

THE SUMERIANS: THEIR HISTORY, CULTURE,
AND CHARACTER

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GEOGRAPHY AND THE SUMERIAN PEOPLE

- Known as Babylonia in classical times
- Lower half of Mesopotamia, roughly identical with modern Iraq from north of Baghdad to the Persian Gulf
- Unpromising land seemingly doomed to poverty and desolation.
 - Climate: hot and dry
 - Soil: arid, wind-swept, and unproductive
- But Sumerians (3000 BCE) were endowed with an unusually creative intellect and a venturesome, resolute spirit.
- Developed what was probably the first high civilization in the history of man.

SUMERIAN CONTRIBUTIONS: HIGHLIGHTS

- Flair for technological invention and resourcefulness
 - First to come upon the idea of irrigation
- Construction: Scarce building timber - cut and dried the huge and plentiful marsh reeds - learned to bake the river clay and mud for construction
- Developed system of Writing on Clay: used all over the Near East for 2000 years
- Also for their ideas, ideals, and values
- Recognized mortal limitations, and helplessness in the face of death and divine wrath
- Prized wealth and possessions, rich harvests, well-stocked granaries, folds and stalls filled with cattle, successful hunting in the plain, and good fishing in the sea
- Stress on ambition and success, pre-eminence and prestige, honor and recognition
- Stressed personal rights - compiled laws and law codes

THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

- Dependence on irrigation fostered a spirit of co-operation
 - Complicated process requiring communal effort and organization
 - To ensure this, a power stronger than the individual landowner or even the single community was mandatory: hence, the growth of governmental institutions and the rise of the Sumerian state.
- Role of the state in trade and use of military force:
 - Practically no metals and very little stone and timber, the state was forced to obtain the material essential to its economy either through trade or military force.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

- Less than a century ago not only was nothing known of Sumerian culture; the very existence of a Sumerian people and language was unsuspected.
- The discovery of the Sumerians and their language was quite unlooked for and came quite unexpectedly.
- The resurrection of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Sumerian peoples, long buried under their desolate mounds, or tells, is an eloquent and magnificent achievement of nineteenth-century scholarship and humanism.

ASSYRIOLOGY AND DECIPHERING THE LANGUAGE

- In 1700, the script first received its appellation "cuneiform,"
- At Persepolis, found trilingual inscriptions -- 3 different types of cuneiform script representing 3 different languages
- Dominant figure in early cuneiform studies - the brilliant, intuitive, and persevering Englishman, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson
 - Determined the Sumerian language was not alphabetical, but syllabic and ideographic
 - With this new insight into the Babylonian script, the decipherment could go on apace.
- The new science, now became known as Assyriology
- Study of Assyrian - first called Babylonian and gradually became known

EARLY DISCOVERIES: LAGASH AND NIPPUR

- Babylonian? Assyrian? Akkadian? Sumerian?
 - The name Akkad applied to the Semitic people of Assyria and Babylonia
 - Sumer referred to the non-Semitic inhabitants
 - The term "Akkadian" continued to be used for decades.
- The first significant excavation on a Sumerian site was begun in 1877 at Telloh, the ruins of ancient Lagash.
- Nippur - of the largest and most important mounds in Iraq
 - Excavated 30,000 tablets and fragments in 4 campaigns – inscribed in the Sumerian language and ranging over more than two millenniums, from the second half of the third to the last centuries of the first millennium B.C.
- Three great pioneers, Hincks, Rawlinson, and Oppert
- Prior to excavations at Lagash and Nippur, practically all the source material for the study of the Sumerians and their language consisted of the bilingual syllabaries excavated in the Ashurbanipal library in the ruins of Nineveh

SUMERIAN CITIES: ERECH, URUK, KISH

- Administrative, economic, and lexical texts date from 25th century B.C and older
- Kish
 - Unearthed monumental buildings, ziggurats, and cemeteries and tablets
 - 2800 B.C. - earliest Sumerian inscriptions of any sizable quantity known at the time
- Uruk
 - Called Uruk by the ancient Sumerians and Akkadians
 - Erech in the Bible
 - Sumer's earliest monumental buildings known at the time, dating from about 3000 B.C.
 - From Biblical Erech we turn to Biblical Ur, or Urim as it was known to the Sumerians, the city which was excavated from 1922 to 1934
- Close to Ur, some four miles to the north, lies a small low mound known as al-Ubaid which, in spite of its size, has played a large role in Mesopotamian archeology.

THE END OF SUMERIAN DOMINANCE

- Third Dynasty of Ur, End of Sumerian Civilization
 - Sumerians lost their predominant political position in Mesopotamia
 - With the beginning of the reign of Hammurabi of Babylon, for all intents and purposes the Sumerians ceased to exist as a political, ethnic, and linguistic entity.
- 3000 Years of Dominance:
 - From around 4500 B.C., when the first settlements were established in Sumer, to about 1750 B.C., when the Sumerians ceased to exist as a people, is a stretch of close to three thousand years.

