

From the Prehistoric Village to Early States in Ancient Near East & The Chalcolithic in the Near East: Mesopotamia and the Levant

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INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Chronological and Geographic Framework

- Ancient Near East, but specifically Mesopotamia and the southern Levant
- Early Chalcolithic in Mesopotamia: the Ubaid Period
 - 6th-5th millennia BCE
- Late Chalcolithic in Mesopotamia: the Uruk Period
 - 4th millennia BCE
- Chalcolithic Levant (mostly Late Chalcolithic)
 - 5th-4th millennia BCE



The Chalcolithic: an 'in-between' time?

- after the “Neolithic Revolution”, before the “Urban Revolution” (in V.G. Childe’s terms)
- this is *our* perspective, not that of people at the time
- we should also try to understand what this time was for people in past
 - not only thinking about what came after it, what it led to (teleology)
- Chalcolithic means “copper (stone) age”
 - as we will see, little copper in Mesopotamia for most of this time, but a lot in the Levant
 - for many archaeologists these days, Chalcolithic refers primarily to socioeconomic situation, not use of particular raw material

Structure of the course

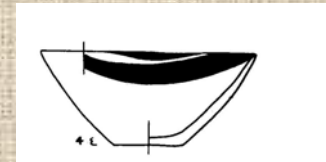
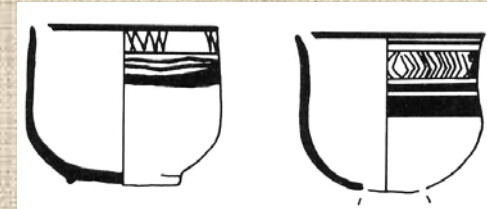
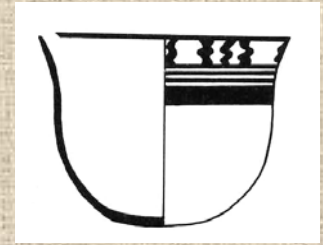
- Lectures: culture historical background; introduction to material culture; subjects of research and debate
- Seminar: reports on readings
 - deepen understanding of subjects
 - discussion of lecture material
- Seminar presentations: approx. 15 minutes
 - basic structure of author's argument
 - evidence to support arguments
 - questions you have
- Seminar discussion – how do readings relate to lecture material? to other readings?

