

Lecture 5 Akkad and Empire



HIST 213

Spring 2012

Akkadian Empire 2334-2193 BCE

- Semitic Dynasty
 - three generations
 - stretched from “Elam to the Mediterranean sea,” including Mesopotamia, parts of modern-day Iran and Syria, and possibly parts of Anatolia and the Arabian peninsula.
- New capital, (Agade) Akkad
- world’s 1st military dictatorship



Akkadian Empire 2334-2193 BCE



Akkadian Cylinder seals and modern impressions c. 2300 - 2000 BCE

Sargon of Akkad 2334-2279

- Reigned 56 years
- Numerous legends
 - set adrift as baby in basket of reeds and pitch
 - royal cupbearer to the King of Kish
- conquers the last Sumerian King and led him through the streets in a dog collar
- conquers the Elamites

Sargon's Mythical origins

- of humble beginnings
- despite Šarru-ken-u ("the king is legitimate")
- Story of him being exposed in a reed basket
- found a raised by a gardener's wife
- won the love and attention of the goddess Ishtar



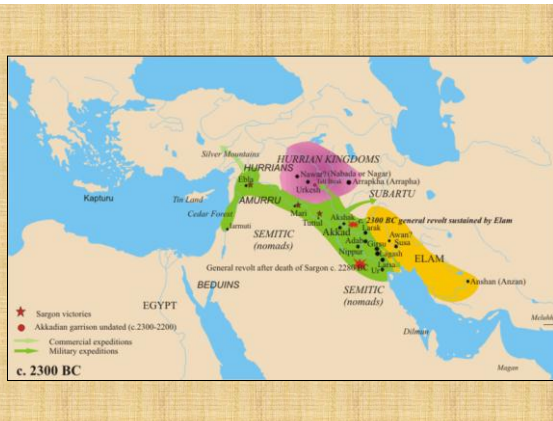
Victory stele of Sargon I, king of Akkad, showing prisoners marching (first register) and armed warriors.
Around 2300 BCE Diorite Sb 1

Birth Legend of Sargon

- <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/2300sargon1.asp>

Successful in War

- “5400 men ate in his presence”
 - standing army
- Sargon marches up the Euphrates
- conquers Mari and Ebla
- continues up to “Cedar Forests and Silver Mountains
- much of Sargon’s “Legend” comes from later Assyrian sources
 - claims to have captured 50 governors (*ensi*) including **Lugalzagesi** of Umma and Uruk (coalition leader)



Sargon Quells Dissent

Sumerian South angered at occupation
Sargon makes new “double office”

- makes his daughter high priestess of:
 - moon god Nanna at Ur
 - Heavengod An at Uruk
- these offices would continue for 500 years

Syncretism between:

- Sumerian Inanna (love and fertility)
- Ishtar (Akkad's warlike deity)
 - Becomes “Queen of Heaven”

Political Innovations

First "Empire" in history

- appoints Akkadian governors to rule in Sumerian cities
- centralized authority
- Sumerian cities must tear down defensive walls
- Culture slowly becomes Sumero-Akkadian
 - Mesopotamian

Changes in the conceptualization of Kingship

- Sargon establishes his daughter Enheduanna as the priestess (*entu*) of Nanna at sanctuary at Ur.
- Object's function is not clear.
- One single register
 - A ziggurat is restored in the left hand side of the scene
 - possibly representing the institution of the Entu-priestess.



Limestone Disk from Ur of Enheduanna with a priest and two priestesses

Not Everyone Bought the New Regime

Sargon's son assassinated

- Naram-Sin of Akkad (2255-2218 BCE)
 - grandson of Sargon
 - "King of the four quarters"
- aggressive on battlefield
- considers himself "divine"
- created high civil posts for his children
 - His reign and his son's considered the "Classical" Akkadian period



Naram-Sin 2254-2218 BCE

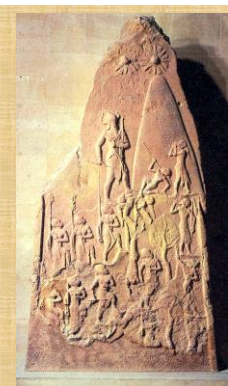
- grandson of Sargon
- quelled rebellion in his territories
- conquered new lands
 - NE Mesopotamia
- centralized and improved bureaucracy
- deified himself late in his reign

Naram-Sin on the battlefield

- Facing revolts from the start of his reign

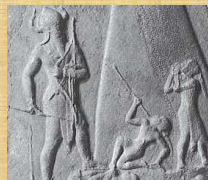
Naram-Sin:

- conquers Ebla in Syria
- defeats a coalition led by Kish
- defeats another coalition led by Uruk
- all the major cities of Mesopotamia
- attacks Nippur and the Hatti.

