

2017

Pottery is King: Bevel Rim Bowls and Power in Early Urban Societies of the Ancient Near East

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POTTERY IS KING:
BEVEL RIM BOWLS AND POWER IN EARLY URBAN SOCIETIES OF THE
ANCIENT NEAR EAST

BY

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BA CUNY QUEENS COLLEGE 2013
MA SUNY BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY 2017

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Masters of Art in Anthropology
In the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
State University of New York
2017

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Binghamton University
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2017

December 18th 2017

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Abstract

This thesis is about how material objects, specifically ceramics, are used to create and perpetuate political power of the ruling class. My research will demonstrate how bevel rim bowls were a form of structural violence in the Uruk/Protoliterate period Mesopotamia by forcing the people to create the very vessels they needed to obtain their rations. These vessels were widely used throughout the region, and as of yet their exact function is unknown. The Uruk period in Mesopotamia was a time of great change. Large urban centers were being formed and people were coming together in a new way to live in cities. A ceramic analysis of the bowls found in the region will help to determine their social and political importance.

To my father, Herbert M. Stimpfl

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people that helped me complete my thesis. I would first like to thank my advisor Kathleen Sterling. Her comments and criticisms helped push me in new directions, without her guidance this project would not be anywhere near what it is today. I am also grateful for Michael Sugerman and Lubna Omar for their helpful feedback and discussions.

My deepest gratitude is to my mother Evelin Stimpfl, without whose love, support, and encouragement I would not have finished this thesis. Last but certainly not least; I would like to thank my fiancé Edward who listened to me talk about bevel rim bowls for three years. His endless patience, support and advice helped me get through the writing process.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1	1
a. Abstract.....	1
b. Research Problem.....	2
c. Research Question.....	3
d. Methods.....	4
e. Theoretical Perspective.....	5
Chapter 2	8
a. Materiality of Political Practice.....	9
b. Public Domestic Life.....	11
c. Political Performance.....	13
d. Web of Interconnectedness.....	15
Chapter 3.....	17
a. Chogha Mish and its Context.....	17
b. The Uruk System.....	20
c. Rise of City States.....	23
Chapter 4	27
a. Representation and Meaning.....	27
Chapter 5	32
a. Clay in the Near East.....	32
b. Atrihasis: Origin Myth.....	36
Chapter 6	39
a. Early Archaeology in the Near East.....	39
Chapter 7	42
a. Bevel Rim Bowl Theories.....	42
Chapter 8	54
a. Near Eastern Culture.....	54
b. Basic Requirements of Life.....	54
c. Food and Feasting.....	55
Chapter 9	60
a. Ceramic Sourcing Study.....	60
b. Ceramic Analysis.....	62
c. Findings.....	65
d. Visual Comparison of Bowls.....	65
Chapter 10	68
a. Discussion.....	68
b. Conclusion.....	70
Bibliography	74

List of Tables

Table 1. Pottery Phases at Chogha Mish	20
Table 2. Basic Requirements of Life	51
Table 3. Standard Deviation of Data	65
Table 4. Chain of Interdependence of BRB.....	69

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of the Near East.....	18
Figure 2. Bevel Rim Bowls (XXI) Found at Other Contemporary Sites.....	22
Figure 3. Bevel Rim Bowls.....	31
Figure 4. Similarities between BRBs and Bedja Bowls.....	41
Figure 5. Sumerian Symbols and their Meaning	43
Figure 6. Evolution of the BRB.....	44
Figure 7. Volume of a Truncated Cone.....	65
Figure 8. Bevel Rim Bowls.....	67

Chapter 1

Abstract

This project is about how material objects, specifically ceramics, are used to create and perpetuate political power to the ruling class. My research will demonstrate how bevel rim bowls (BRBs) were used to perpetuate power through structural violence in the Uruk/Protoliterate period Mesopotamia. These vessels were widely used throughout the region, and as of yet their exact function is unknown. The Uruk period in Mesopotamia was a time of great change. Large urban centers were being formed and people were coming together in a new way to live in cities. A ceramic analysis of the bowls found in the region will help to determine their social and political importance.

The larger question at stake is the role of material objects in the political sphere. This is a common question asked of architecture and public monuments, however, it is rarely asked of common objects such as ceramics. Material objects have a great influence over people's lives and by exploring objects often ignored, we can understand more about life in the past. These ignored, often times crude items, can sometimes be the most telling of a culture's politics and beliefs (Bowser, 2000). Furthermore, it looks at how political influence penetrates the domestic sphere in

ways not readily seen by outsiders of that community (Bowser, 2000).

Highly decorative, figural and fine clay vessels are the ones that get most attention from archaeologists. However, the most telling vessels are the ones that go against the technology and design of the times. These might seem to be just utilitarian items however, the choice of the people to produce them in such a way can tell us more than just use value. The broader impact of this research is to challenge the idea that the function of the object is merely how it is used in day-to-day life. This research is looking at a larger scale function and one that is not commonly looked at. Bevel Rim bowls in the early stages of City-State formation were used as a form of structural violence whereas the people themselves were instructed to make the very vessels with which they needed to receive their food rations. This will give us a better view into the life of Uruk period people in the Near East.

Research Problem

Bevel rim bowls are one of the most iconic ceramic types found during the Uruk period in Mesopotamia. The debate over how bevel rim bowls were used began in the late nineteenth century with their discovery at the site of Susa in Iran (Potts, 2009). These vessels came to define the Protoliterate period and their presence or absence became a significant chronological marker. They can be found from Eridu in southern Mesopotamia, to Ninevah in the north, Susa to the east and Hamah near the Mediterranean (Delougaz 1952).

Their use over a widespread area for a limited amount of time (4000-3100BC) has made them an important object. From the 19th century until the

present the use of these bowls has been a topic of heated debate and study in Near Eastern Archaeology. However there are many challenges facing archaeologists who attempt to understand this type of ware. The very nature of the vessel being crudely made and having no identifying marks to symbolize a deeper meaning allow multiple interpretations of the vessel to be debated. The challenge with this is wading through these interpretations and looking for an answer that would make most sense based not only on the vessel itself but also on the greater community within which it was used. Their use could also be multifaceted; in that they could have an obvious use but also a deeper cultural and societal meaning. This is what I am proposing with my research. I propose that these bowls have an obvious use, as ration bowls, however their very use is woven deeply into the politics of the time and therefore BRBs are a far more important object than previously thought.

My research would shed new light on the politics of communities during the Uruk period at the start of urban development in the region. It would help us understand how people were organized into cities and groups and how a ruler took power and was able to create large urban centers, vast trade networks, and create the elaborate culture of the Bronze Age that we can still see archaeologically today. The question is how BRBs functioned in these early urban societies.

Research Question

The Uruk period, beginning around 3,500 BCE was a time of vast urban development and trade. Small villages transformed into bustling urban centers with interconnected trade networks (Bernbeck 2009). Goods, people, and ideas were

moving across the land and settling in new areas (Bernbeck 2009). These changes would not have been possible without a strong power structure. The site of Chogha Mish in Iran is one of these early city-states. It grew from a small Chalcolithic settlement into a large regional center.

At this site and many others in the Uruk period, many bevel rim bowls were discovered stacked and in pits. This immense amount of similar sized, crudely made ceramics found throughout the region and their purpose has puzzled researchers for generations (Beale 1978).

The rise of political power in the ancient Near East is a widely discussed and researched topic. However the role ceramics play in this movement has rarely been explored. Why are bevel rim bowls so important during the Uruk period, and what role do they play in society? The most prominent theories that have been proposed about these bowls are, bread-baking bowls, votive/ presentation bowls, or ration bowls. I propose that there is also a fourth interpretation; this material item was used to create and perpetuate political power. By looking at each hypothesis individually as well as data from my ceramic analysis we can understand the importance of these vessels and how they were used during the Uruk period. With the use of these items, the ruling party had a strong hold over the people and used clay as a means to perpetuate their own power.

Methods

In order to answer this question I analyzed a collection of 166 BRBs from an excavation, at the site of Chogha Mish, done by the University of Chicago Oriental

Institute. I measured, observed and compared the bowls within the collection to understand their correlation to one another. This allowed me to understand how the bowls were made, and make my own hypothesis as to their use.

I compared my finding to Beale's (1978) analysis. His objective was to measure the bowls to see if they were of a standard size and also to see their volume. He does this by taking key measurements of the bowls such as opening diameter, depth, height, and bottom diameter to see their relation to one another. In my analysis I took the same measurements as well as did a visual analysis on the bowls to understand their material and materiality in connection to their use.

This research will help to further understand political performance and the use of material objects in political practice. Performance is not easy to see in the archaeological record however by looking at the material objects used in these political events we can understand better their components and purpose. I will look at the context within which the bowls existed to get a better understanding of how these material objects were used in politics. By looking at the BRBs as not just an everyday object but as an item of political performance we can change the way we see politics in early urban societies in the ancient Near East.

Theoretical Perspective

"...situations created by violence- particularly structural violence, by which I mean forms of pervasive social inequality that are ultimately backed up by the threat of physical harm—invariably tend to create the kinds of willful blindness we normally associate with bureaucratic procedures." – (Graeber 2006, 4)

Power and violence are interconnected concepts. With the perpetuation of

societal power comes a form of violence, which is often unnoticed by the everyday person. Based on David Graeber's (2006) work on the prevalence of power and violence we can approach this topic with a new understanding. The effects of power over us are often unconscious, until we are in the position where it forcibly acts upon us. These instances are filled with violence and are easily recognized. Graeber writes that along with power comes the stupidity that leads to violence (Graeber 2004, 72). This originates from people turning a blind eye to how the government controls them through violence (Graeber 2004, 72). Similar political violence can be seen by the use of ceramics, as one of these unrecognized instances.

"But the violence I'm referring to here is not epistemic. It's quite concrete. All of these are institutions involved in the allocation of resources within a system of property rights regulated and guaranteed by governments in a system that ultimately rests on the threat of force. "Force" in turn is just a euphemistic way to refer to violence."- (Graeber 2006, 5)

Graeber uses the example for bureaucratic forms to show how the government imposes structural violence on its people. These forms are used to control the people, and control access to institutional benefits and have specific rules, regulations, and must be followed exactly. BRBs (bevel rim bowls) work in a similar way. My hypothesis is that these bowls were created in a standardized way and used for formalized ritualistic purpose in order to control the people's access to food/religion/administration. To access these items, the people needed to use these specific bowls and in a formalized way. The need for people to perform the act of creating a bowl used in giving them the very means with which they need to survive, is using material to control people.

Other scholars including Reinhard Bernbeck (2009) refer to this idea of the

people themselves making the bowls in order to obtain food. In “Class Conflict in Ancient Mesopotamia: Between Knowledge of History and Historicizing Knowledge” he uses the BRB as a case study to look at how history itself is written. Bernbeck looks further into the lives of the people that suffered through changes in the past and asks questions about the history and perspective of the “losers.” He writes that the people were “materially producing” “the means of their own submission (BRBs), which was, ironically, at the same time a means for their survival” (Bernbeck 2009, 55). In my own work I will build on Bernbeck and Graeber and look at how, like paperwork, these bowls were a necessary, political, and violent means through which to suppress and control the lower classes.

Chapter 2

It is hard to imagine a world without materials. Thinking about the thousands of objects a day that we use and rely on for survival, we sometimes forget how humans and materials work together. When we look at the past through archaeology; materials are all that remain. One aspect of society that requires the use of materials is politics. A ruler cannot rule on words alone, they need to display their power. One way to do that is through objects.

Materiality and its different interpretations is a good way to look at this web of interconnectedness. How do humans act on objects and in turn how do objects act on humans? The relationship between human and object is not always one of creator and created. These relationships are not always easy to discern and there is varying debate among scholars such as Johansen, Meskell, Ingold, Hodder, and Ristvet. Some views place the power on the humans as the creator where as other theories suggest that creation is more organic and is a process of growth. Looking at these different views will help to understand the materiality of BRBs. What is their place in the fabric of society and how does their creation help us to understand their use. I will look at current scholar's theories of materiality and link them to BRBs at the site of Chogha Mish and in the larger Uruk landscape.

