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The Development of Sumerian Art





M. LOUISE BAKER

42. The mosaic 'Standard': the 'War scene' (p. 79)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUMERIAN ART

by

C. Leonard Woolley



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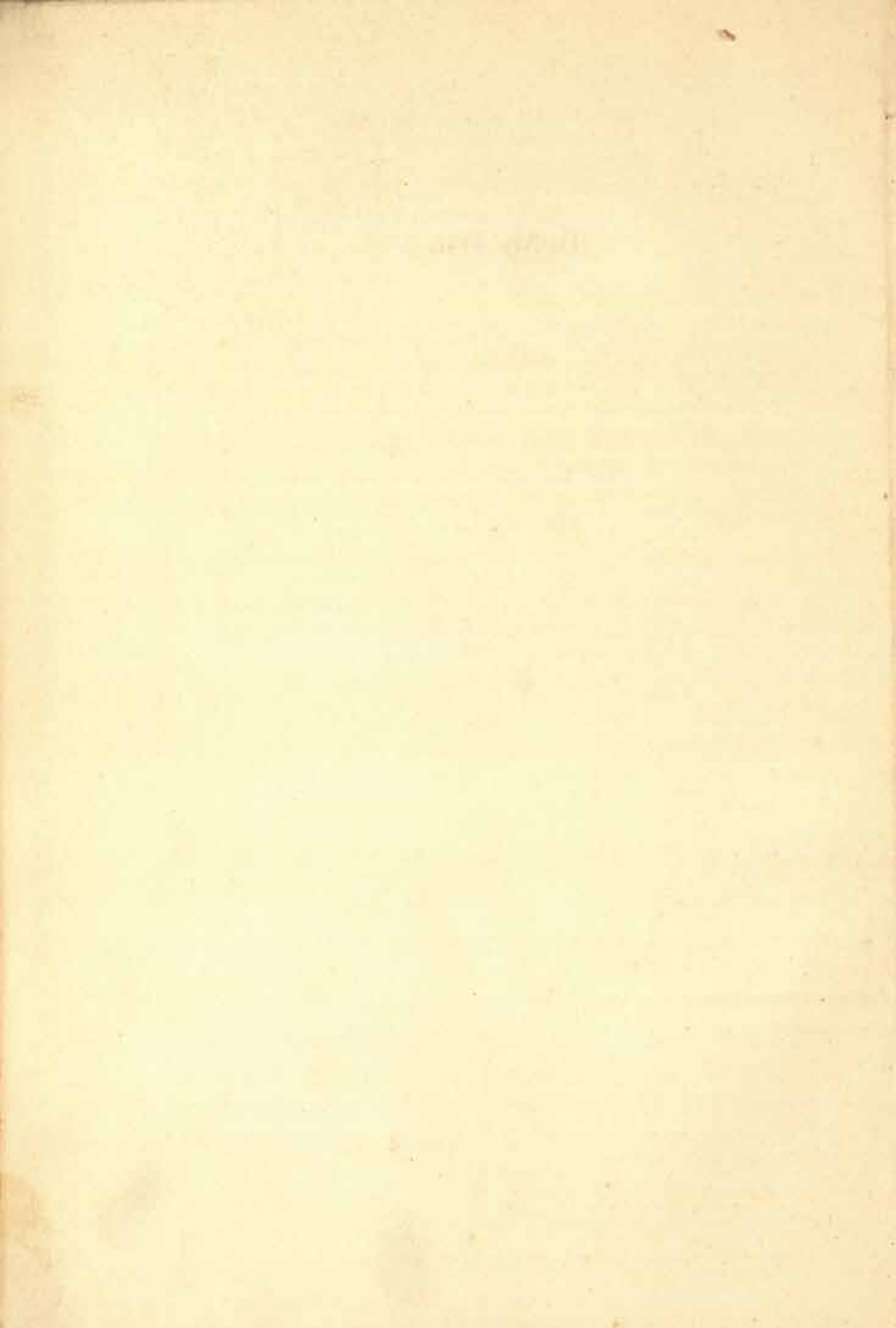
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To My Wife



Author's Note

This is not intended to be a critical appreciation of Sumerian art—for such a task I do not hold myself competent and should prefer to leave it to experts: my whole aim has been to shew what were its sources and to trace its development as influenced by the accidents of history. Some such introduction will, I believe, help towards the understanding of an art whose ideals and conventions are necessarily unfamiliar and may prepare the way for the critic's more considered judgment.

Acknowledgments

For permission to publish the photographs which appear in this volume I must express my grateful thanks to the Trustees of the British Museum, the Board of Managers of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, the Department of Antiquities, Baghdad, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Conservateur Général des Musées du Louvre, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Dr. J. Jordan, Dr. E. Heinrich, Professor S. Langdon, Sir Aurel Stein and the Editor of the *Illustrated London News*.

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A Foreword on the History

In the following chapters an endeavour is made to connect the development of Sumerian art with the vicissitudes of Sumerian history, and constant reference is made to the outstanding political events. But because that history is little known it seems advisable to introduce the main subject of the book by some schematic outline which may reduce those references to an understandable order.

A scheme of the sort was drawn up by Sumerian scribes writing in about 2000 B.C. As a framework, doubtless, for a narrative history which has been lost, they compiled a list of all the dynasties of kings who claimed to have ruled over the whole land of Sumer and Akkad, the south land and the north. They must have had at their disposal a mass of documentary evidence of which we know nothing, and those documents, reflecting the traditions of rival states, were not all of equal value and, by reason of their age and perhaps of the forms in which they were written, alien even to the old scribes, were not always understood by them. It was difficult to adjudicate between conflicting claims to the supremacy, and there can be no doubt that sometimes dynasties recorded as consecutive were in fact more or less contemporary—possibly indeed the Sumerians were aware of this, but the tabulated form in which the lists are compiled give no

hint of it and it is only by casual references in other documents that the real overlap can be detected. They state the length of each king's reign, and for many of the earlier dynasties these are fantastic—centuries count for nothing and one ruler is credited with a reign of forty-three thousand years—so that even if there be some substratum of history in the names recorded, the chronology cannot be taken seriously. Yet the King-Lists cannot be altogether dismissed. Recent discoveries have proved the historical reality of the First Dynasty of Ur, until a few years ago regarded as mythical, and at any moment corroboration for the earlier dynasties may be forthcoming: and the King-Lists alone give us something in the way of that ordered scheme without which there can be no history.

The Lists begin with antediluvian kings, eight in all, ruling for incredible millennia from five different capitals; after them 'the Flood came. After the Flood came, kingship was sent down from on high.'

We have now definite evidence for the historic disaster of the Flood, and therefore we must correlate with the reign of the antediluvian kings the al 'Ubaid I Period whose remains were found by us below the silt of the deluge.

The King-Lists do not explicitly state that immediately after the Flood any one city-state was so powerful as to secure the hegemony of the whole land; on the face of it it is likely that there would be a phase of reconstruction and recovery to which no 'dynasty' properly so called would correspond. It is to such an interregnum that I would refer our Uruk Period.

The first post-Flood dynasty is the *First Dynasty of Kish*, whose twenty-three kings reign for more than as many thousand years; putting the dates on one side, we may correlate with this dynasty the Jamdat Nasr Period.

There follows the *First Dynasty of Erech*. The kings of this dynasty include the demi-gods of future ages, Lugalbanda the Fisherman, Dumuzi (=Tammuz and Adonis) the Shepherd, Gilgamesh the tamer of wild beasts; their longevity is still in some cases far beyond the human span, but seven out of the twelve appear as normal men. To this age must correspond the earlier part of the 'plano-convex brick period' with the tombs of the pre-dynastic kings at Ur—vassals of the overlord of Erech, the stone temple at Warka and the palace at Kish.

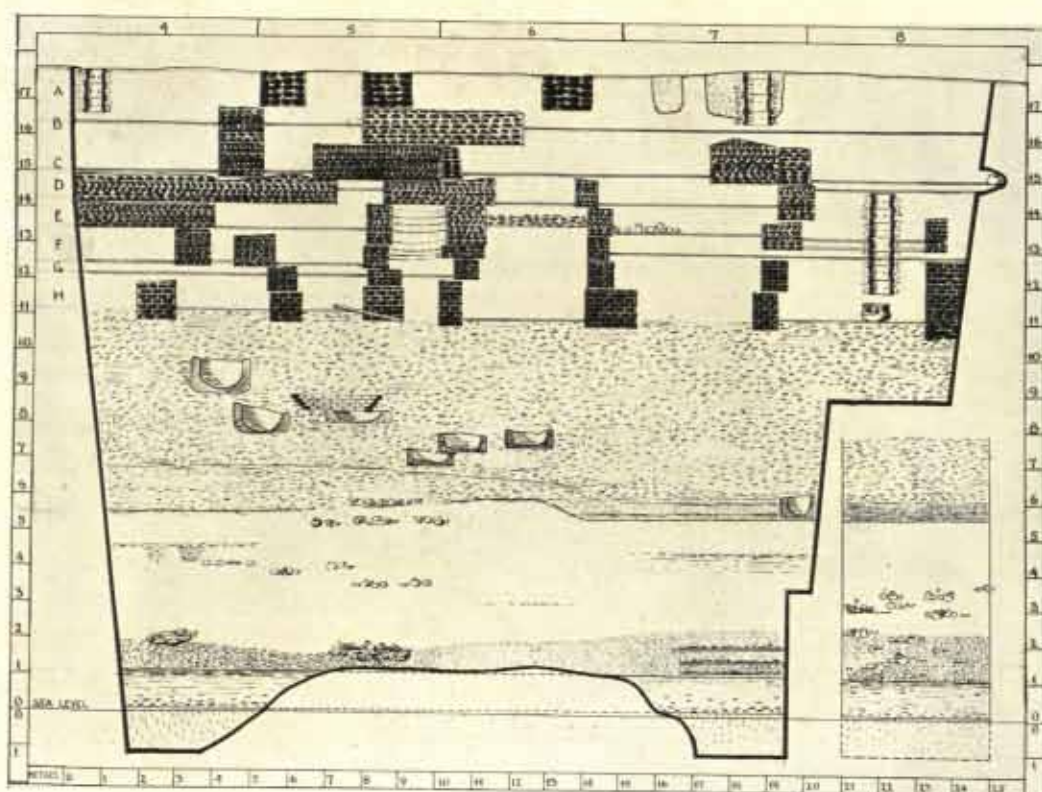
The *First Dynasty of Ur* is now proved to be historical, and of three out of its five sovereigns we possess contemporary records. Now for the first time a positive chronology begins to be possible, and although scholars are not yet agreed upon the point we may assume for the accession of Mes-anni-padda a date of something like 3100 B.C. He and his son A-anni-padda reigned between them for eighty years and the whole dynasty for 177 years, according to the King-Lists.

The *Dynasty of Awan* must represent a temporary eclipse of the Sumerians, for Awan lay in the hill country of the north-east, outside the river valley. The *Second Dynasty of Kish* followed by the *Dynasty of Hamasi* (another non-Sumerian state in the north-east), the *Second Dynasty of Erech*, the *Second Dynasty of Ur*, the *Dynasty of Adab*, the *Dynasty of Mari*—this a city of the middle Euphrates, on the north Syrian border, of which there will be mention later—and the *Dynasty of Akshak* all belong to a time of confusion when one city-state after another succeeded in grasping a short-lived supremacy or disputed the claim to overlordship with independent rivals; the sum of their years as given by the Lists has little bearing on chronology, for there is certainly much overlapping and many of the rulers

must have been contemporary. To the same period belongs a line of rulers whom the Lists pass over in silence as not being supreme overlords but whose monuments have been preserved to us where those of the dynasts have left no trace, namely, the *patesis* or governors of Lagash, Ur-Nina, Akurgal, Eannatum, Enannatum I, Entemena, Enannatum II and their descendants; Ur-Nina's date is generally put at about 2900 B.C., so that he would come fairly early in this age of anarchy.

The *Fourth Dynasty of Kish* and the *Third Dynasty of Erech* give place to the great *Dynasty of Agade* founded by Sargon of Akkad, for whom the latest date suggested is 2528 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Rimush, by Manishtusu, Naram-Sin, and Shargalisharri, the whole dynasty lasting for about 150 years; the accession of Sargon marks the victory of the northern Akkadian element over the Sumerian south. His house was overthrown by the invasion of the hillsmen, the Guti, and such anarchy ensued that the compiler of the Lists pauses to ask in despair, 'Who was king, who was not king?' but in time they established the *Dynasty of Gutium* which exercised a loose control over the land but left the city-states a virtual independence; amongst the nominal subjects of the later Guti kings was that Gudea, *patesi* of Lagash, whose numerous statues have made him the most familiar to us of all the Sumerian rulers.

About 2280 B.C. the last of the Guti kings, Tirigan, was dethroned by Utu-khegal, who founded the *Fifth Dynasty of Erech* but was himself, after a reign of less than three years, supplanted by his vassal Ur-Nammu, governor of Ur. The *Third Dynasty of Ur* was materially one of the most glorious in Sumerian history; Ur-Nammu himself and his four successors, Dungi, Bur-Sin, Gimil-Sin and Ibi-Sin, ruled from the Persian hills to the shores of the Mediter-

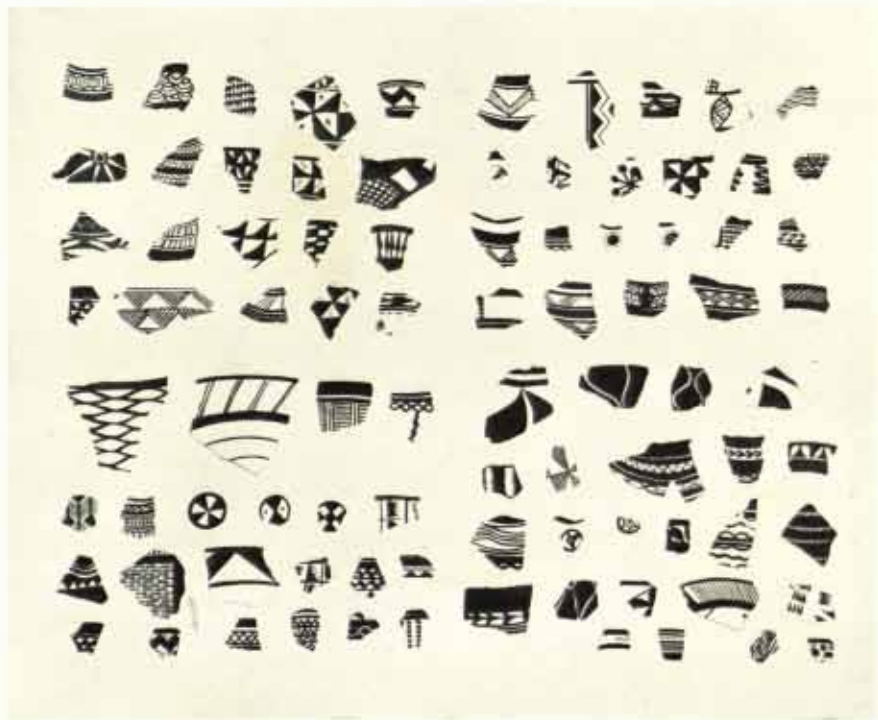


1. Section of the 'Flood-pit', Ur (p. 51)

The al 'Ubaid I house stratum begins at 1.00 m. above sea level. Between 1.00 m. and 5.50 m. is the Flood silt in which are graves of periods al 'Ubaid II and III. Between 5.50 m. and 11.00 m. is the stratum of kiln 'wasters', the pottery changing from al 'Ubaid II through Uruk to Jamdat Nasr. Of the building strata above, F, G and H are distinguished by flat-topped bricks, A to E by plano-convex bricks. The date of stratum A is about 5200 B.C.



2, a. Examples of al 'Ubaid I pottery (p. 54)



2, b. Decorative motives on al 'Ubaid I pottery (p. 57)

anean and were revered by their subjects as demi-gods; but to maintain their throne they were involved in constant wars and the effort was too great for the failing spirit of the Sumerians. From the beginning of his reign Ibi-Sin was harassed by rebellion in the north and west; then Elam took the field against him and the highlanders overran the fertile valley, defeated the royal forces, took Ibi-Sin captive and utterly sacked Ur and the other cities of his dominion. Sumer lost its independence for ever. For a century or more an Elamite dynasty with its capital at Larsa exercised an alien control over the south; then, with the rise of Hammurabi to power, semitic Babylon seized the reins of government and in Babylonia the very name of Sumer was forgotten.

Chapter I

*The Cultural Periods of Early
Mesopotamia. The al 'Ubaid Period.
The Architecture of Uruk*

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE
REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST
IN THE YEAR 1629

The first year of the reign of Charles the first was a year of great calamity to the kingdom. The king's displeasure against the parliament was so great, that he was obliged to dissolve it, and to govern by his prerogative. This led to the great schism, and the civil war, which ended in the execution of the king, and the establishment of a republic. The year 1629 was the first year of the king's reign, and was marked by the beginning of these troubles.

Chapter I

The Cultural Periods of Early Mesopotamia. The al 'Ubaid Period. The Architecture of Uruk

Recent excavations in Mesopotamia have brought to light a great number of objects which make a direct appeal to our sense of beauty and can justly be treasured for their artistic merit; the pleasure which they give is independent of any question of their age or school, of the sources from which they sprang, of the conditions which helped to shape them and of the traditions they embody. But the mere fact that these things do possess a purely aesthetic value at once gives to them an interest which is not itself aesthetic. They are the products of a civilisation which, coming at a very early stage in the evolution of the modern world, attained the high level of art to which they bear witness and did much to mould the art and the civilisation of other lands and later ages: in proportion to its achievement and its influence does the problem of its own origin and development become worthy of study, and its art history must rank as an important chapter in the history of art.

'Sumerian art' has already become for us a phrase with a very definite content. However diverse the objects which the phrase may evoke they all possess something in common, a style which is individual and unmistakable; we know what we mean by the expression. But in the early chapters of this study we shall look in vain for that individuality and

that style or recognise it only with difficulty; its development can only be understood if it be traced back to its origins, and we must begin with a period and a phase of culture which did indeed hold the germs of what was to be but had not yet brought them to maturity.

In the winter of 1930 at a meeting of the heads of archaeological expeditions which was held in Baghdad it was decided that the state of our knowledge made it possible to divide the early history of Mesopotamia into periods defined by the peculiarities of their cultures; in the absence of anything like a chronology expressed in figures the sequence of these periods would supply a historical framework such as would give coherence and meaning to what had been or might be discovered. They were as follows:

I. al 'Ubaid. This is a period characterised by the use of an easily-recognised type of painted pottery which was called after the place, al 'Ubaid near Ur, where it had been found in great quantities by Dr. H. R. Hall in 1918.

II. Uruk. Characterised by a type of plain pottery which had just come to light, in strata overlying those in which the al 'Ubaid pottery occurred, at the German excavations at Warka. Warka is the modern Arab name for the site of the ancient city called by the Sumerians Uruk and by the writers of the Old Testament Erech; we employ the modern name for the site of the excavations, Uruk for the particular type of pottery and for the period which it defines, and Erech for the ancient city and for the dynasties of kings whose capital it became.

III. Jamdat Nasr. The name is that of a small site near Kish, where Dr. Langdon had found remarkable polychrome pottery associated with clay tablets inscribed with a very primitive pictographic writing; such had later been

found at Ur and at Warka in stratified conditions above the Uruk ware.

IV. 'The Plano-convex Brick Period' was the name at first given to a period during which the Sumerian builders employed in their constructions a curious brick with flat sides and base but rounded upon the top like a cake or a tin-baked loaf. The period, which we now prefer to call 'The Early Dynastic Period', is a very long one, including the time of the Royal Cemetery at Ur, the First Dynasty of Ur (which can be dated shortly before 3000 B.C.), the early rulers of Lagash and the various dynasties enumerated by the Sumerian King-Lists almost down to the reign of Sargon of Akkad.

V. The Sargonid Age. The dominant personality of Sargon (2528 B.C. according to the minimum chronology) may be taken to symbolise an age which saw the re-consolidation of the kingdom after a period of civil wars and ephemeral dynasties, and the emergence of the semitic-speaking Akkadians as the major element in the State.

VI. The later rulers of Lagash (Gudea and his descendants) lead directly to the Third Dynasty of Ur; after this magnificent period the Sumerian people and civilisation are merged in that of semitic Babylon.

The classification thus drawn up four years ago has been modified and expanded by later discoveries but still holds good as the outline of early history; it was founded on observations which later work has confirmed and its periods correspond to real stages in the development of Sumerian art.

The al 'Ubaid culture is the earliest in south Mesopotamia, the culture of the immigrants who first settled in the drying marshes of the Euphrates delta.

The section of a great pit dug down to virgin soil at Ur (Pl. 1) explains the type of evidence on which this statement

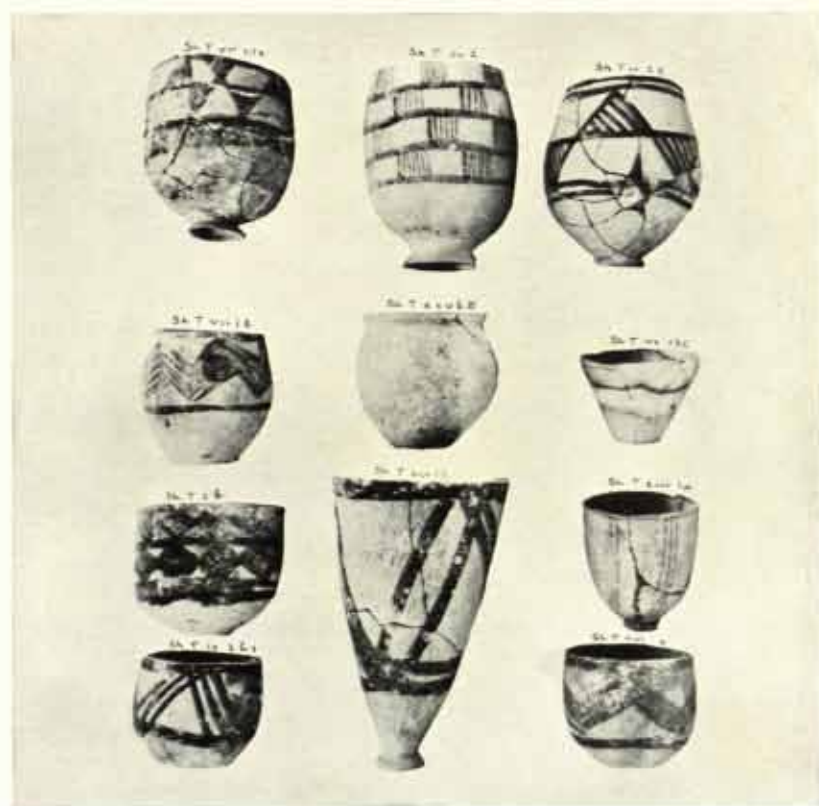
is based. At the very bottom of the pit, below modern sea-level, there was found a stiff greenish clay pierced with the brown fibrous marks of decayed plant-roots which was the bottom of the marsh that extended over the whole country before it was fit for human occupation. Above this came a belt of black organic soil composed partly of river silt but principally of vegetable matter—the stems and leaves of the reeds whose roots had been seen in the clay; lying flat in this, as they had sunk by their own weight in the soft mud, were a few potsherds flung away here by people who had settled on a little island site close by; it was evident that we were digging not in the middle but on the outskirts of the primitive village. As the black soil rose above sea-level it became more grey in colour and coarser in texture; the marsh clearly had dried. On its surface were the remains of houses and huts; at one end of the pit three superimposed floors bore witness to an occupation reasonably prolonged, at the other end were the ruins of mud huts and of brick-built houses, and the whole area was littered with flint tools and weapons, querns and rubbing-stones and masses of the painted pottery of al 'Ubaid. Lying over the debris of the houses was a deposit of water-borne silt about eleven feet thick; this was the material evidence of itself left by a flood which had wiped out the lower quarters of the town; it was absolutely clean and uniform, it had been deposited very quickly as the result of a single great inundation followed perhaps after a short interval by a slighter recurrence, and there could be little doubt that the disaster to which it bore witness was the Flood recorded by Sumerian scribes as having overwhelmed the land at a very early stage in their history (see p. 22).

Into this silt graves had been dug by later occupants of the site; they were in two distinct strata, excavated from dif-



3, a. Pottery of Susa I (p. 55)

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3, b. Pottery of Baluchistan (p. 55)

J.R.A.S. LXIV



4. Pottery of al 'Ubaid II (p. 37)

ferent ground-levels, and therefore while both were necessarily later than the ruins below the Flood they differed from one another in date; but both were shewn by the pottery which they contained to belong to the al 'Ubaid culture. Above the silt was a huge deposit, sixteen feet thick, of ashes and broken pottery, the 'wasters' from a potter's works which for many generations occupied the site; the actual kilns were found at various levels, buried by the fragments of the vessels which had failed in the firing and had been discarded by their makers: in the lowest part of the stratum the sherds were uniformly of al 'Ubaid type, higher up such were mixed with the wares characteristic of the Uruk period, and higher up still they disappeared altogether; the evidence of the stratification of the pottery refuse agreed with that afforded by the relative depths of the two series of graves. The comparison of these enabled us to subdivide the al 'Ubaid period into three; the cultural phase illustrated by the house ruins became al 'Ubaid I, that of the lower series of graves al 'Ubaid II, and that of the upper series al 'Ubaid III. The lines of division are of course arbitrary and (except for the accident of the Flood which divided I from II) the phases really merged one into another as stages in a process of degeneration; but the recognition of that process and of the difference between its stages is vital to an understanding of Sumerian history.

