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MESOPOTAMIAN ARCHITECTURE AS BACKGROUND DESIGN IN CONTEMPORARY ANIMATED SERIES

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ABSTRACT

As the Japanese animation industry grows more competitive, it keeps introducing or creating new concepts to ensure its animation sells in the market. This could be where the combination of historical elements and fantastical storytelling sprouts in the animated film realm. Due to this, there are a lot of historical references that influence the animation in order to enhance the narrative and storyline or to recreate history in an animated film. However, specific productions do not delve into the historical records and studies to make a compelling portrayal of historical records in their animated film; thus, the interpretation is further away from the real historical records. Through qualitative studies using past studies and research about history and a visual analysis method, this research will analyse the consistency of historical referencing using the case study of choice, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019). This research will be a reference for future animators, to create a historical related architecture for background design.

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1. Introduction

Mumcu and Yilmaz (2018) highlight the significant evolution of anime, a vibrant and diverse form of animation that originated from Japan. Today, anime thrives with diverse genres, styles, and themes for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Due to its rich storytelling, stunning visuals, and unique cultural perspectives, anime remains at the forefront of animation innovation and has become a pop culture. Some well-known anime, such as *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019), are heavily inspired by Mesopotamia's historical influence, particularly in the animated series's background design. The series takes place in the city of Uruk during Mesopotamia's time, portraying buildings and places that match Mesopotamia's architecture and characteristics. As the character from *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic*

Front: Babylonia (2019) resembles figures from Mesopotamia's history and mythology, it is crucial to provide an accurate landscape to deliver a good story and environment. This study explores how Mesopotamia's lengthy history shaped the background design presented in the animated series *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)*. This qualitative method uses media analysis, cultural studies, and history components to highlight the historical context's role in creating fictitious worlds in the animated entertainment industry. Mesopotamia holds importance because between 6000 and 1550 BC, significant advances in the evolution of human civilisation were made. The term "meso" means "middle," and "potamos" means "river or stream." According to Van De Mieroop (1997), Mesopotamia was the first and most urbanised culture in history. Mark and Van Der Crabben (2018) also describe Mesopotamia as 'The Cradle of Civilisation', referring to the area that gave rise to numerous empires and civilisations.

Originating as a narrative in a popular Japanese mobile gacha game, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)*, an Animated Series is an adaptation of the seventh chapter of the *Fate Grand Order Saga*. Directed by Toshifumi Akai and produced by CloverWork, the series was aired officially in Japan from October 5, 2019, until March 21, 2020, and ran for 21 episodes in total. The *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)* is an animated series that takes place during King Gilgamesh's reign in the ancient city of Uruk, in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). The story revolves around the protagonist, a master in the Chaldea Security Organisation, who teams up with renowned heroes from various eras to fight formidable foes and unearth mysteries from the past. As animated series grow in popularity, creators and industries continue introducing new concepts to ensure their creations sell well in the market. However, it is unclear if the portrayal of historical places in the background is authentic or if they refer to the real historical record to adapt to their creation. Some popular cultures succeed in adapting and referring to historical records, while others fail.

The research questions include identifying the significant characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian architecture, analysing the consistency of Mesopotamian historical architecture on the background design presented in *Fate/Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)*, and establishing the influence of Mesopotamian historical architecture towards the background design in the animated series. Using historical references in animated films works as a visual storyteller and can effectively expose modern society to more about history and the past. It becomes more effective when texts and old manuscripts are translated using visual communication to capture the old times more clearly. Animation works as one of the best and most effective visual storytellers, so it is crucial to ensure the historical references used in creating the animated film are accurate and consistent. This research focuses on the influence of significant Ancient Mesopotamian architecture towards the background design of the *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)* animated series, focusing on only one singularity from the *Fate/Grand Order* seven singularity arc, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)*. As this research is limited to the animated series adaptation of the given title, it will not involve real-life interviews due to the geographical area. In terms of Mesopotamian history, this research is limited to the architectural side of Ancient Mesopotamia and significant structures and buildings from the historical era and places related to the case study.

2. Literature Review

As much as there are countless historical records and research conducted on Ancient Mesopotamia, this literature review will only cover the field that might have relation with the animated series and possibly made an appearance in the subject matter like The City of Uruk, the appearance of Ziggurat - referring to a throne or castle belongs to character called Gilgamesh, and the gate at the entrance of the city. As much as there are countless historical

records and research conducted on Ancient Mesopotamia, this literature review will only cover the field that might have relation with the animated series and possibly made an appearance in the subject matter like The City of Uruk, the appearance of Ziggurat - referring to a throne or castle belongs to character called Gilgamesh, and the gate at the entrance of the city.