DEVELOPMENT OF CUNEIFORM WRITING

- Once the cuneiform system of writing had been developed from its earlier pictographic state, it must have occurred to one or another of the temple priests and scribes to put down in writing the ruler's building activities and votive offerings and thus record them for all to see and remember unto distant days.
- Gradually, the scribes became more confident, original, and communicative; and by the twenty-fourth century B.C., we find relatively intricate and diversified writing.

FIRST DOCUMENTS

- Military summaries, economic and administrative documents
 - Dealings and transactions recorded in these documents had to be fixed in time for practical purposes
- The King List: Named the years by outstanding religious and political events. This method of dating provides us with valuable historical information.
 - Records the names of most of the kings of Sumer and the lengths of their reigns from what, for the Sumerians
 - The beginning of history--the time in the distant past when "kingship (first) descended from heaven"-up
- Man's first social reforms based on a sense of freedom, equality, and justice

OTHER TYPES OF SUMERIAN LITERATURE

- "Royal Correspondence," the letters that went back and forth between the rulers and their officials.
 - Spoke of motives, temptations, rivalries, and intrigues
- The humiliating and disastrous invasion of the country by the ruthless and barbaric nomadic hordes from the mountains to the east.
 - Nine Sumerian epic tales
- "Lamentation"
- "Wisdom" literature

ANCIENT INHABITANTS OF SUMER

- Settled between 4500 and 4000 B.C.
- Both the rivers and the cities must have been named by a people that did not speak Sumerian
- Pre-Sumerian settlers of Sumer - lived long before writing was invented and left no telltale records
 - Basic agricultural techniques and industrial skills were introduced in Sumer by their nameless predecessors, the Proto-Euphrateans
- Ubaid people, responsible for the cultural remains first unearthed in the tell known as al-Ubaid not far from Ur were enterprising agriculturists who founded villages and towns
- Semitic hordes began to infiltrate their settlements
 - Followed Proto-Euphrateans into Sumer and that as a result of the cross-fertilization fertilization of their two cultures, there came into being the first relatively high civilization in Sumer, one in which the Semitic element was probably predominant.

FIRST CITIES AND RULERS

- First recorded ruler - Etana of Kish, 3rd millennium B.C.
 - In the King List as "he who stabilized all the lands."
 - Man's first known empire-builder
- City of Erech, known by the older name Eanna
 - Meskiaggasher and his son Enmerkar
 - Epic tales of Lugalbanda, who was deified and accompanied Enmerkar on his Aratta campaign
- Dumuzi, a ruler who became the major figure in a Sumerian "holy-marriage rite" and "dying-god" myth - left a deep impression on the ancient world
 - Dumuzi is followed, per the King List, by Gilgamesh
 - Gilgamesh - the hero par excellence of the ancient world
 - Adventurous, brave, but tragic figure
 - Symbolizes man's vain but endless drive for fame, glory, and immortality
- Bitter struggle for supremacy by the rulers of Kish, Erech, and Ur weakened Sumer and impaired its military might.

LAGASH

- Lagashite historians respected the truth and recorded facts as they took place
 - Still, the pious and religious character of the style they developed is sometimes obscure and confusing
- Sargon, a Semite,- founder of the powerful Dynasty of Akkad
 - began the Semitization of Sumer that brought about the end of the Sumerian people
 - A military leader of genius as well as an imaginative administrator and builder with a sense of the historic significance of his deeds and achievements.
 - Sargon eliminated Lugalzaggesi from the political scene. Made a surprise attack against Lugalzaggesi's capital, Erech, "smote it," and destroyed its walls.
 - He built the city of Agade, not far from Kish
 - The word Akkadian has come to designate today the Mesopotamian Semites in general.
 - Raised Agade to new heights of power and glory, only to see it come to a bitter and tragic end.

DYNASTIES

- The fourth ruler of the Isin dynasty, Ishme-Dagan, boasts in the hymns of restoring Nippur to its former glory
- Early in his reign he promulgated a new Sumerian law code, - the model of the renowned code of Hammurabi - written in the Akkadian, not Sumerian.
- Hammurabi
 - In the previously unimportant city of Babylon, this outstanding Semitic ruler came to prominence
 - After 3 decades of trouble - attacked and defeated Rim-Sin of Larsa, as well as the kings of Elam, Mari, and Eshnunna, - about 1750 B.C., became ruler of a united kingdom reaching from the Persian Gulf to the Habur River.
 - With Hammurabi the history of Sumer comes to an end, and the history of Babylonia, a Semitic state built on a Sumerian foundation, begins.

SOCIETY: THE SUMERIAN CITY

- Sumer, in the third millennium B.C - a dozen city-states
 - Walled cities
 - Massive staged tower, a ziggurat,
 - decorated with patterns of zigzags, lozenges, and triangles
 - City-governor – the *ensi*, who a peer among peers
- Military leadership became a pressing need, and the king, known as the "big man," came to hold a superior place.
 - At first he was selected and appointed by the assembly at a critical moment for a specific military task.
 - But gradually kingship with its privileges became hereditary - considered the hallmark mark of civilization.
- Sumerian economy was relatively free
 - Even a king could not merely confiscate property whenever he wished but had to pay for it.

