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Tradition and Social Change in Northern Mesopotamia During the Later Fifth and Fourth Millennium B.C.

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Introduction

Human society is essentially non-egalitarian. It is constructed of a complex system of interdependencies and often subtle relations of dominance. This system of interdependence is regularised, maintained and reproduced by recurrent social practices among individuals and groups (Giddens 1979; Tilley 1982). Social practices are based upon past experiences and common knowledge. Thus, to some extent, there is always a repetitive component in social practices (Giddens 1979). The underlying structuring and organising principles in society are not observable as such but are mediated in daily life through a set of codes and rules (Hodder 1982a). All social relations, both material and non-material, involve some kind of symbolic behaviour. By means of these symbolic systems the daily world is ordered and given meaning. A conceptual order is thus created which is never static but constantly reproducing, reinterpreting and re-presenting the underlying structuring principles (Hodder 1982a; Pader 1982). Symbolic expression is omnipresent in human society and definitely not limited to some kind of transcendental or non-material representation of ideas or beliefs. All aspects of material culture, too, reflect the structuring and organising principles of society. Material items are given meaning as a result of their use and associations. Material culture is not a mere residue of human action but an important means of categorising and ordering the conceptual world (Hodder 1982a; Miller 1982; Pader 1982). Broadly speaking, a symbolic system may have three functions (cf. Braithwaite 1982, 1984):

- it may act as a means of communication
- it may serve as a means of categorisation
- it may serve as an instrument of domination by establishing and legitimating the interests of hegemonic groups

The latter is of particular interest since it touches upon the concept of ideology. In recent years, the concept of ideology has received considerable

rable attention in archaeology (see e.g. the various contributions in Miller and Tilley, Eds., 1984). Strong impulses from the social sciences and French marxist anthropology have led to the development of a firm theoretical framework describing ideology as a practice or set of practices (ideas, ideals, beliefs, representations) which serves to maintain and reproduce the relations of dominance between individuals and groups in society (Shanks and Tilley 1982; Shennan 1982; Miller and Tilley 1984; Tilley 1984). The main point here is that ideology does not serve the interests of all members of society equally but, on the contrary, legitimates the interests of specific groups.

Ideology thus acts as an instrument of power. Symbolic behaviour is thereby of utmost importance. Miller and Tilley (1984: 7) point out that all relations of dominance and power can be ultimately reduced to either the exercise of physical force (or its threat) or to manipulation. Physical repression alone is highly unstable in the long run since it relies upon individual and often temporary concentration of force. More effective is the exercise of power by means of social institutions which both legitimise and naturalise the *status quo*. This can be done by creating a »tradition« focussing on repetition and invariance, and implying a continuity with the past. Such traditions may be actually invented (see the various contributions in Hobsbawm and Ranger, Eds., 1983) but will always refer to the past. By institutionalising the relations of dominance in society, these uneven social relationships become part of the natural order and as such receive the status of ever-existing and non-discussible.

The institutionalising of inequality in society through traditions involves a number of explicit or implicit rules and rituals. Ritual and tradition are inextricably tied up. Ritual may be viewed as the performance of relatively invariant sequences of formal and stylised acts designed to express certain fundamental social values and norms of behaviour within a society (Huntington and Metcalf 1979; Rappaport 1979). Ritual behaviour is definitely not limited to the religious sphere but perceptible at all levels in human society. Knowledge, position and related power are transmitted through ritual activities (cf. the rites of passage which transfer an individual from one social status to another). Rituals stress the social order by formalising it and by giving meaning to it, but, at the same time and by the same means, rituals hamper the rise of contradictory views. Rituals thus legitimise, maintain and reproduce the existing social order and as such are ideological activities (Tilley 1984: 116). Obviously, the existing social order need not (and

probably will not) represent the interests of all individuals and groups in society. As a consequence, ritual behaviour largely serves the interests of some individuals or groups only. For some segments of society, ritual behaviour thus may become a powerful tool in maintaining and reproducing their social position; it secures the existing relations of dominance.