Materiality of Political Practice

“Politics, as a specific and dynamic field of power, social relations and practices, both produces and is constrained by materiality.” (Johansen 2014:12)

Johansen (2014) states that there are two distinct emphases on materiality in anthropology today. Some scholars look at how objects and things are imbued with meaning and come to encode values through their production and circulation. He uses this quote from Meskell to demonstrate this idea “Materiality represents a presence of power in realizing the world, crafting things from nothing, subjects from nonsubjects” (Johansen 2014:12). By this he means that objects gain meaning from being created. Other scholars place emphasis on the dynamic relational attributes of physical materials to resist cultural imprints and instead create their own meaning through socio material practice. (Johansen 2014) For this Johansen looks to Ingold’s explanation. Ingold suggests “‘making’ inanimate things is a process of ‘growth’- much like raising crops or animals – not a process of producing something out of an infinitely malleable material substance” (Johansen 2014:13). By this he means that material forms are like living beings and are generated within context of the people and environments involved.

These two understandings of materiality place meaning on different actors. The first, places it on the power of the object to have meaning within society. The second places it on the environment and creation of the object itself. Johansen combines aspects of both of these ideas on materiality and uses them in his understanding of political materiality. To understand the political meaning of BRBs I will use his theory in my analysis. The idea that political materiality has a dualism

that materials are given meaning through their creation and through the humans who use them, is helpful in understanding how BRBs are created. They are created from their environment and their very creation and use gives them meaning.

In order to understand how materials and power are interconnected I also use Johansen's idea that explores politics as

"...suites of historically situated practices through which power is differently articulated, manifested and impacted on a variety of social relationships by a diversity of social actors in the conscious pursuit of a particular individual and collective goals." (Johansen 2014:7).

By this he means that he is not looking at the types of politics (i.e. state, chiefdoms etc.) but instead at the practices that make up a political power (Johansen 2014).

These practices impact different relationships within the collective group and have a specific goal in mind.

He goes on to explore a case study from South India in the Iron Age.

Megalithic monuments and mundane features, such as rock pools for watering cattle, showed political practices of spatial appropriation (Johansen 2014). These places enhanced "social inequalities of access" to both the place itself and to the material and symbolic resources. (Johansen 2014) It also expressed the inequalities of herd management, provisioning communal feasts and mobilizing labor. However this would have been misinterpreted without the understanding of the importance of cattle during the Iron Age. This shows that the understanding of materials is only as important as the understanding of the society in which they are used. Without understanding the political climate and urban development of the Ancient Near East, the meaning of BRBs is lost.

By using the idea of political materiality we can get a deeper understanding of how BRB fit into society. This analysis allows us to look past the two general ideas of materiality and see how the material, object, and society all played a roll in its use and meaning in political practice.

Public v. Domestic Life

“ A long standing assumption in archaeological theory is that pottery in the domestic context represents a form of “passive style” that does not enter into symbolic communications in the political domain” (Bowser 2000: 219)

The public and domestic spheres are often seen as two distinct and separate areas of social life. Brenda Bowser breaks these two spheres down and looks at how pottery bridges the domestic and public. She identifies the interconnected web of influence that underlies the village of Conambo and how the women of the village move within it.

Bowser (2000) looks at the style of domestic chicha bowls and how they are used to influence the political climate of the village of Conambo. The women of the house make each bowl using designs taught to them by other women. The style and designs tell the viewer what political faction (Achuar or Quichua) that women belong to (Bowser 2000). This challenges the long held belief that domestic items have passive style or unconscious and public or political items have an active style or deliberateness. These chicha bowls have a lot of rules and ritual surrounding them, their decoration and how chicha is served can be a very deliberate political act. (Bowser 2000)

These bowls are used for the everyday serving of chicha for the household as well as to guests who often come to discuss politics. Bowls made from calabash gourds are also used for very informal settings (Bowser 2000). The order, timing and type of bowl (calabash or pottery) with which the women chooses to serve the chicha, signals the visitor's social distance, status and even disfavor (Bowser 2000). While the men are the main political actors in public, women are a very big part of the political discussion that takes place at home. They have sway within the household on which faction to side with, as well as opinions on different issues. "In Conambo the public/private and political/domestic contexts are inseparable, and each women uses her chicha bowls on a daily basis to bridge those domains." (Bowser 2000: 229). This pottery is a way for the women to have a voice in politics and in turn this pottery is highly political and influential on society.

While this is different from what is happening with the BRBs, it shows how domestic and somewhat utilitarian pottery can be quite influential within the political sphere. The material and design of the chicha bowls create a situation where not only do people have influence over material, but the material then in turn has influence over the household and community. The use of the ceramic bowls over the bowls made of calabash for serving guests is a conscious choice on the part of the women of Conambo to impose their political voice. This relationship between politics and material is used over and over again through statuary and monuments however, clay as a highly political medium is far more difficult to see. Pottery can be used to unify, stratify or signify many aspects of society. In this way Bowser's case study is similar to the BRB. BRBs are used to unify the social class while separating

them from the upper class. They were also being used to signify the power of the ruler and reliance of the people on the ruler for their survival.

Political Performance

Lauren Ristvet (2015) looks deeper at this relationship between public and domestic. She looks at ritual and performance in connection with politics in the ancient Near East. She argues that analyzing material culture is necessary to understanding ritual and politics in the physical world (Ristvet 2015). She places this intersection of ritual, politics and religion on two levels; public events and daily practices. She describes public events as large-scale rituals, ceremonies, pilgrimages, festivals, and celebrations “that work to fuse a specific ethos and worldview” (Ristvet 2015: 25). Daily practice, which includes dress, education, and house building, differs from public events because they are done “in order to see how the world is actualized in ritual impinges on the world of common sense” (Ristvet 2015: 25).

Public events do not arise randomly. They conform to specific rules that are given meaning in their cultural context. They use certain formulas that make their events different from every day life such as repetition, and formality (Ristvet 2015). These events also take place in a “time apart” they do not exist in everyday life but instead along side it. They also utilize the material. They use objects and places that inspire meaning and it is only through these objects that these political performances are effective.

These political events take three forms.

“-First, they can effect change themselves; they can model a new reality.

- Second, events can become mimetic and display one vision of the political order...

- Finally, public events can provide occasions to critique and even to transform the status quo...” Ristvet 2015:26).

All political events take on at least one of these forms and it allows them to be effective.

The role of religion in ritual is not always clearly seen in these political events. The understanding of performance requires understanding how aspects of ceremony, and ritual draw upon and shape other social and economic practices (Ristvet 2015). Ristvet uses Durkheim’s (2001) idea of religion in order to present her argument. Durkheim says that religion was not about explaining the unexplainable or the worship of gods, but about the “characterization of life into the sacred and the profane a way to create a moral community.”(Ristvet 2015:27).

To explain this she gives multiple examples of how performance is political. One such example is the French Revolution. In January 1793, alongside drummers, soldiers, and prison guards, King Louis XVI was paraded through the streets of Paris. He was then decapitated before a crowd of 100,000 people (Ristvet 2015). Louis would not be the last decapitated however this began a particular type of ceremony that was the foundation for the new republic. In this way the performance was an “anti-ritual” it sought to revoke the dynastic principal. However in turn it became a political performance denoted by repetition and commemoration (Ristvet 2015). Over the next two years, 2,639 people were decapitated and 40,000 people died throughout France. This became the way for the Jacobins to define their power.

Many festivals and commemorative events took place during the years after Louis’ death. The new regime used this as a way to establish new political loyalties.

Fashion and dress at the time also changed, the uniform became popular over more ostentatious clothing (Ristvet 2015). This symbolized the idea that cloths do not make the man and represented with a break from the previously established order. Most importantly was the use of symbols. These celebrations and fashions employed potent symbols that helped to create a new class of political citizen. The use of symbols, repetition and material objects established the new political regime (Ristvet 2015). This illustrated the importance of political events and practical actions in times of change to establish power.

In this way we could relate the use of BRB to this idea. If religion is a cultural system and material objects were needed in these ritual performances then it is possible that BRBs were used for the same purpose. They were needed as a way to preform politics effectively. Their use in repetitive events and their symbolic creation lend credence to their larger purpose in political performance.

Web of Interconnectedness

Humans and things have a long-standing and entangled history. Here I am using Hodder's (2011) definition of "things" as referring to human-made objects or natural objects that humans have an interest in. Human existence and social life depend on material things and looking at this relationship is an important aspect to understanding the human experience (Hodder 2011).

Hodder points out five ways in which this entanglement can present itself in everyday life.

- "Humans depend on things"

- “Things depend on other things.” All things depend on other things along chains of interdependence.”
- “Things depend on humans. Things are not inert. They are always falling apart, transforming, growing, changing, dying, running out.”
- “The defining aspect of human entanglement with made things is that humans get caught in a double-bind, depending on things that depend on humans” Meaning the human-thing entanglement does not stop at one connection but builds to form a multilayered web.
- “Traits evolve and persist.” This means that these relationships evolve and shift. (Hodder 2011:154).

Hodder (2011) used clay at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey as an example to how humans, materials, and things are linked. Clay was used for “...houses, hearths, ovens, figurines, skull modeling” and later, pottery (Hodder 2011: 156).

“... people at Çatalhöyük lived in a world of clay and clayey soil and depended on it for protection, warmth, food, social identity, personal identity, as well as for the development of senses and probably cognition” (Hodder 2011:156).

With clay surrounding them at every turn it is easy to imagine that clay was not only important to society but also was as vital as food itself.

The use of such an immensely important, though ubiquitous material to make bowls like the BRBs is very telling. The people of Chogha Mish as well as others in the region, who used the bowls, depended on things that depended on humans to be produced. They depended on the bowls to be given their rations but they also depended on the people who made the bowls themselves. Things depend on other things where “...many other actors are involved – human, institutional, legalistic, bureaucratic, and so on.” (Hodder 2011:157). This leads to an intricate web of relationships and control for the people to survive.

Chapter 3

Chogha Mish and its Context

Chogha Mish has a long and varied history. By looking at its different periods, we can see how during the Uruk/Protoliterate period the site layout and population changed. This change is due in part to the new Uruk system that was sweeping through the Near East. Cities and satellite cities sprung up all with a seemingly common cultural thread. The most obvious, being the BRBs. They are found in almost every city, not only in the Mesopotamian heartland but also throughout the region. By looking at the Uruk system and the rise of these city states it will help us to determine why BRBs were important to Uruk society.

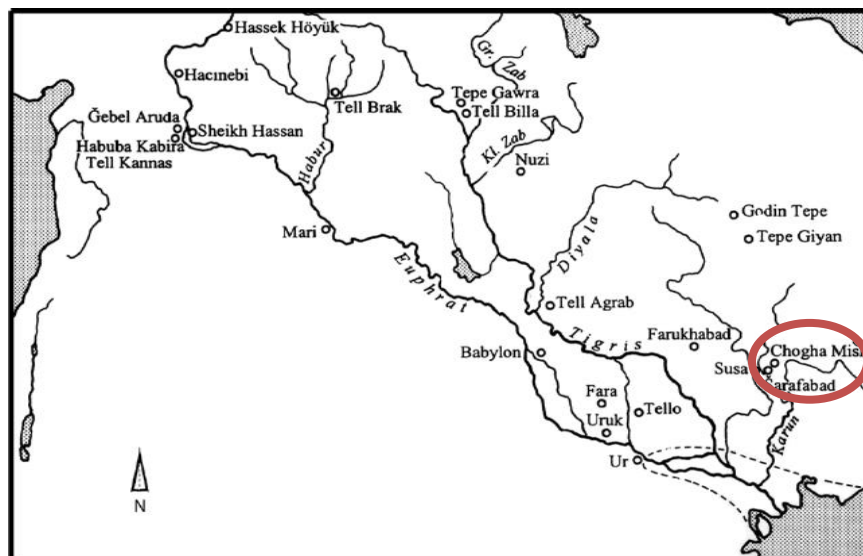


Figure 1 Map of the Near East (Alizadeh 2008)

Chogha Mish is located in lowland Susiana and is the largest Pre-Susanian settlement in the region. The site is located within range of four rivers, the Dez, Sia Mansur, Jundi Shapur and Shur, which made it possible to sustain life, farming, and the thriving of the city (Alizadeh 2008). Chogha Mish had a long almost uninterrupted period of habitation. This gives the site the unique ability to demonstrate the series of major developments that took place during the entire prehistoric period in southwestern Asia (Alizadeh 2008). The earliest phase at the site is the Archaic Susiana Period I, which dates back 6800 BC. The nearby site of Chogha Bonut, which has the earliest record of settled habitation of the Susiana Plain, helps to fill in the gap before Chogha Mish, giving a largely complete history of settlements in the region, as well as the development of pottery technology and style (Alizadeh 2008). Early farmers in the area took advantage of the marshes below these settlements as well as the dry farming in the highlands (Alizadeh 2008). These farmers cultivated wheat, barley, and lentils, as well as keeping domesticated sheep, goats, pigs, and dogs. Hunting and gathering supplemented this mixed subsistence.

