

ART OF ANCIENT NEAR EAST



Mesopotamia: Sumer,
Babylonia, Assyria &
Persia

THE FERTILE CRESCENT



ANCIENT NEAR EAST



- ❧ Between 4000-3000 BC a major cultural shift took place in Mesopotamia
- ❧ Complex societies with a hierarchy of priests and kings arose
- ❧ Polytheistic temple complexes
- ❧ Urban (city-states) arose leading to specialty professions
- ❧ Why is the growth of cities so important? To history? To art?

Ancient Cities...



Big Question:

What is so important about cities for the development of art and culture?

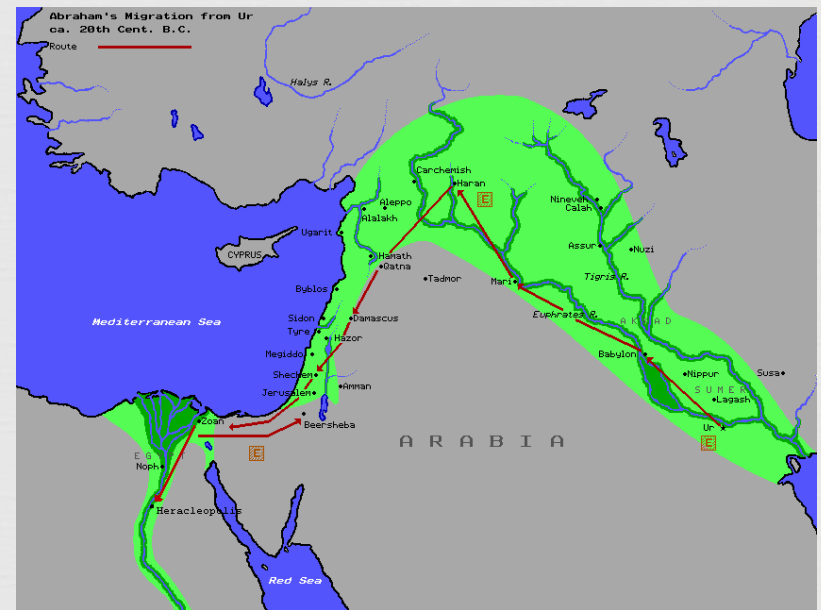
Effects of Cities

- ❧ Cities transform societies!
- ❧ Alter physical environment (agricultures, slash and burn, ziggurats)
- ❧ New means of transport (wheel, sailboat) need generated by lack of natural resources
- ❧ Metallurgy new use for metals (tools, weapons): the beginning of Bronze Age
- ❧ Human organization and structure changes (governments)
- ❧ Division into social classes (royal, religious, landholding)
- ❧ Specialization - Craftspeople, artisans, trades, etc.
- ❧ Record keeping needed lead to development of language and writing
- ❧ Growth of wealth means growth of time for arts, education, leisure

THE FERTILE CRESCENT

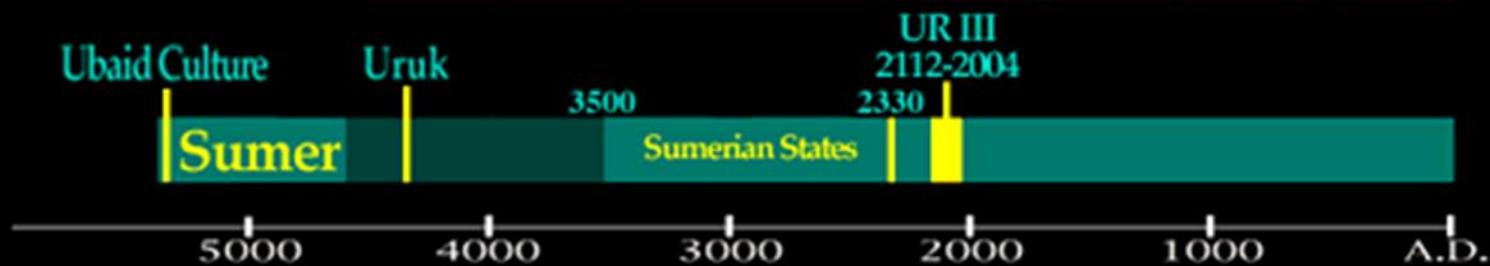
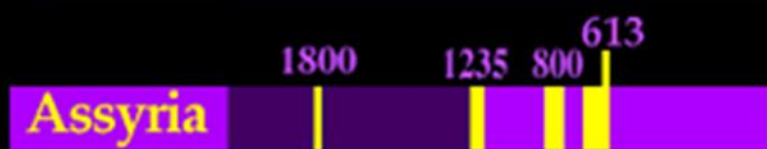
☞ All of this growth was based on control of water and agriculture on the fertile plains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

☞ Thus, the Fertile Crescent





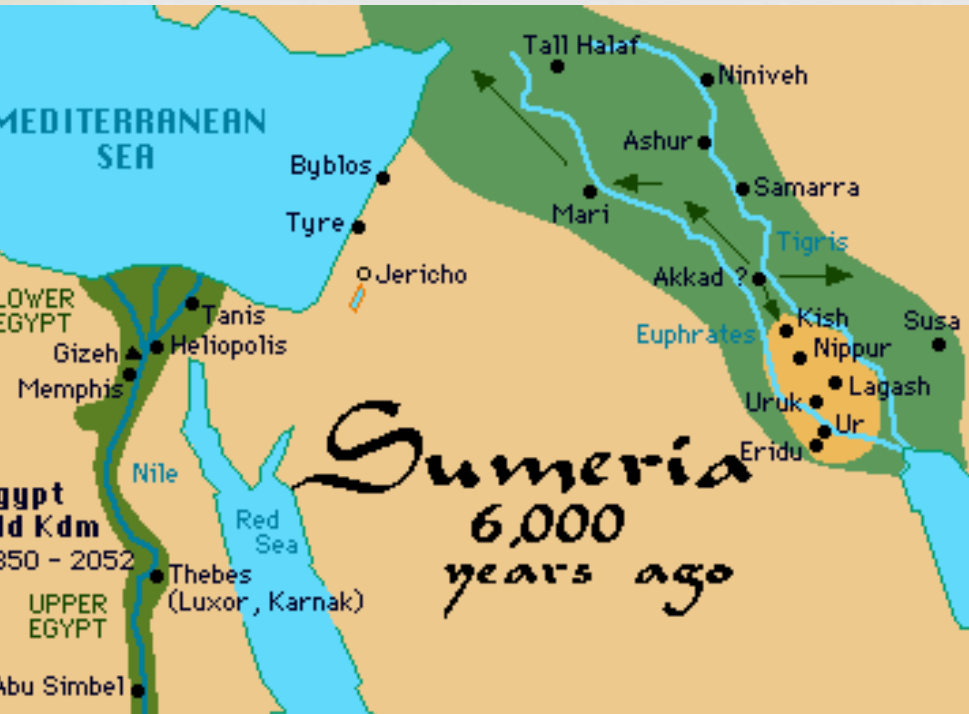
Akkadians before 3000
2112 Gutian Invasion
2200 Amorites
1595 Hittites sack Babylon
1200 Arameans
1159 Elamite Invasion
750 Chaldean Invasion
613 Medes