Ritual and symbolic expression, both material and non-material, are indivisibly linked; ritual behaviour always requires symbolic behaviour. Whereas the non-material symbols will be for the larger part inaccessible to the archaeologist, their material expression is within his/her range. In the following I shall try to recognise some ritual behaviour in 5th and 4th millennium Mesopotamia ('Ubaid – Late Chalcolithic periods) and to relate it to some ideological changes in society. The emphasis is upon northern Mesopotamia, mainly taking Tepe Gawra and Tell Arpachiyah into consideration. Moreover, I will limit myself to two aspects of 'Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic society, *viz.*, a) settlement structure and architecture, and b) funerary practices.

Settlement and Architecture

At present, hundreds of 'Ubaid sites are known from northern Mesopotamia (see e.g. Vértessalji 1984a: 159 ff). The earliest sites mainly are small and dispersed hamlets or villages, rarely occupying an area over 2 or 3 ha. Most settlements seem to consist of only a few structures, arranged in an open manner.

Tepe Gawra seems to represent one of the larger 'Ubaid settlements in the north. The mound itself is of considerable dimensions, measuring about 180 x 160 m, but the actual area of occupation throughout the various phases seems to be limited and of an open, dispersed nature. The early strata XIX and XVIII have been sounded on a limited scale but from stratum XVII onwards a considerable part of the settlement has been exposed. These strata clearly illustrate the open character of the 'Ubaid settlement at Gawra. Within the excavated part, two main areas can be distinguished, one in the north and one in the south. The two areas are divided by means of a low depression (see Tobler 1950, Pls. XV-XVIII). Throughout the strata XVII to XV, and perhaps already before, this distinction is maintained. Perhaps this division can be related to different kin groups, each occupying their own territory. The emphasis in occupation varies considerably. Whereas e.g. in stratum

XVI the southern part seems to be the main area of occupation, in stratum XVA this southern part is almost wholly devoid of architecture and most building activities now seem to have taken place in the northern part (cf. Tobler 1950, Pl. XVII and XVI). Tobler (1950: 39) suggests that occasionally functional variables may have played a role in settlement organisation at Gawra, thereby reserving particular areas at the site for particular activities. Generally, Tepe Gawra does not seem to have been densely occupied during the 'Ubaid period.

At the small site of Arpachiyah, the upper levels TT 1-4 on top of the mound yielded evidence of some 'Ubaid buildings. Unfortunately, Mallowan devotes almost no attention to these structures, merely describing them as »miserable dwellings« resembling a »slum« (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 11). The settlement seems to have occupied an area of about 0.6 ha, and probably consisted of only one or two houses, surrounded by an open area or court containing some ovens (*ibid.*, Figs. 5a-b). Level TT 1 is almost completely eroded but the lower levels TT 2-4 indicate some multi-roomed, rectangular buildings oriented with their corners towards the cardinal points of the compass. Levels TT 2 and 3 seem to be closely associated, level TT 2 representing an almost identical rebuilding of the lower TT 3 structure.

Small hamlets like Arpachiyah seem to constitute a characteristic feature of 'Ubaid settlement in the north. The recent excavations in the Hamrin area of central Iraq have given ample evidence to support this view. Here 16 'Ubaid sites have been recovered but only two of these, *viz.* tells Abada and Abu Husaini, seem to have been more than a hamlet or single house mound. Tell Abada measures about 190 x 150 m at its base but the actual area of occupation is much smaller. Level II, representing a completely excavated building phase at the site, shows an inhabited area of about 0.7 ha and consists of 10 buildings, separated by small streets and open places (Jasim 1985). The main buildings seem to surround some kind of central square. The topmost level I shows a more spaciouly organised settlement structure. The total area of occupation remains more or less the same as in level II but now only 7 buildings were recorded. Jasim (1985: 201) suggests a population ranging between 80-120 persons for the various levels at Abada. Tell Abu Husaini is the other large site in the Hamrin area, probably having a settled area of 110 x 130 m (about 1.5 ha). Numerous traces of buildings were found but here, too, open spaces covered large areas (Tusa n.d.). Abu Husaini belongs to the latest stages of the 'Ubaid period in the Hamrin and is of a later date than Abada, the latter belonging to the

‘Ubaid 2-3 period. If during ‘Ubaid times in this region already any »central places« existed, we may suggest that Abu Husaini took over the central role from Abada. The other sites in the Hamrin region all have much smaller dimensions (see Jasim 1985: 143ff for an overview) and represent small settlements comparable with Arpachiyah.

