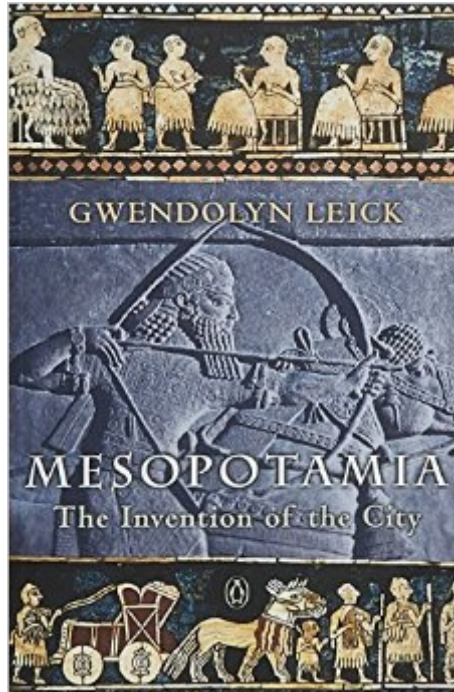


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# Mesopotamia: The Invention Of The City



## Synopsis

Situated in an area roughly corresponding to present-day Iraq, Mesopotamia is one of the great, ancient civilizations, though it is still relatively unknown. Yet, over 7,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, the very first cities were created. This is the first book to reveal how life was lived in ten Mesopotamian cities: from Eridu, the Mesopotamian Eden, to that potent symbol of decadence, Babylon - the first true metropolis: multicultural, multi-ethnic, the last centre of a dying civilization.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm reading Leick's book right now, and enjoying it. She surveys ancient Mesopotamia through the examination of 10 ancient city sites, from Eridu to Babylon. Naturally this narrative device is a springboard for digressions into the culture as best we can know (or guess) at it. Leick does stints as a tour guide, if I recall the author bio correctly, & it shows in her writing, which is accessible if a bit repetitive when she wants to make a point. She also attends to the different archaeologists who've dug up Mesopotamia and their biases, hypotheses, etc.; she takes a similar approach with contemporary scholarly debates, "teaching the conflicts" as it were. This & Roux's "Ancient Iraq" seem to be the two best books for us lay readers in the past 40 years or so.

Mesopotamia: The Invention of the City by Gwendolyn Leick is a book only a history major could fall in love with. But even non-history majors can enjoy it. The book is ten chapters, each chapter a detailed history of one city, using archaeological information in the form of textiles, writings and ruins. From the first city of Eridu, to the last city of Babylon, we follow the lives of the people, as they

go from city-state, to Kingdoms to large Empires, from waiting for the rain to come feed their gardens to redirecting rivers to feed their fields. Artists, soldiers, priests and Kings, we learn how the region developed and follow the history of one of the first civilizations by how the cities developed. Because the history of each city overlaps, weaving a complex history of warfare, trade, worship and power. The only problem some readers might have is how detailed it truly becomes in the last few chapters. Also some of the text accompanying the photos were placed on the wrong part of the page. Or the photos were placed on the wrong part of the page. Either way some photos don't match the text that go with them. The chapters come with a simple timeline, a useful map, a helpful index and a not so helpful glossary (as some words I wanted to look up were not in it). Overall it is still a great find and worth getting for any library on history, urban development or the Middle East.

I enjoyed this book a lot. It's a book that manages to be both scholarly and readable as it introduces the archaeology and history of various cities around Mesopotamia. Archaeology is the main focus, but Leick draws on written texts, notably literary texts, to illuminate the physical evidence. This book also shows how much more investigative work there is to be done in that region of the world. A good read.

This book devotes a chapter to each of ten Mesopotamian cities. Each city is representative of a particular era the 4000 year old history of Mesopotamia, beginning with the Sumerians and ending with the Babylonians. In between, the reader is introduced to the Akkadians, the Assyrians and a string of other nations as they appear, conquer and are conquered in turn. The chapters are all organized in the same way, starting with the archaeological findings at each site, and using these findings to relate the political structure, economy and religious life of the residents of the city. From there, each chapter discusses the history of the city, its rise to prominence and its decline, and its significance within the larger regional context. Ultimately, one feels one knows the city, its avenues, monumental buildings and its people. It's an admirable analytic framework, providing insights and points of comparison than might otherwise be missed. There are a number of revelations within each chapter. The role of women in some of these societies, the importance of scholarship, the peculiar architectural practices were all new to me. But the key insight I took away from this book was the incredible stretch of time covered by the text. From the Ubaid period to the neo-Babylonian period, we're talking about 3500 years, vastly longer than the entire existence of Western Civilization. It's a healthy reminder of our own insignificance in the long march of human history.

The dawn of civilization has long been a dark mystery to everyone except a handful of scholars in dusty libraries and museum collection rooms. While endless material has been written and published about Egypt, Rome, and Greece, almost nothing has been available for the layman with an abiding interest in the very dawn of civilization: Sumer and Akkad. Gwendolyn Leick's book "Mesopotamia" has changed everything. This is far more complete, far more readable, and far more detailed than anything currently available on the market. If you are looking for one book with a complete, impartial view of how civilization began, then this is the book you're looking for!

I read this book after reading Paul Kriwaczeks Babylon: Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilisation - and I recommend reading in that order. This book provided infill and detail on each of layers of civilisation that ebbed and flowed across the region over 50 millenia. It certainly provided perspective and detail on some of the great builders of infrastructure - irrigation, temples, ziggurats and agriculture products as well as the administration that managed and controlled operations across thousands of kilometers. A most enjoyable read.

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