



Semitic Mesopotamia
Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #5

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, October 5
Gilgamesh Essay due
- Thursday, October 15
Midterm Exam
- Sunday, September 20
Responses for Week 3 Due

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Four things today

- Gilgamesh
- Writing
- Semitic Mesopotamia
- Sargon's empire

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Questions from the Responses

- How real life events inspired the story of Gilgamesh?
- I'd like to find out *why* Enkidu lost his bond with nature.
- I'm also eager to know if Enkidu eventually comes to regret what he had lost when he left the wilderness.
- I would like to find out more about the ordinary lives of the people there and would like more of a look into it. I want to see what they would talk about and how they would unbiasedly view the leader.
- I would wanna know more about the backstory on how Gilgamesh was two thirds god and one-third human.

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Questions about whatever

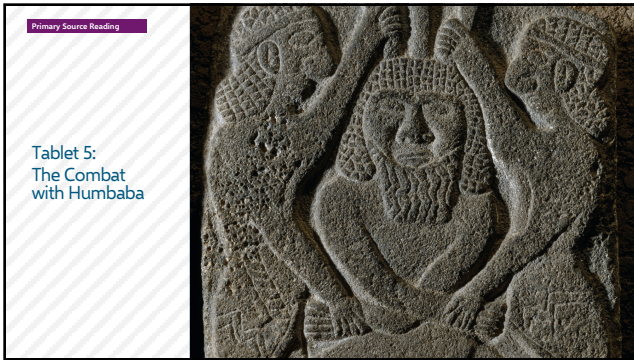


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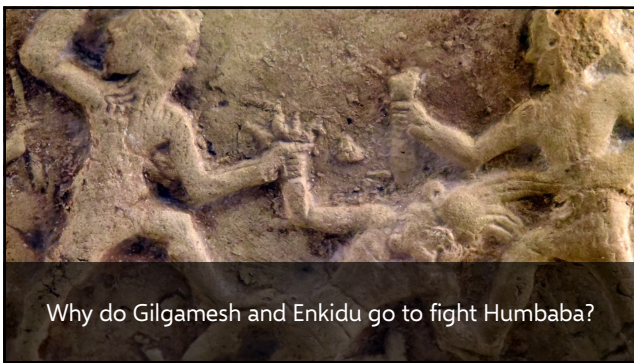


Gilgamesh

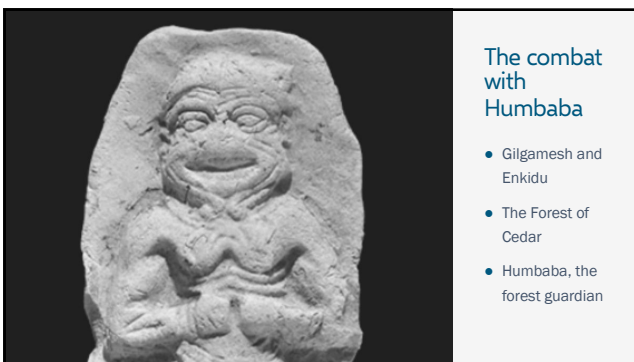
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[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

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Writing a Position Paper

- Link on Resources page
- Structure, research, citations, etc.

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Ancient Civilisations

Choose your topic from one of the three prompts below

Option A: The mortal and the divine. Choose any of the mortal characters from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and discuss his or her relationship with the gods. (Note: your best bet is either Gilgamesh or Enkidu. *Utnapishtim* is also a possibility.) What does the Epic show us regarding Sumer's take on religion and the gods, and what it means to be human?

Option B: Gender in Sumerian society. Choose any of the female characters from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and discuss her relationship with the other characters and Sumerian society. (Note: your best bet is Shamash, Ninsun and Inanna are also possibilities.) What does the Epic show us regarding gender expectations and the roles of women in Sumerian culture?

Option C: Life and death. Mortality is one of the major themes of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, but what is the epic saying about it? What does the Epic show us regarding Sumerian ideas of death and legacy, and how Sumerian culture thought about death?

Find three moments from the Epic that are strong examples of your topic.

Option A: For the 'mortal and divine' option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* showing your character interacting with or contemplating the gods.

Option B: For the 'gender' option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* showing your character's actions or behavior and how it relates to her role as a woman in Sumerian society.

Option C: For the 'life and death' option, find three moments from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that involve death or mortality—either an actual death, or discussion of death and mortality.

Write a 3- to 4-page essay in which you take a position on Sumerian culture.

You'll need an Introduction ... State what you believe the Epic shows us about the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of ancient Sumer in a way that answers the question in the prompt you chose (This is your thesis statement.)

... a Body ... Describe and discuss, one by one, each of the three moments you found from the Epic. For each section, discuss what the evidence tells us about ancient Sumer.

... and a Conclusion. Tie your examples and assertions together and show how they support your overall thesis.

