



NEAR EAST ART

Sumer, Assyria, Akkad, Babylon, Persia, Asia Minor



WHY IS IT THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION?

Shouldn't the cradle be central Africa,
or possibly Asia?

ANSWER

Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (in modern day Iraq), is often referred to as the cradle of civilization because it is the first place where complex urban centers appear.

ANCIENT SUMER

Greeks called the area Mesopotamia

PREHISTORIC VS. ANCIENT HISTORY

language and writing -
documents to study

ANCIENT HISTORY VS. THE COMMON ERA

The Common Era (CE) begins at the time of Christ

WHY USE COMMON ERA?

Why Have Some People Adopted BCE/CE? An important reason for adopting BCE/CE is **religious neutrality**. Since the Gregorian calendar has superseded other calendars to become the international standard, members of non-Christian groups may object to the explicitly Christian origins of BC and AD.

THE MODERN ERA

- The early modern era is around 1500 – 1800.
- The late modern era includes the 1800s through the end of WW II.
- Contemporary history is the end of WW II (1945) to present

EARLIEST DRAWN IMAGES

- Earliest images found in Africa 200,000 years ago
- Cave paintings most impressive pre-historic images
- Sumerian pictographs are dated around 3000 BCE
- Code of Hammurabi dated 1800 BCE
- Egyptian pictographs evolve into hieroglyphics around 3100 BCE

URUK OR PROTOLITERATE PERIOD

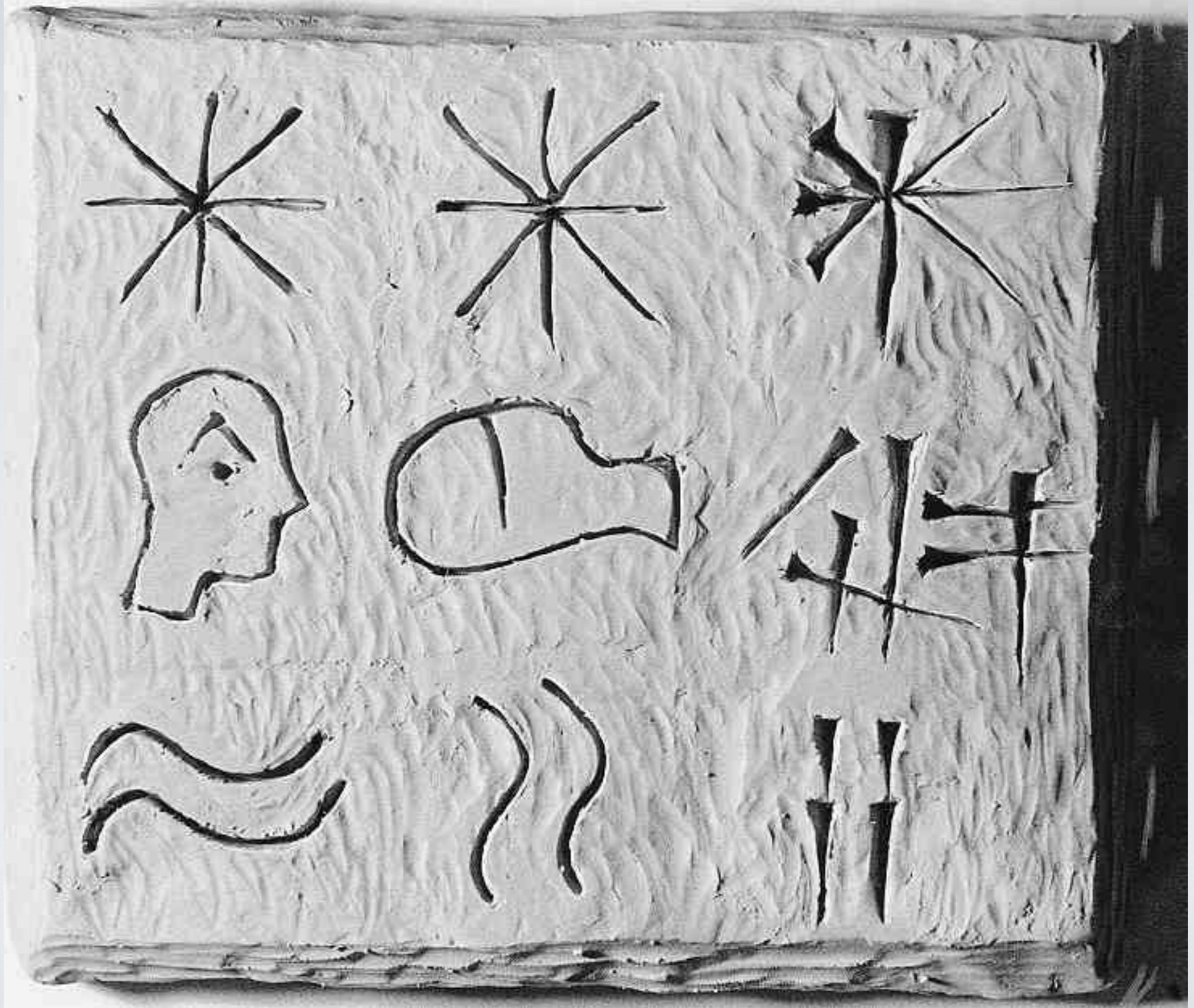
The Uruk period (ca. 4000 to 3100 BC; also known as Protoliterate period) existed from the protohistoric Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age period in the history of Mesopotamia, after the Ubaid period and before the Jemdet Nasr period.



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WRITING ARRIVES WITH CUNEIFORM

Cuneiform is a logo-syllabic script that was used to write several languages of the Ancient Middle East. The script was in active use from the early Bronze Age until the beginning of the Common Era. It is named for the characteristic wedge-shaped impressions which form its signs.



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MESOPOTAMIA

Mesopotamia is a region of southwest Asia in the Tigris and Euphrates river system that benefitted from the area's climate and geography to host the beginnings of human civilization. Its history is marked by many important inventions that changed the world, including the concept of time, math, the wheel, sailboats, maps, and writing.

NOTE: Mesopotamia = Sumer

THE CITY STATES

Hundreds of city states each worshipping their own god or goddess and ruled by a king vied for resources and power in Sumer.

NOTE: No living person has ever heard the Sumerian language. It is a lost language.

AGRICULTURE CREATES LARGE-SCALE CITIES

The ancient Near East, and the historical region of the Fertile Crescent in particular, is generally seen as the birthplace of agriculture. The first agricultural evidence comes from the Levant, from where it spread to Mesopotamia, enabling the rise of large-scale cities and empires in the region.

In the 4th millennium BCE, this area was more temperate than it is today, and it had fertile soil, two great rivers (the Euphrates and the Tigris), as well as hills and mountains to the north.

BEER & CEREAL

It is thanks to agriculture and the abundance of cereals that the great city-states and empires of Mesopotamia were able to rise. Supporting a large-scale urban population and the division of labor into specialized trades was only possible by moving away from subsistence farming to an organized agricultural system that provided enough surplus to feed a large non-farming population. In that sense, agriculture laid the foundation for civilization.

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

The Epic of Gilgamesh recounts the tale of the hero-king of ancient Mesopotamia. Gilgamesh has encounters with creatures, kings and gods and also provides a story of human relationships, feelings, loneliness, friendship, loss, love, revenge, and the fear of death.

NOTE: It is the first story recorded in writing.





NINEVEH





House MG22

North Palace

Nabu Temple

Ishtar Temple

Ziggurat

Southwest Palace



ZIGGURATS

A ziggurat is a pyramidal stepped temple tower that is an architectural and religious structure characteristic of the major cities of Mesopotamia (now mainly in Iraq) from approximately 2200 until 500 BCE. The ziggurat was always built with a core of mud brick and an exterior covered with baked brick.



Ziggurats are as emblematic of Mesopotamia as the great pyramids are of ancient Egypt. These ancient stepped buildings were created to be home to the patron god or goddess of the city. As religion was central to Mesopotamian life, the ziggurat was the heart of a city.

The word ziggurat means raised area. Broad at the bottom, these pyramid-shaped buildings had two to seven tiers, with each ascending tier smaller than the one under it. The top of the building was flat, and on it was a shrine or temple to the god where only priests could go. The entire building was made of sun-dried bricks in all the interior areas, with glazed fire-dried bricks facing outward. The facing bricks on each successive tier were glazed a different color. A series of staircases led to the top of the ziggurat for the priests to use.



The most famous ziggurat in history is the Tower of Babel – associated with the great ziggurat of Babylon known as *Etemenanki* – "the foundation of heaven and earth" – made famous from the story in the Bible (Genesis 11:1-9). The best-preserved ziggurat extant is the **Ziggurat of Ur** begun under the reign of Ur-Nammu (2047-2030 BCE) and completed under the reign of his son and successor Shulgi of Ur (2029-1982 BCE).

