



The Essential
Archaeological Guide to
BIBLE LANDS

UNCOVERING BIBLICAL SITES OF THE ANCIENT
NEAR EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

TITUS KENNEDY



“Few areas of biblical study and scholarship impact a preacher’s or Bible student’s ability to understand, interpret, and communicate the Scriptures more than the study of biblical archaeology. Beautifully illustrated and practically organized, Titus Kennedy’s excellent volume *The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands* delivers everything you need...and more! No serious student should be without it.”

—**Mark Yarbrough**, PhD, president,
Dallas Theological Seminary

“A real page turner! Literally, I would skip other important work to read the next section of this book! The job of the professional archaeologist who writes a popular work is to enlighten the nonspecialist. Titus Kennedy performs this duty wonderfully, illustrating how to better comprehend Bible texts, people, places, and stories by weaving them into the archaeological findings from 50-plus ancient cities mentioned in the Bible. By reading this faith-building book, I learned a lot and drew closer to God. This is a great read for the serious Bible student and a superb reference work for preachers, pastors, and church leaders.”

—**James M. Leonard**, PhD, professor and
chair of geography, Marshall University

“Titus Kennedy has produced a substantive work that will benefit all who endeavor to understand the complex relationship between archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern texts, the most relevant of which is the Bible. When site identifications remain unclear, he presents opposing scholarly views, thus enabling readers to grapple with the data. The photos and graphics are excellent and serve to illuminate the subject matter. Like all great writing, this work condenses and simplifies complicated topics so that readers can internalize them.”

—**Scott Stripling**, PhD, president,
Near East Archaeological Society

“In a world of academic secularism, there are many publications that explain away centuries of history as fabrication or mere fables. *The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands* is a well-researched and informative guide to the lands and narratives of the Bible. This resource supports the historical accuracy of the Bible and provides valid archaeological and other evidence to readers. Archaeological discoveries such as inscriptions, pottery, foundations of cities and buildings, and even evidence of destructions are given life and meaning in order to provide the proper historical and cultural background to the understanding of the biblical text.

“Titus Kennedy’s love of the Ancient Near East, his great skill and experience as an archaeologist, and his meticulous methodology have provided him with all the necessary equipment to make a huge and necessary contribution to scholars as well as guides and tourists to the Bible lands.”

—**Magdel Le Roux**, DLitt et Phil in biblical archaeology,
professor, University of South Africa

“This book is a gold mine of information connecting archaeology to the Bible. Similar to a Bible encyclopedia, its articles about biblical cities and regions give the geography, history, setting, and evidence for the biblical stories associated with each place. This up-to-date resource helps to bring many Bible passages and topics to life by laying a solid historical foundation for the events connected to them. Kennedy’s writing style is refreshingly ‘Just the facts, please.’ He doesn’t overstate what we know, and he clears the air on many points where other archaeologists and historians have obscured the data to favor their pet theories. This is an incredible handbook that everyone should have, and it would make a great companion textbook for any Bible survey course.”

—**John A. Bloom**, PhD, PhD, professor of physics;
director, MA, Science and Religion Program, Biola University

