

URUK POTTERY FROM ERIDU, UR AND AL-UBAID

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I.

The excavations of Abu Shahrain (Eridu) have furnished us with a considerable quantity of both early and late Uruk pottery. Five temple-platforms (V-I) and two non-secular buildings in the town area were attributed to Uruk period.2 The earlier ceramic group was found mainly in the two non-secular buildings, and in the sand piled within; a few examples propably came from temple VI3 (the last al 'Ubaid temple). Late Uruk pottery occurred in the rubble filling and the layer of debris, laid over the drifting sand in the two nonsecular buildings, and to a lesser extent in fallen debris in the late Uruk temple platform in square EF/7.4

Among the early types, three Uruk

varieties, namely the red, the grey, and the plain (both hand-made and wheel turned) weres were present.

The red ware is common in the early group, especially in the "out-house", square H/5. Four types of vessels occurred:-

 High-shouldered narrow-necked jars with plain everted rims.⁵

2. Flat-based jars, with curved profiles and plain rims, often with small lugs at intervals around the belly (Warka E-anna XIII yielded some analogies to these two types. Cf. UVB IV, pl. 17Dr, a; also a fragment in Warka XIV, see ibid. pl. 17Dm).

3. Deep flat-based bowls, with convex profiles and everted rims.

4. Shallow flat-based bowls with sin-

the writer immensely in the preparation of this study.

(2) Sumer IV, no. 2, pp. 34-44.

(3) Safar, F. Sumer III, no. 2, pp. 233 (in Arabic).

(4) Sumer IV, no. 2, p. 44.

(5) Ibid., p. 44, and table I, nos. 1-4.

⁽¹⁾ Three seasons of work directed by the Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities between 1946-1949; so far only preliminary reports have been published (Sumer Vol. III, no. 2, 1947; vol. IV, no. 2, 1948; vol. V. no. 2, 1949). Lloyd's article on the Uruk pottery (Sumer IV, no. 2, 1948) benefitted

uous sides (Warka XIII-XII furnished a few fragments of this type).

Red ware vessels are usually made of rather fine pink or brown clay, coated with a fine red slip or wash; all were burnished. An important discovery made in an undoubted 'Ubaid level (level XI) is the jar shown on pl. I. Unfortunately only three fragments were found, but the reconstruction carried out at the Iraq Museum seems fairly certain, as the carinated portion and rim were preserved The jar is made of pinkish clay and coated with a fine red slip. It has, on the carinated body, five groups of four knobs distributed almost equally around the line of carination. The excavators tributed this example to the 'Ubaid period, but the writer prefers (on the basis of both shape and colour) to place it with the red Uruk pottery. Its existence in Eridu XI must indicate an earlier beginning of the red ware in the 'Ubaid period. Such an early beginning explains the transitional stage which occurs nearly everywhere where 'Ubaid and Uruk pottery have been found. Further examples selected from among the body of Eridu potsherds kept in the magazines of the Irag Museum:

- 1. One small jar with straight neck and sharply out-turned rim. It is of hard, fine paste, red ware with burnished red slip. Found in Temple X.
- 2. One medium-sized narrow jar with loop handle. There are four fragments of this vessel, two of which join; hard, limestone-tempered, brick-red-ware, roughly burnished; found in temple VIII.

Only fragments of Uruk grey ware were found, mainly in the "out-house", in square H/5. Among the Temple IX potsherds, however, is a large bowl with slightly incurved rim; it is of hard, fine paste, highly burnished. The one recognizable type is a deep open bowl with a curved profile and either flat or rounded bottom, the rim being usually inverted. A fine grey slip was applied both to the exterior and interior of vessels, and was then highly burnished.

The plain Uruk ware at Eridu is generally buff or drab in colour, usually self-slip and either hand or wheel-turned, the latter being more popular. The following types of vessel occurred in this ware:

- 1. Spouted jars, which are rather popular, usually having curved profiles; spouts are short and placed high on the shoulder directly beneath the rim. In one of the so-called "votive-deposits", more than twenty such jars of rather ovoid shape were found. Vessels with false spouts like those of Warka IX-VIII also occurred, as did spouted jars with globular bodies. 10
- 2. Double-mouthed jars, usually with rather globular bodies.
- 3. Many fragments of open bowls, each bearing a ledge or lug-handles directly beneath the rim, " were found in the "out-house".