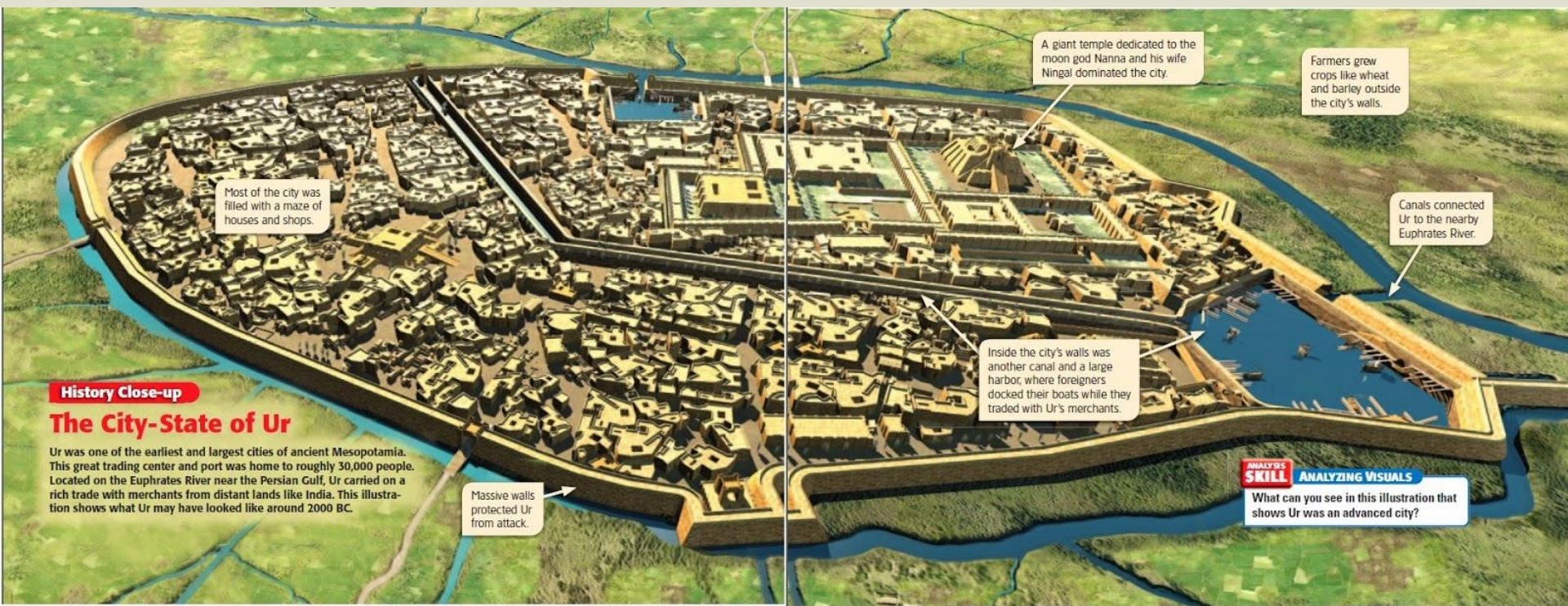
Thousands of Years B.C.

A.D.

SUMER



- ☞ 3500 to 2800 BCE
- ☞ Invented the wagon wheel, the plow, casting objects in copper and bronze
- ☞ But their greatest contribution to civilization was...



Most of the city was filled with a maze of houses and shops.

A giant temple dedicated to the moon god Nanna and his wife Ningal dominated the city.

Farmers grew crops like wheat and barley outside the city's walls.

Canals connected Ur to the nearby Euphrates River.

Inside the city's walls was another canal and a large harbor, where foreigners docked their boats while they traded with Ur's merchants.

Massive walls protected Ur from attack.

History Close-up

The City-State of Ur

Ur was one of the earliest and largest cities of ancient Mesopotamia. This great trading center and port was home to roughly 30,000 people. Located on the Euphrates River near the Persian Gulf, Ur carried on a rich trade with merchants from distant lands like India. This illustration shows what Ur may have looked like around 2000 BC.

ANALYZING VISUALS

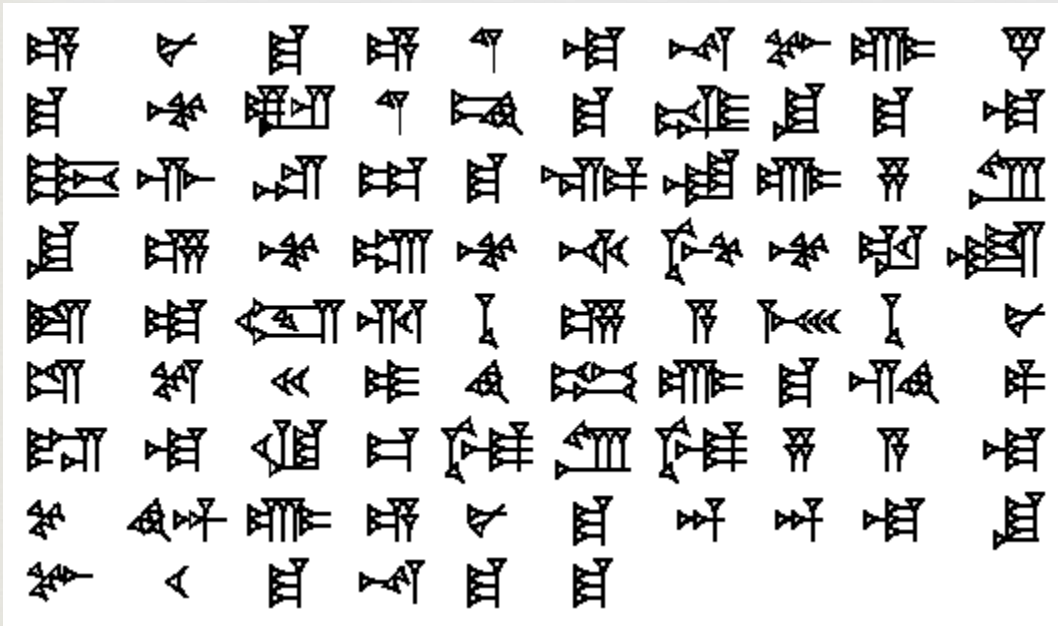
What can you see in this illustration that shows Ur was an advanced city?

