

Mesopotamia: Early Dynastic period and synthesis

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- Early Dynastic (I, II, IIIa, IIIb) 2900 BC - 2373 BC (473 years)
 - The name of the period is the “Early Dynastic Period”, in contrast to later, named dynasties
 - It is *not* the "early" part of the "dynastic" period
 - We have lots more evidence for the Early Dynastic than for earlier periods
 - More written evidence, since writing was becoming more widely used
 - The archaeological material is more spectacular, closer to the surface, and there is more of it (because populations and wealth had increased) so it has gotten more attention
 - the greatest attention is focussed on the most impressive material from the most developed sites at the end of the period (a common bias in many places and periods)
 - This does not mean that the Early Dynastic period was the most important for the *origin* of civilization; one could argue that Sumerian civilization had already appeared by this time and was already changing from its earliest form
- the city of Uruk
 - near the beginning of the Early Dynastic (2800 BC), covered 250 ha (617 acres)
 - almost three times the area of the whole SSU campus
 - by the end of the Early Dynastic, covered 400 hectares
 - 4.5 times the area of the entire SSU campus
 - entirely enclosed by a city wall
 - population probably 50,000 or more
 - this was its peak of size and importance
- One other large city (Umma) and about 6 smaller cities also by this time
 - these cities were in competition, not a united system with the largest at the top
 - the alluvium of Sumer was filled by a series of separate “primate” or simple 3-tiered settlement hierarchies at this point
 - each with one city surrounded by towns (the middle level) and a very few small agricultural hamlets (the bottom level)
 - most of the small hamlets of earlier periods were abandoned
 - most people moved into towns and cities
 - each of these would be called a “city-state”
 - in contrast to a “nation-state” that would include multiple cities
 - that themselves would be in a hierarchy of size and functions
 - the city-states had complex, shifting relationships, with alliances, trade, raids, wars, etc.
 - this pattern of near-abandonment of the rural countryside and extreme concentration of people into large settlements is called "hyperurbanism"
- Hyperurbanism
 - The beginning of the Early Dynastic saw the culmination of a long history of changes in the way people were distributed across the landscape

- Sumer was probably the first place in the world where people experienced city life something like what we know today
- To understand this change, we have to back up and follow the trends from the beginning of the 'Ubaid period
- Early 'Ubaid ('Ubaid: 5600-3900 BC): moderate-sized villages, evenly dispersed
- 'Ubaid 2: the same kind of villages, plus one larger (4 ha) site: Eridu
- 'Ubaid 4: the same kind of villages, plus Eridu, which had increased to 10 ha (ballpark 2000 people, plus or minus a few thousand...)
- Uruk Period in general (3900-3100 BC):
 - increasing number of sites, from 21 Early Uruk sites to 123 Late Uruk sites
 - increasing total population in the region
- Late Uruk specifically (3400-3100 BC): instead of staying in fairly uniformly dispersed medium-sized villages, population shifted to a small number of large sites, each surrounded by a halo of rural settlements that were smaller than the earlier towns
 - this was the beginning of the general pattern of cities with a supporting rural hinterland
 - average settlement was only 1-2 ha (ballpark 200-400 people)
 - the city of Uruk was unique in being far larger: 100 ha, maybe 20,000 people at 3000 BC
 - plus a handful of large towns/small cities, especially Ur, Nippur, Kish, and Eridu
 - much smaller than Uruk, but much bigger than the small hamlets clustering around them
 - they reflected basically the same setup as Uruk, just less exaggerated
 - why did people cluster into towns and surrounding villages like this?
 - maybe for defense?
- Somewhere in the Jemdet Nasr period (3100-2900 BC) and/or the beginning of the Early Dynastic period (2900 - 2373 BC) (say around 2900 BC), most people quit living in small hamlets altogether and crowded almost exclusively into large towns and cities
 - this shift took only around 200 years
 - leading to the near disappearance of small hamlets in the rural countryside
 - people would have had to walk considerable distances from the large towns or cities to their fields to work
 - Uruk ballooned to 250 ha, maybe 50,000 people
- Near Uruk:
 - average settlement 6-10 ha
 - ballpark 1200-2000 people, maybe more
 - this is much larger than the small to medium-sized villages of previous periods
 - but there were fewer of them
 - most of the small to medium-sized villages were abandoned, and people moved to large towns and cities, which grew drastically
 - this is Adams' "hyper-urbanism"
 - two or even three "modes" of site sizes
 - the clear differences between the modes (categories of site sizes) suggests that some functions were carried out only at the larger types of sites
 - that is, there are distinct jumps in size between one size category and the next, rather than a smooth gradation of sizes

