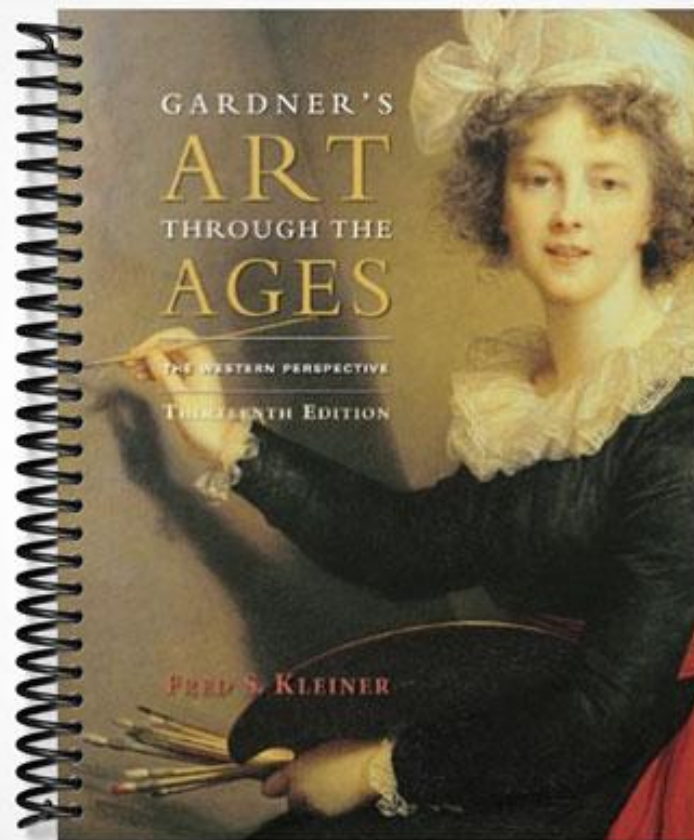


# SOLUTIONS MANUAL



# Chapter 2

## THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

### The Art of the Ancient Near East

#### Summary:

The rise of civilization occurred when humanity gave up the precarious existence of hunting and gathering for the more controlled, stable existence of farming and herding. The region of the Ancient Near East, and Mesopotamia in particular, fostered such revolutionary adaptation. This was the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, known as the Fertile Crescent. It was here that a group of people ended its wanderings, creating a controlled, urban environment by taking up the plow and the hoe to settle in one place and establishing a more regulated, dependable existence. Archeological excavations have uncovered gold objects, jewelry, and artworks in this area. For example, the digs at the Royal Cemetery of Ur revealed clues to the lives of the powerful. From such excavations, scholars have been able to piece together the beginnings of the of Ancient Near Eastern civilizations and their contributions to the rise of subsequent generations.

#### I. Lecture Model

To introduce the student to art history vocabulary and methodologies, an emphasis upon iconography can work well. This approach is also useful in examining contributions of the Sumerians, as well as the importance and eclectism of religion in the ancient world. The role of religion in enhancing and representing political power can also be explored through iconography.

1) The *Warka Vase* (2.5) is a good example of using iconography to understand the concept of a merged identity between a state's ruler with the god or goddess worshipped by the culture. In narrative format, the Vase illustrates a procession to the goddess with offerings from the community, an act performed to receive a blessing or assistance from that deity. In this view, the idea represented on the Vase validates the community, Uruk. The goddess is pleased with the community, hence the richness of the crops and the fertility of the domesticated animals. This is the beginning of illustrative symbols used as visual petitions to the gods on behalf of the population. The Vase also presents these objects as tools employed to preserve the community's identity and belief systems.

2) Another example that illustrates religion as a tool for furthering the community's health and welfare is the actual representation of the goddess or god. Appearing on the *Warka Vase* (though not shown in figure 2.5) is a representation of Innana, guardian goddess of Uruk herself. She is seen in profiled head, frontal torso and profiled legs (a format used for countless depictions across the Ancient Near East, Egypt, the Aegean and Greece).

3) To continue discussion on iconography as a method to explain and interpret visual meanings, use of the bull and the ram in reference to the king or priest-king is suggested. The bull as a representation of the might and power of the divinity has a

history in an even earlier culture, that of Çatal Höyük, Anatolia. In figure **2.10**, the head of a bull adorns the soundbox of the lyre excavated from the royal cemetery at Ur. In tandem with the tale of Gilgamesh and the musicality of the lyre itself, the symbology takes on multiple meanings. The virility of the royal leader or king (the lyre was a possession of the queen or lady of importance) is expressed by the bull's head. The lyre is the vehicle for communication as a musical instrument, sending "sweet sounds" to the gods and pleasing them with the sound and the story. The lyre expresses the audio-visual; it also substantiates the relationship between humanity and the deity.

