

All the world, they do
their labor.

How manifold are
thy works!

They are hidden from
man's sight.

Man goeth forth unto
his work,

And to his labor until
the evening.

O Jahweh, how manifold
are thy works!

O sole god, like whom
there is no other,

Thou hast made the
earth according to
thy desire.

In wisdom has thou
made them all;

The earth is full of
thy riches.

VISUAL SOURCES

Using Visual Sources: The "Royal Standard" of Ur

Visual sources are briefly defined and discussed in the Preface. What follows is a more specific guide to the use of visual sources, focusing on our first visual source, *The "Royal Standard" of Ur*, which immediately follows as an example.

1. Try to look at visual sources as if they were written, primary documents. As with primary documents, assume that you are a historian who knows very little about the history of Sumer and discovers this visual source, *The "Royal Standard" of Ur*. Your goal is to try to "read" it as evidence to support some conclusions about Sumerian civilization.

Without some guidance, "reading" a visual source as historical evidence is more difficult than using a written source. The reproduction makes the details harder to see and most people are not used to looking at a picture in this analytical way. Therefore, in the first paragraph of the headnote to *The "Royal Standard" of Ur* there is a description that puts into words what appears in the visual source. In the second paragraph there is an analysis of the evidence drawn from the photo. Here, as with most visual sources, it is useful to go back and forth between the photo and the written description and analysis that accompany the illustration.

2. As with primary documents, think of questions as you look at the visual source and as you read the

written guide to it. The general question to keep in mind is, "What does this tell me about this civilization, about how people behaved, how they thought, or what they believed?" Other questions are suggested in the "consider" points, such as what information the artist might have been attempting to convey to the viewer.

3. Here the first panel shows the Sumerians at war. The headnote alerts us to "read" this three-line panel from bottom to top, for that is how the Sumerian artist intended it to be viewed. With the aid of the headnote we can see the chariot charging the enemy, then the infantry, and finally the captives being led to the victorious king.

The second panel shows the Sumerians at peace. Again reading from bottom to top, we can see this society organizing in preparation for a banquet and then the banquet itself.

The second paragraph suggests some of the ways the information derived from *The "Royal Standard" of Ur* can be used as historical evidence that Ur in Sumer was a well-organized society with centralized political control, a society that at least by 2700 B.C.E. had mastered the use of various domesticated animals, tools, and instruments.

4. Now pull back and consider the source as a whole. Why might the artist have chosen to depict these scenes? What might be made of the lack of individualized differences in the figures? In what ways might a similar sort of decoration be made today and what might such a set of scenes depict?

Sumer: The "Royal Standard" of Ur

This piece of art—made of shell, lapis lazuli, and red stone inlaid on the sides of a wooden box and found in a grave dating around 2700 B.C.E.—illustrates two aspects of Sumerian life: war and peace. In the bottom line of the first panel, reading from left to right, a wooden chariot charges the enemy and

knocks him over. In the second line the infantry, with protective cloaks, helmets, and short spears, captures and leads off the enemy. In the third line soldiers on the right lead captives to the king in the center. The king, who has just alighted from his attended chariot on the left, towers over the rest. In the second panel the fruits of victory or of peace are enjoyed, at