Early Chalcolithic in Mesopotamia: the Ubaid period

Topic 1. Ubaid Period: cultural-historical overview

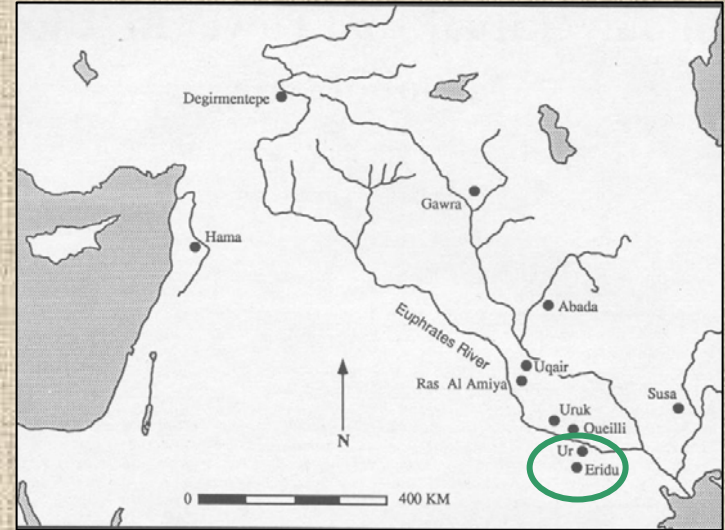
History of research

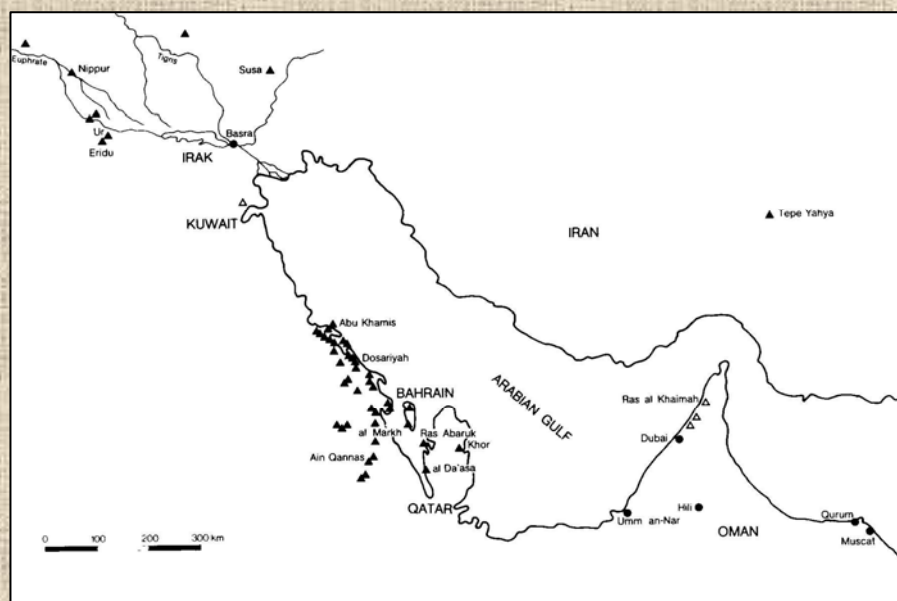
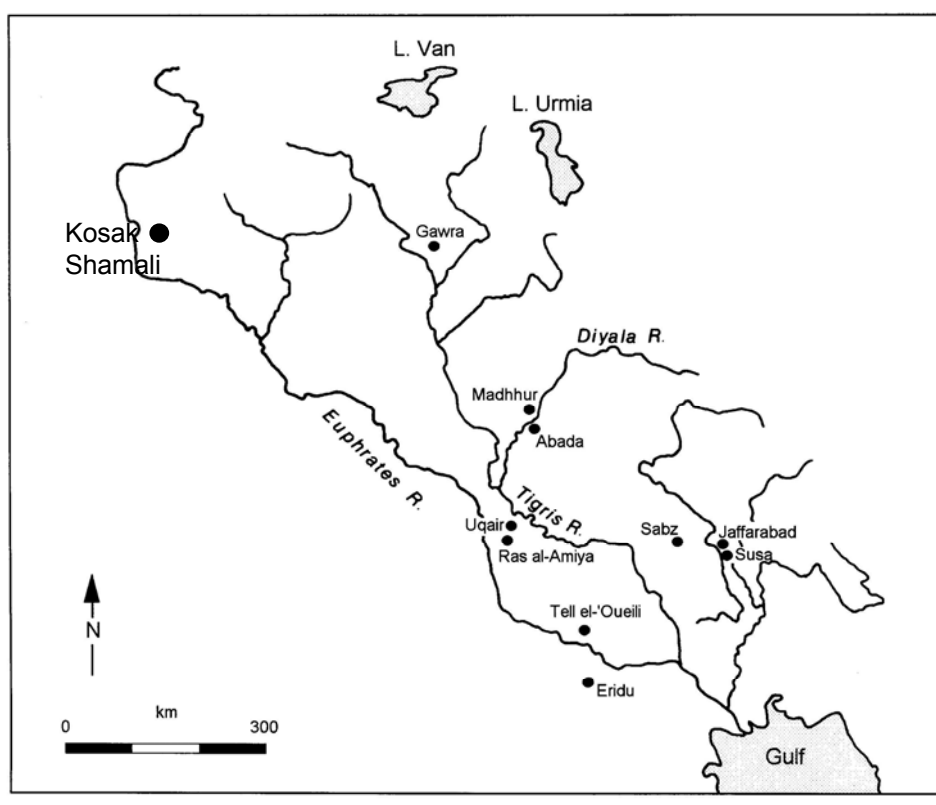
- Tell al-'Ubaid: excavated just after WW I by H. Hall & C.L. Woolley (1919)
 - initially designated distinctive pottery style: black-on-buff painted (**the** defining characteristic because found in all contexts called Ubaid)
 - soon thereafter similar pottery found at Ur
 - Ubaid as designation for a time period came into use ca. 1930
 - along with it the notion of an Ubaid 'culture', implying also a 'people'
- Eridu: excavated around WW II by S. Lloyd & F. Safar
 - sequence of temples, Ubaid cemetery, 'Hut sounding'
- Southern Mesopotamia assumed to be the core area
 - question became how, when, where and why did Ubaid 'culture' 'spread'
 - to northern Mesopotamia (Gawra), to the east (Susa), to the Arabian shores of the Persian Gulf (work in the 1970s)