CLASS STRUCTURE AND SLAVERY

- Class structure:
 - We see that the population consisted of four categories:
 - Nobles,
 - Commoners
 - Clients
 - Slaves
 - "Town meeting" - consisted of the members of the nobility
- Slavery
 - Many slaves were prisoners of war
 - Freeman might be reduced to slavery as a punishment
 - Parents could sell their children as slaves in time of need
 - Slaves were therefore usually well treated

SOCIETY AND REFORMS: URUKAGINA OF LAGASH

- 2350 B.C., Urukagina of Lagash - implemented reforms
- The word "freedom" was used for the 1st time in recorded history; the word *amargi* means "return to the mother"
 - The ruling dynasty founded by Ur-Nanshe around 2500 B.C.
 - Smitten with grandiose ambitions, some of the rulers resorted to imperialistic wars and bloody conquests.
 - Even death brought no relief from levies and taxes.
 - General state of injustice, cynicism, and self-aggrandizement induced by corrupt and oppressive actions
 - Urukagina
 - Removed the ubiquitous bailiffs, tax collectors, and other parasitic officials
 - Stopped injustice and exploitation suffered by the poor at the hands of the rich. Artisans and apprentices no longer had to beg for their food.
- Ur and the Temenos
 - Ur - population of close to 200,000
 - Except for the *temenos*, the sacred area of the city with temples and ziggurat, the Sumerian city was not attractive.

MATH AND MEDICINE

- Mathematical school texts – two types:
 - Tables and Problems
 - Tables include
 - Tabulations of reciprocals, multiplications, squares and square roots, cubes and cube roots
 - Sums of squares and cubes needed for the numerical solution of equations and exponential functions
 - Coefficients giving numbers for practical computation (like the approximate value of $\sqrt{2}$)
 - metrological calculations giving areas of rectangles, circles, etc.
 - Problem texts deal with Pythagorean and cubic numbers
- Medicine
 - Free from the magic spells and incantations which are a regular feature of the cuneiform medical texts of later days; not a single deity or demon is mentioned in the text.
 - Practiced his medicine along empirico-rational lines.

ART AND CULTURE

- Noted for their skill in sculpture
 - The earliest sculptors were abstract and impressionistic
 - Emotional and spiritual intensity rather than modeling skill
 - Sculptors - skillful in carving figures on steles and plaques
- Dress
 - Common form of dress - a kind of flounced skirt, over which long cloaks of felt were sometimes worn
 - Later the chiton, or long skirt, took its place
- Poetry and song flourished in the Sumerian schools.
 - Beautifully constructed harps and lyres were excavated in the royal tombs of Ur.
 - Percussive instruments, such as the drum and tambourine, were also common, as were pipes of reed and metal.
- Cylinder seal, a small cylinder of stone engraved with a design that became clear and meaningful when rolled over a clay tablet or the clay sealing of a jar.

SUMERIAN INDUSTRY

- Chisel-workers
- Textile industry - the most important means of commerce
- Agriculture:
 - The instructions which the farmer gives his son are from the god Ninurta, who was the "trustworthy farmer of Enlil," a leading deity
- Date palm, from which a sweet substance known as lal, or "honey," was extracted
- Animals
 - Donkey - commonly used for transportation
 - The Ox - useful domesticated animal
- Fowler, caught birds with a whole arsenal of nets. The net was the implement most commonly used for catching fish
- Beer, a popular beverage among the Sumerians
 - Goddess in charge of beer preparation, Ninkasi, a name which literally means "the lady who fills the mouth."
 - Beer had its divine and sublime qualities for the Sumerian poets and sages.

RELIGION: THEOLOGY, RITE, AND MYTH

- Developed religious ideas and spiritual concepts which have left an indelible impress on the modern world, especially by way of Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism.
- Became the basic creed and dogma of much of the ancient Near East.
- Emotional valve for man's love of pageantry and spectacle.
- Scribes of the *edubba*, created the richest mythology of the ancient Near East,
 - cut the gods down to human size, but did so with understanding, reverence, and above all, originality and imagination

COSMOLOGY

- An-ki
 - In the beginning was the *an-ki*, the “heaven earth”
 - And there was also *lil*, whose approximate meaning is wind, air, breath, spirit
 - First, there was the primeval sea, surrounded by a boundless sea in which the universe is fixed and immovable
- Controlled the cosmos in accordance with well-laid plans and laws
 - The cosmos and all its manifold phenomena must be tended, supervised, guided and controlled by living gods that had human form
 - They must be immortal; otherwise the cosmos would turn to chaos and end upon their death
- Originated the doctrine of the creative power of the divine word
 - Analogical inference based on observation of human society: if a human king could achieve almost all he wanted by command, so must god have that power

LAWS AND SOCIETY – THE *ME*

- First recorded attempt at culture analysis
- The Sumerian word *me*
 - A set of rules and regulations assigned to each cosmic entity and cultural phenomenon for the purpose of keeping it operating forever in accordance with the plans laid down by the deity creating it
- Divided civilization as he knew it into over one hundred elements, each of which required a *me* to originate it and keep it going