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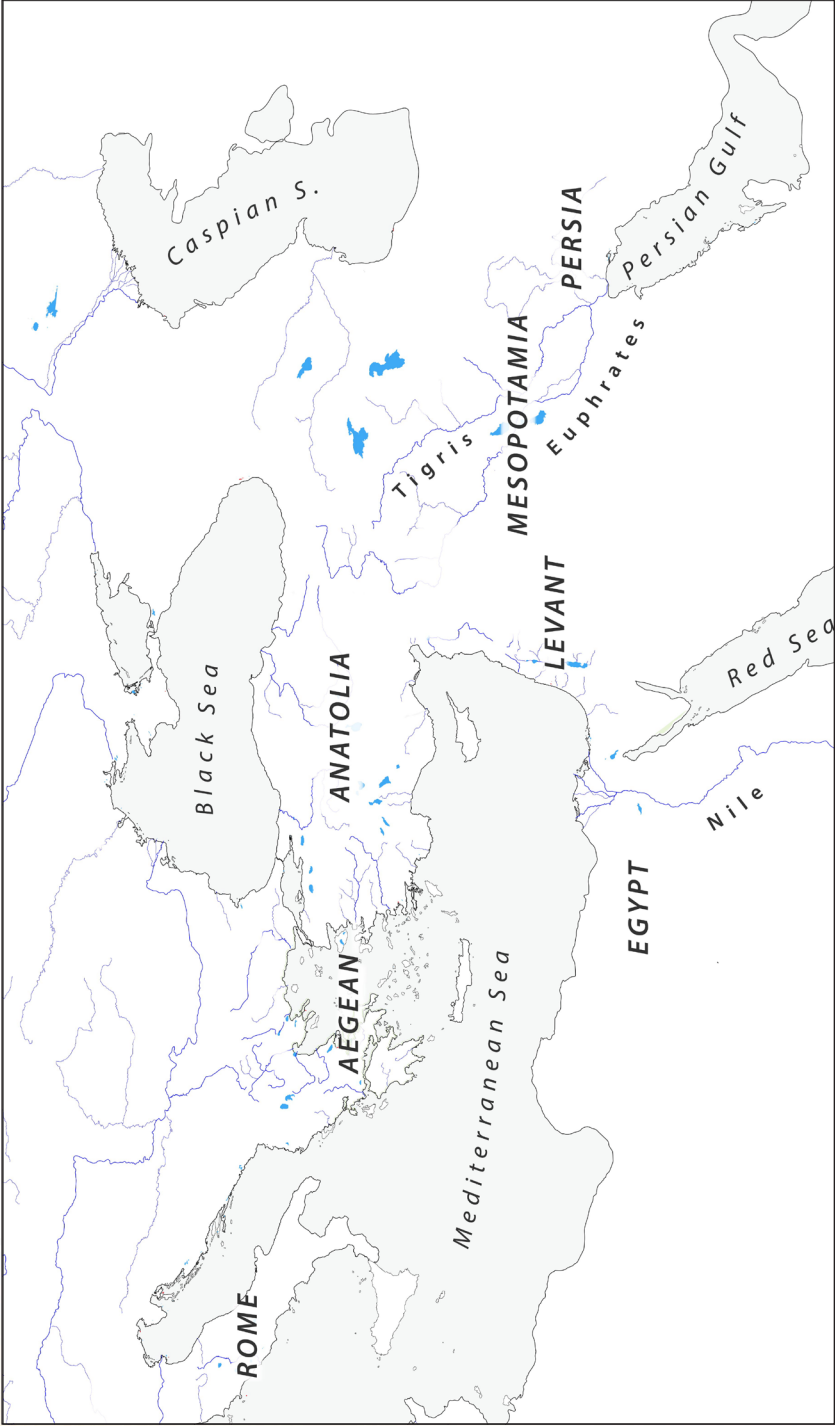
Contents

Exploring the Archaeology of Bible Lands	9
CHAPTER 1—Mesopotamia and Persia	17
Uruk	17
Babylon	25
Nineveh	43
Ur	53
Harran	60
Susa	66
CHAPTER 2—Egypt and Sinai	73
Rameses	73
Pithom	86
Heliopolis	90
Memphis	98
Thebes	106
Sinai	114
CHAPTER 3—The Levant	127
Jerusalem	127
Ai	172
Dan	180
Gezer	187
Hazor	194
Jericho	206
Lachish	220
Megiddo	228
Rabbath-Ammon	235

Samaria	241
Shechem	247
Shiloh	256
Sidon	260
Sodom	264
Tyre	275
Caesarea Maritima	279
Caesarea Philippi	287
Capernaum	291
Magdala	297
Nazareth	300
Tiberias	304
CHAPTER 4—Anatolia	309
Ephesus	309
Smyrna	326
Pergamon	329
Thyatira	334
Sardis	337
Philadelphia	339
Laodicea	342
Patmos	348
Perga	352
Pisidian Antioch	358
Iconium	363
Lystra	366
Derbe	371
Colossae	373
Hattusa	378
Ararat	384

CHAPTER 5—Greece, Rome, and the Mediterranean	395
Paphos	395
Philippi	399
Thessalonica	407
Beroea	413
Athens	415
Corinth	431
Malta	443
Rome	452

BIBLE LANDS





Exploring the Archaeology of Bible Lands

The events recorded in the Bible occurred millennia ago in locations vastly different than our modern cities, towns, villages, and monuments. Apart from the exception of a few iconic buildings preserved in artwork or through restoration, the architecture, engineering, technology, purpose, and symbolism of these ancient locations would appear foreign to the modern observer. The scale of ancient cities and buildings cannot be fully grasped simply by reading words on a page, and in certain places, even the landscape has changed significantly. Yet, this ancient contextual knowledge is crucial to an accurate understanding of many passages in the Bible.