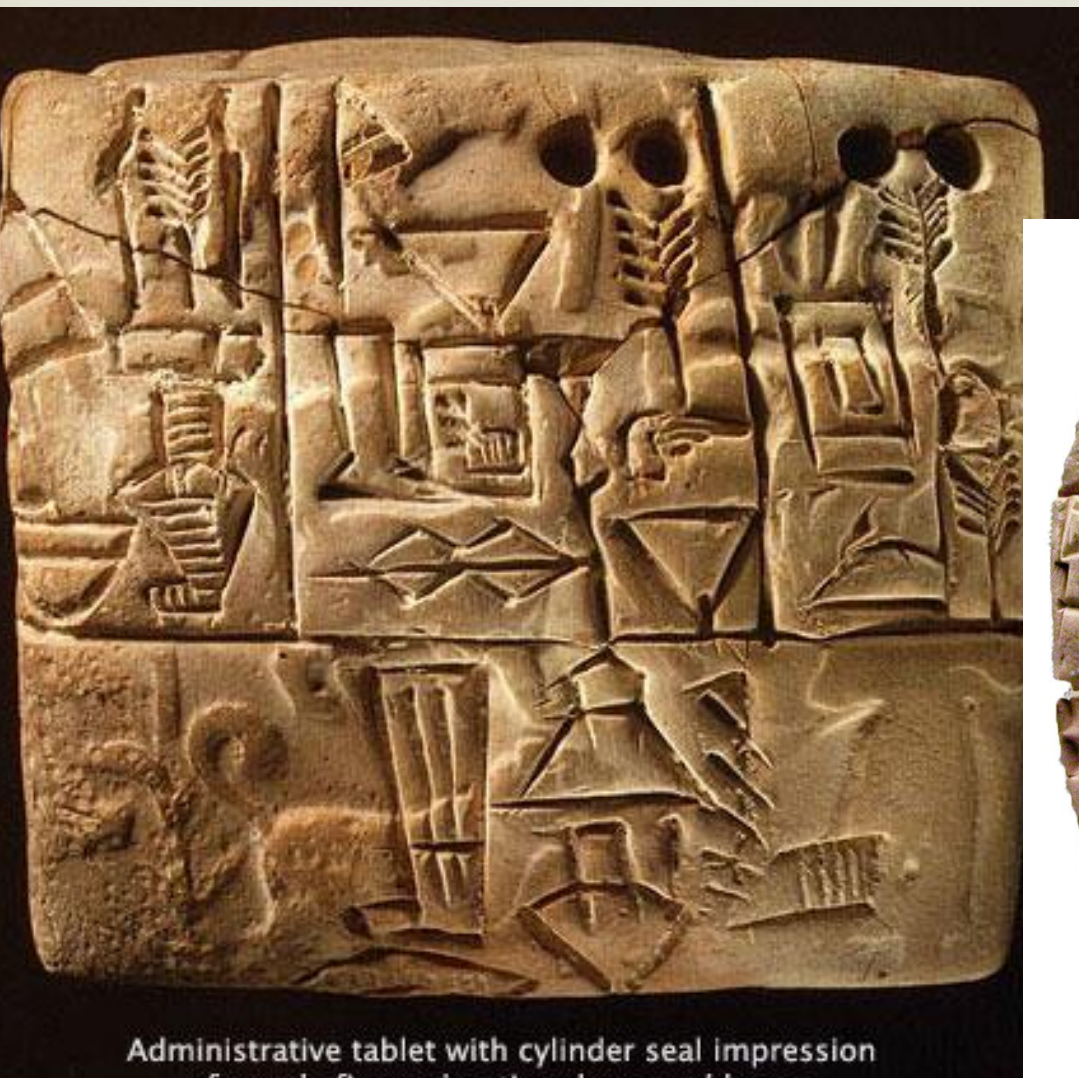


WRITING!



🌀 Cuneiform: one of the earliest systems of **writing**, distinguished by its wedge-shaped marks on clay tablets, made by means of a blunt reed for a stylus



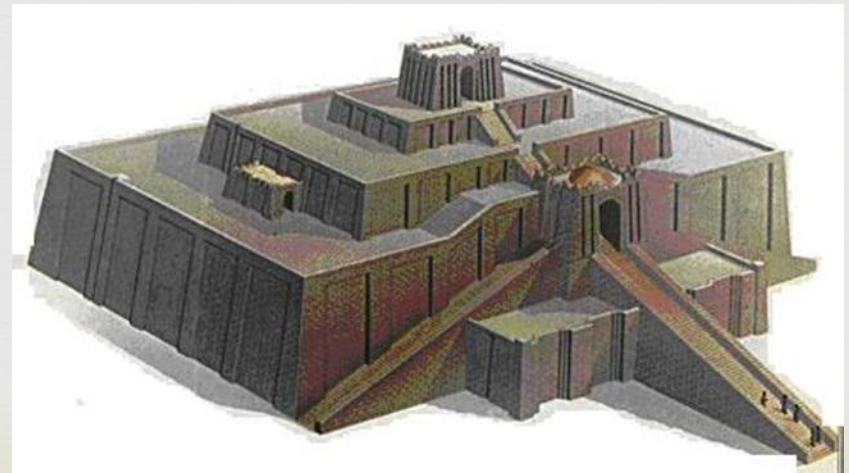
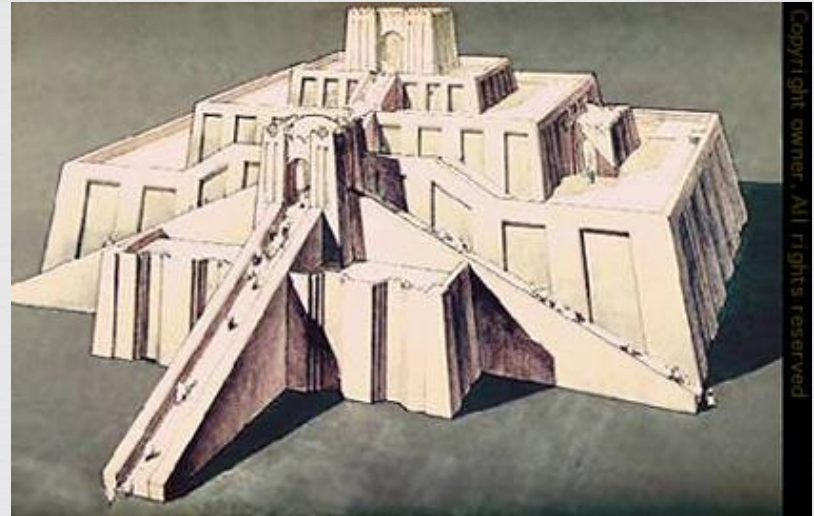


Administrative tablet with cylinder seal impression of a male figure, hunting dogs, and boars, Jamdat Nasr, Uruk III style.; 3100-2900 B.C.