History of research: Chronology

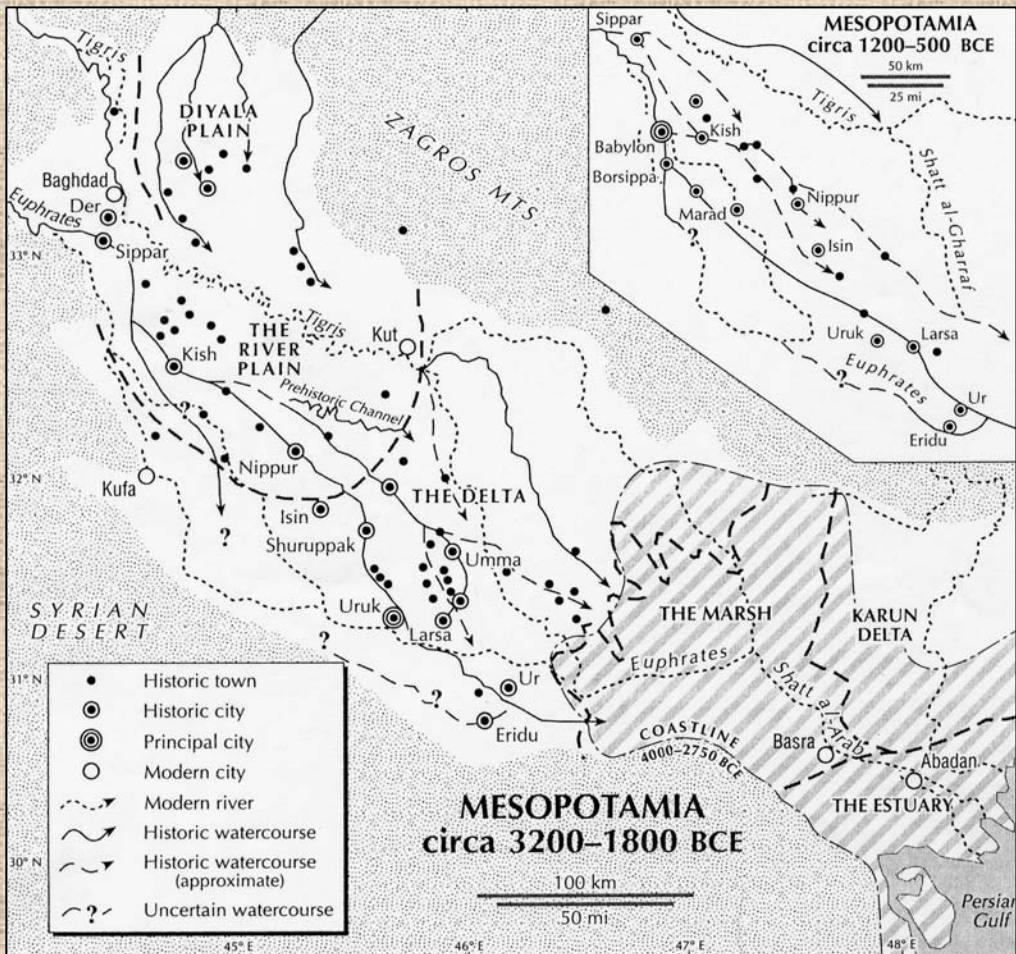
- Oates' chronology (1960): based on Eridu in southern Mesopotamia
 - Ubaid 1: Eridu
 - Ubaid 2: Hajji Mohammad
 - Ubaid 3: Early Ubaid
 - Ubaid 4: Late Ubaid
- Chronology subsequently extended:
 - Ubaid 0: Oueili (Samarran)
 - Ubaid 5: Terminal Ubaid
- Calendrical dates – problematic
 - southern Mesopotamia Ubaid 0 – 5: c. 6500 – 4200/4100 BCE
 - Ubaid 1 begins c. 5750 BCE
 - elsewhere Ubaid designates a shorter period of time:
 - in northern Mesopotamia, adoption of Ubaid features in Ubaid 2 or 3 (c. 5300-4300 BCE)
 - replaces Halaf
 - Arabian shores of Gulf – Ubaid 2-3, some Ubaid 4
- i.e. assumption of ceramic continuity in south; break and introduction of new (Ubaid) pottery in north and along western shores of Persian Gulf