- the generally accepted way to explain this is that each "jump" up in size corresponds to a distinct additional function or institution present at the site, which would require numerous people to staff
 - For example, a site either has no temple, or has one and is therefore considerably bigger than sites without one - it can't have half a temple with half a temple's personnel
- if correct, this model implies a hierarchy of sites something like this:
 - smallest sites
 - mostly residential
 - medium sites
 - residential, plus...
 - some administrative functions requiring special buildings, storage facilities, additional people, etc.
 - largest site(s)
 - residential, plus...
 - the same administrative functions as a medium site, plus...
 - the temple, palace, army, etc.
 - making it far bigger yet
- the interesting point is that the different categories of settlements would have been different not just in size, but in kind
 - presumably ranked in importance, influence, and administrative role, with the larger ones (with the additional, less common functions) higher in the hierarchy
 - people in smaller towns would have been dependent on the larger ones for the services that were available only there
 - this implies a complex, interdependent, and hierarchical society, with three (or more) levels in its administrative hierarchy
- Same hyperurbanism trends in other areas, around the cities of Kish, Nippur, Akkad, and Susa (southeast of Sumer)
 - the fact that this pattern happened in many parts of Mesopotamia suggests that it was not just a local coincidence at Uruk, but a general part of the process of increasing complexity, maybe important in the formation of city-states
- but there were also exceptions to this pattern
 - near Ur, by this time also a major city, many smaller villages continued to be occupied
 - maybe Ur was more effective at keeping the peace, so people didn't feel unsafe in their small villages?
 - And in the Diyala plain, the cities never got as big, and the villages continued to be occupied, with no rural depopulation
 - because it was a marginal region?
- why did hyperurbanism happen?
 - due to warfare between cities or fear of it?
 - problems with nomadic people, with whom farmers would have had to trade, but with whom there might have been conflicts?
 - attraction of new economic possibilities in the towns?

- intentional policies of an emerging urban elite, encouraging or forcing people to move into towns (as Adams suggests)?
 - intended to improve control over population?
- what effect might it have had?
 - probably increased competition between people and magnified differences in wealth
 - increased interaction, communication, more complex economy...
 - more potential for taxation, labor recruitment, etc.
- the total population of the Mesopotamian plain by the Early Dynastic was 500,000 to 1 million people
 - shared the Sumerian culture, but the city-states were not united in a single organization
 - on the contrary, they were walled to defend themselves from the others
 - "hyperurbanism" hints that tensions were so great that it was not safe outside the walls
- Cities and architecture:
 - dense, like modern Near Eastern cities
 - in central, high-status areas, mostly two-story houses around central courtyards
 - some had latrines and drains
 - "blocks" separated by streets and alleys
 - arches of mudbrick over doorways
 - no evidence yet of marketplaces (nor of money or other features of a market economy)
- The temples' power continued to increase
 - huge walled-in precincts at the core of each city (>3 ha at Khafaje in Diyala valley)
 - the precincts included not only the temple, but also workshops (sculpture in stone and cast copper), storage rooms, high-status dwellings
 - outer wall enclosed more public courtyard, inner wall enclosed temple precinct itself
 - presumably to keep some of the sacred activities secret or restricted to certain people
 - and to protect the temple workshops and stored wealth
 - by ED II, temples like the one at Khafaje had an open-air pedestal in the plaza at the foot of the temple
 - may mean that too many people were involved in ceremonies to fit inside the temple
 - the temple itself was increasingly big and elaborate
 - temple details varied widely from city to city
 - yet some temples in different cities had certain items that were nearly identical (as in the stela from Khafaje that exactly matches one from Ur)
 - suggests a lot of contact between high-level temple experts, if not organization and control
- Sumerian religion and ideology
 - mostly known from 2nd millennium texts (1000's BC), which is many centuries later than the periods we have looked at
 - since temple architecture and religious iconography were very stable over time, it is probably fair to project the general outlines of these beliefs back to the Early Dynastic, Uruk period, or even earlier