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Structure of an interpretive essay

Introduction ■ State the problem (some say ... others say ...) ■ Give your thesis (I believe...)
First reason ■ ASSERTION #1 ■ Evidence from primary or secondary sources ■ Discussion of how the evidence demonstrates your thesis
Second reason ■ ASSERTION #2 ■ Evidence from primary or secondary sources ■ Discussion of how the evidence demonstrates your thesis
Third reason ■ ASSERTION #3 ■ Evidence from primary or secondary sources ■ Discussion of how the evidence demonstrates your thesis
Conclusion ■ Address counterarguments ■ Connect your "reason" sections together ■ Restate your thesis as having been demonstrated

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Evidence vs. discussion

Assertion

War elephants have been used in previous conflicts. King Porus, for example, had used elephants against Alexander in the battle of the Hydaspes in 326 BCE, as a key element of a larger force. Porus's "squadron" of over 200 elephants was critical in helping to keep Alexander out of India, starting with literally blocking Alexander's passage of the river even before the engagement began.^[1] Reportedly, Alexander saw his horses as particularly vulnerable, both from the elephants causing the horses to bolt if the larger beasts advanced and from the noise.^[2] He used elephants to guard his camp during battle, along with a small company of men.^[3] In the encounter itself Porus put his elephants front and center while deploying troops behind and in the wings though difficult to control, they nonetheless fatally blunted the effectiveness of Alexander's cavalry and phalanx charges, which had been so devastating against other enemies.^[4] Only when the elephants were exhausted did Alexander make any headway against the Indian forces.^[5]

Evidence

Discussion

Here we see the unexpected versatility of elephants thoughtfully employed in battle. Elephants weren't merely for terrifying the infantry; they could be used cunningly to prevent the passage of armies, or to ensure the security of the camp with minimal human assistance. Their effect on cavalry horses could not be ignored, and was more reliable a cause of disruption and disadvantage. Their intimidation factor as enormous beasts, and the effect of encountering such enormous beasts, was augmented by the evidence of power and wealth such displays evinced: merely the solid presence of hundreds of magnificent, ornately decorated brutes proved to the officers and men of Alexander's campaign-worn forces that Porus was a formidable foe, even before those beasts were deployed against the hapless armies opposing them.^[1]

Citations

[1] Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.11.5, 5.11.6, 5.11.8, 5.11.9. For the battle of the Hydaspes, see 5.11-18.5.
[2] Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.12.8 & 5.13.4.
[3] Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.12.4-5.
[4] Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.12.1-18.1.
[5] Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.17.4-5.

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Footnotes and bibliographies

Prophets are consistently shown in the fifth century to be outside the social structure of the community, and yet at the same time they are presented as manifestations of the feminine idea. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu's situation as a man, a citizen, and as a counterpart to Gilgamesh is all made possible by the barshi Shamash, who performs "the work of a woman" — the masculine transformation of a male beast of the wild into a valuable member of society on equal footing to its king. The most famous woman in fifth-century Athens was Aspasia, who started as a trained consort (called a *hetaira*) and ended as a madam. She stood separate from conventional society, yet was still seen as an empowered embodiment

Bibliography

George, Andrew R. 2003. *The epic of Gilgamesh: the Babylonian epic poem and other texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*. London: Penguin Books.

Primorcy, Sarah B. 1995. *Golden women, wives, and slaves: Women in classical antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books.

Stanton, G. R. 2003. "Why did Caesar cross the Rubicon?" *Historia* 52: 67-94.

West, Thomas G., Plato, Aristophanes, and Grace Stary West. 1998. *Four texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology and Criton and Aristophanes' Clouds*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹ George, 7.
² Primorcy, 89.

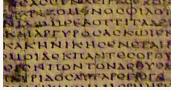
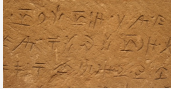
2 A footnote points to an item in the bibliography and adds a page number.

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Writing

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Forms of writing

PICTOGRAPHS	SYLLABARIES	ALPHABETS
Each character represents a word or a concept	Each character represents a syllable (consonant + vowel)	Each character represents a sound
		
Cuneiform	Linear B	Greek
		
Hieroglyphs	Archaic Cypriot	Latin

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Cuneiform



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Hieroglyphs

- Roughly contemporary with cuneiform
- Used for formal writing and records

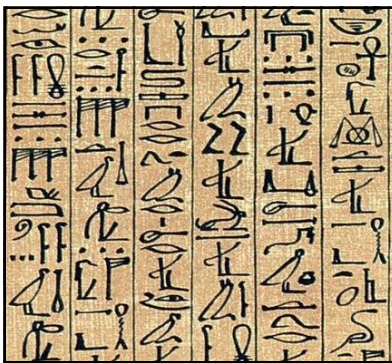
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Hieroglyphs: cartouche

- Within a cartouche, the first syllable is sounded out to make proper names

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From stone to papyrus

- Papyrus is made from woven reeds
- Fluidity of ink version leads to a more informal script
- Still difficult to learn

