated Babylon in the time of Sennacherib.

REASONS FOR THE FALL

- Sarah Melville, a Clarkson University scholar who studies this period, has made a new interpretation of this. She notes that the Babylonian records state that the devastation in Assyria wasn't the fault of the Babylonians. Rather, it was done by the Medes. The Babylonians claimed that they were shocked by how the Medes had treated the Assyrians.

- This might have been true. The Babylonians and Assyrians shared the same culture, religion, and language. They had a long and complicated relationship, but they respected one another. Melville believes they also shared some rules about combat and about treatment of defeated enemies. These rules wouldn't have included destroying everything in sight. The Medes, however, didn't share their culture and didn't follow the Mesopotamian rules.

- As for why Assyria fell, Melville argues that the Assyrians simply weren't prepared to fight defensively. After centuries of being on the offensive, they made mistakes. They didn't switch to fighting defensively until it was too late. Their cities weren't designed for the change in tactics. Those wide city gates hadn't been built to keep a foreign army out.

- There were other reasons for the fall of Assyria. The Assyrians were unpopular with many of their subjects, and the long history of Assyrian efforts to control Babylonia gave the Babylonians a good reason to go on the attack.

- It also looks as though the Assyrian government was spending much more than it was taking in by this time. Expensive undertakings like the attempt to conquer Egypt and all the civil wars had sucked up a lot of wealth. It even looks as though the population was shrinking, which would have reduced tribute and taxes.

- The very fact that Assyria had started losing wars might also have worsened morale. As long as the Assyrians were always victorious, people probably believed that the god Assur simply couldn't be defeated.

- In the end, the Assyrian Empire wasn't mourned much. Some writers in the Bible were obviously thrilled to see it fall. People in other lands might have said similar things, but most of those lands that had been subject to Assyria didn't suddenly gain their independence. The beneficiary of the fall of Assyria ended up being Babylonia.

Nabopolassar—the Babylonian king—took control of much of the former Assyrian Empire. He and later rulers of the Neo-Babylonian Empire were the last indigenous rulers of Mesopotamia for hundreds of years.

READINGS

- Brinkman et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 3, part 2.
- Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*.
- Dalley, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved."
- Fuchs, "Assyria at War."
- Melville, "The Last Campaign, the Assyrian Way of War, and the Collapse of the Empire."
- Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II*.
- Stronach and Lumsden, "UC Berkeley's Excavations at Nineveh."
- Ur, Jason. "Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals."
- Van De Mieroop, "Revenge, Assyrian Style."
- Waters, "Elam, Assyria, and Babylonia in the Early First Millennium BC."

QUESTIONS

- How was Tiglath-Pileser III able to strengthen the empire of Assyria?
- Why do you think the Assyrians and Babylonians had such a complicated and contentious relationship at this time?
- What do you find convincing about the various theories for the fall of the Assyrian Empire?

23

BABYLON AND THE NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL

For a Neo-Babylonian king to be considered legitimate in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, he had to go through a ritual called "taking the hand of Marduk." Marduk was the patron god of the city of Babylon. In this ritual, the king apparently held the hand of the sacred statue of Marduk while standing next to it. This showed that the god and the king ruled together. This shows that Babylonian rituals—the subject of this lecture—were quite important.

MARDUK

- The god Marduk and his wife Sarpanitum lived in a vast temple called the Esagil, at the center of Babylon. However, in 689 BCE—when invading Assyrians sacked Babylon—the troops of the Assyrian king Sennacherib removed the statue of Marduk and took it to Assyria. Marduk wasn't returned home until 668 BCE. Babylon was a city without a god for 21 years.

- Babylonians felt that the whole orderly functioning of the universe was at risk when Marduk was away. In order to understand all of this, it helps to know about the Babylonian new year's festival, called the Akitu festival. It was the big religious event of the Babylonian year and lasted for 12 days, but it could take place only when Marduk and the Babylonian king were both in town.

- The kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which lasted from 912 to 612 BCE, were high priests of the god Assur—heads of the government and of the religion. Assur was the great god of the Assyrian pantheon, equivalent to Marduk in Babylonia.

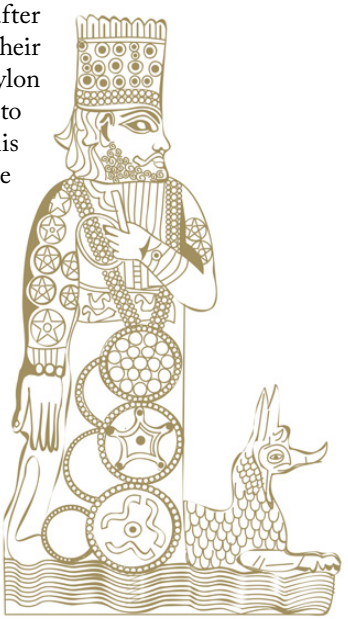
THE FESTIVAL

- In Babylonia, the king wasn't a priest, but he still had a vital role to play in the Akitu festival. No one else could replace him. Most of the events of the festival were kept secret—Babylonian citizens weren't directly involved—but they trusted that the proper ceremonies were taking place.

- On the first days—deep in the most sacred halls of the Esagil temple—priests purified themselves, recited prayers, and sang hymns to Marduk and Sarpanitum while standing right in front of their statues.

- A crucial moment of the Akitu festival was when the high priest recited out loud the entire text of the Babylonian creation epic. This was on the third day of the festival. The priest stood alone in the presence of the god, reminding him—by reciting the epic—of the history of the world, Marduk's greatness, and his role in maintaining cosmic order.

- In a Babylonian creation story, Marduk, after ending a period of chaos, gave separate gods their various realms. They built the city of Babylon and then had a banquet. They swore an oath to support Marduk. The very act of reciting this story to the statue of Marduk helped restore order to the universe. Doing so every new year assured that chaos wouldn't sneak in.



THE RITUAL

- The Akitu festival continued after the creation epic was recited. More purifications took place, more prayers were recited, and hymns were sung. Then, a really strange ritual took place.

- The king of Babylonia washed his hands and came to the temple of Marduk, where he was greeted by the high priest. Only the two of them were present for this very important part of the festival.

- The priest was required to take away the king's scepter, circle, and sword, and put them on a chair in front of the god. These were the symbols of kingship. Then, the priest came back to the room where the king was waiting and struck him on the cheek. After that, the priest dragged the king into the holy room where Marduk's statue was located.

- Next, the king bowed on the ground, groveling in front of the god. He swore an oath that he had been good to Marduk and to his city and his temple. He even swore that he hadn't humiliated people who were his subordinates, which covered everyone.

- After that, the priest gave a speech in which he asked Marduk to bless the king and destroy his enemies. The king got back his scepter, circle, and sword, but he wasn't done with being abused.

