

What the Near East knew

Piero Scaruffi

Copyright 2018

<http://www.scaruffi.com/know>

- **Part III: Babylonia**

What the Akkadians knew

- **Akkadian empire (2340-2180 BC)**
 - **2334 BC: Sargon of Kish unifies Akkadians and Sumerians**
 - **Regular postal service**
 - **Catalog of astronomical observations**
 - **The ziggurat dominates the city**
 - **2095-2047 BC: Shulgi/Dungi of Ur writes the oldest law code**

What the Akkadians knew

- **Creation myth**
 - **Eland the bull (northern mountains) and his wife Asherah the sea (Persian Gulf)**
 - **Their children-gods created the cities of Mesopotamia**

What the Akkadians knew

- **Creation myth**
 - The gods were tired of having to work in the fields for their survival
 - Enki created humans to work on behalf of the gods
 - Enlil, annoyed that humans proliferated and made so much noise, ordered the flood
 - Enki warned Atra-hasis who built an ark

Lagash (Neo-Sumerian)

- **Gudea (2144 - 2124 BC)**
 - Imports cedars from the Amanus and Lebanon mountains in Syria, diorite from eastern Arabia, copper and gold from central and southern Arabia and from the Sinai
 - Era of artistic development (lifelike realism)
 - Gudea, following Sargon, was one of the first rulers to claim divinity for himself



South Arabia



Statuette from South Arabia, 2,000 BC
(Metropolitan Museum)

What the Babylonians knew

- Agriculture
- Valleys and rivers as the source of civilization
- Basic crop: barley grown on irrigated fields (requires manpower, equipment and coordination)
- Social contract (aristocrats/peasants)
- Astronomy, mathematics and medicine
 - Positional notation (but 59 digits!)
 - Zero
 - Lunar calendar with intercalation

What the Babylonians knew

Science

- Trigonometry

3,700-year-old clay tablet
Plimpton 332: the world's
oldest trigonometric table

🏠 > Science

**3,700-year-old Babylonian tablet
rewrites the history of maths - and
shows the Greeks did not develop
trigonometry**



An Australian mathematician cracked the code of a famous 3,700 year old Babylonian clay tablet revealing that they were doing more accurate trigonometry nearly 1,500 years before the Greeks.



 Ancient Library

What the Babylonians knew

- Religion
 - Human life depends on the gods
 - Religion as a cult of fertility
 - But the gods depend on human labor and sacrifice
 - The temple is the household of the gods
 - The temple organizes agricultural activity for the whole community (men in the fields, women and children in the production of textile and food)
 - The temple (not the palace) is the identity of the people of the city
 - A temple rules only over one city
 - The destruction of a temple is a catastrophe
 - Largest temples: Marduk at Babylonia, Anu at Uruk

What the Babylonians knew

- Religion
 - Anu, god of the sky
 - Ea, god of wisdom, master-magician
 - Ellil, original leader of the gods
 - (Gods reside in specific cities)
 - Marduk, son of Ea, leader of the gods (god of Babylon)
 - Ishtar, goddess of war (Uruk)
 - Nabu (Borsippa)
 - Sin (Ur)
 - Shamash (Sippar)

What the Babylonians knew

- State
 - The king as the divinely appointed leader
 - The palace is the household of the king, who could be a foreigner (eg Amorites, Kassites)
 - The palace organizes agricultural activity for the well-being of the king (mainly through slaves captured in war)
 - The palace rules over more than one city
 - The destruction of the palace is a regime change, not necessarily a catastrophe
 - No tomb of a Babylonian king has ever been found

What the Babylonians knew

- **Business**
 - Birth of the mercantile class (eg, trading surplus of food for metals)
 - Trade along the Euphrates
 - Silver as a means of payment for materials (2500 BC) but not labor
 - People's wages paid in cereals and beer
 - Birth of venture capital and usury

What the Babylonians knew

- **Scribes**
 - Employed by temples, palace and merchants
 - Letters, contracts and accounting



**Flood, epic of Atrahasis
(Babylonia, 1635 BC)**



**Babylonia cylinder 1823 BC
(dedication of a temple)**



**Tablet of 1,800 BC
(Oriental Institute, Chicago)**

What the Babylonians knew

Hammurabi and the god Shamash (18th c BC stele)

Hammurabi receiving the law from the
seated Shamash, the Babylonian god
of justice