THE GREAT ZIGGURAT

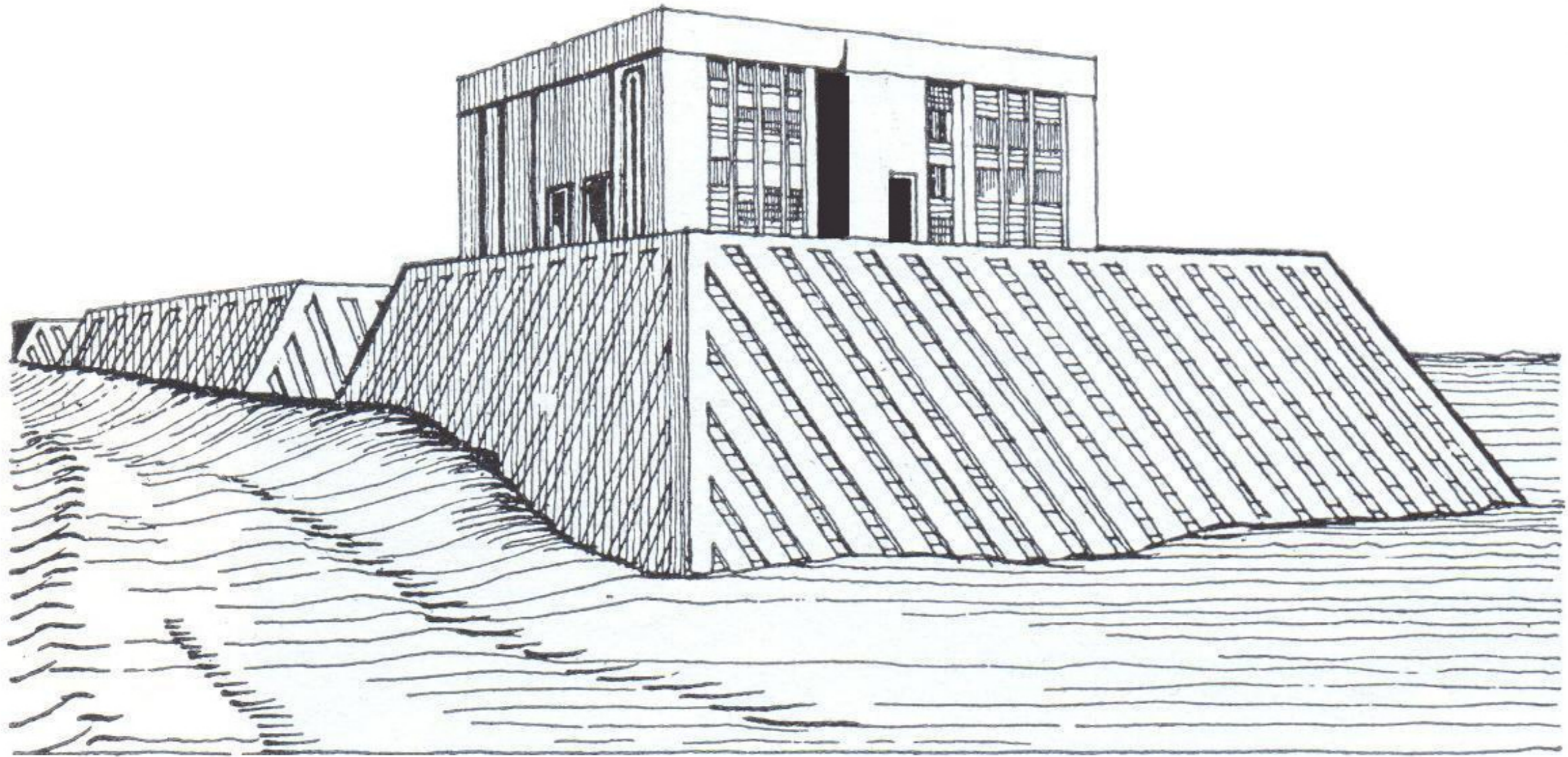
The Ziggurat (or Great Ziggurat) of Ur, meaning "temple whose foundation creates aura") is a Neo-Sumerian ziggurat in what was the city of Ur near Nasiriyah, in present-day Dhi Qar Province, Iraq. The structure was built during the Early Bronze Age (21st century BCE) but had crumbled to ruins by the 6th Century BCE of the Neo-Babylonian period, when it was restored by King Nabonidus. Its remains were excavated in the 1920s and 1930s by Sir Leonard Woolley. Under Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, they were encased by a partial reconstruction of the façade and the monumental staircase. The Ziggurat of Ur is the best-preserved of those known from Mesopotamia, besides the ziggurat of Dur Untash. It is one of three well-preserved structures of the Neo-Sumerian city of Ur, along with the Royal Mausolea and the Palace of Ur-Nammu (the *E-hursag*).



THE WHITE TEMPLE

Where is the white temple and its ziggurat?

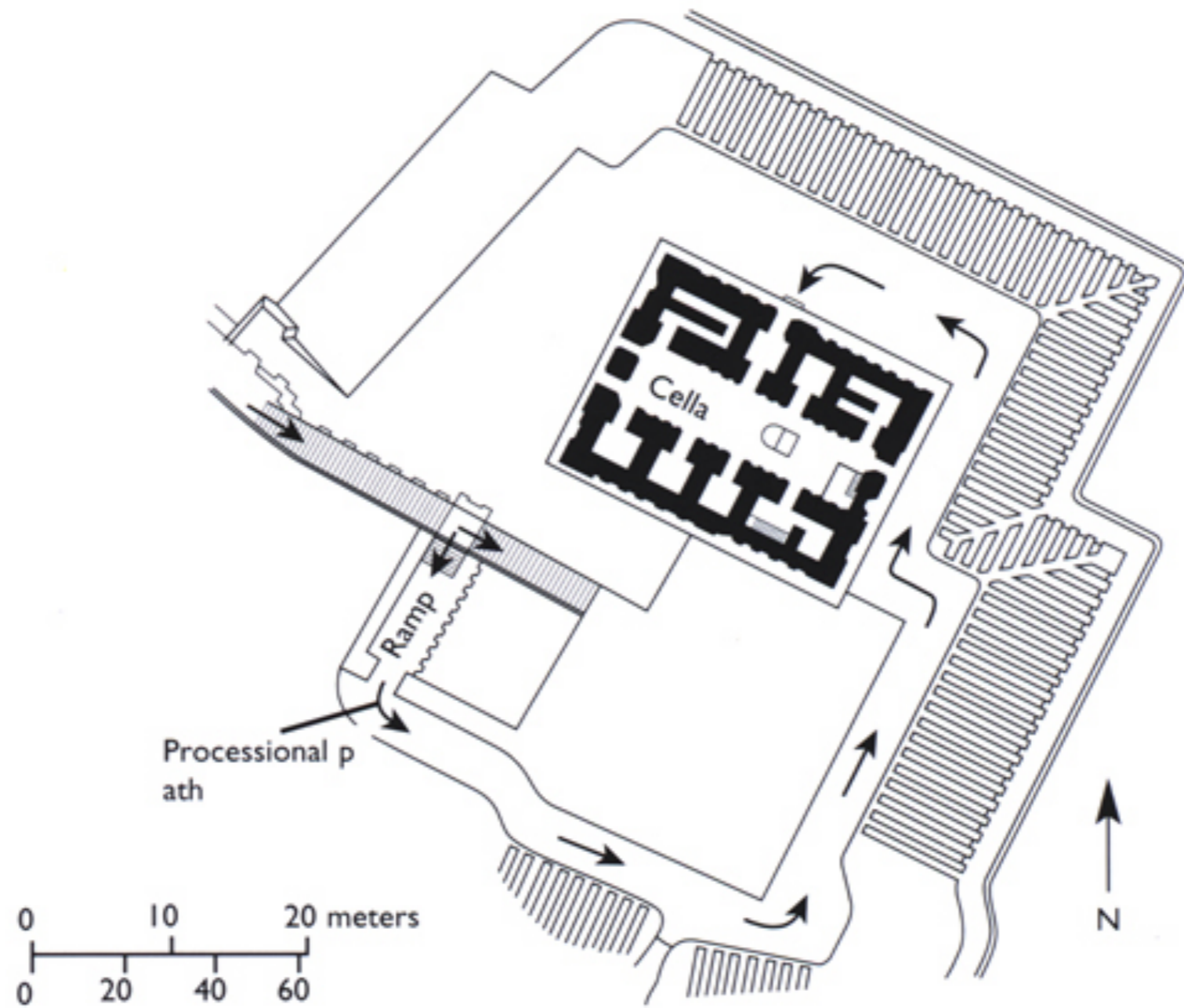
Uruk (modern Warka in Iraq)—where city life began more than five thousand years ago and where the first writing emerged—was clearly one of the most important places in southern Mesopotamia. Within Uruk, the greatest monument was the Anu Ziggurat on which the White Temple was built.



THE WHITE TEMPLE & ZIGGURAT,
AT WARKA ARCHAIC PERIOD B.C. 3500-3000







3-2. Plan of the "White Temple" on its ziggurat (after H. Frankfort)



© artefacts-berlin.de
Material: DAI

INANNA ISHTAR

What is Inanna the goddess of?

Inanna (Sumerian)/Ištar (Akkadian) is among the most important deities and the most important goddess in the Mesopotamian pantheon. She is primarily known as the goddess of **sexual love** but is equally prominent as the goddess of warfare.

SEPTEMBER 2003

“Near East archaeologists are celebrating the recovery of a priceless antiquity even as the situation in Iraq remains perilous. Last week the famed Warka mask, lost during the looting of the Iraq Museum in April, was found buried in a field north of the capital. An investigation by Iraqi police led them to a 2-meter-deep hole in a field north of Baghdad, where they recovered the 5000-year-old marble mask.”

RECENT HISTORY

Some researchers believe the mask represents the powerful Sumerian goddess Inanna and illustrates "the ultimate femme fatale," says Elizabeth Stone, an archaeologist at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. John Russell, an archaeologist at Boston's Massachusetts College of Art, adds that "the Warka lady exemplifies the classical ideal in sculpture 2500 years before the Greeks thought of it." It was made in the ancient city of Uruk (modern-day Warka). Because the mask was one of the museum's most valuable--and best known--pieces, archaeologists hoped it would eventually surface. "The sense is that it has been bouncing around Baghdad all summer, being basically too hot to handle," Stone says.



VOTIVE STATUES

The votive statues are of various sizes and usually carved in gypsum or limestone. They depict men wearing fringed or tufted fleece skirts, and women wearing fringed or tufted dresses draped over one shoulder. Many have inlaid eyes and painted hair. The statues are usually carved with the hands clasped, right over left, at the chest or waist in a gesture of attentiveness. Some figures hold cups or branches of vegetation. Standing figures often step forward with the left foot. Male heads are frequently shown bald but sometimes wear beards, while female figures can have a variety of hairstyles or headdresses. Facial characteristics offer little variation from one statue to the next.

