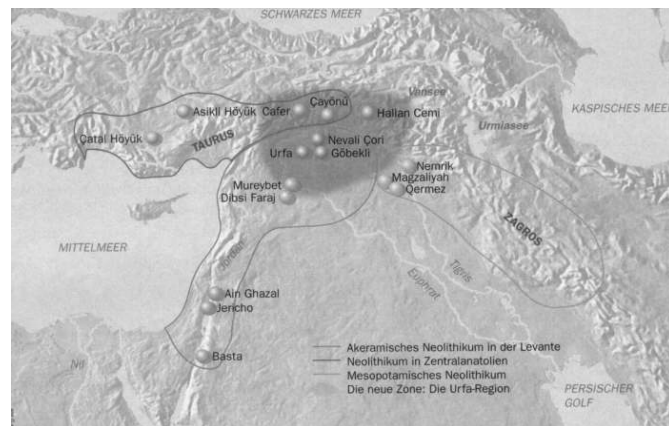


arch 1600. archaeologies of the near east
joukowsky institute for archaeology and the ancient world
spring 2008



Emerging social complexities in Mesopotamia: the Chalcolithic in the Near East.
February 20, 2008

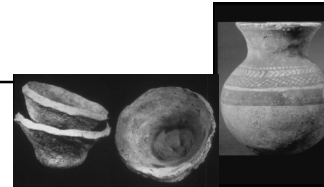


Neolithic in the Near East: early sites of socialization

“neolithic revolution”: domestication of wheat, barley, sheep, goat:
early settled communities (ca 10,000 to 6000 BC)

Mudding the world: Clay, mud and the technologies of everyday life in the prehistoric Near East

- Pottery: associated with settled life: storage, serving, prestige pots, decorated and undecorated.



- Figurines: objects of everyday, magical and cultic use. Ubiquitous for prehistoric societies especially. In clay and in stone.



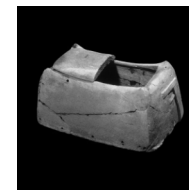
- Mud-brick as architectural material: Leads to more structured architectural constructions, perhaps more rectilinear spaces.



- Tokens, hollow clay balls, tablets and early writing technologies: related to development of trade, tools of urban administration, increasing social complexity.



- Architectural models: whose function is not quite obvious to us. Maybe apotropaic, maybe for sale purposes?



"All objects of pottery... figments of potter's will, fictions of his memory and imagination."

J. L. Myres 1923, quoted in Wengrow 1998: 783.

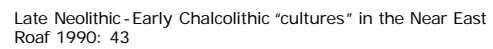


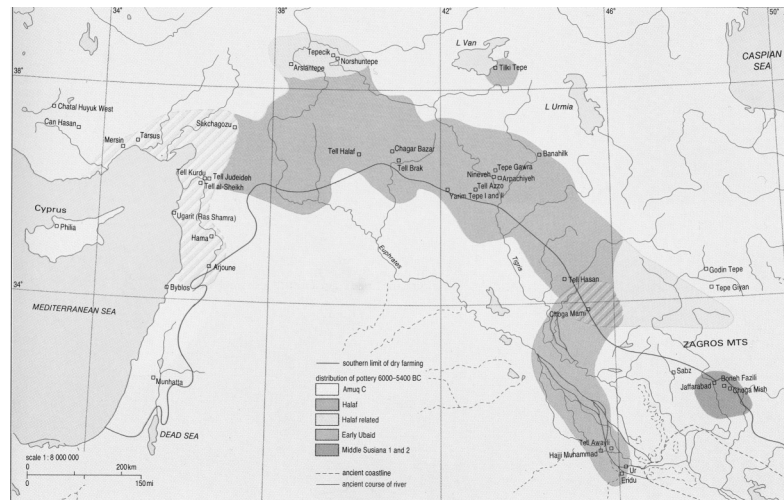
What is culture in “culture history” (1920s-1960s) ?

Archaeological culture = a bounded and binding ethnic/cultural unit
within a defined geography and temporal/spatial “horizons”,
uniformly and unambiguously represented in the material culture,
manifested by artifactual assemblage.