The numerous ‘Ubaid sites in the north and central parts of Mesopotamia give evidence of a remarkably homogeneous material culture. Apart from temporal effects, the finds from the various sites can hardly be distinguished from one another. This does not hold true solely for ceramics or other small finds but also for the architectural features or burial practices.

Concerning the architecture, the most characteristic feature of ‘Ubaid architecture in the north seems to be the tripartite building, showing a large central room enlarged by parallel rows of smaller rooms along each of the long sides. These regularly built tripartite structures are by no means the sole kind of ‘Ubaid architecture; numerous other types of rectangular or even round structures have been uncovered, some of them well-planned and carefully constructed. The tripartite buildings, however, are a recurrent feature at most sites and derive some special attention here. In view of their common appearance, plan, dimensions and the common presence of additional features like ovens or bins, it seems reasonable to assume that these buildings were intended in the first instance for living. The other kinds of buildings may have partly served for living, too, but the often small size, the ground plan and the absence of any ovens, doorways or the like, suggests that these buildings in most cases were used for other activities, e.g. as storage rooms or stables. It is not my intention here to discuss the distribution and development of ‘Ubaid tripartite architecture (for this the reader is referred to e.g. Aurenche 1981a; Forest 1983b; Roaf 1984), but merely to emphasize some characteristics of tripartite architecture of importance to the present paper. At Tepe Gawra, tripartite buildings or close derivations are found in strata XIX to XII. Tobler (1950: 44) considers the stratum XVIII tripartite building as a temple. This assignment is mainly made on analogy with the temple buildings from the much later strata XIII and following. Others (Forest 1983a; Roaf 1984), however, have doubted Tobler’s view, pointing towards the numerous inconsistencies, incorrect stratum assignments and interpretations found in the final Gawra report. Roaf (1984: 82) points out that none of the features thought by Tobler (1950: 44) as characteristic of temples is necessarily indicative of a religious function,

since all of these features may also appear in domestic architecture. The latter observation is of crucial importance here; apparently, no clear-cut boundary exists between domestic and sacred architecture in the early 'Ubaid period. Summarising the development of tripartite structures at Tepe Gawra, it seems that the earliest structures are simple rectangular buildings, occasionally supported by buttresses. From stratum XV onwards, a more elaborate type of tripartite buildings appeared marked by a cruciform central room and stepped facades¹. In the Hamrin, e.g. at Tell Abada, this new kind of tripartite building seems to appear at an earlier stage, *viz.* 'Ubaid 3a (contemporary with Gawra XIX-XVII). In stratum XIII at Tepe Gawra, the first true temples appear which seem to have developed out of earlier tripartite domestic architecture. Tobler (1950: 44) already points out that the tripartite temples are not an »accidental« feature but the result of a definite and long-term tradition.

In southern Mesopotamia, the 'Ubaid culture is best known from the so-called Temple Sounding at Eridu (Safar *et al.* 1981). Here 13 strata are distinguished, all considered by their excavators as »temples«. The most elaborate buildings, no doubt true temples, appear in levels XI-IX, and, apparently on the basis of a supposed relationship between space and function, Safar *et al.* (1981: 54ff) assume that the earlier structures represent the forerunners of the levels XI-IX temples. However, when viewing the earliest »temples« in more detail, we may have our doubts about this assignment. Porada (1965: 149-50) considers the stratum XVI structure as the earliest recognizable sanctuary at Eridu, mainly on the basis of a deep recess in one wall, in which a small pedestal was found; a similar pedestal was present in the center of the building. Safar *et al.* (1981: 86) suggest that this building may have been a rebuilding of the level XVII rectangular structure, in the center of which a pedestal was found. Temples or shrines are also reported from levels XV-XII but here any evidence for religious structures is totally lacking. The level XV »temple« consists of an one-roomed rectangular building with interior buttresses. After abandonment, the level XV building seems to have been filled with mud bricks, apparently in order to create an emplacement for a new building. No traces of this new structure were found but nevertheless the filling of the level XV building was considered to represent the remains of the level XIV »temple«. The same accounts for the next levels XIII and XII: although no traces of buildings appeared, the excavators prefer to designate these levels as »temples XIII and XII« (Safar *et al.* 1981: 90ff). The first true temple at Eridu seems to appear in level XI, at the beginning of the 'Ubaid 3