Archaeological sites have been instrumental for furthering the understanding of ancient locations, geography, history, chronology, economics, language, religion, and culture of the biblical world. Since the early excavations in the 19th century, archaeology has revealed new information year by year and vastly increased our knowledge about the places in which the events of the Bible occurred. While a few sites were never lost to history, and several are still unknown or tentative, the vast majority of the cities, towns, villages, sacred sites, and historically significant locations have now been identified through exploration, research, and archaeological investigation. Of these identified places, a substantial number have been partially excavated or surveyed, although it could take decades or even centuries of intensive work to fully recover and document what still exists beneath the surface of the ground.

When reading through the Bible and mapping the various places mentioned, one realizes that the ancient biblical world was immense, stretching from Persia in the east to Rome in the west to Nubia in the south to Anatolia in the north. Areas even farther outside of this sphere, such as India and Spain, are also mentioned. The lands of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Canaanites, Israelites, Egyptians, Hittites, Urartians, Greeks, Romans, and many others are all part of the larger story and played roles. The geographical setting for the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible world was the Ancient Near East, which today is the region called the Middle East and included Mesopotamia or the land of the Chaldeans (Genesis 24:10; 11:28); Anatolia, called the land of the Hittites and alternatively possibly Gouim (Joshua 1:4; Genesis 14:9); Persia or Elam (2 Chronicles 36:20; Genesis 14:1); Canaan, Israel, and Judah (Genesis 11:31); Egypt or Mizraim (Genesis 12:10; Exodus 6:11); Arabia (2 Chronicles 9:14); and Cyprus or Elishah/Alashiya (Ezekiel 26:6-7).

The geographical setting for the New Testament world was the Roman Empire, comprised of provinces and regions including Judea (Luke 3:1), Syria (Luke 2:2), Achaia (Acts 18:12), Macedonia (Acts 16:9), Italy (Acts 18:2), Malta (Acts 28:1), Asia (Acts 19:10), Egypt (Acts 2:10), and many others. Geographical analysis of ancient texts such as the Bible has played a key role in the discovery and identification of archaeological sites. The accuracy of those descriptions of locations is also something that can be tested and verified through archaeological and geographical analysis.

Although maps seem to have been rare in the ancient Near East, written descriptions of geography have been found in many ancient documents. Modern maps often help not only with regard to comparing geographical features, but often ancient names have been preserved over time, even if slightly modified or changed into a modern language. These descriptions, along with a few existing ancient maps and existing place names, have enabled archaeologists to rediscover sites and to reconstruct maps of the ancient world. However, when clues are vague and the ancient name has not been preserved, considerable searching is required through survey and excavation, and to conclusively identify a location it may be necessary to find an inscription at the site that states its ancient name. As a result of various archaeological investigations,

many sites mentioned in the Bible have been located, surveyed, and excavated, increasing our knowledge and allowing correlations to be made between ancient texts and the archaeological record.

Archaeological sites and their various strata or layers must also be evaluated based on chronology and the correspondence of those findings to locations, architecture, events, or persons mentioned in ancient texts such as the Bible. Chronology, or the “study of time,” is the arrangement of events in the order of their occurrence in time. This is a significant aspect of understanding the events of the past and confirming the historical accuracy of an ancient text because just as a specific geographic location is necessary to identify the correct historical site, only with a precise place in time to identify specific events and people can one place events in a correct historical context and correlate what is found in archaeology with what is recorded in the Bible.

In the modern world, an absolute chronology is used, usually with the BC–AD system, while in the ancient world, various chronological systems existed that typically corresponded to the reign of a king or a significant event. Besides the Bible, we have historical texts written by people in many nations and cultures of the ancient world who often included chronological information or markers in their writings. Moses, one of the most famous authors of ancient times, also incorporated chronological information tied to events and people from which can be derived approximate dates in our modern system.