The Architecture of Ancient Mesopotamia

As defined by Peter Collins and Roger Scruton (2024), architecture is an art and process encompassing all aspects of designing buildings that fulfil human requirements, from grand public buildings to residential complexes and urban planning. Architects use design, engineering, and craftsmanship principles to create buildings that meet functional needs and elicit feelings, communicate cultural meanings, and influence the built environment. Ancient Mesopotamia, often considered the cradle of civilisation, is known for its pioneering contributions to architecture. The Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians achieved significant architectural breakthroughs that established fundamental principles for contemporary architectural practices. By 2000, there were at least 124 villages with a population of approximately one hundred, twenty towns with a population of up to two thousand, another twenty small urban centres with a population of approximately five thousand, and one large city, Uruk, with a population that may have reached fifty thousand.

Uruk, one of Mesopotamia's biggest ancient sites, is known for its architecture and other cultural advances, including the origin of writing (Mark & Zunkir, 2022). It is considered the world's first actual city, the source of writing, the first instance of stone architecture, the genesis of the Ziggurat, and the first city to create the cylinder seal, which the ancient Mesopotamians used to identify private property or sign documents (Mark & Zunkir, 2022). Crüsemann et al. (2019) state that the famed city wall was constructed at the start of the third millennium BC, encircling a city that was 5.5 square kilometres in size. This required the wall to be about 9 kilometres long, which was a gigantic project. Uruk city was built and planned to be square, surrounded by a vast wall. Mark and Zunkir (2022) write that when King Eannutum formed his First Dynasty of Lagash in 2500 BCE, the vast wall of Uruk, supposedly constructed by King Gilgamesh himself, still stood around the city, proving to be a legacy from King Gilgamesh who used to rule the city during his life and constructed it as a safe city for his people. Mesopotamian architecture was heavily influenced by the availability of resources, with buildings in Pi-Ramesse and Uruk predominantly made of air-dried mud bricks (Crüsemann et al., 2019). This material, which was not available in stone, significantly influenced the structural layout and aesthetics of buildings, including houses, facilities, and the famous Temple known as the Ziggurat.

High temples, also known as Ziggurats, were considered an important characteristic of Mesopotamian civilisation (Entidhar et al., 2012). These stepped pyramids, or ziggurats, were constructed of mud brick with temples to gods and goddesses atop, resembling towers. They were initially built around 3500 BC and were considered temples to the people during the early age of the civilisation (Lloyd, 1999). Ziggurats served religious purposes, as they were considered temples to the people. Ziggurats were constructed from the centre outward using sun-dried mud bricks, which were the only material available at the time. The White Temple in Uruk was waterproofed and had a solid foundation thanks to the construction of the Uruk Ziggurat, which was constructed of rammed earth and sun-dried mud brick with bitumen applied to the top surface before additional brick was added. There were many types of Ziggurats, but they all share general features that distinguish them as Ziggurats.

The Gate of Ishtar, another remarkable structure from Ancient Mesopotamia, is known for its massive entrance, which is made of burnt brick and spans the main street of the ancient Babylonian city (today in Iraq). Constructed circa 575 BC, it turned into the city's eighth defensive

gate. The Ishtar Gate is said to be twelve meters tall and adorned with levels of glazed brick reliefs depicting juvenile bulls and dragons. There was a large antechamber on the south side of the double gate. In conclusion, Mesopotamian architecture was heavily influenced by the availability of resources, such as air-dried mud bricks, Ziggurats, and gates like Ishtar. These structures played a significant role in shaping the architectural landscape of ancient Mesopotamia and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the region.

Representation of Mesopotamia in Popular Culture

Mesopotamia, a region in modern-day Iraq, has significantly influenced popular culture, particularly in science fiction, fantasy, and comics. Mesopotamian gods and tales have reached new audiences through various media, including Marvel Comics. Jack Kirby developed the character of Gilgamesh, the hero of Marvel comic books, according to Pryke L. (2018). Roy Thomas, another writer, has also used the character. Marvel, a well-known company for their superhero franchise, has included Mesopotamian characters in their comic series, including the goddess of love Inanna in their 1974 comic, Conan the Barbarian #40, The Friend from the Forgotten City. As a result, Marvel has taken some influence from Ancient Mesopotamia in creating and developing characters to represent Ancient Mesopotamia in their superhero franchise.