Environmental issues

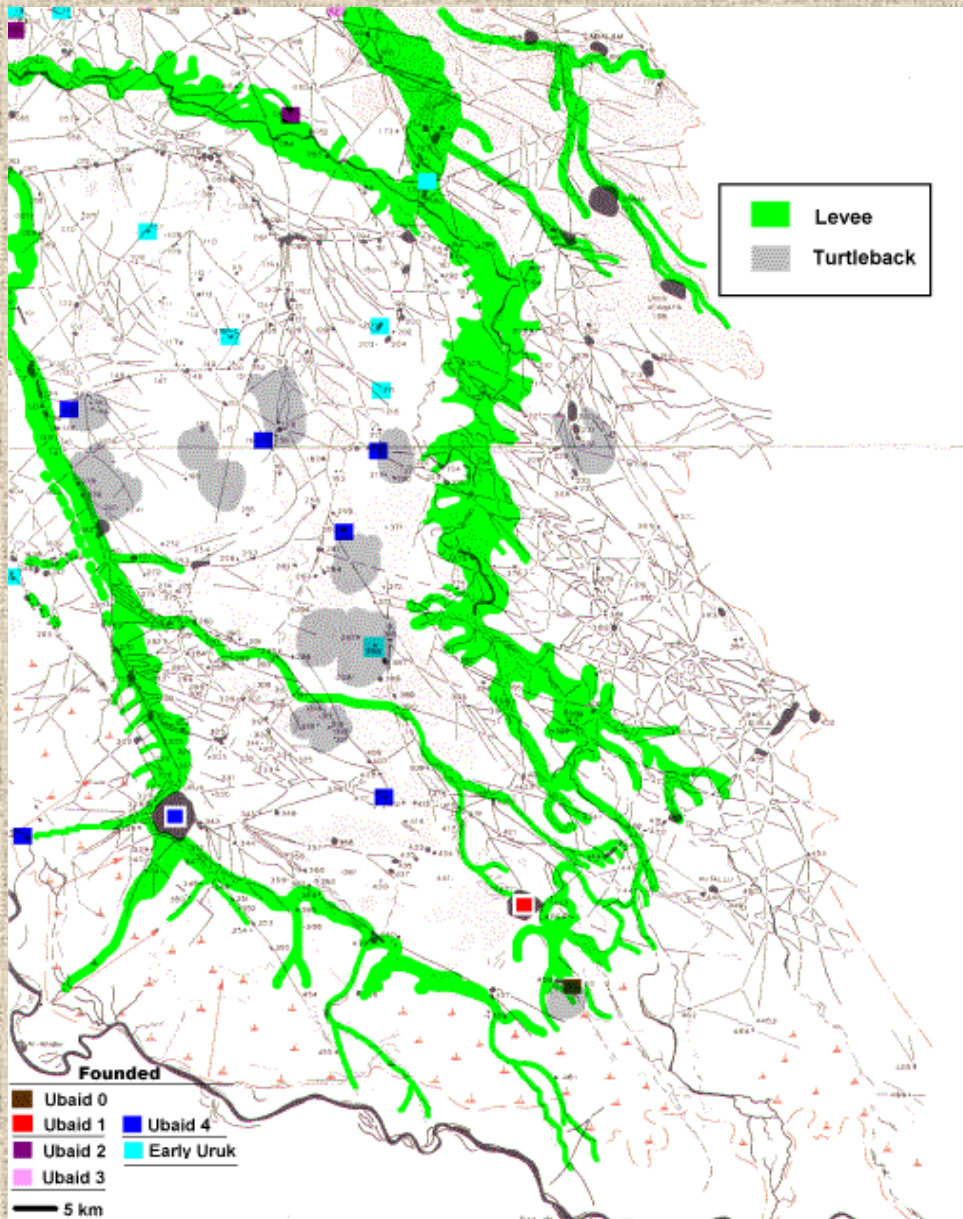
- From 7th-4th mill. BCE moister climate than today
 - some indications of summer monsoons in 5th mill.
- Recent work by Jennifer Pournelle using satellite imagery
 - marine transgression in 5th millennium BCE into southern alluvial lowlands
 - villages in this region in Ubaid times were concentrated on levees and 'turtlebacks' bordering marshes
 - dry land was relatively limited
 - Pournelle concludes that Ubaid villagers in southernmost Mesopotamia emphasized exploitation of riverine and marsh resources: reeds, fish, tubers, birds, pig, etc.



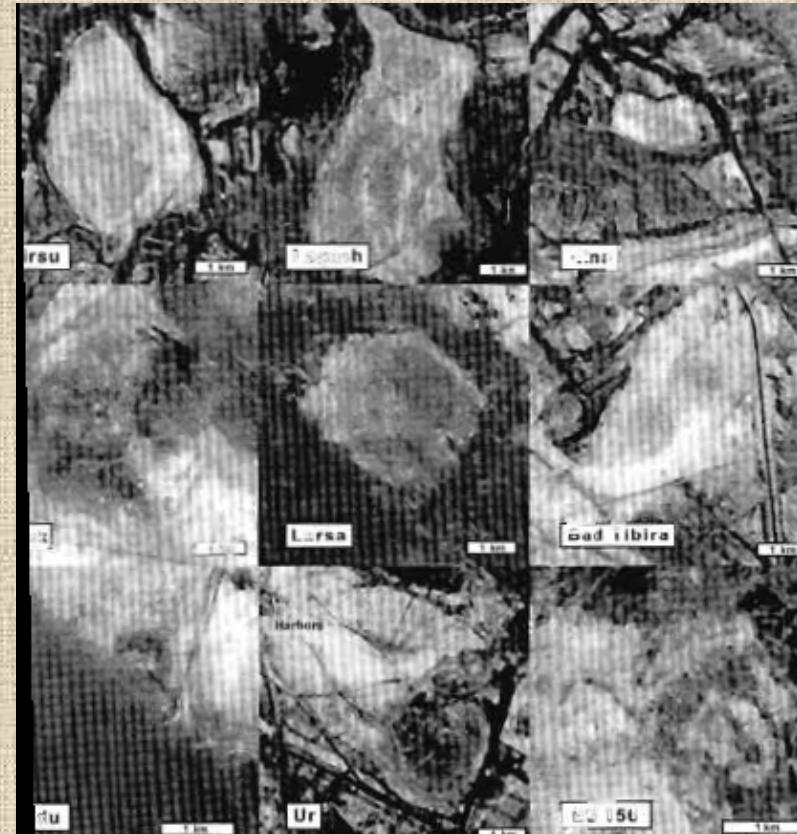
Incursion of Gulf waters
into southern Mesopotamia



