**Anthro 100. Lecture 6 Mesopotamia - Lecture Notes J. M. Kenoyer**

**Fall 2017**

**MESOPOTAMIA** (modern Iraq and Kuwait, with links to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Iran)

**Sumer -** southern alluvium of the two rivers

**Akkad** – middle alluvium of the two rivers

**Regionalization Era – 6500-3500 BC - Major Periods** Samarra, Halaf, Ubaid

**Pre-Urban** Settlements –Tepe Gawra, Tel es Sawwan, Tel Awayli, **Eridu, Uruk,** Susa

Four Preconditions are met during this Era from 6500-3500 BC

Humid Phase 5500 - 3500 BC: at the **end of the Humid** phase, evidence for population increase in the southern alluvium due to three possible factors:

1) normal population growth,

2) migration of agriculturists from the north,

3) settling down of nomads and pastoralists from the desert fringes.

**INTEGRATION ERA** begins towards the end of the Uruk period, circa 3500 B. C.

**Uruk Period:** 4000-3100 BC - Sumerian Theocracy?, early **CITY STATES,** mud brick platforms called **ziggurats** with several temples on top, 4 tier settlement system - reflects 4 tier administrative hierarchy = state level, socio-political organization

Eridu (Tel Abu Shahain), Southern Alluvium, earliest levels dated to 5400 BC

Samarra and Halaf ceramics, shrine or temple structure (3 meters square) identified built first on a sand dune

* Ubaid Period , approx. 5300 - 4000 (or 3500) B.C distinctive Ubaid pottery styles, Late Ubaid temple (20 x 10 meters). seals found in the temple indicate role of temple in authorization of transactions

Uruk (Warka) , Iraq

Early levels – 3900, Middle to Late Levels 3500-3100 BC, site is 80 to 100 hectares(10,000 to 40,000 people)

- large public buildings, temples (80 x 30 meters)

- beginning of writing associated with **temple economics and rationing,** tablets concentrated in the trash around central buildings

- expansion and reorganization of crafts - standard professions list describes approximately 100 different occupations

- temples had their own production centers, that duplicated what was going on outside on a wider scale, rationing using **beveled rim bowls** and other measurement devices

**Jemdet Nasr Period:** 3100-2900 B. C. - Sumerian Theocracy?

**Early Dynastic Period:** 2900-2350 (2371) BC - Sumerian Monarchies, at least 2 dozen major **CITY STATES**, endemic warfare, writing,

**Royal cemetery at Ur** (2680-2450 B. C.), burials with human sacrifice, offerings of ornaments, weapons, feasting associated with burials,

**Economic Control**

Mesopotamian number systems were not abstract but were strongly contextual- 15 different numerical systems have been identified - value was related to the context of its use - predates arithmetic.

Mesopotamian weight system was not standardized, was also probably strongly contextual - different weight systems for different commodities

**Mesopotamian Writing** - **Seals, Tokens, Tablets**

**Proto-Cuneiform**- 3500-2800 B. C. influenced proto-Elamite in Iran and was the foundation of Cuneiform writing system in Mesopotamia

The earliest Proto-cuneiform written tablets appear around 3500 to 3300 B. C.

Habuba Kabira, Syria, N. Mesopotamia, Kish in Central Mesopotamia, Uruk in S. Mesopotamia, also at Tel Uqair, Jemdet Nasr, Khafajah

**Cuneiform** (cuneus = wedge) - term to define script that is used to write many different languages, Sumerian, Akkadian, Elamite, Old Babylonian, Assyrian, Ugaritic, Old Persian, etc.

Writing was first used for accounting - earliest symbols were three dimensional tokens, that could also be written down as pictographs and numbers - these became simplified to pictographs and numbers without the tokens, - then just numbers and abstracted pictographs.

Writing - done by male scribes or eunuchs - no indication of women scribes, (but women used cylinder seals and had economic and political power over texts)

By 2500 B. C. writing had become standardized - cuneiform symbols were syllabic, phonetic or ideograms (pictures that express concepts of objects).

By 2350 B.C. the script had been reduced from +2000 signs to around 600-700 signs

**Gender Issues in Mesopotamia**

Patriarchal society with Men - dominant, Women - less powerful

Other - eunuchs, transvestites, homosexuals, children, old people - least powerful

All of our information comes from written texts, burials, and iconography of seals

**Temple hierarchy-** women appointed to temples by men or family as **naditu women**

**Enheduanna** - daughter of Sargon, high priestess of the moon god Nanna at Ur and possibly the sky god Anu at Uruk - allowed Sargon to control the southern cities

**Akkadian Period:** 2350 (2371) -2200 (2150) BC - FIRST EMPIRE, Sargon of Akkad (Agade), son of a priestess and pastoral-nomad, north central Mesopotamia, Semitic speaking rulers, conquered sources of raw materials, traded with adjacent regions, integrated trade system

- Naram Sin - grandson of Sargon - took on the title of god-king, offended the gods, eventually the Akkadian empire collapsed