Photograph © www.metmuseum.org

ZIGGURAT

- ❧ A ziggurat is a stepped pyramidal structure with a temple or shrine on top
- ❧ Functioned symbolically as lofty bridges between earth and the heavens



ZIGGURAT



∞ The Nanna Ziggurat of Ur (Iraq)

∞ The temples were known as “waiting rooms” where the priests and priestesses waited for the gods and goddesses to reveal themselves

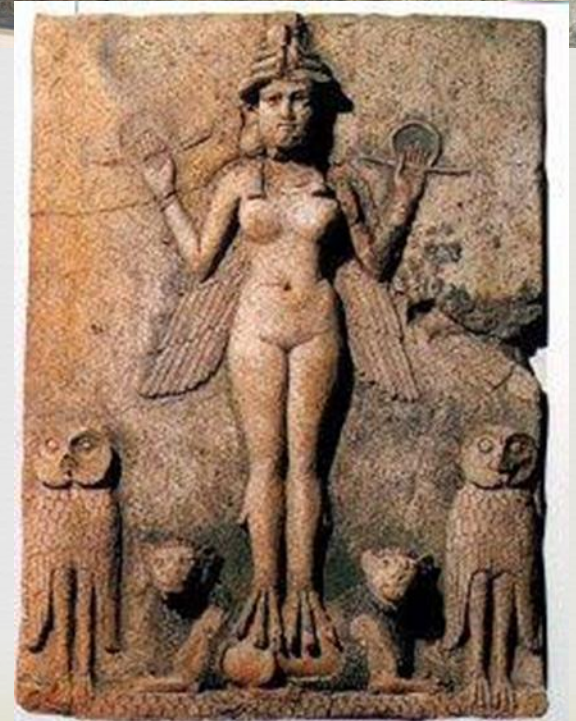


VOCAVULARY WORDS



☞ The carving is an example of LOW RELIEF or BAS RELIEF

☞ This is when figures are carved to project only slightly from a flat background



LOW RELIEF OR BAS RELIEF



- ❧ The low relief carving on this vase tells a story
- ❧ The story is told bands or REGISTERS
- ❧ It is the story of a ritualized marriage between a divine female and a male

Could this be Marduk, king of the ancient Babylonian gods?



VOTIVE FIGURES

- ❧ 2900-2600 BCE
- ❧ Votive figures are statues made as an act of worship to the gods
- ❧ They are statues of individual worshippers that were set up before the statue of the god



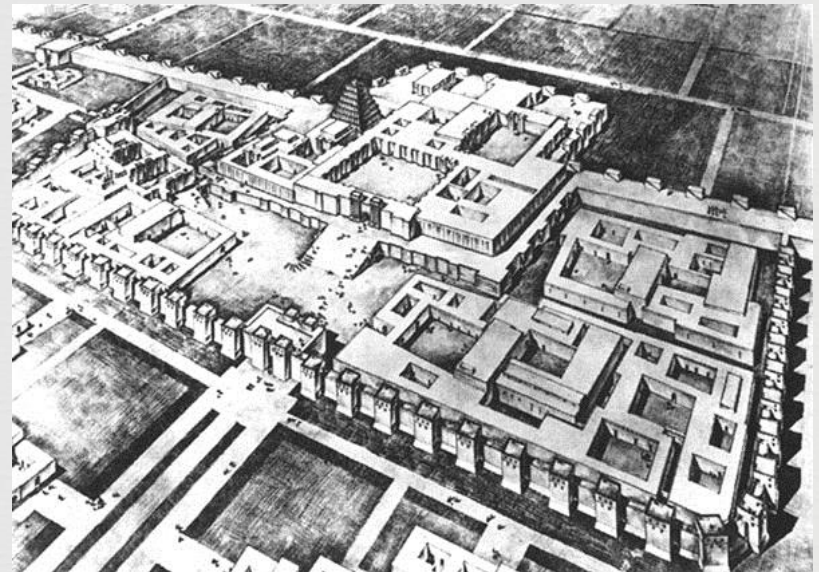
VOTIVE FIGURES



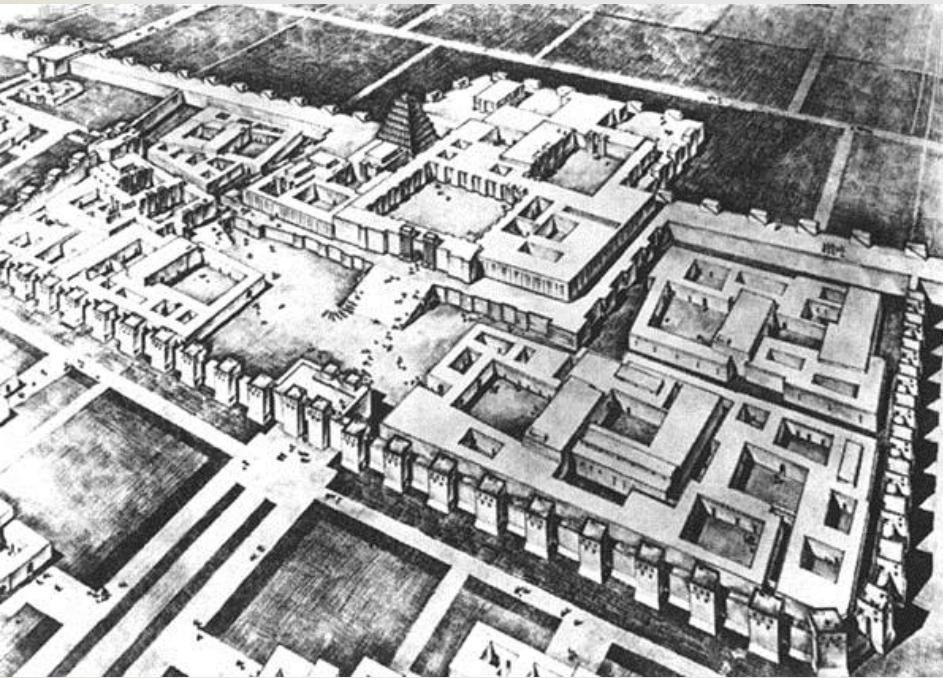
- ❧ The wide open eyes reveal the importance of fixing on a god with an attentive gaze
- ❧ All the features are reduced to simple geometric shapes

VOCABULARY WORD

- ❧ A CITADEL is a walled fortress
- ❧ Sargon II built this citadel within the walls of the Assyrian capital at Dur Sharrukin



