

## Lecture 7: Ancient Architecture in Anatolia, Levant, and Persia



Stone capital with a lion-head, Apadana  
Persepolis, Iran, ca. 521–465 BCE

**ANCIENT NEAR EAST: ca. 3500 B.C.E. – 636 C.E.** [ANCIENT EGYPT: 3000-30 B.C.E.]

- Sumer (c. 3100-c. 2000 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA
- Akkad (c. 2340/50-2180/2200 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA
- Lagash/ Neo-Sumerian (c. 2150 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA
- Babylonia (c. 2000-1600 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA
- Troy (c. 2900-1100 BCE) ANATOLIA, modern Turkey

1. **Hittites (c.1600-1200 BCE) ANATOLIA, modern Turkey**
2. **Assyria (c.1000- 612 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA**
3. **Chaldea/Neo-Babylonia (612-539 BCE) MESOPOTAMIA [\*Babylon/Ishtar Gate]**
4. **Persia - IRAN**

Achaemenids (559/60-330/331 BCE) \*Persepolis  
Parthians and Arsacids (247 BCE-226 CE)  
Sassanids (224-636 CE) \*Ctesiphon

(we will choose 1 or 2 of the 4 above you wish to study in class!)

**ANATOLIA** [from Greek “East”] – Asian territory of modern-day Turkey

### 1. Hittites (c.1600-1200 BCE)

\*Boğazköy (Büyükkale = “great castle”) = Hattušša

- Hittites excelled in building fortifications; -Their capital, near modern city of Boghazkoy in Turkey, still preserves strong city walls.
- Huge site 300 acres– city-palace dedicated to Weather-god of Hatti and Sun-goddess Arinna.
- city known as the “city of a Thousand Gods” – 28 temples recovered, each dedicated to various gods

\*Town walls of Boğazköy, ca. 1360 BCE

\*Lion Gate, south-western gate of Hattušša, ca. 1250 BCE

- fortifications double gates within the towered enclosing fortified walls; -the entrance guarded by a pair of gigantic beasts; -Beasts (real, fantastic) guarding the gates of cities and palaces soon became the standard feature in Near Eastern architecture cf. Persepolis, but also Khorsabad, Babilon etc. protective function

\*Yerkapi

- Gate on the artificial mound covered by a stone pavement with neat corners resembling truncated pyramid and ramps of Mesopotamian palaces
- At the sides staircases and tunnels led up to the bank; -the tunnel was closed by a door; - ceremonial function (?) – not military

\*Temple I, Boğazköy

- the largest temple; two cult chambers; -king Hatusilili III (1275-1250 BCE)

\*Open-air Sanctuary, Yazilikaya (=“written rock”), ca. 1 mile of Boğazköy, 13<sup>th</sup> c BCE

- the largest known Hittite rock sanctuary; - may have served as a place for the celebration of the arrival of the New Year (remember Spring March 21<sup>st</sup>! – first day of astrological year in the Middle East)

**LEVANT** [from French “the Orient”] – territory of Eastern Mediterranean

### 2. Assyria (modern north Iraq and south Syria), c.1000-612 BCE

Assyrians – warriors and hunters; authoritarian, known after their brutality, mentioned in Old Testament dramas

- capitals [-- ceremonial and governmental complexes; -- roughly rectangle in plan; -- enclosed by thick mud-brick walls; -- strongly fortified citadel(s) with zigurat, palaces, temples and administrative buildings on the mound, alongside the city wall; -- elevation differentiates the urban zoning; -- more-or-less orthogonal planning]

- palatial architecture [-- built on platforms; -- two large courtyard sections (public and private); -- asymmetrical arrangement; -- use of luxurious orthostats (relief stone slabs for the revetment of lower sections of the walls) made of alabaster or marble, painted and gilded; -- each doorways guarded by a colossal pair of lamassu/shedus (anthropomorphic protective creatures); -- beside doorways and in corners reliefs showing apkallu (winged geniuses – protective spirits); -- luxurious furniture made of ivory and carved wood; -- luxurious crystal and golden finds]

- Assur, traditional capital and state’s main god Assur (not studied in class)

\* Kalhu (modern Nimrud, Iraq), 9<sup>th</sup> c BCE

- capital of king Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE); - Huge site 360 ha (890 acres) – walled citadel 24 ha (60 acres)
- Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II - “Palace without a rival”

\* Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad, Iraq), ca. 8<sup>th</sup> c BCE

- capital of king Sargon II (721-705 BCE); - Huge site 300 ha (740 acres) - “Fortress of Sargon”

\* Niniveh (modern Kuynjik, Iraq), ca. 7<sup>th</sup> c BCE

- capital of kings Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) and Assurbanipal (668-631 BCE) ; - Huge site 750 ha (1850 acres) – “Incomparable Palace” with gardens

### 3. Chaldea/Neo-Babylonia (612-539 BCE)

- \* Babylon: Ishtar Gate and throne room, ca. 6<sup>th</sup> BCE

### 4. Persia - IRAN:

Achaemenids (559/60-330/331 BCE)

\*Persepolis, ca. 521–465 BCE

- ceremonial and governmental complex; -- enclosing walls, stairways, terraces, gatehouses, apadana, throne room, council hall, treasury, harem; -- *Lamassu*, Apadana (audience hall) of Darius and Xerxes; --*Darius and Xerxes Receiving Tribute*; --*The Gate of All Nations*; - royal tombs
- Ahuramazda (winged sun-disk) – Zoroastrians – fire altars

Sassanids (224-636 CE)

\* *Palace of Shapur I*, Ctesiphon, ca. 250 CE

-- *Triumph of Shapur I over Valerian*, Bishapur, Iran, ca. 260 CE, relief, living rock

### Terms:

See all underlined architectural terms enlisted above and covered in class