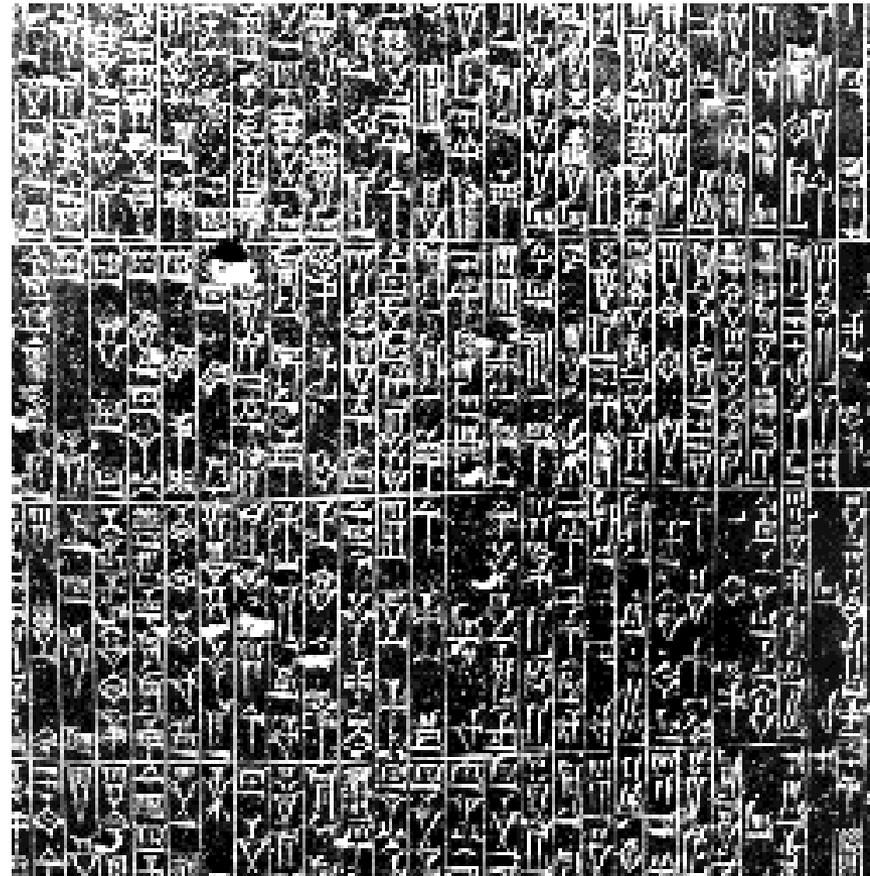


What the Babylonians knew

- **Hammurabi law code (18th c BC)**
 - **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**
 - **Pragmatic: avoid endless cycles of revenge**
 - **Each group has rights and duties proportional to its status**
 - **Codification of patriarchy**
 - **Protection of women and children from indiscriminate abuses**
 - **Even slaves have rights**
 - **Severe restrictions on female sexuality**
 - **Professional standards for physicians, architects and engineers enforced via draconian punishments**

What the Babylonians knew

- Hammurabi law code



What the Babylonians knew

- Hammurabi law code



(Louvre, Paris)

What the Babylonians knew

- “Enuma Elish” (1700 BC)
 - Tablet 1 of the Enuma Elish in Akkadian

<p>En-1 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>
<p>En-1-5 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>
<p>En-1-10 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>
<p>En-1-15 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>	<p>𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭 𒂗 𒀭</p>

What the Babylonians knew

- **“Enuma Elish” (1700 BC):**
 - **Marduk, the supreme god (a third-generation god), and Ishtar (his wife), goddess of the Earth**
 - **The male freshwater ocean (Apsu) and the female saltwater ocean (Tiamat) created the elohim (gods) that created the world**
 - **Conflict between the gods (Apsu gets killed, Tiamat leads persecution of the gods, Marduk kills her)**
 - **Gods are tired of their tough life and want servants**
 - **After sacrificing Tiamat’s son Kingu, Marduk creates humankind out of Kingu’s dead body to be the servants of the gods**

What the Babylonians knew

- **“Enuma Elish” (1700 BC):**
 - **Marduk creates a world for humankind out of Tiamat’s dead body**
 - **Grateful, the gods declare Marduk the supreme god**
 - **Struggle between order and chaos (Marduk's battle with Tiamat) but also male vs female**
 - **Demise of the female goddess and rise of Marduk as chief god**

Enuma Elish

TABLET I

**When on High the Heavens had not been named,
Firm ground below had not been called by name,
Nothing but ‘Primordial Apsu’ [Fresh Water], the Begetter,
and ‘Mummu Tiamat’ [Salt Water], She Who Bore them All,
—their waters commingling as a single body—**

**No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—**

Then it was that the Gods were formed within Them.

Enuma Elish

TABLET II

The Assembly of the Gods gathers:

**“No god can go to battle and
Facing Tiamat, escape with his life.”**

**Lord Anshar, Father of the Gods, arose in grandeur,
And, having pondered in his heart, said to the Gods:**

**“He whose strength is potent shall be our Avenger,
He who is keen in battle, Marduk, the Hero!”**

Marduk replies:

**“Creator of the Gods, destiny of the Great Gods,
If I indeed, as your Avenger,**

Am to vanquish Tiamat and save your lives,

Set up the Assembly, proclaim supreme my destiny!

When you have sat down together rejoicing in Ubshukinna

Let my word, instead of you, determine the fates.

Unalterable shall be what I may bring into being;

Neither recalled nor changed shall be the command of my lips.”

Enuma Elish

TABLET IV

Having defeated Tiamat, the embodiment of chaos, Marduk proceeds to produce an ordered world, first by splitting her body into two parts and raising one to form the sky, leaving the other half as the earth's surface.

He bad them to allow not her waters to escape.

He crossed the heavens and surveyed the regions.

