IMAGES OF POWER:
ANCIENT NEAR EAST: FOCUS
(Sumerian Art and Architecture)
TITLE or DESIGNATION: White Temple and its Ziggurat

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Ancient Sumerian

DATE: c. 3500-3000 B.C.E.

LOCATION: Uruk (modern Warka, Iraq)
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT:

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Statues of Votive Figures, from the Square Temple at Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar)

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Ancient Sumerian

DATE: c. 2700 B.C.E.

MEDIUM: gypsum inlaid with shell and black limestone
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT:

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Standard of Ur from the Royal Tombs at Ur

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Ancient Sumerian

DATE: c. 2600-2400 B.C.E.

MEDIUM: wood inlaid with shell, lapis lazuli, and red limestone
IMAGES OF POWER:
ANCIENT NEAR EAST: SELECTED TEXT
(Sumerian Art and Architecture)
SUMERIAN ZIGGURATS

Online Links:

Ziggurat - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Architecture of Mesopotamia - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Sumer - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Uruk - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ziggurat of Ur - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ziggurat of Ur – Smarthistory

Sumerian Art - Smarthistory

Iraq- The Cradle of Civilization - Michael Wood on YouTube
ART of the ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Online Links:

Architecture of Mesopotamia - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Sumer - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Standard of Ur - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

sumerianshakespeare.com

The Standard of Ur - Smarthistory (video)

Mesopotamia – YouTube

Standard of Ur - Iraq's Archeological Past - Penn Museum

Mesopotamian Masterpieces - Smithsonian Magazine
The temple complexes at their cores became the Eanna District and the Anu District dedicated to Inanna and Anu, respectively. Inanna is the Sumerian goddess of sexual love, fertility, and warfare. Unlike the Eanna district, the Anu district consists of a single massive terrace, the Anu Ziggurat, dedicated to the Sumerian sky god, Anu.
The **ziggurat**, derived from an Assyrian word meaning “raised up” or “high,” is a uniquely Mesopotamian architectural form. Mesopotamians believed that each city was under the protection of a god or gods to whom the city’s inhabitants owed service, and they built imitation mountains, or ziggurats, as platforms for those gods.

The main room atop the White Temple at Warka (or Uruk), or **cella**, where sacrifices were made before the statue of the god, is a narrow hall that runs the length of the temple and is flanked by smaller chambers.
A stairway leads to the top but does not end in front of any of the temple doorways, necessitating two or three angular changes in direction. This "bent-axis" approach is the standard arrangement for Sumerian temples, a striking contrast to the linear approach the Egyptians preferred for their temples and tombs.

Maintenance of mud-brick architecture, in general, meant adding new coats of mud plaster to the walls, floors, and roofs from time to time to keep the building dry. In the Sumerian temple, however, the addition of mud plasters, renewed at least annually, was more than simple upkeep. It became part of a ritual of purification that included the replastering of all the temple furniture as well as of the walls. Oftentimes splashes of white paint or whitewash were cast onto the walls during this ritual.
It is possible to posit that in Sumer much of life was focused on the temples of the gods. Individual deities owned their own cities and territories. For example, Inanna, a complex goddess of many aspects including both love and war, owned Uruk; Nanna, the moon god, possessed Ur; and Ningirsu, a fertility god as well as a warrior god, retained Lagash.

The best known ziggurat was at Babylon (7th-6th cents. BC), the biblical Tower of Babel, which was some 300 ft. high and had seven stages. At the top was the shrine of the local deity, where a sacred marriage was performed annually. The tower is represented on neo-Babylonian seals.

Many rooms of this “house” of the god were filled with mud-brick furniture in the form of other altars and offering tables and included, as well, places for building fires and stations for pouring liquids.
The city-state's agricultural production would be “given” to Innana, the patron goddess of the city, and stored at her temple. Harvested crops would then be processed (grain ground into flour, barley fermented into beer) and given back to the citizens of Uruk in equal share at regular intervals. The head of the temple administration, the chief priest of Innana, also served as political leader, making Uruk the first known theocracy.

We know many details about this theocratic administration because the Sumerians left numerous documents in cuneiform script.
Ziggurat at Ur (modern day Iraq), c. 2100-2050 BCE
One of the largest and best-preserved ziggurats of Mesopotamia is the great Ziggurat at Ur. Small excavations occurred at the site around the turn of the twentieth century, and in the 1920s Sir Leonard Woolley revealed the monument in its entirety.