The priest had to hit him in the face again, very hard this time. The king had to cry, which assured the continued order of the universe.

- The moment when the king literally took the hand of Marduk came after this, on the eighth day of the festival. This is when the public part of the proceedings started. The statue of Marduk was brought out of the temple, and the king grasped his hand.

- Somehow, the god spoke and announced his plans for the year, though it's unclear how this happened. This was followed by a huge procession. At the front, Marduk and the king rode in a chariot. They were followed by other gods, along with musicians, singers, dancers, priests, officials, and royal family members.

- Marduk and the other gods were all taken by boat to a special Akitu temple outside the city. There, they were placed together in a room to meet. Some of the gods had traveled to Babylon from other cities. Their presence confirmed that Babylon was the greatest city and Marduk was the greatest god.

- A day later, the procession came back to Babylon. Marduk made another speech (however he did that) and returned to his temple, and the other gods went home. The world was seen as safe.

LATER EVENTS

- When the statue of Marduk was in Assyria after Sennacherib's conquest of Babylon, the ritual couldn't happen. That must have been disorienting for the people: What awful things would take place if the Akitu festival was canceled?

- Fortunately, the statue of Marduk was returned to Babylon in the reign of the Neo-Assyrian ruler Ashurbanipal, during the 7th century BCE. The Akitu festival resumed. Fifty years after that—when the Assyrian Empire fell in 612 BCE—the Babylonians credited Marduk with their success.

- The Babylonian king Nabopolassar was on the throne at the time. He had a son named Nebuchadnezzar II, who was a very successful general during the war against Assyria. When Nabopolassar died in 605, Nebuchadnezzar took over the Babylonian throne. He enjoyed a long reign of 43 years and was responsible for many of Babylon's subsequent successes.

- Nebuchadnezzar continued to fight through most of his reign. Many regions of what had been the Neo-Assyrian Empire resisted being absorbed into the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Some of them, especially in the west, allied themselves with Egypt.

- The kingdom of Judah in the Levant was one of these. The authors of the Bible wrote about it in detail. The kings of Judah stopped paying their tribute to Babylon, but Egypt didn't end up helping them. The Babylonian army showed up in Judah in response to a rebellion. In 587 BCE, Judah was conquered.

- Vast numbers of Jews were now taken captive to Babylon. The Babylonians put a king on the throne in Judah, who was supposed to be loyal to them, but he rebelled as well. The Babylonians came back and besieged Jerusalem. More people were deported.

ANCIENT BABYLON

- Nebuchadnezzar used the same kinds of strategies that the Assyrians had used before him. However, unlike the Assyrian kings, Nebuchadnezzar didn't brag about his conquests in his royal inscriptions. Mostly, he bragged about his building activities. Nebuchadnezzar wanted Babylon to be extraordinary.

- The wall that surrounded the city was about 10 miles long. Babylon was bigger than Nineveh had been, and it was the biggest city that ever existed in that region up to that time. It continued to be the biggest until Rome, centuries later.

- The temple complex of Marduk was as big as two football fields. It was near the river that flowed through the middle of the city. There were two courtyards. In one was the huge, stepped ziggurat, and in the other was the lower temple.

- The main statues of Marduk and Sarpanitum were in the lower temple, the Esagil. That's where the private ceremonies of the Akitu festival took place. The statues might have been made of solid gold, but some scholars think that the statues might actually have been made of wood with gold plating. Either way, they were certainly spectacular.The statues' eyes and hair would have been inlaid with other materials like shell, lapis lazuli, and carnelian, and they wore clothes that were finely woven and embroidered.

- North from the Esagil was the processional way—the road that the gods took during the Akitu festival parade. It was wide, and the walls on both sides were tiled with glazed bricks in bands of bright blue and yellow, with white rosettes. A wide middle band of turquoise bricks provided the background for images of striding, growling lions, colored white, brown, and black.

- At the end of the processional way stood the Ishtar Gate. This gateway building was deep blue, with borders in white and yellow and relief sculptures of bulls and dragons arranged in rows. It was entirely covered in glazed bricks, so it shone in the sun like a giant jewel.

Ishtar gates in Babylon

- When German archaeologists excavated in Babylon during the early 20th century, they dismantled the Ishtar Gate and packed it up to take with them to Berlin. It was meticulously reconstructed in the Pergamon Museum . The gate is 50 feet high, and the original foundations extended another 45 feet underground.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DWELLING AND HABITS

- Off to the west of the Ishtar Gate was one wall of Nebuchadnezzar's palace. The palace was the size of many city blocks, built around five huge courtyards and surrounded with thick fortification walls. The layout looks like the palaces of the Assyrian kings—like a labyrinth, with vast numbers of offices, workshops, storage rooms, kitchens, domestic apartments, and so on.

- However, it would have been a different experience to visit. Take the throne room: Although the walls were brightly colored, they weren't decorated with battle scenes. The same type of glazed brick reliefs that decorated the Processional Way and the Ishtar Gate were used in the palace, as well.

- They featured stylized palm trees, rosettes, palmettes, naturalistic lions, and other motifs from nature. Even the cuneiform inscriptions on the walls were carved onto glazed bricks, and pieced together in the right places by the builders.

- Nebuchadnezzar doesn't seem to have been interested in being surrounded by sculptures of himself. Presumably, he looked like other Assyrian and Babylonian kings, with a long beard and elaborate robes. However, statues of him haven't been found.

- As Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon, he made a point of restoring buildings from centuries before rather than knocking them down. Some scholars have called the Neo-Babylonian kings the sponsors of the world's first archaeology. When they found sculptures and objects from the past as they dug, they treated them carefully and put them in their palaces.

- In classical times, Babylon was best known for its city wall, which was listed in one version of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was another of Nebuchadnezzar's achievements. The main wall was so wide that one could ride a chariot along the top.

- In most parts of the city, three lines of these walls ran parallel to one another, along with a moat on the outside. The Euphrates River flowed right through the center of the city, with the two halves connected by a wooden bridge on top of stone piers. That was quite an engineering feat.

LIFE IN BABYLON

- People in Babylon must have felt that they were living in a modern, extraordinary place. Even though individual houses and the lives of average citizens were much the same as they had always been, the city as a whole was on a scale unlike any other.

- People from all over the world (or at least the world they knew) lived there. Many of them had been deported from other parts of the empire. However, most of them weren't slaves, and the records show that many of them thrived.

- Some documents found in Mesopotamian cities include Jewish names. These confirm that Jews from Judah were living there in exile, as the Bible said. There are even cuneiform records of the Judean king and his sons receiving plenty of rations from the Babylonian administration.