He squared Apsu's quarter, the abode of Nudimmud,

As the lord measured the dimensions of Apsu.

TABLET V

He constructed stations for the great gods,

Fixing their astral likenesses as constellations.

TABLET VI

The gods cease their labors and enjoy a banquet.

Marduk's status as king of the gods is solemnized by his father Anu.

What the Babylonians knew

- **Divination**
 - **Summa alu**
 - **Compendium of omens related to the Earth**
 - **Enuma Anu Enlil**
 - **Compendium of omens related to the Cosmos**
 - **The future is predetermined by the gods**
- **Rituals**
 - **The will of the gods can be changed by appropriate rituals**
 - **The same gods that created the future also created the rituals for humans to change the future**

What the Babylonians knew

- 1500 BC: Abraham lives in Ur

What the invaders knew

- **The Chariot**
 - **1700 BC: the Hyskos (Semitic people from Arabia) invade Egypt**
 - **1500 BC: the Mitanni/Hurrians (Indo-Europeans from the northern mountains) invade Mesopotamia**
 - **1600 BC: Indo-Europeans invade the Indus valley**
 - **1500 BC: the Shang invade China**
 - **Enabling technologies:**
 - **Metallurgy (lightness)**
 - **Woodworking (integration)**
 - **Tanning (comfort)**
 - **Domestication of horses (motor)**

What the invaders knew

- **The Chariot**
 - **Origin**
 - **Border between steppes (horse civilization) and river valleys (metal civilizations)**
 - **Hunting, farming, building**
 - **Effects**
 - **Increased speed tenfold (ox-transport: 3kms/hr, horse-transport: 30 kms/hr)**
 - **New class of warriors**
 - **Composite bow (invented at about the same time)**



Mesopotamian chariot of 2500 BC
(mainly used for transportation)



Egyptian chariot of 1275 BC



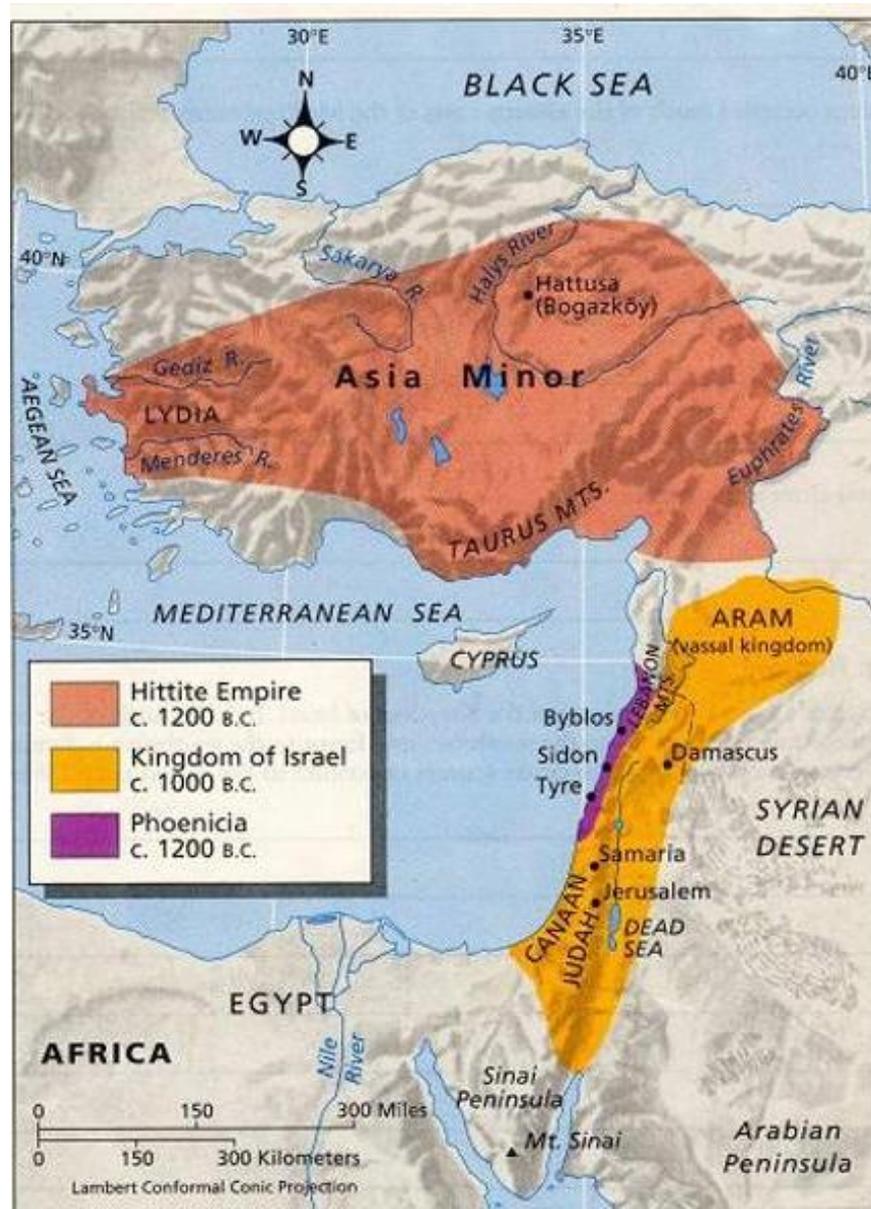
Hittite chariot 1200 BC



One of the oldest surviving representations of a mounted horse
(relief from southern Turkey, 2000 BC)