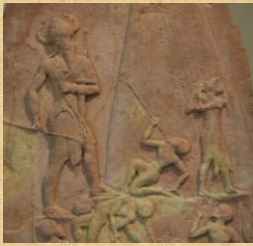


stele to commemorate victory

- hierarchical proportion
- organization of figures
- incorporates landscape



Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (Susa, Iran)
2254-2218 BCE, pink sandstone



Deification of Naram-Sin

"secured the foundations of the city in times of trouble"

- great rebellion that killed his father
- Naram-Sin was victorious

Only king to be represented with the horned crown of deity

- horned helmet is "divine" determinant in Akkadian language
- seated with Ishtar

Revolts after Naram-Sin's death

The Akkadian Dynasty

- Sharru-kin (Sargon): 2334-2279 BCE
- Rimush: 2278-2270 BCE
- Manishtushu: 2269-2255 BCE
- Naram-Sin 2254-2218 BCE
- Sharkalisharri 2217-2193 BCE

New Economic Policies

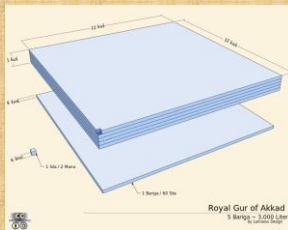
- Standardized barter within the Akkadian Empire
 - had been in barley
 - Each item had a corresponding weight in metal (silver)
- Silver ingots used for long-distance trade
 - NOT money in the monetary sense
 - traded for manufactured (nonperishable) goods

Increased Trade Contacts



Uniform weights and measures

- developed under Naram-Sin
- Akkadian *gur*
 - a measure of 300 liters of barley
- uniform accounting system
- Akkadian becomes the official language of bureaucracy



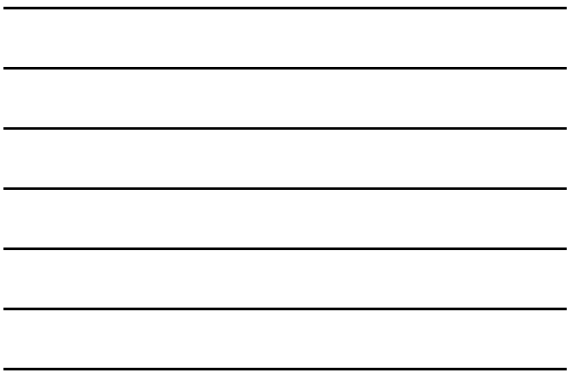
Land Confiscation

Obelisk of King Manishtushu (2269-2255 BCE)

- records the "transfer" of 8 large fields to the royal household of Akkad in N. Mesopotamia
- King gave \$ for it, but under market value
= 3.5 sq. kms.



Manishtusu obelisk - Louvre Museum



- Sumerian is a more agglutinative language
 - phonetically unchanging words and particles are joined together to form phrases with increasingly complex meaning
- Akkadian is inflectional
 - basic form of a word, called a root, can be modified in a myriad of ways to create words of related but different meanings
 - the basis of Semitic languages is the *triconsonantal root*: sequence of three consonants representing the most basic and abstract form of a word.

Imperialism in Art

- The ideology and power of the empire was reflected in art that first displayed strong cultural continuity with the Early Dynastic period.
- A new emphasis on naturalism, expressed by sensitive modeling, is manifested in masterpieces of monumental stone relief sculpture.
- Although little large-scale art of the period remains, a huge corpus of finely carved Akkadian seals preserves a rich iconography illustrating interactions between man and the divine world.



Cylinder seal with contest scene, 2350–2150 BCE
Mesopotamia
Albite
Height 15/16 in. (3.4 cm),
Diam. 7/8 in. (2.3 cm)

Cylinder seal with a battle of the gods, ca. 2220–2159 BCE
Akkadian
Mesopotamia, Kish
Lapis lazuli
Height 1 1/8 in. (2.8 cm),
Diam. 11/16 in. (1.7 cm)