Herodotus, a Greek historian of the 5th century BC, also recorded chronological data so that events and people could be placed in an overall timeline of history. Lists of kings, era/year numbering systems, and historical records from various authors in antiquity have yielded important information that allows for the pinpointing of events, places, and people in time. The chronologies of the ancient world and the Bible have been carefully constructed by compiling and analyzing information, with the constant addition of details and refinements over centuries of scholarship. While adjustments have needed to be made to the chronologies from time to time, the changes are minimal, measuring usually only a few years to a few decades.

Currently, archaeological and historical chronologies for regions such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant have been constructed that overlap with each other for synchronisms, which allows data to be correlated to other

studies and publications without drastic recalibration or adjustment. This book follows widely accepted chronological systems that include the almost universally utilized archaeological chronology for the Levant, the Short Chronology for Mesopotamia, the Egyptian High Chronology or similar dates for specific segments of the New Kingdom, and the standardized historical chronology for the Roman period. The Short Chronology for Mesopotamia understands that the date for the fall of Babylon and the reign of Hammurabi is later in time than the Middle or Long chronologies for Mesopotamia, while the High Chronology for Egypt and specifically the New Kingdom places the beginning of the New Kingdom at a slightly higher or earlier date, resulting in the reigns of many Pharaohs being shifted several years earlier than the Low chronological system for Egypt.

While chronological controversies exist within academia, and no perfect system has been presented and agreed upon in complete consensus, scholars continue to make progress on these issues and acknowledge that dates may be approximate or subject to revision. For the Levant, minor adjustments have been made over recent decades, primarily with the Early Bronze Age, Intermediate Bronze Age, and transitions from Middle Bronze to Late Bronze and Late Bronze to Iron Age. However, the older dates are still often used in many publications for simplicity and do not vary significantly.

In Mesopotamian archaeology and history, many recent scholars have come to the conclusion that the Short Chronology or a slightly adapted version of the Middle Chronology toward the Short Chronology is probably the most accurate or closest to the correct timeline based on a variety of new data, although the Middle Chronology is often used for convenience. In Egyptology, the High Chronology was accepted for decades, but subsequent studies and support from influential scholars resulted in the Low Chronology rising to prominence as a more popular system. However, a recent and comprehensive radiocarbon study using 211 samples from plant remains, along with numerous other chronological studies based on new archaeological discoveries and historical synchronisms, now suggests that the New Kingdom and the 18th Dynasty of Egypt probably began between the traditional dates for High Chronology and Low Chronology. Notably, 128 radiocarbon samples from the New Kingdom period and the most recent IntCal20 calibrations

indicate that the reigns of Pharaohs from the middle of the 18th Dynasty and later match much more closely to the High Chronology dates.

The chronology of the Roman period has not been a considerable matter of debate or controversy because of the plethora of historical records, inscriptions, coins with regnal years, and era systems. While dates for certain rulers or events may fluctuate from scholar to scholar, typically these vary by only a few years, and in rare cases, decades. In the future, with continued discovery and research, the chronologies of the ancient world will likely become more consistent and less controversial, but even now the differences are usually minor.

Although there is a wide spectrum of views on the historical reliability of the Bible, the majority of places where significant events in the Bible occurred have been rediscovered, studied, and in many cases even excavated, and scholars agree that, at a minimum, the Bible is a useful and accurate resource regarding geography and locations. The information from these sites not only helps the reader to better visualize and comprehend the ancient written word in its original context, and therefore what the authors were intending to communicate, but many discoveries from these sites have corroborated historical accounts in the Bible.

However, archaeology itself is also subject to interpretation, new data, and the refinement of techniques. Therefore, certain archaeological sites or specific interpretations or conclusions might be particularly controversial or change with new discoveries or new research. Archaeological publications may even conflict about data or interpretations of sites depending on when they were written, what methodology was used, or the viewpoints of the authors. Yet, rather than be limited to merely reading words on a page or data tables, one must value the importance of field experience and personal familiarity with specific sites in correctly understanding and interpreting archaeology and archaeological reports, just as actual experience is essential for proficiency and expertise in any profession.