Riding horses not useful until the invention of the stirrup (1000 BC, Asian steppes)

What the Hittites knew



What the Hittites knew



What the Hittites knew

- Hatti (capital Hattusa, an iron-bladed dagger from 2500 BC)
- Old Hittite Kingdom (1720 to 1480 BC)
- Great Hittite Kingdom or Imperial Hittites (1480-1190 BC)
- Late Hittite City States (1190 to 712 BC)

What the Hittites knew

- Oldest recorded **Indo-European** language
- **Iron** smelting (1,400 BC)
- Extreme polytheism: the world is populated by a multitude of deities (every natural object is conscious and is inhabited by a deity)
- Religious tolerance: all deities are legitimate deities
- The “Storm God” of Hatti as the supreme deity (married to the Sun Goddess of Arinna)
- Temple of the Storm God at Hattusa (160x135m)
- El and his consort Ashera, mother of Baal (Ras Shamra texts , 1,500 BC)

What the Hittites knew

- Storm God (bull) from Alacahöyük



Storm god Hadad of Aleppo
Hittite 9th c BC (taken to
Babylon by Nab II)
Istanbul Museum

What the Hittites knew

- **Origins of the Indo-Europeans**
 - **Marija Gimbutas' thesis: warriors moved west and southeast from the Russian steppes 4,000 BC**
 - **Colin Renfrew's thesis: agriculture spread from Turkey west and east 7,000 BC**

What the Hittites knew

- **Broadcasters of Mesopotamian culture to the Mediterranean civilizations, from Egypt to Greece to Phoenicia**
- **No private property (the king owns all the land)**
- **The bulk of the population are tenant farmers**
- **Kings cremated not buried**

What the Hittites knew

- Hattusa



What the Hittites knew

- Alalu original king of the gods
- Anu dethrones Alalu but is dethroned by Kumarbi
- Kumarbi is dethroned by his three children led by the storm god (Teshub)

What the Hittites knew

- Yazilikaya



What the Hittites knew



Inscription 9th c BC
Istanbul Museum



Warrior 9th c BC
Istanbul Museum



Banquet 9th c BC
Istanbul Museum

What the Hittites knew



Colossal statue 9th c BC
Istanbul Museum



Chariot 9th c BC
Istanbul Museum

What the Hittites knew

- **Fiction**
 - "The Disappeared God" (Hittite, 16## BC)
 - "Kumarbi-ullikummi" (Hittite, 16## BC)
 - "The Dragon Illujanka" (Hittite, 16## BC)

What the Assyrians knew



What the Assyrians knew

- Altar of Tukulti-Ninurta I (reigned 1244-1207BC) in Ashur

Altar of Tukulti-Ninurta I (reigned 1244-1207BC) in Ashur



The king approaches the throne of the god, who is represented as a mere symbol

What the Assyrians knew



Relief from Ashurnasirpal II's palace
in Nimrud (870BC)
(Oriental Institute, Chicago)



Altar of Tukulti-Ninurta I (13th c BC) in Ashur

The king approaches the throne of
the god, who is represented as a
mere symbol

What the Assyrians knew

- Empire of Tiglath-pileser III (746 BC-727 BC)
 - Multi-ethnic imperial system
 - Scientific warfare
 - Army of peasants and slaves replaced by professional army from the conquered lands
 - **Iron weapons** employed on a massive scale
 - Balance of infantry, cavalry and chariots
 - Imperialist ideology
 - Warfare a religious duty
 - Control of subjects via terror

What the Assyrians knew

- Kingdom of Ashurnasirpal I (1050-1032 BC)
- Kingdom of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC)