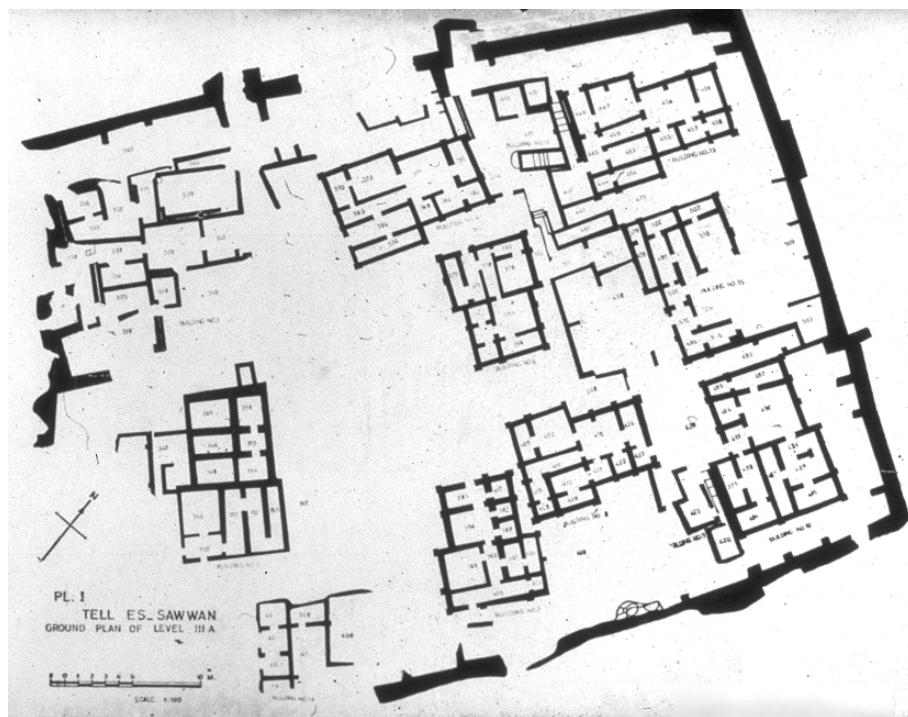
pots=people?

- “Do cultures actually exist as real, empirical units to be discovered?”





Early Chalcolithic "cultures" in the Near East: Halaf, Early Ubaid and others (6000-5400 BC)
 Roaf 1990: 49





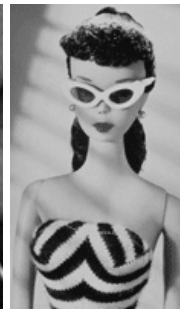
body and architecture



poetics of construction



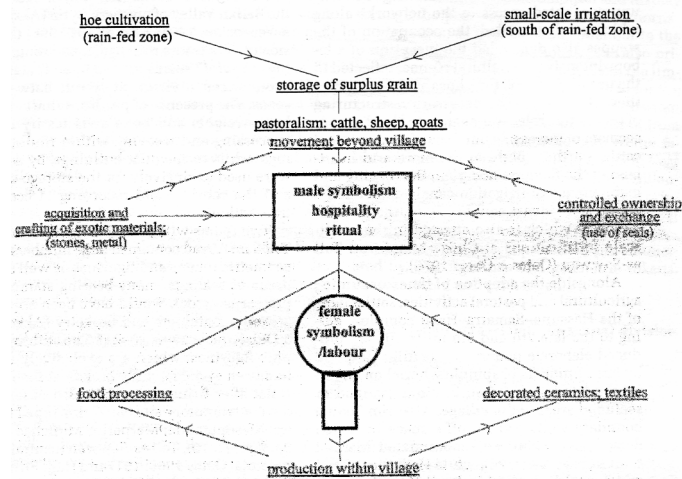
prehistoric figurines : an intimate world

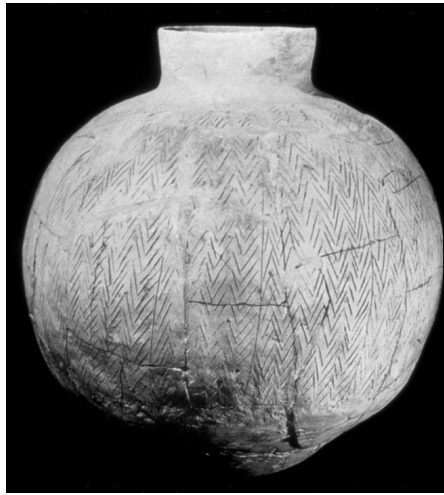


'THE CHANGING FACE OF CLAY'

*colonisation of northern and central Mesopotamia and spread
of settlement to metal and obsidian sources.
fission of male/female productive life; growth of male status groups
engaged in trade*

HASSUNA-SAMARRA-HALAF (6500-5000 cal BC)





Tell Hassuna, Hassuna period pottery jar, mid- 7th millennium BC: lightly fired and quite porous. Decorated with herringbone patterns of lines, incised with a sharp instrument.