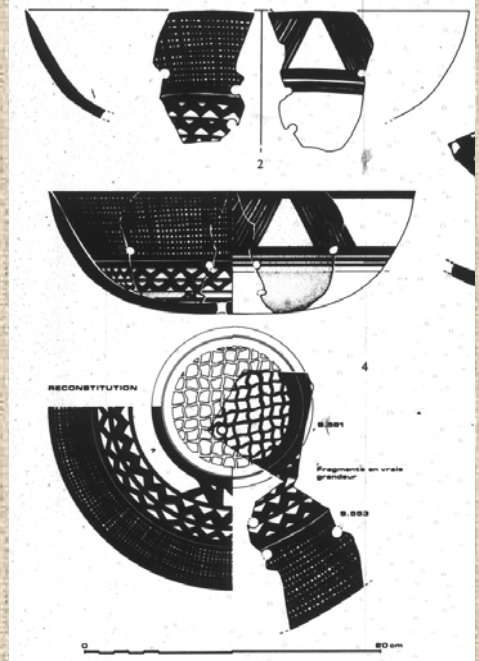
Southern Iraqi marshes in the 1980s



Uruk survey area: Sites occupied during the Ubaid 4–Early Uruk periods. Legend indicates earliest settlement period (Pournelle 2003: Fig. 8)



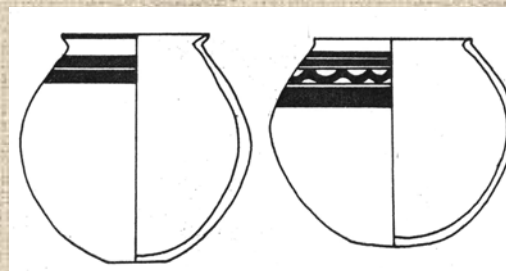
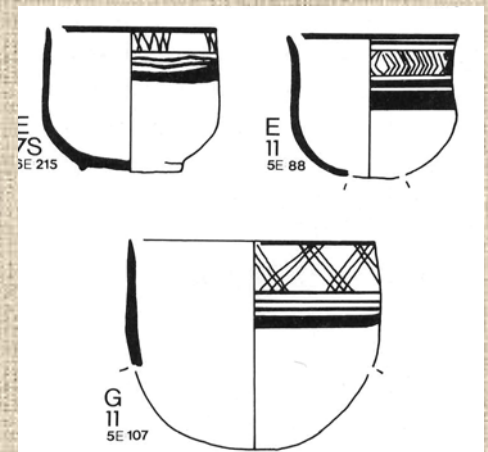
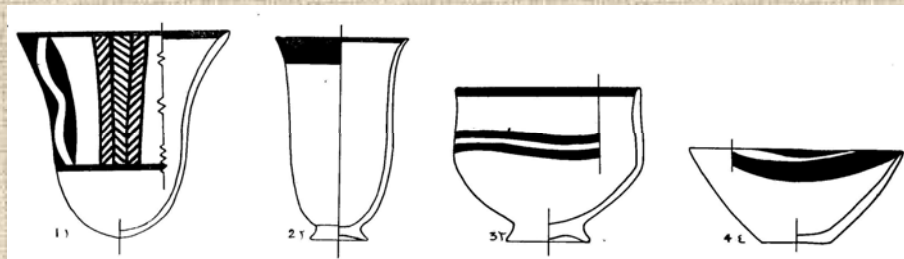
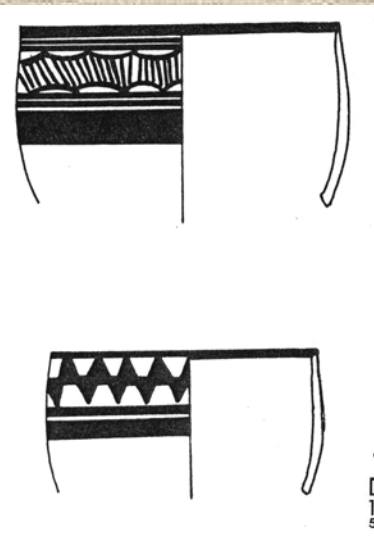
Examples of sites on “turtlebacks”