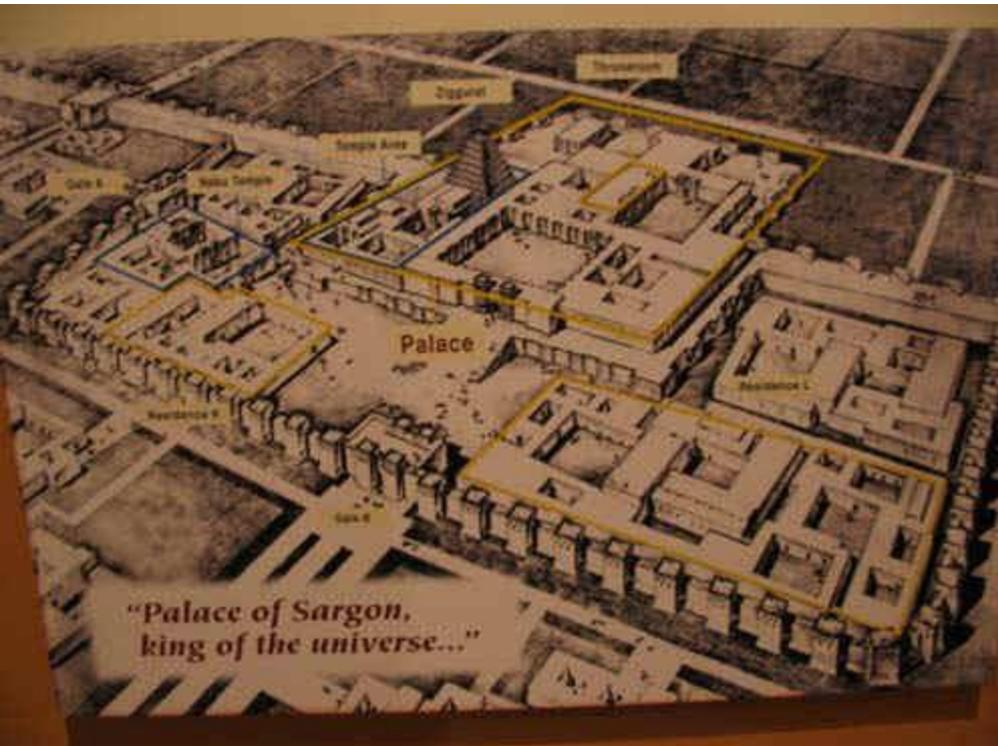
Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud
(Metropolitan Museum)

What the Assyrians knew

- **Architecture**
 - **Palace**
 - **Palaces made of stone instead of mud brick, using arch and vault**
 - **The ziggurat becomes a mere adjunct to the royal palace**

What the Assyrians knew

- The Palace of Sargon at Khorsabad, 700 BC



The ziggurat has become a mere adjunct to the royal palace



(Oriental Institute, Chicago)

What the Assyrians knew

- The Palace of Sargon at Khorsabad, 700 BC



(Oriental Institute, Chicago)

What the Assyrians knew

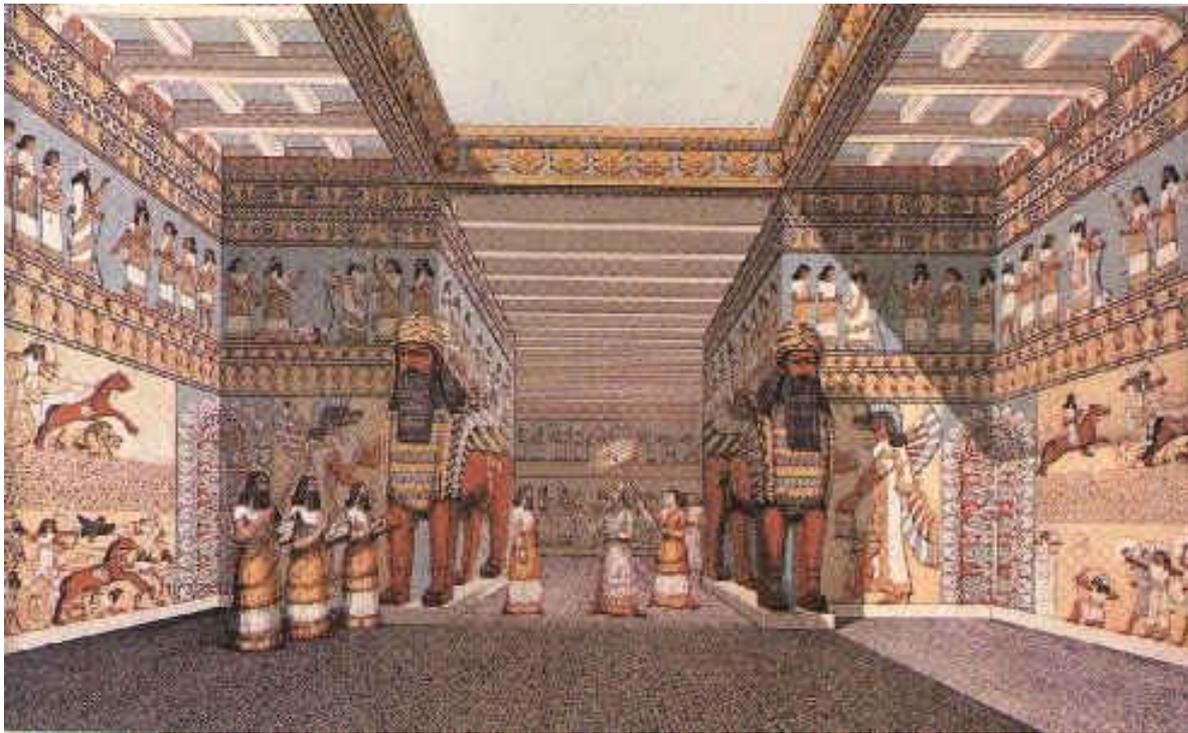
- The Palace of Sargon at Khorsabad, 700 BC



(Oriental Institute, Chicago)

What the Assyrians knew

- The Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, 700 BC



Wounded lioness, Royal palace at Nineveh, 647 BC

Dead lion, Royal palace at Nineveh, 647 BC



(British Museum)