In the late types of Uruk pottery at Eridu, the following shapes are present:

1. Fragments belonging to squat fourlugged jars, 12 decorated usually with bands of incised crosshatching on the

⁽⁶⁾ Sumer IV, no. 2, p. 46; many parallels are to be seen throughout Warka XIV-V, cf. UVB IV, pls. 17 Da. and 19 Cy, a.

⁽⁷⁾ Sumer IV, no. 2, table 3 nos. 1-2; cf. also UVB IV pl. 17 Dp of Warka XIII.

⁽⁸⁾ Sumer IV, no. 2, table 3 nos. 17-18.

⁽⁹⁾ Ibid., table 3 no. 22.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ibid., table 3 no. 21.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibid., table 4 nos. 3-4.

⁽¹²⁾ This type, and the following two, were tabulated by the excavators under the "Early group"; it seems more reasonable, however, to place them among the late types.

the shoulder. 13 Other incised orna- II. meth occurred in the form of small crescents, made by pressing a hollow reed obliquely in the clay.14 Tabhandles, either triangular or rectangular also occurred. 15.

- 2. Deep "flower pots" are popular; some of these are crudely shaped. On them (especially round the base) traces of finger impressions are still? visible;16 all are hand-made.
- 3. The most common of the late types are jars with drooping (curved) spouts. Such jars usually have tall, curved profiles, small flat bases, short narrow necks, and plain flaring rims. Spouts, as a rule, were placed high on the shoulder. 17 A large number of fragments belonging to these jars were reported from the later rubble filling over the ruins of the early Uruk building, and from the debris of the late Uruk temple-platform.
- 4. Jars with short, upward-pointing spouts; the bodies of which are either tall and slender or rounded with avery short neck. 18 Such examples usually have flat bases and spouts placed immediately beneath the plain rim.
- 5. Unspouted jars with tall slender bodies are familiar among the late ceramic,19 as are narrow bottles with folded-over rims.
- 6. The earliest examples of the bevelled rim votive bowls occurred in the upper part of the sand filling in buildings in square H/5. Hundreds of these bowls were found among the later debris.20

The bulk of the Uruk and Jamdat Nasr pottery occurred in deep soundings conducted in the town area and in the cemetery at Ur.21 The majority of this ceramic came from graves and occurred for the most part above the remains of the al 'Ubaid period and below those of the Early Dynastic. At the bottom of the kiln stratum in Pit F (the flood pit), material from Ur-'Ubaid III graves was mingled with early Uruk pottery, mainly the red ware.22 The lower part of Pit F furnished the greater part of the ceramic in question. Pits D, G, H, K, L, X, Y and Z yielded but little Uruk pottery.

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The Pottery of Pit F:

The two bottom levels (g and h) of the eight building strata encountered between 17.00 m. and 10.00 m. above sea level at the top of Pit F. were attributed to the Jamdat Nasr period.23 Two specimens of early Uruk types were found in level g, however, a handled-cup and a fragment of red-slipped ware.24 In a half metre of debris above the kiln stratum and below building level h, where Jamdat Nasr wares were popular, the following types were present:

- 1. A late Uruk or Jamdat Nasr jar.
- 2. An early Uruk handled-cup.
- 3. Sinuous-sided open bowls,25 a late Uruk variety.

Below this, excavations proceeded down to 5.50 m. above sea level through accumulated heaps of potsherds and ash. Stratification was artificially drawn, and

⁽¹³⁾ Sumer, IV, no. 2, table 3 nos. 1-2.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 50; and table 4 nos. 35-36.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibid., table 4 no. 37. (16) Ibid., table 3 no. 41.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Lloyd uses this type of jar for dating his second sub-phase of the Uruk period, cf. Ibid., table 3 no. 9.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid., table 3 nos. 19-20 respectively

⁽¹⁹⁾ Ibid., table 4 no. 22.

⁽²⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 49, and table 3, no. 40.

⁽²¹⁾ Cf. Sir Leonard Woolley: Ur excavations, Vol. IV, 1956, p. 2.

⁽²²⁾ Ibid., pp. 3 and 56; pls. 71 and 73.

⁽²³⁾ Ibid., pp. 3-4, and 56-59; pl. 73.

⁽²⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 62.

⁽²⁵⁾ Ibid., pp. 64-5, and pls. 64 (JN. 154), 56 (JN. 3),

half a metre in depth was assigned to each level,26 Between 9.00 m. and 8.50 m. of the kiln stratum, plain Jamdat Nasr wares were still plentiful, though the polychrone variety was declining.