Background Design in Animation

Criscuolo (2021) highlights the importance of background design in animation, which involves painting and drawing the background to set the stage and atmosphere for a scene. This role is crucial in any animated series or motion picture as it defines the world of the character and helps deliver the story. Background design is not only meant to serve as the characters' backdrop but also resembles a theatre stage where the characters perform and engage with the props. It is important for the animation creator to pay close attention to the design of the background, props placement, lighting, shadow, and even the mood and atmosphere of the background design.

Traditional animation, also known as hand-drawn animation, cel animation, or classical animation, was done manually from scratch, taking much more time to create a finished animation. Animators would draw each frame on paper, compile, and change them every frame to create a movement similar to the flipbook animation method. The background was painted using watercolour. Purwaningsih (2017) explains that today, computers have made the process quicker and less difficult by allowing animators to alter the character and background line drawing and colouring. Technology makes it easier for animators to fix mistakes later on, such as changing colours, removing layers and objects, or replacing objects with something else for the background design. Traditional 2D hand-drawn animation's imperfections serve as a reminder that people are imperfect. According to Lammi (2021), although the artist must still paint the layout by hand when using digital painting, the many tools and benefits of digital media have made the process quicker and less difficult. Digital drawing software such as Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop, Krita, and Paint Tool SAI allows artists to create a cohesive style that appears to have been developed by a single artist. To speed up the process of creating a finished animated movie or series, a large number of artists should work together to finish all the background design needed for all scenes in the animation.

Analysis of Fate Grand Order: Absolute Demonic Front Babylonia (2019)

The "Babylonian" chapter of the mobile game *Fate/Grand Order*, produced by CloverWorks, is an anime adaptation of the "Babylonian" chapter from the Fate series. The story follows Ritsuka Fujimaru and Mash Kyrielight, members of the Chaldea Security Organisation, as they embark on a mission to ancient Babylonia, where they discover Gilgamesh's city of Uruk is

under attack from the Three Goddess Alliance. They must investigate the goddesses' intentions while defending Uruk from Demonic Beasts. The anime is praised for its excellent production standards and animation, with some comparing it to Ufotable's adaptations of Fate. However, viewers without prior Fate knowledge may find the pacing and plot difficult. The literature review should focus on Ancient Mesopotamia's Architecture and its influence on the contemporary world, as it will later be used as a reference to evaluate the consistency of its references in *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019) Animated Series*.

3. Methodology

A systematic strategy that guarantees the validity and dependability of research findings in various domains is referred to as research methodology. It includes the preparation, data collection, and analytical procedures necessary to carry out research in an efficient and ethical way (Kushwaha et al, 2024). For researchers at all levels, understanding research methodology is essential because it links theoretical understanding with practical application.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, which are known as study designs, are frequently used in research activities to various degrees. In quantitative research, an issue is measured by producing numerical data that can be converted into statistically valid information. Meanwhile, qualitative research maintains a disciplined approach to data collecting and analysis despite its subjectivity (Pandey, 2024).