After the aceramic phase seen at Chogha Bonut, the formative phase of the Archaic period began (Alizadeh 2008). This was marked by crude pottery vessels with simple shapes. The people built small rectangular houses consisting of two or three rooms with an open court and fire pit. Based on the size and communal area these were simple nuclear family homes. Little is known of the social hierarchy of this period because there is a homogeneous distribution of artifacts in the excavated

areas of the site, such as the cemetery, residential areas and administrative center (Alizadeh 2008).

Pottery Phases at Chogha Mish	
Period	Date
Parthian Period	247 B.C. -224A.D
Iron Age II (Neo-Elamite)/ Achaemenid Period	1100-770 B.C
Old Elamite	2700-1600 B.C
Protoliterate Phase	3500 B.C
Late Susiana Period	4600-4000B.C
Middle Susiana Period	5200-4800 B.C
Early Susiana Period	5800-5400 B.C
Archaic Susiana Period	6500-5900 B.C

Table 1 Pottery Phases at Chogha Mish

During the Early Susiana Phase there was contact between the Susiana plain and Mesopotamia. One difference between the two centers, though, is that in Iran there is an absence of any structures that can be considered a temple, whereas in Mesopotamia these buildings became the focal point of the site (Alizadeh 2008). During this time period, the site of Chogha Mish almost doubled in size to about five hectares. By the Late Susiana Phase, Chogha Mish had grown to seventeen hectares then shrunk back down to eight hectares. This phase lasted from 4350 to 4190 BC. However, about 150 years or so of data are missing from Chogha Mish. The site was abandoned and then reoccupied within this time gap (Alizadeh 2008).

By the next phase, the Protoliterate phase, the site was occupied again to its capacity of seventeen to eighteen hectares. The Protoliterate phase had planned

streets, side alleys, sewers, and irrigation drains, water wells and cesspools, workshops, and public and private buildings (Alizadeh 2008). It was a major site for the manufacture of pottery, with numerous kilns and fireplaces found throughout the site. There is good evidence that the site was established as an administrative and production center, and a series of buildings were excavated that attest to this (Alizadeh 2008). These were a series of large complex building in the East Area of the site. There was also a building that in plan was similar to temples found at Uruk, but no evidence within it suggests it was used as a temple. This is the period in which the BRBs were produced and used (Alizadeh 2008). After this, the site was peacefully abandoned and left to the elements for 1,500 years, until parts of the site were in use again in the Achaemenid period (Alizadeh 2008).

The Uruk System

The Uruk culture or period lasted from around 3800-3200 BCE (Leick 2001). Similar archaeological findings can be found at sites throughout Iraq, Syria, southern Turkey, and western Iran.

Table 1. Open Vessels, Similar to Chogha Mish Protoliterate Families IV–XXXIc, Present at Other Sites

	PROTOLITERATE FAMILIES																			
	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	XI	XII	XVI	XVIIIa	XIX	XX	XXII	XXIII	XXIV	XXVII	XXVIII	XXIX	XXX	XXXIc
SUSA																				
Acropole 1965																				
“Jamdat Nasr récent”	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
“Jamdat Nasr ancien- Uruk récent”	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	—	—	×	—	×	—	×	—
Apadana Trench 1038	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	—
Acropole I																				
I7	—	—	—	×	×	×	×	—	—	—	—	×	—	×	×	—	×	—	—	—
I7B	—	×	×	×	×	×	×	—	—	—	×	×	×	×	×	—	×	×	—	×
I8	—	—	×	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—
WARKA																				
Md XV4: Archaic Set- tlement “Jemdet Nasr”	×	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
K/L XII Sounding “Spät-Uruk”	×	—	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	×	×	×	—
Eanna Precinct and Test Pit																				
III–II	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
IV	—	—	×	—	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
V	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
VI	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	×	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×
VII	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—
IX–VIII	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XII	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—
NIPPUR																				
Inanna Temple																				
XII	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XIII	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XIV	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—
XV	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
XVI	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XVII	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	×	—
XVIII	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XIX	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
XX	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TELLO	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
JEMDET NASR	×	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
KHAFAJAH Protoliterate c–d	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NINEVEH																				
IV	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
III	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
GRAI RESH II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
HABUBA KABIRA SOUTH	—	×	×	—	×	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	×	×	×	×	—	—	×	—
GEBEL ARUDA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
HASSEK HOYUK																				
Early Bronze Age I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—
Late Chalcolithic	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	×	—
ARSLAN TEPE VIa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
TEPECİK (KEBAN)																				
Late Chalcolithic	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
GODIN V	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
GIYAN Surface Collection	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SIALK IV	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
QABRESTAN IV	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MALYAN Banesh Period	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
YAHYA IVc	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Figure 2 Bevel Rim Bowls (XXI) found at other contemporary sites (Delugaz et al Part I 1996,

Table 1 pg54)

This leads archaeologists to believe that the “Uruk culture” was present in a very wide geographical area beyond the Mesopotamian heartland (Leick 2001). The

artifacts associated with this culture are immediately recognizable. The pottery has a defined stylistic range, there are multifunctional monumental buildings, and cylinder seals and tablets are written in an early form of cuneiform script. Most interestingly is the prevalence of BRBs. Many archaeologists call this the Uruk world system (Leick 2001). Another important innovation of the Uruk period was the invention of bureaucracy and time-resistant accounting (Leick 2001). This refers to the use of clay to keep track of transactions (i.e. clay tablets and bullae). The success of the Uruk main center was dependent on the coordination of an economic exchange system. These exchanges lead to the creation and use of seals and writing (Leick 2001), which emphasizes the reciprocal nature of exchanges. The highest office on the bureaucratic level was called EN for a man and NIN for a woman (Leick 2001). Texts suggest that the EN was the highest point in the chain of command.

The epicenter for this culture seems to be Uruk which is labeled as “the city” in antiquity and as the “mother city from which all other cities sprang” in 1856 (Leick 2001: 30). Uruk was continuously in use from 4000 BCE to 654 CE and went through many phases and periods (Leick 2001). The site continued to grow into the third millennium BCE until it covered 550 hectares. Other contemporaneous sites throughout the Near East used and spread Uruk period artifacts (Leick 2001). These sites were usually located near waterways linking them to southern Mesopotamia. Leick thinks this process was the first type of “colonial” empire. How the system was ruled and by whom, is unknown (Leick 2001). However, there was a collective effort and collective values that underpinned public life (Leick 2001). The artifacts known from this period were designed to “ensure greater efficiency in

administration and production to maximize the equal distribution of goods and services” (Leick 2001: 47).

Rise of City States

The catalyst for the rise of city-states is not known, but by looking at archaeological evidence we can see how they emerged over time. We do not have written records that relate to this formation, but we do have architecture and artifacts. Forest (2005) uses architectural features to study how change in house shape led to new forms of social organization. He begins his analysis by looking at the Ubaid period from 6500-3800 BCE. While this is temporally before the focus of this paper, the events and social organization leading up to the Uruk period is of great importance.

The first house plan Forest looks at is the tripartite building. These were huge buildings in the early Ubaid period (Forest 2005). They were comprised of one main common room at the center and private apartments on either side. The apartments may have been occupied by an elder couple on one side and by a younger couple with their children on the other; based on the differing sizes of the apartments and communal space at the center (Forest 2005). This indicates a stem family; three generations of a family could have resided in these houses. A stem-family is when a couple’s firstborn child as well as their spouse and their children live in one house while the younger children often move out upon marriage. This type of family structure indicates that they were dealing with developed village societies where family decision-making was in the hands of family heads. The

enlargement of the family group is meant to maintain stability in the numbers of people who assume responsibilities (Forest 2005). This means that each housing unit will only have one family head and only one person making decisions for them within the greater society.

As these societies grew, they needed to find new political, social, and ideological solutions for dealing with a larger population (Forest 2005). The next phase of Ubaid culture was “chiefdoms.” A few lineage heads took on decision-making, which can be seen by the presence of large tripartite buildings with a central hall and a row of utilitarian rooms on both sides. These were probably assembly chambers where eminent persons gathered to manage public affairs. Over time these buildings became bigger and their façades more elaborate (Forest 2005). Houses at the site of Gawra (Iraq) show more social differentiation. Some buildings at the site stand out because of their large size, thick walls, elaborate façades, and a plan that shows they were more open to the outside. These seem to be residences of eminent persons. They were first scattered throughout the settlement, but over time they were congregated together on the highest point of the settlement. These compounds eventually evolved into the prototype of a palace (Forest 2005).

The next change was the transition to the Uruk period. Cities began to rise on the alluvial plains, divided into small principalities. The leaders of these principalities needed to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. To do this, they used luxury goods. This required skilled craftsman, who brought about new techniques. These luxury goods also consisted of rare materials only found abroad. Expeditions to obtain these rare materials resulted in the creation of

colonies. These colonial centers were built using an organized plan so that they could be erected quickly and land could be distributed. A town hall was built on a high point in the city for control (Forest 2005).

The layout of a city with its narrow streets and limited movement was a clear way to demonstrate and create political authority (Ristvet 2015). The architecture of the city such as streets, walls, gates and monuments “not only expressed a regime’s political power, but also became part of the urban fabric, it continued to affect each citizen in ‘an unconscious, habitual, corporeal way’” (Ristvet 2015:44, Hastorf 2009:53). In this way political authority was naturalized. Not only were the cities a gleaming, example of power but cross-cultural travel also explicitly showed the wealth and power of the ruler (Ristvet 2015). Exotic objects and knowledge were linked to power and the very act of travel was in itself a ritual and established authority. Restricting access and controlling movement was a method to display power and unite the countryside (Ristvet 2015). In this way the journey served as a ritual act and political metaphor.

The elite were exempt from agricultural work so that they could focus on ensuring the society’s prosperity. Because of the difference in social status, elites had to distribute goods to keep their status, as well as trade for the rare materials they required to have luxury goods. The restrictions of the distribution of goods led to new forms of record keeping and control (Forest 2005). Cylinder seals, tokens, and writing developed as ways to keep track of goods and transactions. In addition to the increase in power figures, new ideological tools also emerged. Symbols for kingship in seals and writings, as well as the building of temples, demonstrated the

presence of gods on earth and helped establish a social order (Forest 2005). In order for the elites to keep their place in this new social order, tactics of social control needed to extend to more than just administrative records. They would have needed to control aspects of social life in both the public and private lives of the people. I propose that one of these ways was to require the production of utilitarian vessels such as the BRB. This would have altered how people saw food and how they understood art and propaganda.

Though Chogha Mish was inhabited long before the Uruk/Protoliterate phase began, it was during that time that the city became the manufacturing powerhouse that can be seen in the archaeological record. The layout and size of the site became similar to other Uruk sites throughout the region and into Mesopotamia. This interesting rise after a 150 years of abandonment, speaks to the changes that were happening in the region at large. The Uruk system was sweeping through and created the need for administrative and production centers along the Susiana Plain. Taking a closer look at BRBs, a major link between these sites, will give us a better answer as to how Chogha Mish moved into this new cultural era.

Chapter 4

Art is the most identifiable aspect of culture. It is specific to each culture but is also fluid and ever changing. By looking at the transformation of art we can see how during the Uruk period, these cultural systems changed to keep up with the ever-expanding city-states. Changes in political power lead to a new social dynamic surrounding food and to a new more monumental way for propaganda to be conveyed through art. At the center of these changes were BRBs. They were used for food distribution and were produced on a monumental scale throughout the region that showed a somewhat centralized power. Delving into the cultural background will help to put BRBs into context and show how they were used in a changing world.