VOTIVE STATUES

These statues embodied the very essence of the worshipper so that the spirit would be present when the physical body was not. Quite how, or indeed if, the statues were presented to the god is unknown, as none have been discovered in situ but rather found buried in groups under the temple floor, or built into cultic installations such as altars, or scattered in pieces in the shrine and surrounding rooms, perhaps having been damaged when the temple was plundered or rebuilt in antiquity. Hundreds of such statues or fragments have been excavated and at no other time in the history of the ancient Near East has nonroyal sculpture survived in such abundance.







ROYAL SCULPTURES

Sir Leonard 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 markhor goat eating the leaves of a tree. One of two such objects excavated from The Great Death Pit at Ur, 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.







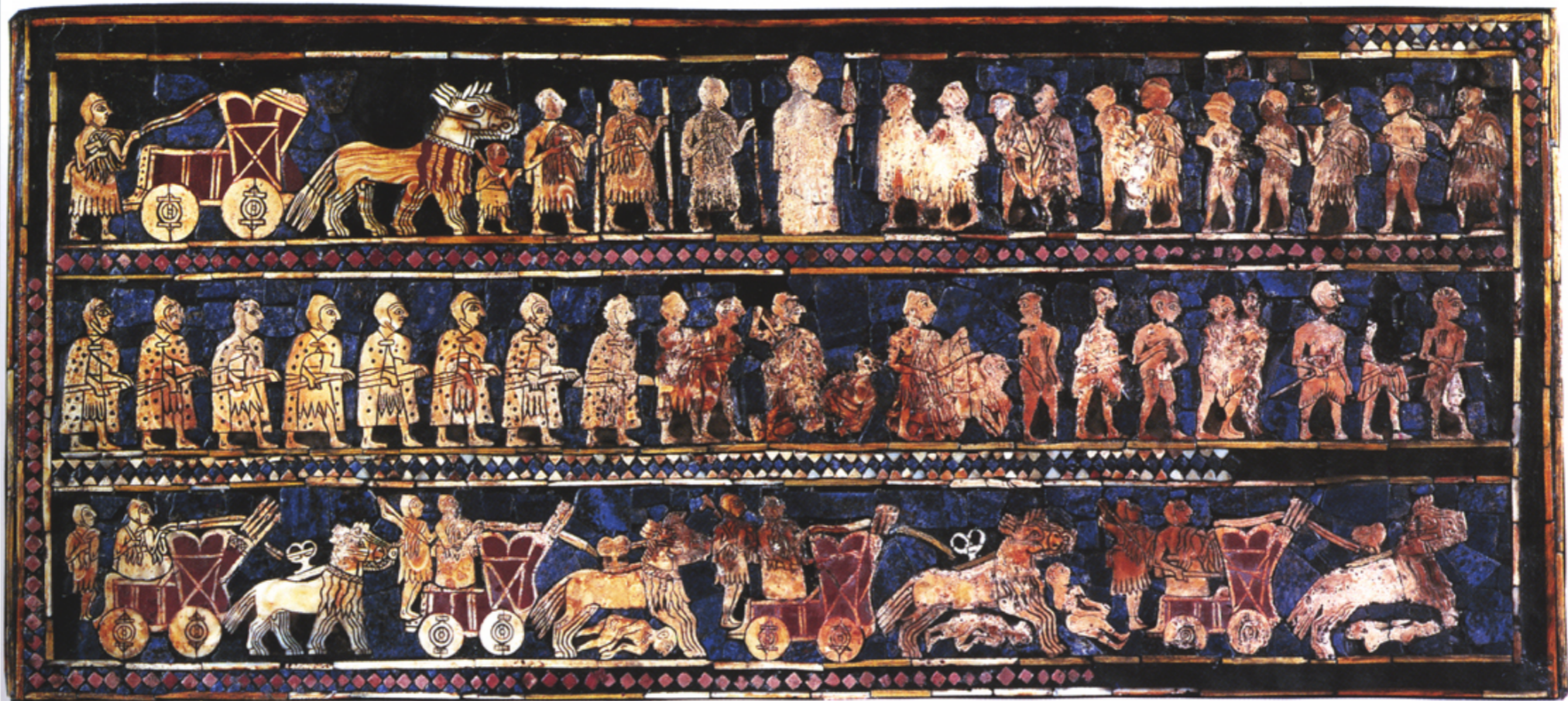
Upper left: sculpture as found during excavation

Center: pre-1998 restoration

Right: current state of the sculpture

STANDARD OF UR

"The Standard of Ur", decorated on four sides with inlaid mosaic scenes made from shell, red limestone and lapis lazuli, set in bitumen. One side shows a war scene; a Sumerian army with wheeled wagons and infantry charges the enemy; prisoners are brought before a larger individual, who is accompanied by guards and has his own wagon waiting behind him. The reverse shows scenes of men who are bringing animals, and fish, possibly as booty or tribute; at the top the same large individual banquets with other men; they are entertained at the right by a singer and a man playing a lyre. The triangular end panels show other scenes; the object was found crushed but has since been restored.





CYLINDER SEALS

Cylinder seals are small, barrel-shaped stone objects with a hole down the center and an incised design or cuneiform inscription. They were originally rolled on clay or wax when soft to indicate ownership or to authenticate a document and were used mainly in Mesopotamia from the late 4th to the 1st millennium BCE.





ASSYRIAN ART

The major themes of Assyrian art are military dominance, royal activities (such as lion hunts), violence against their enemies, and depicting the polytheistic gods of their religion.

AKKADIAN PERIOD

Sargon of Akkad's (reigned c. 2334–c. 2279 BCE) unification of the Sumerian city-states and creation of a first Mesopotamian empire profoundly affected the art of his people, as well as their language and political thought. The increasingly large proportion of **Semitic** elements in the population were in the ascendancy, and their personal loyalty to Sargon and his successors replaced the regional patriotism of the old cities. The new conception of kingship thus engendered is reflected in artworks of secular grandeur, unprecedented in the god-fearing world of the Sumerians.

WHO ARE SEMITIC PEOPLE?

Semitic people are a member of any of a number of peoples of ancient southwestern Asia including the Akkadians, Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Arabs. : a descendant of these peoples. : a member of a modern people speaking a Semitic language.





JET LI

HERO

TONY
LEUNG

MAGGIE
CHEUNG

ZHANG
ZIYI

CHEN DAO
MING

DONNIE
YEN



HERO

Ancient China and the Qin Empire is out to conquer the six kingdoms. This makes its king a target for assassination. However, one man has single-handedly ensured the safety of the king, by killing the three most notorious assassins in the land. Treated as a hero, he is summoned for an audience with the king.

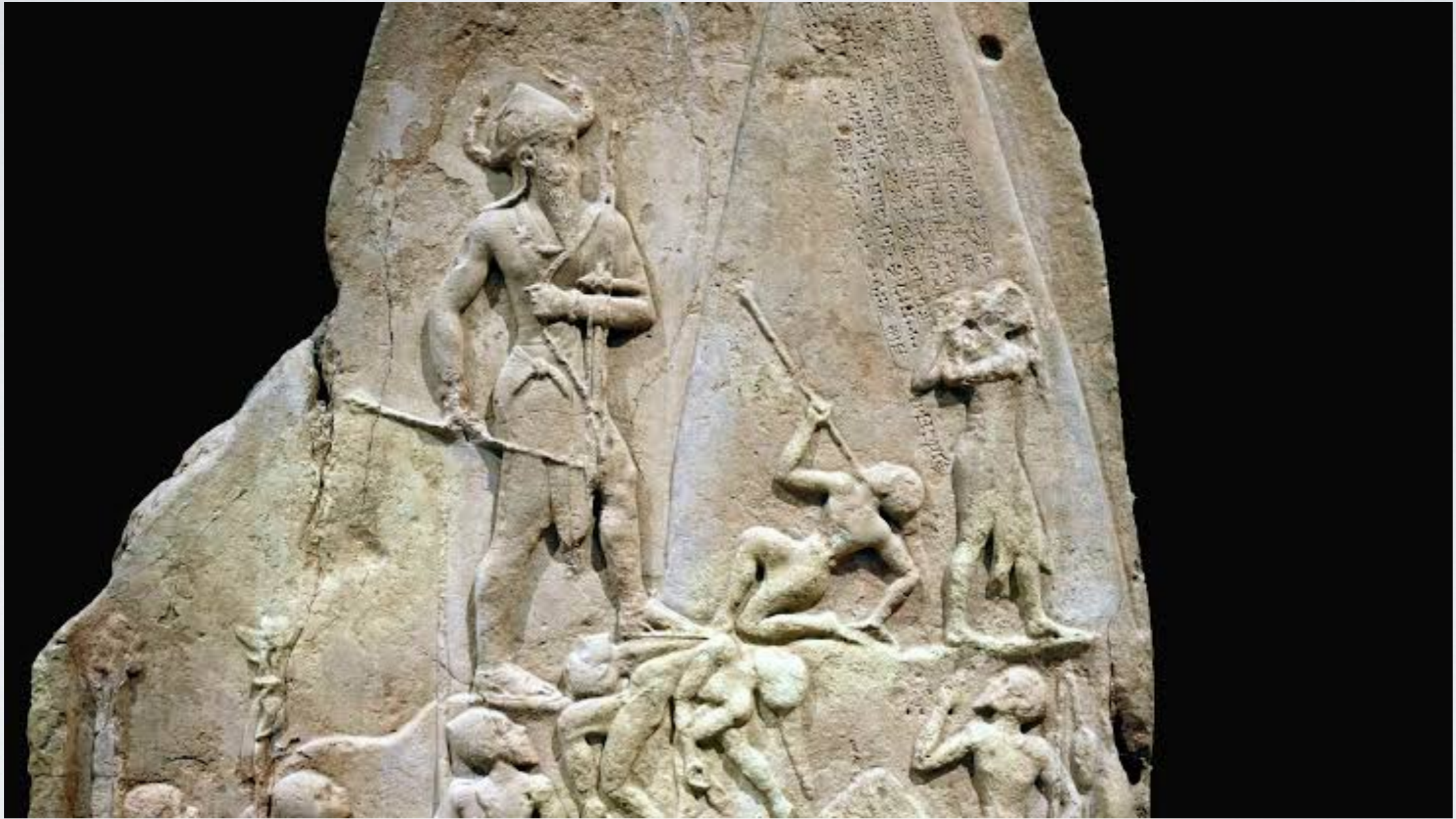
NARAM-SIN

Naram-Sin (r. 2261-2224 BCE) was the last great king of the Akkadian **Empire** and grandson of **Sargon the Great** (r. 2334-2279 BCE) who founded the empire. He is considered the most important Akkadian king after **Sargon** (or, according to some, even ahead of him) and, along with his grandfather, became a near-mythical figure in Mesopotamian legend and story.