The following propotion of sherds was found: polychrome JN:4; Uruk red burnished: 70; Uruk black burnished: 1; twisted handled-cups; many; spouted jars with globular bodies and ring bases: 1; painted 'Ubaid: .. 55.27 Between 8.50 m. and 8.00 m. the proportion was as follows; polychrome JN: none; monocrome JN: 1; plum-red, burnished: 4; incised ornament: 4; plain Pruk ware: 38; painted al 'Ubaid: 47; twisted handles: 5; spouted jars with curved profiles: 6. Between 8.00 m. and 7.50 the proportion was: Uruk red burnished: 87; incised, or stamped ornament: 4: monochrome JN:64; painted al 'Ubaid: 64; loop handled-cups: 7 (one is complete example); double loophandled-cups: several; twisted handledcups: 6; plain Uruk sherds: large number: bevelled rim votive bowls: very popular; spouted jars with curved profiles, and small flat bases, the spout is of the drooping type: 2 (both are intact examples):28 Depth 7.50 m. - 7.00 m. showed the following types: monochrome JN: 2; plum-red JN, burnished: 5: Uruk red burnished: 46; painted al-'Ubaid: 73; twisted bandled-cups: 10; bevelled rim votive bowls: large number. The proportion at depth 7.00 m. — 6.50 m. was: monochrome JN:2; Uruk red burnished: 23; painted al 'Ubaid: 82; incised ornament: 1; bevelled rim votive bowls: declining in number; beaker: several; slender-bodied spouted jars: a few. 29 Depth 6.50 m. — 5.50 m. is the lower part of the kiln stratum, in which all JN. wares were entirely absent and Uruk varieties decreasing in

quantity. Al 'Ubaid painted ware, however, showed an unmistakable increase (729 potsherds). Of the Uruk red burnished ware only four examples occurred; there were two twisted handled-cups, and two loop handled examples also. No, bevelled rim votive bowls were found.

Pottery of Various Pits:

Pits Λ, B and C yielded nothing of the ceramic under discussion.

 Pit D yielded only two examples; both came from 8.00 m. — 7.00 m. above sea level. One is a deep "flower pot", the other a spouted jar; both

are Uruk types.

- 2. At 8.50 m. 7.50 m. in Pit G there were a few Uruk sherds mingled with painted al 'Ubaid pottery; among them was a black-burnished rim-sherd (shape undetermined); and several red-burnished examples (also of undetermined shape). At a depth of 7.50 m. 6.50 m. a shoulder fragment occurred, grey-burnished, with four small lugs. Jamdat Nasr wares are fully represented, however.
- 3. In Pit H, there was no, sign of Uruk ceramic, yet Pit K produced some, together with painted al 'Ubaid pottery which was thought to be interusive. The depth 5.90 m.—4.20 m. (in K) occurred several fragments, mainly red-slipped and burnished. There were also some sherds from bevelled rim votive bowls. Still deeper at 1.70 m.—1.00 m. above sea level, more red-slipped sherds were found, together with a handle of a cup.

4. At a depth of 5.70 m. — 3.80 m. in Pit H a number of fragments of bevelled rim votive bowls occurred, also several sherds of red slipped

⁽²⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 65.

⁽²⁷⁾ Ibid., pp. 27; 66 and 67.

⁽²⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 67. pl. 62 (JN. 113),

⁽²⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 67; pls. 58 (JN. 70) and 61 (JN. 118).

⁽³⁰⁾ Ibid., pp. 72:74.

of plain ware.

or vertical pebble-burnished traces.

- 'Ubaid, Uruk, and Jamdat Nasr periods. Red-burnished examples occurred in graves 148, 214, 217, 235 and 325. Other examples covered with a haematite wash came from graves 155, 192, 193, and 347. Black-burnished fragments occurred in graves 162 and 303.
- 7. Graves 348-367 in Pit Y vielded both red and grey fragments, the red being slipped and either left matt or burnished. Gray and black examples were always burnished.

III.