Representation and Meaning

Art in the ancient world does not fall into the aesthetic framework that we use today to think of art. Instead, it belonged to a category used in Latin and Greek meaning “skill” (Ross 2005). The art historical terminology of art, artist, and patron are also good ways to look at Ancient Near Eastern works. The artworks of the Ancient Near East functioned in a larger cultural system. They were not meant for

aesthetics, but to relay messages and to show the social order. Ross (2005) calls this approach, “ideological”. This requires that there be a sponsor and a creator of the work, an understanding audience, and a distinct message being communicated and received, though not always consciously. It is no surprise then that the growth of urbanism in the Near East coincides with the appearance of public art works.

Kings and rulers were not the only people who could commission works. Common people often commissioned figurines for magical purposes. These figurines would have represented gods, demons, or humans, and were used for protection or spells. Once their magic was depleted they were often purposely damaged or discarded (Benzel 2010). These objects were made for a particular reason and use; the idea of “art for art’s sake” is not often seen in this time period. Images meant to copy or portray a likeness of an object or being was then instilled with the spirit and powers of that thing or being (Benzel 2010; Gardner and Kleiner 2010). These magical figurines of gods and demons were not meant to be representations, but were seen as the actual embodiment of these creatures and contained all their supernatural powers. This idea extended from monumental public works (architecture, large statues, and stele) to votive statues in the likeness of worshipers. This rational can be found throughout the Near East at this time, as well as in Egypt. The *Ka* statues commissioned by pharaohs were intended to be homes for the spirits of dead kings, and as a way for them to exist in this world and the next for all eternity. This also extends to architecture, where the temple being the home to the god or goddess on earth as long as their cult statue resides in the building (Gardner and Kleiner 2010). Similar ideas of what we could call living art are placed

on propaganda pieces and reliefs. These scenes and events were “re-presented”; they were taken out of their original times and contexts and preserved in a continually present tense (Ross 2005). This reality is then presented through a filter. Dominant themes of victory, powers etc. are understood by the viewer, not the real sequence of events being presented. For instance, battle scenes may represent a particular battle in history, however, the king is always the victor and the army is always triumphant (Benzel 2010). The message to the audience is that the king is perpetually a good leader who wins all battles.

There are a number of factors that support an artwork’s use as propaganda: scale, material, setting, and iconography are a few. While in most cases scale refers to the size of a given object, here I also use it to refer to the quantity of items made. The size of an object can directly correlate to an object’s use as a public monument. It would have had to be large enough for the people to see it and to create a feeling of grandeur. However, scale can also refer to having items mass-produced (to an extent). This can be seen in the case of the BRB, where their production is widespread and influences a large region.

Material is another important factor. The properties of materials can contribute to their longevity, and materials have been a conscious choice by the commissioner if they wished that the work would survive for generations. The source of materials also adds to the propaganda of the work. Only the wealthy and well-connected could have had materials imported from long distances or from special places. The sacred value of places and the rarity of materials also add to their

value. The use of these materials for artworks would have shown the wealth and prominence of the rulers to the public.

To get the most exposure for these works, the commissioner had to choose the right setting. This is one of the most important aspects of creating propaganda pieces. The location affects the exposure and the audience of the piece. Public places such as temples and courtyards would have allowed for a large amount of exposure and the ability to view the work in the round (Ross 2005). All of these factors would have meant nothing, however, if not for iconography. Iconography gives the viewer specific clues to what the piece is about and its intended message (Ross 2005). Just as in a Renaissance painting where each element from the halo to a blown-out candle in the scene can tell the viewer which bible story is being depicted, so too do the iconographic elements in these monuments tell the audience what the commissioner is trying to portray. These images are centered on themes of religion, power, and war. Not many people of the time could read, so iconography was important; without a set meaning for each aspect of a work the audience could miss the meaning (Ross 2005).

By taking these ideas into account as well as Bowser's case study on chicha bowls, we can start to merge public and domestic art in a way that will help us understand everyday objects as art. To do so we need to look at what art or public works were meant to signify and how they were used in this art–artist–patron dynamic. By understanding this we can look at works that lack the iconography that describes its purpose and try to understand that a lack of iconography does not in fact mean that the object has no meaning. BRBs are made in a large scale, an

accessible material, and are found in important places throughout the site but lack iconography. However, such abundant items had a purpose and a person or group commissioning them.

Chapter 5

Clay in the Near East

“Pottery was the first synthetic material humans created – artificial stone – and it combines the four basic elements identified by the Greeks: earth, water, fire, and air. As one of the many materials within the large sphere of technology known as ceramics, pottery has transformed a broad range of human endeavors, from prehistoric cuisine to twentieth-century aerospace industry” (Rice 1987,3).

After around 10,000 BC in the Near East, clay was used for a variety of purposes including architecture, pottery and modeled clay objects (Rice 1987). The use of clay for architecture was widespread very early (7500 BC) and was used in sedentary agricultural settlements. Pottery containers appear as early as 8500 BC at sites such as Beldibi and Çatalhöyük in South Eastern Turkey (Rice 1987). These early vessels were hand built or coil made. They were then scraped, paddled or rubbed to produce an even finish (Rice 1987). They were fired without kilns in large bonfires. Some early items that were also fired were administrative artifacts such as stamp and cylinder seals (Rice 1987).

By around 4000-3000 BC major technological advancements as we see them today in ceramic manufacture were being used; open top kilns, the potter’s wheel and glazes (Cooper, 2000). Kilns allowed for the pottery to be more evenly fired and allowed for higher temperatures and more control. The potter’s wheel allowed for

rapid mass production of standardized forms (Rice 1987). This allowed potters to serve a large demand and market. Glazes allowed for vessels to better hold liquids. It also added to aesthetic value and allowed potters to experiment with new styles and designs (Rice 1987).

In the Ubaid period (5500-4000 BC), many of these new advancements in pottery production took place. This period set up changes that would be influential into the Uruk period and our understanding of BRBs. Ubaid pottery is identified as black painted buff ware. It had black designs painted on an otherwise plain vessel. These designs were repeated on the vessel itself and also repeated within the ceramic style. As the period progressed the vessels became plainer and less surface area on the vessels were painted (Karsgaard 2006). They were found throughout the region during this time period and suggest that sites were connected through trade or influence. There were two major changes in pottery going into the Ubaid period. The first change was a shift from individualistic designs to a more homogenized and conventionalized design (Karsgaard 2006). They seem to have a community identity rather than that of an individual maker. All of the pottery types have a set style and tend not to deviate from form and design. This can be most clearly seen on an intra-site level but can also be seen in the region as a whole (Karsgaard 2006). Secondly, there was a movement away from open shapes in favor of a more closed vessel form. These vessels seem suited for commensal practices. Because of the homogenous assemblage at many sites, it seems that these bowls fostered social solidarity. This in conjunction with the tripartite house style, with a central hearth, suggests that the Ubaid period was one of commensal events

(Karsgaard 2006). Looking at how Ubaid pottery was used for communal meals gives an interesting context to how BRB with their same conventionalized style could have been used for the same purpose.

Clay plays an important role in Near Eastern society. It was used in almost every aspect of daily life from building materials for houses to the pots food was cooked in (Rice 1987). This persistence of clay and pottery in everyday life can often lead to its influence on society being overlooked. While it was used for very utilitarian purposes, pottery was also used for political purposes to increase the power of the rulers. It was used for administrative events and food distribution as well as religious ceremonies and was a way to control the populous and glorify the ruler. With clay always surrounding people it can be hard to see how it might have power over their lives. However by stepping back and looking at the uses for clay we can see how it can be used to create social hierarchy in the Near East. The example of the BRBs shows how ceramics were more than just household items, but items used and controlled by the state. Their uses for food distribution and religious purposes show how administration used these items to control and order the population.

Bevel rim bowls were mold-made of coarse clay. The clay was placed in the ground and hand shaped using a fist. They have a grainy exterior and a roughly smoothed interior and rim (Bernbeck 2009). They have been found in the thousands at almost every site in the Uruk period, and because of their production process, efficiency was key (Bernbeck 2009). The bowls are largely found intact and stacked at the sites. Chogha Mish (Iran, 3500 BC) is known for its extensive number of bevel

rim bowls.



Figure 3 Bevel Rim Bowl (Delugaz et al Part II 1996, Plate 117 P-Q)

Measuring the bowls found in caches at this site will help to understand their importance. This study of the vessels will also look at how the bowls were made and by whom. This will give information as to how their production was controlled.

Atrihasis: Origin Myth

By looking at Near Eastern mythology, we can see that this control was on a deeper level. The prevalence of clay in the everyday lives of Near Eastern people transcended the physical and material world. Clay played an important role in their origin myth as well. It was a part of their cosmological and metaphysical existence and in turn would have had a meaningful effect on how the people interacted with it.

“...With his flesh and blood.
Then a god and man
Will be mixed together in clay.
...
After she mixed that clay,
...
Mami made her voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
‘I have carried out perfectly
The work that you ordered me.
You have slaughtered a god together with his
Intelligence.
I have relieved you of your hard work,
I have imposed your load on man.
You have bestowed noise on mankind.
I have undone the fetter and granted freedom.’
When she [womb-goddess] had finished her incantation,
She pinched off fourteen pieces (of clay),
(And Set) seven pieces on the right,
Seven on the left.
Between them she put down a mud brick.
She made use of (?) a reed, opened it (?) to cut the
Umbilical cord,
Called up the wise and knowledgeable
Womb-goddesses, seven and seven.
Seven created males,
Seven created females,”
(Dalley 2000: 15-16)

This excerpt from the Atrahasis myth describes the creation of humans by the gods. The lesser gods, fed up with the hard labor of working the earth, rebel

against Enki and the other gods. Enki decided to create humans from clay and the blood of the slain god of intelligence. The clay and blood are mixed together and then birthed by the womb-goddesses; seven males and seven females. This myth clearly shows how the ancient Mesopotamians viewed clay. To them it was not only a valuable resource; it was the very substance from which they were created. Clay was the matter of life. It was not seen as merely a cheap and easily attainable material, but its use would have had great significance and would have evoked the myth. This fits with the ancient idea that artistic works and images were not merely representation, but contained within them the spirit and essence of that which is represented. By creating things in clay, the creator was, in a way, a god, and giving life to his or her work. I do not believe this idea applies only to figurative images. Even utilitarian uses of clay such as mud bricks for housing or bowls and cooking pots had an element of life to them. The use of clay in these cases was for the purpose of survival, and to sustain life. In addition, the people would have wanted a similar power as the gods held in figurative representations, to also be within the walls of their houses and in their cooking pots. Therefore, making pottery with the intention of it being disposable seems incompatible with their worldview. If clay was as important to them as their creation myth suggests, then the hypothesis of these BRB being used for a one-time purpose and then be disposed of does not make sense. Unless, like the magical figurines (further discussed above), the bowls had a deeper more spiritual meaning and the act of their disposal was just as important as their creation. If they were created to be a one-time use item and later disposed, they were still often found neatly stacked. This would suggest that if they were

disposed of it was done with some care and consideration. However the act of making these bowls out of clay and not another material was a conscious choice. They were made to help them receive food, and in turn life.

In the world of Ancient Near Eastern people, clay was about life and creation and it seems fitting that they used clay for so many important daily tasks. Because of this link between culture and clay it is interesting to see how changes in pottery style reflected the societal changes that were taking effect. The vessels themselves reflected the change to a homogenized community identity rather than an individualistic one. This representative link helps us to look at BRBs as a deep cultural marker and one that changed with cultural shifts.

Chapter 6

Early Archaeology in the Near East

“... a display of power in which the cultures of others were given meaning only within histories of Western civilization.” (Potts 2012:107)

In the mid 1800s the promise of gold and glory drove many amateur archaeologists to the Near East. They were not looking at materials and artifacts through the lens of materiality but were looking to find monumental art and glittering jewels. Their focus was not on the lives of the everyday people but on obtaining vast collections for their institutions.

The year 1842 is generally considered the beginning point of archaeological excavations in the Near East. Paul-Émile Botta, the French consul in Mosul, began the first excavation in what is today northern Iraq (Potts 2012). From then on forgotten ancient cities emerged from the landscape identifiable by their connections to the Bible. With these discoveries came further excavations and travelers hoping to discover the origins of Western Civilization. In addition to this, archaeology found its place in a “cultural competition” (Potts 2012:49). Archaeology and in turn archaeologists were used as pawns in the power struggle in the Near East, with the French and English and later on the American and Germans all vying for influence and artifacts.