GODS AND CULTURE

- The Sumerian gods in their myths were entirely anthropomorphic
- Although the gods were immortal, they also had to have their sustenance; they could become sick to the point of death
- Middle of the third millennium B.C. at the latest, we find that hundreds of deities, at least by name, existed among the Sumerians.
- Of all these hundreds of deities the four most important were
 - Heaven-god, An,
 - Air-god, Enlil,
 - Water-god, Enki,
 - Great mother-goddess, Ninhursag

ENLIL, ENKI, AND NINHURSAG AND INANNA

- Enlil, the air-god - most important deity in the Sumerian pantheon, played a dominant role in rite, myth, and prayer
 - Glorified as a most friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans
- Enki, god of wisdom, the 3rd of the leading Sumerian deities
 - In charge of the abyss, or, in Sumerian, the *abzu*.
 - Organized earth in accordance with Enlil's wishes, who only made the general plans. Details and execution were left to Enki, the resourceful, skillful, handy, and wise.
- Ninhursag, - Mother-goddess – 4th among the creating deities
 - Also known as Ninmah, "the exalted lady."
 - Known as Nintu, "the lady who gave birth."
- Three important astral deities:
 - Moon-god, Nanna, also known by the name of Sin,
 - Nanna's son, the sun-god, Utu;
 - Nanna's daughter, Inanna, known to Semites as Ishtar

SUMERIAN VALUES

- Free will
 - Man was created by the gods solely for their benefit
 - Hierarchy of the gods and humanity
 - Dependent status of humanity
 - Divine decision that death was man's lot and that only the gods were immortal
- Good
 - Cherished goodness and truth, law and order, justice and freedom, righteousness and straightforwardness, mercy and compassion
- Evil
 - Naturally abhorred their opposites, evil and falsehood, lawlessness and disorder, order, injustice and oppression, sinfulness and perversity, cruelty and pitilessness
- Justice and Freedom
 - Urukagina, proudly records that he restored justice and freedom to the long-suffering citizens of Lagash

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

- Discovered man's first recorded attempt to deal with the age-old and yet very modern problem of human suffering
 - More than a thousand years before the composition of the Book of Job
- But one valid and effective recourse, which is to continually glorify his god and keep wailing and lamenting before him until he turns a favorable ear to his prayers.
- Also find documents that shed considerable light on the life of the dead in the world below as pictured by the Sumerian sages

THE NETHER WORLD

- Night and the Nether World
 - After the sun sets it continues its journey through the nether world at night, turning its night into day
 - The moon spent its "day of rest," the last day of each month, in the nether world
- Prayers for the Dead
 - Gods of the nether world - called upon to utter prayers for the dead
- "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World."
- The Gate in Erech
 - A mortal could sit down in front of it and go through it
 - A hero like Enkidu might descend to the nether world

THE NETHER WORLD (CONT'D.)

- Deities of the Nether World
 - Some seem to belong there
 - Others were originally sky-gods condemned
- "Man-Devouring" river
 - Had to be crossed by the dead
 - Boatman who ferried the dead across to their destination
- "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World," – most all available
 - A place to which one descends and from which one ascends
 - Through an opening or a gate situated in Erech
- Ruled by Ereshkigal and Nergal, and special entourage of deities
 - 7 Anunnaki and numerous unfortunate sky-gods
 - Constable-like officials known as *galla's*
- Judgment of the dead by the sun-god, Utu, and to a certain extent by the moon-god, Nanna –
 - Favorable judgments - dead man's soul would live in happiness and contentment

RITUAL, HIEROS GAMOS, AND TEMPLES

- Rite and ritual were more important than private piety
- *Hieros Gamos*
 - Significant New Year rite - holy marriage, representing the god Dumuzi, and one of the priestesses, representing the goddess Inanna
 - Ensure fecundity and prosperity of Sumer and its people
- Sumerian temples - niche for the god's emblem or statue and an offering table of mud brick in front
 - Nanna temple of the city of Ur
 - Ziggurat - the staged tower which became the hallmark of Mesopotamian temple architecture
 - Ornamentation - covering the mud-brick with small clay cones that had been dipped in different colors
 - Daily sacrifices offered - animal and vegetable foods, libations of water, wine, and beer, and burning incense
 - Feasts lasted several days - celebrated with special sacrifices and processions.