earlier Ubaid pottery

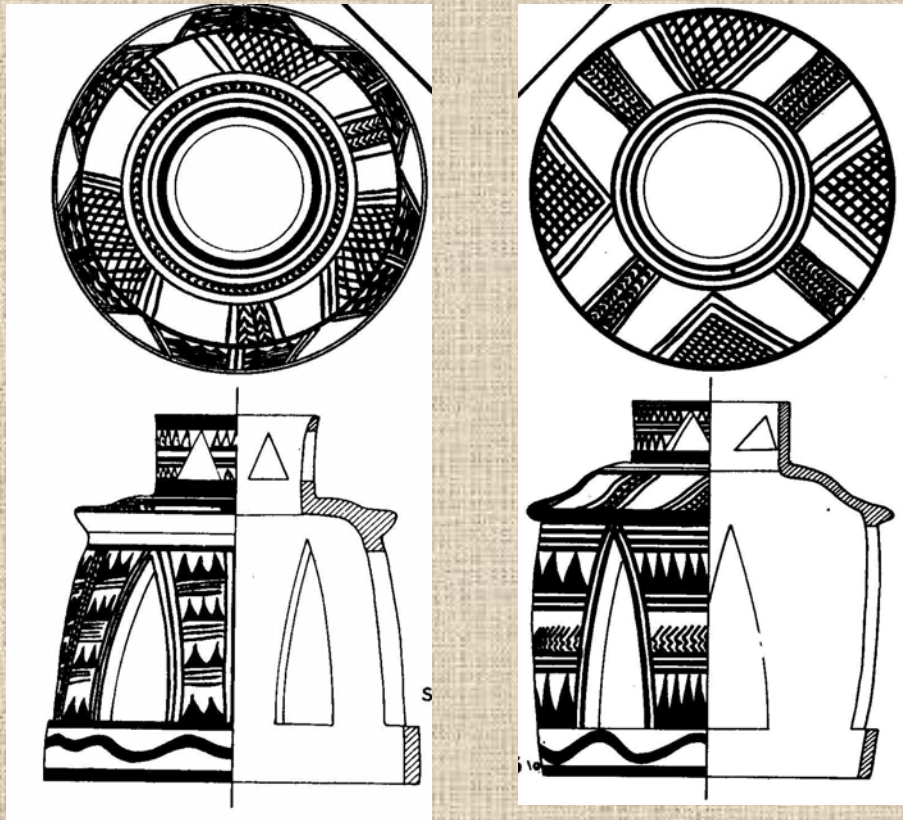


later Ubaid pottery



Exceptions

Late Ubaid pottery from the Eridu temple and the Susa Necropole



Eridu

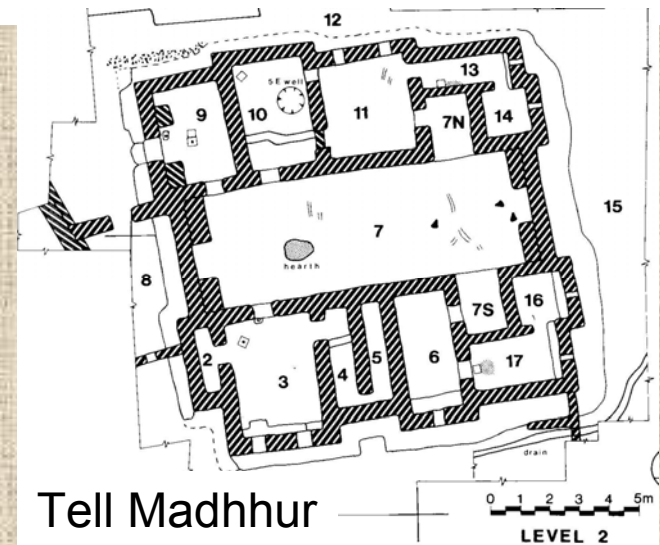
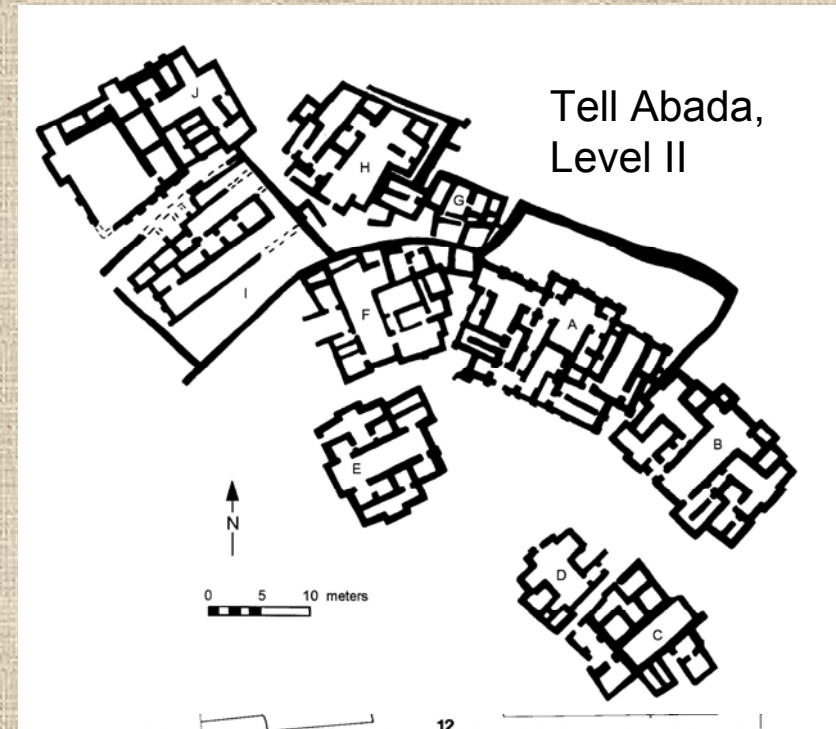