The Ziggurat at Ur and the temple on its top were built around 2100 B.C.E. by the king Ur-Nammu of the Third Dynasty of Ur for the moon goddess Nanna, the divine patron of the city state. The structure would have been the highest point in the city by far and, like the spire of a medieval cathedral, would have been visible for miles around, a focal point for travelers and the pious alike. As the ziggurat supported the temple of the patron god of the city of Ur, it is likely that it was the place where the citizens of Ur would bring agricultural surplus and where they would go to receive their regular food allotments. In antiquity, to visit the ziggurat at Ur was to seek both spiritual and physical nourishment.
Sumerian votive statues placed within the cella of a Sumerian temple.
Certainly the shrine could not have been open to everyone— not even to all the temple personnel— and, in fact, access was probably limited to only a few who served the god’s own special needs.

It is perhaps for this very reason that during the Early Dynastic period a special type of sculpture— often called a worshipper statue or a votive figure—became popular.

The statues, which were images that literally embodied the essence of the worshipper, were dedicated to the god and stood on benches or offering tables before the divine presence in the cella.

Some are inscribed with simple dedications giving the name of the god and the profession and name of the donor.
Statuettes from the Temple of Abu at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), c. 2700-2600 BCE, gypsum

Cuneiform texts reveal the importance of fixing on a god with an attentive gaze, hence the wide-open eyes. These stand-ins are at perpetual attention, making eye contact and chanting their donors’ praises through eternity.
The largest male statue has no attributes of divinity and is thought to represent an important or wealthy person dedicating himself to the god Abu.

All the statues probably represent worshippers of varying status whose sizes were determined by the amount of money their donors paid for them. The larger figures may be priests, and the smaller figures, laypersons.

Rigid and attentive, they stand as if in perpetual prayer. Their enlarged eyes, inlaid with shell and black limestone convey the impression of dread and awe, visual testimony to the sense of human apprehension in the face of divine power.
The altars, tables, benches, and other protuberances grew to such great size that they became like free-form sculptures so dense that movement within the holiest of rooms, the cella, became virtually impossible. Certainly the shrine could not have been open to everyone— not even to all the temple personnel— and, in fact, access was probably limited to only a few who served the god’s own special needs.

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Once the statue was offered and became part of the temple, it could not be disposed of profanely. Instead groups of statues, perhaps after the donor died, were either buried beneath floors in the cella or other temple rooms.

What was important was not precisely where they were put when discarded but rather that they were kept within the temple.
The ancient Sumerians came from Mesopotamia, the “land between two rivers.” The surplus of storable food created by the Sumerians allowed the population of this region to settle in one place, instead of migrating as hunter gatherers.

Sumer was also the site of early development of writing, progressing from a stage of proto-writing in the mid 4th millennium BCE to writing proper in the 3rd millennium. The text seen here in the so-called Stele of the Vultures is written in Sumerian cuneiform script.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>SAG Head</th>
<th>NINDA Food Ration</th>
<th>GU To Eat</th>
<th>AB Cow</th>
<th>APIN Plough</th>
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Standard of Ur, c. 2700 BCE

The artifact was found in one of the largest royal graves at Ur. Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations in Iraq in 1927-28 uncovered the artifact in the corner of a chamber, lying close to the shoulder of a man who may have held it on a pole.

For this reason Woolley interpreted it as a standard, giving the object its popular name, though subsequent investigation has failed to confirm this assumption.
Each side of the reconstructed work presents a series of scenes displayed in three registers, upper, middle and bottom. The two mosaics have been dubbed "War" and "Peace" for their subject matter, respectively a representation of a military campaign and scenes from a banquet.

The "War" panel shows the king in the middle of the top register in hierarchical proportion, standing taller than any other figure, with his head projecting out of the frame to emphasize his supreme status – a device also used on the other panel.
In the uppermost register of the “war side,” soldiers present bound captives (who have been stripped naked to degrade them) to a kinglike figure, who has stepped out of his chariot. The chariots are the earliest known representation of wheeled vehicles.
Each city, as long as it could, maintained a jealous independence, and indulged itself in a private king. It called him *patesi*, or priest-king, indicating by the very word that government was bound up with religion.