ERECH, KINGSHIP, INANNA AND EANNA

- Erech, important Sumerian city-state
 - Dumuzi, 3rd millennium B.C., prominent ruler
 - Made a deep impression upon future generations
 - Tutelary deity - Inanna, goddess of sexual love, fertility, and procreation
 - Dumuzi and Inanna - closely intertwined in the early myth and ritual of Erech
- 3rd millennium BC, - becoming more nationally minded - theologians systematize and classify Sumerian pantheon
- Erech's main temple, the *Eanna* – Inanna, the main deity
 - The spiritual head of the temple was the *en*
- King of Sumer must become the husband of the life-giving goddess of love, Inanna of Erech,
 - Ensure fecundity and prosperity of the land and people
 - Accepted dogma - carried out in ritual practice by the consummation of a marriage ceremony, which was probably repeated every New Year, between the king and a hierodule from Inanna's temple in Erech

SUMERIAN MYTHOLOGY

- Much cosmological and theological reflection in Sumerian myth
- Heirs of the illiterate minstrels and bards of earlier days
 - Composed narrative poems about the gods that were appealing, inspiring, and entertaining
 - Their main literary tools were imagination and fantasy
- Major protagonists relatively few in number:
 - Air-god, Enlil,
 - Water-god, Enki,
 - Mother-Goddess, Ninhursag (also known as Nintu and Ninmah), the god of the south wind, Ninurta
 - Moon-god, Nanna-Sin,
 - the Bedu-god, Martu,
 - Goddess Inanna, and her unlucky spouse, Dumuzi.

DILMUN (PARADISE), NINHURSAG AND ENKI

- Parallels with the Biblical paradise story – the idea of a paradise, a garden of the gods, originated with Sumer
 - Dilmun is a land that is "pure," "clean," and "bright," a "land of the living" - knows neither sickness nor death but lacks fresh water
 - Water-god, Enki, orders Utu, the sun-god, to fill it with fresh water - turned into a divine garden, green with fruit and meadows
 - Enki sends messenger to bring him the fruit
 - The angered Ninhursag (mother-goddess) pronounces the curse of death on Enki and disappears from among the gods.
 - Also known as Ninti - *ti* also means "to make live" - "the Lady who makes live" and "the Lady of the rib.
 - Fox will bring back Ninhursag if rewarded, but he is destroyed. She seats Enki by her vulva, and after inquiring which eight organs of his body ache, she brings into existence eight healing deities, and Enki is brought back to life and health.

INANNA'S DESCENT TO THE NETHER WORLD

- One of the best preserved Sumerian myths
 - Ambitious, aggressive, demanding goddess of love, Inanna (Akkadian Ishtar)
 - Husband, the shepherd-god, Dumuzi (Biblical Tammuz)
 - Marriage ends badly - Dumuzi dragged to Hell
- Inanna descends to the nether world to make herself its mistress and raise the dead
- Approaches Ereshkigal's temple of lapis lazuli - turned into a corpse and hung from a stake.
- 3 days and nights pass. Ninshubur, her servant, seeing that his mistress has not returned, asks the gods to help. Enlil and Nanna refuse help. Enki, devises a plan to restore her to life.
 - Entrusts to them the "food of life" and the "water of life"
- Dumuzi, not concerned that his wife suffered torture and death, has "put on a noble robe, sat high on a throne," and celebrates her misfortune
- Dumuzi - carried off by demons of the underworld to die in the nether world as a substitute for his angered and embittered wife
- Geshtinanna, Dumuzi's sister, visits and interprets her brother's foreboding dream, warns the demons of the nether world, the *galla's*, are closing in on him and that he must hide immediately.
- Dumuzi comes to a tragic end, a victim of Inanna's love and hate.

INANNA AND THE ME'S

- Enki has under his charge all the divine decrees that are fundamental to civilization.
 - *Me* - over 100 culture traits relating to man's political, religious, and social institutions, to the arts and crafts
- Enki gets drunk on beer with niece Inanna, who through trickery, gets the *me* from him - takes off in the boat of heaven
- Enki regrets his munificence and decides to prevent at all costs the "boat of heaven" from reaching Erech
 - He dispatches his messenger together with a group of sea monsters to follow Inanna and her boat to the first of the seven stopping stations that are situated between the Abzu of Eridu and Erech.
- Finally Inanna and her boat arrive safely at Erech, - amidst jubilation and feasting on the part of the delighted inhabitants, she unloads the precious divine *me's*

ORIGIN OF FLOOD STORY

- This is the long-known Flood-story, so important for comparative Biblical studies.
- Ziusudra, the Sumerian counterpart of the Biblical Noah, is then introduced in the story as a pious, god-fearing king who is constantly watching for divine dreams and revelations.
- When the text resumes, we find that the flood in all its violence has already come upon the earth where it rages for seven days and nights.
- At the end of that time, the sun-god, Utu, comes forth lighting and warming up the earth, and Ziusudra prostrates himself before him and offers him sacrifices of oxen and sheep.