Lion leaping at
Ashurnasirpal's chariot,
Nimrud 865 BC



What the Assyrians knew



- Art

Chariot, Assyrian 8th c BC
(Istanbul Museum)



Warriors, Assyrian 8th c BC
(Istanbul Museum)

What the Assyrians knew

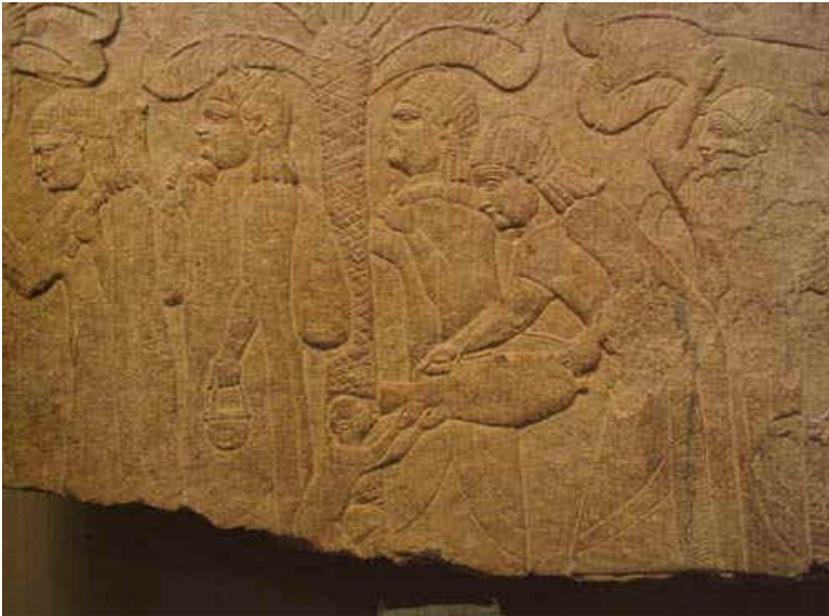
- **Empire of Ashurbanipal (669 BC - 626 BC)**
 - **Library of Niniveh**

Ashurbanipal (British Museum)



What the Assyrians knew

- **Sculpture/ Relief (mostly on military themes)**



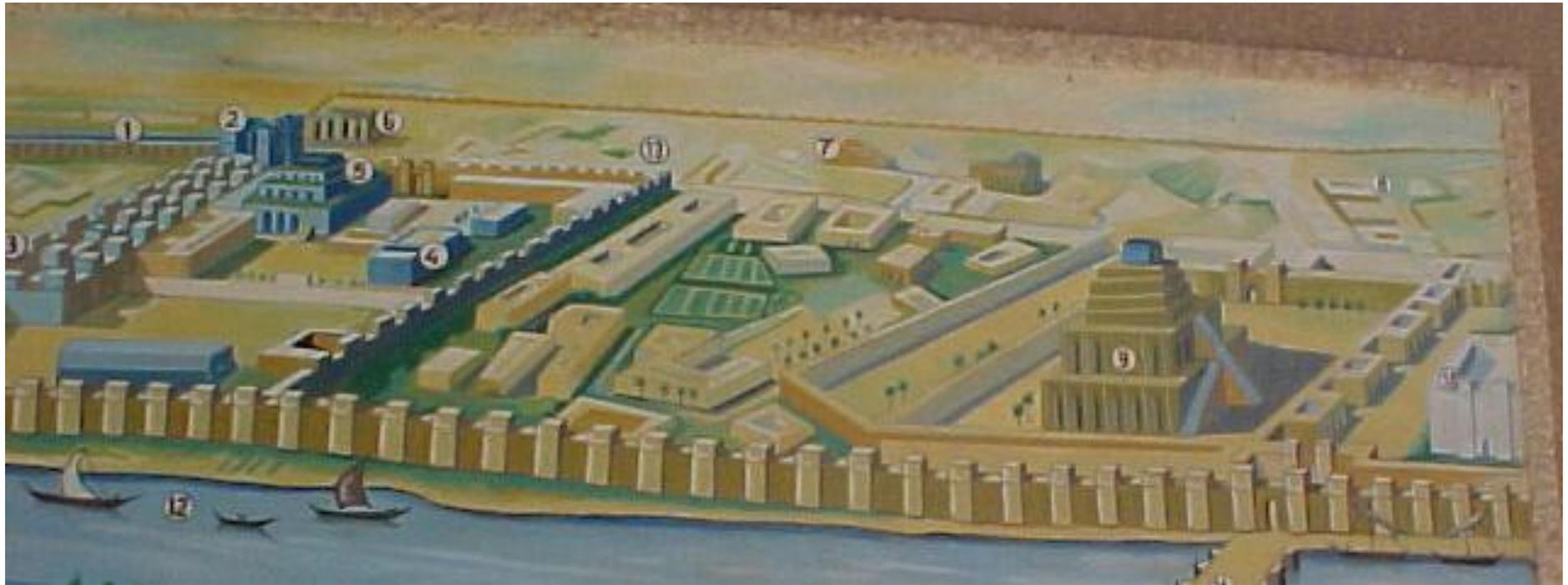
Procession of Babylonian women taken prisoners (Nineveh, 7th c BC)