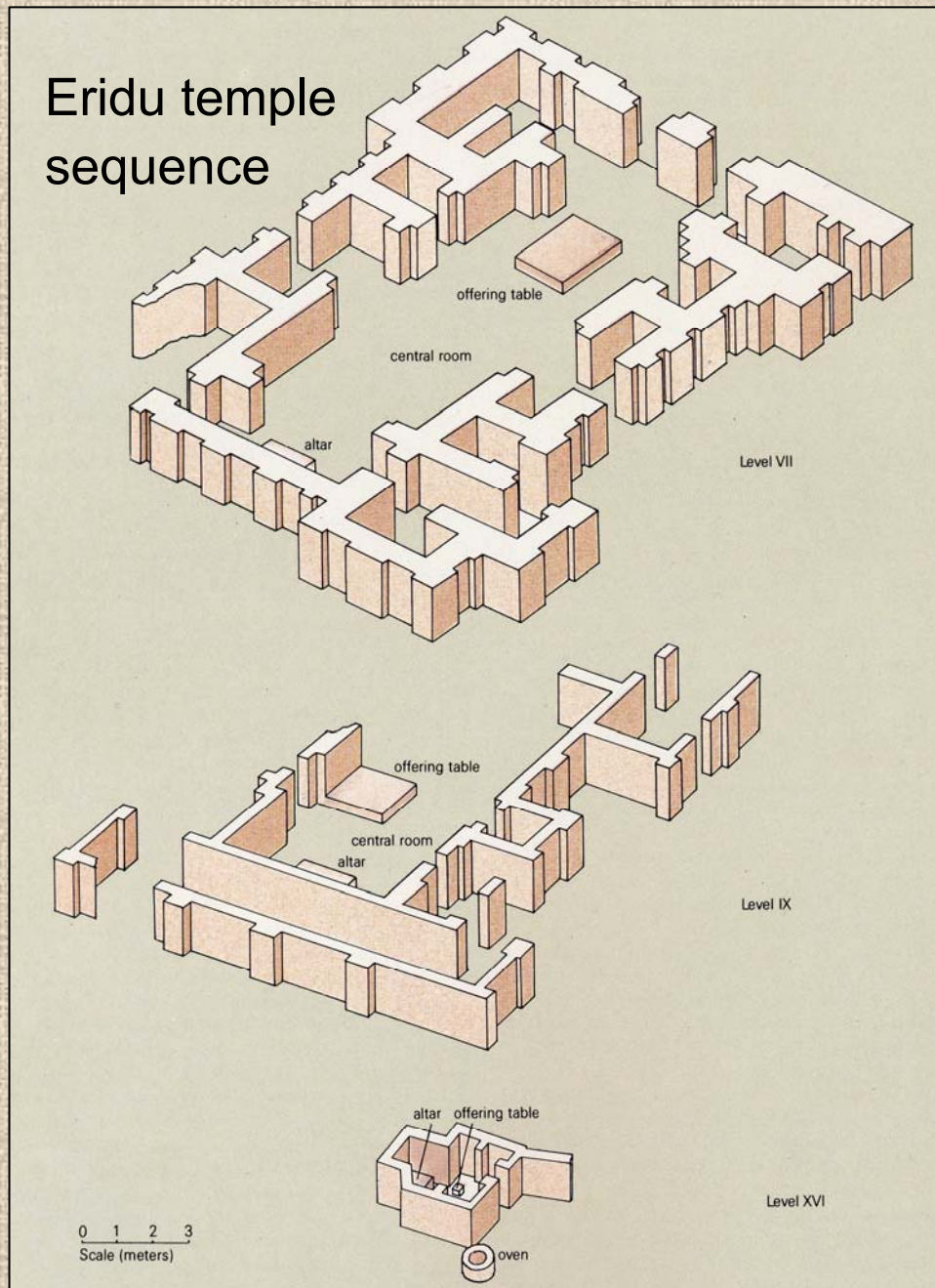
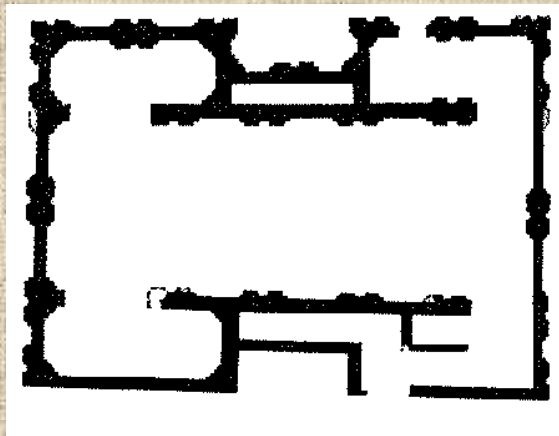
Susa