The so-called "prehistoric" pottery of Tell al 'Ubaid came from two areas excavated early in 1923-1924 by Woolley, from a trench (2-4 m. in width and 30 m. in length) dug at the hut settlement,31 and from a few graves, unearthed in a "later cemetery" belonging to the late Early Dynastic period. 32 Grave no. 90 was assigned to an earlier period on the grounds that its contents33 probably belonged to the late Uruk period.34

Uruk Pottery from the Trench:

Masses of painted al 'Ubaid sherds were encountered in the trench sounding except at its south-eastern end, where a large number of coarse plain potsherds

ware, together with more examples were found. Among them were numerous pieces of the grey and black wares, some 5. In Pit W were a few fragments of with combed incisions. Examples of the grey ware with either horizontal plain buff ware, similarly decorted, also occurred. A few specimens painted red 6. Pit X vielded grave materials of the all over (red-slipped) were found mingled with a great number of painted al 'Ubaid sherds at the north-east end of the trench. Examples of the plain combed ware also occurred in this area. Unfortunately no complete shapes could be reconstructed from these fragments.

Uruk Pottery from the Graves:

Grave no. 90 yielded an ovoid-shaped spouted jar with a rather narrow neck and beaded rim. 35 A variety of spouted jars also occurred, 56 together with plain unspouted jars. 37 Handled-cups with rounded bottoms occurred;38 there were crescent-shaped incisions on the upper body. Varieties of the "flower pot" occurred in some graves.39 Shallow saucerlike bowls occurred. 40 Jamdat Nasr polychrome, monochrome, and plain varieties were plentiful. The most prominent shape among the latter pottery was a squat jar.41

IV. Summary:

Both early and late Uruk types were present almost equally at Eridu. Unlike Warka, and in fact unlike the majority of other Mesopotamian sites, the crude bevelled rim votive bowls occurred rather late, while "flower pots" were found in an earlier context.

The squat, lugged jar (pl. I) dis-

⁽³¹⁾ UE I. pp. 149-150. Further excavations were carried out later by Lloyd and Delougaz (cf. OIP LXIII, p. 130).

⁽³²⁾ UE I. p. 172; ninety four graves were recorded; among them nos. 8, 9 and 64 yielded painted al 'Ubaid wares (see ibid., p. 190).

⁽³³⁾ Ibid., p. 203.

⁽³⁴⁾ Perkins placed it in the Protoliterate period (cf. SAOC. 25, p. 104).

⁽³⁵⁾ UE I. pl. LIX, type LXXX.

⁽³⁶⁾ Ibid., pl. LIX, types LXXVI. LXXVII, and LXXVIII.

⁽³⁷⁾ Ibid., pl. LXVIII. Type LV.

⁽³⁸⁾ Ibid., pl. LII, type p. XVI. (39) Ibid., pl. LV, types I, II, III, and IV. No mention of the hevelled rim volive bowls was made, however.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Ibid., pl. LVI. type XV.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Ibid., pl. LVIII, type XLVII.

covered in level XI ('Ubaid level), and other examples of the red and grey varieties found in Temples X-IX, and VIII, suggest strongly both that the Uruk pottery is a local development, and that there is a considerable overlap between the second part of al 'Ubaid period and the beginning of Uruk. It further suggests a gradual change in ceramic tradition, and not, as previously thought the intervention of new people.

The bulk of the Uruk ceramic at Ur came from heaps of accumulated debris, the rest from graves. The material is not stratified as at Warka, Eridu and Nippur, yet it still supplies useful evidence both for the continuity and the development of Uruk pottery in the south. The considerable overlap between 'Ubaid and Uruk on the one hand, and between Uruk and Jamdat Nasr on the other should be particularly noted. Both early and late Uruk types occurred in several pits, although the majority come from the lower part of the kiln stratum. Red-and grey-burnished Uruk wares were found in some quantity, but few shapes could be reconstructed. Buff plain ware was by far the most common type of Uruk pottery. Among the early plain produce stratified material.

buff pottery the following types are present: handled-cups, both loop and twisted-handled, with either rounded bottoms or flat bases; bevelled rim votive bowls, equally common in both the early and late groups; spouted and unspouted jars, again equally popular in the early and late periods; the "flower pot" open bowl, this occurred in good number among the late types and in association with the following Jamdat Nasr wares; four-lugged jars.

Fragments of grey and black Uruk wares, some with combed incisions, fragments of buff plain ware similarly decorated, together with a few pieces coated with a red slip, were found at the south-eastern end of the trench at Tell al 'Ubaid. With them was a mass of painted al 'Ubaid pottery.

Grave 90 vielded some vessels typical of the Uruk period: spouted and unspouted jars, also handled cups. Jamdat Nasr pottery occurred in considerable quantity. From this it can be concluded that Uruk pottery, although not fully represented at this site, is present at Tell al 'Ubaid, and further excavation would probably

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