The conclusion that al 'Ubaid I was the oldest culture in the delta does not rest on the evidence of this one pit alone, but is supported by that of other pits excavated at Ur and by work on other sites. At Warka, where a shaft was sunk through the middle of the town ruins, an enormous accumulation of al 'Ubaid debris was found to rest ultimately on virgin soil. In this case the first example of worked metal was recorded at no less than thirty-three feet above the

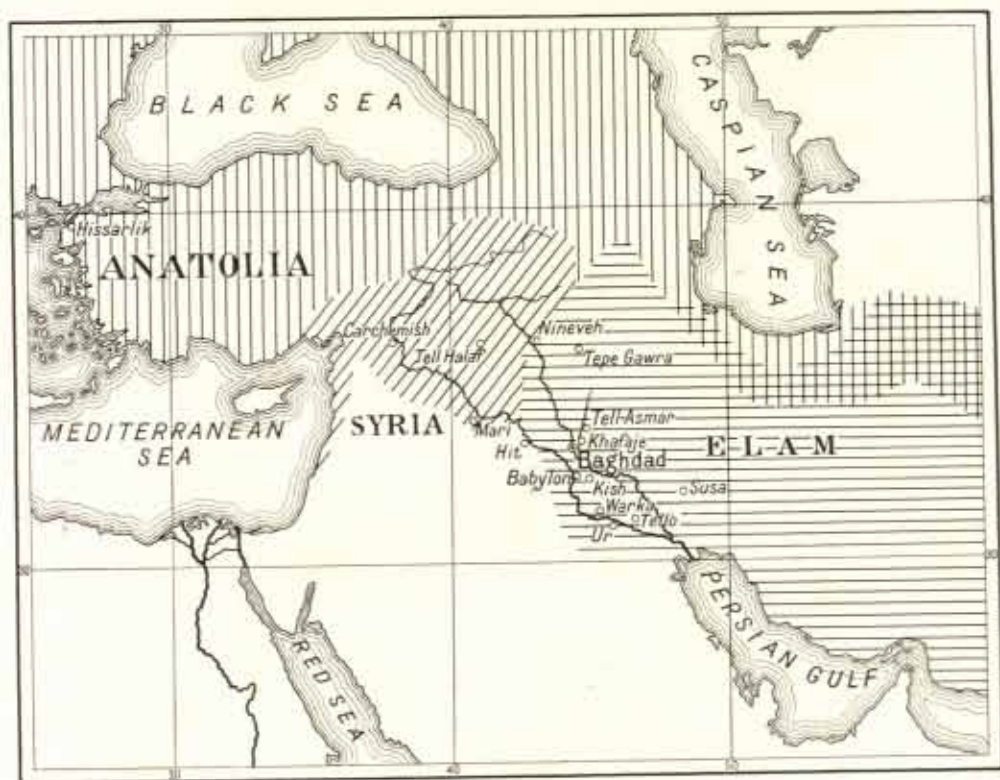
bottom of the deposit and in the intervening layers only stone implements were encountered; at Ur the al 'Ubaid III graves contain metal objects but none are found in the house ruins below the Flood: the culture of al 'Ubaid I, therefore, was either purely neolithic, as some authorities would suppose, or at least one in which metal was rarely used, and it is only natural that of so primitive a culture the principal monument is its pottery.

The pottery of al 'Ubaid I (Pl. 2) is hand-made; that is, it is either made entirely by hand or turned on a 'slow wheel' pivoted so that it might revolve but not weighted so as to revolve of itself, its motion no faster than the motion of the potter's hand. The clay, light in colour but, owing to a mixture of lime and iron in it, turning to a greenish tint with over-firing, is well levigated, the walls of the vessel are often extremely thin, the potting very regular; the surface is generally worked up with water to a fine smooth texture and sometimes the vessel is covered with a thin slip of a clay similar to but finer than that of the body. The decoration is in a haematitic paint, sometimes matt but more often lustrous, black in colour but inclined to flare to a chocolate-brown: the design, often very complicated, is built up of simple elements, usually geometric, but sometimes based on plant motives; animal or human forms are very seldom introduced and are then merely silhouettes crudely drawn and filled in with solid colour.

This, the earliest pottery in southern Mesopotamia, is in many ways the best that the valley was ever to produce. Well made and well baked, with a fairly wide range of shapes all proper to the nature of the material, it boasts a decoration which, for all its simplicity, is admirably composed and strictly in relation to the structural lines of the vessel to which it is applied; it shews, in fact, in addition to



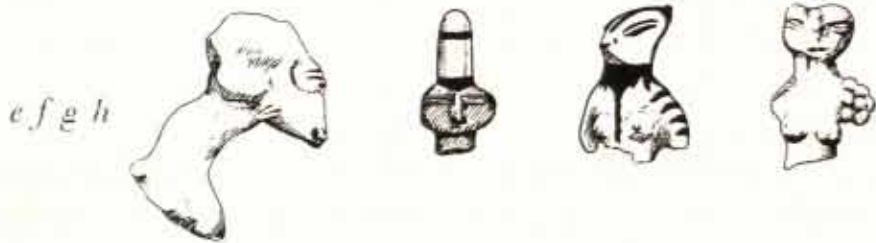
5, a. Painted cup of al 'Ubaid III (p. 57)



5, b. Cultural map of the Near East shewing the sub-neolithic cultural provinces of Anatolia, North Syria and the Iranian plateau (p. 55)



a b c d



6. Clay figurines of al 'Ubaid I and II (pp. 57-8)

technical ability, that sense of form and that discrimination in ornament which are the essentials of art.

The painted wares of al 'Ubaid do not stand alone. Long before the first discovery of them was made there had been found at Susa and at other sites in Persia, the ancient Elam, painted wares (Pl. 3, *a*) to which those of al 'Ubaid are obviously akin. The two are by no means identical; the earliest Susa pottery is made either on the 'slow wheel' or on the regular potter's wheel, the shapes most characteristic of the one site are not reproduced on the other, the combinations of geometrical elements in ornament are not the same and the animal motives so rare in Mesopotamia are at Susa a prominent feature of the design; at the same time the kinship between the two is unmistakable, and while it could not be argued that the art of al 'Ubaid is derived from that of Susa or *vice versa*, we cannot avoid the conclusion that they are mutually independent branches sprung from a common source.

Recently Sir Aurel Stein has found similar painted pottery (Pl. 3, *b*) on sub-neolithic sites east of Persia, in Baluchistan and as far away as the borders of India, and even from Manchuria come wares which it is difficult not to associate with the early Mesopotamian: we have to envisage a great cultural province which at the end of the Late Stone Age extended across the Iranian plateau from al 'Iraq, the cliff where the Arabian desert breaks down into the delta of the Euphrates, across the ancient Elam to the confines of China. As the map (Pl. 5, *b*) shews, that Iranian culture was on the north limited by, and in part overlaps, a distinct province which we may call the Anatolian, though it spreads far to the east of Anatolia and embraces much of the transcaucasian area: it is distinguished at this period by the use of a monochrome pottery, black, grey or red, to the

entire exclusion of any painted wares. South of this, on the Syrian coast of the Mediterranean, there lay a third cultural province. Here, in the sub-neolithic period, there prevailed a painted polychrome pottery which is in fabric and in decoration totally distinct from the Iranian; it occurs as far east as the Mosul district, where it overlaps with the al 'Ubaid ware, but is a stranger to the delta; a single sherd of North Syrian pottery found at Ur is the unique witness to any contact with the north or north-west and only emphasizes the division between the two areas. Of the Anatolian pottery, we have not a single example in the al 'Ubaid I levels. The earliest inhabitants of Sumer belonged to the Iranian cultural province: it is, of course, highly probable that amongst them there were settlers from Arabia, nomads who would have filtered into the valley from the desiccating uplands of the western desert, but such would have been of a much lower type of culture and of them no memorial has been found or is likely to have survived; the bulk of the valley population and the only part of it which has importance for the history of art had purely Iranian affinities.

Dr. Frankfort, the only authority who has attempted the solution of the Sumerian problem on archaeological lines,¹ would make the people of al 'Ubaid I the direct ancestors of the historical Sumerians and the originators of Sumerian civilisation and art. Ancestors they certainly were, but to derive from them all that remarkable development which we see in the Royal Tombs of Ur and in the monuments of the third millennium B.C. appears to me impossible; the course of history did not run so smooth.

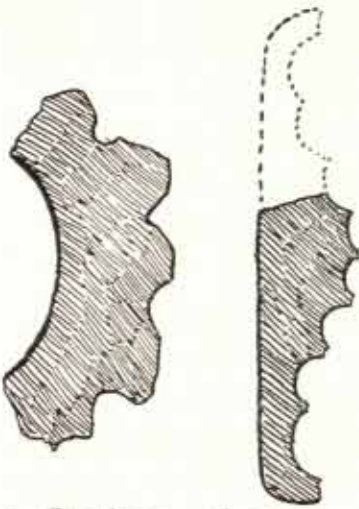
The pottery illustrated on Pl. 2, from al 'Ubaid and Ur, belongs to the sub-period al 'Ubaid I. A comparison of this with what was found in the graves of al 'Ubaid II and

¹H. Frankfort, *Archaeology and the Sumerian Problem*, Chicago.

III (Pls. 4 and 5) shews a steady process of degeneration due in the first place, doubtless, to the disaster of the Flood itself, which must have destroyed a large part of the population and weakened the moral and impoverished the resources of its survivors, and in part to the foreign invasions of which I shall speak in Chapter II; but be the causes what they may the results of them are manifest. In al 'Ubaid I a very large proportion of the pottery is painted; the decoration is often bold and free, large vessels being adorned with plant designs very broadly treated, and even where the elements of the pattern are simple the ornament is rich and covers the greater part of the vessel's surface. In al 'Ubaid II (Pl. 4) there is a marked poverty of design, a limited number of motives is monotonously repeated, the proportion of decorated surface is reduced to a minimum and plain horizontal bands of paint are reduplicated to disguise the economy of pattern. In al 'Ubaid III (Pl. 5, *a*) the painted ware becomes very rare (no grave yielded more than one example); only one form, the cup, boasts any ornament at all, and that is limited to plain bands of colour. This is the last stage of decadence, and very soon the painted pottery of al 'Ubaid comes to an end and leaves no descendants.

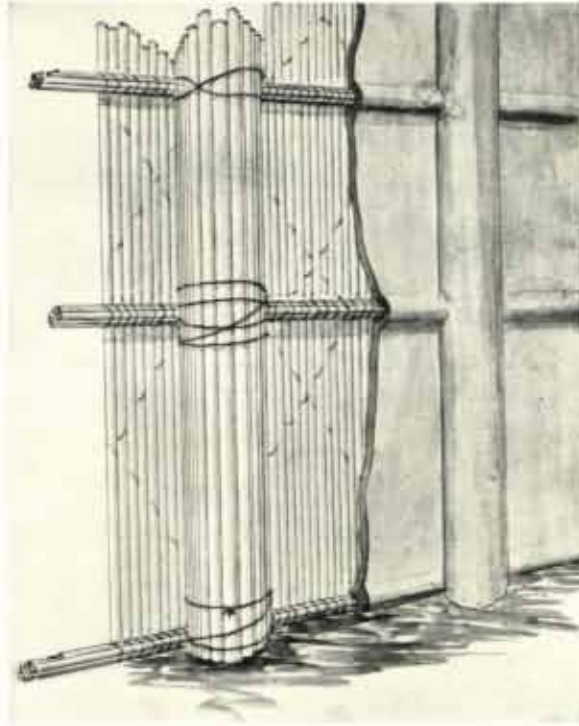
The second characteristic product of the al 'Ubaid period is the series of hand-modelled clay figurines found both in the pre-Flood houses and in the graves of al 'Ubaid II. Both animal and human figures occur. The animals are roughly modelled and the details picked out with touches of paint; crude as they are they often give an extraordinarily vivid impression of the animal (Pl. 6, *l, m*) and certainly bear witness to a power of observation and quick characterisation which might have gone far if more ambitiously applied. The human figures (Pl. 6, *a-e*) are much more remarkable. On them considerable care has been expended and the

modelling of the bodies is, in spite of certain conventional exaggerations, skilful and pleasing; the heads, on the contrary, are grotesque, with enormously elongated skulls and reptilian features quite at variance with the rest. This appearance is not an accident due to want of skill on the maker's part. It is true that on early seals the human figures have bird-like heads, mere circles with a central dot for the eye and a prominent beak-like nose (*v. Pl. 69*), and that is a technical accident—the engraver was working on a very small scale, in a hard material, with a drill and a V-shaped chisel, and this was the easiest way in which the salient features of the face could be rendered; but here the modeller has plastic clay to shape according to his pleasure, he has taken as much care with the heads as with the bodies, and that he is not limited by incapacity is proved by the fact that we found in the house ruins two figurines (*Pl. 6, f, h*), of which the faces, each treated in a different style, are round and flat and definitely those of human beings: the monstrous aspect is intentional (presumably the figures represent some kind of demon) and the more monstrous it is the more does it do credit to the artist's skill. But just as the painted pottery comes to an inglorious end so do the terracottas. Rough animal figures do indeed persist after the al 'Ubaid period, but they become more and more sketchy and lose even the small claims to art which those of the early time possess; as to the human figurines, though small clay models were made, as such were bound to be made, by later generations, they are shapeless grotesques which have nothing in common with the sophisticated demons of al 'Ubaid I and II. The two most characteristic products of al 'Ubaid, almost the only products of that period having any artistic claims which survive to us, disappear, and that as the result of a process of degradation and degeneration, not



a. Sections of clay plaster from the 'Flood-pit'

b. Reconstruction of reed hut with mud plaster



7. The reed and clay architecture of al 'Ubaid I (pp. 39-40)



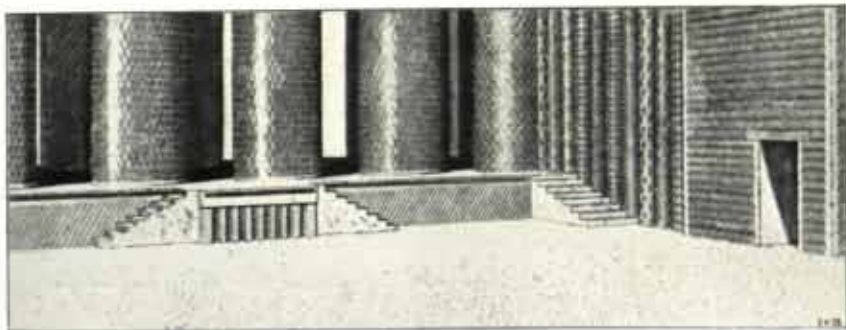
7, c. A wall decorated with half-columns
7th century B.C. (p. 40)



8, a. Warka (p. 42)
Archaic Ziggurat with decoration of clay pots embedded in the plaster



8, b. Warka (p. 42)
Cone mosaics on the pedestal of the columned building



8, c. Warka (p. 42)
Reconstruction of the façade of the columned hall
Uruk period

Preuss. Akad. d. Wissensch.

because they developed into something better. It might be asked then, are they in any way germane to the subject of Sumerian art?

I think that they are. Taken together, the pottery and the figurines do enable us to envisage a people, primitive indeed, but possessed of considerable technical skill, of imagination and a creative spirit, with a marked appreciation for form and a sense of decorative values. If I am right in believing that al 'Ubaid I represents an earlier phase than does Susa I of the Iranian culture to which both belong, then the superiority of design on Elamite vases—for it certainly is superior—proves that the al 'Ubaid people had in themselves the seeds of artistic growth. And although the pottery and the figurines vanished, the people of al 'Ubaid did not. They persisted and formed one element in that composite race which later was known as Sumerian: to that amalgam they contributed the qualities to which their crafts bear witness, and without them the course of Sumerian history would have been very different.

But their contribution was not only a moral one. I have discussed at length certain minor products of their genius because such supply most of our knowledge of the race; these were dropped in a later age which was not disposed to accept the aboriginal culture *en bloc*; but other of their arts were to be developed and employed throughout Mesopotamian history.

Below the Flood deposit there were found the ruins of houses of the al 'Ubaid I period. In one place was a fragment of a wall built of flat rectangular bricks, in another, masses of clay lumps from the plaster of a reed hut which had been destroyed by fire before the Flood: the fire had hardened the clay enough to preserve its form; one side of each lump, carbonised black, bore the imprint of the reeds,

the other, burned red, was smooth and either flat or curved, the curve being sometimes convex, sometimes concave (Pl. 7, *a*).

Mesopotamia offers to the builder reeds and mud and, in antiquity at least, a certain amount of timber; in the delta stone is wholly lacking. The poor man, then as now, built his hut of reeds, lashing the tall stems together in fascines to form the uprights and the cross-ties and filling in the panels with woven mats or with screens of reeds set side by side; that might suffice, or for better protection he might plaster the whole with mud. Such were our pre-Flood huts, but what is interesting is that the plaster shews curves as well as flat surfaces: this can only mean that the builder, so far from disguising the framework of his building by the applied facing, accentuated its structural features; the mud hut shewed (Pl. 7, *b*) the same panelled front as did the reed-work. Custom enforced begets fashions. The al 'Ubaid builder was using moulded bricks as well as plastic mud: the reed hut translated into brick-work, with right angles naturally taking the place of curves, gave that system of shallow decorative buttresses which is distinctive of religious buildings throughout historic times (Pl. 59, *b*): there can be no doubt that the tradition which was preserved in the great days of the Third Dynasty of Ur and down to the close of the late Babylonian empire goes back to the mud-plastered hut of the primitive marsh-dwellers. Building of a more ambitious sort, in timber, would take much the same lines, palm-logs set side by side instead of reed bundles to make a stouter wall caulked and plastered with the inevitable mud; and here too starts a convention which as a decorative motive was to endure to the end of Babylonian history (Pl. 7, *c*). And from the reed construction are derived other architectural forms. The fascines which form the up-



9. Part of the columned wall
with a mosaic of terra-cotta cones (p. 42)

Warka: Uruk period
Preuss. Akad. d. Wissensch.

rights of the wall can be bent inwards and their tops tied together in an arch (we see such illustrated on early reliefs, Pl. 18, *b*, and it is the fashion to-day), and a row of such arches with mats laid over them make a vaulted chamber: to translate from mud-covered reed-work to mud brick was no difficult step, and the arches and vaults of the Royal Tombs must have here their genesis. In a land where the palm-tree is indigenous man can hardly avoid the use of the column; that the primitive people of Mesopotamia availed themselves of so obvious a convenience would have been a reasonable assumption were there no evidence to support it, but the evidence is not lacking: in a building of the Larsa period, *circ.* 1950 B.C., we find an interesting survival in the shape of a column of mud brick, of which the surface is moulded in relief with triangles reproducing faithfully the texture of the palm-trunk (Pl. 57, *b*): that the triangular tesserae of the mosaic columns from the al 'Ubaid temple of the First Dynasty of Ur, *circ.* 3000 B.C., have the same motive is not to be doubted—they are actually applied to palm-log uprights (Pl. 28, *a*)—and when we know that built columns were used at the beginning of the Uruk period we can be certain that the simpler form at least was familiar to the architects of al 'Ubaid I. To this age then can be traced back, at least in elementary form, those various architectural principles which in the Early Dynastic time are seen fully developed; for their invention credit must be given to the old Iranian stock.

Nor did the buildings of al 'Ubaid I lack decoration. Amongst the debris of the houses there are found small slender cones of baked clay, rather like pencils in shape, with the blunt end sometimes painted red or black, sometime left plain: these are for wall mosaics. None are *in situ*, for no buildings of that time survive, but their use is proved by examples of the same technique of later date. At Warka

there remains one Ziggurat tower, a high stepped platform, really an artificial hill, constructed not with moulded bricks but with heaped mud, a primitive structure belonging to the beginning of the Uruk period which overlaps with the later phases of al 'Ubaid: the upper part of its buttressed walls is decorated in panels with a mosaic of large clay cones, hollow like vases, sunk in the mud plaster; the white circles of their rims and the black shadows of their interiors make a very striking ornament (Pl. 8, *a*). In this case the size of the 'inlay' is determined by the height of the building—seen from so far away the small solid cones would have been ineffective—and the hollows take the place of colour. In another building at Warka, first discovered by the English traveller Loftus seventy-five years ago and now excavated by the German mission, we have an example of the small-cone technique dating from a later stage of the Uruk period. There is a great courtyard enclosed by a wall decorated with half-columns in the archaic style derived from construction in timber or in reed fascines and at one end steps go up to a low terrace whereon stands a columned hall (Pl. 8, *b*), an extraordinary building whose roof was upheld by a double row of mud-brick columns no less than eight feet in diameter; these columns, the façade of the terrace and the whole of the courtyard wall were covered with a mosaic, red and black and white, made up of just such little pencil-like cones as are found in the ruins of al 'Ubaid I (Pl. 9). On every half-column the pattern is different; the panels of the platform front, framed by pilasters in relief, are filled with delicate designs (Pl. 8, *b*); as in the case of the painted pottery, the elements are simple, zigzags, triangles and lozenges, but these are combined into an intricately varied scheme of decoration, and though the colours are faded now the general effect is wonderfully rich; in so far as the



a. Plain red ware



b. Burnished red ware with design in deeper red



c. Black 'smothered' ware



d, e. Black burnished ware and light grey ware

10. Pottery of the Uruk type (p. 49)



a. Red-painted ware
from Ur



b. Red-painted ware
from Carchemish



c. 'Reserved slip' ware
from Ur



d. 'Reserved slip' ware
from Carchemish

11. North Syrian pottery types from Ur and
Carchemish (p. 50)

technique, and apparently the patterns also are traditional, this Uruk palace gives us a very good idea of what the best buildings of the al 'Ubaid period may have been like.

The clay cone mosaic may at first sight seem a clumsy method of decoration, and it certainly was laborious to execute, but it had compensating qualities which no other could boast and the reason for it is simple. Walls had to be mud-plastered, for some kind of plaster was necessary and mud was at this time the only material available. Mud takes colour badly and soon weathers, so that paint would have been unsatisfactory from the outset and would have required constant renewal—at Warka there has been found an example of wall-painting dating to the Jamdat Nasr age, and though it is on an interior wall the superimposed layers of colour shew how often it had to be repaired, and on an outer wall the decoration would have been ephemeral indeed: but the cones of baked clay set closely together formed an almost waterproof covering and protected the wall as well as gave it a permanent decoration. Therefore the use of cone mosaics was to endure for very many centuries.

Here then we can see a direct contribution of the al 'Ubaid people to the art and civilisation of Sumer, and the particular form of that contribution is worth insisting on.

The painted pottery of al 'Ubaid I had, as I have pointed out, its counterpart or its parallels over much of the East and belongs to the recognised stock-in-trade of the Iranian culture, so that an al 'Ubaid I vessel made at Ur might almost as well have been made in Baluchistan—its reason and its genesis were accidental so far as the Euphrates valley was concerned. But the genius which produced that vessel, when applied to architecture in the Euphrates valley, seized upon the local resources and exploited them to the utmost. Later ages, whatever foreign customs they might introduce,

could not depart from the lines laid down once and for all by the builders of al 'Ubaid, for their art had grown up out of the soil, was part of the valley itself: man had exhausted already the possibilities of such raw material as Nature offered him, and what he had made of it became the permanent possession of all who were to follow him.

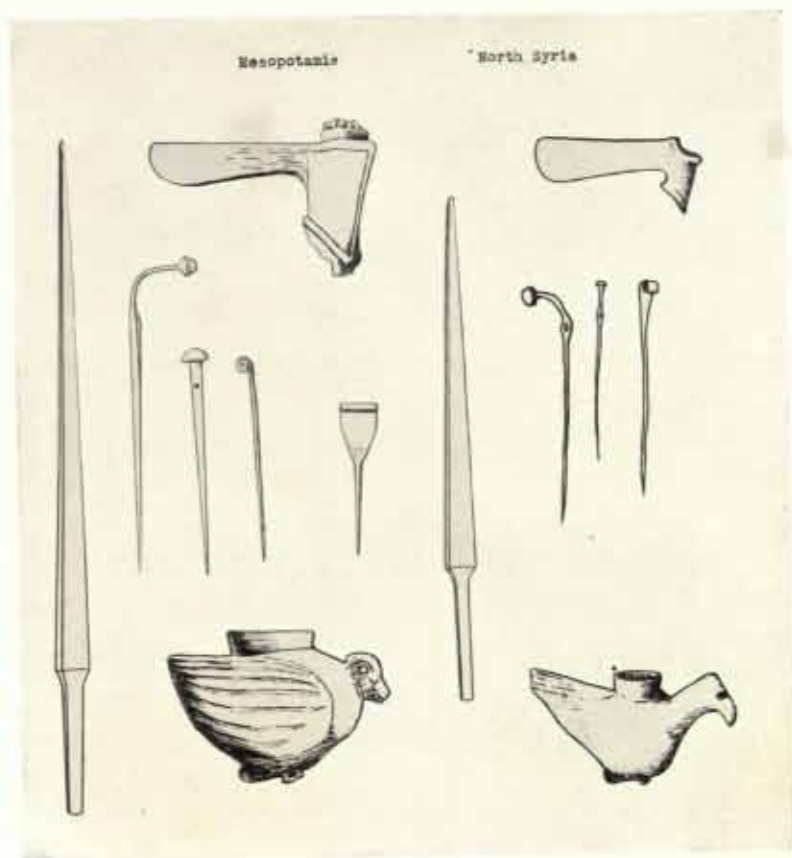
To have been ultimately responsible for the architectural achievements of Mesopotamia is no small thing, but there is no other field in which we can by concrete evidence prove the influence of the al 'Ubaid people upon the art of Sumer. That is not merely due to the scantiness of their remains, for as I have shewn, the remains most characteristic of them are unrepresented in later ages, and further, Sumerian art was the product of a hybrid race and much of it can be traced directly to the non-Iranian elements. The Iranians had no monopoly of invention or of that spiritual aspiration which creates beauty, but from their humble experiments in mud and clay we can fairly deduce a quality of mind not out of keeping with the great civilisation in which they were to share.

Note on Chapter I

The painted pottery discovered at al 'Ubaid is published in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. I, 'al 'Ubaid', and the account of the graves in the deep pit at Ur will appear shortly in the same series, Vol. IV, 'The Archaic Periods'; a preliminary report is in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. X, 4, 1930.

The Susa pottery can be studied in the *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires*, XIII, 'La Céramique peinte de Suse', by J. de Morgan and R. de Mecquenem, Paris, 1912, and XX, 'La Céramique peinte archaïque en Perse', by R. de Mecquenem, Paris, 1928. My illustration of the Baluchistan pottery is taken from Sir Aurel Stein's Huxley Memorial lecture for 1934, 'The Indo-Iranian Borderlands', in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, LXIV. A critical account of early Sumerian art is given by L. Legrain in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, VI^{me} Période, VIII, October, 1932, 'L'art sumérien archaïque'. The interrelations of the various types are discussed by H. Frankfort in the *Royal Anthropological Institute Occasional Papers*, Nos. 6 and 8, and in *Archaeology and the Sumerian Problem*, Chicago, 1932.

The buildings at Warka to which reference is made in the text are published in the *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse (Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka)*, by Julius Jordan, No. 7, 1929, and No. 4, 1930, and by E. Heinrich in No. 6, 1932.