4) The foundation for this symbology lies in the Sumerian culture. With the evolution of art as a vehicle for visual expression in the Ancient Near East, other cultures used and re-used symbols developed by the Sumerians. In this way, adaptation of a previous society's signs aids development of the new society, emphasizing their prestige, power and importance. The *Victory Stele of Naram-Sin* (**2.13**) points to an inheritance of symbols from Sumer. Here we see Naram-Sin larger than life, leading his troops on to victory, almost impervious to harm from the battleground. This theme is very similar to the *Victory Stele of Eannatum* (**2.7**), yet the Akkadian rendering has made significant changes to the narrative, indicative of the re-use of the "sign" to fit the new demands of a different culture. Note the symbol of the sun just overhanging the mountain in the relief; this is the symbol for the divinity's support of Naram-Sin as a co-equal. The horned helmet worn by Naram-Sin is a characteristic of the god or deity, and now the artist has granted Naram-Sin an almost divine status with its use. This is a clear change from previous groups, i.e., the Sumerians would never feature their ruler in such garb, and they illustrated importance by size (**2.8**). In the *Standard of Ur*, the viewer focuses on the centrally positioned figure, also the largest figure represented. The uniqueness of Naram-Sin's stele is the use and re-use of a motif to create a new theme, the potential divinity of the king or, at the very least, the special relationship the king had with the gods.

5) The Ancient Near Eastern area is replete with objects and art works which focused on the might and power of the king/ruler. Working in conjunction with archaeologists, art historians have been able to sometimes confirm the evidence of the events as they happened or, as is usually the case, pose an educated speculation about might have occurred. In an Assyrian relief, the sculptor's primary obligation was to depict the exploits of the king in triumph. Another task was to visually create in narrative format stories that clearly indicated the powerful military skills of the Assyrians. For example, in figure **2.22**, the sculptor is creating a narrative of a battle, either about to happen or having happened. We see figures in the river swimming for their lives. The arrow protruding from back of one of the swimmers gives the viewer a picture of the event and an inkling of what might be happening. The educated speculation arises in precisely naming the battle, which did occur. As infamous as the Assyrians were in the conduct of war, they, too, were not impervious to re-using other symbols to create an even better "picture" for the viewer to see.

6) Archaeology has been invaluable in uncovering, literally, the past. Its ability to create reconstructed models of great cities or monuments of the Ancient Near East demonstrates how archaeology has broadened the body of knowledge. Uruk's White Temple (**2.2**) and its more formidable duplication, the Ziggurat of Ur (**2.15**), illustrate the thread of imitation and re-invention. Over one thousand years separate these two structures, yet the imitation is clear. From excavations throughout the area, we see this

architectural form appearing in its various sizes and modifications, again emphasizing the importance of Sumer. In examining these ancient cities, much can be learned. The placement of the ziggurat, for example, in Sumerian cities was the focal point of the city. However, in Assyrian cities, the temple was not the central focus, but rather the palace of the king was the largest and more luxurious structure in the city.

In carefully excavating a city, even more information can be learned about the civilization which built the city. What was important to its people, how they worshiped, what industries were available and many more questions can be answered. For example, a reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate at Babylon gives the viewer a suggestion of what the grand entry into the city must have been like. Seeing the reconstruction and the actual gate (2.24) together can give us a better picture of the opulence of ancient Babylon. A reconstruction drawing of Khorsabad, the citadel of Sargon II (2.20), allows the viewer to gain a clearer image of the defensive nature of the inhabitants. And the excavation of Persepolis (2.25), allows the viewer to picture the size of this palatial construction and understand the impact it must have had on the foreign visitor.

## Resources:

### Videotapes

*Iraq: Cradle of Civilization* 29 min. BVL3763 \$89.95

*Sign, Symbol and Script* 40 min. BVL9299 \$129

*Sumer, Babylon, Assyria: The Wolves* 26 min. BVL2782 \$89.95

*Testament: The Bible in History* 7 pt. Series\* 52min. each BVL869 \$595

*As It Was in the Beginning* BVL 1725 \$89.95

*Chronicles and Kings* BVL 1726 \$89.95

\* the other parts of this series will be listed in the pertinent chapters

Films for the Humanities

1-800-257-5126

<http://www.films.com>

### Books

Bottero, Jean. Mesopotamia, Writing, Reasoning and the Gods. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Bryce, Trevor. The Kingdom of the Hittites. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.

Dick, Michael B., ed. Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: the Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East. Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbraun, 1999.

Goodison, Lucy and Christine Morris, ed. Ancient Goddesses: the Myths and the Evidence. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

Hook, S. H. Middle Eastern Mythology. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 2004.

Kondoleon, Christine. Antioch: the Lost Ancient City. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Leick, Gwendolyn. The Babylonians: An Introduction. London: Routledge, 2003.

McCall, Heniretta. Mesopotamian Myths. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Raaflaub, Kurt and Nathan Rosenstein eds. War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. Washington, D. C.: Center for Hellenic Studies: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Reade, Julian. Assyrian Sculpture. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

### **Web Resources**

<http://www.metmuseum.org>

<http://www.ancientneareast.net>

<http://www.crystalinks.com/sumer.html>

<http://whc.unesco.org/sites/114.htm>