The despot lived in a Renaissance atmosphere of violence and fear; at any moment he might be dispatched by the same methods that had secured him the throne.

Here, for the first known time on a large scale, appear some of the sins of civilization: slavery, despotism, ecclesiasticism, and imperialistic war. The priest-king led the army, regulated the supply and distribution of food, and provided political and religious leadership.
The royal prince, in his younger days, seen on the top register of the Standard of Ur, as described on the “war side”. In one hand he would have held a spear or battleax (which is now lost due to damage) imitating the soldiers standing in front of him.

Across his shoulder he carries a royal scepter. The scepter belongs to his father, since a royal scepter symbolizes the right to rule, and here the prince is still too young to be a reigning monarch.

A royal scepter was found in the same tomb as the Standard of Ur. To whom does it belong? The gold bands around the scepter were originally in the form of cylinder seal impressions, which would identify the owner. Unfortunately, these seals are no longer recognizable.
"Peace" portrays a banquet scene. The king again appears in the upper register, sitting on a carved stool on the left-hand side.

Corpses of attendants and musicians were found accompanying the remains of the kings. Unlike ancient Egyptian tombs, the dead were not buried with provisions of food and serving equipment; instead, they were found with the remains of meals, such as empty food vessels and animal bones. They may have participated in one last ritual feast, the remains of which were buried alongside them, before being put to death (possibly by poisoning) to accompany their master in the afterlife.
The middle register shows a procession where the people bring forth the abundance of the Land; sheep, cattle, goats, fish, etc. The scene depicted is part of a religious ceremony, led by a man with his hands held in the "prayer position". The procession is a thanksgiving celebration to mark the victory of the king.

The people bring forth their goods voluntarily, and all the men depicted are Sumerian, except for the last two. Second from the left on the bottom row is a man with curly hair. He looks different than the Sumerians, who have clean-shaven heads. He wears a different kind of belt and he wears a shorter skirt, since it cannot be seen hanging beneath the ram he is herding. He has always been described as the man who represents the people from "faraway places" who are the friends and allies of the Sumerians.
In the bottom register, many men who wear the distinctive angled-skirt are seen. These are the defeated enemy. The goods they carry are not voluntary contributions, but tribute; which is only to be expected. They lost the battle on the "war side" of the Standard of Ur, so it's inevitable that they be seen on the "flip side" of the standard carrying tribute to the victors. Only the defeated enemies in the procession carry a burden. None of the Sumerians carry a load, not even the donkeys carry a burden.
The *Standard of Ur* has been reconstructed as a hollow wooden box inlaid with a mosaic of shell, red limestone, and *lapis lazuli*. The lyre (or harp) depicted here is similar to one found also in the ancient Royal Sumerian graves at Ur.

Right: Headdress of Queen Pu-abi of Ur, Mesopotamia, 2550 BCE

Pu-abi's "death pit" contained the remains of more than a dozen ladies-in-waiting in "full regalia".
The approach to the burial chamber had been "guarded" by five men with copper daggers. The harpist "seated" at the corner still accompanied his/her "divine" queen to the next world. Close by, the remnants of two wooden frames with many separate parts were found.

The modern reproduction became a challenge for Woolley (shown above with an original lyre). He reconstructed the object, but was never happy with the result.
The front wooden panel of the sound box of the royal lyre from Ur is representative of third millennium instrument decoration. The panel, inlaid with gold, lapis lazuli, and shell, is decorated with four scenes. The top scene, a typical ancient Near Eastern heraldic tableau, depicts an unclothed man holding two bearded bulls with human faces.

In the next scene, a wolf with a knife in his belt carries a table laden with boar’s head and a sheep’s head and leg. Following the wolf, a lion carries a jar to the feast.

In the third scene, a donkey plays a naturalistic bovine-lyre while a bear appears to be clapping and singing. A jackal sits facing the bovine head of the harp. He shakes a rattle and beats a drum in his lap.

The bottom scene shows a scorpion-man followed by a goat carrying two vessels. This tableau may be related to passages in the epic of Gilgamesh, a legendary Sumerian king about whom many stories formed a cycle of tales. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the scorpion-man is a guardian at the place where the sun rises.
Woolley dubbed this statuette the “ram caught in a thicket” as an allusion to the biblical story of Abraham sacrificing a ram. It actually depicts a goat eating the leaves of a tree. One of two such objects excavated from The Great Death Pit, the other is housed at the British Museum.