12, a. Objects from Sumer and from North Syria compared (p. 51)



12, b, c. Jamdat Nasr three-coloured pottery (p. 50)



15, a. A Jamdat Nasr pot with bird design, from
Ur (p. 52)



15, b. 'Susa II' painted pottery (p. 52)
Dél. en Perse

Chapter II

*Uruk and Jamdat Nasr.
The Pottery Developments.
Stone Sculpture*

Chapter II

Uruk and Jamdat Nasr. The Pottery Developments. Stone Sculpture

The first evidence of there having been an Uruk period came from the excavations at Warka. Lying below the Jamdat Nasr remains there were found sherds of red and of black or blackish-grey monochrome pottery which was recognised as being of Anatolian origin—nothing of the sort was known from the al 'Ubaid period in Mesopotamia but it was already familiar throughout Asia Minor and as far west as Hissarlik, the site of Troy. The ware (Pl. 10), simple as it is, is none the less distinctive. The red colour of the one variety is due to a haematitic wash applied to the entire surface of the vessel; it is either matt or burnished, in the latter case the dull red paint becoming semi-lustrous and of a heightened tint. The black or grey ware (which is relatively rare) was made in a 'smother-kiln', that is, in a kiln so damped down as to retain the carbon fumes which penetrate and colour the clay. Both types are wheel-made.

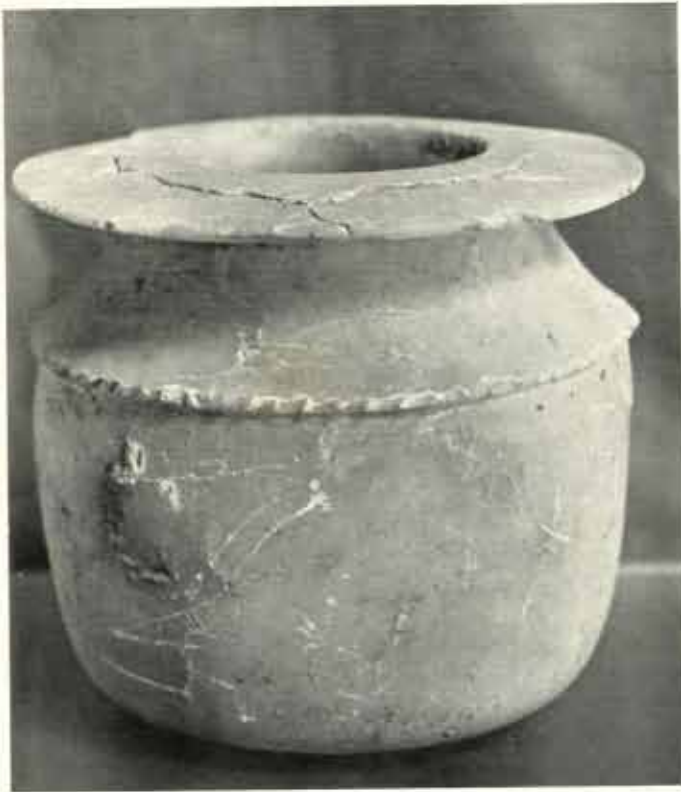
The 'Uruk' pottery was subsequently found at Ur mixed with and finally superseding the wares of al 'Ubaid II-III, and again at Warka in a well-stratified deposit it was discovered immediately above but unmixed with the al 'Ubaid II sherds, then, in a higher stratum, mixed with sherds of al 'Ubaid III, and higher still it was exclusively in use and the al 'Ubaid pottery disappeared altogether. The most pro-

bable explanation of the facts is that foreign invaders from the North swept over the delta; at first they as conquerors kept more or less aloof from the older population, then gradually mixed with them and in the end imposed their own culture on all alike and—at least in the ceramic field—drove out the al 'Ubaid industries.

That was as much as could be inferred until the excavation at Ur of a cemetery of Jamdat Nasr date threw new light on the problem. In these graves there were found side by side with the three-colour painted pots by which the period is known other wares not connected with them by origin; these included examples of the Anatolian type surviving from the Uruk period, some of which were of shapes (Pl. 10, examples *d* and *e*) such as do not occur in Anatolia but are borrowed from the stone vessels used in Mesopotamia (e.g. Pl. 14, *b*), shewing that the Anatolian wares were being modified in their new home by influences which before had not affected them; and with them there were other types—small vessels of smooth fine-grained pink clay decorated with horizontal bands of red paint, larger vessels of coarse red or buff clay having on their shoulders roughly drawn patterns of straight or curved lines in red paint (Pl. 11, *a*), vessels decorated with line burnishing—the smooth and lustrous burnished lines spaced well apart so as to contrast with the coarser body-clay exposed between them, and vessels decorated in the 'reserved slip' technique (Pl. 11, *c*) whereby the whole of the pot was covered with a thin fine slip and this was then partly wiped away so as to expose the body and by the contrast of colour and texture make an unobtrusive but not ineffective ornament. None of these later types are akin in any way to the Jamdat Nasr products, none were found at Jamdat Nasr itself, none are known from Anatolia, but all have been found in North



14, *a*. A Jamdat Nasr seal-impression on a clay jar-stopper (p. 55)



14, *b*. Alabaster vase of Jamdat Nasr date (p. 56)



15, *a*. A large diorite vase from a Jamdat Nasr grave, Ur (p. 56)



15, *b, c*. An alabaster lamp from a Jamdat Nasr grave, Ur (p. 56)

Syria, in the Carchemish district (Pl. 11, *b* and *d*). Moreover, they do not stand alone. On Plate 12, *a*, are shown various metal types, a socketed axe cast from a two-piece mould, a 'poker' spear, straight and curved pins with eyeleted shanks, pins with rolled or racket-shaped heads, which are characteristic of Sumerian art and occur at a very early period in the cist-graves of Carchemish, and an alabaster vase of animal form, typical of the Uruk and Jamdat Nasr periods, which can be compared with one from northern Syria of at least as early a date. Here we have unmistakable evidence of there having been, together with the invasion from Anatolia, a Syrian invasion whose effect upon the lower river valley was not less great.

At Jamdat Nasr, where the painted pottery was first found, it was associated with clay tablets inscribed not with the cuneiform writing of later times but with pictographic signs, the originals, seemingly, from which the formal script was in the course of time to be evolved; it was natural to assume that of this rudimentary script the Jamdat Nasr people were the inventors. Now, at Warka, similar tablets have been discovered belonging to the Uruk age, and various art forms besides, such as the animal vases carved in stone, which were at first thought to be peculiar to Jamdat Nasr are found to go back to an earlier time; it becomes clear that the civilisation illustrated by remains which themselves may be of Jamdat Nasr date was developed and formed before the Jamdat Nasr period began. Further, in the 'Flood Pit' excavated at Ur (see Pl. 1) the types of pottery which we can now identify as Syrian are found mixed with the Anatolian types which in the great accumulated heaps of potsherds form the stratum between al 'Ubaid and Jamdat Nasr; as in the graves, they are associated with Jamdat Nasr and both of them (and especially the 'reserved slip' ware)

continue in vogue after the three-colour pottery has fallen into disuse; the Anatolian seems to be the earlier comer, but it is followed fairly soon by the Syrian, and upon these two the Jamdat Nasr ware is superimposed as an alien and relatively ephemeral intruder which failed to exercise any permanent effect on the ceramics of the country. And as to Jamdat Nasr itself, the excavation of the cemetery at Ur yields the most important hint. It has been pointed out that the al 'Ubaid I pottery represents a branch of the Iranian culture which spread over Persia and the East and at Susa produced the remarkable pottery known as 'Susa I'; at a later time, corresponding to the Uruk period in Mesopotamia, there is found at Susa a pottery (Pl. 13, *b*) painted sometimes in monochrome, sometimes in three colours, which shews the old Iranian style modified by foreign influences; to this ware the normal three-colour pottery of Jamdat Nasr (Pl. 12, *b, c*) possesses some affinity, but the resemblance is not so close as to make any connection certain. But from one of our graves there comes a vase with a design painted in black on a creamy slip (Pl. 13, *a*) which is altogether in the 'Susa II' style—in particular the bird motive with its alternation of treatment in solid colour and in cross-hatching might have come straight from Susa—and isolated though it is it seems evidence enough to solve the question. Elam, the modern Persia, is a mountainous land divided by parallel ranges running north-west by south-east across which communication is difficult; only at a late day did a central government succeed in binding the tribes of the sequestered valleys into a political unity, and until that was done cultural progress was slow—Elam was always behind Sumer in civilisation—and although all belonged ultimately to a common stock each community must have developed along more or less independent lines: it would be

wrong to expect the pottery, for instance, of northern Elam to be identical with that of Susa even though its relation to Susa would be obvious. Since neither Sumer's northern neighbour, Anatolia, nor the north-west, Syria, can furnish any parallel to the Jamdat Nasr pottery it is necessary to look for such to the east or north-east, and since Susa, to the east, offers at once resemblances and differences, only the north-east remains, and if northern Elam be taken as the home of the Jamdat Nasr invaders the character of the only art product by which we can identify them is satisfactorily explained.

For the development of Sumerian art this is the crucial period, and its history, so far as the archaeological evidence allows us to reconstruct it, is of prime importance. The old Iranian culture of al 'Ubaid, which had grown up out of the soil, had been wrecked by the Flood; its villages had been destroyed, its cultivated fields laid waste, a large part of its population wiped out; the cities, perched on their high mounds, had survived, but the disaster had weakened the al 'Ubaid race morally as well as physically. Now, into the devastated and half-empty valley, following the course of the two rivers, from the north and from the north-west there came in a second flood, this time not of waters but of men: down the Tigris valley, probably, advanced the people of Asia Minor, from the middle Euphrates the Syrians; the delta-land became a melting-pot (Pl. 5, *b*) in which three great early cultures, the Iranian, the Anatolian and the north Syrian, were to amalgamate and form a new race. Before the end of the Uruk period the process of fusion was complete, the Sumerian race had come into existence and Sumerian art had taken on its distinctive character; the city states into which the river valley was parcelled out had indeed by virtue of their independence developed or preserved certain

individual traits recognisable even in such relics as have come down to us, but through such minor divergences can be perceived the essential spirit which is Sumerian. To what a level of civilisation and art this mixed population advanced in the Uruk period has already been suggested by the account given in Chapter I of their architecture, the astounding palace at Warka with its columned hall and mosaic-sheathed walls; their achievements in other fields have, for the most part, to be deduced from scanty remains or from objects actually of later date but fashioned after the traditions which the Uruk age had formulated, but they seem to have been not unworthy of their buildings. And upon a civilisation so full of promise there broke in the invading tribes from the Elamite hills. As Iranians, the Jamdat Nasr people were akin to the original al 'Ubaid stock, and from that stock incorporated in its hybrid population Sumer had derived as much of Iranian culture as it required; moreover the hillsmen were as ever stout fighters but in civilisation lagged far behind the people of the plain, and though they could make themselves masters of the river valley they could contribute nothing to its art. Apart from the painted pottery which is their hall-mark there is nothing whereby we can recognise the influence of the Jamdat Nasr race; but the mere fact that this foreign ware is found uniformly on every ancient site can only mean that they exercised a general control over the land. The seal-impressions on some of the mud jar-stoppers dating from this time give lists of cities such as would seem to imply a greater degree of union than had prevailed under the old system of city states; and associated with the lists there is a curious sign, a *tetraskelon* (Pl. 68, *l, m, n*), which may be the origin of the later ideogram meaning 'the four quarters of the earth' which was part of the regular title of a Sumerian dynast,



16, *a, b, c.* Decorated limestone cups from Jamdat Nasr graves, Ur (p. 57)



16, *d.* Steatite figure of a wild boar, Jamdat Nasr period, Ur (p. 57)



17, a. Limestone vase from Warka (p. 58)
Kurzbericht d. Deut. Forschung



17, b. Fragments from the upper part of a large decorated
gypsum vase, Warka (p. 59)
Kurzbericht d. Deut. Forschung

and if that be so there must have been a single overlord ruling the land of Sumer and the Jamdat Nasr age would correspond to what the later scribes called 'The First Dynasty of Kish'. If Jamdat Nasr did indeed enforce political unity on the old warring states its contribution on the moral side at least was not a small one, for so not only was uniformity of development assured but unity, albeit enforced, begat that selfconsciousness which turned a race into a nation.

A curious light is thrown on the art of the time by numerous seal-impressions stamped on the lumps of clay which secured the stoppers of big store-jars, objects corresponding closely to the stamps on the sealing-wax of modern wine-bottles; on some of them there is writing, on others designs of various sorts. The writing is still pictographic or semi-pictographic, the old style being retained for decorative purposes after a more formal script had been developed for practical use, and the signs are often combined with other motives into intricate patterns (Pl. 68) which shew a remarkable ingenuity in composition and an almost childlike delight in elaboration for its own sake, as where the heads of men and of oxen are interwoven in a sort of 'puzzle picture' (Pl. 14, *a*): side by side with these there are naturalistic drawings which foreshadow the greater works of art to come, such as the pastoral scenes of dairymen and cattle-byres (Pl. 69, *a*) in the spirit of the al 'Ubaid temple frieze. In the linear designs we can perhaps trace the influence of the old Iranian people who made the clay pots of the pre-Flood age with their painted geometrical ornament; in some seals we find definite echoes of those from Susa and can recognise therefore affinities with Elam; in the animal drawings there seems to be more of the northern spirit—it is noticeable that on early seals the animals are often of

breeds native to the mountain land, the spotted leopard, the stag and the aurochs. Certainly it is to the northern element in the race that we must attribute an outstanding feature of the Uruk and Jamdat Nasr periods, namely the predilection for work in stone. At Warka the excavators have laid bare the foundations of a large temple of the Uruk time constructed in coursed limestone rubble; the material was wholly alien to the original inhabitants of the valley and its use must have been introduced by the hill people of northern Syria or of Anatolia. Similarly with the stone vases. In the Jamdat Nasr graves at Ur the stone vases are sometimes so common as to outnumber and even to replace altogether those of clay, and the materials of which they are made are almost as varied as their forms—diorite and basic diorite, limestone, marble, alabaster, gypsum and steatite are all found, and the form of the vessel is often decided or at least modified by the character of the stone. In the case of alabaster or gypsum the flat rim of a vase may be ground down to an extreme thinness so as to emphasise the translucent quality of the stone (Pl. 14, *b*); a tall diorite vase (Pl. 15, *a*) has a severe purity of outline, in keeping with the hardness of the material, which reminds one of Greek work of the fifth century B.C.; always in the hard stones there is a strict simplicity of contour and no embellishment other than the fine polish of the surface, whereas the softer limestone, having no beauty of its own, or the alabaster may be carved with patterns in relief or may take unsymmetric and fantastic shapes. An example of the latter is given on Pl. 15, *b*; the craftsman has cut his alabaster into the form of a lamp modelled on a star shell (we have found real shells of the sort used as lamps) but moved by a comic whim has added a bat's head underneath, so that what is a perfectly good copy of a shell seen from above becomes, if looked at from below,



18, *a.* Fragments from the lower part of a large decorated gypsum vase, Warka (p. 59)
Kurzbericht d. Deut. Forschung



18, *b.* Carved gypsum trough from Warka (p. 60)



19, *a, b, c.* Early statues from Tal Asmar (p. 60)

a figure of a flying bat: here is the same spirit as that which on the jar-sealings interlaced the heads of man and ox. Amongst the decorated vessels two are ornamented with a procession of oxen carved in relief; in one (Pl. 16, *b*) the relief is low and confined to one plane, in the other (Pl. 16, *a*) the heads of the animals project in the half-round as they do in later examples of the same *genre*; for the importance of these cups is that they carry back at least to the Jamdat Nasr period a subject and a style which was to be developed until it became a commonplace of Sumerian art and could produce such a masterpiece as the steatite cup illustrated on Pl. 55, *c*. Our two early examples were originally of poor workmanship and have suffered much by the wearing of the stone's surface, but they bear witness to that continuity which runs through Sumerian history.

Much more informative is a steatite figure of a wild boar (Pl. 16, *d*) found at Ur in the Jamdat Nasr stratum of the 'Flood pit'; it is the only example of free sculpture of this period that the site has yielded, and though the hole through the middle of the back implies that it was in the nature of a base for something else and not itself an independent work of art it does give grounds for judgment of the artist's powers. The first impression which the little figure makes is that of style, the formed and conscious style that bespeaks mature art. There is observation of nature here—the character of the animal is aptly rendered and the drawing back of the upper lip over the tusks is a touch of pure realism, but this is deliberately subordinated to a sculptural ideal which eliminates all accidentals and reduces to a minimum the articulation of the living beast in favour of an abstract balance of mass. If we imagine the boar as part of something else—the deep grooves in the sides suggest a support which gripped it tightly, possibly flat-leaved reeds of

bronze or gold—this restraint becomes yet more admirable; the sculpturesque effect is as necessary to the composition as it is successfully secured.

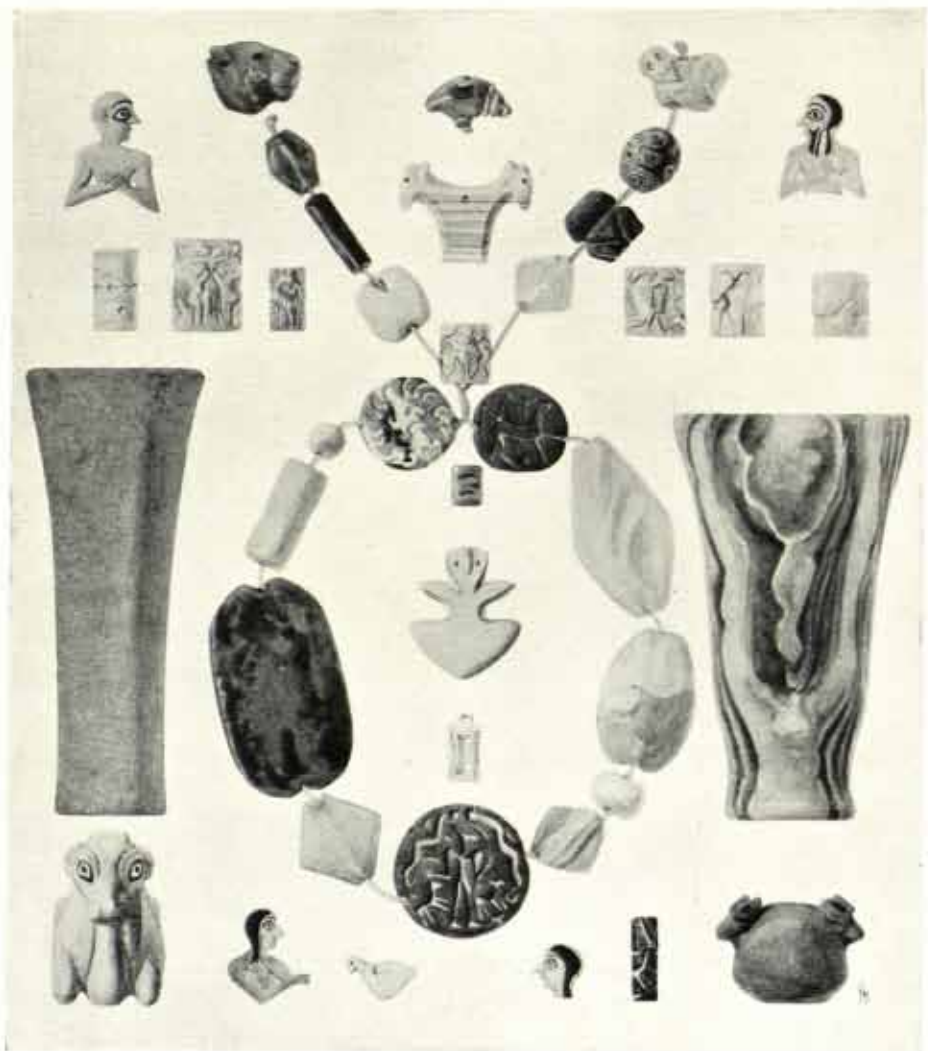
Such restraint is curiously lacking in the next example (Pl. 17, *a*). At Warka, in the winter of 1933, there was found beneath the Ziggurat a room of a Jamdat Nasr building wherein, under a packing of later bricks, there lay a great deposit of temple vases and ornaments which had outlasted the fashion: perhaps of early Jamdat Nasr date, they might equally well go back to the Uruk period—indeed, the best of them had been broken and mended in Jamdat Nasr times, so it presumably was even then reckoned as an antiquity. It is a revolutionary discovery, for here we find fully developed examples of stone carving which up to last year would on technical and stylistic grounds have been assigned by many to the time of the First Dynasty of Ur instead of to the vastly earlier age to which the archaeological evidence proves them to belong. There are many small figures of animals which set the pattern for the First Dynasty, vases of dark steatite inlaid with red limestone, lapis-lazuli and shell, extraordinarily like the Third Dynasty example shewn on Pl. 52, *a*; cylinder seals illustrating every stage of development from drawings with roughly scratched outlines to the most finished work in deep *in-taglio* (*v.* Pl. 67); but most remarkable of all are the stone vases decorated in relief. One of these, in fine-grained limestone (Pl. 17, *a*), has on the body of the vessel a carving of cattle attacked by lions, the heads protruding in the round, while the spout is flanked by two small free figures of lions. The detail of the work is excellent, but as a composition the whole is deplorable; the contours of the vase are disguised by the excrescences of the ornament, its severe outline outraged by the floridness of the applied design, there



20, *a, b, c, d.* Early statues from Tal Asmar
(p. 60)



21, *a, b.* Early statues from Tal Asmar (p. 60)



21, *c.* Stone vases, seals, amulets and shell figures for inlay, Tal Asmar (pp. 60-4)

is no unity and even the mechanical balance of the piece is destroyed. Judging from the fact that several vases of the same pattern were found we may judge that it was a convention—a case of religious symbolism being forced on the artist without regard to his own likes or dislikes; certainly it has nothing in common with the technical skill displayed in its execution. But no such charitable view is invited by the piece figured on Pls. 17, *b*, and 18, *a*. Here are the fragments of a gypsum vase with splayed foot and cone-shaped bowl; it stands over three feet high and is decorated with bands of carving in low relief—at the top a scene of a religious festival with a shrine carried on the backs of rams and worshippers offering baskets of fruit to the goddess, below this a procession of men bearing offerings, then a procession of cattle and then again a row of symbols. The composition is formal and the conventions are such as we must expect in Sumerian art—a disregard of perspective, a sacrifice of scale to the need of covering the field of ornament, a somewhat hieratic stiffness which in less skilful hands would result in monotony; but with this an extremely fine sense of proportion and a thorough understanding of the real nature of relief. The artist limits himself virtually to two planes, but the flatness of the work is relieved by a most delicate modelling of the surface which makes the figures stand out in sharp contrast against a background from which in fact they scarcely project; the diminishing width of the bands of ornament is in strict keeping with the shape of the vessel and in them a difference of treatment harmonises with their decorative value—at the top a loose pictorial composition, then the human figures individually full of life and movement yet restrained and schematised into a frieze, then the more staid and formal line of cattle and below that the motives of still life forming a mere pattern. Some-

thing of the same high degree is shewn in a gypsum trough (also from Warka) in the British Museum (Pl. 18, *b*). The motive of the cattle and the byre so popular with Sumerian artists is here rendered with a poise and a feeling for nature chastened by conscious style which make of it a very notable monument; it would be difficult better to translate a *genre* subject into a decorative scheme.

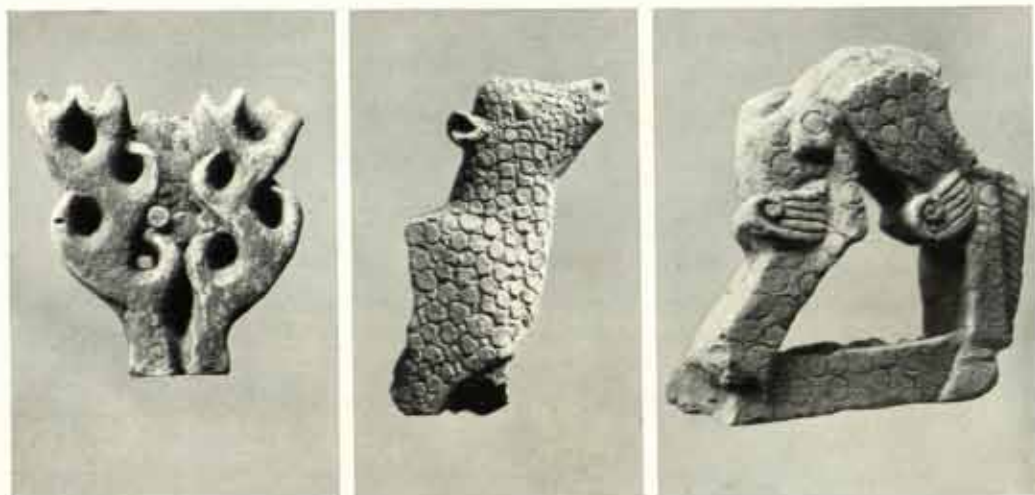
It is curious to turn from these masterpieces of the Sumerian south to the sculptures found in the winter of 1933-4 at Tal Asmar, near Baghdad. In a shrine of the beginning of the Early Dynastic period there was discovered beneath the pavement a great hoard of stone objects which, like those from Warka, were temple heirlooms which had been discarded as old and out of date but instead of being thrown away had been reverently buried within the sacred precincts; they belong to the Jamdat Nasr period and some of them may be even earlier. Certainly difference of date must account for some of the startling differences of style which the various statues display;—it would be impossible to believe that all were contemporary and merely the work of artists more or less skilled; but even so the collection gives the impression of an art which had developed no canons and no conventions but was still in the experimental stage. There are quite definite signs that the sculptors had not yet learnt the qualities and the limitations of their material; they were working in a soft and fragile stone (limestone and alabaster) but indulged in an undercutting which was as dangerous as it was easy; in particular they constantly eschew the support behind the legs which is a regular device of Sumerian artists and entrust the weight of the heavily-skirted bodies to two slender columns obviously inadequate to it. This would seem to be part of a violent striving for effect which is quite alien to the spirit of normal

Sumerian sculpture, a striving which finds expression in the grotesquely exaggerated eyes of the figures on Pl. 19, *a* and is much more successful in the kneeling figure on Plate 20, *c, d*, an admirable piece of free sculpture which is without parallel in Sumerian art. In the latter figure, and still more in that of the old bearded man on Pl. 21, *a*, one of the best pieces in the collection, there is an individual characterisation going almost to the length of caricature which again is in strong contrast to the abstract quality predominant in the art of the south; it is a school of portraiture, uncertain of its means, vigorous and impatient of tradition, attempting with a hit-or-miss audacity a realism which their masters rejected as inartistic. Some of the figures, e.g. those on Pls. 19, *c*, and 20, *b*, are, apart from peculiarities of technique, Sumerian in treatment as in subject—for it is quite clear that we have here representations of two distinct racial types—and in some of the smaller objects found, such as the fragments of shell inlay on Pl. 21, *c*, which closely resemble those from the Kish palace (Pl. 23, *b*), and in the seals of animal form, the Sumerian style is unmistakable; it is where the subjects of portraiture are non-Sumerian, in the tall and lanky bearded male figures, that the departures from Sumerian art tradition are most obvious.¹ It is tempting to compare the physical type of these with the Kish inlays on Pl. 23, *a*, and to suggest that they represent the aristocracy of Uruk and that the

¹Dr. Frankfort, who discovered the statues, thinks that most of them at least are cult figures and that the huge eyes are symbolic of divinity and he restores the two figures on Pl. 19, *a, b*, together with the small figure which stood beside the female statue (only its feet remain) as a 'sacred triad'. Personally I think that all are votive statues representing human rulers, their wives and families, such as we find, in relief and in the round, throughout Sumerian art: they stand in the attitude of adoration and bear no divine attributes. If that be so, the evident individuality of the faces is far more intelligible.

peculiarities of the art are due to a disproportion of one element in the racial amalgam of the north country; the little violin-shaped figure in the middle of the group, Pl. 21, c, has well-known North Syrian and Aegean affinities. In any case we are bound to recognise in the Tal Asmar hoard a mixture of influences and tendencies and a resultant art which is at best inchoate.