NARAM-SIN

He was the first Mesopotamian king known to have claimed divinity for himself, taking the title "God of Akkad", and the first to claim the title "King of the Four Quarters, King of the Universe".





GUDEA

Gudea's appearance is recognizable today because he had numerous statues or idols, depicting him with unprecedented, lifelike realism, placed in temples throughout Sumer. Gudea took advantage of artistic development because he evidently wanted posterity to know what he looked like. And in that he has succeeded.

GUDEA

Gudea ruled between about 2144 – 2124 BCE, and the statues demonstrate a very sophisticated level of craftsmanship at the time. More than 2,400 inscriptions mention his name and describe his 20-year campaign of city improvements, including new temples and irrigation canals. He was also a patron of the arts.





INANNA ISHTAR

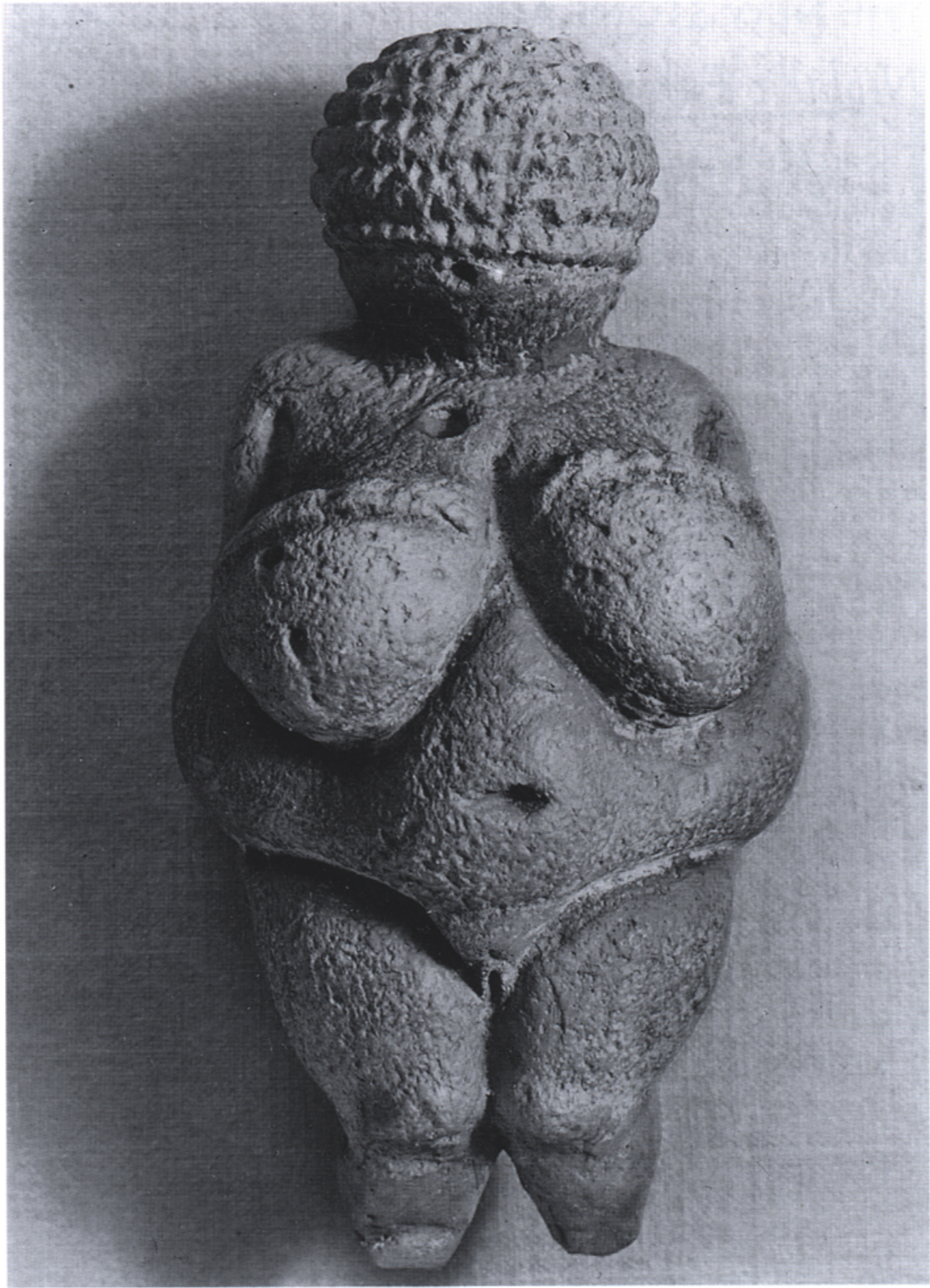
Ishtar, (Akkadian), Sumerian **Inanna**, in Mesopotamian religion, goddess of war and sexual love. Ishtar is the Akkadian counterpart of the West Semitic goddess Astarte. Inanna, an important goddess in the Sumerian pantheon, came to be identified with Ishtar, but it is uncertain whether Inanna is also of Semitic origin or whether, as is more likely, her similarity to Ishtar caused the two to be identified. In the figure of Inanna several traditions seem to have been combined: she is sometimes the daughter of the sky god An, sometimes his wife; in other myths, she is the daughter of Nanna, god of the moon, or of the wind god, Enlil.