These excavators at the time were not interested in how the everyday people lived but wanted to uncover the richest artifacts to send back to their home country. While they did publish important volumes on these sites they did so more as collectors as opposed to scientists. These excavations were often rushed and utilized trenches and tunnels to uncover walls and reliefs (Potts 2012). Oftentimes this became a hunt for artifacts. They even went so far as to remove the 30-ton monolithic bull reliefs and float them down the Tigris River on inflated sheepskins (Potts 2012). Botta and other archaeologists of the time spared no effort to give their country the best collection.

What began as expeditions to uncover Biblical places became a power play between Europe's colonial powers to gain influence and riches. Archaeologists were sent out to find the riches of these civilizations and bring them back to grace the walls of their museums. This not only affected archaeology but also played a huge role in knowledge production (Witcomb 2003). The history was written around the rulers and the wealthy individuals of the society, leaving out the everyday people and daily life.

This held true to the nineteenth century idea of civilization as material progress. This means that the civilizations with the most complex materials were more "advanced" (Witcomb 2003). Museums at the time solidified this idea by teaching a hierarchical understanding of cultural development and instilled the values of materialism. This knowledge production had a profound effect on colonialism and archaeology in the near east (Witcomb 2003). This made museums the ideal places to represent the advanced technology of the West to the people.

Archaeological objects therefore would prove the “backwardness” of that society while showing how “civilized” western societies were (Witcomb 2003). This can be clearly seen in the International Exhibitions throughout Western Europe, America and Australia at this time.

This history of “cultural competition” in the region led important everyday objects to be over looked or interpreted as “backward”. It wasn’t until the 1930s that objects like the BRBs were seen as more than refuse and archaeologists took a closer look at their use.

Chapter 7

Bevel Rim Bowl Theories

Since the 1930s when they were first studied, there have been had many different interpretations as to how these bowls were used. They have been found at a majority of sites in the Near East and this has led many scholars question their purpose and importance.

One interpretation of these bowls was that they were votive bowls. At Nineveh (excavated from 1929-1932), excavators found BRBs upside-down in the vicinity of the Istar Temple (Potts 2009). This reminded the excavators of the Aramaic incantation bowls found at Nippur, a much later temple site. This idea was later dismissed by Delougaz (1952). He wrote “If this view were correct, one might expect to find such bowls always within or near contemporary sacred buildings, if they were dedicated to deities, or within graves, if they were dedicated to the dead” (Delougaz 1952: 128). At the site of Khafajah, none were found within the Sin Temple; however, they were common outside it. Delougaz argues that there is lack of conclusive evidence to suggest the BRBs were votive objects. He does, however, provide an alternative to this belief. These bowls were made of a special paste and handmade at a time when the pottery wheel was used to make most vessels. This distinct construction suggests a particular intentional purpose. This paste created

porosity in the vessel that could have been desired for a functional purpose. He links this idea to modern (1952) Mesopotamia, where people use large pottery jars of similar fabric to filter and cool muddy water (Delougaz 1952:129). BRBs are too small for such a large task; however, their use to separate whey from curds or some other food preparation process is possible. Their porosity shape and size would have been well suited for this task. He also suggests that this would account for the large dissemination over such a wide region, during a defined period. It was a specialized utensil with a utilitarian purpose and could have been replaced by a new utensil serving a better purpose (Delougaz 1952:129).

Another hypothesis that has come in and out of popularity since the mid Twentieth century is the idea that these bowls were similar to bread baking bowls used in Egypt. Burton-Brown proposed this hypothesis in 1946 when he compared BRBs to Predynastic and Old Kingdom Egyptian bread pots, followed by others such as Millard, Chazan, and Lehner (Potts 2009:1). None of these scholars explicitly imply that they were actually used to make bread until Schmidt and Millard (Millard 1988, Schmidt 1982). Millard makes this comparison by looking at the contexts of where both the BRBs and Egyptian bowls have been found. The function of the Egyptian bread mold called the *bedja* is found illustrated in tomb scenes, figurines, and models (Chazan and Lehner 1990:21). They are found in both cemetery and habitation contexts (Chazan and Lehner 1990:21; Millard 1988). They also occur contemporaneously. In Egypt there has been a great number of *bedja* found from the Early Dynastic period to the Old Kingdom. Egyptologists suggest “bread baked in them must have formed part of the daily nourishment of the living, while at the

same time it was considered suitable as an offering to the gods and to the dead” (Millard 1988: 51). BRBS in the Near East have also been found in great quantities in association with kilns. Some of these sites seem to be bakeries, further supporting the interpretation as bread molds (Millard 1988). While there is no physical evidence of how the bread molds were used in Mesopotamia, information from Egypt suggests that one way might be to heat the empty molds and then fill them with dough, which then baked rapidly (Millard 1988). Chazan and Lehner argue that the crude fabric of the BRBs can be explained by the uneven and rapid heating, and that the more open a ceramic fabric, the more able it is to absorb thermal shock (Chazan and Lehner 1990:30). Millard also suggests that the bevel rim would allow the bowl to be easily held upside-down to shake the bread out of the mold. He then looked at evidence from cuneiform texts, specifically the sign of bread, “NINDA”, and the Egyptian hieroglyphic for “bread loaf” (Millard 1988). He noted their similarity, with both represented by what looks to be a bowl. Finally, he looks at how these bowls changed over time. BRBs are not found in the archaeological record at the end of the Uruk IV period (around 3100 BC). Around this time a conical bowl emerged, and is suggested to be the descendent of the BRBs (Millard 1988). This conical bowl is a clumsy solid-footed vessel. In Egypt, the bread mold also moved from a bowl-type to a conical-type during the Middle Kingdom (2000BC to 1700BC) (Millard 1988). Based on this evidence, Potts argues that the hundreds of thousands of BRBs found at sites like Chogha Mish indicate that these sites were great bakeries (Potts 2009).

	Bevel Rim Bowl	Bedja bowl
Form		
Walls	Splayed	Splayed
Wall Thickness	0.7-1.8 cm.	1.2-2.8 cm.
Interior	Smooth	Smooth, Cone shaped
Interior Bottom	Impressed	Rarely impressed
Base	Slightly rounded	Convex or Flat
Diameter	14-19 cm.	18-25 cm.
Height	6-15 cm.	13-23 cm.
Depth	5-13 cm.	7-14 cm.
Level Volume	0.4-0.9 liters	0.7-2.2 liters
Ware		
Inclusions	Organics Predominant	Organics Predominant
Density of Inclusions	High	High
Manufacture		
Construction	Sequential Slab	Sequential Slab
Firing Temperature	Usually Low	Low
Archaeological Context		
General Frequency	50% or greater	50% or greater
Cemeteries	Susa, Tello, and Eridu	Common
Temples	Eridu, Uqair, and Brak	Common
Administrative	Godin, Yahya, and Susa	Tomb of Ty
Domestic	Common	Common
Ovens	Common	Ayn Asil; Middle and New Kingdom
Evolution of Form		
Prototypes	Bowl with Tapering Rim	Shallow Crude Ware Bowl
Subsequent Forms	Conical Cups	Taller, Narrower Vessels with Thin Walls

Figure 4 Similarities between BRB and Bedja bowls (Chazan and Lehner 1990:30)

Two less popular ideas are those proposed by Forest (1987) and later by Buccellati (1990). Forest suggested that the bowls were used to hold food consumed at banquets by Late Uruk aristocracy and were later discarded (Potts 2009). Buccellati (1990) looked at the process of salt procurement and trade in Europe and Mediterranean and theorizes that BRBs could have been used for the collection and trade of this valuable good in Mesopotamia. Based on his excavations at Qraya, Syria he suggests that the bowls could have been used both to hold the brine and the salt after it had been heated by a fire (Buccellati 1990). He compared how the bowls were constructed from known salt procurement sites in Europe to BRBs and noticed that their crude construction, fabric and fragility between the vessels were very similar. The bowls would have been stored, when not in use, by the ovens (as found in some contexts) upside down and stacked. The porosity of the bowls would have been useful to drain the moisture and create salt cakes. The bowls containing the salt cakes would then have been placed under “lock and seal” which, according to Buccellati, would explain the presence of sealing wax found in the area (Buccellati 1990). The nature of their disposal (broken and concentrated in one area) could be

explained by the technique of removal of the cakes from the bowls. Because of their use in trade the bowls would have to be somewhat standardized (Nissen 1970); however, for this purpose the volume of the bowls would not need to be exact but the salt would have been measured according to weight (Buccellati 1990).

The most influential hypothesis of the BRBs is that of ration bowls, proposed by Nissen in 1970 (Potts 2009). Even though contrary hypotheses have been put forth over the years, this Nissen's is still the most favored by archaeologists. *Grabung in den Quadraten K/L XII in Uruk-Warka*, Nissen's book on the topic, has been cited by many scholars (e.g., Johnson, Potts, Buccellati, Millard, Delugaz etc.). I will use these scholars' translation of Nissen's work to present his arguments here. Nissen argued that the manufacture, frequency, and distribution of the bowls pointed to daily ration for workers (Wright & Johnson 1975). He predicted that the bowls would conform to a regular measure of units (Wright & Johnson 1975). This idea came about with the use of analogy from the written ration lists from the third millennium BC (Millard 1988). He argued that there was a centrally-controlled labor system in which workers were "issued with regular allocations of barley a day" (Millard 1988:50). He also associated a picture sign that resembled BRBs, which later meant "NINDA" or "bread," in Sumerian, with BRBs. The sign "GU" or "to eat" also resembles a human head with a bowl (Millard 1988:50).

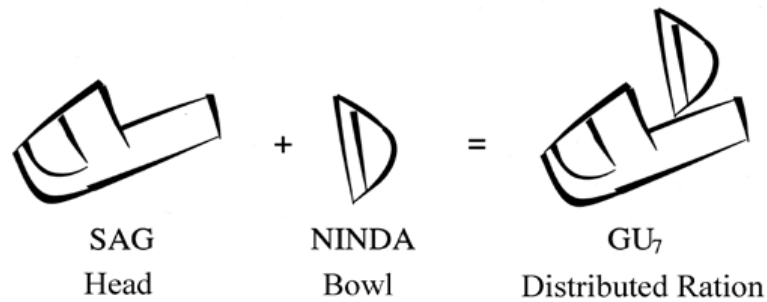


Figure 5 Sumerian Symbols and their meaning (Bernbeck 2009, 53)

Johnson elaborated on this hypothesis when he found that bowls from the sites of Susa and Khuzistan, in modern day Iran, clustered around three volumes (0.9, 0.65, and 0.45 liters) (Beale 1978).

Pollock (2003) argues that while the bowls not only have a similarity to the ideogram for “ration,” they also have a similarity to the mass-produced vessels found in the Jemdet Nasser (Blumentopfe) (3100-2900 BCE) and Early Dynastic periods I (solid footed goblet) (2900-2350 BCE) and II-III (conical bowl) (Pollock 2003). She suggests that both the BRB and the fourth-millennium ceramics are wide and deep, and could have held from one half to three liters of contents. While the solid-footed goblets of the Early Dynastic Period I could have only held liquid (due to their tall, open mouthed conical shape), they are widely represented in many scenes of feasting. The change in shape and size is suggested to be due to move toward the disbursement of liquids as opposed to solid foods (Pollock 2003).