- The Babylonians didn't think of themselves as living in the ancient world. They looked back to their distant past for inspiration in art, architecture, and tradition—to them, that was the ancient world. They saw themselves as modern, living right at the most recent moment that had ever existed.

READINGS

- Bahrani, "Babylonian Art."
- Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.*
- MacGinnis, "Herodotus's Description of Babylon."
- Oates, *Babylon*.
- Oshima, "The Babylonian God Marduk."
- Pearce, "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia."
- Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*.
- Van De Mieroop, "Reading Babylon."

QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the Babylonian king was willing to go through ritual humiliation during the Akitu festival?
- How does the Babylonian creation story compare with creation stories from other religious traditions? What does this imply about the beliefs of the Babylonians?
- Why do you think Herodotus was so impressed with Babylon?

24

END OF THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

In 562 BCE, a Mesopotamian king died. His name was Nebuchadnezzar II, and he'd ruled over an era of almost unprecedented wealth: a time when all of Mesopotamia, and much of the rest of the Near East, had been united within the Neo-Babylonian Empire. This lecture looks at the end of that empire.

DIFFERENT GROUPS

- Partly because of conquest, partly because of trade, and partly because of immigration, many populations were on the move during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. The contacts between peoples had a profound effect on the history of this region.

- One influential group was the Arameans. They spoke a Semitic language called Aramaic, and they'd been growing in influence for several centuries. The Aramaic language had gradually replaced Akkadian and other languages across north and northwestern Mesopotamia. Aramaic would continue to be a major language in the Near East for hundreds of years.

- Another group of people, known as the Medes, had burst onto the scene toward the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. They helped bring that empire to an end with their fierce attacks on the city of Nineveh in 612 BCE. The Medes were based in what is now northwestern Iran.

- Still another group of people, the Persians, lived farther south, on the Iranian Plateau. For now, they were subject to the Medes. The Medes and Persians spoke Indo-European languages, and had different religious beliefs from their neighbors in Mesopotamia and Elam, in what is now southwest Iran.

- There were Jews living in Babylon, as well. They were there because of the deportations that Nebuchadnezzar II imposed when the Hebrew state of Judah was conquered in 587 BCE.

- The bigger era in which these contacts were taking place is sometimes known as the Axial Age. It started in the 8th century and lasted until around 200 BCE. This wasn't just in the Near East; it was a phenomenon that reached all across Eurasia. Many new ideas were spreading, as though society had reached a collective turning point.

- Some philosophers and prophets stopped thinking only about local, pragmatic issues and started wondering about more abstract things. They asked questions like: What constitutes good government? How can people be virtuous? What is the meaning of life?

NEW ANSWERS

- In cities like Babylon, new ideas would have been shared between people from different places. One of the earliest of the innovative thinkers was a Persian prophet named Zarathustra, also known as Zoroaster. No one's sure exactly when he lived, but his ideas were increasingly popular around the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. His followers are known as Zoroastrians.

- He taught that all of human experience can be seen as a battle between good and evil. Zoroastrians believed that the good gods in every civilization were incarnations of Ahura Mazda, their great god of goodness. Anyone worshiping any god was, in a way, worshiping Ahura Mazda.

Ahura Mazda

- This was also the time when the Jewish religion became more universal, with the monotheistic belief that there is just one God. Beyond the Near East, all kinds of ideas were developing, like Confucianism and Taoism in China, classical Hinduism and Jainism in India, and philosophy in Greece. These thinkers were all asking similar questions, but coming up with different answers.

- Even the ancient polytheistic religion of the Mesopotamians was beginning to develop some new ideas. Toward the end of the Neo-Assyrian period, around the 7th century BCE, there had been some syncretism. Some texts mention the idea that perhaps two or more gods were actually the same god under different names.

- In this era, the Babylonian belief that their god Marduk was the king of all gods might have been shakier than it seemed on the surface. Certainly, the Jews in Babylon wouldn't have agreed. Nor would the Assyrians, who were still devoted to Assur. Nor would any Persian or Mede who had settled in the capital city.

NABONIDUS

- Into this multiethnic, multireligious environment came a king who had some new, radical religious ideas. His name was Nabonidus, and he wasn't related to the Babylonian kings who came before him. One of those predecessors, Nebuchadnezzar II, had overseen a stable reign, but his son and successor was deposed after just two years. After two more very short reigns, Nabonidus then took over.

- He was an unlikely king. Not only was he not a member of the royal family, but he may have owed his position to his remarkable mother. Her name was Adad-guppi, and she wrote an autobiography. She probably had quite a bit of help from her son in composing it. After all, it finishes after her death, and it helps make the case for Nabonidus's right to be king.

- At some point, Adad-guppi had a dream that her son Nabonidus would restore the temple of Sin, the moon god, in Harran. Nabonidus himself had a similar dream, recorded in a surviving inscription. Sin told him that he should rebuild the temple in Harran, and then he would become king.

- When all the chaos erupted after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps Nabonidus thought that Sin wanted him to become king and restore order. He managed to take the throne in 556 BCE. He dutifully had the temple in Harran reconstructed, and he commissioned a new statue of the god, since the old one seems to have been destroyed.

NABONIDUS IN EXILE

- Nabonidus started out his reign venerating all the Mesopotamian gods. He went through with the new year's festival—the Akitu event—in Babylon. He swore to the Babylonian god Marduk that he would support him. In his second year, he seems to have proposed a religious transformation, with the moon god Sin being raised to a higher position than Marduk as king of the gods.

- Nabonidus made his son Belshazzar coregent with him. Soon after this, Nabonidus went off on a campaign to the west. He didn't come back for 10 years, settling in a city called Tema, in northern Arabia. Belshazzar was in power in Babylon, but Belshazzar couldn't stand in for Nabonidus in the new year's festival. Sources from this period are in agreement that the Akitu festival didn't happen for a whole decade.

- The priests of Marduk were incensed. They would have devoutly believed that the continued functioning of the whole universe depended on Marduk's veneration and on the restoration of the Akitu festival. They would have wanted Nabonidus out of power. Then, the outside world intervened.

CYRUS

- While Nabonidus lived in exile from 553 to 543 BCE, a king named Cyrus was busily changing the political face of the Near East. He took the throne in Persia in 559, before Nabonidus was even king. Cyrus at that time was a coregent with his father, and Persia was a small kingdom, under the control of the Medes. After eight years, his father had died, and Cyrus became the sole king of Persia. Right away, he rebelled against his overlord. He was able to conquer the army of the Medes in 550.

- Cyrus kept going. He turned his attention to the kingdom of Lydia, in what is now Turkey, and attacked. Cyrus was victorious there as well, and by 546 BCE he had taken control of the Lydian capital of Sardis.