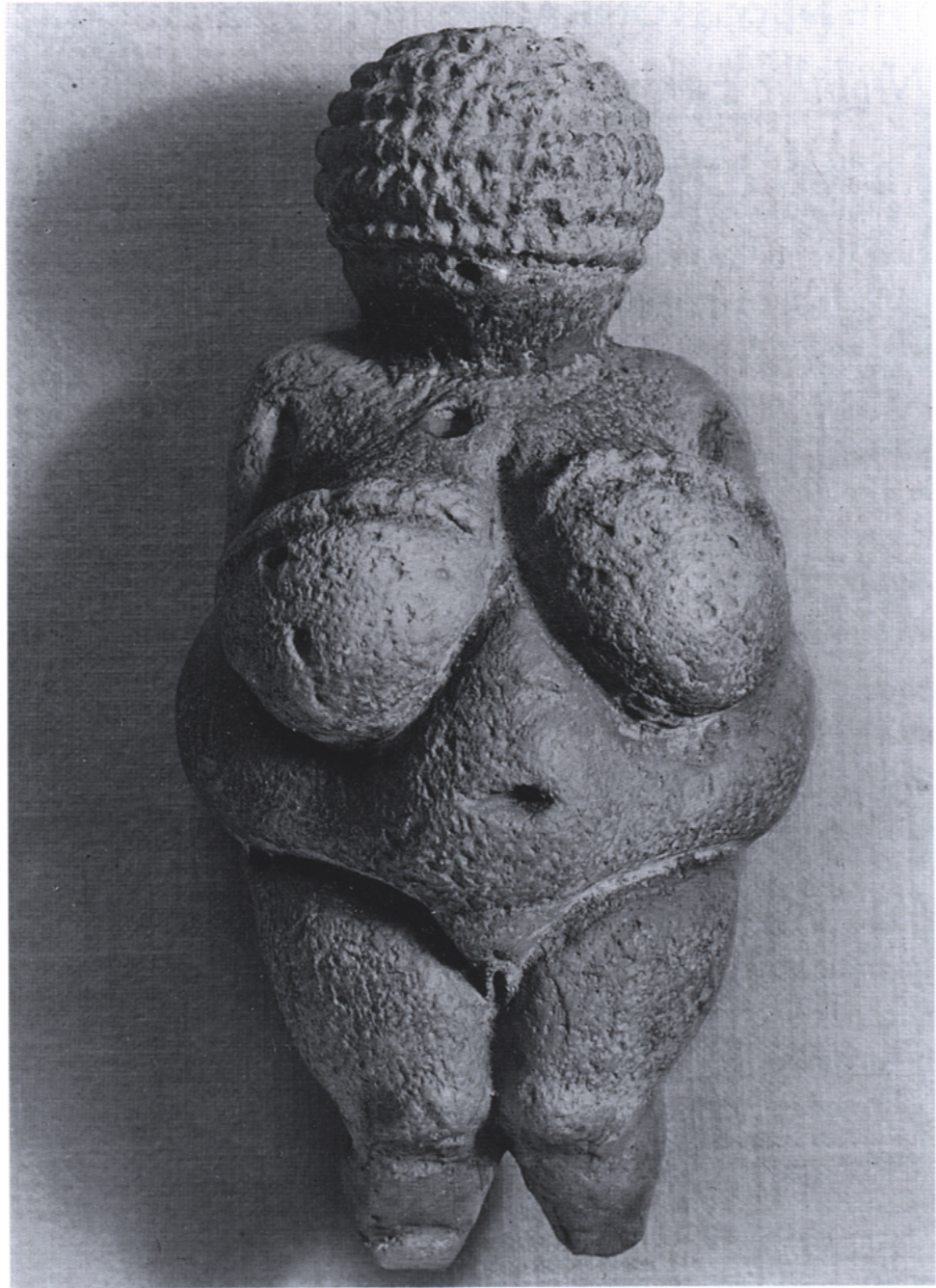
INANNA ISHTAR

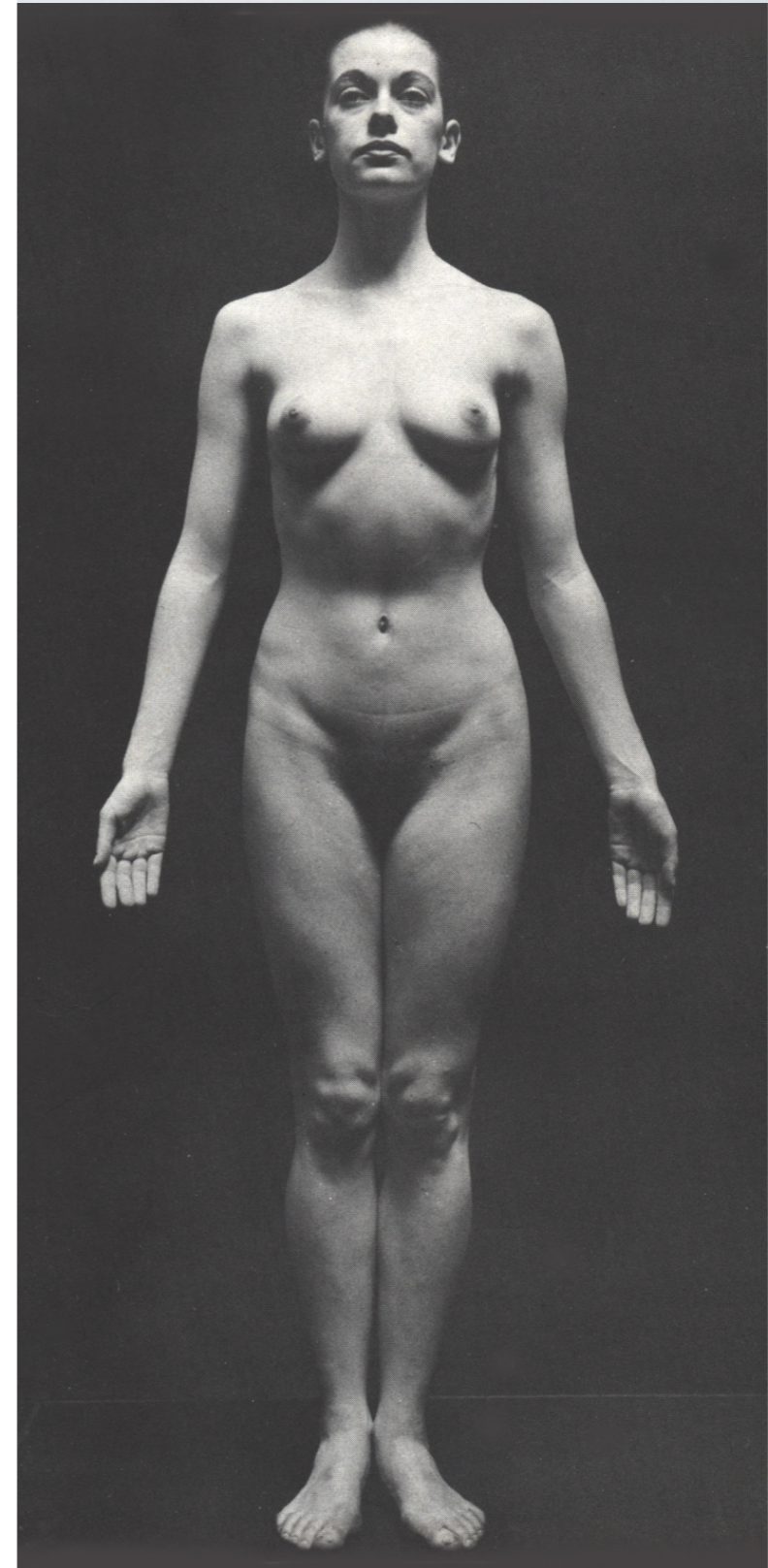
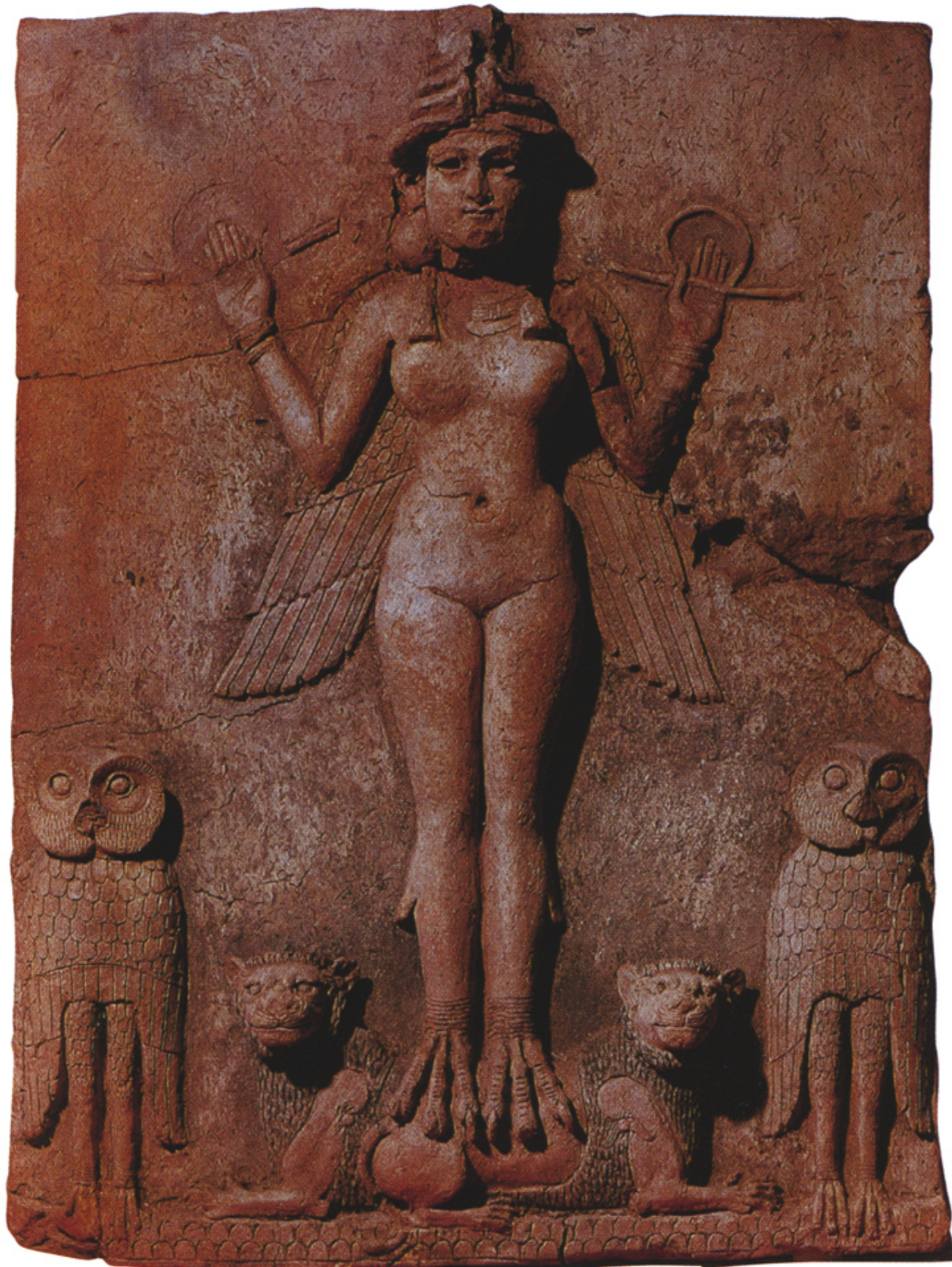
In her earliest manifestations she was associated with the storehouse and thus personified as the goddess of dates, wool, meat, and grain; the storehouse gates were her emblem. She was also the goddess of rain and thunderstorms—leading to her association with An, the sky god—and was often pictured with the lion, whose roar resembled thunder. The power attributed to her in war may have arisen from her connection with storms. Inanna was also a fertility figure, and, as goddess of the storehouse and the bride of the god Dumuzi-Amaushumgalana, who represented the growth and fecundity of the date palm, she was characterized as young, beautiful, and impulsive—never as helpmate or mother. She is sometimes referred to as the Lady of the Date Clusters.











HAMMURABI

More than 3,800 years after he took power, the ancient Babylonian king Hammurabi is best remembered for **the Code of Hammurabi** which was inscribed on human-sized stone pillars that he placed in the towns of his realm.





NOTABLE QUOTES

“If a man destroys the eye of another man, they shall destroy his eye. I am old, so give me your peace.

Wisdom comes with age. If a man has knocked out the teeth of a man of the same rank, his own teeth shall be knocked out.”

THE GOOD

“If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.”

TOUGH LAWS

“If a builder build a house for some one, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built fall in and kill its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.”

HITTITES

The Hittites were an ancient group of Indo-Europeans who moved into Asia Minor and formed an empire at Hattusa in Anatolia (modern Turkey) around 1600 BCE. The Hittite Empire reached great heights during the mid-1300s BCE, when it spread across Asia Minor, into the northern Levant and Upper Mesopotamia.

THE LION GATE

The Lion Gate at Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite Empire. The gate, dated to the 13th century BCE, was flanked by two towers. The head of the lion on the left had already been broken away in antiquity. It has been reconstructed in 2011. The lions were put at the entrance of the city to ward off evil.

