Visions of Heaven and Hell: The Afterlife in World Art
Week 2, Spring Quarter, 2015
Roberta Shaw

ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: Sumer (Sumeria) - located in southern Iraq
  Uruk Period - from 4000 to 3000 BCE
  Cities of Uruk and Ur were established by c.3500 BCE
  Early Dynastic Period – from 3000 to 2350 BCE
    Writing in cuneiform on clay tablets developed by 3000 BCE
    King Gilgamesh ruled in Uruk c. 2600 BCE
    Royal Cemetery of Ur in use from c. 2600 to 2000 BCE
    Queen Puabi’s tomb, c. 2600 BCE
      Famous contents of tomb include:
        Headdress of Queen Puabi,
        “Ram in a Thicket”
        “Standard of Ur”
    Ziggurat of Ur, temple of moon god Nanna, built by King Ur-Namma c. 2030 BCE
    The Epic of Gilgamesh, considered first great work of literature, c. 2100 BCE

Some important Mesopotamian deities:

  Inanna/aka Ishtar – Goddess of love, fertility and warfare; queen of heaven and earth; patron deity of temple prostitutes; her consort is Dumuzi, aka Tammuz, god of the date harvest.

  Ereshkigal – goddess/queen of the underworld, the realm of death. She is the elder sister of Inanna. Her consort is Nergal, god of hunting, war and sudden death.

ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism is an ancient religion of Persia/Iran. The precise date of the founding of Zoroastrianism is uncertain. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) who is thought to have lived sometime between 1700 BCE and 500 BCE. Zoroastrianism was the main religion of Persia from the 6th century BCE until the 7th century C.E. when Islam supplanted it. It is a monotheistic religion, yet with a dualistic element: the one supreme god is Ahura Mazda, the “Wise Lord”, later called Ohrmazd. He is pitted against Angra Mainyu, the “Evil Spirit”, later called Ahriman, who dwells in the dark Hell under the earth. At the end of time, good will triumph over evil. It is often said that Zoroastrianism provides several “firsts” in the history of religion – the first monotheistic religion, the introduction of the Devil, and the idea of a resurrection of the dead. These ideas were influential for other religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.