(BostonMuseum of Fine Arts)

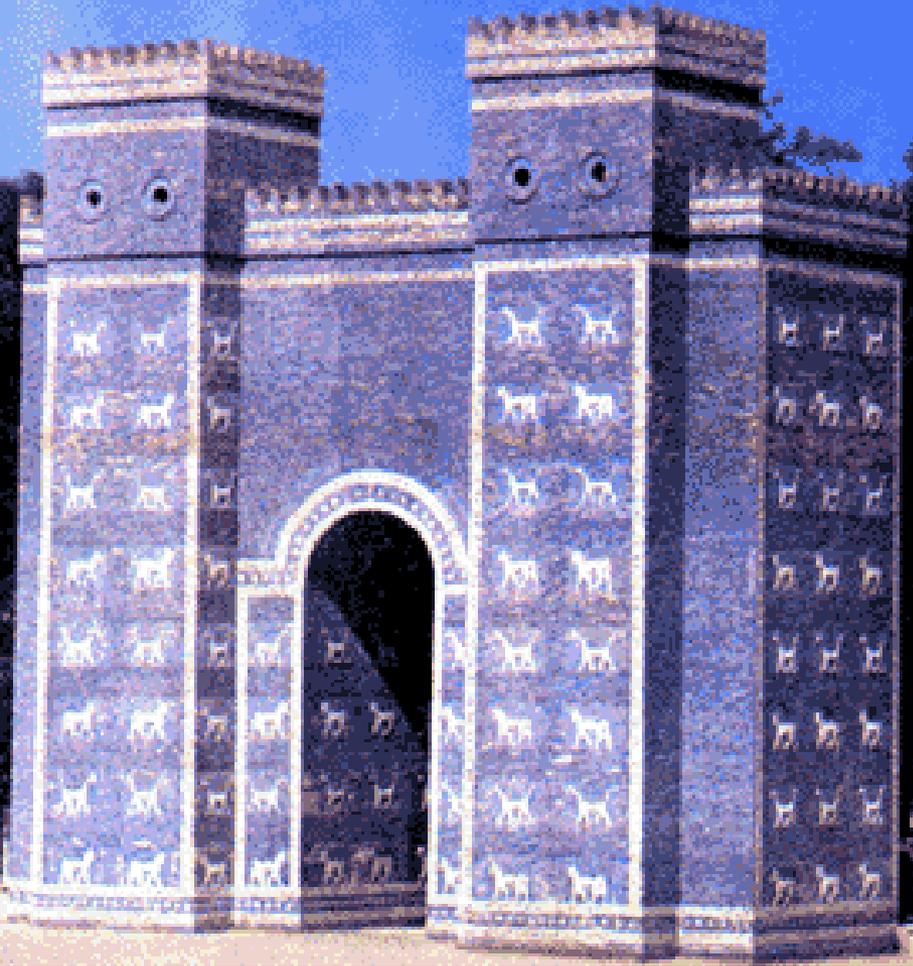
What the neo-Babylonians knew

- **Empire of Nebuchadnezzar II (605 BC - 562 BC)**
 - **Babylonia has 100,000 people**
 - **Eight monumental gates**
 - **Esagila complex**
 - **Seven-story ziggurat**
 - **Hanging gardens**