Many excellent books have been written about archaeology and the Bible, including those that examine the archaeology of the important region known as the Holy Land. However, rather than focus exclusively on sites in the Holy Land, this book has selected key locations from various geographical regions throughout the ancient world of the Bible. This has been done with a desire

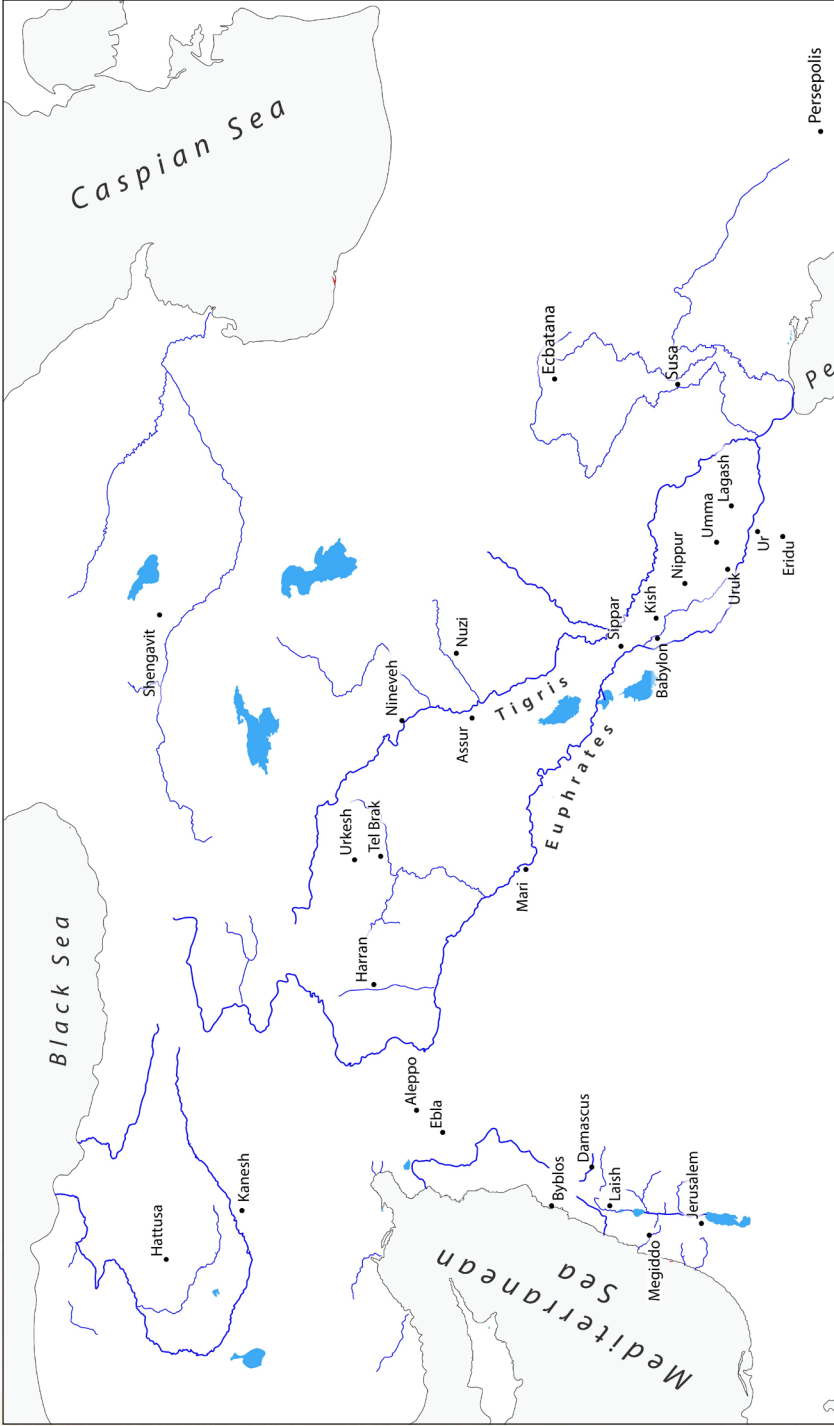
to provide a broader picture of the history and archaeology behind the biblical texts and to fill a niche with regard to information available. Each site was examined in relation to its connection with the biblical narratives and specific time periods, meaning that an exhaustive history of each site and its discoveries is not given.