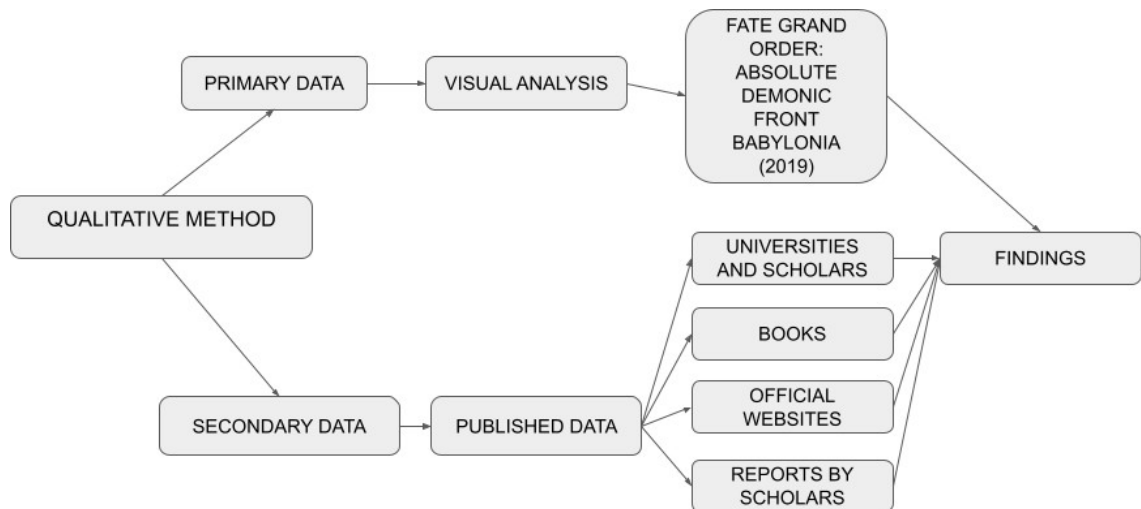


Figure 1. Summary of Method

This research design employs qualitative methods, focusing on content analysis and secondary data collection. Primary data is collected from the *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)* animated series, while secondary data is sourced from published online or academically appropriate sources such as universities, scholars, books, trusted websites, or reports by scholars. The primary data analysis involves designing, gathering, and analysing unique data for a specific study goal, with researchers having direct control over the process. Visual analysis is a qualitative research methodology that uses visual materials like drawings, photographs, and films to uncover deeper meanings, viewpoints, and experiences. In this paper, the researcher will conduct a visual analysis by watching and observing the animated series *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)* to collect necessary data, information,

and screenshots for data analysis. Secondary data is obtained from previously collected information from other sources, such as governmental sources, business reports, and scholarly publications. Gathering secondary data is typically more expensive and time-consuming than primary data, and may not match the goals or inquiries of the current study. For this research, the author will use secondary data such as academic journals, books, and official websites to support the analysis or retrieve limited information. Secondary data was invaluable in finding information about the Mesopotamian civilisation and its architectural features and characteristics due to the limited geographical area and time gap.

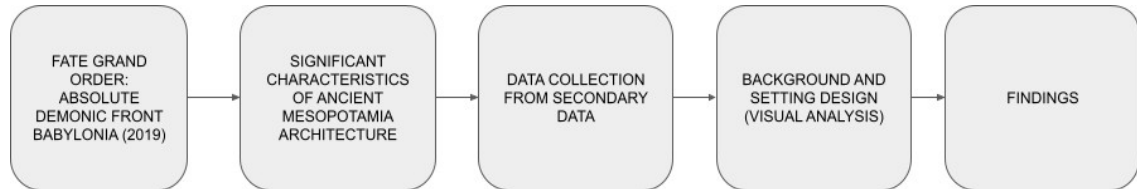


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The research design involves a conceptual framework that links various concepts, theories, and variables to provide a theoretical foundation as can be seen in Figure 2 above. The primary data collection method is visual analysis of the *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylon* (2019) animated series. The seventh singularity arc from the Fate Grand Order game is chosen as a case study due to its more precise and frequent background design that depicts Mesopotamian civilisation and architecture. A case study design is used as a qualitative research method, examining a real-life, current bounded system over time. Researchers gather comprehensive data over an extended period using various techniques to develop new theories or insights and gain a thorough understanding of the case subject. This research mainly uses qualitative methods for data analysis and retrieval of findings. It does not use graphs, pie-charts, or numerical data, and heavily relies on secondary data collected from historical records, books, academic or scholarly records, and articles. The analysis focuses on whether the animated series' background design uses references from authentic Mesopotamian architecture, as recorded by past researchers and scholars or what is written in the articles.

4. Results

The research aimed to identify significant characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian architecture through extensive data collection from various sources, including scholars, books, and articles. The process involved gathering insights from 11 sources with contrasting viewpoints on the architecture's characteristics, which were recorded in Table 1. The collected data helps us understand which characteristics are most known from the records and serves as evidence of their influence on the background design of the *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonian* (2019) animated series. The data collected provides valuable insights into the architectural style and influences of Ancient Mesopotamia.

Table 1
Significant Characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian by Scholars and Experts