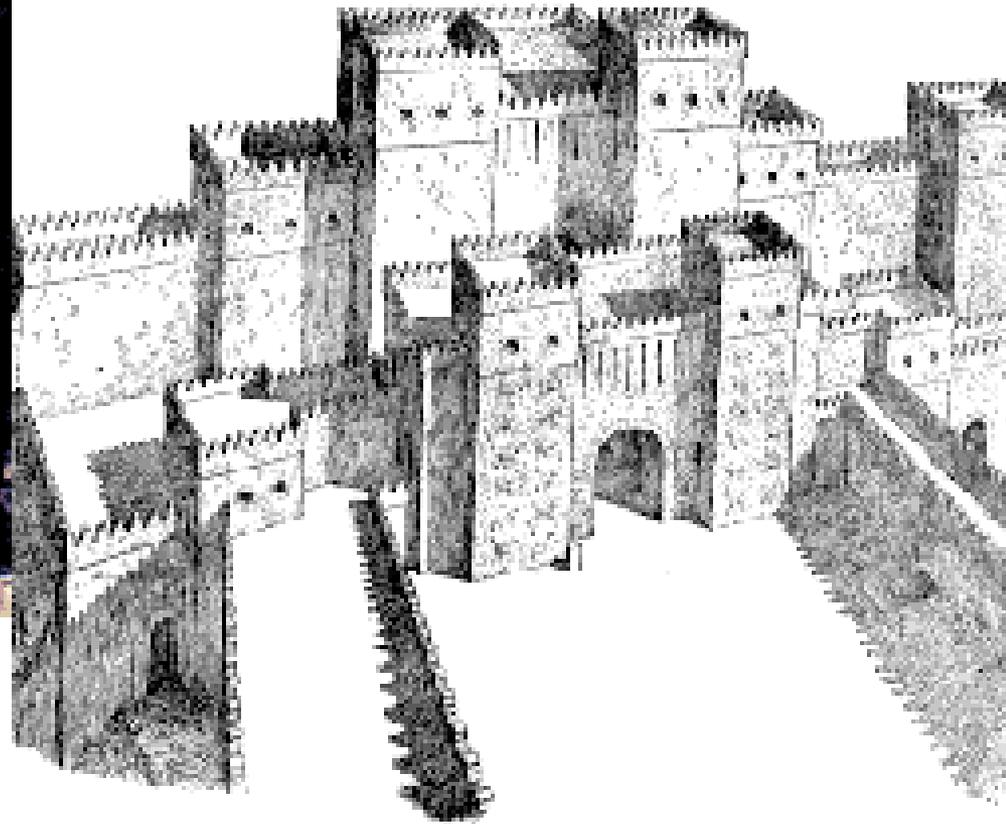
Babylonia



Babylonia



Ishtar gate (604 - 562 BC)



By Peter Cruz in the field and facade of construction. Historical reconstruction of

Palace

60

Babylonia

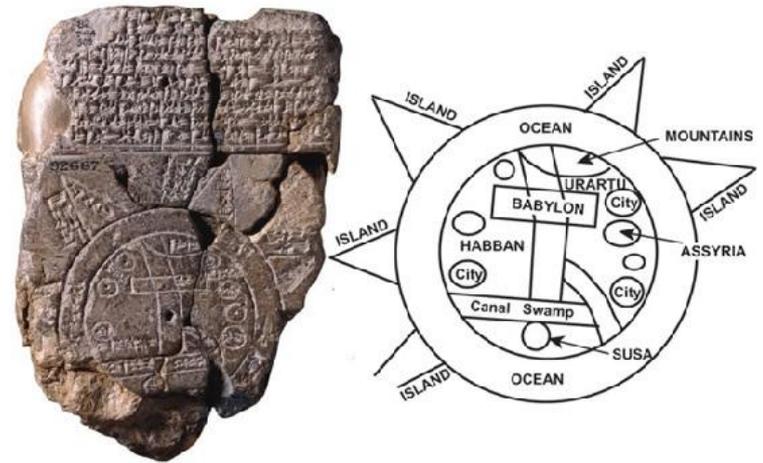


Ishtar gate, Istanbul Museum

Babylonia



Cylinder (6th c BC, Babylonia)
Boston Museum of Fine Arts



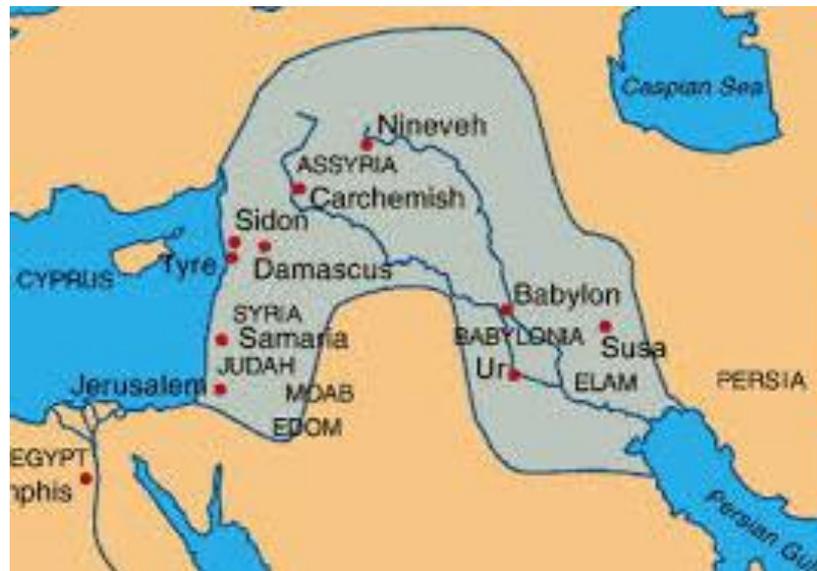
Imago Mundi (6th c BC, Babylonia)
British Museum

What the neo-Babylonians knew

- Astral religion
 - Gods identified with planets (Marduk=Jupiter, Ishtar=Venus, Ninurta = Saturn, Nabu =Mercury, and Nergal = Mars)
 - Gods lose their “human” attributes
 - Gods are inscrutable
 - Humans can only have faith
 - Humans have sinned
 - Humans are depraved beings
 - Rise of the penitential hymn
 - Rise of astronomy (understanding the gods)
 - Week of seven days (Sun, Moon, 5 planets)

What the neo-Babylonians knew

- The Jews
 - 597 BC: Babylonia (south Iraq) conquers Judah (Jerusalem) and the Jews are deported to Babylonia
 - 539 BC: Persia conquers Babylonia and the Jews are allowed to return to Judah



What the neo-Babylonians knew

- Time keeping
 - Week of seven days
 - Day of twelve double-hours of 120 minutes each

What the neo-Babylonians knew

Piero Scaruffi

Copyright 2018

<http://www.scaruffi.com/know>