- religious cosmology was a model and legitimization for life here on earth
- the gods established unchanging laws
- there was a hierarchy of gods
 - The pantheon was headed by Anu
 - King of heaven
 - the one who bestows royalty on humans
 - next were two other main gods:
 - Enlil, god of Earth
 - Enki, god of water and subterranean world.
 - then three subsidiary deities:
 - Utu, god of sun
 - Nanna, god of moon
 - Inanna, goddess of the star Venus
 - also Anu's consort, lady of heaven
 - responsible for lunar calendar, therefore for many omens
 - became the goddess of war and sexual love (!)
 - these and other high ranking gods were lords of temple institutions and cities
 - below them were lower gods for individuals
 - people were at the bottom
 - they belonged to their city's god
 - the gods created people specifically to relieve the gods from the drudgery of work
 - gods appointed human representatives to direct the work: the priests of each temple
 - This is an example of an ideology that served to legitimize the political and economic order
 - as in several of the definitions of civilization
 - question: did the ideology encourage the rise of a hierarchical society, or did an emerging hierarchical society form the ideology?
 - if the latter, was it conscious and intentional, or not?
- Temple ceremonies included seasonal feasts
 - attended by the public
 - biggest one was to ask for the annual spring regeneration of vegetation
 - by honoring the marriage of the city ruler to the goddess Inanna (or her representative)
- at the same time, a new powerful institution appeared: the palace
 - the secular, military, royal residence compound of a king
 - palaces appeared in addition to temples in ED III at Mari, Kish, Eridu, maybe other cities (around 2500 or 2400 BC)
 - architecturally distinct from temples or other apparently ceremonial architecture
 - lacked the ritual complex with a ziggurat platform, "cella" with a freestanding pedestal and niche or pedestal at one end, the big courtyard, etc.
 - that is, no obviously public ceremonial space
 - although they did have smaller ritual areas, probably for internal or personal use
 - palaces had hundreds of rooms

- storerooms, apparently for storage of tribute or taxes
- workshops, probably staffed by "attached" specialists
- royal residence
- administrative rooms
- archives of cuneiform documents, as at the temples
 - the archive in the palace at Ebla contained 13,000 tablets
- development of hereditary kingship (texts show kingship was passed down as many as 6 generations)
 - in contrast to temple leadership
 - there must have been people in charge of the temple institutions, but there are no written records that indicate that these positions were hereditary
- kingship seems to have had different origins in different cities
 - based on linguistic evidence
 - some kings were addressed as “lugal” (king), with a word suggesting military leader appointed by a ruling council
 - others as “sangu” (accountant) (!), the word used for the top administrator of a temple
 - others by “ensi”, a word apparently related to the term for the human husband of a city’s goddess (that is, a ritual, temple-related office)
 - later, some by “ugula” (foreman)
 - suggests that in different cities, different offices, roles, or institutions gave rise to powerful secular institutions that look the same to us: palaces
 - presumably, the process by which this happened varied somewhat in each case
- The famous Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh illustrates how some people of the time thought of kingship
 - actually, a collection of stories, some tightly related, others not, but involving overlapping sets of the same characters
 - the most famous ones describe Gilgamesh’s supernatural deeds, and his failed attempts to become immortal
 - many of the named characters are known from historical inscriptions, and most scholars think that Gilgamesh was a real ruler of Uruk in the Early Dynastic period
 - for understanding the origins of kingship, the most relevant story is the more recently discovered one that is translated as one of your readings
 - Gilgamesh, the *ensi* of Uruk in the middle Early Dynastic period, has to first try to win the approval of a council of elders, and then override them by convincing an assembly of the city’s able-bodied men, before he can make war against the threatening city of Kish.
 - Later, he does not have to get approval to end the war and let the king of Kish go.
 - In other stories, he is powerful enough to be independent of these councils, and he builds (or rebuilds) the wall around Uruk, some of which does indeed date to this period.
 - although a myth, this story may record how people perceived the development of kingship
 - or propaganda about it that would have been plausible to them