Little of the original Ram survived when Woolley excavated it, which he did by pouring wax on it and using waxed muslin strips to stabilize it.

In Woolley’s original reconstruction of the Ram, he miscalculated the height of the animal and placed the tree too deeply into the base, causing the Ram’s legs to dangle above the tree’s branches.
Perforated relief of Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash, limestone, Early Third dynasty, 2550-2500 BCE
This votive plaque, which would have been hung on the wall of a shrine through its central hole, illustrates the chief priest and king of Lagash, Ur-Nanshe, helping to build and then commemorate the opening of a temple of Ningirsu, the patron god of his city. The top portion of the plaque depicts Ur-Nanshe helping to bring mud bricks to the building site accompanied by his wife and sons. The bottom shows Ur-Nanshe seated at a banquet, enjoying a drink, again accompanied by his sons. In both, he wears the traditional tufted woolen skirt called the kaunakes and shows off his broad muscular chest and arms.
The Third Dynasty of Ur, also known as the Neo-Sumerian Empire or the Ur III Empire, refers simultaneously to a 21st to 20th century BCE Sumerian ruling dynasty based in the city of Ur. It came to preeminent power in Mesopotamia after centuries of Akkadian and Gutian Kings. It controlled the cities of Isin, Larsa, and Eshnunna.
Gudea was a ruler, or ensi. Gudea chose the title of “ensi” (town-king or governor), not the more exalted “lugal” (Akkadian “sharrum”); though he did style himself “god of Lagash”.

Gudea claimed to have conquered Elam and Anshan, but his inscriptions emphasize the building of irrigation channels and temples, and the creation of precious gifts to the gods.

Early statues of Gudea were made of limestone, steatite, and alabaster; later, when wide-ranging trade-connections had been established, the more costly exotic diorite was used.
These portraits of Gudea stood in temples where they could render perpetual service to the gods and intercede with the divine powers on his behalf. His statues show him seated or standing, hands tightly clasped, head shaven, sometimes wearing a woolen brimmed hat, and always dressed in a long garment that leaves one shoulder and arm exposed.
These statues are dedicated to the gods of Lagash, such as Ningirsu. Inscriptions of some of the statues reveal through dreams how Ningirsu commanded Gudea to build temples in his honor.

The statue seen above is of unique interest because Gudea has a temple plan drawn on a tablet on his lap.
IMAGES OF POWER:
ANCIENT NEAR EAST: ACTIVITIES and REVIEW
(Sumerian Art and Architecture)
The largest seated figure on the uppermost register can be identified as the patesi or priest-king. The seated figures with cups are likely honoring the priest-king at a banquet. The entertainers at the far right are carrying a harp or lyre, similar to that found in the royal tomb alongside the Standard of Ur.

This object was excavated by a man named Leonard Woolley. It was discovered within a royal tomb.

The blue stone used to fill in the negative space in each register was extremely costly. It is called lapis lazuli.

Only the defeated enemies in the procession carry a burden. None of the Sumerians carry a load, not even the donkeys carry a burden.

The lower registers appear to depict figures bringing goods voluntarily to the king, perhaps to honor his victory or power.

The man on the right of the middle register displays his hands in “prayer” or “obedience” suggesting participation in a ritualistic, sacred act.
All of the figures are depicted in profile and they are regularly placed within the composition so as to suggest a sense of order or discipline.

As one's eye moves from left to right on the bottom register, the chariots increase with speed, trampling over enemies of the Sumerians.

As opposed to the “peaceful” mood on the other side of this object, the large central figure appears to preside over an event that can best be described as war.

The naked figures seen in the upper and middle registers are most likely prisoners of war.

Across his shoulder, a young prince is shown carrying a royal scepter. The scepter belongs to his father, since a royal scepter symbolizes the right to rule, and here the prince is still too young to be a reigning monarch.

The depiction of chariots are a reminder that the Sumerians are credited with the invention of the wheel.
STUDENT PRESENTATION #1:

What do the remains of the ziggurat and temple at Uruk reveal about the beliefs and practices of the Sumerian peoples?
STUDENT PRESENTATION #2:

Analyze ways in which these two objects reflect Sumerian concepts of power and rule.
VIDEO: Standard of Ur on Smarthistory