- Cyrus now moved his troops back towards the Persian heartland. At this point, Nabonidus may have started to get nervous. The Persian Empire was expanding, and Cyrus was repeatedly victorious. Finally, Nabonidus returned from Tema to Babylon, during his 13th year on the throne. Right away, he removed many high officials from their positions and replaced them. They probably had disapproved of his religious reforms.

- In 540 BCE, Cyrus attacked Persia's western neighbor, Elam. The Persian Empire was getting dangerously close to Babylon—the Elamite capital of Susa was only 160 miles east of the Tigris River.

- Hearing that Elam was under attack by the Persians seems to have worried Nabonidus. He called for all Mesopotamian city gods to be brought into Babylon. He might have done this to protect them, or perhaps he wanted their help in protecting his city. Either way, the absence of the divine statues left the people in their cities feeling as though they'd been abandoned. It doesn't seem to have made Nabonidus any more popular.

CYRUS TARGETS BABYLONIA

- Now that Elam was brought under Persian control, Cyrus's next obvious target was Babylonia. There was a battle between the Babylonians and the Persians at the site of Opis, north of Babylon, and the Persians won. After that, according to some accounts, the Babylonians don't seem to have tried very hard to keep the Persians out.

- In 539 BCE, Cyrus took Babylon. According to his own account, he did it without a fight. The people of Babylon welcomed him. In his words, they "bowed to him and kissed his feet." Soon after this, Cyrus had a royal inscription drawn up and distributed to describe his Babylonian conquest.

- In his account, Cyrus makes good use of the unpopularity of Nabonidus. He describes things getting worse before he arrived—the gods being sent to Babylon, for example, and Nabonidus requiring forced labor. According to this account, Cyrus took over control in Babylon because Marduk had asked him to. That is, Marduk chose Cyrus to rescue the Babylonians from the heresies of Nabonidus.

- Though it was propaganda, Cyrus was wise to use the Babylonians' language for this inscription, and to use phrases that were familiar from previous Mesopotamian inscriptions. Cyrus was also wise to declare himself completely devoted to Marduk, even though Marduk wasn't a Persian god.

CYRUS IN POWER

- Cyrus was good to other people who lived in Babylon, as well. The Bible records that the Jews living in exile were allowed to return to Jerusalem after Cyrus took power.

- Right from the start, Cyrus created his empire in a different way from the kings who came before him. He hadn't depended on creating fear in the population. He seems to have wanted to be loved. When he'd conquered the Medes 12 years earlier, he let the king live, and he even married the Median king's daughter. It was as though he was joining the Medes rather than oppressing them.

- His inscription, known as the Cyrus Cylinder, has been described as the earliest expression of a king consciously attempting to rule a society of different nationalities and faiths. In terms of the Babylonians, he made it clear that he understood their frustrations with Nabonidus and that he could solve the problem. Marduk would be happy again. The order of the universe would be restored.

- Babylon did continue to be a stable and prosperous place. Plenty of documents survive from the period of Persian rule showing that life went on pretty much as before. Only gradually did the Mesopotamian gods begin to fall out of favor.

- The cuneiform writing system was used less and less. New cities replaced some of the old Mesopotamian capitals. The Persian kings stopped coming to Babylon for the new year's festival. Babylon became one of many provincial cities paying tribute to the great Persian kings, who lived far away, ruling over the biggest empire the world had ever seen to that point. It extended all the way from the Indus River Valley to the Aegean Sea.

- Mesopotamian culture had lasted for more than 3,000 years, but by around the year 1, it was gone. It wasn't until cuneiform was deciphered in the 19th century that the amazing ancient history of Mesopotamia began to be rediscovered.

LEGACY OF THE MESOPOTAMIANS

- The Mesopotamians left an incredible legacy to the world. They invented the very idea of writing and built the world's first cities. They wrote down the earliest laws, and created a judicial system that prized evidence and fairness, a system that still influences us today.

- They created mechanisms of diplomacy that never stopped being used. Looking to the stars, they figured out how to calculate the dates of eclipses and anticipated the movements of the planets.

- Many achievements credited to the Greeks had their origins long before in Mesopotamia, like the calculation of the sides of a right angle triangle. The innovation of the phalanx formation in battle and the names of the constellations were also owed to the Mesopotamians.

- One Mesopotamian innovation has an impact on our lives every single day. Mesopotamian mathematics was based on the number 60. For example, their system of weights had 60 shekels in a mina, which weighed about a pound, and 60 minas in a talent. This was convenient because 60 divides up easily into many different fractions. That influence remains today in the form of 360 degrees in a circle, 60 seconds in a minute, and 60 minutes in an hour.

The hundreds of thousands of documents that have survived since the Mesopotamians' time allow us a window into their world. In the future, as more documents are found and translated, we will continue to learn more about the men and women who first tackled the dilemmas of urban life.

READINGS

- Beaulieu, "Nabonidus the Mad King."
- ——, *The Reign of Nabonidus*.
- Bryce, *Babylonia*.
- Finkel, ed., *The Cyrus Cylinder*.
- Kuhrt, "Cyrus the Great of Persia."
- Waters, *Ancient Persia*.
- Zawadzki, "Nabonidus and Sippar."

QUESTIONS

- How might people have been personally affected by the amount of migration that took place within the Neo-Babylonian Empire? How might their worldview have changed?
- What were some of the reasons why the Neo-Babylonian Empire fell? Which of these factors might have had the strongest impact?

Bibliography

Akkermans, Peter M. M. G. and Glenn M. Schwartz. *The Archaeology of Syria: From Complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (ca. 16,000–300 BC).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Algaze, Guillermo. *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization: The Evolution of an Urban Landscape*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

———. *The Uruk World System: The Dynamics of Expansion of Early Mesopotamian Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Allen, James P. "Egypt and the Near East in the Third Millennium B.C." In Aruz 2003, pp. 251–253.

Ammerman, Albert J. and Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza. *The Neolithic Transition and the Genetics of Populations in Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

André-Salvini, Béatrice. "Tello (Ancient Girsu)." In Aruz 2003, pp. 68–69.

Archi, Alfonso "Ebla Texts." In Meyers 1997, volume 2, pp. 184–186.

———. "The Royal Archives of Ebla." In *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria*, edited by Harvey Weiss, pp. 140–148. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1985.

———. "Trade and Administrative Practice: The Case of Ebla," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 20/1 (1993), pp. 43–58.

Archives Royales de Mari. Paris, 1950.

Artzi, Pinhas. "The Rise of the Middle-Assyrian Kingdom, according to El-Amarna Letters 15 and 16." In *Bar-Ilan Studies in History*, edited by Pinhas Artzi, pp. 25–41. Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1978.

Aruz, Joan, ed. *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Aruz, Joan et al., eds. *Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008.