- that is, the institution of kingship in this case supposedly arose as a consensus government granted a notable person special powers during wartime, and he gradually took on permanent power
 - a believable story...
- the palace organized long-distance trade
 - merchant agents employed by king
 - they got cloth, clothes, barley, oil, flour from royal stores (mostly things that Sumer could produce), and took it abroad to exchange for foreign goods for the palace
 - the temple, and possibly even independent traders, may have carried out long-distance trade, too
 - the other side of this trading was made up of neighboring groups, especially to the east in the Zagros mountains, who themselves were developing cities and complex societies
 - example: Tepe Yaya in southeastern Iran, which made chlorite (a kind of stone) bowls that they traded to Sumer
 - this is not a case of a dominant core area extracting raw materials from the periphery, like England during the British Empire; the Sumerians were not so very much different from their trading partners in complexity or technology
- kings are recorded as building water projects, so this might have been both a function and a source of power
 - sites were increasingly located in linear patterns, suggesting that they were along rivers that had been canalized
 - one string of sites in a previously empty area implies a canal project at least 15 km long, with cooperation between multiple settlements
 - this is still not a huge project
 - but it may suggest increasing coordination and organization among settlements
 - note that the Gilgamesh story we read emphasized an ongoing project of building wells that seemed to be the responsibility of the city as a whole
- technology and production
 - the Early Dynastic was not notable for technological innovation, but rather for increasing scale of production and amount of goods made
 - large scale weaving of wool and flax (linseed – linen cloth)
 - copperwork became more common for tools, containers, and art
 - including both arsenic bronze and tin bronze
 - with a correspondingly increased number of specialist craftspeople
 - although still probably under 20% of population
 - that is, over 80% of the people were still farmers
 - specialist production went on in both the temple and the palace
 - some worked for temple
 - frieze of the dairy at the Early Dynastic period temple at al ‘Ubaid suggests organized dairy production attached to the temple
 - decorations and supplies for ritual and the temple buildings themselves
 - goods for temple personnel
 - goods for exchange by the temple, to get foreign raw materials
 - others worked for the palace

- making decorations and supplies for the royal court and palace personnel
 - goods for exchange to get foreign raw material
 - goods for the military arm of the palace
 - weapons, armor, chariots
 - still others worked for wealthy individuals
 - evidenced by hoards of valuables in some large houses
 - and apparent vendor's stalls facing the streets
 - overall pattern: lots of attached specialists producing goods that were controlled by institutions (temple and palace), some by high-status individuals, and maybe some unattached specialists - but probably not many
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- legal code: a secular (palace) matter, not religious
 - the palace served a role in conflict resolution and maintenance of order
 - Urukagina, last Early Dynastic king of Lagash (i.e. around 2350 BC) is known for his legal reforms, which were recorded in inscriptions on buildings of his time.
 - that is over 500 years before the famous law code of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC)
 - Hammurabi is better known because we have a nice, complete copy of his law code, while earlier ones (well before Urukagina) are known only from fragmentary references
 - Urukagina, a king, claimed that his legal reforms were meant to “return to the good old days” when the temple ruled (!)
 - this was, in fact, accurate history
 - the temple did exist long before the palace, and presumably was a place where conflicts were resolved
 - later on, that role shifted to the palace, for whatever reason
 - it also played on a perception that the temple formerly had legitimately exercised these powers
 - and that the palace now legitimately had that power
 - this could easily have been propaganda to justify new powers asserted by the palace...
 - Urukagina promised legal protections for common people against the temple and palace
 - this implies that there *were* such abuses, and hints at the power these institutions had
 - he also promised legal protection against confiscation of property and cheating in trade
 - implies that there was private property and regulated exchange
 - Urukagina also promised to cut certain taxes on commoners (!)
 - heard that one before? (this promise dates to about 2350 BC)
 - confirms that the palace collected taxes
 - these reforms would have increased the power of the king by giving him more regulatory authority
 - and would have weakened the wealthy families who probably competed with him for economic and political clout
 - this is the sort of maneuvering that anthropologists envision when they talk about leaders “strengthening and expanding their privileged positions”
 - military role of the palace
 - stelae commemorate kings who led professional armies with standardized weaponry