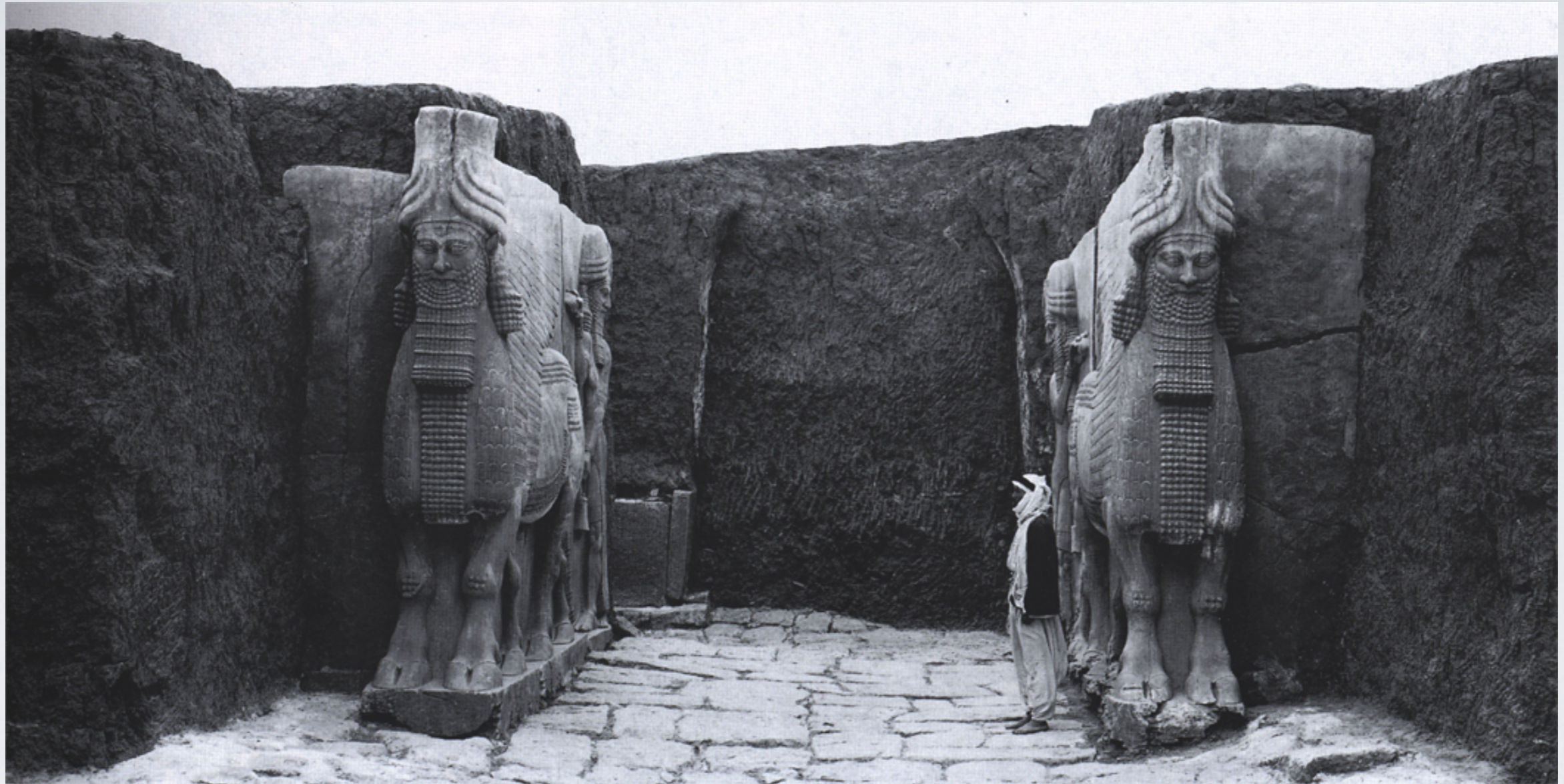


ASSYRIAN ART

The Assyrians left behind a great deal of Assyrian art and architecture. Known for its intricate detail, such artifacts include relief carvings, narrative art, Lamassu statues, cylinder seals, palaces, and ziggurats.















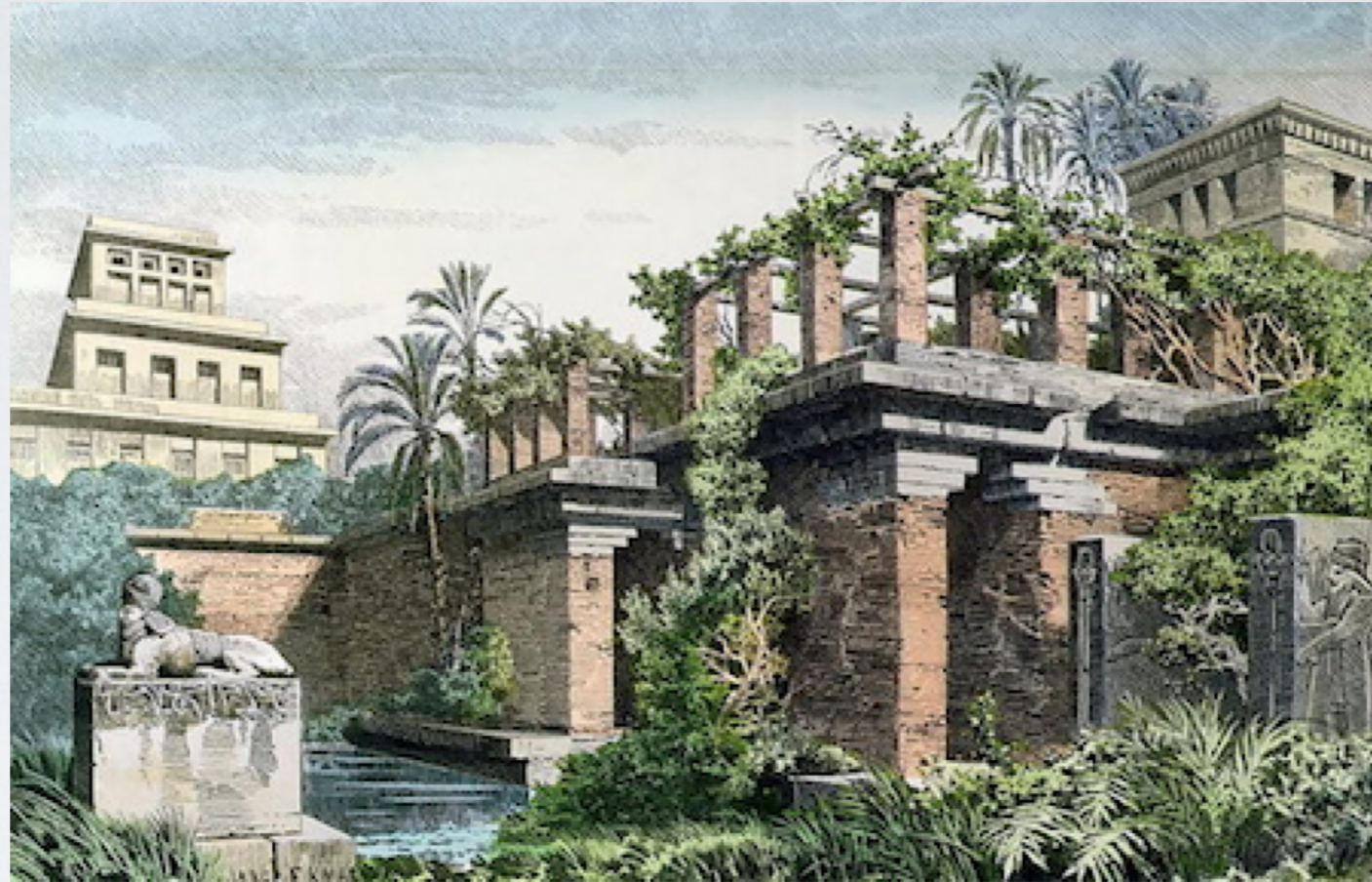




BABYLON

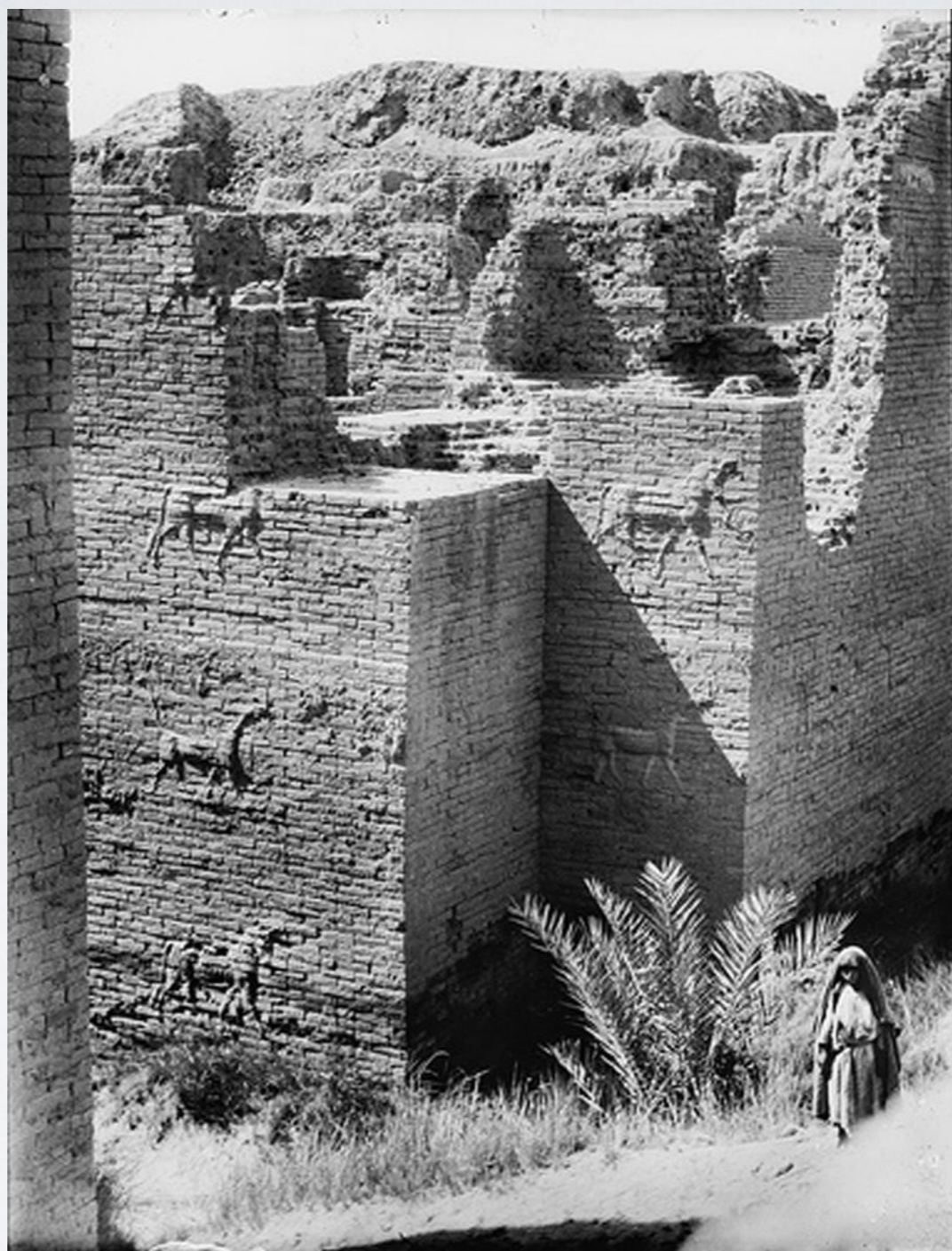
Babylonian art of all periods places a heavy emphasis on the piety of the king, and similar images recur throughout Mesopotamian history. In some seals, the king is replaced by a goddess, Lama, who in Mesopotamian art is often depicted interceding or praying for a human donor to a more powerful deity.