LITERATURE: SUMERIAN BELLES-LETTRES

- 5000 tablets and fragments inscribed with a varied assortment of literary works unearthed - enable us to penetrate into their very hearts and souls.
- As literary products, the Sumerian belles-lettres rank high among the aesthetic creations of civilized man
- The Akkadians, that is, the Assyrians and Babylonians, took these works over almost in toto.
- The form and content of the Hebrew and Ancient Greek literary works were profoundly influenced by them.
- Literary output of the Sumerians increased with the centuries - they became prolific toward the end of the third millennium when the school, the *edubba*, came to be an important center of education and learning.
 - Composed in the *edubba* by the members of its staff rather than by priests

NARRATIVE MYTHS ABOUT INANNA

- Five myths in which Inanna plays the major role:
 - "Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech"
 - "Inanna and the Subjugation of Mount Ebih"
 - "Inanna and Shukalletuda: The Gardener's Mortal Sin"
 - "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World"
 - "Inanna and Bilulu"
- "Enki and the World Order," one of the longest and best preserved
 - Performs acts vital to the earth's fertility and productiveness.
 - Life-giving water / Plow, yoke, and furrow
 - Enki covers the plain with green vegetation, and cattle
 - Puts Uttu, the goddess of clothing, in charge of weaving cloth
- Inanna complains to Enki - he reminds she actually does have quite a number of special prerogatives
 - "the crook, staff, and wand of shepherdship"
 - "herdship"
 - oracular responses in regard to war and battle
 - the weaving and fashioning of garments
 - the power to destroy the "indestructible"
 - Gives her a special blessing.

EPIC LITERATURE

- Sumerians - first to create and develop epic literature consisting of heroic narrative tales in poetic form.
- Thirst for fame and name so characteristic of the ruling caste during a heroic age
- Epics – provide entertainment at the court banquets and feasts - recited to the accompaniment of the harp or lyre
- It is the deeds and exploits of the individual hero that are the prime concern of the poet, not the fate or glory of the state
- Outstanding differences between the Sumerian epic material and that of the Greeks, Indians, and Teutons.
- There is no attempt to articulate and integrate these episodes into a larger unit
- The heroes tend to be broad types, more or less undifferentiated, rather than highly personalized individuals.

GOVERNMENT

- First political assembly, a "bicameral congress," took place almost five thousand years ago
- Sumer, consisted of a number of city-states vying for supremacy over the land as a whole.
 - One of the most important of these was Kish - according to Sumerian legend, received "kingship" from heaven immediately after the Flood
 - But in time, Erech, kept gaining in influence and power until it threatened Kish's supremacy in Sumer
- Gilgamesh is determined to fight rather than submit to Agga, but first he has to get the approval of the citizens of Erech. He therefore goes before "the convened assembly of the elders of his city" with the urgent plea not to submit to Kish but to take up arms and fight for victory.

GILGAMESH AND ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH

- "Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living," is about man's anxiety about death and his desire to find an immortal name
 - His spirit is heavy as he sees men die and perish in Erech, "dead bodies floating in the river's waters."
 - Realizing bitterly that he must die, he is determined at least to raise up a name for himself before he dies.
 - He sets his heart on journeying to the far-distant "Land of the Living" to fell its famed cedars and bring them home
 - They cross 7 mountains, and find "the cedar of his heart." He fells it with his ax, and Enkidu cuts off its branches.
 - This act disturbs Huwawa - monster who guards the "Land of the Living," - has Gilgamesh fall into a coma
 - Enkidu pleads with him to turn back, for the monster is fearful and no one can withstand his attack.
 - Gilgamesh comes face to face with Huwawa and fastens a rope about him. Enkidu, the latter cuts off his neck.
 - Enlil sees Huwawa's severed head - utters a curse which dooms them to eternal wandering, scorched by burning sun.

GILGAMESH, ENKIDU, AND THE NETHER WORLD

- Huluppu-tree (perhaps a willow), planted on the banks of the Euphrates and nurtured by its waters, was uprooted by the South Wind and carried away.
- Inanna brought the tree to her city Erech, and planted it in her garden.
- Its trunk stood bare without branch or leaf
 - The snake who knows no charm had built its nest in the tree
 - The fierce Imdugud-bird had placed its young in its crown
 - The vampire Lilith had built her house in the middle
- Inanna, usually lighthearted and joyful, shed bitter tears
- Gilgamesh and the men of Erech cut down the tree and gave it to Inanna for her throne and couch.

SUMERIAN HYMNOGRAPHY AND GLORIFICATION OF DEITIES

- Hymnography – a carefully cultivated, highly sophisticated art in Sumer.
- Hymn to Inanna as the Venus star, noteworthy for its description of the *hieros-gamos* ceremony celebrating the union of the goddess and the king Iddin-Dagan of Isin on New Year's Day.
- Temple hymns :
 - Song of praise to the Ekur, Enlil's temple in Nippur
 - Hymn to the temple of the goddess Ninhursag at Kesh
 - A composition of over four hundred lines containing hymns to all the important temples of Sumer and Akkad.

LAMENTATIONS AND OTHER LITERATURE

- Two kinds of Sumerian lamentations:
 - Bewailing the destruction of Sumerian cities
 - Lamenting the death of the god Dumuzi
- Related to the lamentation is the elegy or funeral song
 - Intrinsic merit as literary efforts; they convey in imaginative poetic form the deep human passions and emotions generated by the tragic loss
 - First examples of the elegiac genre
 - Sumerian cosmology is revealed - the sun, after setting, continued its journey through the nether world at night and that the moon-god, Nanna, spent his "day of sleep," that is, the last day of each month, in the nether world.
- "Wisdom" compositions, consisting of disputations, essays long and short, and collections of precepts and proverbs.