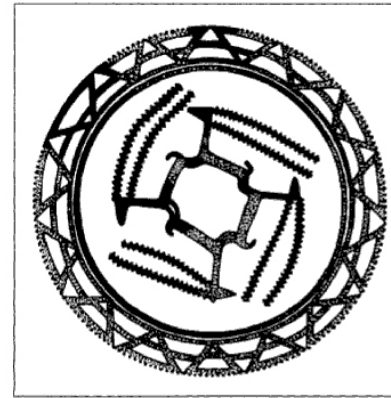
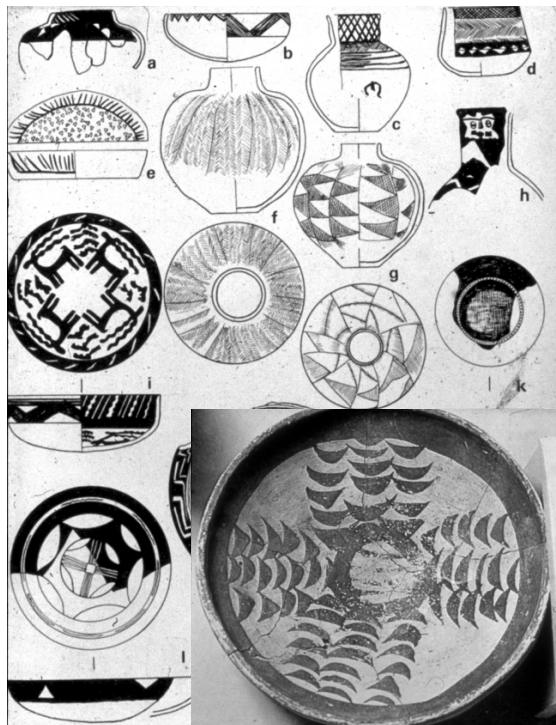
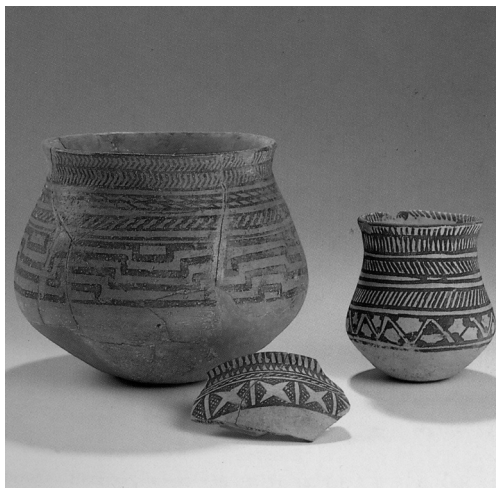
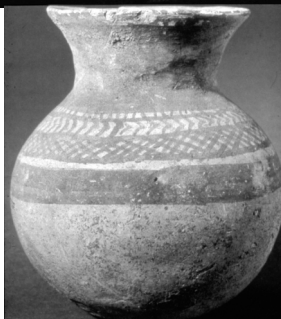
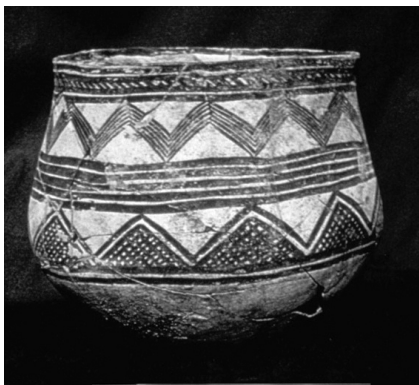
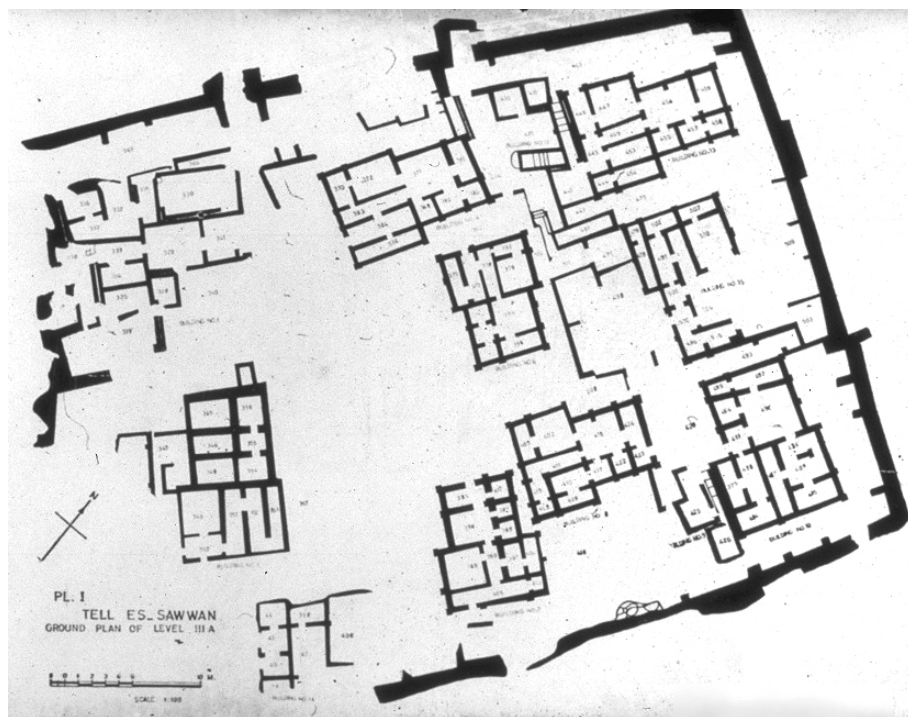