Source	Author	Excerpt	Characteristic	Description
The Rise And Eclipse of Sumer	Ann Kordas, Ryan J. Lynch, Brooke Nelson	Each city had a massive temple complex dedicated	Ziggurat	Ziggurat is visualised as a A stepped

	and Julie Tatlock (2023)	to its patron deity. The complex included a ziggurat, a stepped pyramid topped with a shrine for the deity. Priests, artisans, and workers lived and worked within the complex.		pyramid with a shrine for the deity on top of it and various workers (including influenced figures) working within the complex.
Mesopotamian art and architecture	Seton H. F. Lloyd (2019)	Early Sumerian and Babylonian architecture focused primarily on religious buildings and sculpture.	Religious	Religion is a significant influence on Ancient Mesopotamian architecture, especially buildings and sculpture.
The Form, Function and Symbolism of Standards in Ancient Mesopotamia during the Third and Fourth Millennia BCE: An Iconographical Study	Renate Marian van Dijk (2016)	During the Early Dynastic Period, worshipper statues, representing both genders, were the most common large-scale artworks. These statues were believed to embody the depicted A person's essence.	Sculptural art	Sculptural art is considered a common large-scale artwork influencing Ancient Mesopotamian architecturing.
		Individually identifiable figures, like the Priest-King, and ritual scenes in temples are depicted for the first time.	Temple	A temple is a place where ritual scenes are conducted.
		The best-preserved Ziggurat, built under Ur-Nammu, is located at Ur.	Ziggurat	Ziggurat was considered the best-preserved building in one of the biggest cities during the age of Ancient Mesopotamia.
Architecture and Ancient Epics - Mesopotamian	Ghada Rzhouki Al Slik (2024)	City planning was evident in the square gathering places and the hierarchical road system. Uruk was a well-planned city, with the wild uplands outside its walls, where	City planning	Ancient Mesopotamian The architecture involved the city planning like Uruk, which has square gathering places, a road system,

Gilgamesh as a Model		Enkidu lived. Mesopotamian legends feature flood gods, while their ziggurats symbolise eternity.	Ziggurat	and walls. The Ziggurat Building symbolises eternity.
		Uruk's impressive brick walls, adorned with a decorated cornice, were renowned for their strength. The epic highlights the The king inspected this fortification, which was built primarily to protect against floods.	City walls and gates	City walls and gates made of bricks with a decorated cornice were built to protect the city from floods.
The Defensive Brick Architecture in Mesopotamia From The End of Early Bronze Age to The End of The Early Iron Age	Kadim Hasson Hnaihien (2020)	Defensive walls were built to showcase the influence of power Moreover, protect against floods and enemies.	City walls and gates	City walls and gates were a symbol of the influence of power and for protection.
		Several palaces, a large temple to Nabu, and a citadel arsenal were uncovered.	Temple	The Large Temple is a part of the Ancient Mesopotamian architecture.
		Bricks, mainly used for Neo-Assyrian platforms and all Ziggurats were used in vast quantities.	Material	Ancient Mesopotamian Ziggurats use bricks as the building material.
		A single wall surrounded a complex with religious and administrative functions.	City planning	Religious and Administrative functions were divided to make an effective city planning.
The great houses of Mesopotamia: Tripartite houses and the formation of the city-state.	Pascal Butterlin (2022)	These houses were divided into three sections: a central room and two side rooms.	City planning	Strategised city planning existed during the Ancient Mesopotamia.
		Typically interpreted as temple platforms, these structures grew significantly, reaching 280 square meters, with their central areas measuring around 90 square	Temple	Temple has platforms and goes into development bigger sizes.

		meters. The most renowned example is the terraced structure of the Anu ziggurat at Uruk.	Ziggurat	Ziggurat is the most renowned terraced structure in Ancient Mesopotamia.
Mountains for the Gods: Mimicking Landscape with Architecture. Mesoamerican Pyramids and Mesopotamian Ziggurats in a Cross Cultural Examination	Felix Levenson and Mónica Pacheco Silva (2022)	Mesopotamian high temples, or ziggurats, are exemplified by the famous 'Tower of Babel' in ancient Babylon, though its artistic representations often deviate from its actual form.	Ziggurat	Ziggurats' artistic representation sometimes deviates from their actual forms.
How wide is the Near East? Some reflections on the limits of "Near Eastern Archaeology"	Elena Rova (2020)	Highland societies, often stereotyped as "primitive" in Mesopotamian texts are frequently underestimated due to their smaller settlements, absence of palatial and Temple architecture, and lack of written records.	Temple	Temple architecture is considered an advanced development of Ancient Mesopotamia.
The vaulted funerary hypogea in Mesopotamia between the Second and First Millennium BC: localisation and architectural features	Margherita Dallai (2020)	While stone was rarely used, brick, both baked and unbaked, was the primary building material. However, the high cost of baking limited the use of fired bricks.	Material	Primary building materials during Ancient Mesopotamia were mostly bricks and rarely used stones.
Southern Mesopotamia: Water and the Rise of Urbanism	Dr. Mark Altaweel (2019)	This conflict underscores the critical role of water control, particularly over key canals, in determining the economic and The political dominance of cities in the region.	City planning	Having water control, economic and political dominance is considered a city planning.