- the temple institution does not seem to have had much to do with warfare
- social stratification became more pronounced than ever before
 - “royal burials” at Ur attest to a very privileged royalty and court or nobility
 - excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley
 - over 2500 burials, mostly ED III (2500 - 2400 BC)
 - 16 were particularly lavish, and have been called "royal" tombs
 - most were badly looted, but not all
 - one example: tomb 789
 - larger outer chamber containing:
 - two wagons with oxen and male servants
 - 59 bodies, mostly richly-attired females, and a few male soldiers
 - supposedly went willingly to their deaths, maybe drugged, with their valuables and finery
 - based on absence of traumatic injuries or positions that would suggest struggle
 - but there could be other ways to explain this...
 - gold, silver, lapis, musical instruments, wood inlay...
 - another tomb (800), had a queen’s chamber still intact
 - the queen was named Shubad or Puabi (depending on how the signs are read)
 - her remains were still on her bed, surrounded by rich jewelry
 - this tomb also had a larger, outer chamber in which many attendants wearing jewelry were apparently sacrificed
 - along with musical instruments, a sledge, animals to pull it, and some soldiers or guards
- at the other end of the social hierarchy, written records from the Early Dynastic period include the first documentation of slaves
 - although slavery may well have existed earlier, this is the first clear evidence of it
 - apparently not a large class; only a small part of the population and economy
 - mostly female
 - mostly worked at spinning yarn and weaving in shops run by the temple
 - records show citizens became slaves by falling into debt or being sold by their families (!)
 - it was possible to buy one’s own freedom
- intermediate social statuses included at least:
 - farmers, presumably near the bottom, many living on the outskirts of the city; some in small towns or hamlets
 - craftspeople, possibly further divided according to their products and skills
 - since some mass-produced crude pottery, while others made finewares, metalwork, jewelry, etc. that presumably required more training, contact with elites, etc.
 - scribes
 - literacy was a skill in which people were specifically trained in schools or apprenticeships
 - and it involved a lot of contact with traders, political and religious elite, etc. who had to trust them with crucial information
- scribes practiced by writing standard texts, including the "standard professions list"
 - a stereotyped list of particular jobs and offices

- always in the same order, with divisions and titles that suggest that the order was from the highest status to the lowest
- unfortunately, only some of the job titles can be translated
- but just the concept of the list emphasizes that people now thought in terms of a complex social hierarchy
- variation in houses suggests a wide range of social standings:
 - size and number of rooms
 - one vs. two stories
 - doors off main streets or alleys
 - presence or absence of central courtyard
- warfare between cities (city states), power relationships constantly shifting
 - note that at this point, the wars were not like those we usually imagine
 - not conquest (taking control of a group of people for the long term)
 - but rather, raiding (capturing wealth, animals, people)
 - or resolving small-scale territorial disputes (contested areas of farmland in border regions)
 - as in the Gilgamesh and Akka story, apparently fighting over water sources
 - evidence is from written references to wars
 - and from the lack of evidence for one city-state dominating any other for any length of time
 - shown by huge defensive walls at all major sites, completing a trend that had begun already in the late 'Ubaid period
 - at least some of the conflicts were over control of disputed areas of irrigated farmland
 - groupings of more than one city were rare and short-lived, but were increasing near the end of the Early Dynastic
 - at many times during the Early Dynastic, one king and his city-state were seen as dominant, “ruling” Sumer, but there was little integration or centralization
 - the “ruling” king was just a “first among equals”
 - or one who happened to be the most militarily powerful at the time
 - the “ruling” city-state did not have any different functions than the other city-states
- Government: the temple vs. the palace
 - the temple as an institution (this is “temple” defined broadly, possibly including other forms of communal/public institutions involving elaborate monumental architecture suited to activities with many people)
 - public and probably private religious ritual
 - also production, labor mobilization, storage, redistribution
 - temple officials not only performed rituals, but also
 - accepted and stored surplus production
 - probably in the form of offerings, tithes, payments for ritual services, etc.
 - redistributed it to others
 - probably mostly in compensation for labor, services, or goods
 - advised on timing of planting and harvesting
 - giving the temple a central role in agricultural production