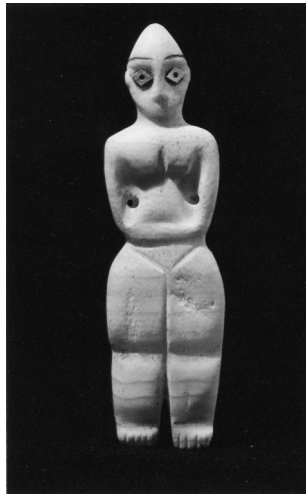
Figure 3.10 A Neolithic painted bowl of the Samarra culture (sixth millennium BC) from Samarra (after Bernbeck 1994, Pl. IV)

Tell Hassuna, Samarra period pottery bowl, late- 7th -early 6th millennium BC: well fired and painted with a chocolate brown color with unique swirling designs of abstracted animal imagery.





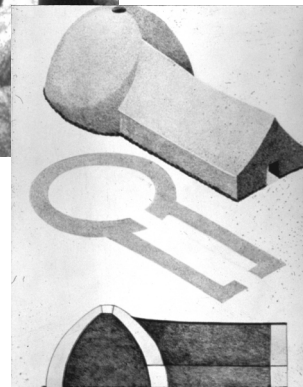


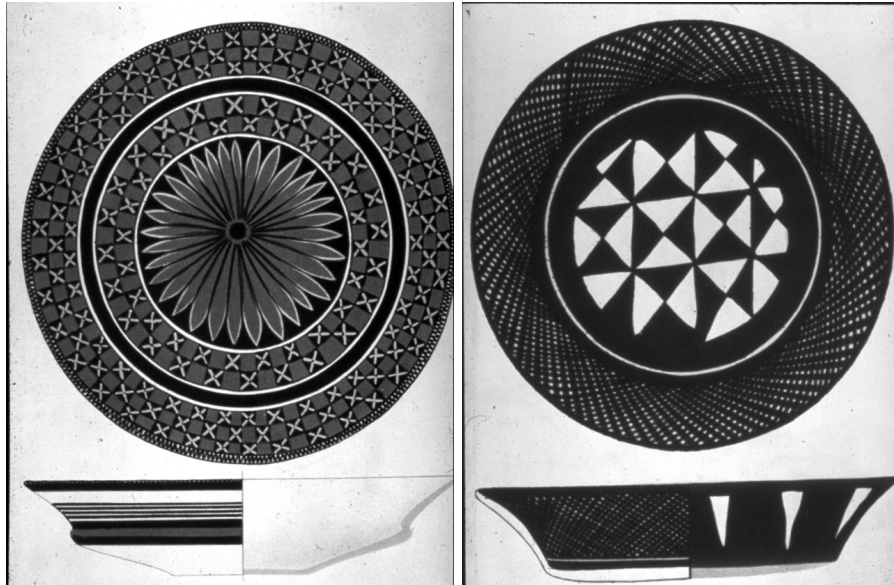


Tell es Sawwan, Samarra period finds from children's graves, late- 7th -early 6th millennium BC: alabaster figurine and veined alabaster vessels. Figurine with inlaid eyes with bitumen