In another respect the statues are instructive because, thanks to the conditions of their burial, they preserve much of the colour with which they were adorned. Sumerian sculpture, like Egyptian, was generally polychrome, but very seldom does enough of the fugitive water-colour paint survive to give an idea of the original appearance of the figures and we have to judge of their effect by what are really only ghosts. Here not only do the eyes retain their inlay but the black paint of the hair and beards and even something of the flesh-tint remains; it is a plain wash of colour with no detail and no shading, but it enhances greatly that vivid realism which in his carving the artist was at such pains to achieve. With the help of the Tal Asmar sculptures we can judge far better than before Sumerian sculpture as a whole.



22, *a, b, c.* Terra-cotta figures for inlay in wall mosaics, Warka
 In *a* can be seen the clay cones used with the silhouetted
 figures (p. 68)

Preuss. Akad. d. Wissensch.



22, *d.* The columned court in the palace at Kish (p. 68)

Kish, Vol. I



25, a. Shell figures inlaid in slate



25, b. Shell and mother-of-pearl inlay from the palace at Kish (p. 69)



25, c. Pieces of mother-of-pearl inlay
Kish, Vol. I

Note on Chapter II

On the stratification at Warka see *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse*, No. 6, 1932, by A. v. Haller; the evidence from Ur for the sequence of Uruk and al 'Ubaid is recorded briefly in my provisional report in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. XIV, 4, p. 355 *seq.*; the full account will be given in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. IV, 'The Archaic Periods'. On the Anatolian connections the authority is H. Frankfort in the books quoted for Chapter I; such of the Carchemish material as has been published can be found in *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, Liverpool, Vol. VI, 1914. For Jamdat Nasr see E. Mackay, *Report on Excavations at Jemdet Nasr, Iraq*, Field Museum of Natural History. Anthropology, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, No. 3, Chicago, 1931. The seal-impressions from Ur, of this early period, will shortly be published as Vol. III of *Ur Excavations*, 'The Archaic Seal-Impressions', by L. Legrain.



24, *a*. A corbel-vaulted stone tomb-chamber, Ur (p. 70)



24, *b*. A vaulted stone tomb-chamber shewing advanced technique, Ur (p. 70)



25, *a*. Cement plaster on the doorway of a tomb-chamber (the blocking of the door is mud-plastered), Ur (p. 70)



25, *b*. A brick arch over the doorway of a tomb-chamber, Ur (p. 70)

Chapter III

*The Early Dynastic Period,
Part I. Architecture. The Treasures
of the Royal Cemetery*

Chapter III

THE HISTORY OF THE
REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST
BY JOHN BURNET



26, *a*. A tomb-chamber with a brick vault ending in an apse, Ur (p. 71)



26, *b*. A tomb-chamber roofed with a dome of limestone rubble, Ur (p. 71)



a. The wall of the First Dynasty
Ziggurat terrace (p. 72)



b. The façade of the temple at al 'Ubaid (p. 72)
27. Stone construction under the First Dynasty of Ur

Chapter III

The Early Dynastic Period, Part I. Architecture. The Treasures of the Royal Cemetery

Wherever remains of the Jamdat Nasr period have been found, at Ur or elsewhere, there has lain immediately above them a layer of ashes, the evidence of a conflagration. Above this layer the characteristic three-colour pottery is wholly absent, but there is a marked recrudescence of the old Uruk wares and in particular does the 'reserved slip' fabric¹ preponderate in such quantities as to symbolise a new historical phase. It would appear that the domination of the river country by the Jamdat Nasr foreigners had been brought to a violent end by a sudden uprising of that very nationalistic spirit to which their unification of the country had given birth, and a new age takes up the thread of progress not indeed at the point reached when the Jamdat Nasr invasion began but as under their suzerainty the Sumerian people had developed it on the lines of their own uncontaminated genius. It is perhaps to the hatred of the foreigner, to a determination to make a clean cut with the immediate past, that we may attribute the strange feature which for a long time served to define what we now term the Early Dynastic period: throughout the whole country² the builders, dis-

¹See above, p. 50.

²That is, throughout Sumer proper; further to the west, at Mari, where in the Early Dynastic period Sumerian art flourished, flat-

carding the flat-topped rectangular bricks which all past ages had employed, began with one accord to use the curious and awkward round-topped cake-shaped bricks which we call 'plano-convex'. For many centuries, down almost to the time of Sargon of Akkad, they were content with a material which cannot have been other than a handicap, and it was this persistence which at first gave specious unity to a long period wherein we can now distinguish very different stages of culture; their adoption of it in the first place can scarcely be explained except as a somewhat irrational attempt at self-assertion,¹ their retention of it only by the conservative force of Sumerian tradition.

The earliest important building of this period is a palace (constructed of plano-convex bricks) at Kish, of which Pl. 22, *d*, shews one court with a flight of shallow steps leading to the entrance-door; with its row of columns, made of mud bricks specially moulded, it is quite in the old Uruk tradition, and not less traditional in spirit are the mosaics which adorned its walls, though here we can see considerable progress in technique. The oldest mosaics (*v.* Pl. 9) had been made with clay cones only; in time animal motives were combined with the early geometrical patterns and at first these may have been executed in the same way, but later they were made in one piece, silhouetted figures of baked clay on which stamped circles recalled the primitive formation (Pl. 22, *b, c*), and then this pretence was dropped and the clay figures were simply set against a background of cone mosaic (Pl. 22, *a*). The final step was to extend the topped bricks continued in use. Possibly here the Jamdat Nasr tyranny had not been so hardly felt.

¹Other explanations, such as that the round-topped brick was an imitation of stone introduced by new-comers from a stone-using country, are no less far-fetched—and there was no foreign invasion at this time.

technique of the figures to the background also, and instead of the long pencil-like cones embedded in the plaster we find a mosaic of large or small pieces of flat stone secured by copper wire and bitumen to a wooden backing, or the figures might be inlaid in slabs of solid stone, as is the case with some of the Kish palace decoration (Pl. 23, *a*). This represents an advanced stage in the development of a process which goes back to the old pre-Flood days, but it is not in the method only that the consistency of Sumerian art tradition can be seen, for the subjects and the treatment of them link up the Kish mosaics both with earlier and with later times; some of the mother-of-pearl figures, especially the women, are almost identical with those from the Tal Asmar hoard (cf. Pls. 21, *c*, and 23, *b*), and others, such as the broken group of a man milking a cow, anticipate the finished products of the First Dynasty of Ur (*v.* Pl. 30, *a*). Already, too, here we have the two forms of inlay which are found side by side in the mosaics of the Royal Cemetery at Ur and in First Dynasty work; the larger figures cut in mother-of-pearl, and the women's heads in the same material, are flat, the inner detail being rendered by incised lines only, but some of the shell figures are modelled and so stand out from their background in low relief; it is perhaps an accident that the latter are more truly Sumerian in style than are the simply silhouetted figures.

Imposing as the Kish palace is in its ground-plan the building itself is too far ruined to give much information as to the structural methods employed in the Early Dynastic period: for knowledge of that sort we must turn to the Royal Tombs at Ur, for in them we have miniature reproductions, made for the dead, of the buildings in which living men were housed, and because they lie deep underground

they have preserved features which in constructions above-ground could not possibly have survived.

The tomb-chambers have walls of limestone rubble set in clay mortar and roofs either of limestone or of burnt brick. To-day they give a misleading appearance of rough and shoddy work, for they have been crushed by the weight of the soil above which has forced the always damp mortar out from between the courses, pushed the stones awry and dislodged the wall-facing, and it is only in the rare cases where there has been no great thrust that the walls still stand straight and retain their coating of smooth cement plaster (Pl. 25, *a*) and we can recognise the admirable quality of their construction; but even where the appearance has suffered the tombs illustrate a knowledge of architectural principles which is indeed surprising.

On Pl. 24, *a*, is shewn an example of a stone corbelled roof; starting from a certain point in the side walls each course is brought forward so as to overlap slightly the course below until the intervening space is made so narrow that cap-stones can be laid across it; meanwhile the walls themselves are carried up in solid masonry which acts as a counterpoise to balance the weight of the overhanging courses. This is the simplest and most primitive method of carrying a stone roof across an empty space. Pl. 24, *b*, shews a technical advance. Here the stone courses still project, but instead of lying flat they are tilted inwards and the uppermost stone serves at once as cap-stone and key-stone; it is a half-way step to the true voussoir construction. Pl. 25, *b*, shews a doorway in a rubble-built wall which is capped by a brick arch; the bricks are not shaped as voussoirs but they are laid radially and fragments of brick or pottery are inserted in the mortar between the outer ends of the bricks to keep the joints open; here then we have the true arch. On the next



28, *a.* al 'Ubaid temple: a mosaic column (pp. 41, 72)



28, *b.* al 'Ubaid temple: the great copper relief from above the door (p. 75)



29, *a.* al 'Ubaid temple: a copper statue of a bull (p. 75)



29, *b.* al 'Ubaid temple: a copper relief, part of a frieze (p. 75)

Plate (Pl. 26, *a*) is the roof of the same tomb-chamber, a barrel-vault formed of a series of ring arches; at the far end of the chamber bricks laid diagonally turn the square corners into curves and on them as pendentives there is built an apsidal end to the vault. On Pl. 26, *b*, is a view of the outside of a small tomb of limestone rubble and clay which was found with its walls and roof intact; the roof is a true dome resting on pendentives, constructed originally over a solid centering. From the first half then of the Early Dynastic period there are preserved to us actual examples of the column, the arch, the vault, the apse and the dome, proving that in the fourth millennium before Christ all these basic principles of architecture were freely used by the Sumerian builder: that the invention of them goes back to a yet earlier period¹ can scarcely be doubted, but even apart from that reasonable hypothesis we can assert that all are indigenous to the country; they had been evolved here, and for the knowledge of the more elaborate forms at any rate their later users were indebted to the Sumerians.

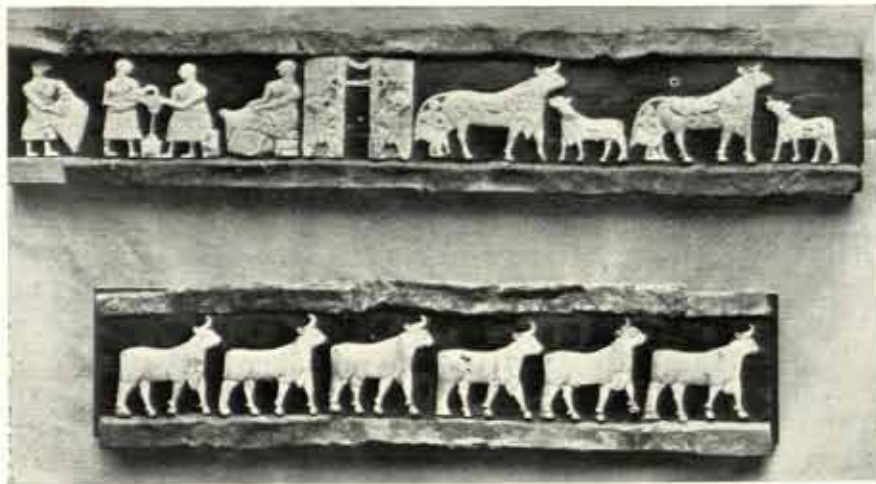
The use of limestone rubble for wall construction goes back, as has been remarked above (p. 56), to the Uruk period: it was a foreign custom which was an anomaly in the stoneless delta, but the tradition persisted, so far as religious buildings were concerned, right down to the end of the First Dynasty of Ur. The stonework was confined to the foundations and if it rose at all above ground was concealed by plaster; it was therefore not ornamental, and it served no practical purpose that would not have been fulfilled equally well by the 'damp-course' of burnt brick set in bitumen

¹The presence of the corbel vault does not necessarily imply priority in time or mean that the voussoir principle had not been discovered; corbelling was employed for the royal tombs of the Third Dynasty at a time when the true arch had been known for centuries and was employed in domestic houses of all classes.

which was ultimately to supplant it, but the custom, which probably enjoyed some religious sanction, died hard. A curious survival of it is seen (Pl. 27, *a*) in the retaining-wall of the terrace whereon stood the First Dynasty Ziggurat. Here the seemingly massive stone footings, which so far as they shewed at all above ground level were thickly plastered with clay and therefore indistinguishable from the brickwork above, were only one course thick; a mere skin masking the mud-brick core of a thirty-foot thick wall: it is the last concession which common-sense allowed to outworn prejudice, and thereafter the fashion which the Uruk people had brought with them from their mountain home disappears from Sumerian architecture.

At al 'Ubaid there was found a little temple dated by the inscription on its foundation-tablet to the reign of A-annipadda, second king of the First Dynasty of Ur (3100-3000 B.C.) which illustrates the rococo elaboration of architectural detail at the time. A flight of steps very solidly constructed in ashlar limestone and enclosed by balustrades of wood-panelled brickwork led up to the top of a platform whose stone foundations and walls relieved by shallow buttresses (Pl. 27, *b*) were altogether in the old tradition. On the platform rose a shrine, of which we are able to reconstruct the façade in detail, thanks to the fact that its walls had fallen outwards in great masses to which various members of the decoration were found still attached while others, whose purpose was in any case recognisable, had been flung down by the despoilers of the temple and heaped at the platform's foot.

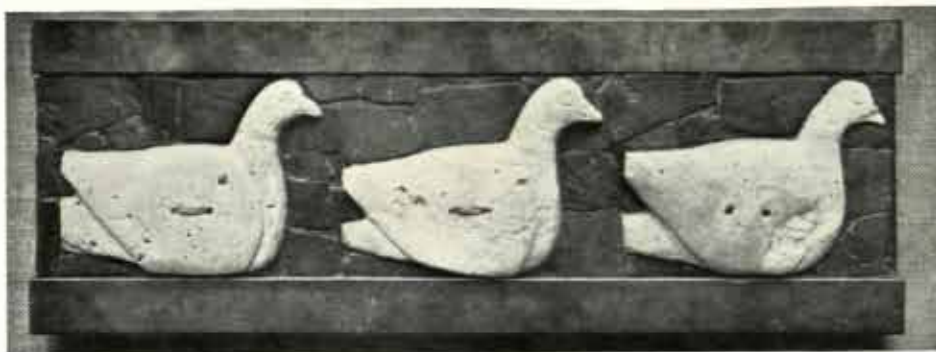
In front of the door (Pl. 31, *a*) was a porch whose column and roofing-beams, made of palm logs, were overlaid with sheet copper. The entrance was flanked by palm-columns sheathed in a mosaic of red and black stone and mother-of-



a. The 'dairy scene' and cattle: limestone figures

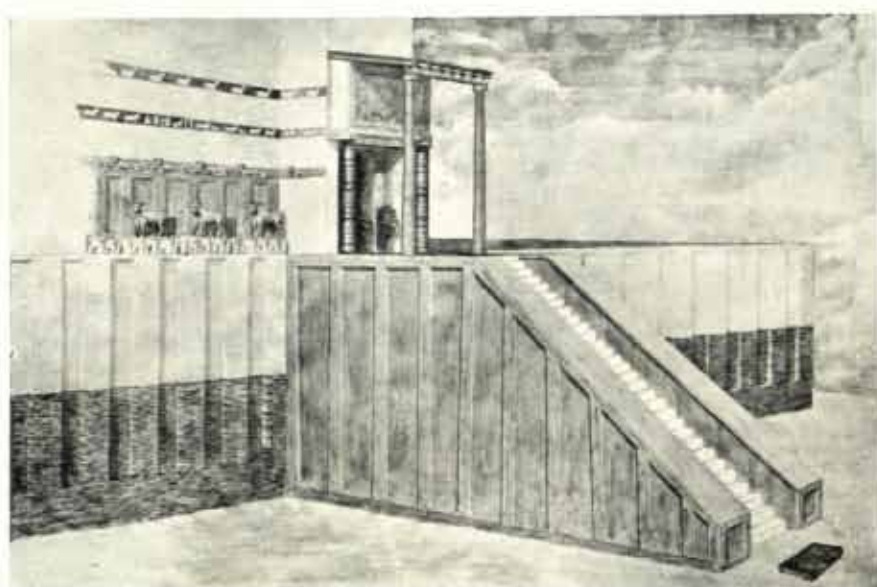


b. Cattle: shell figures



c. Birds: limestone figures

30. Mosaic friezes from the al 'Ubaid temple (p. 75)



51, *a*. Reconstruction of the façade of the temple at al 'Ubaid (p. 72)



51, *b*. Gold bowls from the Royal Cemetery (p. 75)

pearl (Pl. 28, *a*) which supported, above the lintel, a great relief of hammered copper whereon the victorious eagle grasps the two stags as his prey (Pl. 28, *b*): against the inner face of the door-jambs were copper lions, their bodies hammered in relief, their heads projecting in the round with inlaid eyes and mouths agape to shew red tongues and teeth of white shell. Along the edge of the platform, at the wall's foot, stood a row of copper statues of oxen (Pl. 29, *a*) made of thin sheet metal beaten over a curved wooden matrix; with the decay of the wood the metal, cracked and reduced by oxidisation almost to powder, has collapsed, and we possess little more than a caricature of the original, but enough remains to shew something of the dignity and of the sculpturesque quality of the work. Standing by these, or, more probably, let into the wall, were flower rosettes of clay and coloured stone; higher up was a copper frieze having, in high relief, a row of oxen shewn in the act of rising (Pl. 29, *b*), and in these better-preserved pieces the merit of the artist can more easily be seen. Higher up was a second frieze (Pl. 30, *a, b*), this time of mosaic, figures in shell or limestone (the latter once painted) set against a background of black stone; there are rows of cattle and a fresh version of the familiar scene in which men milk their cows outside the reed-built byre, but here there are also men, clean-shaven priests, who strain the milk and pour it into great store-jars; it is the farm of the goddess Ninkhursag, and her priests store the divine milk which was the food of her foster-son the king. Higher up yet was a third frieze, simple silhouettes of birds (Pl. 30, *c*) roughly cut and relying for their detail upon paint, also set against a black background and framed with copper bands. The wall itself must have been whitewashed.

It is an extraordinarily ornate little building (Pl. 31, *a*),

too ornate, and even when we first dug it out, knowing nothing of the art of the day, we recognised that it belonged to the decadence of a great period. There is a proper sense of fitness in the order of the decoration, with the sculpture in the round below, going up through the high relief of the copper frieze to the delicate modelling of the shell cattle and ending with the flat painted surfaces of the birds—though it might be urged that the mosaic friezes are too high above the line of sight—and both in the design and in the detail there is a strong feeling for style, but it is a style that has become traditional and almost stereotyped and the copper figures at least strike one as school pieces which have lost the freshness and love of nature instinct in similar works of an older date. For the study of the architecture of the Early Dynastic period has taken us too far ahead in time; to appreciate the other arts it is necessary to turn back to the Royal Cemetery which, earlier by some generations or some few centuries, represents the climax from which the First Dynasty marks a decline.

The cemetery would in date seem to fall between c. 3500 and 3200 B.C., coming half-way between the time of the Kish palace and the First Dynasty of Ur, and for the illustration of the art of its time offers a mass of material such as no other period can rival. The objects are of course limited in type to what might be considered grave furniture, but even so the range is very great, for any kind of personal belonging was a suitable offering to the needs or the glorification of the dead. The pottery is disappointingly plain—there are no painted wares at all and even the simple forms of decoration which flourished in the Uruk period have been abandoned; all is purely utilitarian. The stone vases, though finely made and of choice material, are practically never enriched by carving; there is no doubt but that carved



52. Gold vessels from the Royal Cemetery (p. 75)



35. The gold helmet of Mes-kalam-dug (p. 76)

stone vessels existed, carrying on the old tradition, but for some reason or another they were not placed in the graves. The range of shapes is large and shews a distinct break with the Jamdat Nasr fashions; many of them bear a striking resemblance to Egyptian examples and it is tempting to see in them signs of influence being brought to bear on Sumer by trade with the Nile valley, but in no other branch of art can anything of the sort be discerned and although the possibility of such trade must be kept in view its importance, if it existed, was certainly not far-reaching. It is in metal-work and in shell engraving and mosaic that the Royal Cemetery best illustrates the art of its time, and since much of the first was in gold and gold is virtually indestructible we should naturally look more particularly to the gold objects in order fairly to appreciate the merit of the artists.

From a technical standpoint the Sumerian goldsmith of the fourth millennium was on an equal footing with his fellow-craftsmen of any subsequent age; his manual skill rivalled theirs, nor was there any process other than those implying chemical knowledge with which he was unacquainted; in plain hammered work, repoussé, chasing, engraving, granulated work and filigree and in casting he was master of his craft; it is a claim which the examples here published will fully vindicate. But they exhibit much more than mere skill of hand. The plain gold bowls on Pl. 31, *b*, and the chalice on Pl. 38 possess a purity of outline which in the case of the latter is curiously un-Oriental and reminds one rather of classical Rome; the fluted tumbler on Pl. 32 combines exquisite shape with an ornament that is perfectly proportioned to it and emphasizes instead of concealing the essential form; this and the fluted bowl on Pl. 32 call for no comment or criticism because they are simply as good as goldsmith's work can be. The wig-helmet of Mes-kalam-

dug, Pl. 33, is a veritable *tour de force*; beaten up from the flat, with the locks of hair hammered in relief and the individual hairs represented by fine chased lines, it is a magnificent piece of workmanship. The idea of making a wig in solid metal might strike one as ridiculous, but the artist has here so sublimated it, making a decorative pattern of his ordered curls and aiming rather at the play of lights on his delicately modelled surface than at any effect of realism, that he achieves real beauty in despite of his subject. The same success is seen in the bull's head on Pl. 34. Made of thin sheet gold hammered over a wooden matrix, it decorated the sound-box of a lyre, and there was some convention, probably ritualistic in origin, whereby the bull had to be provided with a beard; in this case the beard is of lapis-lazuli set in a silver frame: very few people, looking at it, have noticed the absurdity of a bull having a beard, and a blue beard at that; the only impression they have got is that of strength and dignity—precisely the impression which the artist wanted to convey. From another lyre, decorated with mosaics in red and blue stone and shell and enriched with gold and silver binding, comes the magnificent gold bull's head on Pl. 40, *a*; in its quiet majesty it is totally unlike the 'blue-beard' head wherein the dominant note is that of the untamed force of nature; it is completely idealised, yet it remains essentially the bull. In the representation of animals more than in anything else does the genius of the Sumerian artist of this age fulfil itself; animals he knew and understood, but he is never content with mere representation; his is an abstract art unconcerned with the individual and the accidental, seeing through them to the type and translating that into line and mass with, as a rule, the utmost economy of means. The nearest approach to pure realism is in the little donkey on Pl. 35, the 'mascot' from the pole of Queen



54. Bull's head of gold with lapis-lazuli
beard: from a lyre (p. 76)



55. The donkey 'mascot'
from Queen Shub-ad's chariot (p. 76)

Shub-ad's chariot,¹ a charmingly light-hearted conception; the physical traits of the animal are faithfully rendered, but in the turn of the head and the up-and-down twist of the ears there is a humorous insistence on character such as is very rare in ancient art. Gaiety of another kind enters into the polychrome—one might almost say chryselephantine—figure of a goat which we have called for obvious reasons 'the ram caught in a thicket'. The head and legs of the animal are of gold, the belly of silver, the body-fleece of pieces of carved shell but the fleece on the shoulders of lapis-lazuli, and of lapis-lazuli are the eye-pupils, the horns and the beard; the tree to whose branches its front legs were chained is of gold and it stands on a pedestal whose sides were silver-plated and its top of pink and white mosaic (Pl. 36); the lavish use of rich materials reminds one of the later Italian renaissance and is at first startling in its *milieu* of Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium before Christ, yet it is indeed thoroughly characteristic of that civilisation. The elegance and lightness of the figure harmonise perfectly with the brilliance of its colour—there is all the agility of the goat translated into art, but at the same time it is a dedicated animal and possesses a curious solemnity; the momentary poise which, as the drawings on the shell plaques prove, the artist knew so well how to seize is here frozen into permanence and life has become statuesque.

The quality which distinguishes the animal sculpture of the period is perhaps best described not in words but by comparison with very similar work of a rather later date. If

¹Sumerian taste did not approve of gold and silver in juxtaposition; with silver only a light-coloured electrum was employed, as here, where the rein-ring is of silver and the donkey is a solid casting in a very pale yellow alloy. It should be remarked that the lower legs of the animal were found bent and distorted and could not be properly repaired.

we set side by side such masterpieces from the Royal Cemetery as the bull's head on Pl. 39, *a*, or the copper head on Pl. 37 and the reliefs from the First Dynasty temple frieze at al 'Ubaid or the bull's head of the same date illustrated on Pl. 39, *b*, the difference is not far to seek. Admirable as the latter are when looked at by themselves, in comparison they lack just that sympathy and confidence which raise the older sculptures to another plane; they are seen as school pieces, repetitive, the work of pupils more concerned with the tradition than with the subject, sure of their technique but not daring to risk self-expression.