Astour, Michael. "Ugarit and the Great Powers." In *Ugarit in Retrospect: 50 Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, edited by Gordon D. Young, pp. 3–29. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1981.

Bahrani, Zainab. *Art of Mesopotamia*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2016.

Banning, E. B. "The Neolithic Period: Triumps of Architecture, Agriculture, and Art." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61/4 (1998), pp. 188–237.

Bar Yosef , O. and F. R. Valla, eds. *The Natufian Culture in the Levant*. Ann Arbor: International Monographs in Prehistory, 1991.

Barmash, Pamela. "Blood Feud and State Control: Differing Legal Institutions for the Remedy of Homicide During the Second and First Millennia B.C.E." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 63/3 (2004), pp. 183–199.

Barnett, Richard David. *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum*. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1970.

Bass, George F. "A Bronze Age Shipwreck at Ulu Burun (Kas): 1984 Campaign." *American Journal of Archaeology* 90/3 (1986), pp. 269–296.

Beaulieu, Paul-Alain. "Nabonidus the Mad King: A Reconsideration of His Steles from Harran and Babylon." In *Representations of Political Power: Case Studies of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Marlies Heinz and Marian H. Feldman, pp. 137–168. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

———. *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.

Beckman, Gary M. *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, second edition. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1999.

———. "Hittite Treaties and the Development of the Cuneiform Treaty Tradition." In *Der deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke*, edited by Markus Witte et al., pp. 279–301. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.

Bienkowski, Piotr and Alan Millard, eds. *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Black, Jeremy, and Anthony Green. *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*. London: British Museum Press, 1992.

Bottéro, Jean. *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

———. *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia*. Translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Brinkman, John A., et al. *The Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Bryce, Trevor. *Babylonia, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

———. *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

———. *Life and Society in the Hittite World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

———. *The Kingdom of the Hittites*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Bryner, Jeanna. "Female Shaman's Grave Loaded with Goodies." *Live Science,* November 3, 2008.

Buccellati, Giorgio and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati. "Terqa: The First Eight Seasons." *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 33/2 (1983), pp. 47–67.

Byrd, Brian V. "The Natufian: Settlement Variability and Economic Adaptations in the Levant at the End of the Pleistocene." *Journal of World Prehistory* 3/2 (June 1989), pp. 159–197.

Cancik-Kirschbaum, Eva and Nicole Brisch. *Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space: The Emergence of the Mittani State*. Berlin: de Gruyter. 2014.

Carter, Elizabeth and Matthew W. Stolper. *Elam: Surveys of Political History and Archaeology.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Carter, Robert. "Boat Remains and Maritime Trade in the Persian Gulf during the Sixth and Fifth Millennia BC." *Antiquity* 80 (2006), pp. 52–63.

Cathcart, Kevin J. "The Earliest Contributions to the Decipherment of Sumerian and Akkadian." *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 2011:1, pp. 1–12.

Charpin, Dominique. "The History of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Overview." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 807–829.

———. *Writing, Law, and Kingship in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

———. *Hammurabi of Babylon*. I. B. Tauris, 2012.

Charvát, Petr. *Mesopotamia Before History.* London, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Chavalas, Mark W. "Terqa and the Kingdom of Khana." *Biblical Archaeologist* 59/2 (1996), pp. 90–103.

———, ed. *The Ancient Near East*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Cline, Eric H. *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Cohen, Raymond and Raymond Westbrook, eds. *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Collins, Paul et al. *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*. London: British Museum Press, 2009.

Collon, Dominique. *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*. London: British Museum Publications, 1987.

Cooper, Jerrold S. "International Law in the Third Millennium." in Westbrook 2003, volume 1, pp. 241–251.

———. *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma Border Conflict*. Malibu: Undena, 1981.

Crawford, Harriet. *Sumer and the Sumerians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), http://cdli.ucla.edu/

Curry, Andrew. "Gobekli Tepe: The World's First Temple?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2008.

Curtis, John E. et al., eds. *Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Publications, 1995.

Dalley, Stephanie. "Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved." *Garden History* 21/1 (1993), pp. 1–13.

———. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Damerow, Peter. "Sumerian Beer: The Origins of Brewing Technology in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 2012:2, 1–20.

Diamond, Jared. "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race." In *Discover*, May 1, 1999.

Eidem. Jesper. "International Law in the Second Millennium: Middle Bronze Age." In Westbrook 2003, volume 1, pp. 748–752.

"El-Amarna Letters at the Vorderasiatisches Museum of Berlin."

Englund, Robert. "Hard Work—Where Will It Get You? Labor Management in Ur III Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50/4 (1991), pp. 255–280.

Feldman, Marian H. *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Finkel, Irving, ed. *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013.

Fleming, Daniel E. *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors: Mari and Early Collective Governance.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Foster, Benjamin. "A New Look at the Sumerian Temple State." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24/3 (1981), pp. 225–241.

———. *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1996.

Foster, Benjamin R. and Karen Pollinger Foster. *Civilizations of Ancient Iraq.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Frahm, Eckart. "Royal Hermeneutics: Observations on the Commentaries from Ashurbanipal's Libraries at Nineveh." *Iraq* 66 (2004), pp. 45–50.

Frame, Grant. *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1992.

Frame, Grant and Andrew R. George. "The Royal Libraries of Nineveh: New Evidence for King Ashurbanipal's Tablet Collecting." *Iraq,* 67 (2005), pp. 265–284.

Franke, Sabina. "Kings of Akkad: Sargon and Naram-Sin." In Sasson et al. 1995, pp. 831–842.

Fuchs, Andreas. "Assyria at War: Strategy and Conduct." In Radner and Robson 2011, pp. 380–401.

Garfinkle, Steven J. "The Assyrians: A New Look at an Ancient Power." In *Current Issues in the History of the Ancient Near East,* edited by Gonzalo Rubio et al., pp. 53–96. Claremont, CA: Association of Ancient Historians, 2007.

———. "Was the Ur III State Bureaucratic? Patrimonialism and Bureaucracy in the Ur III Period." In *The Growth of an Early State in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III Administration,* eds. Justin Cale Johnson and Steven J. Garfinkle. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 2008.

George, Andrew. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Glassner, Jean-Jacques. *The Invention of Cuneiform: Writing in Sumer.* Translated and edited by Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van De Mieroop. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Grayson, A. Kirk. *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Greene, John T. *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989.

Günbatti, Cahit. "Two Treaty Texts Found at Kultepe." In *Assyria and Beyond: Studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen,* ed. Jan Gerrit Dercksen. Leiden: NINO, 2004.

Hallo, William W. and K. Lawson Younger Jr. *The Context of Scripture*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003.