New discoveries are being unearthed each year, and this book attempts to include the most recent relevant and significant finds from those sites that connect to the events, people, places, or times recorded in the Bible. Although for the majority of sites there exists a general consensus on identification and discoveries, no doubt a few sites and specific interpretations in this book could be seen as controversial by certain scholars. However, the disagreements and ambiguities represent a small percentage of the overall content, and hopefully the information in this book can serve as a useful resource for the study of ancient sites in the biblical world.

Ultimately, archaeology assists us in our reconstruction of the ancient past through investigation, survey, excavation, and restoration, allowing us to better understand those writings, events, and lives from so many years ago.

Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;
you will raise up the age-old foundations;
and you will be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of the streets in which to dwell (Isaiah 58:12).

REGION OF MESOPOTAMIA



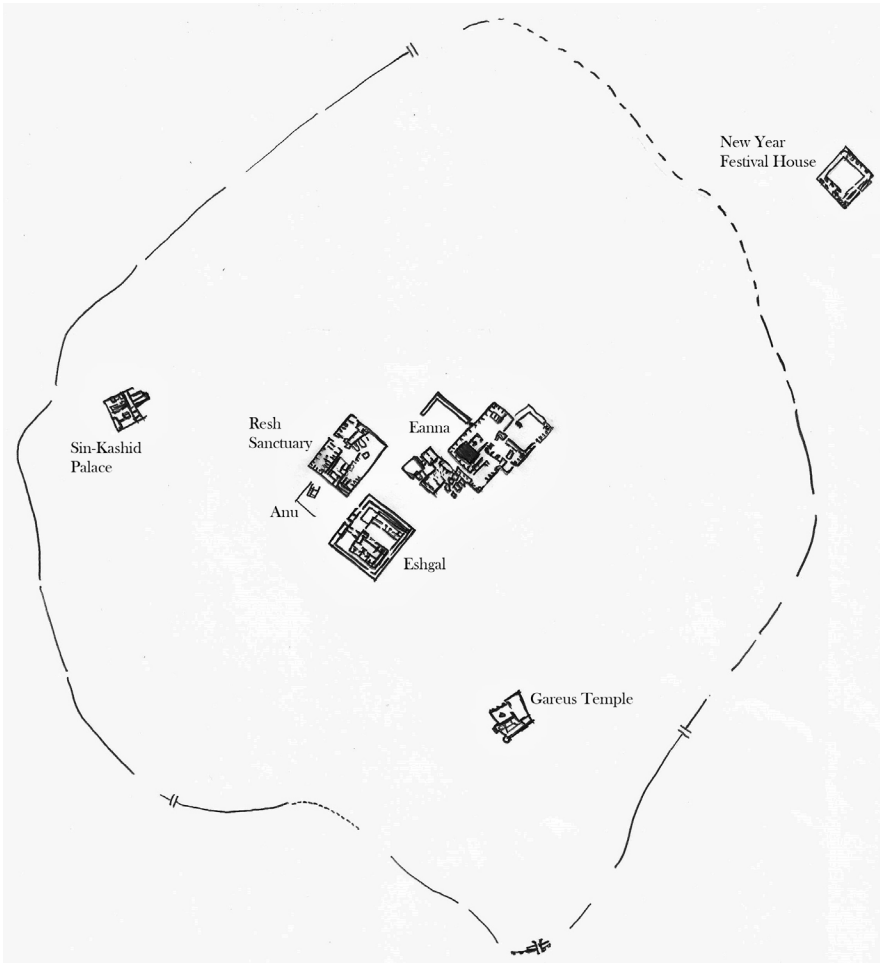
Mesopotamia and Persia

URUK

Uruk is considered one of the first cities of the ancient world. Located in southern Mesopotamia at the site of Warka in Iraq, Uruk was first rediscovered by archaeologists in 1849 and subsequently excavated. The ruins are located nearly 300 km (180 miles) south of Baghdad and east of the current Euphrates River. In ancient times, Uruk was built adjacent to the river, but the course of the Euphrates moved over the centuries. Although excavations at Uruk have taken place over about 40 archaeological seasons and the findings have been extensive, only about 5 percent of the area of the ancient city has been studied.