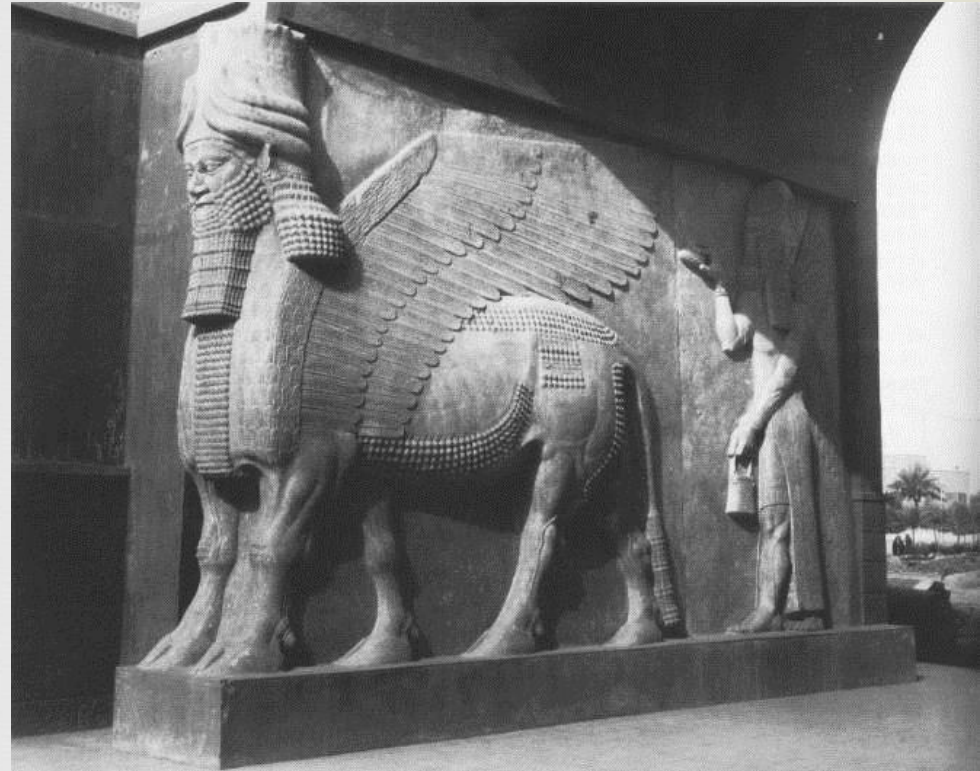
VOCAVULARY WORD



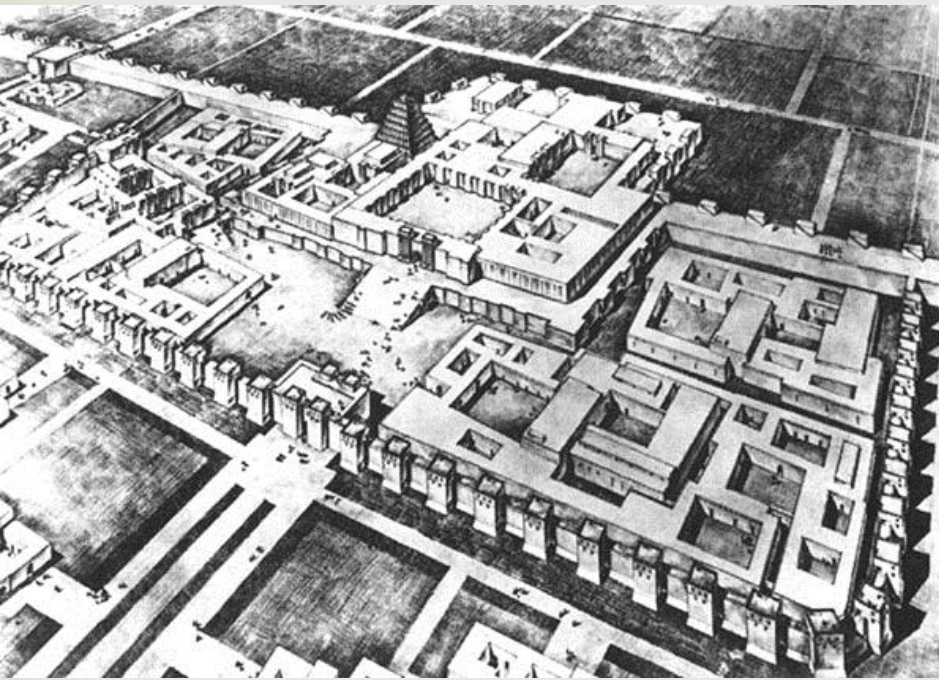
- ☞ He also built a PALACE COMPLEX, centered in the back on a raised platform
- ☞ This is a monumental use of art as propaganda to support political power

SARGON II

- ❧ The king's throne was flanked by these guardian figures, which also flanked the gates of the citadel
- ❧ They are winged human-headed bulls
- ❧ They guard against evil influences