It must be remembered that all the objects whereby we attempt to estimate the art of this time are objects of applied art; the animals' heads, decorated harps or lyres such as that on Pl. 40, *b*; none of them were independent, all served as decoration and were therefore subject to rules extraneous to themselves; it is therefore the more remarkable that apart from their context they should rank so highly. The fact is that the Sumerians were capable of making things of ordinary use to beautiful designs, the details might be excellent, but the whole of which they were part was not less well planned and executed. On Pl. 41, *a*, is shewn a lyre made of thin sheet silver laid over a wooden core; the decay of the wood and of the metal has reduced it to a mere ghost of what it once was, but without making too much allowance for that accident one cannot but recognise the beauty of form imparted to an instrument whose main lines were conditioned purely by its use. It is no wonder that the work of these men set the rule for future generations, so that a description of a harp made for Gudea in the twenty-fourth century B.C. would apply equally to one from the prehistoric tombs of Ur. Perhaps the most striking example of the endurance of artistic traditions traceable to this age is



56. 'The 'ram caught in a thicket' (p. 77)



57. Copper head of a bull,
and shell plaques, from a lyre (p. 78)

given by a copper repoussé ornament, probably from a shield, with a design of two lions, each trampling down a fallen man, and a rosette in the middle (Pl. 41, *b*); had it been found in the north country it would have been confidently assigned to an Assyrian craftsman of about the eighth century B.C.; in Cyprus or on the Syrian coast it would have been compared with Phoenician work of the same date; found at Ur in one of the Royal Tombs it can be seen only as an original from which Assyrians and Phoenicians alike ultimately drew their inspiration, but the original has a freshness and a life which the copy cannot reproduce.

There is another medium in which the skill of the Sumerian artist finds ready expression. Various objects, harps, gaming-boards and articles of furniture, were enriched with inlaid plaques cut from the solid central column of the large conch-shell; the plaques were necessarily small but took an excellent surface, in texture and in colour not unlike ivory. Sometimes the pieces were cut into silhouetted figures, their inner detail rendered by engraved lines, which were set against a background of lapis-lazuli mosaic in the old tradition of wall decoration, here reduced in scale; such is the remarkable 'Standard' (Pl. 42—*frontispiece*) with its frieze-like rows of men and animals picturing the field of battle and the celebration of victory; or, more rarely, the silhouetted figure might be itself carved in low relief as in the case of the lid of the silver toilet-box of Queen Shub-ad (Pl. 43, *f*), where the lion tears the carcase of the wild goat. More often the plaque retains its rectangular shape and the subject is engraved upon it, either in simple lines which are filled in with red and black paste, or the ground surrounding the figure might be cut back and filled in with black paint (as in the *niello* work in silver of a later age) so that it stood out in

a bold pattern of white on black. The value of the plaques lies in this, that although they were intended for inlay and were therefore subordinate elements in a decorative whole, they were individually independent; each was treated as a thing in itself, a minute canvas on which the artist could draw according to his fancy; the instrument-maker required so many squares of black and white to secure a general colour effect, but the man who decorated the separate squares was given a free hand untrammelled by any considerations of 'applied art'. Of course he was a mere craftsman, not one of the recognised artists of the day, any more than the painters of Greek red-figured cases were recognised artists, and of course he tended to have his repertoire of stock designs, so that we have many versions of the same subject which were probably based on the work of better artists, but he was himself a trained draughtsman and he had, sometimes, some of the imagination and originality that were then in the air. The result is that in the plaques we have a gallery of engravings that might be compared to the unsigned woodcuts in an early Italian printed book; the nearest thing that we shall ever possess to the freehand drawings or paintings of the time, they give some idea of the qualities those lost masterpieces may have had.

Here, as elsewhere, the Sumerian succeeds least in his representation of the human figure; it can scarcely have been lack of observation or of skill—in one case, Pl. 43, c, we have what looks like an impromptu sketch and it is infinitely superior to the more laboured and conscious little creatures on the Standard—and one can only suppose that there was some religious inhibition which had retarded progress in that particular field; but here again, as in the metal-work, his skill in the treatment of animal subjects is extraordinary. His single figures are instinct with character,



58, *a*. Gold model cockle-shells, chalice and lamp from the Royal Cemetery (p. 75)



58, *b*. Gold dagger and sheath



59, *a*. Copper head of a bull, Royal Cemetery period (p. 78)



59, *b*. Copper head of a bull, First Dynasty of Ur (p. 78)

—the stealthiness of the slinking leopard, the arrogance of the bull, the wild goat's agility and the proud challenge of the antlered stag are faithfully portrayed, and at the same time realism is subordinate to decorative values; in the grouped figures (Pl. 44) there is a composition almost heraldic in its formality which however does not necessarily exclude a violence of action intensely dramatic; in the series of plaques on Pl. 43, *b*, where animals are shewn playing the parts of men, there is a comic spirit which does not in the least interfere with the faithful characterisation of the animals, and here too there is a delicacy and sureness of line and balance of black and white in the pattern which are altogether admirable. Were these the only relics left to us of Sumerian art in the Early Dynastic age we should still have to rank it very high.

Note on Chapter III

The use of 'plano-convex' bricks is recorded in every report of excavations dealing with this period. In the Oriental Institute of Chicago's *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilisation*, No. 7, P. Delougaz deals very fully with their character and the methods of their employment (with some of the theories put forward I cannot agree). The Kish palace is described by S. Langdon in *Kish*, Vol. I (Paris, 1924), and by E. Mackay, *A Sumerian Palace and the 'A' Cemetery at Kish*, *Field Museum of Natural History. Anthropology, Memoirs*, Vol. I, No. 2, Chicago, 1929. On the early methods of mosaic work see *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse*, No. 2, 1932 (*Ausgrabungen in Warka*), by J. Jordan.

The architecture of the Royal tombs at Ur is fully dealt with in Chapter X of *Ur Excavations*, Vol. II, 'The Royal Cemetery', that of the temple built by A-anni-padda, with its mosaics and other decoration, in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. I, 'al 'Ubaid'. To the gold and other treasures from Ur the greater part of Vol. II, 'The Royal Cemetery', is devoted.



40, *a*. Gold bull's head, from a lyre (p. 76)



40, *b*. A silver lyre (p. 78)



41, *a*. A silver lyre, boat-shaped, decorated with the figure of a stag (p. 78)



41, *b*. A copper relief of lions and men (p. 79)

Chapter IV

*The Early Dynastic Period, Part II,
and the Age of Sargon of Akkad.*

*The Development of Sculpture
in Stone*



Chapter IV

The Early Dynastic Period, Part II, and the Age of Sargon of Akkad.

The Development of Sculpture in Stone

The Early Dynastic period was, in art, one of internal development practically uncontaminated by external influences. It has been remarked that the forms of some of the stone vases are reminiscent of Egypt, but nowhere else can Egyptian influence be detected. In the Royal Cemetery there was found a single specimen of the painted pottery then in vogue in Elam, but it stands unique and neither in the pottery nor in any other craft is Sumer seen to borrow from its Eastern neighbour. Already in this period there had begun certain commercial relations with the Indus valley which in the time of Sargon were to be further extended, but again—probably because imports were chiefly of raw materials—the Indus culture appears to have had no effect on the Sumerians (*v. p. 130*).

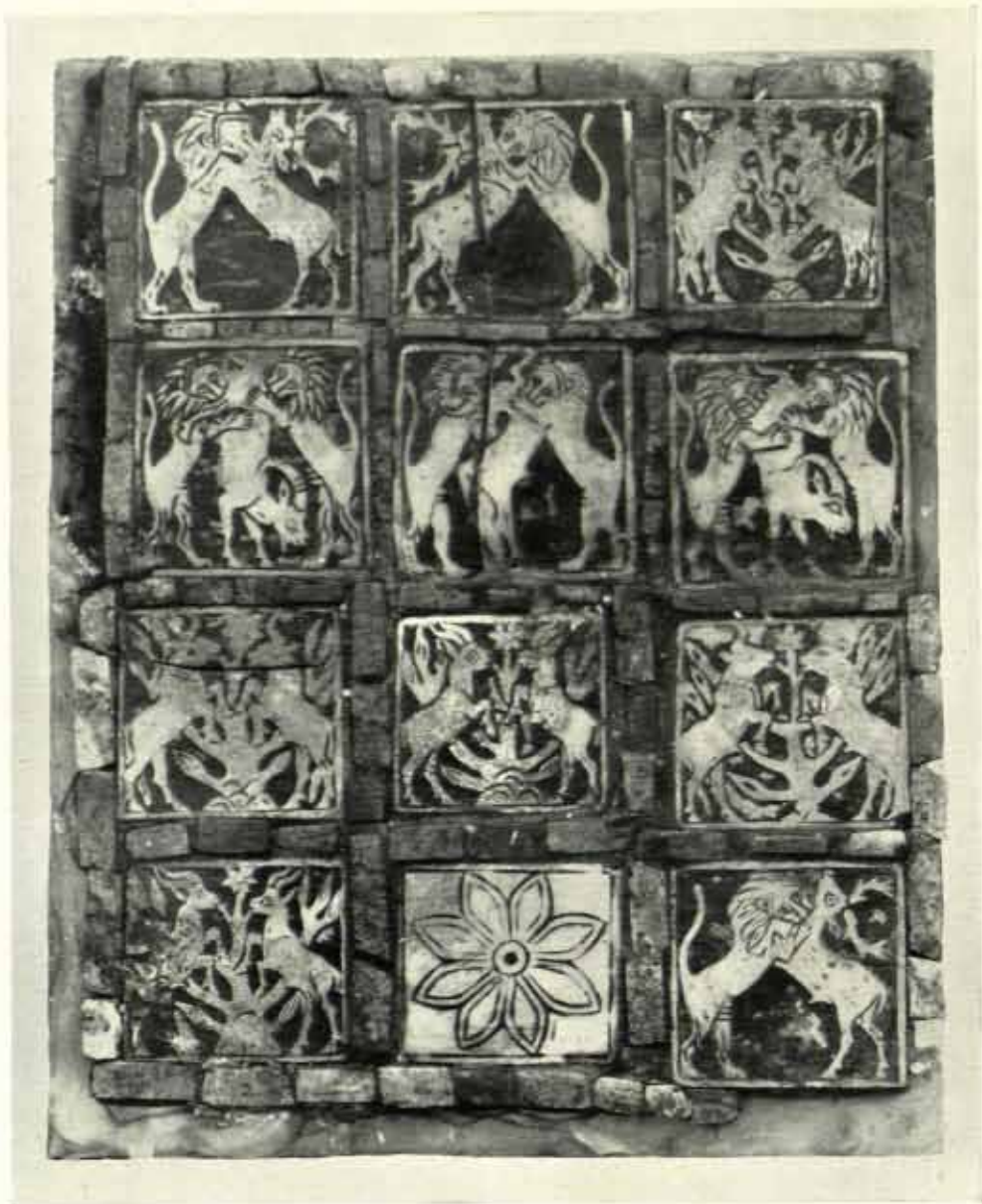
Not the least important achievement of the age was the unification of art, the creation of a really national school. We have seen (*v. above*, p. 60) how in a preceding period the output of a northern centre such as Eshnunna (Tal Asmar) differed in spirit and in execution from that of the more purely Sumerian south: the political unity which Jamdat Nasr had imposed on the whole valley of the Two

Rivers brought North and South into contact and did away with such local peculiarities as had flourished under the old city states, and when under the suzerainty of Erech the new nationalism found expression its utterance was no longer in varying dialects but uniform. A concrete illustration of this truth is given by discoveries made respectively at Ur and at Khafaje near Baghdad.

In the rubbish above the Royal Cemetery we found the lower part of a rectangular limestone slab carved in relief with a scene of men leading an empty chariot (Pl. 45, *a*). At Khafaje Dr. Preusser found a similar slab carved in alabaster, of which the whole of the lower left corner was missing; not only was the subject the same but the treatment was so far identical that a cast from the Ur relief could be used to complete that from Khafaje and the join was so good as to be scarcely noticeable (Pl. 45, *b*). The two, of course, may have been the work of the same hand, but if so the discovery witnesses to the dissemination of art over the whole country; or the Khafaje slab, which is in a northern stone, may be a local copy of the Ur original, or vice versa, or there may have been a common model from which both are derived; designs may have been circulated round the different centres of production: but however it be explained the fact of identical carvings existing at places so far apart is symptomatic of the new order. Nor is the case altogether unique. At Mari, on the Syria-Iraq frontier, excavations have brought to light sculpture and inlay of the Early Dynastic period which is indistinguishable from that found at Kafaje and Tal Asmar two hundred and fifty miles to the east: Mari was later to be the seat of a dynasty ruling all Sumer and Akkad, but up to this time it had made no appearance in literary tradition; nothing is known yet of its earlier history, and it is likely enough that it had only



43, a, b, c, d, e, f, g. Examples of shell inlay and engraving on shell (pp. 79 et seq.)



44. Engraved shell plaques from a gaming-board shewing heraldic treatment of animal themes (p. 81)

recently been caught up in the stream of Sumerian culture, yet already it bears witness to the uniformity which that culture had attained.

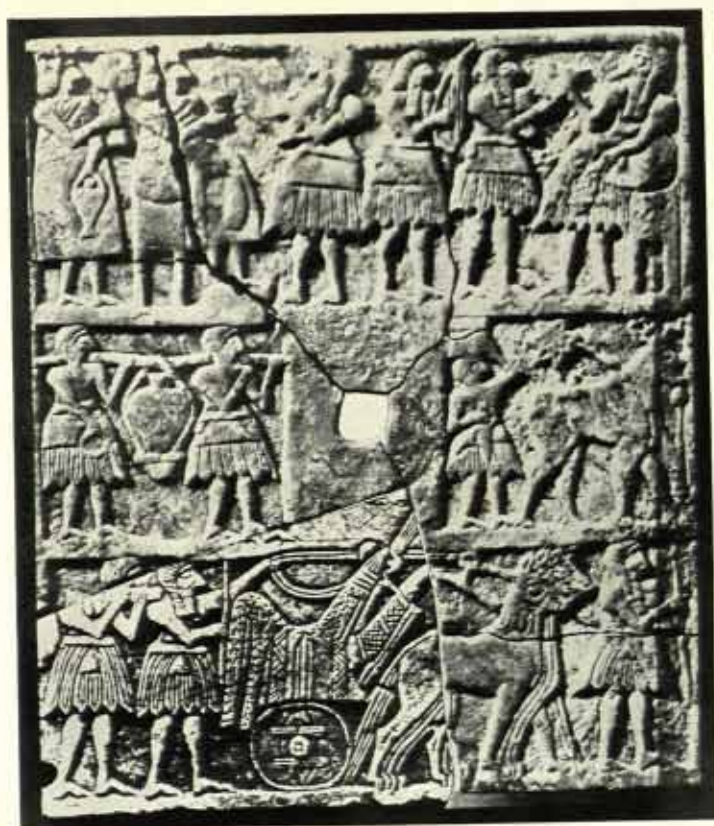
From this time then until the end of the First Dynasty of Ur in tracing the development of art we are free to draw our illustrations from any part of the country without the risk of vitiating the argument by confusing the work of disparate schools, and in the field of sculpture in stone the concession is of value because the material is none too abundant. Almost the first evidence of the great merit of Sumerian art was afforded by the discoveries of stone sculptures—the series of Gudea figures from Tello—but for the earlier periods such are few and far between. For this there is good reason. Most of the sculptures, whether in relief or in the round, were intended for temples; either they represented gods, and their place was in the sanctuary, or they were *ex votos*, figuring their human subjects in the attitude of prayer, destined to stand before the gods in perpetual adoration. Not many early temples have been excavated, and since most of the old cities were again and again captured by enemies and their temples were the first places to be looted, such as have been excavated have contained little; ancient records are full of lamentations over statues that conquerors have carried away, and it is only in some deliberately concealed hoard like that of Tal Asmar that the modern digger can expect reward. Moreover, statues were always, even in antiquity, relatively rare because they were for the most part made of materials not found in the country but imported at considerable expense, and therefore they were essentially luxuries; generally speaking it was only a prince or a ruler who could commission his portrait in stone or make so costly an offering to his god.

Because all stone had to be imported into the lower river

valley the influence of material on style is particularly strong in the case of Sumerian sculpture. It affected even the subject. Except for carvings on a quite small scale, for which mere odds and ends of stone would serve, practically every statue in the round and nearly all reliefs represent men or gods; the animal forms in which, as the last chapter shewed, the Sumerian artist so excelled do not appear in large-scale work in stone; the material was too expensive to be used for such merely decorative purposes. It was expensive not merely in its prime cost but by its nature. The worker in metal who failed in a casting or was dissatisfied with a relief could re-melt the gold or copper and start afresh with no loss except that of labour, but the sculptor who spoilt a piece of stone had ruined what he could not replace; therefore he had to stint himself of experience as well as learn economy of method. In the early days the only stones used were the soft kinds—limestone, alabaster and gypsum—which are most easy to work, and as these are found in northern Mesopotamia sculpture begins in the north and it is there that we find it indulging in such experiments of undercutting, etc., as distinguish the Tal Asmar figures (Pl. 20, *b*). But even limestone and alabaster must have been tolerably costly by the time they had been transported to the south, and it was the south, culturally more advanced, that was to set the standard of style; though easy to cut, these stones were fragile and the bold example of the northern workmen could not be followed without undue risk. From the very beginning therefore the true Sumerian sculpture in stone is timid in execution, and the limitations which their material imposed on its earliest exponents gave rise to a tradition that was never quite outgrown. Relief is always low and there is never an attempt to detach the figure from its ground; effect had to be obtained with the minimum of actual carving. Statues

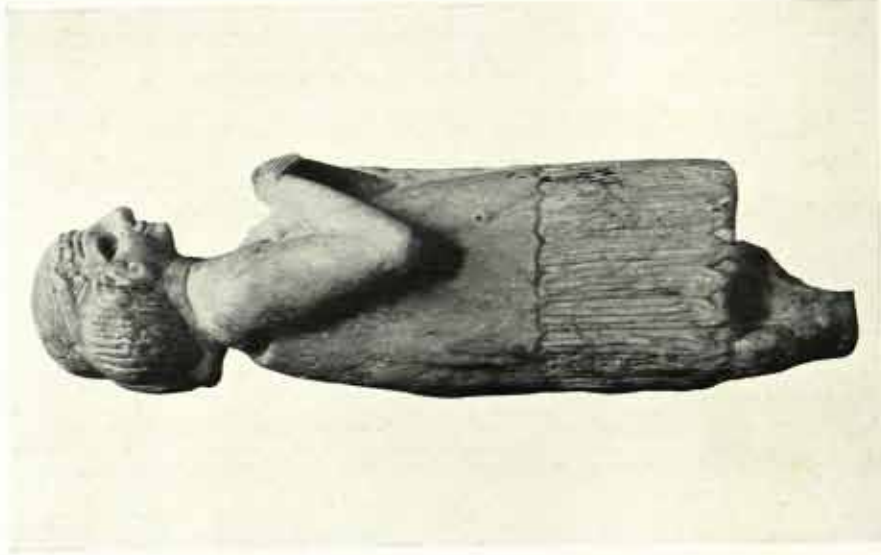


a. Ur: fragment of limestone plaque



b. Khafaje: alabaster plaque, the left lower corner completed by a cast from *a*

45. Sculptured stone slabs from Ur and Khafaje (p. 86)



46, *a*. Limestone statue (p. 89)



46, *b*. Limestone statue from the Royal Cemetery (p. 89)

in the round were for the most part small, the weight of the body had to have proper support in the form of a pillar behind the legs, the whole figure had to be kept so far as might be a solid block, and the arms could not be separated from it; to compare one of these stone figures with, for example, the 'ram caught in a thicket' (Pl. 36) is to understand the influence of material on art. All the white stone work was painted, and the artist relied in no small degree on colour to atone for his technical shortcomings or to enrich what was already good; especially in the case of the reliefs must this be borne in mind, for cutting that may seem clumsy when the work is seen as it was never meant to be seen was perhaps best calculated to give, in combination with colour, the desired effect. The early reliefs are very strongly influenced by the old traditions of mosaic: thus in the case of the Khafaje and Ur slabs already mentioned (Pl. 45) the figures, cut with the minimum of internal modelling, are separated by an almost vertical edge from the plane of the background; were the latter filled in with coloured paste (as it certainly once was, for it is intentionally left rough) the resemblance to the mosaic Standard would be obvious: and the curious mythological slab on Pl. 47, *b*, actually formed part of the mosaic frieze of the al 'Ubaid temple and must have been indistinguishable from the genuine inlay.

It was not the custom to put statues with the dead, but one grave in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, that of a soldier, did by exception contain a full-length figure of a woman sculptured in limestone and so supplies us with a relatively dated illustration of the early art. The statue (Plate 46, *b*) is only about ten inches high but in spite of its small scale it clearly shews the disadvantages under which the artist laboured, for it is made up of two pieces of stone which had to be fastened together by a wooden tenon, and the girth

of the original block was insufficient for its purpose, so that while the front of the figure is fully carved in the round the back is flat and shapeless and where the chignon ought to have projected the stone gave out and the hair had to be completed by an addition in plaster. It was a polychrome work, the eyes inlaid with shell and lapis-lazuli, black paste inset in the groove of the eyebrows, lapis-lazuli inlay running above the forehead to represent the fillet that bound the hair, and the hair and the markings of the fleece skirt were painted black and there were traces of red colour on the face. The woman stands in the conventional attitude with her hands clasped over her breast and the stiff posture and the formless sheath of the heavy dress are in the regular tradition; we have seen them in the less eccentric figures from the Tal Asmar hoard and shall recognise them again in the great works of the Gudea age; they are no sign of incompetence but are due to a theory of art which will become evident as more examples of it are studied.

There are in museums a fair number of statuettes of the period, all more or less alike and differing rather in the skill of their execution than in their general type. One of the best is that from the British Museum shewn on Pl. 46, *a*, in which there is an unusual lightness in the figure and more than the usual success in individual characterisation—here, obviously, is someone alert, whimsical and strong-willed: but this individuality is obtained without any sacrifice of the conventions, by good surface modelling rather than by any change of proportion or balance; it is the work of a better artist keeping to the rules which bound his fellows.

Apart from the standing figures of adorants another attitude was permitted to the sculptor, or rather, one suspects, was sometimes enforced on him by the shape of the block given him to carve, and of such we have a dated specimen in



a. Statue of Kur-lil, from al 'Ubaid (p. 91)



b. Mythological relief, limestone, from
al 'Ubaid (p. 89)

47. Sculpture of the First Dynasty of Ur



a. Alabaster figure of a cow



b. Limestone figures of rams, supports of a throne
48. Sculpture of the First Dynasty of Ur (p. 91)

the trachyte statue of Kur-lil (?) found in the First Dynasty temple at al 'Ubaid. The man (Pl. 47, *a*) is seated with his legs crossed under him and his hands folded in the usual way, the upper part of the torso bare, a heavy skirt enveloping the body from the breast downwards; but here the modelling of the body is reduced to the barest minimum, the limbs are scarcely differentiated, there is a mere suggestion of form rendered with surprising success but with a more than strict economy of means.

The typical Sumerian statue is draped, but it is clear that the artist was not interested in drapery; where the Greek found in the folds and swirls of drapery one of the most exquisite motives of art the Sumerian was content with an envelope without texture and almost without form, a painted sheath beneath which the body scarcely shewed. For the body he accepted certain fixed conventions, the squat proportions, the square shoulders, the exaggeratedly pointed elbows, and although he might spend pains on the elaboration of details such as the hands and feet he was throughout concerned with the type, not the individual, regarding the body not as a thing of intrinsic beauty but as something to be symbolised by certain effects of balanced mass and line arranged according to a rigid formula. It is an abstract art which extends even to animal sculpture; in the little figure of a seated bull carved in white calcite shewn on Pl. 48, *a*, one of a series of small figures belonging to this period, there is indeed the lively appreciation of animal nature which the works in metal would lead us to expect, but it is by the manipulation of mass, a graduation of planes effected with the minimum of actual relief, that form is expressed. So too in the two limestone *protomoi* of rams which probably supported the throne of a god's statue (Pl. 48, *b*); the workmanship is rough and summary as be-

fits mere furnishings whose function it is to be unobtrusive, but the design is full of dignity and force and the animal type is happily rendered; but it is an abstract conception of the ram that is presented, not the individual creature, and with what paucity of means!

Thus far had art gone under the First Dynasty of Ur. Soon after 3000 B.C. that dynasty fell and there ensued a period of anarchy in Sumer, one city state after another establishing a short-lived hegemony over its neighbours, only in its turn to be ousted from power: the disorganisation of society is faithfully reflected in the sculpture of the time, and to turn from the statues of the First Dynasty to the reliefs produced for Ur-Nina of Lagash, one of the struggling aspirants to kingship, is to see every sign of temporary decadence. Lagash was probably always provincial and backward, even the writing of its inscriptions being curiously archaic compared with that of other centres, but the numerous limestone slabs carved in honour of Ur-Nina now preserved in the Louvre and at Constantinople are almost shocking in their crudity (Pl. 49, *a*). There is no sense of composition in them—the ruler and his family had to be represented, and they are simply placed in rows so as to cover the field, and the greater size allotted to the ruler is due to political, not artistic considerations; every square inch had to be filled, and if the figures did not fill it inscriptions were scrawled across the empty space and allowed to impinge on the figures also—there was a *horror vacui* which had to be satisfied at all costs—and the cutting of the reliefs is for the most part so poor that their defacement, it must be confessed, does not greatly matter. One small stela found at Ur illustrates Lagash's lack of technical ability; it is of granite, perhaps the earliest example that has come down to us of the use of hard stone by the Sumerian sculptor, and

it has completely baffled the craftsman; the material was too stubborn for his cutting tools and he has had to do all the work by grinding, with the result that there is a blurred series of misunderstood curves from which the design scarcely emerges at all (Pl. 49, *b*). For the moment it would seem that art had returned to its infancy, but even at Lagash a few generations brought improvement more on the old lines and probably in other parts of the country the decadence had not been so thorough; it is unfortunate that for our knowledge of this period we have to rely almost entirely on the works of the Lagash school, and the impression that they give may well be an unfair one.