Halaf house

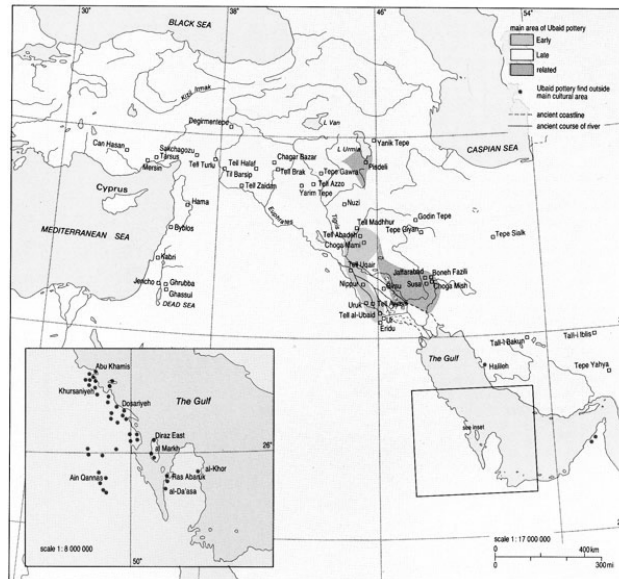




Halaf period pottery jar, mid-late 6th millennium BC (6000-5400 BC): polychrome bowls .

archaeological time

5000-4000 BC	Halaf period in the Northern Mesopotamia Ubaid period in the South Eridu temple sequence (<i>E-abzu</i>)	
4000-3500 3500-3100	Early Uruk period Late Uruk period Uruk Level IV (<i>Eanna</i> Precinct)	Protoliterate Period
social complexity, urbanization, writing, mass-produced pottery potter's wheel introduced, new bureaucratic tools such as cylinder seals, long-distance trade		
3100-2900	Jemdet Nasr period Uruk Level III (<i>Eanna</i> Precinct)	
2950-2750 2750-2600 2600-2350	Early Dynastic I Early Dynastic II Early Dynastic III	Pre-Sargonic Period

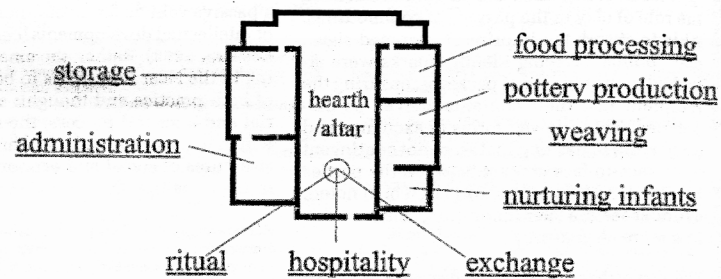


Chalcolithic “cultures” in Mesopotamia: Late Ubaid (5400-4200 BC)
 A regional dispersal from Mesopotamia to Armenia and the Persian gulf
 Roaf 1990: 53

tripartite building becomes standard framework for domestic life and the metaphor of the household is extended to administrative, productive and ritual action creating a new work ethic and greater overall output

LATE 'UBAID (5000-4300 cal.BC)

**Tripartite 'house'
as extended metaphor**



household : workshop : office : shrine



Tell Madhkur

The site of Tell Madhkur was excavated as part of the Hamrin Dam Salvage Project, one of the many projects undertaken to investigate sites threatened by modern development, in this case the construction of a dam across the Diyala river. The site was occupied in the Early Dynastic and Islamic periods, but most of the remains belonged to the Late Ubaid period. In the center of the mound was a large house with walls still standing 2 meters high. The house had been burned and the more valuable items had been removed, but everyday household equipment such as pottery vessels were left in the ruins. The building had a long central room flanked by rows of smaller rooms, and its plan is superficially similar to the temples at Eridu and Tepe Gawra. However, the finds within the building clearly showed that it was a domestic dwelling. After the fire the house had been deliberately leveled, which accounted for its extraordinary state of preservation.