ISHTAR GATE

The Ishtar Gate, named after a Mesopotamian goddess of love and war, was one of eight gateways that provided entry to the inner city of Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (reign 605-562 BCE). It was decorated with glazed blue bricks that depicted alternating rows of bulls and dragons.







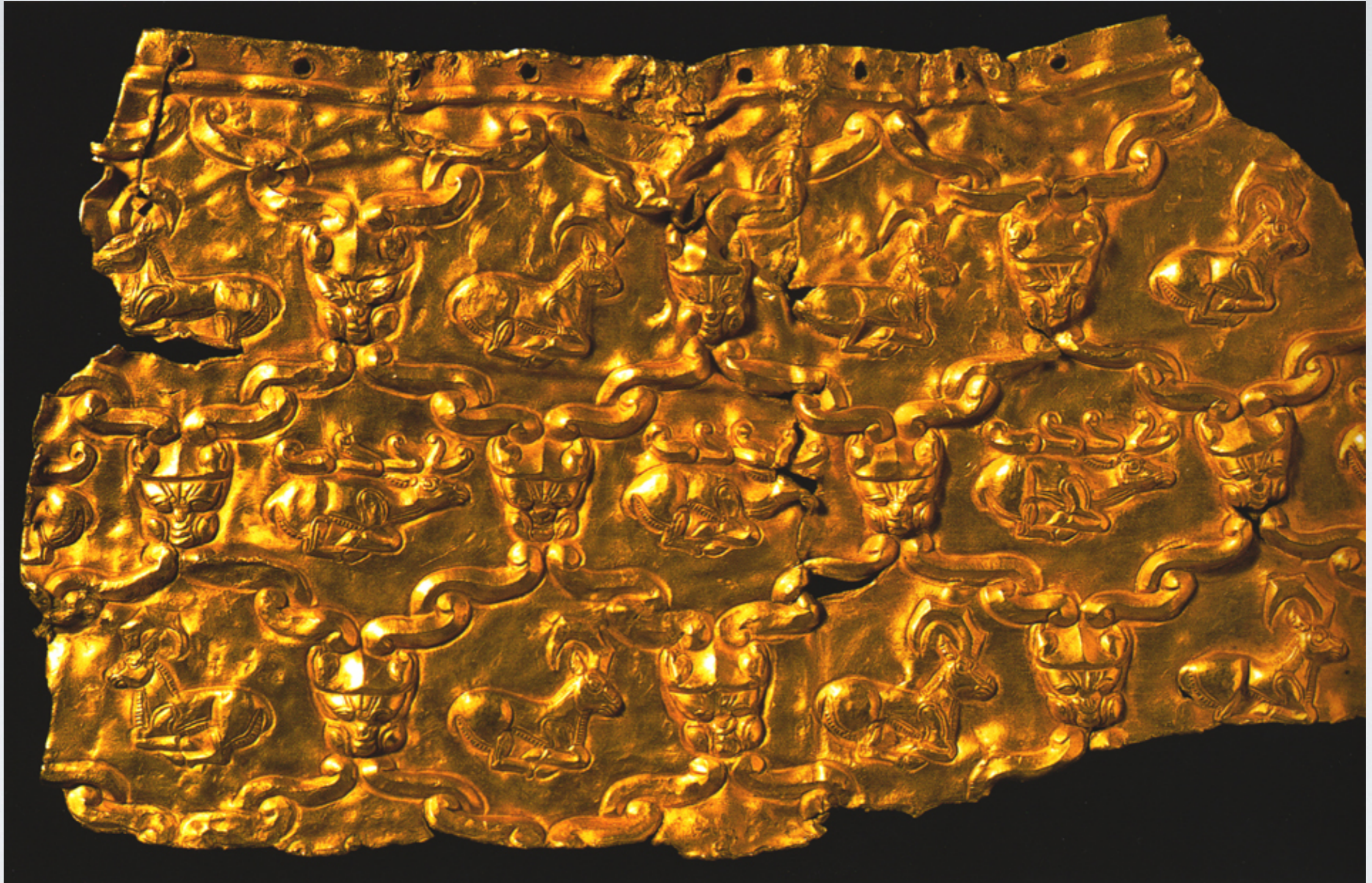


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PERSIAN ART

In its time, the Persian Empire was one of the largest and wealthiest in the world. Its art and architecture were realistic but also stylized, with decorated surfaces and ornamental flattened spaces. Early Persian works of art included ceramics, ivory carvings, and elegant bronzes from Luristan.





CHOGHA ZANBIL ZIGGURAT



CHOGHA ZANBIL ZIGGURAT

Chogha Zanbil is a Mesopotamian ziggurat surrounded by temples and encircled by a wall. Made of baked clay bricks, and inscribed with Elamite phrases, praises, and curses, the complex – located 19 miles (30 kilometers) southeast of Susa – was an attempt to unify the disparate regions of Elam in worship of the god Inshushinak, patron deity of Susa. Although certainly Elamite in character, Chogha Zanbil drew on Mesopotamian motifs and methods of construction which would be developed later in Persian art and architecture. The influence of earlier Akkadian and Sumerian cylinder seals is also evident in the artworks of Elam earlier than Chogha Zanbil - c. 2200 BCE - which depict assorted deities and human figures in communal scenes and these motifs would later be developed by the Persians.

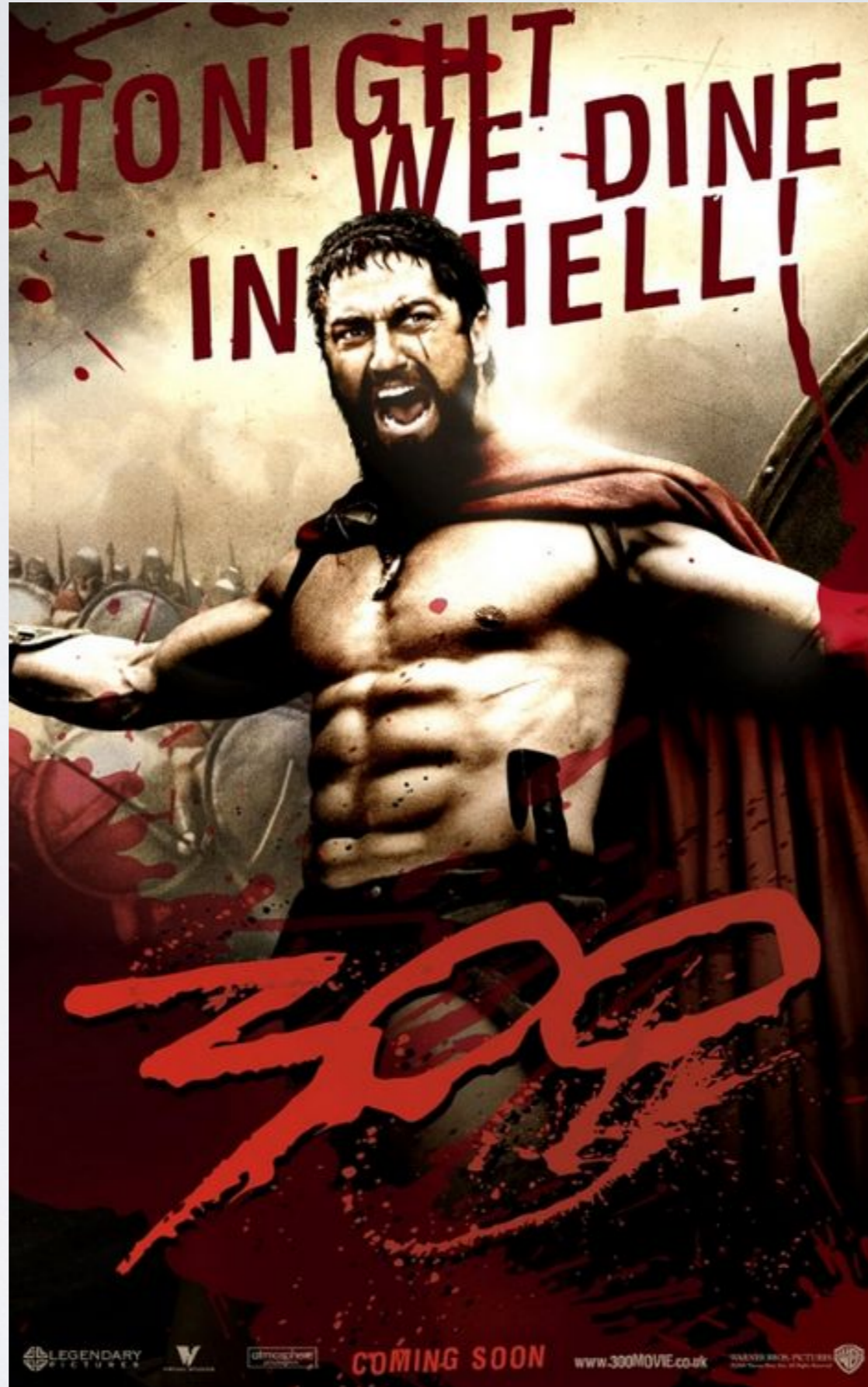
PALACE OF XERXES

The palace of Xerxes at Persepolis, called Hadiš in Persian, "dwelling place", was twice as large as the Palace of Darius. A terrace connected the two royal mansions, which are not very far apart. Yet, compared to the palace of Darius, the house of Xerxes is badly damaged.