		As early as the Ubaid period, long-standing temples played a role in creating social structures that bound people to their land and settlements. This instance of niche construction demonstrates how populations adapted to their environment, but irrigation was not the only factor leading to the rise of complex, urban civilisations.	Temple	Temples play a crucial part for their people in strengthening the connection of the people with their lands.
The Sky From The High Terrace: Study On the Orientation of The Ziggurat In Ancient Mesopotamia	Davide Nadali and Andrea Polcaro (2016)	The Ziggurat is the iconic symbol of Mesopotamian sacred architecture in Western thought.	Ziggurat	Ziggurat is considered an iconic Ancient Mesopotamian architecture.

Table 2
Frequencies of the most mentioned characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian architecture from previous studies

AUTHORS	SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERISTICS OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN ARCHITECTURE						
	Ziggurat	Religious	Sculptural art	Temples	City walls and gates	Materials	CITY PLANNING
ANN KORDAS, RYAN J. LYNCH, BROOKE NELSON, AND JULIE TATLOCK (2023)	✓						
SETON H. F. LLOYD (2019)		✓					
RENATE MARIAN VAN DIJK (2016)	✓		✓	✓			

GHADA RZOUKI AL SLIK (2024)	✓			✓		✓
KADIM HASSON HNAIHEN (2020)			✓	✓	✓	✓
PASCAL BUTTERLIN (2022)	✓		✓			✓
FELIX LEVENSON AND MÓNICA PACHECO SILVA (2022)	✓					
ELENA ROVA (2020)			✓			
MARGHERITA DALLAI (2020)					✓	
DR. MARK ALTAWHEEL (2019)			✓			✓
DAVIDE NADALI AND ANDREA POLCARO (2016)	✓					

After the collective data was gathered in Table 1, all sources were then transmitted into Table 2 to record how many characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamia architecture were mentioned by the scholars and researchers mentioned. The stage is to identify which one is significant among the characteristics that have been mentioned by various studies. Eleven studies and research on the characteristics of ancient Mesopotamian architecture were mentioned, some of which are familiar with one another, while others have different discoveries. Those characteristics are Ziggurats, Religious, Sculptural art, Temples, City Walls and Gates, Materials, and City Planning.

Significant Characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamia

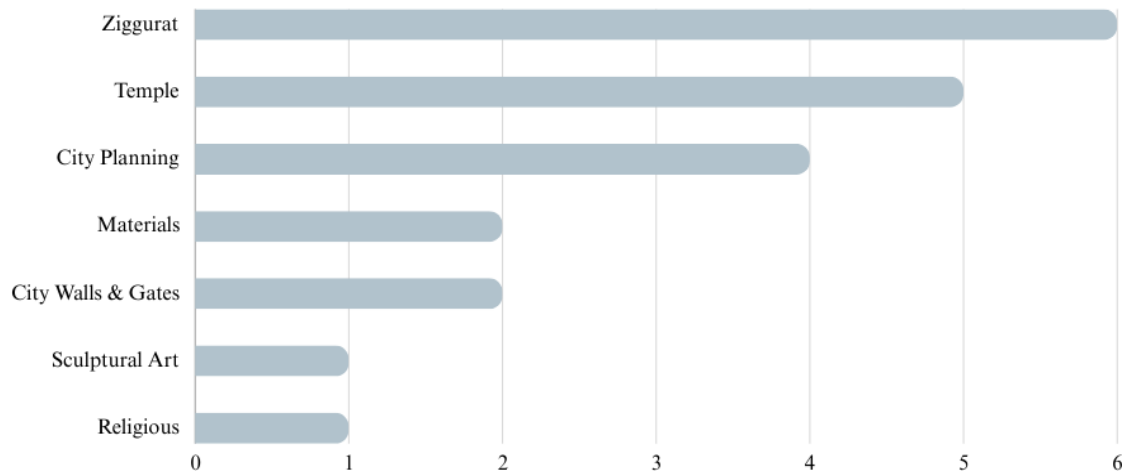


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Frequently mentioned characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian Architecture

Ancient Mesopotamian architecture is characterised by six out of eleven works, with Ziggurats being the most dominant and well-known architectural building. Ziggurats play a significant role in the identity of the civilisation and architecture, leading to frequent studies and discoveries. The second most frequently mentioned characteristic of Ancient Mesopotamian architecture is the Temple, the centre of religious activities, and it plays a significant role in maintaining people and civilisation. The Temple's design and layout reflect the era's advanced architectural skills, making it one of the most influential buildings. City Planning is another significant aspect of Ancient Mesopotamia, as it developed the first urban civilisation. Materials, city walls, and gates are the second least mentioned characteristics, followed by sculptural art and religion. However, many studies and research on these less-mentioned characteristics are not as extensive as those mentioned by the author and scholar frequently.