In the Bible, Uruk (Erech) appears in the list of the first four cities mentioned in Genesis after the descendants of Noah began to disperse and settle in “Shinar” or Sumer, but before the Tower of Babel incident (Genesis 10:10). Although rendered “Erech” in most English translations, the city is spelled *Aleph-Resh-Kaf* in Hebrew and is compatible with the city name Uruk. The other two cities—named Akkad and Calneh—have not been definitively located by archaeologists. Although Akkad is known from ancient texts, Calneh may not have been the name of a city.

Akkad is mentioned in numerous Sumerian and Akkadian texts, and the events surrounding its fall in the 22nd century BC are recorded in the Curse of Agade. It seems that the city of Akkad was never rebuilt, and as a result, it was essentially lost to history. Sources indicate that Akkad may have been



Uruk site map

near the Tigris River, but currently the site is unknown, with speculation that its location was at Tell Muhammad, Qadisiyah, Ishan Mizzad. The fact that such a prominent and documented city as Akkad has not yet been discovered is a case study for not discounting the existence of a city mentioned in an ancient text based on the current absence of archaeological evidence. Calneh may have been located at Nippur, but this is only a hypothesis. Another interpretation translates *calneh* as “all of them” rather than a city.

Uruk seems to have started out as two small settlements that were later merged to form the city, with the precincts of Anu and Eanna as the focal

points around 3400–3100 BC. These two districts may originally have been separated by a waterway, and then monumental buildings began to be constructed in the Uruk VI phase.

The western side was the Anu precinct (perhaps called Kullab), which featured the Anu ziggurat with a platform of about 50 meters by 45 meters and a tripartite building on top called the White Temple. There was also an underground stone building at the foot of the ziggurat that may have served a ritual purpose connected to the underworld. This district seems to have been connected with Anu, the god of the sky or heaven, and it is thought to have been the oldest of the two sacred precincts.

Within the Eanna precinct there were multiple buildings along a north-south axis, possible bathhouses, water channels and basins, and an enclosed garden called the Great Courtyard. The buildings were extremely large—including a limestone building identified as a temple with dimensions of about 76 meters by 30 meters—and closed off from the outside by walls,



Uruk and the ziggurat



Priest-king of Uruk

indicating that this area was protected and not accessible to the public. Representations of the enigmatic Priest-King or Great Man of Uruk have also been found in the Eanna precinct and elsewhere on statues, seals, and tablets. The Sumerian term for this person might be *namesda*, and he is depicted as a hunter, master of animals, leader of religious ceremonies, and torturer of prisoners. Evidence from multiple sites in Mesopotamia such as Jemdet Nasr, Tell Uqair, and Ur also suggests that this leader exercised authority over the region, not only Uruk.

The Eanna precinct was connected to the goddess Inanna (“mistress of heaven”), and there may have been a rivalry between the two deities. In the myth “Inanna Robs the House of Heaven,” the goddess steals a temple from Anu in heaven and brings it to earth, where it becomes perhaps the most important temple in Uruk. Inanna/Ishtar was a fertility and war goddess whose exploits included going to the underworld (*Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld*) and stealing powers and concepts of “civilization” from

Enki such as godship, kingship, priesthood, music, truth, falsehood, destruction, scribe, basket weaver, and prostitution that were stored in the E-Abzu (“house of the deep waters”) temple of Eridu and then bringing them to Uruk (*Inanna and Enki*). This goddess is mentioned in the Bible in later periods, and the myth about her journey into the underworld and the trading

of her lover, Dumuzi, as her substitute is alluded to (Jeremiah 44:17-25; Ezekiel 8:14).

The Sumerian King List claims that Enmerkar, who presumably reigned at least as early as 3100 BC, founded the city of Uruk, and it names Meshkiangasher, the priest of the Inanna temple in Uruk, as his father. While Meshkiangasher is not named in any other known source, Enmerkar is attested in texts and inscriptions such as the Ad-gi4 list, which also mentions his wife and the building of multiple towns. He is also mentioned in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, which narrates disputes with Aratta, a faraway and unknown location that was described as in a mountainous area.

The earliest of these ancient kings attested by a contemporary inscription is Enmebaragesi of Kish, father of Akka, opponent of Gilgamesh. Some scholars have even suggested identifying Nimrod with Enmerkar on the basis of linguistics, their geographic location, leadership position, and chronology. This early city appears to have encompassed about 250 hectares. Centuries later, Gilgamesh—a legendary king of Uruk who may have reigned around 2700 BC—supposedly built a wall around the city of Uruk. Indeed, archaeological excavations discovered a brick city wall that appears to have been built around 3000–2900 BC and could be attributed to him or an earlier king.