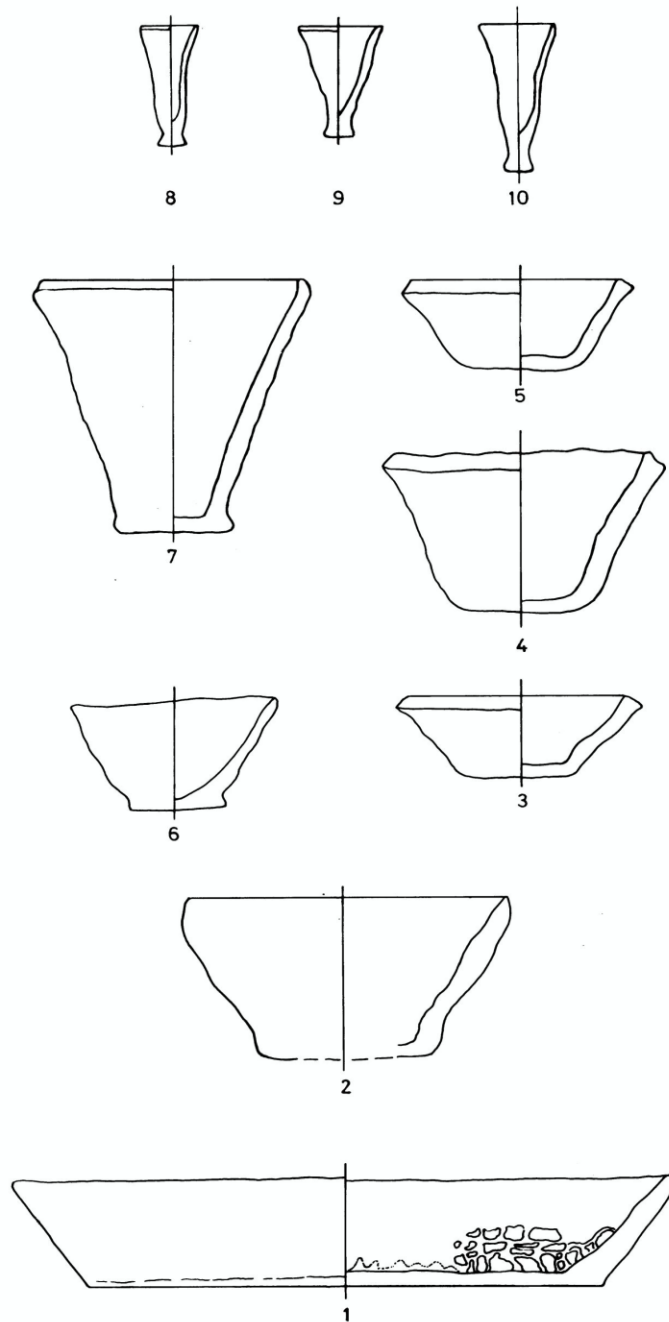


Figure 6 Evolution of the Bevel Rim Bowl. 1. Hassuna Husking Tray (Voigt 1985 : fig. 81b); 2. Proto Bevel Rim Bowl (Johnson 1973 : Pl. lb); 3-5. Bevel Rim Bowls (Surenha- gen 1974-1975 : Tab. 1 : 19; Le Brun 1978 : Fig. 20 : 8; Nissen 1970 : Pl. 104 : 7); 6-7. Uruk Flower Pot (Surenha- gen 1974-1975 : Tab. 1 : 20; Le Brun 1978 : Fig. 20 : 9); 8-10. Early Dy- nastic I Conical Cups (Delougaz 1952 : B077.700, B077.700a, B077.700b). Scale 1 : 5" (**Chazan and Lehner 1990:30**)

Nissen and Johnson argue that for the BRB to have been used for ration purposes they must meet a few requirements (Johnson 1973: 130). First, they must

be cost-efficient. This means that they should have a low material cost per container, and a low labor cost per container (Johnson 1973: 130). Production costs can refer to a few things, such as institutional resources or materials. Materials required to produce the bowls are clay, molds, temper, kilns, and fuel (Johnson 1973: 130). Many materials for the BRB such as pebbles, sherds, and straw are readily available and require little processing. This makes the production cost low and materials easy to obtain. Labor costs are centered on workers involved in material collection and processing. According to Johnson, the production of the bowls is simple. They are made in earthen molds created by digging into the ground using an existing BRB to create the shape. Clay was placed into the mold, pressed down with the hands, then left to dry in the sun. This can be done rather quickly, in about sixty seconds (Johnson 1973: 130-131).

Second, they need to be production-efficient (Johnson 1973: 130). This means that there needs to be a localization of materials, labor, and facilities. Production -efficiency also needs to be task-specialized. According to Johnson, localization means that productive activities are concentrated at a common location (Johnson 1973: 131). Task specialization in BRB production would involve assigning specific operations to specific individuals (Johnson 1973: 131).

Last, for rationing, there needs to be distributional efficiency (Johnson 1973: 130). This refers to the location of production close to the location of distribution, as well as standardization of container size relative to ration size (Johnson 1973 130). While no BRB workshop has been found, pottery production at Susa, Chogha Mish, and Abu Fanduweh has been recorded, as well as BRBs found in kilns at Chogha

Mish and Abu Fanduweh (Johnson 1973: 131). The frequencies of the bowls on the surface and in excavation suggest workshop production. Johnson and Beale suggest that BRBs were produced with volumes proportional to a standard volume of measure (Johnson 1973: 132). Johnson did an analysis of 278 BRB from Susa, where he estimated the volume of the bowls. He found that they fell into three standard sizes of 0.922, 0.647 and 0.456 liters “sampling measurement error suggests that these figures be adjusted to the nearest .05 liters or .90 liters, .65 liters, and .45 liters” (Johnson 1973: 135). This variability in bowl size is explained by the idea that the bowls would only be required to be large enough to sufficiently hold the ration rather than having the same volume as the ration (Johnson 1973: 137). He also cites his method for measuring the bowls as a possible reason for the variability of measurements (Johnson 1973: 137). These suggestions support two hypotheses; that BRB were primarily used as ration containers and that the rations were issued in a “rough proportion” to a standard volume unit (Johnson 1973: 137).

These analyses lead to Johnson’s next question: what type of food was being rationed? To answer this question he looks at contemporary (1973) Khuzistan villagers engaged in physical labor and their daily caloric intake. He averaged that they consume about 3,000 calories a day, with 1,976 of those calories from 760 grams of bread. This comes to 260 calories per 100 grams of bread (Johnson 1973: 137 One liter of barley is roughly equal to 2,900 calories This converted to the largest of the Uruk rations of 0.90 liters is 2,611 calories; however if the barley is converted to bread it loses caloric value, and is brought down to 1,958 calories This is close to the modern villagers’ daily caloric intake of bread. However this size of

BRB is rare, and more commonly they were found with volumes of 0.65 liters. This would equal roughly 1,415 calories from bread, or half the needed overall daily intake (Johnson 1973: 138). Johnson surmises that there must have been additional food sources available to the people, such as private gardens or agricultural lands (Johnson 1973: 139).

Beale (1978) critiqued this idea and proposed an alternative view of the BRB. While he was the first to point out the flaws in the argument he was not the last (cf. Chazan & Lehner 1991, Potts (2009) etc.). Beale begins his critique by reexamining the bowls measured by Johnson. He found that the measurements of 0.9, 0.6 and 0.45liters do not stand out as standard units. Bowls from 0.4 to 0.5 liters are 12.4% of the total sample, and bowls ranging between 0.85 and 0.95 liters comprise only 9.2% of the population. Bowls of similar sizes such as 0.5-0.6 liters and 0.7-0.8 liters represent only 14.2% and 15.2 % of the total sample (Beale 1978:290). He found that every bowl between 0.4 and 0.95 liters is common. This means that no one liter volume from the sample stands out in isolation. He suggests for pottery that is mold-made, a margin of error less than 30% is reasonable; however the standard deviation is more than 80% of the value of the mean volume (Beale 1978:290). Because of these findings he believes that the exact capacity of the BRB was not an important factor in their production.

As a rebuttal to Johnson's explanation that the bowls themselves only needed to be large enough to hold the ration, Beale looks to Gelb's (1965) discussion of the ration system of the Ur III period (2112-2004 BCE). During this period, BRB were no longer produced (Chazan & Lehner 1990:21). According to Gelb, men, women,

sons, children/daughters and infants all received a set weight, or *sila*, of food. Scholars translate one *sila* to 0.84 liters. Men received sixty *sila* a month, thirty for women, twenty to thirty for sons, twenty for daughters/children, and ten for infants. Only seven of the bowls measured at Chogha Mish, would have been large enough to hold a man's daily ration. Of the bowls measured 75% of the bowls would have been too small to hold the women's daily ration of thirty *sila*, and 23% of the bowls would be too large to hold only the infant ration of ten *sila*. While the ration allotments for the Uruk period could have been less, if there were rations at all, it would not be sufficient to supply people with the adequate amount of calories needed daily. Beale points out that "in the end, one might well ask why anyone would have taken the trouble to produce so many bevel rim bowls if only to distribute such small amounts of grain"(Beale 1978:296).

Beale then measured the heaped volume, or the volume of what is piled above the bowl, as well as the liquid volume, and finds the same lack of standardization. He also argued that carrying an open vessel full of grain or liquid from a distribution center to a domestic setting would not be efficient. The locations that the BRB have been found (usually administrative) also raise questions for Beale. He argues that if rations were given to workers, then the bowls would not have been found in abundance outside the administrative areas, but in the domestic areas. He describes the scenario as "...workers lining up to receive their daily ration only to discard the ration containers before leaving the precinct" (Beale 1978: 303). For the functional lifespan of the bowls the mass production would be a waste of time and labor (Beale 1978: 303). Others such as Chazan and Lehner (1990) argue

that the production of BRB would not have been any more economical than wheel-throwing finer wares. The most efficient and economical way for employers to distribute daily rations would have been to have workers bring their own containers and receive rations from an official set of ladles (Beale 1978: 303). Based on this critique, Beale presents his own conclusion for how the bowls were used. All the characteristics of the bowls (their unique manufacture, the numbers in which they are found, the large concentrations near temples or administrative centers, and the frequency in which they are found unbroken) suggest that they are presentation bowls (Beale 1978: 305). While similar to the idea of votive offering bowls, presentation bowls “served as a means of presenting, on special occasions, a token amount of some commodity, probably most often grain, to the gods or a priest-king (*en*) at a temple, shrine, or temple administrative center” (Beale 1978: 305). Their unusual means of production (in the ground) could mean that they were intended as a kind of “chthonic symbol”; the gods or the *en* would be given “produce from the earth in a vessel made in the earth as part of a ritual to ensure the earth’s future fertility” (Beale 1978: 306). They could also have been made domestically and fired in a low-fire kiln or household oven. Domestic production could also account for the crudeness relative to contemporary pottery types. (Beale 1978: 306). Periodic cleaning of the temple precincts could account for the large number of bowls found stacked in pits.

While their exact use is important, the materiality and creation of the bowls say more about the culture and political climate of the period. They were used in a time of flux and in turn changed the society they were made by.

Chapter 8

Near Eastern Culture

How and what people eat is different for every culture. In Near Eastern culture how food was eaten, dictated social status. It brought groups together and separated others. Food was written about in myths and bureaucratic documents. The myth of Adapa outlines its importance and the requirements placed on the ruler to care for their people. Food was seen as the aspect of society that made a person civilized. It is no wonder then that materials surrounding food and feasting were important cultural signifiers. How did BRBs play into this and how did myth influence the social climate of the time.

Basic requirements of life

“I gave bread to the hungry one, water to the thirsty, meat, oil and clothing to the impoverished” (Liverani et al. 2004, 12).

The Babylonian story of Adapa is a myth explaining the mortality of humanity. In one part of the myth it explains the four services offered by the gods to Adapa. The four services are clothing, oil, food, and drink (Liverani et al. 2004). These four necessities form two opposites liquid/solid and internal/external; they

all are needed to survive. The importance of these items can also be seen in the epic of Gilgamesh, when Enkidu was sent to earth and he needed to be dressed and anointed as well as fed to enter civilized society (Liverani et al. 2004). This fits into the discussion of the ration system because to be a good ruler, like the gods, the ruler needed to provide their people with these four necessities. The ration system, as written about during the later dynastic periods, supplied these “four elements (and nothing else) for the survival of individual members of the productive units” (Liverani et al. 2004:10). The ideal reign is when “the hungry ones are sated, the parched ones are anointed, the naked ones are dressed” (Liverani et al. 2004: 12). A good ruler needed to provide these elements if he wanted the people to rely on him as they relied on the gods.

	<i>Internal use</i>	<i>External use</i>
<i>solid</i>	food	clothing
<i>liquid</i>	Drink	oil

Table 2 Basic Requirements of life(Liverani et al. 2004: 9)

It is interesting to see how this myth influenced the power structure of the Near East. It placed the power in the hands of the people who could provide for the people. It also equated that ruler to a god. This began as a symbiotic relationship between a ruler and their people. However, with the influx of the Uruk system and wide usage of BRBs, this dynamic changed, and along with it, social structure.