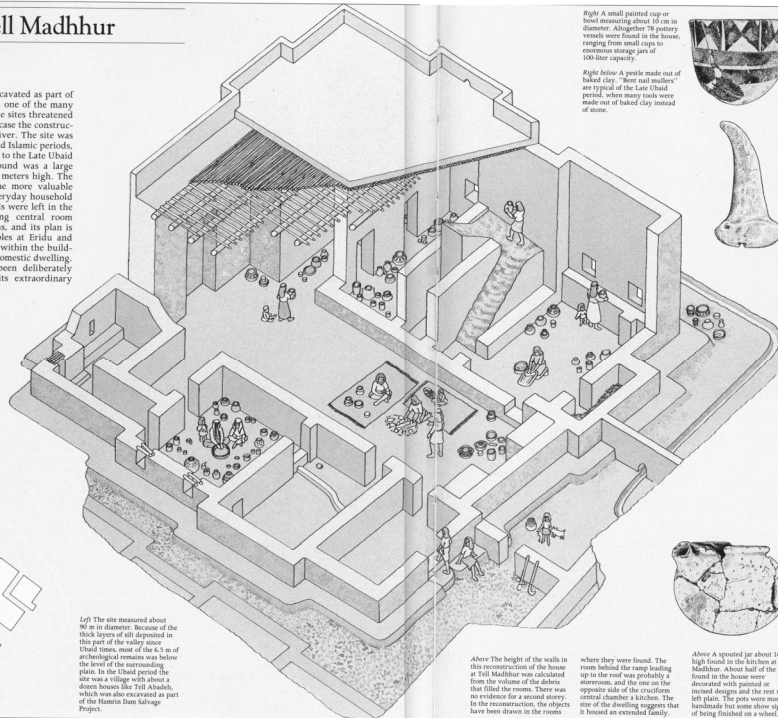
Above Among the finds in the house were chipped flint tools, called stone tools by archaeologists. Attached to a handle with bitumen and cord, these tools were probably used to break up the soil before planting.



Excavated area

0 10 20 30 m
0 30 100 ft

Left The site measured about 90 m in diameter. Because of the thick layers of all deposited in this part of the valley since the Ubaid period, most of the archaeological remains was below the level of the surrounding plain. In the Ubaid period the site was a village with about a dozen houses like Tell Abadeh, which was also excavated as part of the Hamrin Dam Salvage Project.



Right A small pointed cup or bowl measuring about 10 cm in diameter. Altogether 78 pottery vessels were found in the house, ranging from small cups to enormous storage jars of 100-liter capacity.



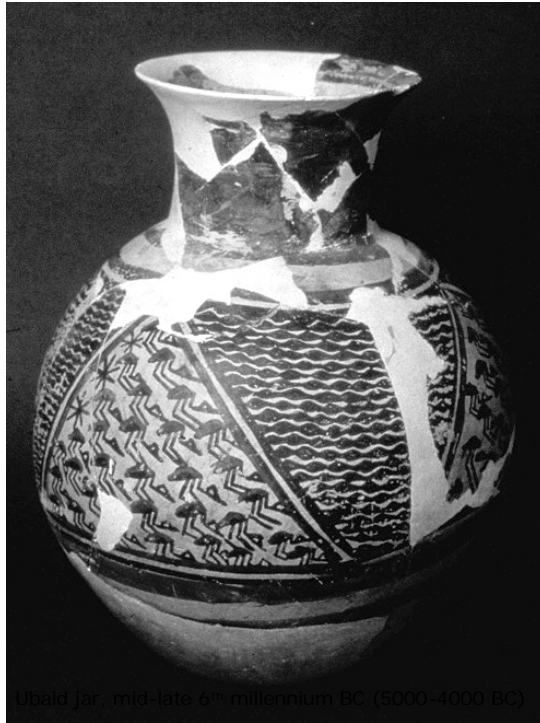
Right below A pot made out of baked clay. "Rent nail mallets" are typical of the Late Ubaid period, when many tools were made out of baked clay instead of stone.



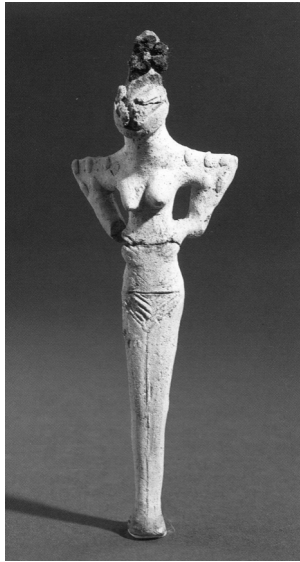
Above A spouted jar about 16 cm high found in the kitchen at Tell Madhkur. About half of the pots found in the house were decorated with painted or incised designs and the rest were left plain. The pots were mostly handmade but some show signs of being finished on a wheel.