At any rate such objects as a carved mace-head (Pl. 50, *a*) dedicated by Enannatum, the third ruler after Ur-Nina, does shew that the artist of Lagash had recovered something of the old mastery of material; the cutting is bold and free and the design, however unoriginal, is well spaced and well adapted to the form of the mace. But the outstanding monument of the reign is the diorite 'Stela of the Vultures' which is one of the glories of the Louvre; only fragments of it survive, but these are enough to shew how great an advance had been made since Ur-Nina's time. Old traditions have not indeed been wholly shaken off; there is still the *horror vacui* which insists on overcrowding the field, still the convention whereby social importance regulates the size of figures, and in the latter a mechanical sameness; but there is a sense of decorative values which was wholly lacking before. Instead of the figures being haphazard they are used as elements in a pattern; in one way the monument is pictorial, an historical chronicle in stone, and the incidents of the tale are very clearly told—the march to battle, the advance of the phalanx over the corpse-strewn field, the burial of the king's dead and the vultures devouring the bodies of his enemies,

but in another it is pure design. The soldiers of the phalanx—and it is amusing to observe the kind of artistic shorthand by which the spears multiply their number—make with their square shields a de-humanised background which throws into relief the isolated figure of the king (Pl. 50, *b*), and in the scene below the ranks of little men with sloped weapons, all of a pattern, are an effective contrast to the leader in his war-chariot. With the stela in mind we are not surprised to find that a generation later the statue of Entemena (Pl. 51, *b*) brings us back into the full stream of Sumerian tradition.

The statue, which was found at Ur, is headless but otherwise well preserved; it is of diorite, and stands, without the head, some thirty inches high. It shews the king in the usual attitude of adoration; the figure is squat and grotesquely rotund, the full skirt of elaborately dressed fleece encloses the body like a barrel, and the general heaviness is not lightened by the block behind the feet which supports the body's weight; but on the other hand the arms and breast and hands are carefully modelled and the highly polished surface emphasizes the modelling with a calculated play of light and shade; here at last the sculptor instead of finding the hard stone an obstacle has known how to turn its qualities to his own use. In point of style there is little to distinguish Entemena from the statues of the Royal Cemetery or First Dynasty age, but at least the ground lost during the Lagash interregnum has been regained and with that recovery the artist has acquired skill in dealing with a material with which his predecessors had been unable to cope; it was not an unimportant advance, for with the use of diorite and basalt—dark volcanic stones—sculpture had to dispense with the adventitious aid of paint and to rely on its own resources; the treatment of



a. Limestone relief from Tello
Déc. en Chaldée

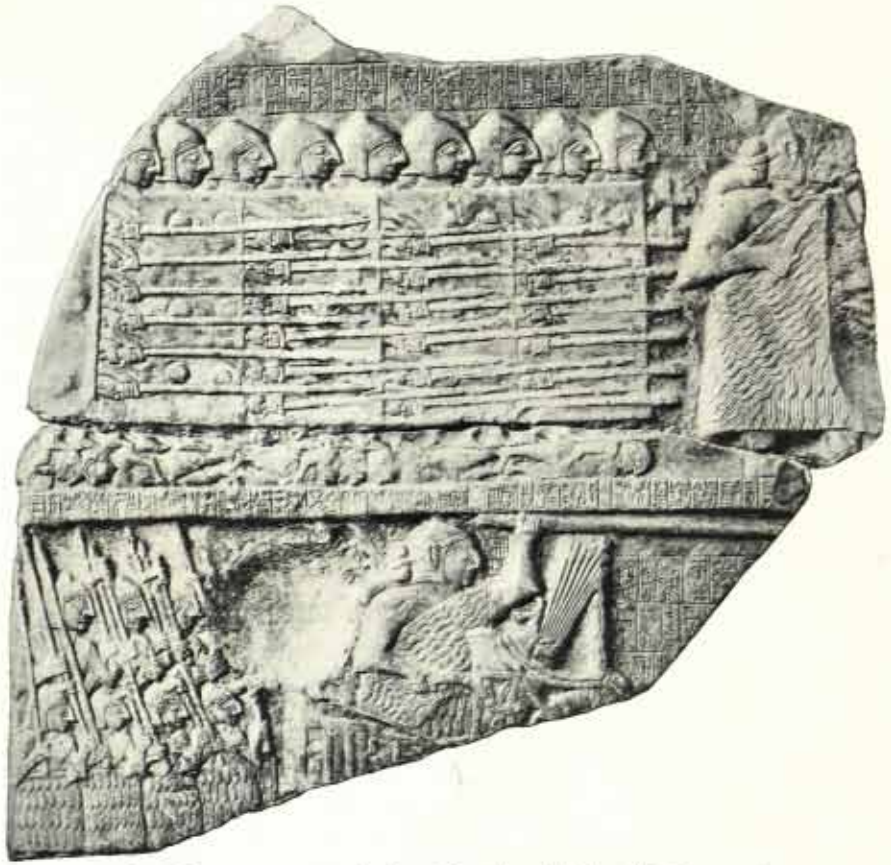


b. Granite stela from Ur

49. Sculptures of Ur-Nina of Lagash (p. 92)



a. Limestone mace-head



b. Fragment of the 'Stela of the Vultures'

Déc. en Chaldée

50. Sculptures of Enannatum of Lagash (p. 95)

surface acquired a significance which it had never before possessed.

In arts other than sculpture the silver vase inlaid with electrum which also bears Entemena's name (Pl. 51, *a*) helps to bridge the gap between the Royal Cemetery and the Sargonid age and carries on the old traditions both of technique and of design. It is a splendid piece of goldsmith's work and isolated though it is it shews that the Sumerian spirit, hard-hit by social disorders, was still alive and needed only the encouragement of ordered government and ease to be as fertile as ever. That ordered government it had in a measure enjoyed under the Lagash rulers, but theirs had been at best a partial and a precarious tenure (they are not even mentioned in the lists of reigning kings) and it is perhaps for that reason that the art wears so provincial an aspect; now a more thorough unification of the country was to be effected, but in a way which brought new influences to bear on art.

In the twenty-sixth century B.C.¹ Sargon, a semitic adventurer, made himself master of Sumer and established a new capital at Akkad. That there had always been a semitic element in the composite Sumerian race is certain, but in the north country, nearer to its original home, it was stronger, and constant infiltration down the river valley had upset the balance and produced a preponderatingly semitic population: now the semite was in power and the Sumerians of the south had to work for a foreign master. There was no artistic revolution. The south had always led the way in civilisation and the north had absorbed its traditions too wholeheartedly to wish to abandon them; in many ways it must have been difficult for onlookers to detect the

¹The actual date is in dispute; Sargon's accession is placed at the latest at 2528 B.C., by others at 2630 B.C.

change, and yet we do find ourselves, rather suddenly, face to face with a development which does not seem to spring naturally from roots in the past but suggests the working of a mind differently formed.

The continuity of tradition is clearly illustrated by such objects as the inlaid cup on Pl. 52, *a*, and the alabaster lamp on Pl. 52, *b*, made in the form of a shell according to the Royal Cemetery convention and decorated with a figure of a man-headed bull which, while it could not be of Royal Cemetery date, is directly derived from its style. Sargonid art is indeed Sumerian, and when there was found at Ur, in the Sargonid stratum, a fragment of a vase decorated with reliefs which in spirit and in execution were unlike anything from Sumer (Pl. 53, *a*) it came as a definite shock; an inscription on the back explained that it had been brought by Rimush, Sargon's son, as loot from the sack of Susa, and the vessel was therefore of Elamite workmanship; but the fact that something really foreign should stand out so obviously as exceptional testifies to the Sumerian character of Sargonid art in general.

The new element that comes in can best be explained by the comparison of two monuments. On Pl. 54, *a*, is a limestone plaque found at Ur; it is not inscribed and the circumstances of its finding gave no clue as to its date, but it can be assigned with tolerable confidence to the Lagashite period—in that case it would seem to indicate that art at Ur did not in that lamentable age degenerate quite to the Lagashite level. It records, in two scenes, an historical event, the initiation of the high priestess of the Moon God who was, according to enduring precedent, the daughter of the reigning king: in the upper register a naked figure, probably the king himself, followed by his three sons, pours a libation before the seated statue of the god; in the lower, a



51, *a.* Silver vase of Entemena of
Lagash, from Tello (p. 95)
Déc. en Chaldée



51, *b.* Diorite statue of Entemena of
Lagash, from Ur (p. 94)



52, *a*. Inlaid bowl of steatite (restored)
Sargonid period (p. 96)



52, *b*. Alabaster lamp of the Sargonid period (p. 96)

priest pours the libation before the door of the shrine, the high priestess, a full-face figure, occupies the centre and behind her servants bring the victim and offerings.

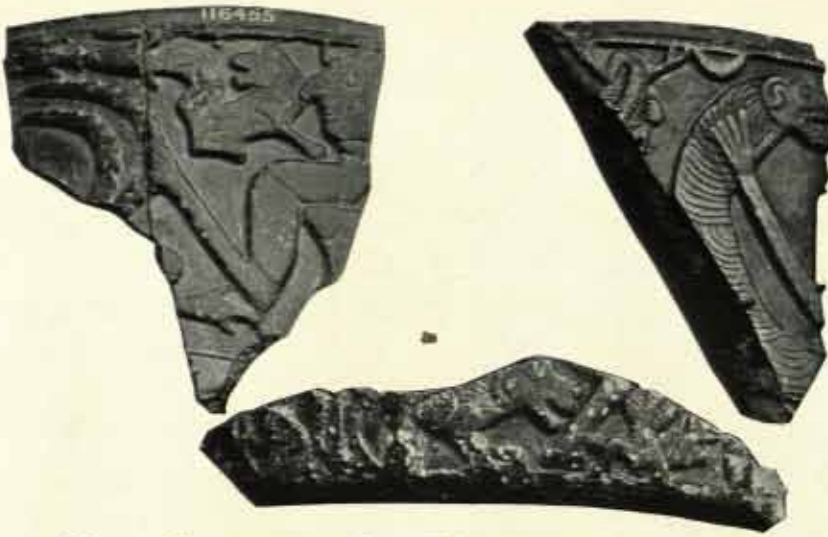
The second monument, which has been wantonly defaced, is an alabaster disk also found at Ur (Pl. 54, *b*) carved in relief with a similar subject—in front of a stepped altar a priest (no longer naked according to the old custom but wearing a long linen garment) pours a libation, behind him stands the priestess, robed and mitred, and behind her a servant: an inscription on the back records that the priestess is Enkheduanna, the daughter of Sargon.

Quite apart from the better carving of the second plaque, which not even the damage it has undergone can disguise, there is a remarkable difference in the treatment of subjects so nearly identical. In the older slab the composition has much the quality of the Ur-Nina reliefs, the scene is over-crowded, the figures run into each other and have that flatness which calls for paint to give them distinction; they are better ordered than in Ur-Nina's work but not yet so schematised into a pattern as are those of the 'Stela of the Vultures' and remaining separate figures they have yet hardly achieved individuality. In the Enkheduanna scene each personage stands out from a clear background and wins its full value from its isolation while by their interplay the composition retains a unity far more real than the mere agglomeration of the other scene can produce. The old art tried to eliminate the background, the new saw how it could be utilised to enhance the significance of the design and the individuality of its component parts; the clear-cut silhouetted figure becomes the hall-mark of the Sargonid style. This conclusion is not based on a single example. It is most patently supported by the cylinder seals, as a later chapter will shew, and by many minor works of sculpture.

A steatite bowl found at Ur (Pl. 55, *c*) is decorated with the often-repeated motive of a procession of cattle;¹ compare it with its prototypes of Jamdat Nasr date on Pl. 16 and it can at once be seen how much it gains by the spacing-out of the design; so too on a fragment of another steatite bowl (Pl. 53, *b*) the conventional figure of the god holding two vases of water (there was a series of them round the vessel) receives an entirely new value from the free background against which it is set. Of these two examples the bull bowl in particular is a masterpiece of applied sculpture. The stylising of the animal forms has gone far beyond what we have seen, for instance, in the temple frieze of the First Dynasty at al 'Ubaid, the bold modelling insists on a musculature which is schematic rather than observed and the vigour with which the figures are instinct is the vigour of art more than of life, and yet nothing could be more satisfying than this formal embodiment of the bull's savage strength made subservient to purely decorative ends.

But it is in the stela of Naram-Sin (Pl. 56) that we see fully expressed the pictorial sense which the Sargonid age introduced into Sumerian relief. Here the great-grandson of Sargon is shewn at the head of his army overthrowing the tribesmen of the Lulubu; the subject is not unlike that of the 'Stela of the Vultures' of Enannatum, but the difference in treatment is astonishing and bears witness to the new spirit that had come into art. The scene is the foothills of a mountain whose peak rises to the stars; the Akkadian troops scramble up the rough tracks and push through the woods in pursuit of the flying enemy, and above them

¹The popularity of the motive is due to its symbolism; the bull and the ear of barley stand for the herds and the crops, which were the country's wealth; the cuneiform ideograms for them, set in conjunction, have the meaning 'prosperity', and the design on the bowl is, as it were, a pictographic rendering of the same word.



55, *a*. Fragments of an Elamite bowl. Sargonid period (p. 96)



55, *b, c*. Alabaster vases in the forms of animals
Sargonid period



55, *d*. Limestone bowl decorated with reliefs
Third Dynasty period (p. 111)



54, *a*. Limestone relief of the Lagashite period, Ur
(p. 96)



54, *b*. Alabaster disk with relief, dedicated by the
daughter of Sargon, Ur (p. 97)

all, isolated against the sky, the king tramples down the dead and receives the submission of the survivors. It is a picture full of life and action, but in spite of the realism of the tangled bodies beneath the king's feet and of the wounded man before him it is no realistic work, but just as the pyramidal composition (repeated in the outline of the mountain) is devised to lead up to the figure of the king so each element of it is not individual but symbolic. A few lines give the landscape, two trees the forest, and instead of the serried phalanx of Enannatum there are a few clear-cut detached figures each of whom by the standard that he bears represents a regiment while their uniformity of pose suggests the discipline that contrasts with the agitated disorder of the enemy; the king stands above his followers, and the foe that dares to meet him on an equal footing must submit or die. The theme has been intellectualised, but with that sophistication of content goes a technique vastly superior to that of previous generations, a freedom which was strange to them and a pictorial as against a merely decorative ideal which is wholly new.

Note on Chapter IV

For the Khafaje excavations see C. Preusser in the *Oriental Institute Communications*, No. 31, 'Tell Asmar and Khafaje', Chicago, 1931. A preliminary report on the work at Mari is published by A. Parrot in *Revue d'Assyriologie*, XXXI, p. 173, 'Mari et Opis', and he and Dr. Frankfort there illustrate the connection between the Syrian site, Khafaje and Tell Asmar.

The grave at Ur containing the stone statue is described in my preliminary report in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. XIV, 4, p. 361.

The series of Ur-Nina reliefs, the 'Stela of the Vultures' and other objects from Lagash are fully illustrated by de Sarzec in the great publication of the *Découvertes en Chaldée*; they are also discussed by L. King in his *History of Sumer and Akkad*.

Chapter V

*Gudea and the Third Dynasty of Ur.
Architecture and Sculpture*



55, *a.* Inlaid steatite bowl, 'The Bull of Heaven' (p. 111)

55, *b.* Fragment of a carved steatite bowl (p. 98)



55, *c.* Steatite bowl carved with a procession of bulls (p. 98)



56. The stela of Naram-Sin (p. 98)

Chapter V

Gudea and the Third Dynasty of Ur. Architecture and Sculpture

The great dynasty established by Sargon of Akkad seems to have saved Sumerian art from the collapse which political troubles had induced; it certainly made possible the advance of which the stela of Naram-Sin is the result. But no later in time than the reign of Naram-Sin's son came another of those disasters which so constantly interrupted the course of Sumerian history: from the mountains of the north-east wild tribesmen, the Guti, swooped down on the fertile valley and broke the power of the Akkadian kings; the cities were sacked, the fields laid waste and the raiders, instead of retiring to their hills, settled down in the ruined land which they had not the wit to rule. For a long time there was utter anarchy; but gradually the individual cities began to re-assert themselves and to recover from the blow; they might pay lip-service, and probably tribute in kind, to the shadowy central government which at last the barbarians made to function, but there was no social unity and such a local ruler as Gudea of Lagash went his own way in virtual independence and in all his numerous records never once even makes mention of his Guti overlord. And in these city states civilisation again flourished and the arts progressed; towards the end of the Guti period, Lagash was a thriving centre of architecture and sculpture and Ur, once

again controlled by Lagash, was perhaps as prosperous; but it was Erech, four times the capital of Sumer, that remembered its old glory and undertook the expulsion of the Guti. Sumer had been their Capua and a single battle settled the fate of the demoralised tribesmen, but Erech was not to reap the benefit for long; Ur-Nammu, the governor of Ur, rose in revolt and at Erech's expense made himself master of the country, raised Ur to the position of the capital and handed down the power to four generations of his children. The Third Dynasty of Ur was politically one of the greatest periods in Sumerian history, and it was the last. It marked a national revival in that it was based on revolt against the Guti invaders, but the Sumerian nation was no longer what it had been; semitic names are found even in the royal family and semites held office on an equality with those of Sumerian stock and even the Sumerian language was being ousted in favour of the Babylonian; that genius which had fired the life of a people for two thousand years was burning low at last, and what must at the time have seemed its most audacious effort was but the flare that comes before the end.

Of this great period relatively few monuments have survived; the tombs and temples have been systematically plundered and the structures of the latter have suffered so much at the hands of destroyers and restorers that often even their ground-plans can only with difficulty be recovered. An exception to the rule is the mausoleum at Ur built by Dungi, the second king of the dynasty. Its superstructure with its magnificently solid walls of burnt brick and bitumen rounded at the corners into towers which have the stark strength of Norman architecture (Pl. 58) has for the most part been overthrown, but the plan is well-proportioned and symmetrical; dignified in its lines it was gorgeous in its decoration, as can be seen from the scanty relics



57, *a*. Brick column of the Third Dynasty (p. 105)



57, *b*. 'Palm-tree' columns flanking a gateway of the Larsa period (pp. 41, 105)



58, *a*. Outer corner of the mausoleum of King Dungi,
Ur (p. 10f)



58, *b*. Staircase in the mausoleum of King Dungi,
Ur (p. 105)

left by the plunderers—with its ceilings painted blue and dotted with gold stars, its doors overlaid with gold and its chamber walls with plates of gold inlaid with lapis-lazuli and agate. Below the building proper, which was really modelled on the private house of the time, lay the tombs, vaulted rooms with walls sixteen feet thick of brick and bitumen: it is curious to find that for them the architects retained the old system of corbel vaults and corbel arches, although the true arch was so familiar that it might be found in any house of the time—it may have been some religious sanction that accounted for so conservative a practice. The arrangement of the tombs, with their descending flights of brick stairs (Pl. 58), is impressive indeed but gives small idea of any capacity on the part of the architect for more than massiveness and strength: less important ruins tell us more about the constructional features employed. Thus in a Third Dynasty temple at Ur the remains of a column built of specially moulded bricks (Pl. 57, *a*) shews that the lessons of the remote past had not been forgotten; on the contrary it can now be asserted that the column was used throughout all Sumerian history, for at Tello (Lagash) one also made of moulded bricks in the time of Gudea bridges the gap between the First and the Third Dynasties while at Ur one fashioned to look like a palm-stem (Pl. 57, *b*) carries on the tradition into the Larsa period which was to succeed after the fall of Ur-Nammu's house. Similarly a little water-cistern on the terrace of the Ziggurat of Ur, built by Ur-Nammu, had its several compartments roofed with domes; the roofs have collapsed but the bases of the pendentives remain to bear witness to their construction. But the proof that the architects of the Third Dynasty had achieved a *finesse* only paralleled elsewhere in the great periods of art is given by the Ziggurat itself, the most im-

posing monument of antiquity that survives at Ur and the best preserved of its kind in Mesopotamia. The Ziggurat is a solid mass of brickwork measuring at ground level some sixty-seven yards by forty-five and still preserved to a height of about sixty-five feet; it was originally three storeys high, built in stages each set back from that below so as to leave a platform round its base, and on the topmost stage was a small shrine which was the chief sanctuary of Nannar, the city's patron god; on the north-east side (Pl. 59, *a*) a triple stairway led to the top of the first stage, passed under a pylon gate and was continued by a single flight of stairs up to the shrine door. Described thus baldly the tower seems to offer little opportunity for architectural skill, nor is its material, burnt brick set in bitumen, conducive to such ornament as may be the glory of a building in stone: but in that material, the only one available to them, the Sumerians were past masters, and while preserving an enforced simplicity they knew how to use mass and line in such a way as to make of this 'High Place' a real work of art.

The walls, relieved by the traditional decorative buttresses, slope inwards with a pronounced batter which, together with the setting-back of the different storeys, leads the eye inwards and upwards to the shrine which was the *raison d'être* of this colossal platform; the triple stairway with its steeper side slopes and straight central flight accentuated this tendency, and the gateway above, knitting together the lines that cut across the face of the lowest stage, carried them up as one to the door of the sanctuary: thanks to the diminishing height of the successive stages and the relatively small dimensions of the building which surmounted them the pyramidal effect was actually helped by the horizontal divisions which if less carefully proportioned would have clashed with it: even in its ruined state to-day

the impression which the Ziggurat makes is one not of sullen mass but of a building which springs up from its foundations to a height much greater than measurements make its own. But it possesses other merits less obvious but not less real. Seen from the back where there are no staircases and angle-towers to guide the eye it might be expected to shew more unfavourably as a simple base likely to be oppressed by its top-hamper, yet even here (Pl. 59, *b*) it manages to preserve something of its competent lightness, and this because of an element of design which for some time eluded our notice. There are no straight lines in the building. Not only do the walls slope inward but they are convex, running from foundation-course to summit in a slight curve which one can compare only to the entasis of a Greek column; and just as the steps of the Parthenon are laid on a rising curve to relieve the eye of any impression of weight crushing on the columns from the entablature, so the base line of the Ziggurat wall is not straight from corner to corner but convex (Pl. 60, *a*) (with an arc of twenty inches in a total length of two hundred and one feet) so that the centre above which towered the mass of its superstructure might appear to be more easily borne. This is no accident; the whole ground-plan is drawn out in the same way,¹ and these calculated curves prove that by the time of the Third Dynasty the Sumerian architect had worked out and knew how to apply optical principles which only the most advanced civilisations were to re-invent.

The only other major art of the time which we can illustrate is sculpture. Here we must go back a step in time, for the bulk of our material, and the best, belongs to the age of Gudea, lord of Lagash a generation or so before Ur-Nammu seized the throne of Sumer. Gudea was a great patron of

¹ The outer wall at Dungi's mausoleum is similarly curved.

the arts and accident has preserved a score of portrait statues of himself and of his son which he had made, whereas of the greater Ur-Nammu not a single figure in the round survives; the series, of which the Louvre can boast more than half, comprises statues in diorite, limestone and calcite (*v. Pls. 60, b, to 62, a*), representing the ruler at different times of his life; generally he is standing in the conventional attitude of worship, sometimes he is seated, once the royal architect holds on his knees the ground-plan of a building he is about to erect, once he apes the gods and grasps the vases out of which run the streams of life-giving water that were the blessing of Sumer. Gudea was a very rich and a very important prince, for all that his name does not appear in the official lists of kings; though nominally subject to the Guti he could count Ur as well as Lagash in his dominions and could even make independent war on Elam: he was able therefore to employ the best artists of his day and the statues that he has left us can without hesitation be taken as representative of their finest work.

In these really magnificent figures one traditional trait is immediately apparent. The sculptor has no interest in drapery as such and the robes are virtually without fold or texture; linen or woollen cloth has taken the place of the combed fleece which enveloped the forms of older kings, but it is still the uncompromising sheath, stiff and column-like, that barely hints at the lines of the body inside. Certain conventions, artistic as well as technical, survive; the clumsy block behind the feet still supports the weight of the standing figure, the elbows are grotesquely pointed, the head as a rule disproportionately large, the shoulders unduly broad and square with the head on its short neck sunk between them; there is little or no undercutting of the stone, nothing to mitigate the rigid pose of a figure still so

little regarded as such that it can be treated as a mere field for inscriptions. On the other hand the modelling of the exposed parts of the body is admirable and the polished surface of the stone by the interplay of lights on its contrasted curves produces, as in the British Museum fragment on Pl. 62, *a*, an astonishing illusion of flesh. But it is on the faces that the Sumerian sculptor lavishes all his art. They are full of life and full of character, bringing out the individuality of the subject in unmistakable fashion; they are portraits up to a certain extent, so that Gudea the young man has a freshness and a vigour very different from the serenity of his middle life or the drawn severity of his old age; yet it is difficult to see quite wherein that difference lies, for there is no realism in them at all. The shape of the eyes is purely conventional; conventional too are the feathered lines of the eyebrows, and the proportions of the face would seem to be based on an artistic canon rather than drawn from the living model. It is not so much the physical likeness of Gudea that the artist has set himself to carve as a symbol of the man's essence; if the body is left a mere abstract of the human form in general, the face is an abstract of the individual so faithfully interpreted that through the stylised features the individual impresses himself upon us.

This preoccupation with the soul of the sitter as expressed in his face may account for some of the peculiarities already noted in the figure. Diorite was imported in the shape of natural boulders to which the statue had to be adapted, and the sculptor, with all his interest centred on the head, might well sketch it out on such a scale as to leave too little of the block for a rightly-proportioned body. And since the body was for him a necessary adjunct which must not be allowed to distract attention from the head, he

would be the more ready to accept the old conventions for its treatment, reducing it to the symbol that he desired; but artistically there had to be a transition from the vivid face to the immobile column of the robes, and so where the flesh is exposed he combines a delicacy of modelling comparable to that of the face with the traditional severity of form that agrees with the drapery; and below the shapeless trunk the bare feet, excellently rendered, recall the vanished body and give unity to the whole composition. For unity he certainly achieves. Totally disparate as the parts are—and in the case of statues found broken the fragments strike one as curiously inharmonious—they are most deliberately planned, and in the case of complete figures such as Tello has produced fall into place as elements equally necessary to the artist's purpose.