Characteristic Ubaid features

- Tripartite mudbrick architecture
 - long, often T-shaped central halls
 - freestanding
- Temples
 - plans similar to houses
 - but with niched and buttressed facades
 - altars and ‘offering tables’
 - corners oriented to cardinal directions
 - sometimes built on platforms
 - often not much bigger than houses

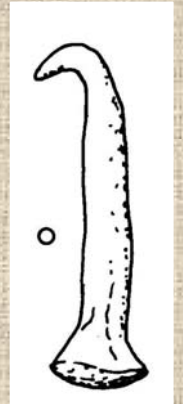




Characteristic Ubaid features

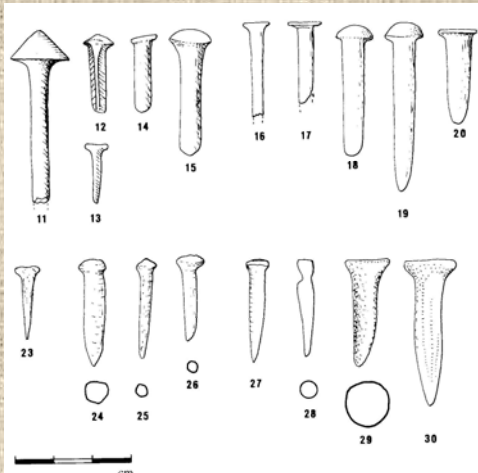
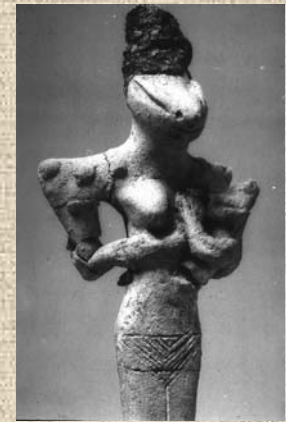
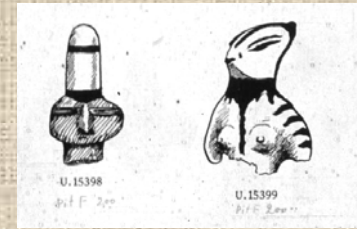
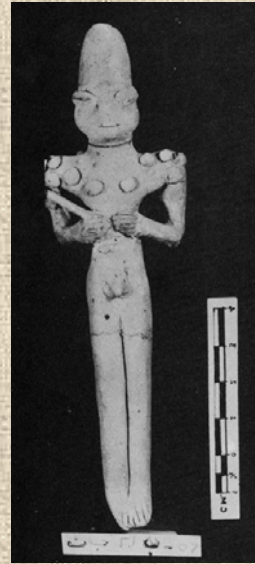
Tools

- ‘bent clay nails’ or clay mullers
- weights: for nets, looms
- hoes
- clay sickles (also later)



Characteristic Ubaid features

- Figurines
 - conical heads, coffee-bean eyes
- Labrets and flanged disks
- Seals and sealings – predominantly in northern Mesopotamia (Gawra, Kosak Shomali, Değirmentepe) and southwestern Iran (Susiana)
- Cemetery burial



Susa



Gawra



Other Ubaid features

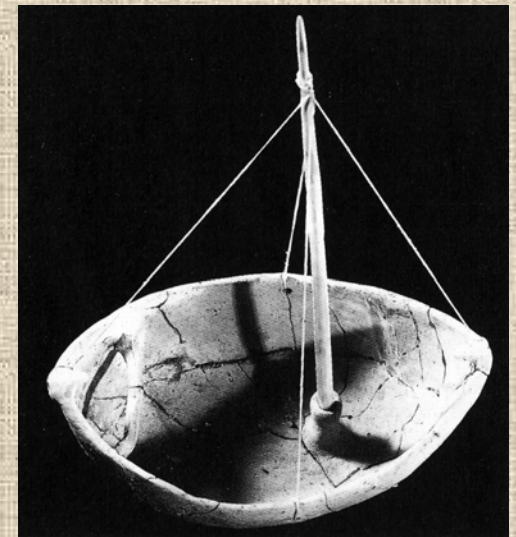
- Copper metallurgy and copper objects
 - principally in northern Mesopotamia
 - smelting installations common at Değirmentepe
 - copper tools at Gawra, as early as L. XVII



clay model boat
from H3, Kuwait



- Exchange goods
 - lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian at Gawra
 - bitumen from Hit at Kosak Shamali
 - Mesopotamian pottery along Arabian shores of Gulf
- Boats for transportation



clay model boat from Eridu