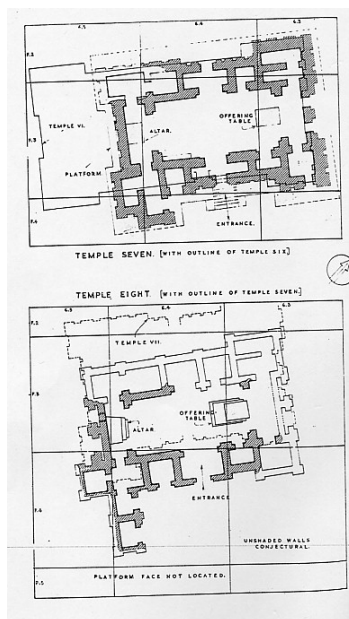
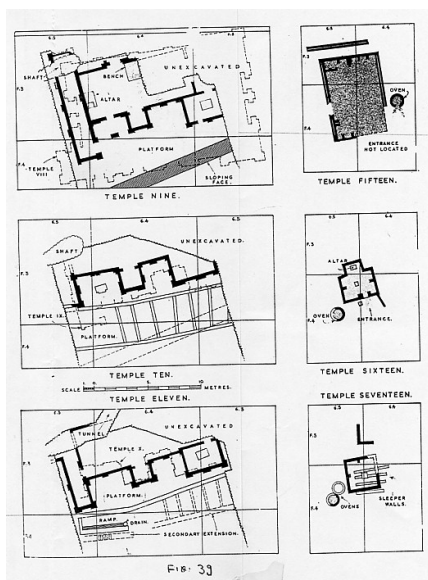
Above The height of the walls in this reconstruction of the house at Tell Madhkur was calculated from the volume of the debris that filled the rooms. There was no evidence for a central alley. In the reconstruction, the objects have been drawn in the rooms

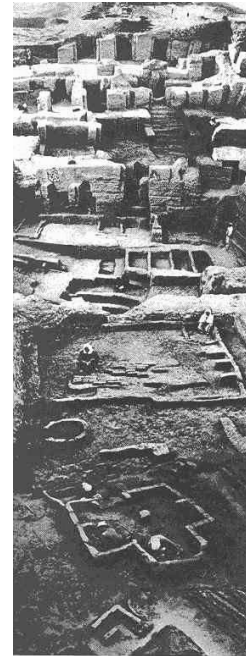
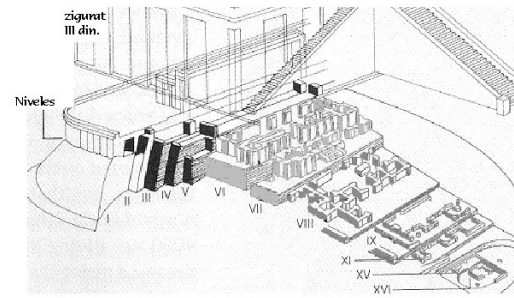
where they were found. The room behind the ramp leading up to the roof was probably a storeroom, and the one on the opposite side of the courtyard central chamber a kitchen. The size of the dwelling suggests that it housed an extended family.



Ubaid jar, mid-late 6th millennium BC (5000-4000 BC)