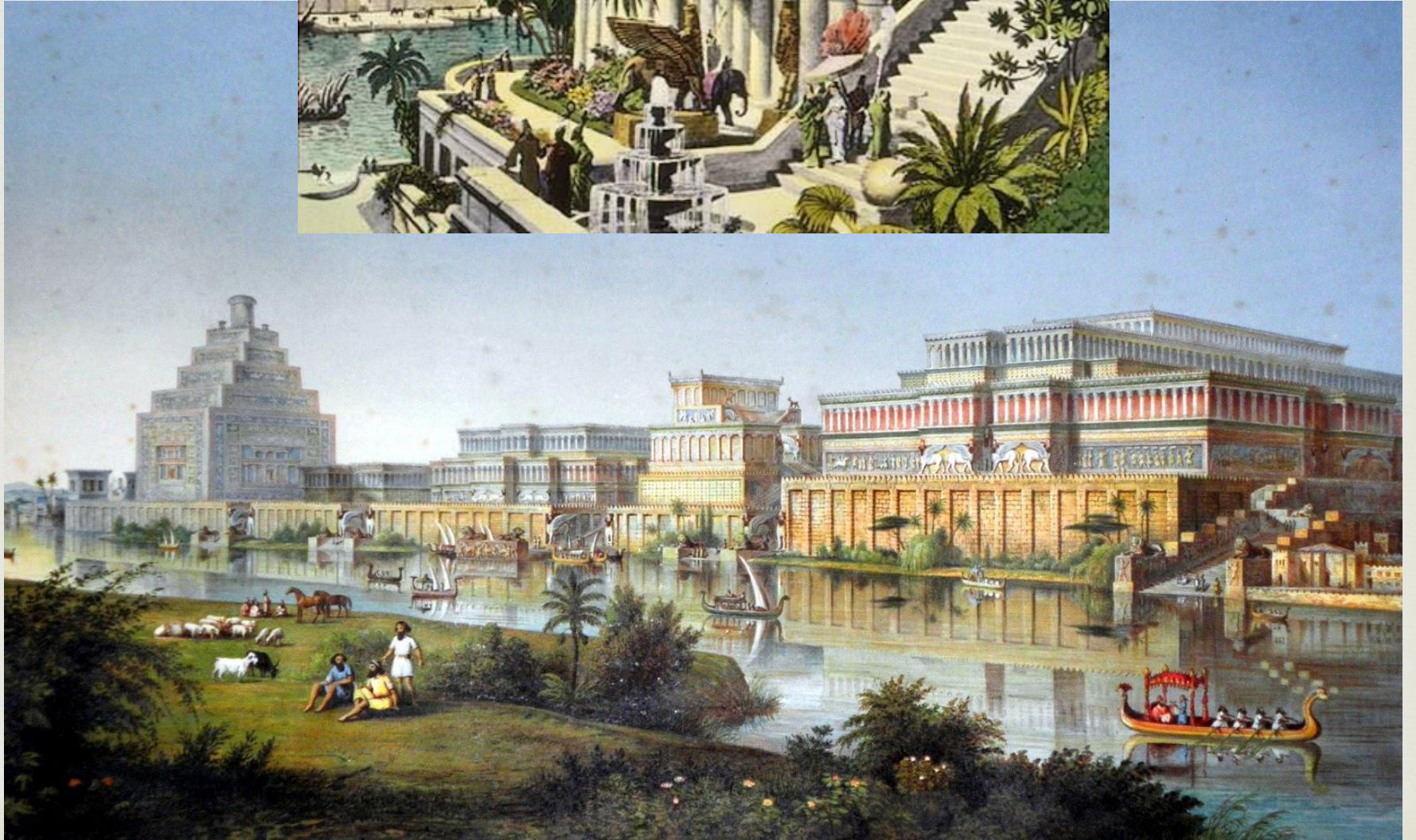
SARGON II



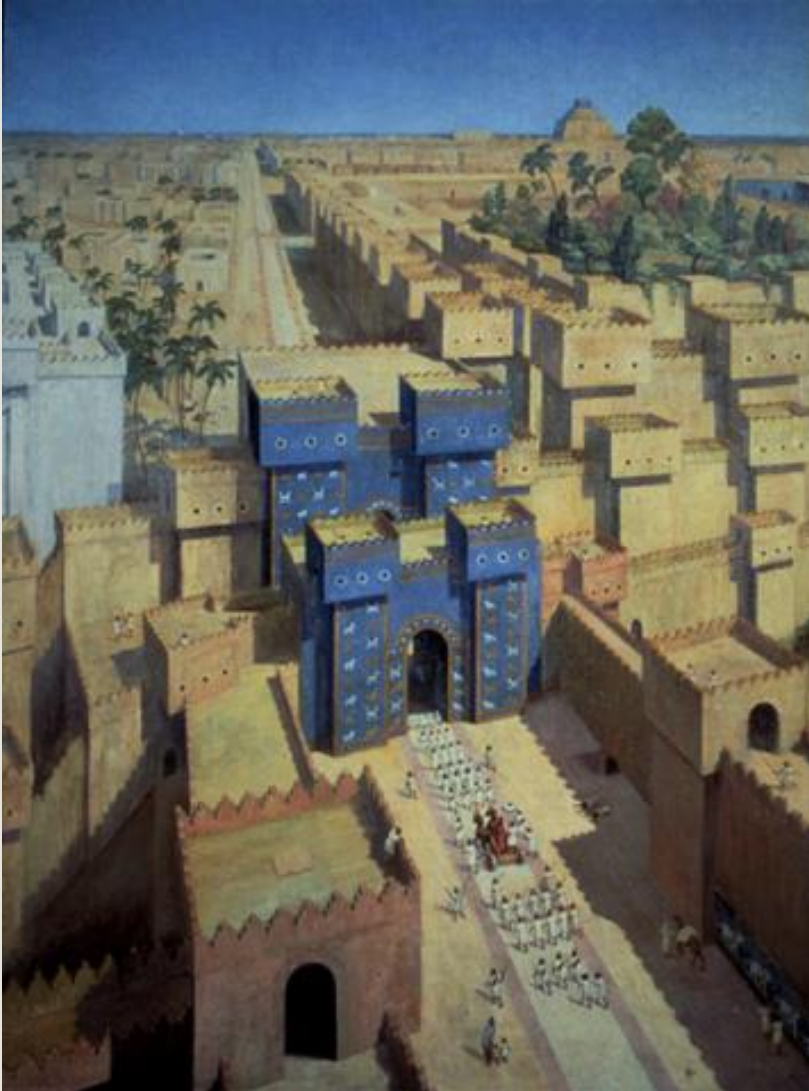
✧ Located between the Palace Complex and the Temple Complex is a ziggurat, 7 levels high, each level painted a different color, declaring the might of Assyria's kings and symbolizing his claim to empire

NEO-BABYLONIA





BABYLON



- ✧ King Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BCE)
- ✧ The city straddled the Euphrates River, traversed by a wide avenue called “May the Enemy Not Have Victory”
- ✧ Note: Hanging Gardens and Marduk Ziggurat

ISHTAR GATE

- ❧ Turquoise bricks that were GLAZED
- ❧ Glazed bricks were painted and fired
- ❧ The top is an example of CRENELATION or topped with notches
- ❧ Gold-colored bricks show lions, the symbol of the goddess Ishtar

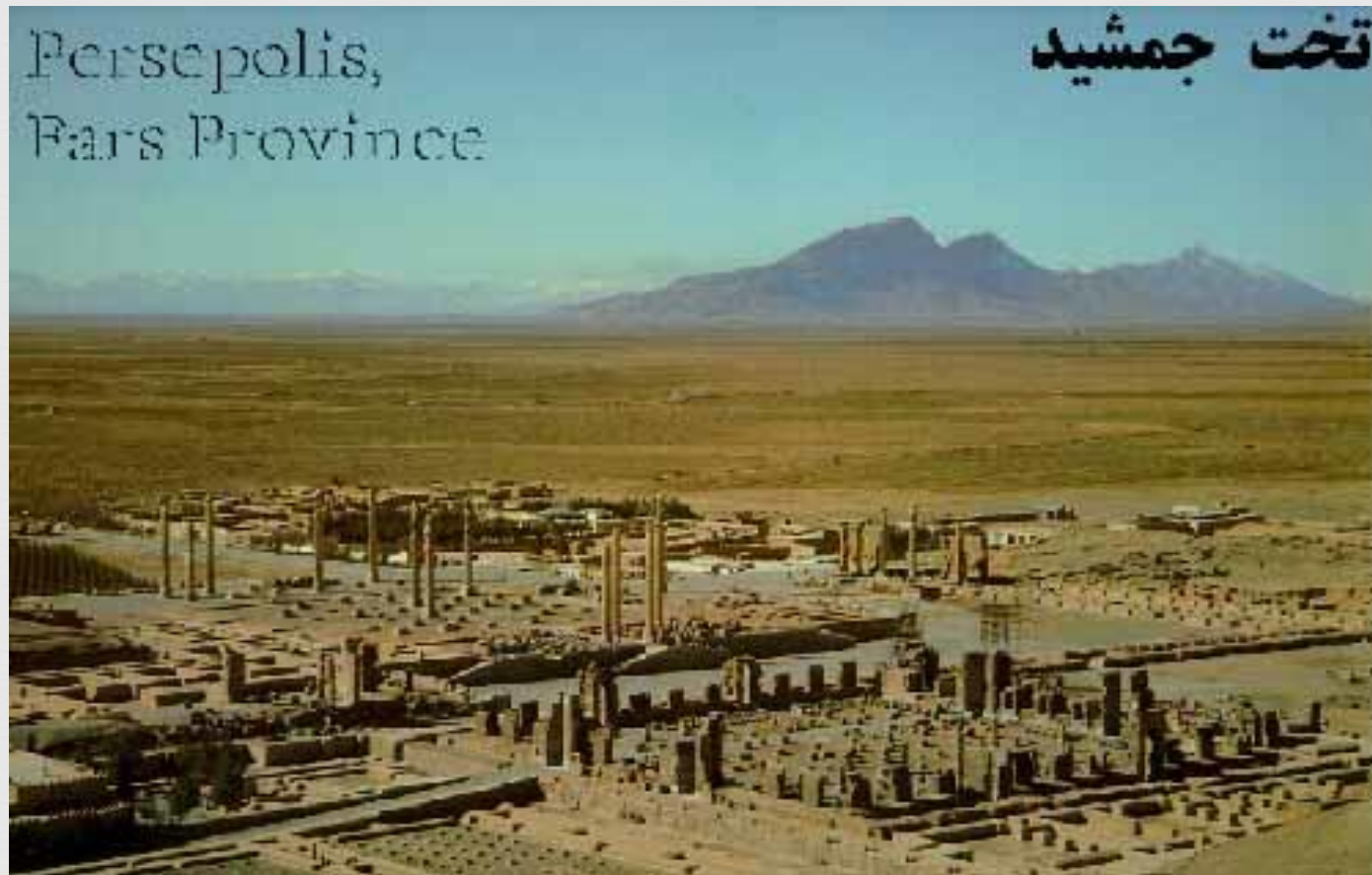


ANATOLIA (Turkey)