5. Discussion

After analysing the data, the research will proceed by analysing the most frequently mentioned significant characteristics of ancient Mesopotamia obtained in data collection. Those significant characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamia are the Ziggurat, the Temple, and the City Planning.

Ziggurat

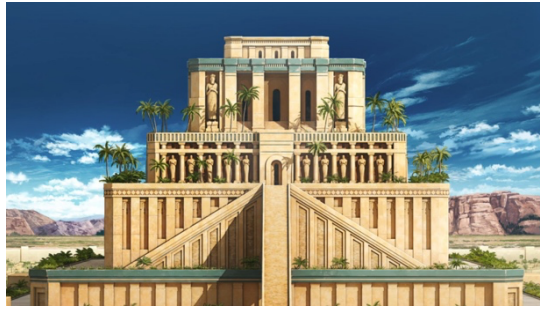


Figure 4. "Front shot view of Ziggurat," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)



Figure 5. "Bird eye shot of Ziggurat," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)

In *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019), the Ziggurat plays a significant role as a throne to Gilgamesh, a character trying to protect the city. The Ziggurat is located in the City of Uruk, where Gilgamesh ruled, and is the highest building or a high Temple. The animation creator closely followed historical records from Ancient Mesopotamian architecture, with the Ziggurat resembling a tripartite building with three stairs, a pyramid shape, and a temple on top of platforms with flat tops. The Ziggurat first appeared in Episode 1 and was officially introduced to the audience by Mash in the 3rd episode. It is the only building in the city that Gilgamesh is trying to protect. The Ziggurat stands until the City of Uruk is almost destroyed by a wave of beasts at the end of the series, symbolising eternity. Gilgamesh is trying to protect the Ziggurat, making it a sacred and important treasure of Mesopotamia. At the end of the series, the Ziggurat becomes the last standing building and is considered "Humanity's Last Defence" as Gilgamesh and other characters like Enkidu and Ishtar protect it. The colour of the Ziggurat indicates that it was made from bricks, as confirmed by Mark and Games (2022).

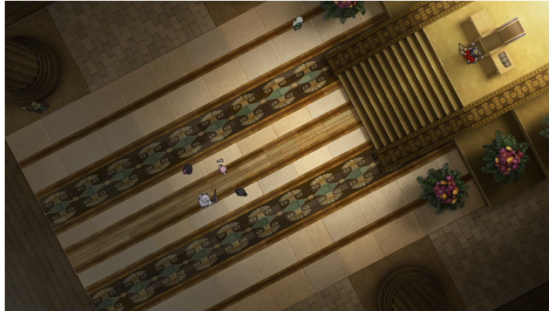


Figure 6. "Top view of Ziggurat's interior," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)



Figure 7. "Gilgamesh throne," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)

Figures 6 and 7 depict the interior of the Ziggurat, a massive brick-made throne for Gilgamesh, on a platform with decorative walls and floors. The throne is often used for appointments with the king to address economic, facility, defence, well-being, or outside missions. The Ziggurat's interior appears frequently throughout the animated series. In *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019), the Ziggurat is primarily used as a throne for Gilgamesh, a king of Uruk, and is considered a "castle" in the City of Uruk. The animated series does not include many religious details or occasions, but still includes religious activity such as rituals and mock-up sacred messages or spells like Mantra. The interior of the Ziggurat appears frequently throughout the animated series.

Temple



Figure 8. "The assembly scene," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)

In the animated series, Figure 8 depicts an assembly before a huge building in the City of Ur. The main character, Fujimaru Ritsuka, and his team, including Mash, Merlin, and Ana, investigate a city called Ur at the order of Gilgamesh. However, they encounter the villagers' attitude, who seem fine but lack help. The team gathers all citizens in front of the building for further investigation. The building resembles a temple, standing on land instead of a high platform, and appears to be tied like small pyramids. It has a large arch in the middle that serves as an entrance, and its colour is similar to the previous Ziggurat, suggesting it was made of mud-bricks. A woman walks out from the Temple's entrance with her bodyguards, but most of the scene takes place outside. The Temple does not appear much throughout the series, as it is placed away from the main city. The assembly in front of the Temple emphasises its importance as central to the religious, economic, and social life of the civilisation. The gloomy mood and the city's placement in a forest make the city seem primitive and lacking in power. The assembly in front of the Temple serves as a reminder of the importance of temple architecture in the civilisation.