DISPUTATIONS AND PROVERBS

- The disputation composition often started with a mythological introduction and ended with the dispute settled in favor of one or the other of the rivals by divine decision.
- "The Dispute between Summer and Winter" and "The Dispute between Cattle and Grain";
- "The Instructions of Shuruppak to His Son Ziusudra,"
 - uses the stylistic device of ascribing whole wisdom collections to presumably very wise rulers of the distant past.
 - Compiled around 2000 B.C., and attributed to King Shuruppak, father of Ziusudra, the Sumerian Noah, Sumerian sage
- Sumerian proverbs reveal a keen if not always flattering evaluation of the human scene and the drives and motives, the hopes and longings, and the paradoxes and contradictions which pervade it.

EDUCATION: THE SUMERIAN SCHOOL

- Sumer's supreme achievements were the development of the cuneiform system of writing and its system of education
- Perseverance of the anonymous, practically oriented Sumerian pundits and teachers who lived in the early third millennium B.C., - it was from Sumer that writing and learning spread the world over.
- There were schools throughout Sumer where writing was taught formally.
 - School "textbooks" dating from about 2500 B.C.
 - Junior scribes and "high" scribes, royal and temple scribes, scribes who were highly specialized for particular categories of administrative activities, and scribes who became leading officials in state and government.

THE EDUBBA

- The Sumerian school was known as edubba, "tablet house."
 - Original goal "professional" - training scribes to satisfy the economic and administrative needs of temple and palace
 - Widening curriculum, it came to be the center of culture and learning and creative writing in Sumer
- Sumerian scribal teachers devised a system of instruction consisting of linguistic classification - classified Sumerian language into groups of related words and phrases and had the students memorize and copy them until they could reproduce them with ease
- When the Semitic Akkadians conquered in the last quarter of the 3rd millennium B.C., the ancient professors prepared the world's oldest dictionaries.
 - The Semitic conquerors borrowed the Sumerian script and treasured Sumerian literary works, studying and imitating them long after Sumerian had become extinct

SUMERIAN CHARACTER: DRIVES, MOTIVES, AND VALUES

- The character and personality of Sumerians:
 - Major motivating forces of Sumerian behavior, the drive for superiority and pre-eminence with its great stress on competition and success.
 - Role of love, hate, and fear as motivating emotional drives in Sumerian conduct.

DUMUZI AND INANNA/MARRIAGE IN SUMER

- Dumuzi-Inanna courtship
 - Not the only deities whose marriage was preceded by a passionate love affair
- Songs sung by priestesses selected as brides for the king on the occasion of the *hieros-gamos* celebrated on New Year's Day.
 - Two such songs have come down to us, and these ring out with passionate love and sexual ecstasy.
- Not all marriages were for practical advantages; some motivated by love and desire
- Normal for Sumerian parents to love and care for their children and for children to love and heed their parents.
- Close and warm relationship between brother and sister as well as between parents and children. The brother takes the place of the father in some respects.
- Friendship and loyalty were highly prized in Sumer.

GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIP

- Man was created by the gods solely to serve and tend them - relationship corresponded to that of master-slave.
- However, the love of god for man followed the pattern of love between parents and children as well as between husband and wife
- It was the love of Inanna for Erech and its people that prompted her to go to Eridu and carry off the me's, the "divine laws," in the "boat of heaven," dangerous though this was.

LOVE OF COUNTRY AND INANNA

- Patriotism, love of country, and love of the home city, was a strongly moving force in Sumerian thought and action.
 - Inhabitants of a city were known as its "sons" and were considered a closely related, integrated unit.
 - Took pride in their city, god, and ruler and were ready to take up arms in their behalf.
- King's sacred, patriotic duty to defend the land from the enemies and bring security and well-being to "the Land"
- Inanna as the great lover and the great hater
 - Inanna - cruel, ambitious, aggressive, but not unattractive
 - Instead of groveling before his wife, Inanna, just ascended from the nether world, she became enraged and turned him over to the seven nether world demons
 - When the gardener Shukalletuda raped Inanna, she was so enraged that she sent three destructive plagues against Sumer in a vain effort to locate her abuser.
 - When Gilgamesh rejected Inanna's love proposals, she sent down the "bull of heaven" to ravage Erech.

FEAR AND LOVE

- Fear colors the Sumerian way of life.
 - From birth to death, feared parents, teachers, friends, fellow citizens, superiors and rulers, foreign enemy, the violence of nature, wild animals, vicious monsters and demons, sickness, death, and oblivion.
- Love of life pervades Sumerian civilization in all its forms and aspects: social, political, economic, and religious.
 - Closely allied to the love of life was the value put on material prosperity and well-being.
- Cherished goodness and truth, law and order, justice and freedom, wisdom and learning, courage and loyalty
- Mercy and compassion were treasured - numerous references to the special protective treatment accorded to widows, orphans, and refugees as well as to the poor and oppressed.
 - Realized they were only part of a larger humanity
- Seemingly far from ethical drive for pre-eminence and prestige, for victory and success. The will to superiority, the driving ambition for victory over a rival, was a pervading source of motivation in Sumerian behavior

DISPUTATIONS AND CONTESTS

- Many uninhibited and quarrelsome literary debates have come down to us. Their popularity indicates a behavioral pattern well known to and approved by the Sumerians.
- Aggressive penchant for controversy and the ambitious drive for pre-eminence provided the psychological motivation which sparked and sustained the material and cultural advances for which the Sumerians are known for: irrigation expansion, technological invention, monumental building, the development of a system of writing and education.
- The passion for competition and superiority carried within it the seed of self-destruction and helped to trigger the bloody and disastrous wars between the city-states and to impede the unification of the country as a whole, thus exposing Sumer to the external attacks which finally overwhelmed it.