- controlled irrigation water distribution
 - again, giving the temple real economic power through its supernaturally-sanctioned authority over water
- initiated large corporate projects
 - temples, canals, probably involved in early city walls (before there were kings and palaces), etc.
- owned land and employed agricultural workers directly
- used surplus to support craft specialists
 - scribes, potters, masons, weavers, copperworkers, sculptors
- managed long-distance trade
 - especially for exotic materials needed to build, decorate, and maintain the temple
 - and to deck out the priests and other religious authorities appropriately to their roles and importance
- temples started as small structures in the middle 'Ubaid period, and grew in size, complexity, and elaboration straight through the Agade and Ur III periods
- matching objects from temples in different cities suggest a network of contacts among religious leaders across the region
- temple had some power through interpretation of omens as well as control of land and resources
- all in all, the priests and temple administrators would have been powerful for both supernatural and material reasons
- the palace: another institution recognized in part by architecture
 - compared to temples, palaces were a much later development, parallel to the temple, eventually overshadowing and apparently controlling it
 - first known definite palaces appeared in Early Dynastic III
 - large, impressive compounds with elite residences, workshops, storage, etc.
 - no venue for public ritual
 - associated with military (unlike the temple)
 - organized around hereditary kingship
 - kingship seems to have had different origins in different cities
 - but at least in some cities, kings were initially seen as military leaders
 - the palace came to have landholdings, storage, craft specialists, etc., much like the temples
 - with apparently unfree and landless (“serf”) labor
- shifting balance of power between temple and palace
 - the temple was initially the only institutional power center
 - and was probably more powerful than the early palaces and the kings that operated them
 - but there was an apparent shift in power away from the temple and towards the palace, with its secular king/military leader
 - already pretty clear by the end of the Early Dynastic, with the royal burials at Ur, art and texts concerning military conquest, and even more so in subsequent periods
- government (as of ED, at least) apparently involved a king with a citizen council that could override him, maybe multiple councils
 - as in the Gilgamesh stories

- meanwhile, in the later half of the Early Dynastic Period, some of the towns in northern Mesopotamia finally began to develop temple and palace institutions similar to the Sumerian ones
- recall that northern Mesopotamian towns had remained smaller and simpler even in spite of the temporary Uruk expansion into the region
- Review of long-term trends in social stratification
 - Late 'Ubaid
 - burial evidence
 - over 200 graves at Eridu
 - little differentiation
 - up to a few pottery or stone vessels, occasionally a figurine or beads
 - concentration of wealth and presumably status at impressive temple complexes
 - Some degree of craft specialization suggests probably varied social roles and statuses
 - zoned housing, best near temple, workshops further out, farmers furthest away
 - that is, the burial evidence and the other lines of evidence don't agree
 - Uruk period
 - not much burial evidence
 - but many other indicators of social stratification, similar to those from the 'Ubaid but even more so:
 - wealth concentrated at the temple
 - suggests that people associated with the temple would have had access to more sumptuous goods
 - temple organization would have required priests, administrators, etc. with special power and status
 - for example, some people had the role of "signing" or certifying written records of temple transactions, presumably indicating some power or status
 - craft specialists presumably had a different, probably higher, status than ordinary farmers
 - scribes would certainly have had a higher status, since they had a valuable and scarce skill
 - and would have to be honest, accurate, and discreet
 - zoned housing, best nearest temple
 - Jemdet Nasr period (or stylistic division of terminal Uruk/initial Early Dynastic)
 - Not much architectural or other evidence that is distinct from other periods
 - burials: somewhat more variation, suggesting some stratification
 - of 340 graves, 61 (about 20%) had one or two metal cups; 2 had numerous goods (the top less than 1%)
 - Early Dynastic: clear evidence of huge status differences, especially by Early Dynastic III
 - royal burials at Ur (Early Dynastic III)
 - variations in housing, up to palaces
 - variations in occupations (farmers, craftspeople, priests, royal court, officials who "signed" records, etc.) imply probable status differences
 - this was not new, but probably was even more exaggerated than it had been before