Food and Feasting

“Food does far more than just satisfy biological needs; it plays a regular and active role in social, political and religious life, in part because it is an inescapable necessity for all people throughout their lives” – (Pollock 2003: 17)

Food and the human diet are culturally different, but the importance of food in culture is a common link. Food itself is not only important because of its part in human survival, but the types and how food is eaten, produced, distributed, shared, disposed of and the taboos surrounding it are just as important. Food and drink are symbolically charged because they “represent embodied material culture” (Steel 2004: 281), meaning food is produced in cultural ways specifically to be ingested and incorporated into the body. Humans make themselves and their social identities in part through the consumption of food and drink, and there are many rules each culture follows in preparation, service, and consumption of food. In turn, eating and drinking are social interactions whether they take place within the household or in public (Steel 2004).

In the Ancient Near East, as in many Bronze Age societies, food was used to forge allegiance to the state (Pollock 2003). The problem of allegiance to the state or ruling party in all stratified societies is an important issue. As urban society progressed into the Uruk period, alliances needed to shift from kin-based loyalty, to allegiance to a select few. The state needed to bind its people together, while in turn also creating distinct differences between classes (Pollock 2003). Two ways this balance was achieved in Mesopotamia was through the distribution of rations to the common people and elite ritual commensality or ritualized shared meals. “Because of the daily need for these elements, they [rations] can be a powerful means of social

control: manipulating access to food and drink or to essential means of production can be translated to control people.” (Pollock 2003: 18).

With the majority of the population during the Uruk period living in large cities, it would have been difficult for people to travel to and from the agricultural fields on a daily basis. It is probable that at least some portion of the population would have had to live temporarily in or near the fields (Pollock 2003). These rural centers were an important and vital part of city life. Because of the distance from fields, many people were dependent on compensation in the form of food from their employer, or from a tenant–farmer arrangement. Without the rural farming economy that they created, life in the city would not have been possible. Therefore without rural food production centers political power would not have risen in this region.

While few records survive from this time period indicating rations, it is well documented in the later Early Dynastic period. In the texts that do exist from the Uruk period, they name laborers and even gods as recipients of rations (Pollock 2003). These rations included barley and barley products, oil, meat, fish, butter, cheese, honey, and dates. Wool and cloth were also sometimes distributed. This was done not only as a way to feed and clothe the people, but also to keep them dependent and under the control of the ruling class (Pollock 2003). Pollock called this ration system a “fast food mentality,” where workers were meant to take or even eat their ration “on the job” (Pollock 2003: 28). This restructuring of the food system from one of domestic production and consumption to public changed many aspects of society. For example, it was incorporated into the language. Bevel rim

bowls have often been linked to the ration system based on the bowls' similarity to the ideogram for "ration bowl" and "ration distribution," as explained above (Pollock 2003). These rations may have been the only means of sustenance for a good portion of the population, creating a physical and material dependence on the state. This changed how food was socially consumed, from domestic settings with kin, to publicly with other members of your social class (Pollock 2003). Pollock suggests that this was a way to intentionally disrupt old patterns of social interactions based on kinship and replaces them with ones of dependence. Also, by showing that the gods also received rations it created a sense that everyone was "in it together" (Pollock 2003:32). This gave power to the state and strengthened its ideological goals.

Where rations created unity while giving structure to the social system, elite feasting was used to create distinction. Feasting, as used here, is defined as events where "communal, ritualized food consumption takes place and that differs from ordinary daily food consumption practices" (Pollock 2003: 21). These feasts helped reinforce social connections and distinctions. Many scenes of feasting appear as visual images in the Early Dynastic period. They most often appear on seals, which were used for administrative purposes, and on plaques or instruments meant for display (Pollock 2003). These items were meant to be viewed by a select few, those few being people of wealth and high social standing. The figures in the scenes also seem to be of a select group of individuals. Paraphernalia associated with these feasts is found in abundance at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Pollock 2003). The copper, silver, and gold used for these cups, vessels, and straws also suggests their

use is specifically ritual. By including only the elite in these feasting events, the ritual sought to distinguish elites from one another as well as make distinctions within the group based on gender, social position, and age (Pollock 2003).

Food and drink figure prominently in rituals of all kinds. As with any other ritualistic event there is certain paraphernalia associated with feasting. This can be seen in the multitude of different pottery types, from strainer jugs to decorated serving bowls. The many types of feasting pottery can be found in scenes suggesting rites of passage such as death, and provide an important link between people and their gods (Steel 2004). While food itself cannot always be seen archaeologically, the types of vessels used to hold food can tell us a lot. The locations of such vessels express the ideology of the culture and help to explain important life events (Steel 2004).

These vessels and the cultural practices surrounding them are again part of the web of interconnectedness between humans and materials. BRBs were made in response to the cultural idea that a ruler must provide food and other necessities to their people. However, the vessels themselves and the act of using them in turn changed the cultural practices of the people. The creation and use of the bowls stratified the classes and disrupted old social norms. It created a dependence on the state and solidified ideological ideas of god and ruler.

Chapter 9

Ceramic Sourcing Study

As can be seen, BRBs emerged from a time of great change in the Near East. Their influence went beyond one of just rations. Their very use changed the social dynamic of cities and their formation alluded to myths of the past. Here I look at specific samples of BRBs from Chogha Mish to connect the context to the archaeological record.

BRBs from Chogha Mish were used in a study to understand ceramic production and distribution on the Susiana plain (Alizadeh 2008). Samples of BRB crosshatch band jars and V-geometric beakers from Chogha Mish and neighboring sites during the same time period were subjected to Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA). In the study 200 sherds from the fourth and fifth millennia BC were selected for analysis. This was based on “location, relevance to prior research, chronological appropriateness, and availability” (Alizadeh 2008, 94). They studied these samples from the sites of Chogha Mish, Sharafabad and Tappeh Abu Fanduweh.

The INAA analysis revealed that though BRBs are found at all these sites their chemical makeup were compositionally distinct. The study concluded that they are

compositionally homogeneous within the sites and therefore, produced at a local level (Alizadeh 2008). The same findings were also observed from the Crosshatch band Jars. However the V-geometric beakers appear temporally distinct in both elemental and component projections, from the other two vessel types (Alizadeh 2008).

These findings are particularly interesting because not only do they show that bevel rim bowls in particular are being produced locally but it also challenges the long-standing idea that pottery was only produced at regional centers. It has previously been thought that pottery was only produced at major sites like Chogha Mish, Susa and Tappeh Abu Fanduweh and traded or imported to smaller sites like Sharafabad. However, we can now see that BRBs were locally produced at all these sites despite the lack of evidence of production such as kilns (Alizadeh 2008).

While there was no doubt that intraregional trade occurred there seems to have been some reason why these bowls, both of which are said to have been mass-produced, are only produced locally. These bowls can be found in number, not only in the Susiana plain but also at all major sites in Mesopotamia proper (see chart). These included the sites of Nippur, Warka, Tello and many others (Alizadeh 2008). While it has not been studied formally, we can potentially assume that the bowls were being locally produced at these sites as well. The question then is why. Why were these bowls chosen to be produced locally where other bowls were traded, imported and moved around interregional? This may be due to the importance of the bowls as mentioned above. If these bowls were used for rationing and needed to obtain food and substance from the government, having them produced within the

site might have been easier. It is also possible that the citizens of the region themselves (potters included) had to produce the bowls as part of the process of obtaining the rations.

Ceramic Analysis

The main portion of my research was centered on ceramic analysis of bevel rim bowls currently housed at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. There are around 166 full bowls in their collection and I measured and made observations on them. A ceramic analysis of the vessels including extensive measurements allowed me to test the various theories presented about the bowls and confirm or disprove them. By looking at the measurements of bowls from the site I was able to see if there was standardization at the site. I also looked at color and temper to see if there was a central location or locations of production. While we know that the bowls were produced at the site, an analysis of color and temper allowed me to see in what capacity that the bowls were mass-produced or produced in a domestic individual setting.

For this analysis I looked at color, work marks, inclusions, clay type (course/fine) temper, paste and if they had been smoothed. I also took measurements of the bowls (wall thickness, height interior/exterior, diameter interior/exterior wall) in order to understand standardization and the various theories of the bowls functions.

The first type of analysis I performed on the samples is a fabric analysis. This is using characteristics of the clay body to study and classify the pottery. This helps

to understand firing temperatures and techniques, types of inclusions present, and clay matrix. By understanding these aspects of the fabric of a ceramic, it can help me understand how and where it was made. For this analysis I used a magnifying glass and a hand lens as well as my own vision. This allowed me to look at the details of the fabric and make conclusions. One hundred and eighteen of the samples showed evidence of organic temper within their fabric. I can see the voids left by the organic temper as it burned out during firing. Out of the 166 samples 102 have sub angular inclusions. From this data I can conclude that the BRB that I analyzed from Chogha Mish were fired with organic temper most notably straw. The clay from the samples varies in color from brown, apricot, cream, red, orange, and yellow. The difference in fabric color could be due to different firing temperatures and conditions. The abundance or lack of oxygen in firing changes the chemical reaction in clay particles that could alter the colors.

The second analysis I preformed was taking measurements. I measured the height of the walls (interior and exterior), diameter of the bottom and opening, average wall thickness. To do this I used a ruler and calipers and measured in millimeters. I found that the average wall thickness was 13.66 mm with the thickest being 19.62 and the thinnest being 9.53. The average bottom diameter was 162.08 and average top diameter was 175.03. The average exterior height was 87.89 and the average interior height was 51.46. With these measurements I took the volume of each vessel by using the formula for a truncated cone $V = \frac{1}{3}\pi(r_1^2 + r_1r_2 + r_2^2)h$.

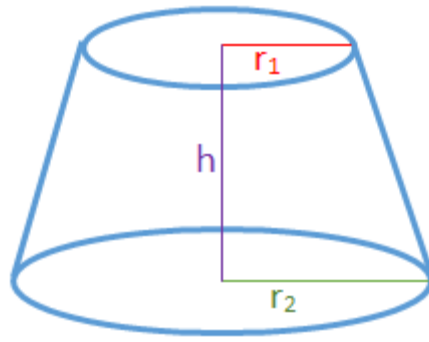


Figure 7 Volume of a Truncated Cone.

I then took the standard deviation of these volumes and found them to be 928084.1282. Upon creating a bell graph I saw that the standard deviation was low, indicating that the volumes of the vessels that I measured were similar with a few outliers. However the standard deviation was not low enough to support the claim for organized mass production but rather there was a standardized mold. This would support my claim that there was a mold used by unskilled potters to create the vessels.

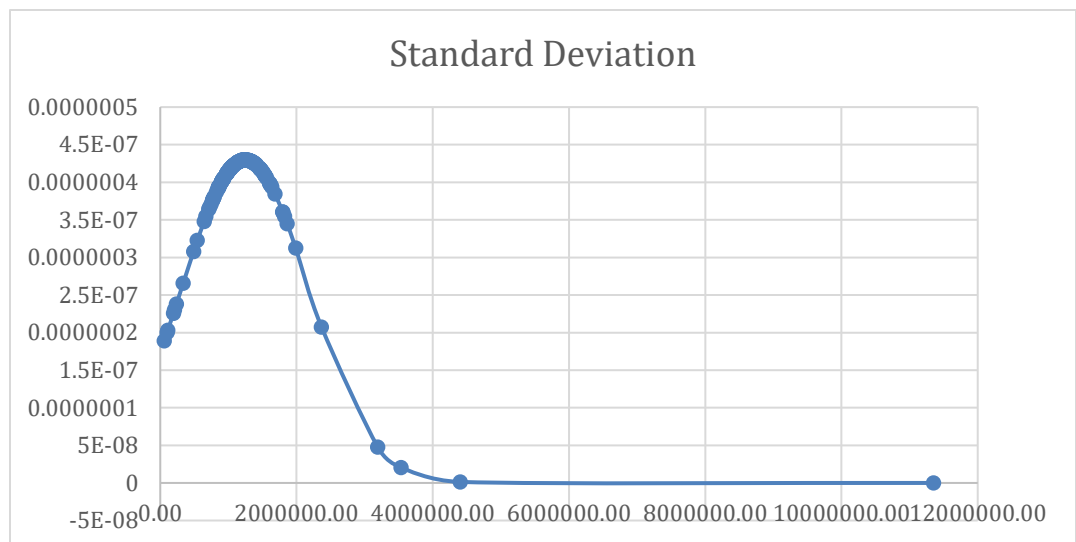


Table 3 Standard Deviation of Data. Vertical Axis shows the Distribution and Horizontal Axis shows the Data.