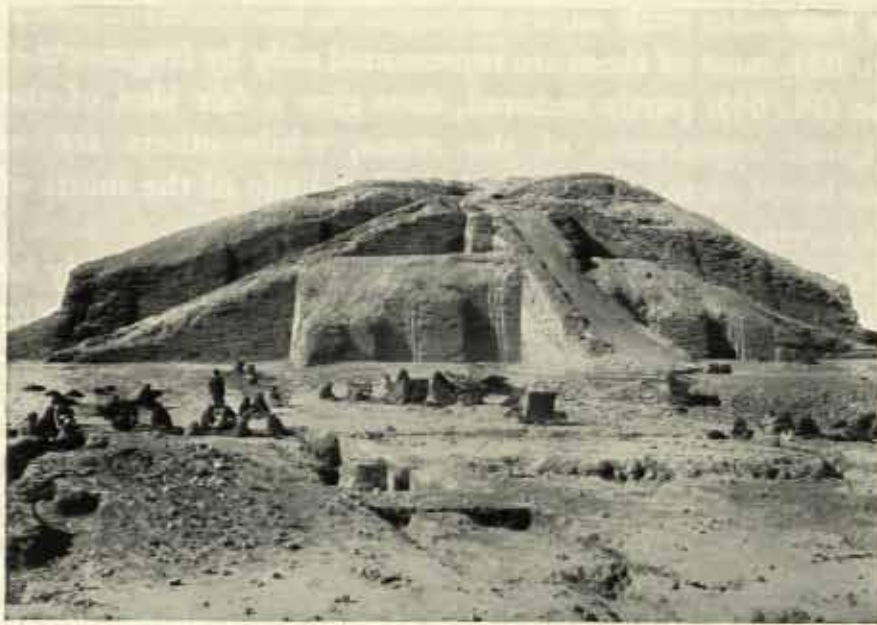
A single fragment of exquisite workmanship, the chin and cheek of a life-size statue in diorite, proves that at Ur under the Third Dynasty there flourished a school of portraitists in the Gudea tradition; two or three little heads of inferior style shew that, even in summary work done for a cheaper market, there was yet something of that individual expression which is the aim of the Lagash figures, but Ur has preserved for us what Tello has not, examples of sculpture applied not to human portraiture but to the representation of the gods. Two small heads (Pl. 62, *b* and *c*), one in white marble, one in diorite, stand out from the general run of Sumerian sculpture as illustrating the conscious striving after beauty for its own sake which is characteristic of Greek rather than of Near Eastern art—conscious striving because the beauty is no mere accident of line but innate in the conception of the artist. Just as the Gudea portraits render not the lineaments so much as the character of the ruler, so here they are aspects of the divine nature that are

evoked, not by any theatrical expressionism but with the utmost paucity of means; it is an idealistic art, working within limitations cheerfully accepted and utilised to express the essence rather than the outward accidents of things.

It is interesting to turn from the statues of the Third Dynasty to the reliefs and to see how much stronger was tradition in this field. In purely decorative art this is perhaps to be expected, for where motives were more or less stereotyped the only advance possible was in technical finish and in elaboration of detail: thus in a steatite ritual bowl bearing an inscription of the Third Dynasty (Pl. 55, *a*) there is the accustomed design of seated oxen now beautifully executed in high relief and enriched with shell inlay, the moon and stars turning the mere animal into a symbol of the 'Great Bull of Heaven' which was Nannar, the chief god of the empire; but the figures are traditional, and the shell inlay is a technique common not only to the time of Gudea but to the distant past of the Jamdat Nasr age. In this case the insistence of the ornament, applied to figures and background alike, tends to confuse the design and is really a retrograde step in taste; other examples such as the limestone bowl on Pl. 53, *d*, not remarkable in themselves, at least shew that the lessons of the Sargonid age had not been forgotten and the composition by isolating its figures against a clear background gives them due value and significance. But the specimen of relief work whereby the period must be judged is the great stela set up by Ur-Nammu at Ur to celebrate the exploits of his reign; this after all is a royal commission and would have been entrusted to the best artist and therefore, fragmentary and sadly defaced as it is, constitutes our safest criterion. It was a slab of white limestone nearly five feet across and ten feet high, carved

on both sides with scenes arranged in horizontal registers (Pl. 63); most of these are represented only by fragments—one (Pl. 64), partly restored, does give a fair idea of the original appearance of the stone, while others are so weathered as to shew the subject but little of the merit of the carving.

On such a panel as this the treatment must evidently be subordinated to the purpose of the monument; the sculptor has to tell a story, is concerned with incident instead of character and in scenes of sacrifice must keep to his facts, or, where he employs symbols, as in the case of the drummers who celebrate victory, must at least make himself clearly understood. Even so his symbolism is of interest. In an inscription Ur-Nammu enumerates the canals that he had dug to promote the fertility of his land, and in the top registers of the stela (Pl. 65, *a*) are the illustrations to the text; the king is shewn standing in the attitude of prayer and from above come flying angels with vases out of which flow the streams of life that only the god can give; it is a *non nobis Domine* carved in stone, and there is in the manner of it something not unlike the spiritual fervour which informs the heads of the goddess statues and idealises the Gudea portraits. In the best-preserved scene (Pl. 64) there is a more rigid formalism, though here too everything is not on the surface, as when the seated god holds out the rod and coiled line of the architect to symbolise his bidding that the king should build him a house; but there is more outward dignity than real expression in the standing figure of the king and his face is a mask of royalty from which all that is individual has been omitted. The scene below gave the actual building of the Ziggurat. The work was seen in progress with ladders set up against the rising wall and workmen going up and down with hods of mortar



59, *a*. The Ziggurat of Ur, front view



59, *b*. The Ziggurat of Ur, back view (pp. 106-7)



60, *a.* The Ziggurat of Ur, the back wall (p. 107)



60, *b.* Diorite statue of Gudea (pp. 108 *et seq.*)
Déc. en Chaldée

and loads of bricks; across the wall-top comes Ur-Nammu prepared to play his part in the labour of the god and bearing on his shoulder in all humility the tools of the builder, the mortar-basket, the pick-axe and the compasses, while behind him a shaven priest helps to carry the load and in front his patron deity leads him to his task. The composition here is frankly pictorial, recalling that of the Naram-Sin stela; in the minor characters there is realism and active movement (as there is in the scenes of sacrifice) which accentuates the staid majesty of the principal actors; the figures, boldly detached, are not marshalled along one horizontal line but are freely spaced about the field and apparently in this as in the Naram-Sin relief were grouped in a more or less pyramidal pattern which culminates in the person of the king. One can be fairly sure that the artist relied to some extent on the help of colour, that the figures stood out against a tinted background and were themselves enhanced with paint, but that has not prevented him from giving full scope to his skill in relief carving; the face and body of the priest who helps to carry the king's burden are admirably modelled (*v.* Pl. 64), and even the drapery is less sheath-like than usual so that the folds that fall from Ur-Nammu's arm have a measure of verisimilitude. Yet it would be idle to pretend that the stela stands, as a work of art, on the level of the statues in the round; from its very nature it did not offer to the artist the same opportunity for expressing just those qualities which were typical of the time, but the lack of spiritual content is not atoned for by any other feature that we can recognise as new and peculiar to the Third Dynasty; the work is capable, well balanced, effective and of fine technique, but unoriginal. At Tello there were found small scattered fragments of a stela of Gudea (Pl. 65, *b*) which in style and treatment and even in

individual scenes was a prototype of Ur-Nammu's; so close a parallel can only mean that when the Third Dynasty sculptor could not exercise his art on those intimate portraits or ideal representations of the divine nature in which alone he was really interested he fell back on the imitation of old models and worked altogether within the limits of convention.



61, a, b, c, d. Statues of Gudea (pp. 108 et seq.)

a. *Nouvelles fouilles de Tello*

c. *Rev. d'Assyriologie*



62, *a*. Fragment of a statue of Gudea (?) (p. 108)



62, *b*. Marble head of a goddess, Third Dynasty (p. 110)



62, *c*. Diorite head of a goddess, Third Dynasty (p. 110)

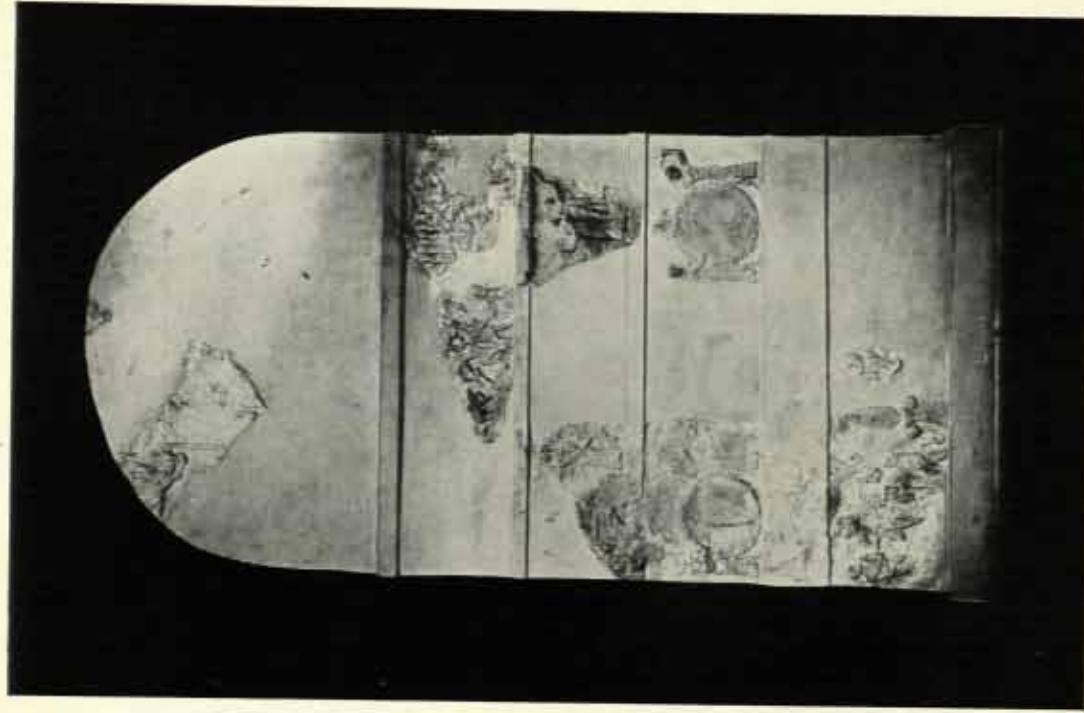
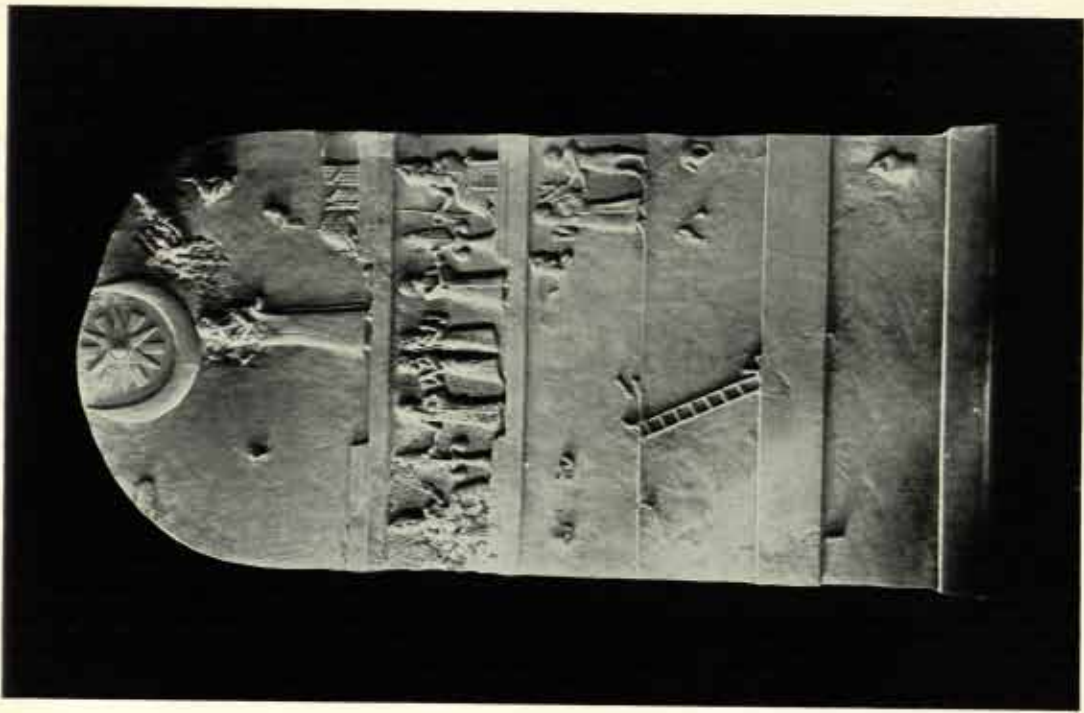
Note on Chapter V

The Mausoleum of Dungi, which will be fully published in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. VI, is provisionally described in my report in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. XI, 4. In the same journal, Vol. V, 1 (and at length in my book, *The Sumerians*), there is given an account of the Ziggurat of Ur, but the views there put forward as to the restoration of the monument have been modified by later discoveries; a full report will appear in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. V, 'The Ziggurat and its Surroundings', now in preparation.

The statues of Gudea found by the French excavators at Lagash are figured in *Découvertes en Chaldée*; other statues discovered later (mostly by Arab plunderers) have been published in various works, e.g. Cros, *Nouvelles fouilles de Tello*, and V. Scheil in *Revue d'Assyriologie*, XXVII, 4; on the earlier series see also King, *History of Sumer and Akkad*. Of the Stela of Ur-Nammu, further fragments are illustrated in the *Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. V, 4; cf. also Legrain in *Revue d'Assyriologie*, XXX, 3.

Chapter VI

The Cylinder Seals: A Summary



65. The stela of Ur-Nammu (the fragments arranged and partly restored) (p. 111)



64. Fragment of the stela of Ur-Nammu. The king pours libations and takes part in building the Ziggurat (p. 112)

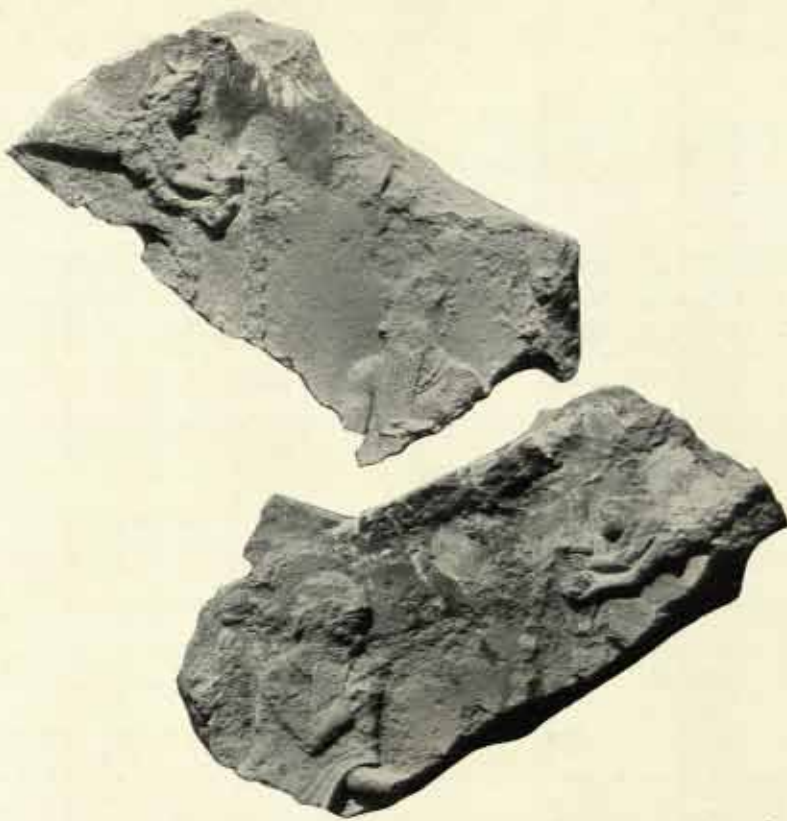
Chapter VI

The Cylinder Seals: A Summary

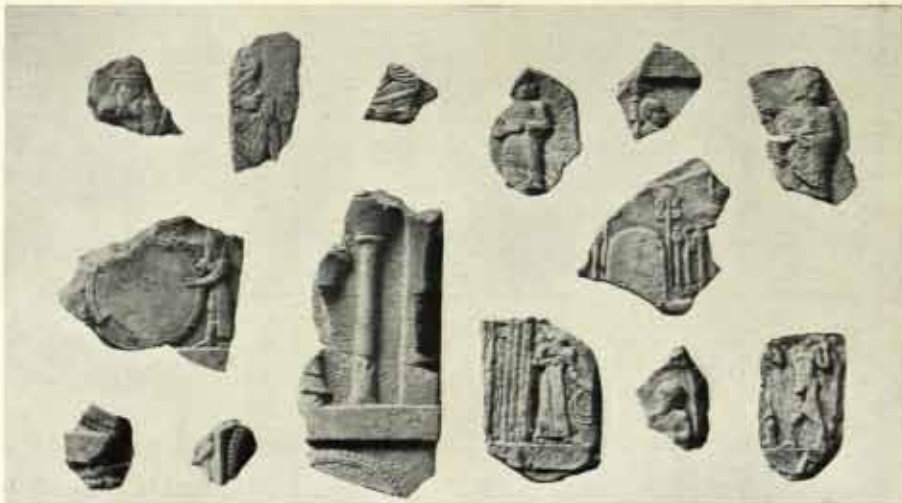
Sumerian art and Sumerian history are both new subjects most of the material for which has but recently come to light and yet, while the political history is already fairly clear at least in its main outlines, the growth of civilisation and the development of art in Sumer can be followed with a consistency and a completeness which are unusual. The fact is that the problem is relatively simple. In the case of most countries too many influences have combined to form their civilisation, and while the sources of some of these influences remain unknown others are themselves so complex that for their understanding more and more analysis is required, and the search becomes interminable. In the case of Sumer we have three main component elements and although about each of them a vast amount is yet to be learned, yet of each we can predicate certain attributes and therefore are able, on the whole, to attribute to one or another of them the several characteristics of the formed culture. With the uniting of the three elements we can see a tolerably uniform progress from within interrupted or deflected thereafter not so much by foreign cultural contacts as by political accidents, and the history of the country is so far established that cause and effect can here be recognised and the changes in art be brought into direct relation with the life of the people.

The primitive stock of al 'Ubaid is shewn by its monuments to have possessed appreciation of form, a sense of decorative values, imagination and a ready adaptability: it exploited to the full the natural resources of the country and in particular it created an architecture, based on and growing out of the soil, which was destined to endure. The artistic superiority of the pottery produced by their Iranian kinsmen of Susa seems to shew that the al 'Ubaid people had in themselves some seeds of progress, but in view of the conditions of life in the Euphrates valley it may be doubted whether they could ever have advanced beyond the narrow limits of a civilisation based wholly on agriculture. It is not beside the point that Dumuzi 'the Shepherd' ranks amongst the kings who reigned before the Flood, or that the traditional title of the Sumerian ruler was *Patesi*, 'the tenant farmer' of the god: the al 'Ubaid society was one of shepherds, farmers and fishermen, as we can tell from its remains, and such communities are unlikely to be adventurous or progressive.

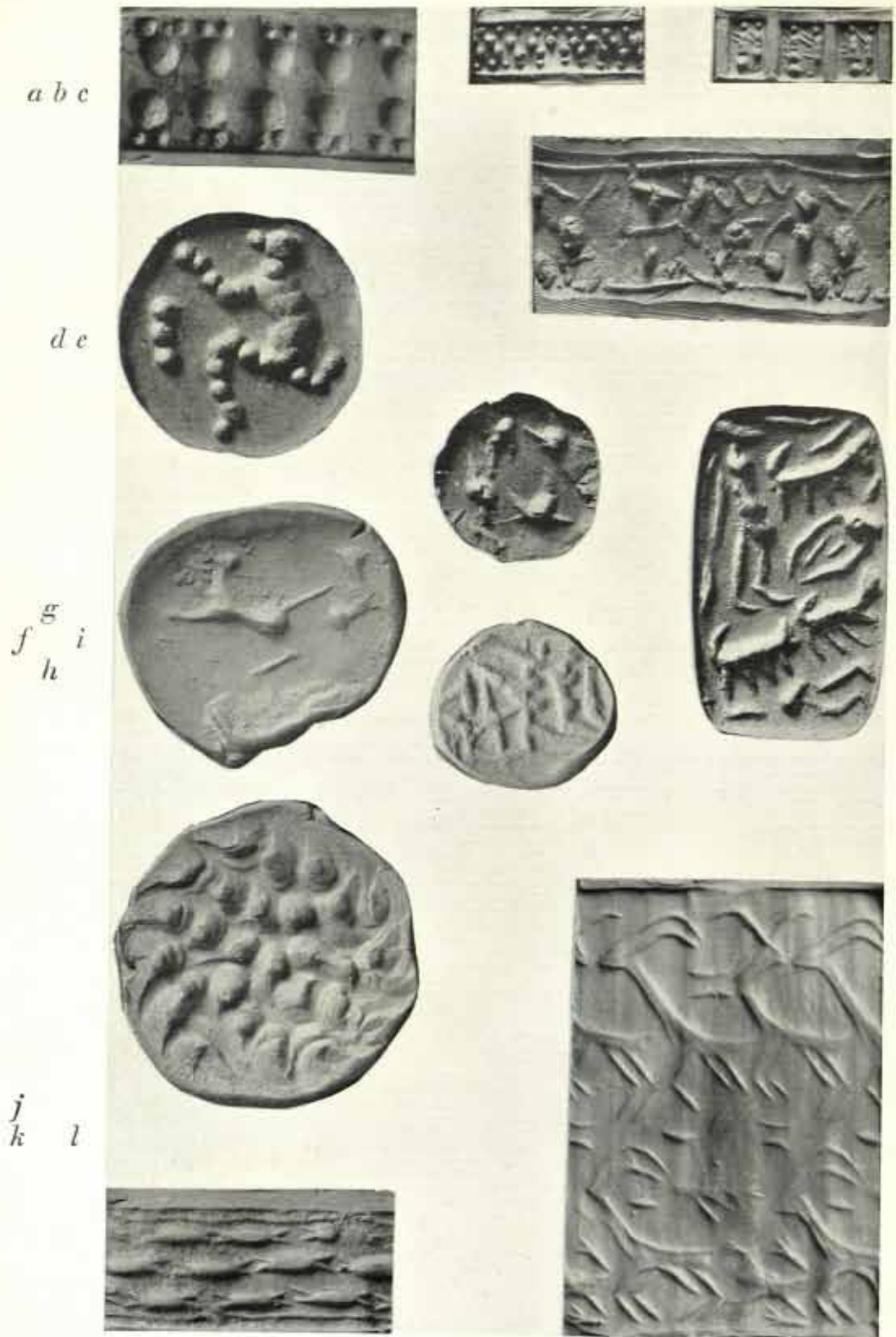
The two races which in the Uruk period came in to the river valley were more advanced than that of al 'Ubaid and the kind of culture which they enjoyed was essentially different; to neither of them was agriculture the basis of society. The Anatolian invaders were primarily workers in metal, with all that that implies; they had better weapons at their disposal and were therefore likely to be of war-like disposition; they had a more advanced technique in the arts and their idea would be rather to make things than to expect Nature to provide them. The North Syrians also were metal-workers, they knew the use of the wheel—which not only benefited the potter but made communications easier and therefore promoted the exchange of goods and of ideas—and they were skilled workers in stone, an art necessarily



65, *a*. Fragments of the stela of Ur-Nammu
The king and flying angels bearing vases
of water (p. 112)



65, *b*. Fragments from the stela of Gudea (p. 115)



66. Early stamp and cylinder seals (p. 122)

strange to the people of the Delta; if we can judge by the relative sterility of Elam it was the North Syrians who brought the real spirit of progress.

The entry of these foreigners opens up the world for the dwellers in Lower Mesopotamia; the Delta enlarges its frontiers and instead of being a mere appanage of the Iranian plateau becomes a meeting-place of the east and the hitherto unknown west. The union of the three stocks meant, on the material side, city life, a more complex form of society demanding a higher degree of organisation, and a life which, asking not merely for sustenance but for wealth, looked for it not so much to agriculture as to manufacture and trade; on the moral side it meant the concentration of disparate aptitudes and ideals, that hybridisation which has always been found essential to the development of great art. It is then in the Uruk period that the stage is set and that Sumerian art properly so called makes its first appearance.

In previous chapters I have occasionally referred to but have not anywhere dwelt upon the class of antiquities which is perhaps the most familiar, the most common and the most characteristic of Mesopotamian art, the engraved seals. In a business community like that of Sumer where every trade transaction, every contract and every legal ruling had to be recorded in writing and where private letters as well as royal rescripts were circulated over vast areas a guarantee of identity was requisite and for every man a signet was an almost necessary possession. The seal was generally made of stone, nearly always in the form of a small cylinder; on it was an engraving in intaglio which pressed or rolled on the soft clay whereon all documents were written gave an impression in relief which was the sign manual of its owner. Sometimes the owner's name is introduced, with perhaps some pious formula of dedication

to a god; more often there is simply a scene, stock motives combined or treated with sufficient variety to ensure that no two seals should be the same, a badge which in its nature is not unlike the crest of modern times. The seal-cutter had his own repertoire, which was not drawn from the major works of art;¹ but he was an artist and necessarily subject to the artistic currents strongest at the moment and therefore in style, though not in subject, his work is a faithful mirror of his day. Naturally not all are of equal merit; some are masterpieces in miniature, others are poor things made by careless or unskilled craftsmen to supply a cheap market; only the better need be considered for our purpose, and they by their numbers and their qualities form a running commentary upon virtually the whole history of Sumerian art. For the study of that art they supply an independent criterion, and if their witness is found to support the conclusions arrived at by a survey of works of other kinds the confirmation will be the more valuable; it is for that reason that I have preferred to reserve their discussion until now.

The earliest seals² belong to the beginning of the Uruk age. At this time the circular stamp-seal, which is a type found both in Elam and in Anatolia, was more usual than the cylinder which was to become universal in Mesopotamia later on. The engraving is rudimentary and more interesting for its technical than its artistic qualities; the tools used were the drill and the V-shaped chisel, and the result may be no more than an ordered series of dots or an arrangement of zig-zag lines (Pl. 66, *a-c, h*); almost from the outset at-

¹The Greek gem-cutter's practice of representing in miniature some famous statue, such as the Elean Zeus, has no real parallel in Sumer.

