Ancient Mesopotamia & Persia
Overview

● Neolithic Revolution
  ○ When humans first gave up the uncertainties of hunter/gatherer life for farming and herding

● First Occurrence Mesopotamia
  ○ Greek “the land between”
  ○ Tigris/Euphrates rivers
  ○ Region Gave birth to Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

● No Natural barriers.
  ○ Near constant conflict
  ○ City States

Outline of Civilizations in Power

● Sumerians 3500-2332BCE
  ○ First City States
  ○ Invented Writing (Cuneiform, ClayTablets)
  ○ Sumerians constructed Temples on lofty platforms
  ○ Artists present narratives in register format (levels in narrative)
Overview Continued

- Akkadian 2332-2150 BCE
  - Become the first Mesopotamian rulers to call themselves kings and have themselves depicted in art with divine attributes.
  - First sculptors to create the earliest preserved hollow-cast statues
- Neo-Sumerian and Babylonian 2150-1600 BCE
  - Builders erect the largest extant ziggurat at UR
  - Gudea of Lagash rebuilds temples and commissions portraits
- Hittite and Assyrian 1600-612 BCE
  - Hittites sack Babylon and fortify capital at Hattusa
  - Assyrians rule a vast empire from citadels guarded by Iamassu
  - Extensive relief cycles celebrate Assyrian military campaigns
- Neo-Babylonian and Achaeminid 604-559 BCE
  - Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilds Babylon home of the Ziggurat called the Tower of Babel
  - Persians build an immense palace at Persepolis
- Greco-Roman and Sasanian 330 BCE-636 CE
  - Alexander the Great conquers absorb region into the Greco Roman World
  - New Persian Empire challenges rome from Ctesiphon
- Notes about the Chaos.. Near constant Warfare, Raiding among city states, development of central authority, the absence of natural borders, such as oceans, deserts, forrests, or Mountains create this instability. No Stone, Use of Mud Bricks in Architecture.
Presentation of offerings to Inanna (Warka Vase), Uruk, Iraq ca 3200-3000 BCE

- Register Format. or Frieze
  - Placing all figures on a common ground line
  - Narration: Tells a story of the procession of animals, the bounties from the earth to the goddess Inanna as a votive offering in dedication or gratitude
  - Inanna is later known as Ishtar. Ishtar Gate Babylon. Goddess of Love and War.
Presentation of offerings to Inanna (Warka Vase), Uruk, Iraq ca 3200-3000 BCE

White Temple, Uruk (Warka) Iraq ca 3200-3000BCE

https://youtu.be/Ahx2wp7obv0

Sumerian did not have access to Stone

These structures were formed using mud bricks which are durable but deteriorate with exposure of water.

These temples pre-date the first stone pyramids of Egypt

Structures seen as waiting rooms for the gods. Corners of structure correspond to cardinal points on a compass. Large enough for leading community members only.
White Temple, Uruk (Warka) Iraq ca 3200-3000BCE

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This temple would be the city square with the city surrounding.

This temple facade was probably white washed.
Sumerian Civilization

Agriculture was well developed—Fewer people were needed to farm and raise animals.

The excess citizenry could do other things, writing/administration, inventory. Central Authority. Music, Art, Weapons, Specialization of Labor Started. Cuneiform Writing

https://youtu.be/HbZ2asfyHcA
Sumerian Civilization

Map depicting extents of Sumer, and Akkadian Empire.
Music/Art/Literature. Bull-headed harp with inlaid sound box, tomb of pu-abi, Royal Cemetery Ur, Iraq 2600-2400 BCE

The Epic of Gilgamesh

http://etc.ancient.eu/2015/09/24/gilgamesh-enkidu-humbaba-cedar-forest-newest-discovered-tablet-v-epic/

Predates Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey by 1,500 years. Recounts the story of Gilgamesh, King of Uruk and slayer of the monster Huwawa. Musical instruments, Writing, are examples of Specialized Labor as benefits of City states.

https://youtu.be/JU4QRxsZhjg

https://youtu.be/QUcTsFe1PVs

Bull-headed harp with inlaid sound box, from tomb of Pu-abi, Iraq 2600BCE
Inanna, Uruk Iraq ca 3200BCE

https://youtu.be/SSUht-a8Cho

Both (Left) Female Head (Inanna) and Warka Vase were looted during the Iraq war in 2003 but were returned.

Sumerians Lacked stone, so must have been used sparingly in art works. The head is actually a hollowed from with a flat back. It was very likely attached to a wooden body.

Tshnunna Statuettes, from the Square Temple at Eshnunna, Iraq 2700BCE

Buried undneither the floor of a temple at Eshnunna, (Tell Aamar, Iraq).

https://youtu.be/DKMWS9qJ_1U
A stele is a carved stone slab erected to commemorate a historical event. Cuneiform inscriptions of the event fill every blank space.

Steel of the vultures celebrates the victory of Eannatum, of Lagash, over the Umma city state.

Eannatum is Larger than everyone else

Conceptual Representation.. The portrayal of people seen from fixed point, using fixed properties.

Cuneiform suggest Eannatum is born from the semen of the God Enlil implanted in his mother’s womb
Standard of Ur, Iraq 2600BCE

https://youtu.be/Nok4cBt0V6w

Video going into close detail of the standard steele.

Inlaid Lapis Lazuli imported from Afghanistan. Wooden box substrate with shell and red limestone.