PALACE OF DARIUS

What is the significance of the palace of Darius?

Architecturally, the palace was the epitome of the Persian architecture at the height of the empire's growth. It was meant to reflect the same opulence and prestige as Persepolis. This was Darius the Great's attempt to decorate his summer capital of Susa and to showcase its glory.



LEGENDARY PICTURES

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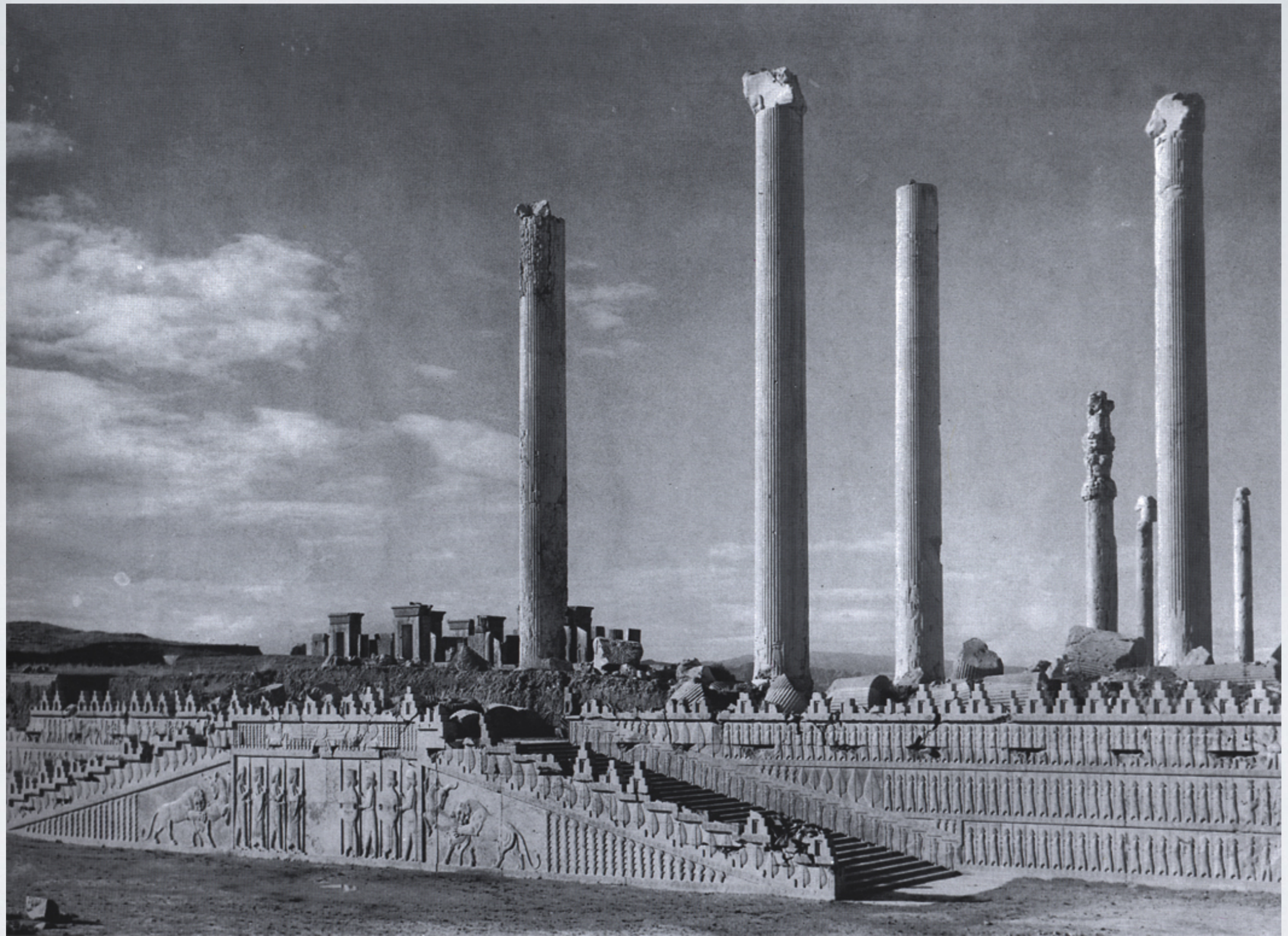
LEONIDAS THE LION

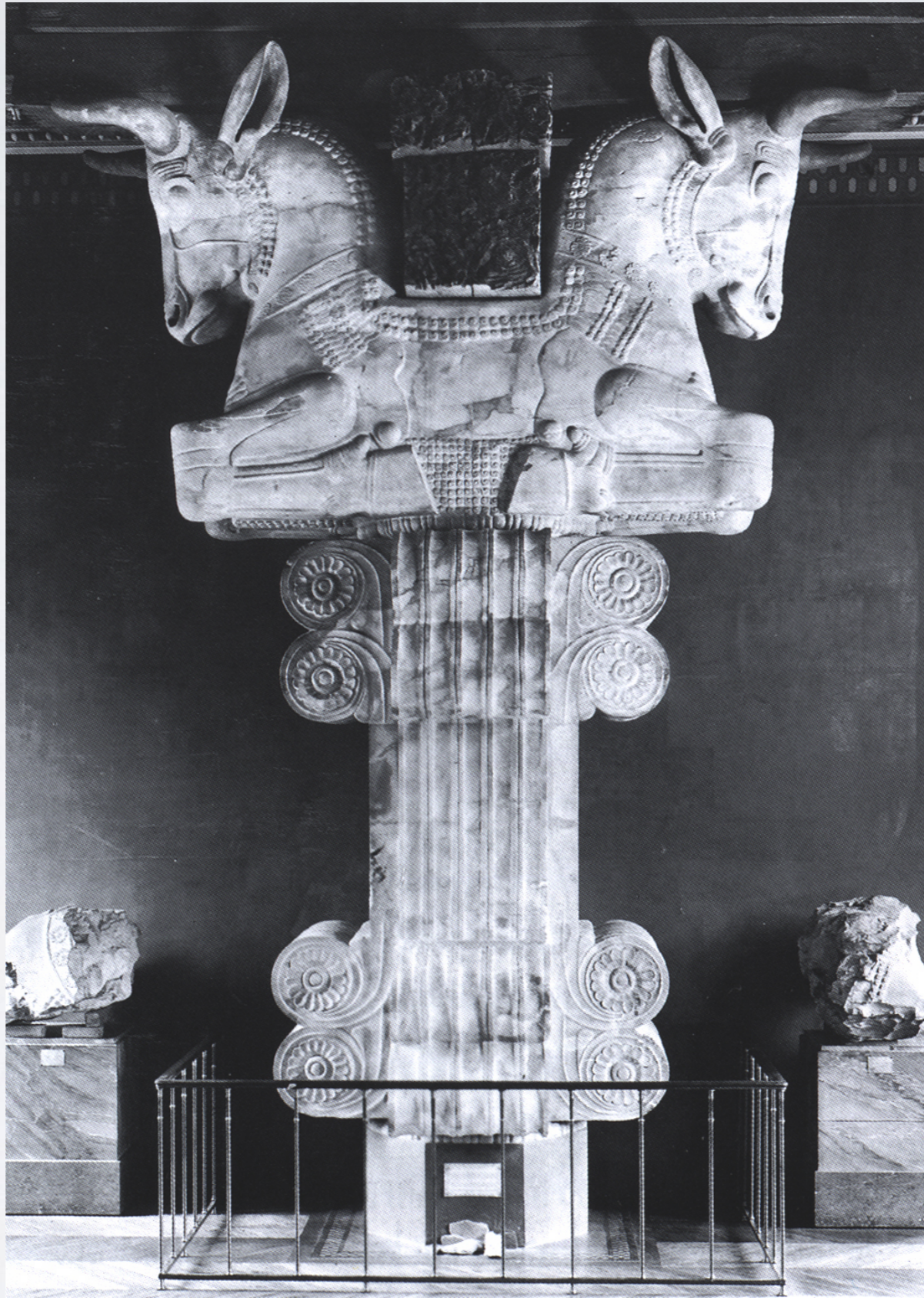
An army of Spartans, Thespians and Thebans remained to fight the Persians. Leonidas and the 300 Spartans with him were all killed, along with most of their remaining allies. The Persians found and beheaded Leonidas' corpse—an act that was considered to be a grave insult.

BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE

The Thermopylae, the "hot gates" or also "gates of fire," is a mountain pass at the foot of Mount Kallidromo in modern Greece where legend tells that King Leonidas and 300 of his Spartan warriors fought millions of Persians during Xerxes' invasion of Greece in 480 BCE. They were able to hold the mountain pass for three days allowing the Greeks to win the day in the naval battle.









RHYTON

A rhyton (plural rhytons or, following the Greek plural, rhyta) is a roughly conical container from which fluids were intended to be drunk or to be poured in some ceremony such as libation, or merely at table.



GOLD RHYTON

Horn-shaped vessels ending in an animal's head have a long history in the Near East as well as in Greece and Italy. Early Iranian examples are straight, with the cup and animal head in the same plane. Later, in the Achaemenid period, the head, or animal protome, was often placed at a right angle to the cup, as in this piece. In the manufacture of this gold vessel, several parts were invisibly joined by brazing, which demonstrates superb technical skill. One hundred and thirty-six feet of twisted wire decorate the upper band of the vessel in forty-four even rows, and the roof of the lion's mouth is raised in tiny ribs. Typical of Achaemenid style, the ferocity of the snarling lion has been tempered and restrained by decorative convention.

THE END



GUIDE TO

**ANCIENT
NEAR
EASTERN
ART**