Hansen, Donald P. "A Sculpture of Gudea, Governor of Lagash." In *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 64/1 (1988), pp. 4–19.

———. "Royal Building Activity at Sumerian Lagash in the Early Dynastic Period." *Biblical Archaeologist* 55/4 (1992), pp. 206–211.

Harris, Rivkah. *Ancient Sippar: A Demographic Study of an Old-Babylonian City (1894–1595 BC).* Istanbul: Historisch-Archeologisch Institut, 1975.

Heimpel, Wolfgang. *Letters to the King of Mari*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2003.

Heinz, Marlies. "Sargon of Akkad: Rebel and Usurper in Kish." In *Representations of Political Power: Case Studies of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East,* edited by Marlies Heinz and Marian H. Feldman. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

Hodder, Ian. *The Leopard's Tale: Revealing the Mysteries of Çatalhöyük*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2006.

Holmes, Y. Lynn. "The Messengers of the Amarna Letters." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), pp. 376–381.

Horsnell, Malcolm J. A. *The Year-Names of the First Dynasty of Babylon,* volume 2. Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University Press, 1999.

Hunger, Hermann and Regine Pruzsinszky, eds. *Mesopotamian Dark Age Revisited*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004.

Jacobsen, Thorkild. "An Ancient Mesopotamian Trial for Homicide." *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* 3 (1959), pp. 130–150.

———. *The Harps that Once …: Sumerian Poetry in Translation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Klein, Jacob. "From Gudea to Šulgi: Continuity and Change in Sumerian Literary Tradition." In *DUMU-E2-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Ake W. Sjöberg*, edited by Hermann Behrens et al. Philadelphia, 1989.

Koehl, Robert B. "Aegean Interactions with the Near East and Egypt during the Late Bronze Age." In Aruz 2008, pp. 270–272.

Kozloff, Arielle P., Betsy M. Bryan, et al. *Egypt's Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep III and His World.* Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Fine Art, 1992.

Kramer, Samuel N. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

Kubba, Shamil. "The Ubaid Period: Evidence of Architectural Planning and the Use of a Standard Unit of Measurement." *Paléorient* 16/1 (1990), pp. 45–55.

Kuhrt, Amélie. *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 BC*, volume 1. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

———. "Cyrus the Great of Persia: Images and Realities." In *Representations of Political Power: Case Studies of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East,* edited by Marlies Heinz and Marian H. Feldman, pp. 169–191. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

Lafont, Bertrand. "The Women of the Palace at Mari." In *Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* edited by Jean Bottero and translated by Antonia Nevill, pp. 127–140. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

———. "International Relations in the Ancient Near East: The Birth of a Complete Diplomatic System." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12:1 (2001), pp. 39–60.

———. "Women at Work and Women in Economy and Society during the Neo-Sumerian Period." In Lion and Michel 2016, pp. 149–173.

Lamprichs, Ronald. "Aššur." In Meyers 1997, volume 1, pp. 225–228.

Larsen, Mogens Trolle. *The Old Assyrian City-State and Its Colonies.* Copenhagen: Akadmisk Forlag, 1976.

———. *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840–1860.* London: Routledge, 1996.

———. "The Old Assyrian Merchant Colonies." In Aruz 2008, pp. 70–73.

Lawlor, Andrew. "The Everlasting City." *Archaeology* (September/October 2013), pp. 26–32.

———. "Report of Oldest Boat Hints at Early Trade Routes." *Science* 296 (2002), pp. 1791–1792.

Layard, Austin H. *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*. London: John Murray, 1853.

Leick, Gwendolyn. *The Babylonian World.* London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

———. *Who's Who in the Ancient Near East.* London: Routledge, 1999.

Lion, Brigitte and Cécile Michel, eds. *The Role of Women in Work and Society in the Ancient Near East*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.

Liverani, Mario. *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 BC.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

———. *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy.* London: Routledge, 2013.

———. "The Late Bronze Age: Materials and Mechanisms of Trade and Cultural Exchange." In Aruz 2008, pp. 161–168.

Livingstone, A. "Ashurbanipal: Literate or Not?" *Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 97 (2007): pp. 98–118.

MacGinnis, John. "Herodotus's Description of Babylon." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 64 (2002), pp. 217–236.

Maeda, Tohru, "Royal Inscriptions of Lugalzagesi and Sargon." *Orient* 40 (2005), pp. 3–30.

Magid, Glenn. "Sumerian Early Dynastic Royal Inscriptions." In Chavalas 2006, pp. 4–16.

Maidman, Maynard Paul. "Nuzi: Portrait of an Ancient Mesopotamian Provincial Town." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 931–947.

Margueron, Jean-Cl. "Mari" in Aruz 2008, pp. 27–33.

Matthiae, Paolo. "Ebla." In Aruz 2008, pp. 34–41.

———. "Ebla." In Meyers 1997, volume 2, pp. 180–184.

———. "Ebla and the Early Urbanization of Syria." In Aruz 2003, pp. 165–168.

McMahon, Augusta, "The Akkadian Period: Empire, Environment, and Imagination." In *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, volume 1, edited by D. T. Potts, pp. 649–667. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Melville, Sarah. *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721–705 B.C.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016.

———. "The Last Campaign The Assyrian Way of War and the Collapse of the Empire." In *Warfare and Culture in World History*, edited by Wayne E. Lee, pp. 13–33. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Meyers, Eric M. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East.* Five volumes. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Michalowski, Piotr. "Third Millennium Contacts: Observations on the Relationships between Mari and Ebla." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), pp. 293–302.

———. *Letters from Early Mesopotamia.* Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993.

———. "Sumerian King List." In Chavalas 2006, pp. 81–85.

———. "The Ur III Literary Footprint and the Historian." In *Not Only History: Proceedings of the Conference in Honor of Mario Liverani,* edited by Gilda Bartoloni and Maria Giovannna Biga, pp. 105–126. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2016.

Michel, Cécile. "Women of Aššur and Kaniš." In *Anatolia's Prologue, Kültepe Kanesh Karum, Assyrians in Istanbul,* edited by F. Kulakoğlu and S. Kangal, pp. 124–133. Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality, 2010.

———. "Women Work, Men are Professionals in the Old Assyrian Archives." In Lion and Michel 2016, pp. 193–208.

Milano, Lucio. "Ebla: A Third Millennium City-State in Ancient Syria." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 1219–1230.

Moore, Andrew M. T. "Syria and the Origins of Agriculture." In Weiss 1985, pp. 50–57.

Moorey, P. R. S. *"Ur of the Chaldees": A Revised and Updated Edition of Sir Leonard Woolley's Excavations at Ur.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Moran, William L. *The Amarna Letters.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Morgan, Christopher. "Late Traditions Concerning Sargon and Naram-Sin." In Chavalas 2006, pp. 22–44.