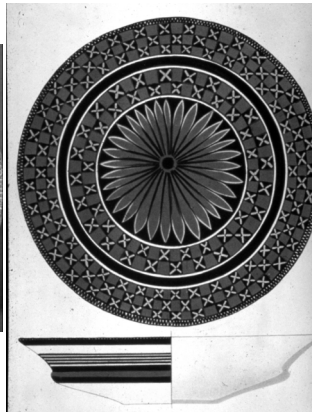








samarra

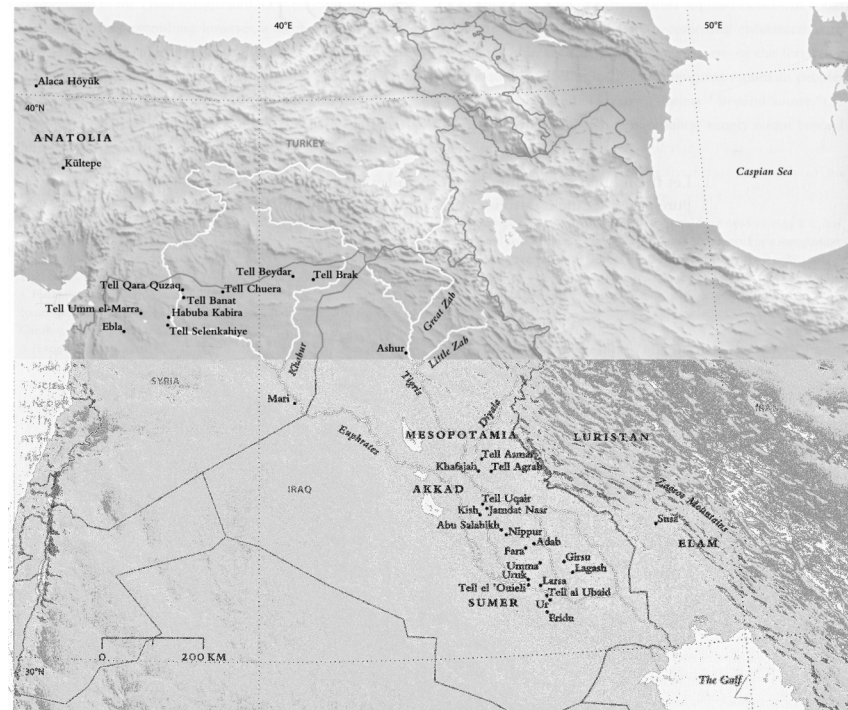


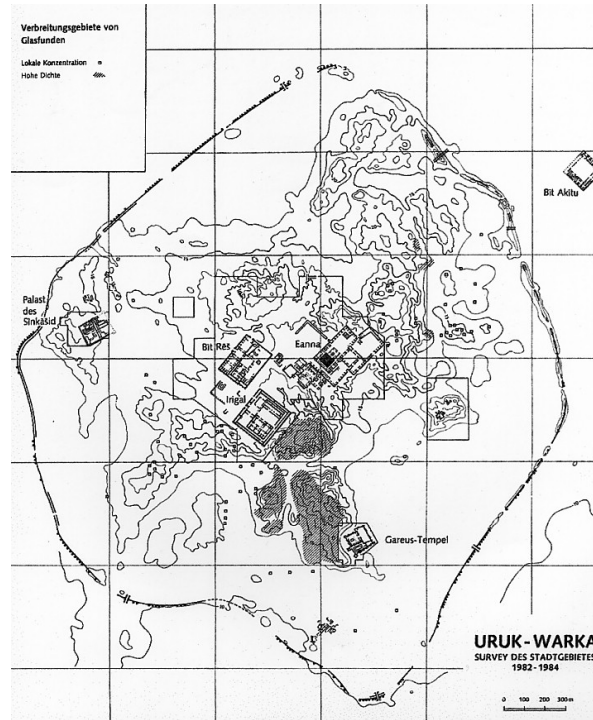
halaf



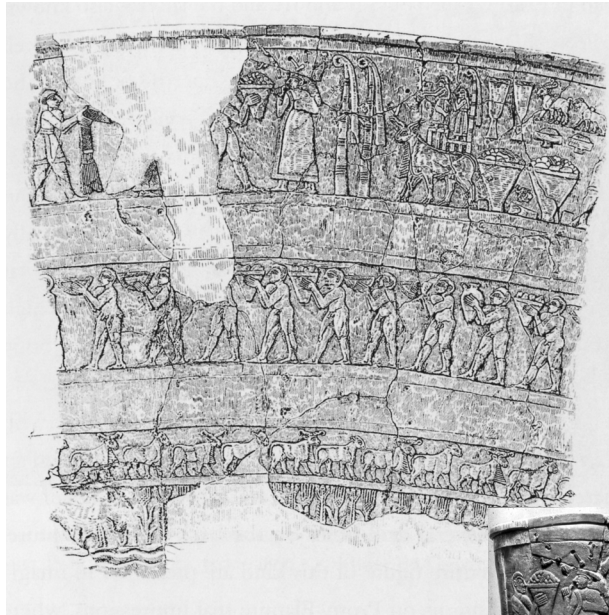
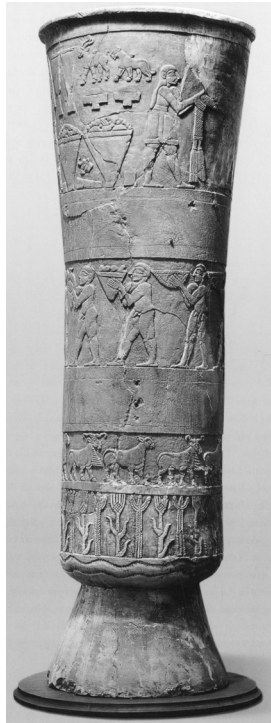
uruk

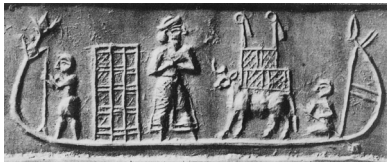
pottery technologies: evolution of simplicity











10a



Impression from catalogue number 10a.



10b



Impression from catalogue number 10b.



10c



Impression from catalogue number 10c.