

Museum of World Treasures

Ancient Near East Vocabulary List

- All entries pertain directly to artifacts or signs in our exhibits.

Mesopotamia – The area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that is said to be the birthplace of civilization.

Fertile Crescent – The land of Western Asia and Northeastern Africa that is particularly arable.

Tigris River – the Eastern river that defines Mesopotamia.

Euphrates River – the Western river that defines Mesopotamia.

Ur – A city-state in Mesopotamia of great power. Located in Southern Iraq today.

Babylon – A city built on both sides of the Euphrates River.

Cuneiform – A writing system used for more than 35 centuries. One of the earliest writing forms known; made by using a reed stylus.

Foundation Cone – A type of clay nail used to dedicate a temple or other structure to a god or goddess. They are some of the oldest “documents” in history.

Hammurabi’s Code – A well-preserved early law code consisting of 282 laws, crimes, and punishments from Babylon.

Uruk – An ancient city east of the Euphrates River. Home of the famous Gilgamesh.

Kish – An ancient city east of the Euphrates River. One of the most powerful cities of Sumer.

Akkadia – Sometimes regarded as the first empire in history located in the Fertile Crescent.

Gudea – A ruler of the Lagashi state, reigned for 20 years.

Bronze Age – (3600 BCE to 1200 BCE) Between the Stone and Iron Ages. Identified by the ability of peoples to smelt iron and bronze to make tools and weapons.

Luristan – One of the first places where people settled in the Neolithic revolution in Persia.

Persia – Founded in the 6th century by Cyrus the Great. Constructed a unique road system that helped unite the empire.

Lydia – It is likely that coins were invented in this Iron Age kingdom located in modern Turkey.

Sedentary – People living permanently in groups in one place.

Domestication – A process of changing plants or animals to better suit the needs of humans.

Neolithic Revolution – The transition from hunter-gatherer to a lifestyle of settlement and agriculture.

Amphora – A container of a specific shape and size generally used for storage and transport of liquid and dry items.

Rhyton – A container from which liquids were meant to be drunk or poured ritualistically as an offering to a god or the dead.

Ziggurat – massive step pyramids made in Mesopotamia used for rituals and as part of a temple complex that included living quarters and courtyards.

Astarte Goddess – Known as Aphrodite in Greek Mythology. The goddess of sexuality, fertility, and war.

Polytheism – The belief and worship of multiple gods.

Amlash – An ancient city in modern Iran.

Artisan – A skilled manual worker. The Neolithic Revolution allowed Artisans to exist.

Stylus – an early writing utensil often made of a reed and used to make cuneiform in clay.

Phoenician Alphabet – One of the earliest non-pictographic alphabets.

Pictogram – a form of writing that uses pictures instead of letters or words.

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