Morrison, Martha A. "The Family of Šilwa-Tešub *mâr šarri*." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 31 (1979): 3–29.

Nakata, Ichiro. "Economic Activities of *naditum*-Women of Šamaš Reflected in the Field Sale Contracts (MHET II/1–6)." In Lion and Michel 2016, pp. 255–269.

Nemet-Nejat, Karen Rhea. *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998.

Nieuwenhuyse, O. et al., eds. *Interpreting the Late Neolithic of Upper Mesopotamia.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

Nissen, Hans J. *The Early History of the Ancient Near East, 9000–2000 B.C.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Oates, Joan. *Babylon*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

Oates, Joan et al. "Early Mesopotamian Urbanism: A New View from the North." *Antiquity* 81 (2006), pp. 585–600.

Oded, Bustenay. *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979.

Oppenheim, A. Leo. "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74/1 (1954), pp. 6–17.

———. *Letters From Mesopotamia.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Oshima, Takayoshi. "The Babylonian God Marduk." In Leick 2009, pp. 348–360.

Owen, David I. and Gernot Wilhelm. *Nuzi at Seventy-Five,* SCCNH 10. Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1999.

Parpola, Simo, Asko Parpola, and Robert H. Brunswig, Jr. "The Meluhha Village: Evidence of Acculturation of Harappan Traders in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia?" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20/2 (1977), pp. 129–165.

Paulus, Susanne. "Foreigners under Foreign Rulers: The Case of Kassite Babylonia (2nd Half of the 2nd Millennium B.C.E.)." In *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Reinhard Achenbach et al., pp. 1–16. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011.

Pearce, Laurie E. "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia." In *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, edited by Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming, pp. 399–411. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Pedersen, Olof. *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East, 1500–300 B.C.* Baltimore: CDL Press, 1998.

Peregrine, Peter N. and Melvin Ember, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Prehistory, Volume 8, South and Southwest Asia.* New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2002.

Podany, Amanda H. *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

———. "The Conservatism of Hana Scribal Tradition." In *Cultures and Societies in the Middle Euphrates and Habur Areas in the Second Millennium BC–I*, edited by D. Shibata and S. Yamada, pp. 69–98. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016.

———. *The Land of Hana: Kings, Chronology, and Scribal Tradition*. Bethesda: CDL Press, 2002.

Pollock, Susan. "Ur." In Meyers 1997, volume 5, pp. 288–291.

Postgate, Nicholas. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Potts, D. T. "Distant Shores: Ancient Near Eastern Trade with South Asia and Northeast Africa." in Sasson 1995 et al., Vol. 3, pp. 145–1463.

———. "The Gulf: Dilmun and Magan." In Aruz 2003, pp. 307–308.

———. "The Uluburun Shipwreck and Late Bronze Age Trade." In Aruz 2008, pp. 289–305.

Powell, Marvin A. "The Sin of Lugalzagesi." In *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes,* volume 86, *Festschrift für Hans Hirsch zum 65.Geburtstag gewidet von seined Freunden, Kollegen, und Schülern,* pp. 307–314. Vienna: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Vienna, 1996.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament,* third edition with supplement. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Radner, Karen. *Ancient Assyria, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Radner, Karen and Eleanor Robson, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Rainey, Anson F. *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna Based on Collations of all Extant Tablets.* Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Richardson, Seth. "The Many Falls of Babylon and the Shape of Forgetting." In *Envisioning the Past Through Memories: How Memory Shaped Ancient Near Eastern Societies*, edited by Davide Nadali, pp. 101–142. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Roaf, Michael. *The Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East.* New York: Facts on File, 1990.

Robinson, Andrew. *Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts*. London: BCA, 2002.

Robson, Eleanor. "Reading the Libraries of Assyria and Babylonia." In *Ancient Libraries,* edited by Jason König et al., pp. 38–56. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Rochberg, Francesca. *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Rose, Jeffrey I. "New Light on Human Prehistory in the Arabo-Persian Gulf Oasis." In *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 6 (2010), pp. 849–883.

Roth, Martha T. "Mesopotamian Legal Traditions and the Laws of Hammurabi." In *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 71 (1995), pp. 13–39.

———. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, second edition. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997.

Rothman, Mitchell S. "Tepe Gawra." In Meyers 1997, volume 5, pp. 183–186.

———, ed. *Uruk Mesopotamia and its Neighbors: Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Era of State Formation*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2001.

Roux, Georges. *Ancient Iraq*, revised edition. London: Penguin, 1993.

Rubio, Gonzalo. "From Sumer to Babylonia: Topics in the History of Southern Mesopotamia." In *Current Issues in the History of the Ancient Near East*. Edited by Gonzalo Rubio et al., pp. 1–52. Claremont, CA: Association of Ancient Historians, 2007.

Sassmannshausen, L. "The Adaptation of the Kassites to the Babylonian Civilization." In *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm, RAI* 42. Edited by K. van Lerberghe and G. Voet, pp. 409–424. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Deparement Oosterse Studies, 1999.

Sasson, Jack M. "Texts, Trade, and Travelers." In Aruz 2008, pp. 95–100.

———. "Thoughts of Zimri-Lim" *Biblical Archaeologist* 47/2 (1984), pp. 110–120.

——— et al, eds. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Four volumes. New York: Scribner's, 1995.

Sayce, A. H. "The Discovery of the Tel El-Amarna Tablets." *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 33 (1917), pp. 89–90.

Schneider, Tammi J. *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*. Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 2011.

Scurlock, JoAnn. "Neo-Assyrian Battle Tactics." In *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday*. Edited by Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas and Richard E. Averbeck, pp. 491–517. Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1997.

Simmons, Alan H. et al. "'Ain Ghazal: A Major Neolithic Settlement in Central Jordan." *Science* 240 (April 1, 1988), pp. 35–39.

Smith, George. *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 to 1874.* New York, Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875.

Snell, Daniel C. *Life in the Ancient Near East*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

———. *A Companion to the Ancient Near East.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.

Soltysiak, A. "Antemortem Cranial Trauma in Ancient Mesopotamia." *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 27 (2015), pp. 119–128.

Sommerfeld, Walter. "The Kassites of Ancient Mesopotamia: Origins, Politics, and Culture." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 917–930.

Stein, Diana L. "A Reappraisal of the 'Saustatar Letter' from Nuzi." *Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 79/1 (1989), pp. 36–60.

———. "Nuzi." In Meyers 1997, volume 4, p. 173.

Stieglitz, Robert R. "Long-Distance Seafaring in the Ancient Near East." *Biblical Archaeologist* 47/3 (1984), pp. 134–142.