Inlay. A process of using thin veneers over a wooden substrate.
Akkaad 2332-2150 BCE

Sargon of Akkad became ruler of the cities known as Sumer. (2332-2279BCE)

Akkadians were Semitic, Mesopotamian and spoke a language related to Hebrew and Arabic. Their language was different than the Sumerians but used the Sumerians cuneiform characters for their written documents.

Sargon-True King.

Akkadians introduced a new concept of royal power based on unswerving loyalty to the king rather than to the city-state.

Rulers are more present, central in iconography. Godlike.
Head of an Akkadian ruler, Nineveh, Iraq 2250 BCE

Copper Casted head of a ruler, survived total destruction when the Medes sacked Nineveh.

Attacking force popped the eyes out, made of inlaid stone or bitumen.

Common to find monarch portrait sculptures with gouged out eyes. Reflecting the conflict in the region.
Victory Steele of Naram-Sin, Sippar Iraq, Found Susa Iran 2254BCE

https://youtu.be/OY79AuGZDNI

New convention of steele, horizontal register format is changed, moving along diagonals, indicating the victory in this mountain top battle over the Lulliby. As Naram-Sin moves up the mountain in his horned helmet towards divinity.
Mud brick construction. 1000 years later than White Temple, Its condition is due to its preservation, white Temple isn't.

Neo Sumerian builders used baked bricks laid in bitumen, for the facing of the monument.
Gudea seated, Girsu, Iraq 2100 BCE.

Gudei the ensi of Lagash

His statues show him seated, hands clasped, shaven, always dressed in a long garment that leaves one shoulder exposed.

He is always depicted in black diorite, a rare and expensive stone, imported from Oman.
BABYLON 2100-1600BCE

A return of several independent city states return.

Periods of dominance by one city state, usually goes into decline after the powerful ruler is replaced by descendants. This is a large problem with monarchies throughout history. The most powerful king of the Babylonian city state was Hammurabi.
BABYLON 2100-1600BCE

Map depicting extents of Babylonian Empire CA 1750BCE.
Hammurabi

Hammurabi was famous for conquests, and his system of laws, known as Hammurabi's laws.

Eye for a eye.

If a man kills another man's slave, he shall pay one third a mina.

Steele with the laws of Hammurabi, set up at babylon, iraq, 1780 BCE
The Hittites toppled the Babylonian Empire.

Hattusa, near Boghazkoy, Turkey Modern day was the capital.

The Hittites left, returned home and left babylon in the hands of the Kassites.

Elam was the height of political power in Mesopotamia and appears in the bible in Genesis 10:22, they Carried the Steele of Hammurabi and the Steele of Naram-Sin to Elam

Reason why alot of these Artifacts were found in Iran.
Assyria

Assyrians were brutal warriors, and sacked Elam in 641 BCE.

Base of Power was in the Zargos Mountains of Northern Iraq.

Region extended from The Nile River to Asia Minor.
Palace of Sargon

Citadel - a fortress, typically on high ground, protecting or dominating a city.

As we are moving thru architectural artifacts of this region, a shift from buildings of gods/spiritual contexts, to pray for good weather and not floods, nor droughts, nor famine.. to architecture designed to defend attack.
Lamassu, from the citadel of Sargon II, Iraq, ca 720BCE.

https://youtu.be/2GrvBLKaRSI

Protected the gates of the palace and temple and the king from his enemies.

These were big, but would be dwarfed by the architecture surrounding. These were made from one large stone. Stone and Mesopotamia was an incredible feat of power.
Neo Babylonia

Assyrian Empire was never secure, they fought revolts across Mesopotamia throughout their reign. The Neo Babylonians took over notably King Nebuchadnezzar II 605-562BCE and held it until the Persian Conquests.
Ishtar Gate

Ishtar Gate, Babylon, Iraq ca 575 BCE

Nebuchadnezzar’s babylon was a mudbrick city, but all the main religious and state structures were faced in blue brick.

https://youtu.be/U2iZ83oIZH0

Nebuchadnezzar was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews

He was the source of the story of the Tower of Babel
Persian Empire

539 BCE Cyrus of Persia sacked Babylon, who may have descended from Elamites. Creating the Achaemenid Dynasty.

Akanamander the first Scientist existed in this time. Quote.
Persepolis

Persepolis, Iran, 521-465BCE

https://youtu.be/zVdfUB_ZABw

https://youtu.be/fwFVq-FPpuU

The persians left little written information behind, much of the information around is from Greek writings, their main enemy.
Persian Columns

Cyrus the Great was responsible for picking the site of Persepolis but was Darius I who started construction in 515 BCE.

Not a lot of written record but it is speculated that the construction of the city was out of a desire to project Imperial Power.

The City was Sacked by Alexander the Great 330 BCE.

Persian Architecture shows an active exchange of ideas of all civilizations from Persia, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean There is a mix of styles.
Statue of Persian Mastiff, Persepolis, Iran.
Sasanian Empire/Greco Influences

Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Empire in 330BCE

After Alexander’s Death former generals founded the Seleucid Dynasty.

Sasanians under Artaxerxes, 241 BCE founded the new Persian empire/Sasanian Empire. Kept the Greeks and Romans in Check on their eastern borders, Empire ended 651 CE.
Palace of Shapur I

Palace of Shapur I, Ctesiphon, Iraq 250CE