

Lecture 1: Neolithic Europe and Ancient Near East

WC 2-15 PP 13-24: Epic of Gilgamesh

Archaeological Chronology

Stone Age	Early and Middle Paleolithic	c. 2.5 million-45,000 BP
	Late Paleolithic	c. 40,000-11,000 BCE
	Mesolithic	c. 11,000-8,500 BCE
	Neolithic	c. 8,500-3,000 BCE
Chalcolithic		c. 4500-3000 BCE
Bronze	Early	c. 3000-2000 BCE
	Middle	c. 2000-1600 BCE
	Late	c. 1600-1200 BCE
Iron	Iron Age I	c. 1200-925 BCE

During the **Paleolithic** period (the term “paleo” means “old” and the word “lithos” means “stone”), beginning around 30,000 BCE, cave dwelling **Cro-Magnon** man appears to have the urge to create images. The oldest known cave paintings were discovered in 1994 in the **Chauvet Cave** near Vallon-Pont-d’Arc in France (Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey 11). Around 9,000 BCE, the glaciers receded and a more temperate climate developed. This period is known as the **Mesolithic** period (12). The **Neolithic** period refers to the time when man became herdsman and farmers. This happened at different times in different parts of the world. “The transition to the Neolithic occurred first in the ancient Near East.” (12)

<p>Star Terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cave painting • dry land farming • agricultural surplus • communal architecture 	<p>Geog. Terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertile Crescent • Jericho • Çatal Hüyük
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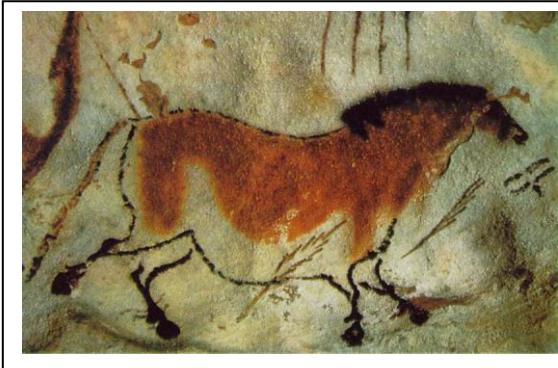
The Prehistoric Period

- 500,000 BCE hominid culture left Olduvai Gorge with stone tools
- 92,000 BCE Homo sapiens and Neanderthal
- 62,000 fire
- 42,000 fire hardened spears
- 9000 domestication of wheat, chick peas, lentils
- 8550-7000 Jericho (8350 BCE to 7370 BCE)
- 7500-5500 Çatal Hüyük (c 7500-5500 BCE)
- 5900-4000 Ubiad (city of Eridu)
- 4000-3300 Early Uruk

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A Hall of the Bulls (Lascaux), c. 15,000-13,000 BCE

- art for use in ritual, twisted perspective, naturalistic renderings



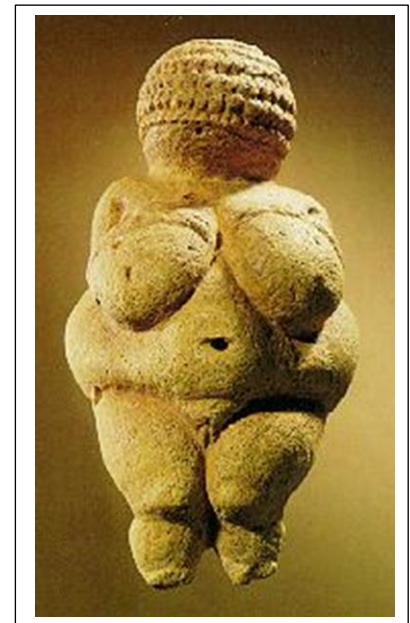
At **Lascaux**, France, as at **Chauvet**, France, (a recently discovered site where we meet the earliest paintings known to us), bison, deer, horses, and cattle race across walls and ceiling. Some of them are outlined in black, others filled in with bright earth colors, but all show the same uncanny sense of life... The pictures never appear near the mouth of the cave, where they would be open too easy view and destruction. They are found only in dark recesses, as far from the entrance as possible. Some can be reached only by crawling on hands and knees.