- written legal protections indicate that there were poor and slave classes, a ruling class, merchants
- standard professions list shows a clearly conceived hierarchy of status according to peoples' occupations

- So: when and how did civilization emerge here?
 - you should think about when in this parade of periods you feel that civilization emerged, and what institutions and processes were involved.
 - what were the roles of economics, warfare, religion, population growth, the emerging elites themselves...?
 - For example, was Witfogel right about the importance of irrigation projects?
 - canals were necessary from the beginning of the 'Ubaid period
 - but most people argue that the projects were not really large enough to imply extensive power until the later Early Dynastic period, well after 'Ubaid and Uruk cities flourished

- What happened next?
 - Agade Period (Akkadian State) 2373 - 2247 BC (126 years)
 - Sargon of Agade, the king and military leader of the city of Agade, located in northern Mesopotamia
 - Leader of a different ethnic group, with a different language from the Sumerians (a Semitic language)
 - succeeded in conquering all of northern and southern Mesopotamia, including the cities on the Sumerian plain
 - forging the first regional state in Mesopotamia
 - this was possible in part due to his well-equipped, professional army
 - such armies were already being established in the Early Dynastic III period
 - for example, a famous Early Dynastic II/III stela from Lagash (in Sumer) shows this kind of uniform, regimented army
 - ranks of men in identical helmets, with shields
 - other ranks with lighter shields and spears, etc.
 - indicating specialized regiments
 - like the palaces of at least some Sumerian cities, the palace of Agade clearly provided standardized weapons and presumably supported professional soldiers
 - this would have been based on arms production by specialists employed by the palace and working in shops there
 - and, in turn, based on the extraction of surplus agricultural production from the people of the city its surrounding hinterland
 - But unlike earlier victors in inter-city warfare, Sargon not only captured spoils when a city fell, but also established a system to control and collect tribute from the city from then on
 - Sargon awarded captured land to his supporters
 - He put local agents in charge of conquered cities, supported by a garrison of soldiers
 - this united the cities for the first time as tribute-paying subjects of his empire
 - unlike earlier “rulers”, he actually controlled the conquered cities, which became parts of a larger organization with its capital at Agade

- Sargon boasted of feeding 5,400 men every day, apparently his administration
 - this clearly required a lot of tribute to maintain
- Sargon’s grandson, Naram-Sin, took on aspects of divinity
 - he was depicted wearing a horned helmet previously shown only on gods
 - his name was accompanied by a “rosette” symbol previously used only with gods
 - Naram-Sin apparently united the institutions of the temple and palace under a single person
- but when we get to Egypt, you will see that Sargon’s unification of Sumer happened hundreds of years after the military unification of Egypt
 - Sumer was the first place to see the rise of city states
 - but it was *not* the first place where they joined together into a large political entity or nation state
- most definitions of civilization do not require large-scale regional unity
 - presumably a city-state can be civilized, even if it is separate from other city-states nearby
- Guti invasion 2247 - 2168 BC (79 years)
 - “tribes” from the Zagros mountains toppled the Akkadian state and held power in Sumer briefly
- Ur III 2168 - 2062 BC (96 years)
 - Ur-Nammu of Ur defeated the Guti invaders and founded a dynasty called Ur III
 - the last great Sumerian dynasty, it was a revitalization of the old traditions, sometimes called “Neo-sumerian”
 - apparently a more integrated, administered empire than Akkadian state
 - standardized units of silver, grain, etc., with standardized equivalencies (prices, but not money)
 - Built the ziggurat at Ur, still visible today