The earliest mentions of Gilgamesh are from around 2500–2400 BC in a tablet and on mace heads. The city wall was between 5 meters and 9 meters thick, and originally about 12-15 meters tall, while the total length of the wall was 8.9 km (5.5 miles). This expanded city covered about 400 hectares and may have had a population of up to 140,000 people. Centuries later, around 2300 BC, prior to the conquest of Sumer by Sargon of Akkad, a new palace complex was built measuring approximately 125 meters by 80 meters. Besides the temples and the palace, the rest of the city consisted primarily of residential buildings, most of which seem to have been of the courtyard-house type, and these residential areas were supposedly grouped according to profession. Transit around the city consisted of not only roads but a vast canal system connected to the Euphrates. Although the buildings were constructed primarily of mud brick rather than stone, they were decorated with designs such as colored cone mosaics made from fired clay, yellow plaster, inscriptions, and fluted walls.

Uruk is also famous as the location where the earliest writing appeared, and it is often suggested that writing was invented in Uruk around 3300–3200 BC, when it was probably the largest city in the world. Prior to this, a system of seals and tokens was used to indicate ownership and quantities. The writing system was originally proto-cuneiform pictographic writing that developed into Archaic cuneiform, and the texts seem to have been economic and administrative. An ambiguous passage in the Legend of Aratta might suggest that another writing system was known before this, but no physical evidence for this hypothesis has been discovered. This cuneiform writing system was both logographic and syllabic, and it was also used for Akkadian, Eblaite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Elamite, Median, Hittite, Hurrian, and Urartian, while Ugaritic and Old Persian adapted cuneiform symbols to use as alphabetic scripts. To the west, Egyptian hieroglyphs emerged slightly later, around 3100–3000 BC, and while it continues to be debated if this was information diffusion or an independent development, it appears as if the Mesopotamian script influenced the earliest Egyptian writing.



Proto-cuneiform pictographic writing

One of the earliest known examples of pictographic writing appears on a limestone tablet called the Kish Tablet and was discovered at the ancient city of Kish (Tell al-Uhaymir) in Sumer. According to the Sumerian King List, the city of Kish was the first to utilize the practice of kingship after the flood, and archaeologically it has also been shown to be one of the earliest cities. At Uruk, nearly 600 tablets and fragments from the early period of writing have been discovered. Approximately 85 percent are administrative and 15 percent are lexical. The only deity that the texts record offerings to is Inanna. At least 18 examples of administrative tablets found contain the name or title “Kushim” (or Kushin) and are primarily concerned with the distribution of barley, including for beer production at the temple of Inanna at Uruk (e.g., MS 1717 Schoyen Collection). The name or title “Kushim from Uruk” appears similar to the name Kush, father of Nimrod, who is also associated with Uruk during the establishment of the first cities after the flood (Genesis 10:8-10).



Ration bowls from Uruk

Around this time another phenomenon known as the Uruk Expansion occurred. This phrase describes the spread of the material culture of Uruk all over Mesopotamia and even beyond, including cylinder seals, beveled-rim bowls, tokens, tablets, and the tripartite building. Beveled-rim bowls were mass produced and have been found in significant quantities, implying the possibility that these bowls were used for ration distribution to dependent laborers who constructed public buildings such as temples. Then, suddenly the Uruk influence ends and locally styled objects and buildings appear at these sites during the Jemdet Nasr period ending around 2900 BC.

After the fall of Ur just after 2000 BC, Uruk seems to have been sparsely inhabited and unimportant until about 850 BC, when it was made a provincial capital by the rising Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians, and especially Nabopolassar, took great interest in Uruk, dividing it into five districts, constructing new temples, and fixing the canal system. By the time of Artaxerxes in the 5th century BC, it appears to have been an important location in the Persian Empire (Ezra 4:9). After the Seleucid and Parthian periods in the 2nd century BC, Uruk declined, possibly in connection with the movement of the Euphrates to the west, and by AD 300 it was essentially abandoned.

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