Over one hundred limestone cave dwellings in southwestern France and still others discovered as recently as 1996 in southeastern France contain images of animals (bears, bison, elk, lions, and zebras, among others), birds, fish, and other signs and symbols, all of which reveal a high degree of artistic and technical sophistication. Executed between 10,000 and 30,000 years ago, these wall-paintings provide a visual record of such long-extinct animals as the hairy mammoth and the woolly rhinoceros. Equally important, they document the culture of a hunting people. Painted with polychrome mineral pigments and shaded with bitumen and burnt coal, realistically depicted bison, horses, reindeer, and a host of other creatures are shown standing, running often wounded by spears and lances. Faith in the power to alter destiny by way of prayer and the manipulation of proper symbols has characterized religious ceremony throughout the history of humankind, but it was especially important to a culture in which control over nature was crucial to physical survival. A motif commonly found on cave walls is the image of the human hand, created in negative relief by blowing or splattering color around the actual hand of the hunter, shaman, or priest who interceded between the human realm and the spirit world. The cave, symbol of the cosmic underworld and the procreative womb, served as a ceremonial chamber, a shrine, and perhaps a council room.

B. *Venus of Willendorf* (Austria), c. 28,000- 23,000 BCE, limestone

- cult of the fertility goddess, lack of naturalistic rendering

We have only to turn to one of the earliest surviving representations of the human form to discover that the body was a source of fascination even to Paleolithic, prehistoric cultures. The tiny limestone carving known as the Willendorf Woman discovered in Willendorf, Austria, is thought to be between 25,000 and 30,000 years old. Anthropologists and art historians have drawn attention to the tactile nature of its bulbous contours, the pendulous breasts and swollen belly, leading them to speculate on the figure's possible talismanic function as a hand-held fertility symbol. The artist has emphasized those parts of the body related to reproduction and nursing. Women probably secured food by gathering fruits and berries; they acted also as healers and nurturers. Moreover, since the female (in her role as childbearer) assumed the continuity of the tribe, she assumed a special importance: Perceived as life-giver and identified with the mysterious powers of procreation, she was exalted as Mother Earth. Her importance in the prehistoric community is confirmed by the great numbers of female statuettes uncovered by archeologists throughout the world.



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Sumerian Culture

5900-4000 Ubiad Culture (city of Eridu)

4000-3300 Early Uruk

3300-2900 Late Uruk

- 3300-1500 Evolution in writing

2900-2300 Early Dynastic Period

- development of literature
- development of civilization

Star Terms:

- Cuneiform
- *Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Warrior Kings of Lagash

Geog. Terms:

- **Mesopotamia**
- **Tigris River**
- **Euphrates River**
- **Uruk**

The **Sumerians** created one of the most important of all ancient civilizations. They invented the wheel, mathematical numbers, multiplication tables, and instrumental music (along with the **lyre** or harp). They are also credited with developing the earliest known script (in the form of wedge-shaped lines) known as **cuneiform**. Each city, as long as it could, maintained a jealous independence, and indulged itself in a private king.

Mesopotamia (in modern Iraq) was the center of ancient Near Eastern civilization. Its name is derived from the Greek *mesos* (middle) and *potamus* (river). Mesopotamia is literally the 'land between the rivers' – the Tigris and the Euphrates. The Mesopotamian climate was harsh, and its inhabitants learned irrigation to make the land fertile

C. *Standard of Ur (Ur), c. 2700 BCE*

- contrast between war and peace, use of registers to depict a narrative, lapis lazuli

The box is inlaid with mosaic scenes from shell, red limestone and **lapis lazuli**, set in bitumen. On one side can be seen peace and prosperity, with a procession of men bringing animals, fish and other goods. At the top the king banquets among his friends, entertained by a singer and a man with a lyre. On the other side a Sumerian army, with chariots (the earliest known representation of wheeled vehicles) and infantry, charges the enemy. The prisoners are then brought before the king.