²They are dated sometimes by the conditions in which they are found, sometimes typologically; for seals were long-lived, and it is not uncommon to find an early seal in use in a much later period.



a



b



c



d

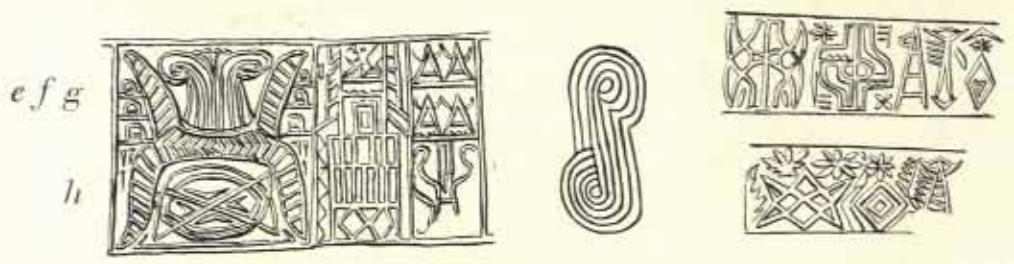


e



f

67. Cylinder seals of Jamdat Nasr date, from Warka (p. 125)



68. Seal-impressions of Jamdat Nasr date (p. 124)

tempts are made at animal forms, sometimes by drilled hollows which are joined together by chiselling, sometimes by chisel-work alone (Pl. 66, *d, f*), and these may be scattered at random over the field, but gradually the sense of design is developed and the motives are worked into a pattern duly proportioned to the space it has to fill (Pl. 66, *l*). Two cylinders from Warka well illustrate the next phase (Pl. 67, *a* and *b*); they are almost identical in subject but the treatment is wholly different. In the first the figures are merely drawn in outline with the graver (there is no use of the drill here) and are really but scratched upon the stone; in the second the figures have been cut into the stone in true intaglio and within the hollow the graver has been employed to add further detail: crude as the result is, it means that the artist has found himself—he has discovered the technique proper to his art and has now only to perfect it. Probably before the close of the Uruk period seal-cutting had reached such a point that men could dedicate in the temples of Erech the magnificent gems shewn on Pl. 67, *c-f*.¹

In the rubbish-mounds of Ur, lying immediately on the level from which the Jamdat Nasr graves were dug, there is a thick stratum of brick refuse, broken store-jars and the dome-shaped lumps of clay with which the jars were sealed, all burnt to a deep red colour;² it all comes from a building or buildings which had been destroyed by fire at the close of the Jamdat Nasr period, and probably destroyed as a result of the nationalist rising which ushered in the Early Dynastic age; the jar-stoppers therefore, with the impressions of seals which they bear, belong to the Jamdat Nasr time. Numerous jar-stoppers of the same date—most of them from

¹From the Warka 'hoard': *v.* p. 58.

²Reference to these has been made in Ch. II. p. 55: *v.* Pl. 14, *a*.

burned buildings—have been found at Warka also, and the designs upon them are remarkably similar to, sometimes identical with, those from Ur: the seal-impressions therefore corroborate the evidence of other classes of objects as to the unification of art throughout the country brought about by the Jamdat Nasr domination, and if we draw our illustrations from the vast amount of material provided by the rubbish-mounds underlying the Royal Cemetery the argument based upon them will apply not merely to Ur but to Sumer as a whole.

During the Uruk period the gem-cutter had acquired complete mastery of his tools and his material: his first apprenticeship had been in the simplest patterns of dot and line, and from such he had proceeded laboriously to figure-subjects; now, with the freedom that he had won, he throws himself with enthusiasm into the development of both those early practices. On the one hand (Pl. 68) he shows off his manual skill by the elaboration of the most intricate patterns of interwoven lines; he may incorporate in them hieroglyphic signs and even human or animal figures, but these are treated purely as ornamental motives; his whole delight is in his ingenuity, and he will work human and animal heads together into 'puzzle pictures' or where a swastika sign is made up of men's bodies so schematise them that the elements are almost lost in the pattern. On the other hand, conscious that he can draw whatever he likes, he looks at the material world of nature and gives us such realistic studies of animal life as are shewn on Pl. 68, *o-r*; here he would seem for the moment to have forgotten all his principles of composition, of fitting his subject to his canvas, and to be jotting down at random sketches drawn individually for the pleasure of drawing them. On some of the seal-impressions there are pictured

complete scenes (Pl. 69, *a-e*) like those on the Warka cylinders (Pl. 67) but these are not mere sketches, they are balanced compositions; in them and in many other examples there can be seen the ultimate tendency of the artist of the time. Pure pattern on the one side, realistic nature-studies on the other, are gradually combined, sometimes, at first, by mere juxtaposition (Pl. 68, *i-k*) but finally into a harmonious whole where naturalism in representation is made subordinate to a decorative design; by the bias of an abstract art the individual merges in the type, and with the growth of symbolism conventions begin to impose themselves. On the whole then what was found to be true of sculpture is exemplified in this miniature art also: in the Uruk period there can be recognised a restless and inventive spirit, the elements not yet coalesced but each striving to express itself in experimental work; in the Jamdat Nasr age the art of the people finds itself and discovers its true method of expression; there is a unity which did not before exist, an agreement as to both aims and means, and henceforward progress must be within the limits of approved convention, along a road mapped out in advance. The only difference would seem to be that in the cylinder seals development is more slow; the sculptors, the major artists, were ahead of their time whereas the gem-cutters, minor craftsmen dependent on a popular clientele, followed rather than set the fashion and so lagged behind their fellows of more genius; but the process is the same, and in the Early Dynastic period the canons of style for the engraver as for the maker of statues in stone or metal were fully established.

In one respect the seals and seal-impressions may be more eloquent of political conditions than is sculpture proper. The resemblance which not a few of them bear to seals

found at Susa is quite obvious and might be thought to witness to direct relations with Elam; but it is more likely that the Iranian origin of the Jamdat Nasr race, reinforcing the traditions of the old al 'Ubaid stock, accounts for the Iranian affinities in the art of the day;¹ traces of this still linger in the early products of the following period but long before its close had been ousted by a style in which the northern influence predominates.

The Royal Cemetery at Ur produced hundreds of cylinder seals illustrating two phases of art within the Early Dynastic period: the first comes fairly near the period's beginning, the second leads up to the First Dynasty of Ur. Already in the first phase (Pl. 70, *a-e*) the *subject* of the cylinder seal has become stereotyped; there is represented either a banquet with seated and standing figures of men and women or there are animals which fight with one another or are overcome by human hunters; within that narrow range there are rung an infinity of changes.

Like the earlier sculptor, the gem-engraver succeeded much better with the animal than with the human form. Working as he did now very largely in lapis-lazuli, a stone beautiful for its colour but of a grain ill adapted to fine detail of carving, he was content to represent a man's head by a drill-made circle with a triangular groove for the nose which gives a bird-like profile, while the body is enveloped in its shapeless fleece skirt, and even when using the finer medium of shell he is guided by the same technique; the scene is more important than its component parts, and the introduction of accessories such as the wine-jar with its drinking-tubes, the table laden with meats or subordinate

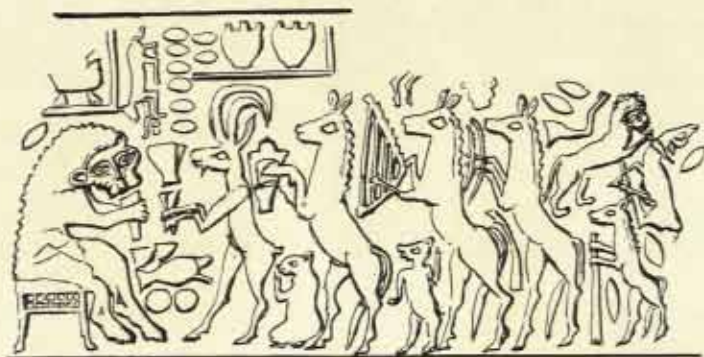
¹The seal-impressions, coming from the store-rooms of a temple or palace, would reflect the taste of the aristocracy, *i.e.* of the Jamdat Nasr rulers.



a b



c d



e



f



g h

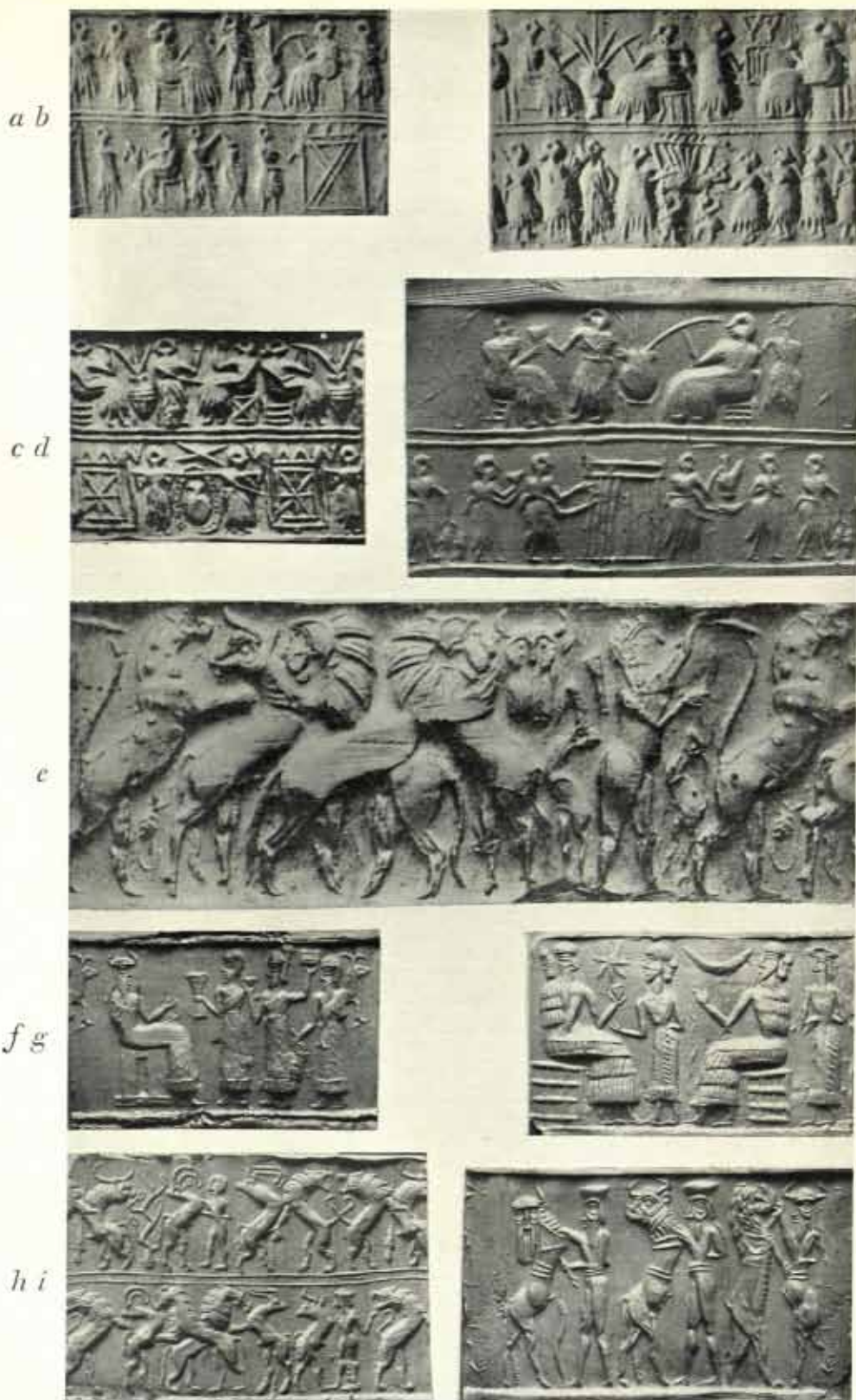


i j



k

69. Seal-impressions. *a* to *e* are Jamdat Nasr date and *f* to *k* are First Dynasty (p. 124)



70. Seals belonging to the earlier half (*a* to *e*) and to the later half (*f* to *i*) of the Royal Cemetery period (pp. 124 *et seq.*)

figures of musicians and dancers does more to enliven the picture than any distinction of drawing or variety of pose in the principal characters. On the other hand the animal pieces are splendidly done. The composition is so schematised as to be heraldic—the struggling bodies of lion, bull and ibex cross each other in a triangle of balanced masses, yet the formal arrangement does not in the least detract from the vigour of their action or from the fidelity with which the character of each beast is interpreted; the large shell cylinders with hunting scenes, which are typical of this period, have the freedom and strength of great art and combine with boldness of design a delicacy of modelling and a perfection of detail comparable to that of the works in metal. In the seals as in all the art of the Royal Cemetery we see an intense appreciation of the objective side of nature, inherited from the preceding age, so far modified that the type is preferred to the individual and yet the representation of the type must be so faithful to the individual as to seem more a copy of, than an abstract from, life: and at the same time, without any loss of truth, there is a voluntary acceptance of a canon of style which, affecting as it does all alike, can only be the expression of a national self-consciousness. We have in this period the exuberance of the Renaissance restrained by traditions more purely artistic and therefore more deep-going than the traditions of the Church were for the artists of Italy: for that very reason conventions when they were formed were more dangerous to originality.

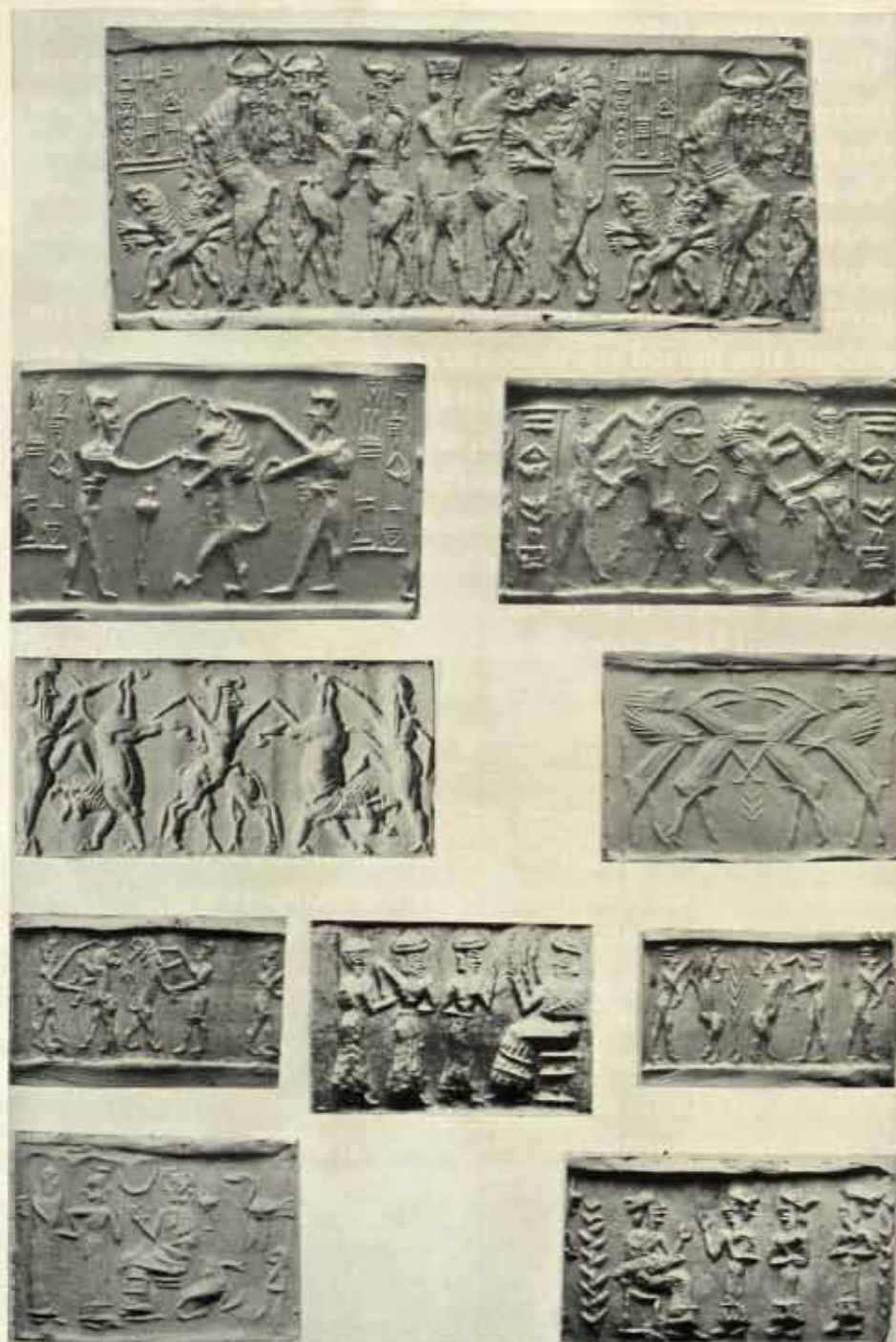
In the second phase of the Royal Cemetery (Pl. 70, *f-i*) decadence is visibly setting in. The animal scenes are still there, though with certain modifications—the hill creatures, the spotted leopard, and the smooth-horned highland bull have been replaced by the water-buffalo and instead of the naked beardless hunter comes one wearing the flat cap of the

north or the bearded figure of the mythological Gilgamesh—but the animals themselves, however skilfully cut, are no longer directly inspired by nature; they are repetitions of a formula which is decorative indeed but divorced from life. Precisely the same contrast as was seen between the copper heads of oxen from the Royal Tombs and those from the al 'Ubaid temple distinguishes the animal designs on the seals of the earlier Cemetery phase from those which in date approach the First Dynasty of Ur; the faithful observance of the canon has become an end in itself and 'school work' has replaced original creation. The engraver possessed excellent technique and had fine models to copy and he was perfectly prepared to adapt these to new designs, so that many of the seals of this period are most attractive and even as late as the First Dynasty of Ur the seal of King Mes-anni-padda (Pl. 69, *f*), owing much to tradition, is admirable in design and in detail; yet there is a formalism about its scene of combat which compares ill with the rush and fury of the old days and even the pattern is timid and mechanical. Something of the same sort is true of the alternative theme—for the engraver still keeps for the most part to one of two subjects. The banquet motive on the older cylinders was not as a rule well carved or conceived with much originality, but it was naively human and sometimes was elaborated into a *genre* picture clearly inspired by scenes of actual life. Now it disappears and gives place to formal acts of ritual in which the feasters are gods and the servants worshippers or minor deities, and though the composition may be much the same the de-humanising of the subject seems to affect the style and about these groups, made up as they are of stock figures differentiated only by their attributes, there is a deadness which leaves to them small artistic value.

We have seen that in the major arts the collapse of the



71, a. Seals of the Indus type



71, b. Sargonid seals. Animal subjects and 'presentation-scenes' (p. 129)



72, *a* to *e*. Sargonid seals with mythological subjects (p. 150)



72, *f* to *k*. Seals of the Third Dynasty period (p. 151)

First Dynasty of Ur and the anarchy which followed had the result—at Lagash at least—of a set-back from which there was only a gradual recovery such that at the end of the period sculpture was much where it had been at its beginning. How far that set-back was reflected in the art of the gem-cutter we cannot say, because there are few seals which can with confidence be attributed to the early Lagash age; what the seals of somewhat later date do shew is that the influence of the northern semitic element was making itself increasingly felt before Sargon's conquests gave it political predominance and that the 'Sargonid' phase in Sumerian art antedates by some time the Sargonid period of history.

The subjects of the Sargonid seals (Pl. 71) tend to carry on old traditions as modified by later religious views; outwardly they might seem to have been little changed but on a closer view their content is very different. There are still animal scenes, but almost always now the lion and the bull, symbols of wild life, are vanquished not by the old human hunters but by the demi-gods Gilgamesh and Enkidu. There is still the seated deity with standing figures reminiscent of the banquet scene, but now the human worshipper, the owner of the seal, is led by the hand by his patron deity into the presence of the great god of the city—it is the 'presentation-scene' which was afterwards to become the stereotyped subject for a man's signet. The growth of symbolism naturally involves a remove from nature. On the best of the seals—and the best are very fine indeed—the design is bold, the cutting of the intaglio exquisite, but the musculature of men and animals on which the engraver lavishes his pains is entirely schematic, the lions' manes become a pattern and even the contorted violence of the attitudes tends to be artificially ornamental.

If in spite of this the Sargonid seals do not seem to lose in vigour compared with those of the First Dynasty it is because a new principle has been introduced into design: where the old engravers had filled their field with fighting beasts that overlapped and crossed each other or with feasters and their servants placed as close to one another as might be, here each figure is isolated against a clear background and by its detachment gains enormously in value. What in the case of sculpture was found to be the distinguishing trait of Sargonid art is not less manifest in the seals, and although in those of earlier date the *horror vacui* which disfigures the Lagash reliefs is not so apparent yet the feeling for space and atmosphere in the new style is a real innovation. And the parallel with sculpture holds good in another important respect. It has been seen that the stela of Naram-Sin marks the introduction into stone-carving in relief of a pictorial sense: similarly in the cylinder seals we find the engraver enlarging his range by bringing in mythological subjects which can only be represented in a pictorial fashion: the elaborate scenes on Pl. 72, *a-e*, are not mere decoration, they tell a story; based probably on the details of temple ritual, mystery-plays or the like, they are examples of the illustrative art that needs to be interpreted by reference to its literary context; the composition is episodic and the significance of the individual figures is essential to bring out the meaning of the picture.

The change comes with all the force of novelty and yet it is certainly due to development from within. In the first place Sumerian art was now so firmly established as to be almost impervious to foreign influences, as is shewn by its Indian contacts. In the Sargonid age there come to light in Mesopotamia numerous seals engraved in the Indus Valley style and sometimes inscribed with Indus Valley characters

(Pl. 71, *a*) which are either direct imports from India or, in some cases, local copies of such imports made to suit a special customer; they stand altogether apart from the seals of the country proper and have exercised no influence whatever on the art of the Sumerian gem-cutter. In the second place the new style is not wholly without its precedents; in seals of the Uruk age there had been faint foreshadowings of it (*v.* Pl. 67) and although such had been swamped by other developments their existence is enough to prove that the inspiration is Sumerian; in both cases it may well be due to the semitic element which in the Uruk period was present and in the Sargonid predominant in the race, and with what we conceive to be the semitic character the insistence on spiritual content is quite in keeping.

Thus far the evidence of the cylinder seals as bearing on the history of Sumerian art has agreed reasonably well with that of sculpture and metal-work; the same characteristics appear more or less simultaneously in every period and witness to the same admixture of racial elements in their varying proportions; the political vicissitudes of the country are reflected in the one art as in the others. Only when we come to the Third Dynasty of Ur does the parallel seem to fail.

No contemporary seals illustrate for us the disaster of the Guti invasion, but its effects, when we can again pick up the thread, are only too manifest. The quickening influence of the northern spirit which had given new life to the art of Sargon's time has spent its force. On the seals of the Third Dynasty mythological subjects are rare, animal subjects, such as the slaying of the lion by Gilgamesh, when treated at all are jejune and perfunctory and the 'presentation scene', often accompanied by the name of the seal's owner, is repeated with wearisome iteration. Sometimes the carving is good, as in the case of the cylinders of King Dungi

(Pl. 72, *h*), Gimil-Sin (*j*) and Ibi-Sin (*k*), but the set scene gives small scope for originality of composition or of detail and more often than not the work is scratchy and superficial; the seals of the period bear to the old something of the relation which commercial trade-marks bear to the emblazonments of heraldry. At first sight it appears anomalous that this decadence should prevail at the very moment when sculpture was producing for Gudea and Ur-Nammu its greatest masterpieces.

The contrast is misleading because the gem-cutter, working on so minute a scale, could not possibly obtain those effects which are the aim and essence of the portrait sculptures; a fairer comparison would be with the stela of Ur-Nammu, which, as we have seen, was for all its merit without original inspiration. But if one goes a little more deeply into the matter it will be found that the seeming contradiction disappears and that the two arts equally express the spirit of their generation.

Sumerian art throughout had been symbolic. The old banquet scene stood for peace and prosperity, not without reference to the ritual communion that the gods share with man; the splendid groups of struggling animals where the lion masters the savage creatures of the hills must celebrate the victories of Sumer over her neighbours; Gilgamesh with the lion or the bull is civilisation taming the wild forces of nature; the Sargonid pictures illustrate the legends of the gods. In all these favourite scenes the subject is impersonal, national or mythological: the 'presentation scene' which is repeated on nine out of ten seals of Third Dynasty date is purely self-regarding, the individual is introduced to the favour of the great god, and his name may be written alongside the better to assure his salvation. In the monotony of subject and of treatment can be seen the failure of the crea-

tive spirit even while the material splendour of the time may call for delicacy of modelling and fine finish; the insistence on the individual note can only mean that the Sumerian, disillusioned and weary, despaired of the State and was concerned only with his own soul. And the extraordinary development of portraiture at the expense of other forms of art points to the same thing—Gudea might dedicate a score of statues 'for his life', for that longevity which was his substitute for paradise—but the artist who made the statues was interested not in the celebration of a great ruler but in the portrayal of character; it is the value of the individual as such, not as a maker of history, that appeals to him. The art of the Third Dynasty, coming after the disaster which had once and for all broken the Sumerian spirit, expresses that 'inward immigration' which accounts for the works of Baudelaire and de l'Isle Adam; it is introspective and centred upon the nature of the individual just as the individual was centred on his own prospects and not on those of the society in which he lived. It is not to be supposed that in the glorious reigns of Ur-Nammu, Dungi and Bur-Sin the citizen was conscious that the day of Sumer was over, but as great art anticipates mass consciousness and is to that extent prophetic we may fairly recognise in the statues as well as in the seals of the Third Dynasty a foreboding of the end.

For when Sin's grandson, the ill-fated Ibi-Sin, was carried away captive into Elam the last chapter of Sumerian history had been written. Elamites first and after them the semitic Babylonians were to take over the sceptre and to inherit the civilisation of the River Valley, the old race was to dwindle and disappear, even its language to be but a curious study for priests, and though the monuments of its art might serve as models for future ages the genius that had created them was no more.

Note on Chapter VI

The literature on the subject of the cylinder seals is considerable. For the illustrations in this chapter I have drawn mainly on examples found at Ur and on those in Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians* (University of Pennsylvania, the University Museum, Babylonian Section, Vol. XIV); of the Ur examples many have been published in *Ur Excavations*, Vol. II, 'The Royal Cemetery', others will appear in Vol. III, 'The Archaic Seal-Impressions', and in Vol. IV, 'The Archaic Periods'.

For the special characteristics of Sargonid seals see Frankfort in *Iraq*, Vol. I, 1, 'Gods and Myths on Sargonid Seals'; on those of the Indus Valley type found at Ur, C. J. Gadd in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. XVIII, 1932. For the Indus seals generally see Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation*, London, 1931.

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