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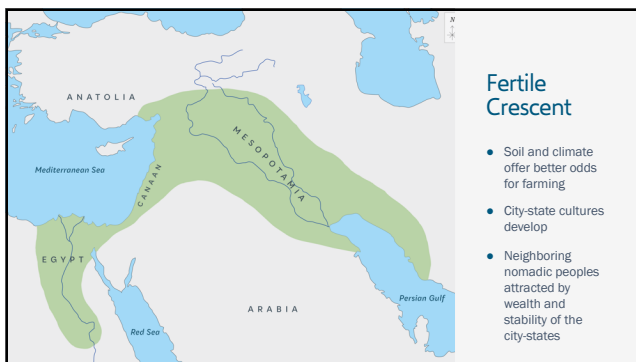
The phonetic alphabet

- Bronze Age scripts are pictographic or syllabic
- Many characters with a high learning curve
- No phonetic scripts until the Iron Age

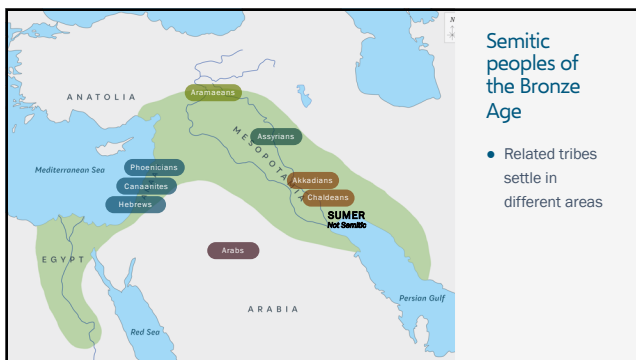
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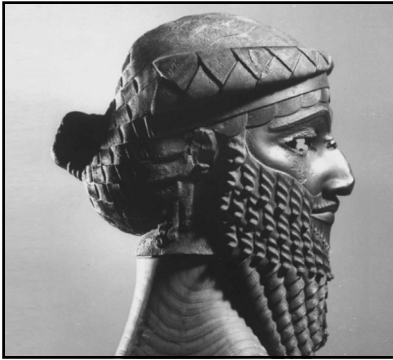
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Sargon and Akkad

- Akkad becomes a strong city-state
- King Sargon I extends control over more and more of Mesopotamia

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Akkadian Empire

- Economic dominance
- Military victories
- Feudal rule over vassal states

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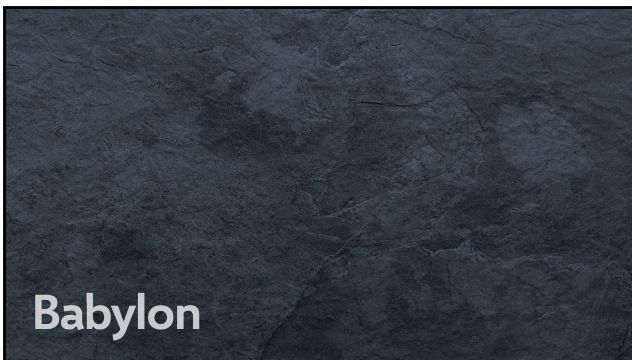
Sargon's Empire

- Control of distant resources
- Political unity
 - Connecting disparate peoples
 - Autocratic rule
 - Defortification of cities
- Economic unity
 - Goods
 - Access to resources not available locally
 - Ideas

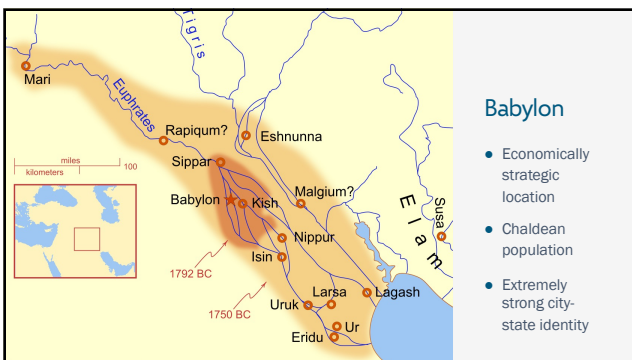
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Marduk

- Babylon has thousands of god and goddesses
- Marduk dominant
 - Patron deity of Babylon
 - Judges other gods as well as the living and the dead
- Henotheism: many gods, one dominant

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The Old Babylonian Empire

- Around 1900-1600 BCE
- Absorbed culture and stories of conquered peoples
- Babylon as a center of science and natural history, especially astronomy

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How does the Code of Hammurabi change things?

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Code of Hammurabi

- Unified legal system emphasizes benefits of empire
- Consistent rules for guilt and sentencing
 - From city to city
 - From judge to judge
- Public law
 - Justice associated with the people, not just nobility
 - Known laws/punishment minimizes arbitrary/corrupt rulings
- State supersedes family/local
 - Emphasis on center rather than parts
 - Makes possible a sense of identity with the larger whole

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