Lastly I made observations about visual aspects on the bowls. I made notations of visible organic temper voids, sub angular inclusions, deliberate smoothing of the surface, if the clay was fine or coarse and any hand marks visible on the vessel. These observations fit in with observations made by other scholars (Beale 1978, Johnson 1973, Nissen 1970) that these bowls were mold made using coarse clay and a lot of organic temper. These same traits are seen at bowls from all sites in the Uruk period and lends to the idea that these bowls were for a standardized use at all these sites.

Findings

This analysis and observations made about the bowls from the site of Chogha Mish leads me to conclude that while there is some standardization of the bowls there is also a low standard deviation. This fits in my hypothesis of unskilled potters, namely the very individuals using the bowls, actually making them. They would all roughly carry the same volume of contents and visually look very similar however there are some discrepancies that seem to be greater than error in mass production.

Visual Comparison of Bowls

Many BRBs, not only those that I have studied, to me look like they were made by an untrained potter. Comparing them to mass-produced bowls present in later and earlier periods these bowls have a signature crudeness.

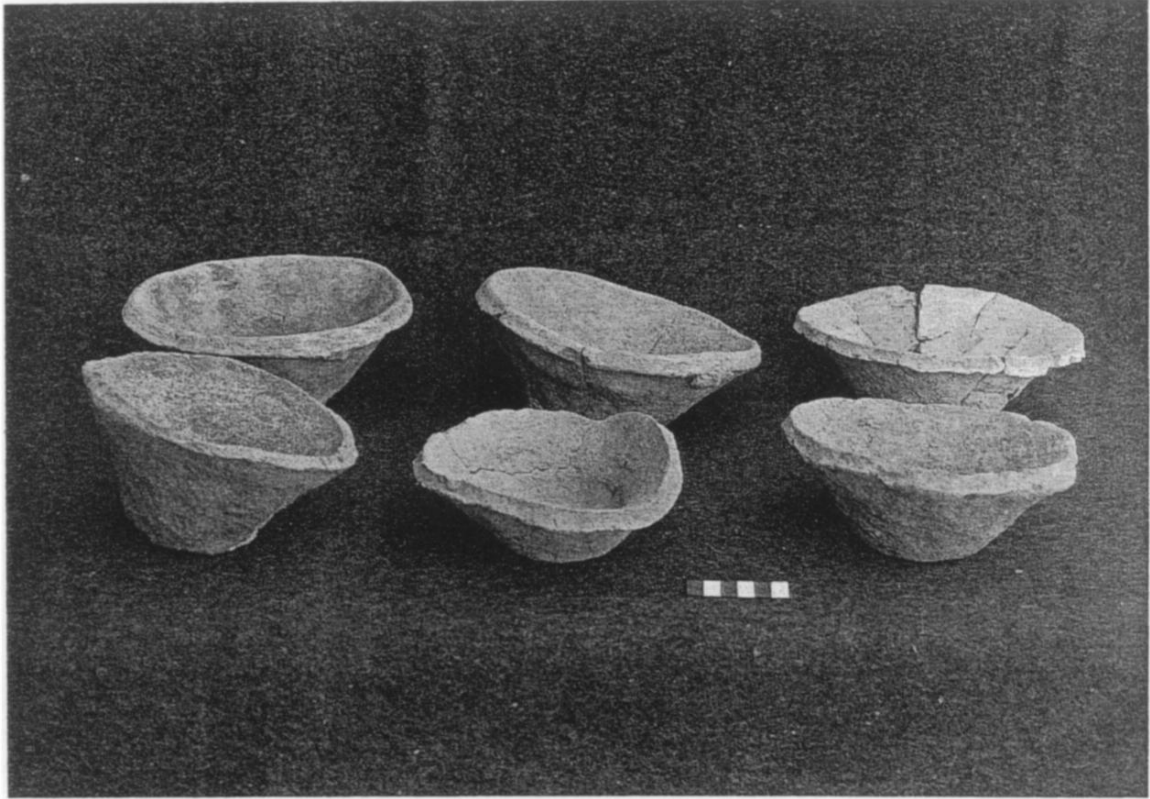


Figure 8 Bevel Rim Bowls (Pollock 1992, 302)

Many are lopsided slightly uneven and in some cases have concave areas. To me this seems as if those that made them were not trying to be expedient, efficient and productive but simply lacked the training in the trade. They were not foregoing aesthetics in lieu of a purely utilitarian creation. However I believe that these bowls were made by the people who themselves needed to use them. Potters created beautifully skilled craftsmanship and must have taken pride in their work. They were able to create elaborate and intricate works as well as had technology like the potter's wheel. A master potter would have been able to create multiple bowls of the same style, shape and size. Even if these bowls were meant to be produced by the thousands, the crudeness of the shapes leads me to believe that it was not merely a rush job at play. Perhaps the creation of the bowls itself was part of the bureaucratic

process. The people were required to create and provide their own bowls in order to obtain their rations. If this is true there would have had to been a standardized mold for the people to use. This would account for their apparent deviation from the standardization as well as their visual differences.

Chapter 10

Discussion

This study found based on ceramic analysis and contextual data from the time period, that BRBs were used to perpetuate power through structural violence in the Uruk/Protoliterate period Mesopotamia. By combining information about the time period, what we know about ancient Near Eastern culture, and the low standard deviation of the bowls studied at Chogha Mish it is clear to see that they fit together to support my hypothesis. However this does lead me to some more political questions about the bowls and their creation.

What are the implications of my hypothesis? If unskilled potters were making their own ration bowls there would need to be hierarchy of political power. In order for such a large scale of production to occur there needs to be a centralized government to organize it. There needs to be an organizing body to gather, store and distribute the rations as well as someone to enforce it. As can be seen with the change to urban life as well as the insurgence of political artworks, and changes in house layout, there was a centralized government that would have been able to support this feat.

The people would also need to be dependent on this government. As in the myth of Adapa it was the role of the king to provide rations to the people. With the

move of people from rural settlements to cities, less people would have been able to grow and provide their own food. However, rations alone would not have kept the people dependent on the government. They would have needed to give the ruler something in return. Such as there are requirements today for governmental assistance, then the BRBs would have been a required element to receive their ration.

Why were they made by unskilled potters and not by pottery workshops? Based on the crudeness of the bowls as well as the standard deviation, I don't believe the bowls would have been made by a skilled pottery workshop. Other vessels of the time were made on a potter's wheel and looked vastly different from BRBs. This difference, and deviation away from the technological advancements of the time is worthy to note and indicates an important choice by the people. Also most vessels at the time were traded over large distances however, INAA studies done on the bowls from several sites found that BRBs were made locally. Why make these two creative decisions that deviate from the norm if skilled potters were making the vessels. It seems more likely that unskilled potters were making the vessels themselves using a mold.

Why have individuals create their own bowls as opposed to a few low-skilled workers produce them? This goes back to the idea of keeping the people dependent on the ruler. Providing them with rations would not have been enough to control the people. However, having the people provide a required element in order to receive their ration would have added the bureaucratic aspect that keeps the people dependent on the government. That's not to say that that there could not have been

people selling the bowls for others to buy. However, they would not have been commissioned and made by large-scale workshops and people would still need to provide and bring the bowls in order to receive their allotted ration.

These and other political questions are interesting to look at through future research. How did these rulers come to power, who where they, and how did the everyday person navigate this world? This research has brought to light many questions about politics in the Uruk period Near East that would lend to more knowledge about this time period.

Conclusion

Humans and the materials we make and use are forever entangled. We need and control them, and once they are created they in turn control us. Clay is one of these materials. Clay was an extremely important resource to the people of the Near East. Its importance was more than just for creating their houses and pottery but was the very material of their own creation.

As Hodder explained there is a chain of interdependence between people and things. This chain of interdependence went from clay, to people, to bowl, to maker of

bowl, to person controlling the food source, to bowl, to ration.

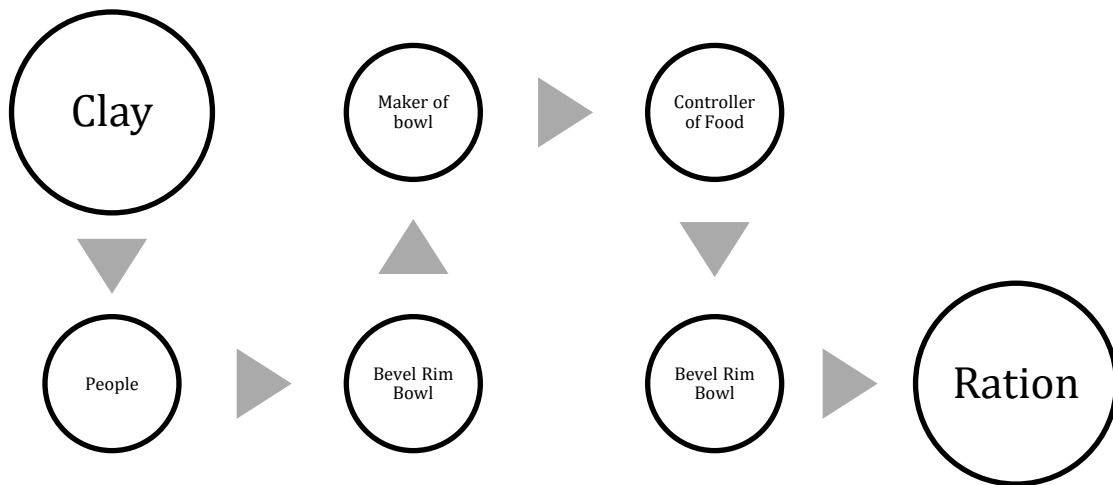


Table 4 Chain of Interdependence of BRB

Broken down in this way, the bureaucratic system within which the bowls functioned can be seen. In bureaucracy there are many steps and levels that need to be reached before the end result is achieved. Here you can see how the people who needed the rations had to go through multiple steps in order to obtain their food and means of survival. They needed to collect the clay, use the appropriate mold, craft the bowl, fire it and carry it with them to get their allotted rations. This interdependence controlled the people and kept them relying on things to survive.

During the Uruk period many aspects of life in the Near East were changing. These changes were not only due to a shifting landscape or evolving cultural region but were conscious choices made by the few that altered all aspects of society. With the movement of people from rural areas and their relocation to urban centers new forms of power and rule came into play. This new type of rule relied on housing, art and sustenance to control the population.

Bevel Rim Bowls are one of the most iconic artifacts of the Uruk period. Their use and purpose has baffled scholars for generations. However, one thing cannot be disputed, they were an extremely important part of society. Their use as ration bowls during this period speaks volumes to the bureaucratic system of this time.

Using Graeber's understanding of the bureaucratic process and institutional violence, we can see how these bowls had a much deeper meaning in society than previously thought. Their importance runs much further into the fabric of society than can be seen at face value.

As Johansen suggests the meaning on materials and objects gets lost in the translation of time if we do not understand the history and politics within which they were formed. With society altering to fit into city life, changes in housing and eating, changed the family unit. Leaders wanted to distinguish themselves from the population. They built elite housing and imported luxury goods to display their power and wealth. With this housing structure changed. This in turn altered the family unit from a generational household to a more nucleated family. Rations created a "fast food mentality" and changed communal meals from taking place at home with family to in public with those of your social class. While this unified people based on class it drastically changed family culture.

Rationing was a beneficial means to keep the people fed and was also an important part of creating allegiance between the people and the ruler. This allegiance was a necessity and was required for the people to receive the necessities of subsistence. Food and rationing was a way to control the people and keep them solely dependent on the ruler for their very survival.

These societal changes and the reliance of the people on the ruler for means of survival, created a perfect mix for institutional and bureaucratic violence. The people themselves had to create the bowls with which they used to obtain the very food needed to survive. Based on evidence from the bowls themselves as well as scholarly sources, the use, creation and purpose of these bowls was to create allegiance to a ruler in a rapidly changing time. They were a domestic item used in a heavily political way. They were steeped in religion, politics, family, and survival. Being the most iconic artifact in this rapidly changing period is very fitting and shows how materials have a great power and control over people.

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