Stratford, Edward. *A Year of Vengeance: Time, Narrative, and the Old Assyrian Trade.* Boston and Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017.

Stronach, David and Stephen Lumsden. "UC Berkeley's Excavations at Nineveh." *Biblical Archaeologist* 55/4 (December 1992), pp. 227–233.

Troy, Christopher S. et al. "Genetic Evidence for Near-Eastern Origins of European Cattle." *Nature* 410 (2001), pp. 1088–1091.

Ur of the Chaldees: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/ur_project.aspx

Ur, Jason. "Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals: New Insights from Satellite Imagery and Aerial Photography." *Iraq* 67/1 (2005), pp. 317–345.

Van De Mieroop, Marc. *A History of the Ancient Near East*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

———. "Democracy and the Rule of Law, the Assembly, and the First Law Code." In *The Sumerian World,* edited by Harriet Crawford, pp. 27–7289. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

———. *King Hammurabi of Babylon: A Biography.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005.

———. "Reading Babylon." *American Journal of Archaeology* 107/2 (2003), pp. 257–275.

———. "Revenge, Assyrian Style." *Past and Present* 179 (2003), pp. 3–23.

———. *The Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of Ramesses II.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.

Van Koppen, Frans. "Old Babylonian Period Inscriptions." In Chavalas 2006, 88–106.

Veenhof, Klaas R. *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and its Terminology.* Leiden: Brill, 1972.

———. "Kanesh: An Anatolian Colony in Anatolia." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume, pp. 859–871.

Villard, Pierre. "Shamshi-Adad and Sons: The Rise and Fall of an Upper Mesopotamian Empire." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 873–884.

Walker, C. B. F. *Cuneiform.* London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1987.

Waters, Matt. "Elam, Assyria, and Babylonia in the Early First Millennium BC." In *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, edited by D. T. Potts, pp. 478–492. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Waters, Mark. *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Weiss, Harvey, ed. *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria.* Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Weiss, Harvey et al. "The Genesis and Collapse of Third Millennium North Mesopotamian Civilization." *Science,* New Series 261 (1993), pp. 995–1004.

Wengrow, David. "'The Changing Face of Clay': Continuity and Change in the Transition from Village to Urban Life in the Near East. *Antiquity* 72 (1998), pp. 783–795.

Westbrook, Raymond. *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, volume 1. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003.

Westenholz, Joan Goodnick. "Heroes of Akkad." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103/1 (1983), pp. 327–336.

Wilford, John Noble. "Civilization's Cradle Grows Larger." *The New York Times*, May 28, 2002.

Wilhelm, Gernot. "The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second Millennium Upper Mesopotamia." In Sasson et al. 1995, volume 2, pp. 1243–1254.

Woolley, Leonard. *Ur of the Chaldees: A Record of Seven Years of Excavation,* second edition. London: Benn, 1950.

Woolley, C. L. "The Royal Graves of Ur." In *Hands on the Past: Pioneer Archaeologists Tell Their Own Story.* Edited by C. W. Ceram, pp. 258–262. New York: Knopf, 1966.

Yoffee, Norman. "The Evolution of Fragility: The Resistible Rise and Irresistible Fall of Early States." In *State Formation and State Decline in the Near and Middle East*, edited by Rainer Kessler et al., pp. 5–13. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2016.

Yon, Marguerite. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Zamazalová, Silvie. "The Education of Neo-Assyrian Princes." In Radner and Robson 2011, pp. 313–334.

Zawadzki, Stefan. "Nabonidus and Sippar." In *Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien*, edited by Manfried Dietrich and Hans Neumann, pp. 875–884. Munich: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014.

Image Credits

PAGE	CREDIT
3-9	©Cynthia Shirk/iStock/Thinkstock.
4	©santi0103/iStock/Thinkstock.
5	Hamid Najafi/flickr/CC BY-ND 2.0.
6	Hathi Trust Digital Library.
6	Wellcome Library, London/CC BY 4.0.
6	©Dorling Kindersley/Thinkstock.
7	The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
12	Didier Descouens/Museum of Toulouse/ Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
13	Yelkrokoyade/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
14	©Jupiterimages/PHOTOS.com/Thinkstock.
16	©undefined undefined/iStock/Thinkstock.
17	Ordercrazy/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
21	Jean Housen /Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
22	Sandstein Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
23	dedhed1950/flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0.
24	Elelicht/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
26	©Oks88/iStock/Thinkstock.
28	The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
32	Public Domain/The British Museum Collections.
33	Maksim/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 2.0.
34	Dmharvey/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
36	The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
40	SAC Andy Holmes (RAF)/MOD/OGL.
41	The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
42	Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
44	NBC 2579, courtesy Yale Babylonian Collection.
48	Internet Archive/Public Domain.
50	Hathi Trust Digital Library.

52 Marie-Lan Nguyen and one more author/ Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
55 Colleen Morgan/flickr/CC BY 2.0.
59 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
60 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
63 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
64 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
69 Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities - Encyclopedia Britannica Online/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
74 Jastrow (2006)/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
78 Metropolitan Museum of Art.
81 Metropolitan Museum of Art.
82 Wolfgang Sauber/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
86 ©moodboard/moodboard/Thinkstock.
89 Carole Raddato/flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0.
92 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
93 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
94 ©Peter Visscher/Thinkstock.
103 ©dmitriymoroz/iStock/Thinkstock.
111 Herbert Frank/flickr/CC BY 2.0.
113 Mbzt and one more author/Wikimedia Commons/CC By 3.0.
117 Serge Ottaviani/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
118 ©jsp/iStock/Thinkstock.
121 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
122 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
126 Google Books.
128 Mbzt and one more author/Wikimedia Commons/CC By 3.0.
130 Marie-Lan Nguyen and one more author/ Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
139 Orf3us/Wikimedia Commons/CC By 3.0.
142 Rama/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 2.0 fr.
148 CaptMondo/Wikimedia Commons/CC By 2.5.
150 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

150 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
157 Claude Valette/flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0
158 Photograph by A. Parrot/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
159 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
164 ©Siempreverde22/iStock/Thinkstock.
167 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
171 Sharon Mollerus/Flickr/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 2.0
172 Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
175 Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg)/ Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0
179 ©Photos.com/Thinkstock.
181 ©swisshippo/Thinkstock.
183 Zereshk /Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.
186 Fæ/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0.
187 Wellcome Library, London/CC BY 4.0
188 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
190 Claude Valette/flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0
192 Internet Archive/Public Domain.
198 NYPL- New York Public Library.
201 Hathi Trust Digital Library.
208 ©Dorling Kindersley/Thinkstock.
212 ©HomoCosmicos/iStock/Thinkstock.
218 Alan/flickr/CC BY 2.0.
220 BabelStone/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.