- ∞ The Hittite stronghold of Hattushash sculpted guardian figures out of the foundational rock itself
- ∞ This Lion Gate harmonized the colossal scale of the construction

PERSIA and the city of PERSEPOLIS





PERSEPOLIS

∞ 518 BCE

∞ King Darius utilized influences and materials from all over his empire, which included Babylon, Egypt, Mesopotamian and Greece

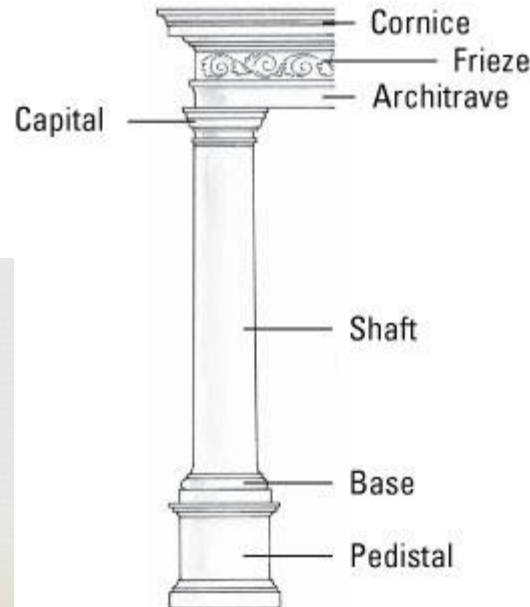
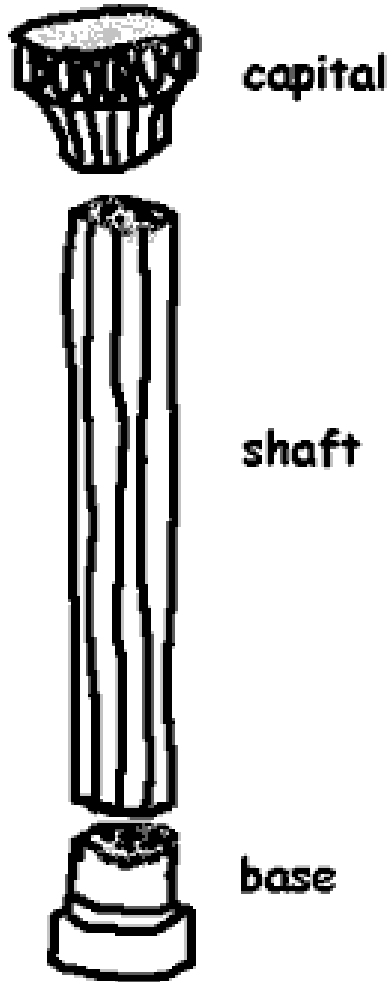


PERSEPOLIS

- ❧ At the height of the Persian Empire it stretched from India to Africa
- ❧ Persia today is known as Iran
- ❧ The city included extensive use of columns



VOCABULARY WORDS



∞ The COLUMN is divided into three parts:

∞ The BASE

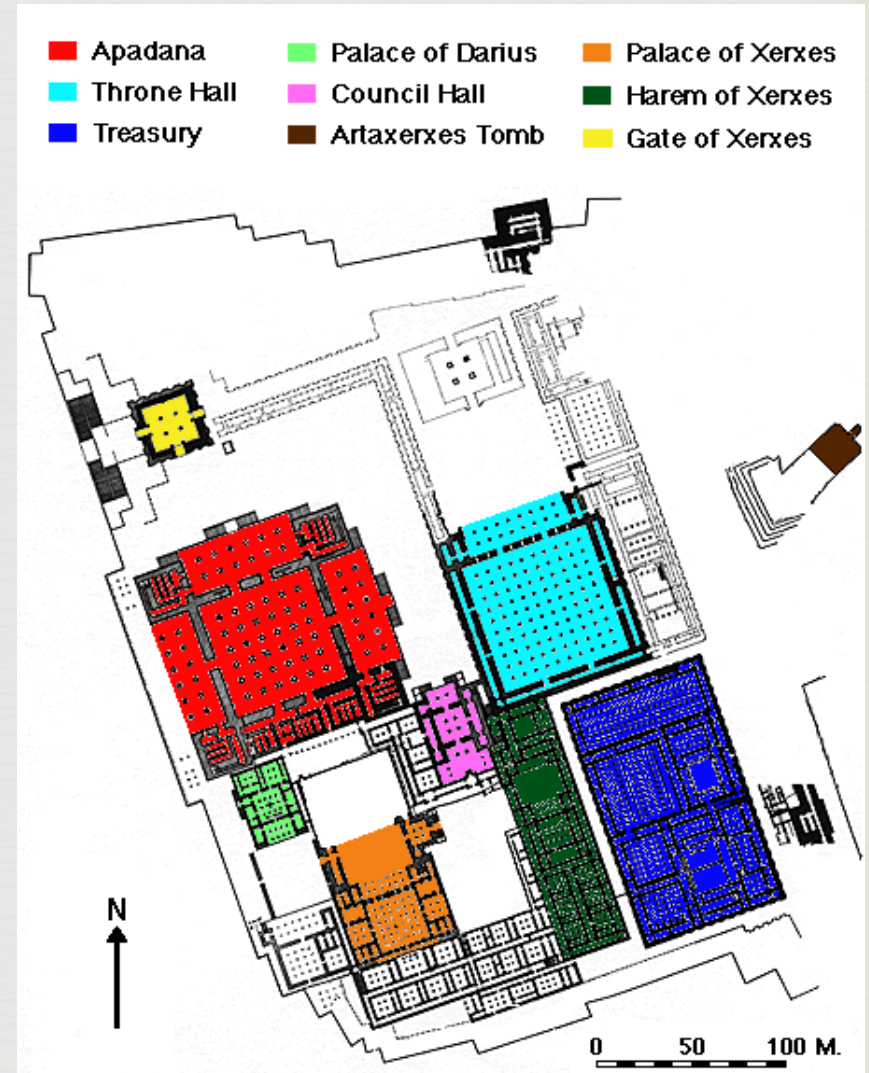
∞ The SHAFT

∞ The CAPITAL

∞ This shaft is FLUTED

VOcabuLARY wORD

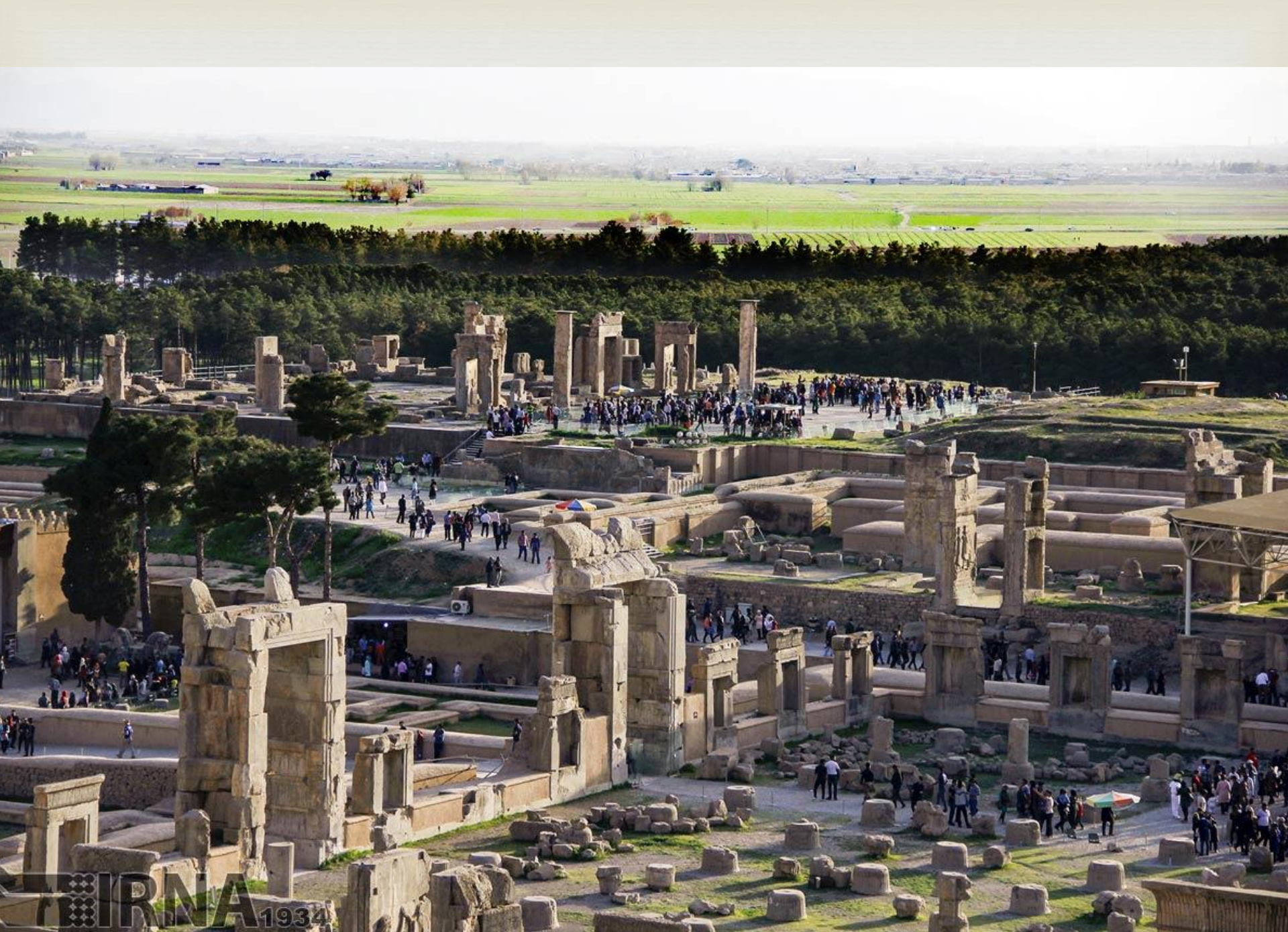
- ❧ A PLAN is a two-dimensional drawing of a building(s).
- ❧ Then it is viewed from overhead
- ❧ This PLAN is laid out as a GRID, a system of crossed lines

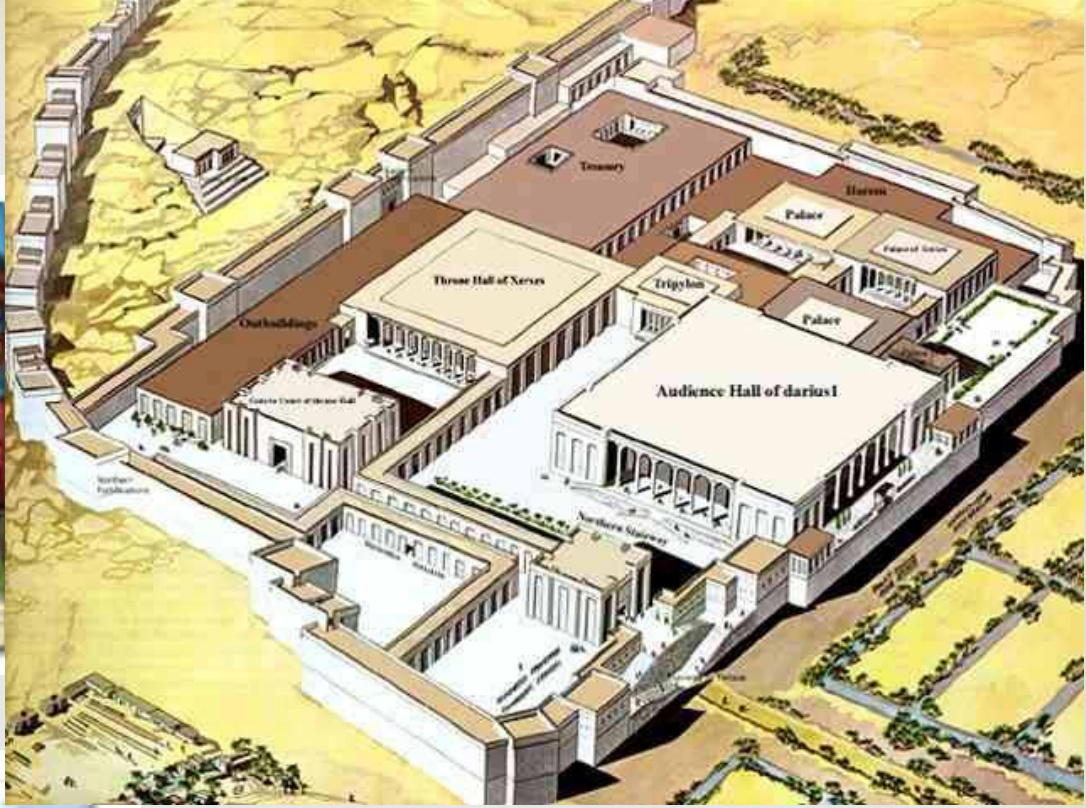


PERSEPOLIS



- ✧ Under the direction of King Darius, a new capital for the Persian empire was built and came to be called Persepolis
- ✧ Darius was followed by his son, Xerxes (ruled 485-465)
- ✧ The Apadana (Audience Hall) features wonderful low relief sculpture





NEXT STOP: EGYPT