THE LEGACY OF SUMER: THE SUMERIANS WERE THERE FIRST

- Sumerian influence, particularly at the religious and spiritual level, reached out for thousands of miles and in all directions.
- Sumerian courtiers, administrators, priests, and teachers had considerable knowledge of foreign countries.
- The Sumerian people-the "black-heads" as they called themselves from at least 2000 B.C. on - were only a part of this larger mankind
- Thought of themselves as a rather special and hallowed community more intimately related to the gods than mankind in general-a community noteworthy not only for its material wealth and possessions, not only for its powerful kings, but also for its honored spiritual leaders

INFLUENCE ON AKKADIANS AND BABYLONIANS

- There was friction between the Sumerians and the Semitic-speaking and kin-conscious Akkadians
- Amorites, commonly known as Babylonians because their capital was the city of Babylon, took over Sumerian culture and civilization lock, stock, and barrel.
- Except for the language, the Babylonian educational system, religion, mythology, and literature are almost identical with the Sumerian.
- Planted the Sumerian cultural seed everywhere in the ancient Near East. And this brings us to the legacy of Sumer down through the ages

SUMERIAN CITY-STATE AND GOVERNMENT

- City-state, which, in Sumer, developed out of the village and town in the second half of the fourth millennium B.C. and was a flourishing institution throughout the third millennium.
 - Found all over the ancient world from the Indus to the western Mediterranean.
 - In Egypt, for instance, the city-state never took root,
- One of the most characteristic features of the Sumerian city-state state throughout the greater part of the third millennium B.C. was written law
- They all go back to Sumerian prototypes; even Greece and Rome would probably never have had their written laws had it not been for the Sumerian penchant for keeping a record of their legal transactions.

SUMERIAN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

- Sumerians made their major contribution to future generations in mathematics by devising the sexagesimal system of place notation
- Invented the potter's wheel, wheeled vehicles, and sailboats
- Architecture was the major art of Sumer from earliest times
 - Construction of temples with their stone foundations and platforms, niched cellas, painted walls and altars, mosaic-covered columns, and impressive facades;
 - Architectural techniques were diffused over the ancient world.
- Made use of the dome, vault, and arch, and it is not improbable that the arch first came to Greece and Rome from contact with Babylonia, which had inherited it from Sumer.

RELIGION AND LITERATURE

- Fashioning statues of gods and men, may go back to Sumer
 - Conceived of the idea that the statue represented the ruler, standing before his god in unceasing prayer.
- Left a deep impress on their neighbors and the culture of modern man, especially through their influence on the ancient Hebrews and the Bible.
- Sumerian Learning:
 - Learned teachers and scribes were imported from Sumer to the schools of the neighboring lands
 - Scribes traveled to Sumer for special instruction in its famous academies. The result was a wide dissemination of Sumerian culture and literature.
- Cosmology, theology, ethics, and system of education - permeated the thoughts and writings of the peoples of the ancient Near East. Also, their literary forms and themes-their plots, motifs, stylistic devices, and aesthetic techniques.
- Most literary documents were composed about 2000 B.C.

INFLUENCE ON HEBREW AND AKKADIAN CULTURES

- Akkadian literary works known to Palestinian men of letters, including the Hebrews, and can be traced back to Sumerian prototypes, remodeled and transformed over the centuries.
- Abraham's birth in Ur of the Chaldees, around 1700 BCE
 - May have had acquaintance with Sumerian literature
 - Brought Sumerian lore and learning to Palestine
- Inherited ideas:
 - Creation of the Universe - primeval sea - united heaven and earth
 - Man fashioned of clay – imbued with the "breath of life."
 - Creation preceded by divine planning
 - Divine paradise - a garden of the gods
 - The Cain-Abel rivalry Motif
- To the Hebrews, the towering ziggurats could often be seen in a state of ruin and decay,
 - Symbols of man's feeling of insecurity and lust for power which brings upon him humiliation and suffering

GOD AND OTHER MOTIFS

- Personal God, each city had a tutelary deity
 - In return, glorified god with prayers, supplications, and sacrifices
- Psychologically, the Sumerian was more distant and aloof than the Hebrew-more emotionally restrained, more formal and methodical.
- The Plague Motif
- The "Job" Motif
- The Biblical Sheol, and, for that matter, the Hades of the Greeks, has its counterpart in the Sumerian