Figure 9. "Ritual performing scene," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)

In Episode 6 of the animated series, a temple is detected, with people performing a ritual for their goddesses in an unknown temple. Van Dijk (2016) revealed that the Temple is a place where people conduct rituals, but there is a lack of interaction and presentation of the Temple's detailed functionality. The people are desperate for help to maintain their homeland and peace, and this scene became the scene of choice to showcase the Temple's functionality. The animated series aims to showcase the Temple's importance in maintaining peace and harmony.

City Planning



Figure 10. "Bird eye view of the City of Uruk," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)



Figure 11. "City of Uruk in opening credit," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute* Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)

Mark and Zunkir (2022) highlight the importance of city planning in the architecture of Ancient Mesopotamia. The animated series, "Mankind's Oldest Fortress City," portrays the City of Uruk, a well-planned city surrounded by massive walls that protect the civilisation from external threats. The city is filled with crowds, food stalls, houses, and smiths, and it appears in the first episode and a clip in the opening introduction. The main characters, Fujimaru Ritsuka and Mash, interact with the people of Uruk, showing genuine and happy interactions. However, by the end of the series, the city is destroyed, signifying the end of their civilisation. Uruk is the largest city in Ancient Mesopotamia, and its well-planned layout ensures smooth operations in buying, trading, selling, and transportation. The animated series's creator pays attention to maintaining accuracy in the records of Ancient Mesopotamia, as evidenced by the roads for transportation. The City of Uruk is surrounded by huge walls, built by King Gilgamesh, and troops under Gilgamesh's order have been protecting and maintaining the walls for six months from demonic beasts. The interpreted walls in the animated series are shown in Figure 12 and are a testament to the intricate city planning and architecture of Ancient Mesopotamia.



Figure 12. "Sunset in Uruk," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute* Demonic Front: Babylonia (2019)

Additionally, Figure 11 clearly shows that houses are made of bricks. To look into even more detail, Figure 13 is when the king's attendant, Siduri, brings Fujimaru and the team to their stay in Uruk.



Figure 13. "The Chaldean's stay," Toshifumi Akai, *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019)

Dallai (2020) highlights the use of bricks as primary building materials in Ancient Mesopotamia, as depicted in the series. The city's development is well-portrayed, with citizens requesting help from King Gilgamesh for water-control issues in Episode 3. In Episode 6, King Gilgamesh, along with Fujimaru Ritsuka and Mash, travels to the Persian Gulf to overcome water-related problems, aligning with scholar Altaweel's (2020) notion of water-control as a means to maintain political dominance in a region. The series effectively portrays the city's development and the importance of bricks in achieving political dominance.

6. Conclusion

The research methodology uses qualitative methods and secondary data to analyse the influence of Ancient Mesopotamia architecture on the background design of the animated series *Fate Grand Order Absolute Demonic Front: Babylonia* (2019). The study reveals significant characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamia architecture, such as Ziggurat, Temple, City Planning, Materials, City Walls and Gates, Religious and Sculptural Art. Ziggurat is the most prominent architecture during Ancient Mesopotamia, maintaining its standing until the end of the series to give the audience the idea that it is an identity of Ancient Mesopotamia. The Temple, a significant factor in the rise of civilisation, serves as a ritual site for ancient people to communicate with their gods. The production consistently follows facts and studies based on real Ancient Mesopotamian civilisations in the background. The animated series' production did an excellent job following historical records from real Ancient Mesopotamia, maintaining the identity of Ancient Mesopotamia even as the storyline changes. The production team maintained the settings and background of the film, portraying Ancient Mesopotamia properly to allow viewers to experience the world of Ancient Mesopotamia that has long gone. As long as the significant characteristics of Ancient Mesopotamian architecture are portrayed appropriately in the animated series, there will be no misportrayal throughout the series. Through this, the series may not only provide historically accurate architecture, but as a reference for future generation in the field of animation and background studies. This gives the historical architecture a value of appreciation, as well as education.

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Conflict of Interest

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