period. This building, and its successors in levels X-IX, strongly differs from the earlier structures of the Temple Sounding. The building is made of a new type of mud bricks and had been raised upon a platform of considerable dimensions. The temple is of tripartite plan with a long central room entered through the long side and with rows of smaller rooms on either side. The recessed outer facade is marked by buttresses at regular intervals. The temples from levels X-IX are closely associated with the level XI temple and constructed in virtually the same way with only minor modifications. If we consider the level XVI building as a temple or shrine, Eridu seems to give evidence of a development from single, one-roomed shrines to more elaborate and carefully constructed tripartite temples (Aurenche 1981a; Roaf 1984).

Obviously, the temple construction of level XI did not fall out of the skies as a gift of the gods, but required a well-conceived concept, built upon and at the same time representing long-standing social values. Thus, one may wonder what the relationship is between the single, one-roomed shrine of level XVI and the complex tripartite building of level XI. Recently, Forest (1983b) has argued that the early 'Ubaid buildings in southern Mesopotamia are closely related to the Samarran T-shaped and tripartite tradition, perhaps sharing the same origin. If one accepts this view, it seems more likely that the tripartite temples of Eridu XI-IX have developed out of earlier tripartite architecture and not out of the single-roomed structures found in the lower levels.

Unfortunately, apart from the Eridu Temple Sounding, little is known about early 'Ubaid architecture in southern Mesopotamia. The so-called Hut Sounding at Eridu yielded only flimsy traces of architectural features whereas also at neighbouring sites like Ur and al-'Ubaid settlement evidence is very scanty. At the recently excavated site of 'Oueili, the earliest 'Ubaid levels have been reached on a limited scale and gave evidence of regularly-built, multi-roomed architecture (Huot 1987a; Forest 1987b). The architecture from the various levels suggests a strong continuity through time in building techniques and outline. In other aspects, too (e.g. pottery and subsistence economy), the site suggests a continuous development without any major interruption (Huot 1987a: 14). Interestingly enough, the earliest 'Ubaid remains at 'Oueili show close similarities to Samarran features like those uncovered at Choga Mami, Tell es-Sawwan or Tell Songor (Forest 1987b: 25). The present evidence seems to support Forest's hypothesis that the earliest 'Ubaid in Mesopotamia is closely associated with Samarran society.

Around the middle of the 4th millennium B.C. an end seems to come to 'Ubaid society in Mesopotamia and cultural development now proceeds along two diverging lines, *viz.* Late Chalcolithic society in the north and Uruk society in the south. A strong local development seems to have taken place. Uruk seems to be a truly southern Mesopotamian development and its appearance in the north probably is of intrusive nature. No true break is found in the archaeological record and the later 4th millennium cultural traits seem to have gradually developed out of earlier 'Ubaid features. The general picture is one of continuity between the 'Ubaid and Late Chalcolithic/Uruk periods.

In northern Mesopotamia, the later 4th millennium is poorly documented. Only a few sites have been investigated, Tepe Gawra unquestionably being the most important. The transition from the 'Ubaid to Late Chalcolithic period is marked by some major changes which can be summarised as follows:

- changes in settlement organisation: many of the formerly inhabited sites now seem to have been abandoned
- a change from tripartite domestic buildings to irregular agglomerations of small rooms
- a strong emphasis upon sacred architecture, *viz.* the appearance of tripartite temples
- a shift from an open and dispersed village structure to a more clustered settlement organisation
- appearance of fortified buildings
- a gradual but definite shift from painted ceramics towards undecorated pottery
- appearance of new types of pottery vessels, most notably the crudely shaped, plain-rim bowls
- a wider variation in burial practices
- appearance of metals and other rare materials
- appearance of new types of seals

Two points need to be emphasized here. First of all, the tripartite building plan is gradually abandoned, except for sacred structures and some large buildings perhaps representing the seats of the village headmen. The transition from the well-planned, tripartite domestic buildings towards more irregular agglomerations of structures is associated with a shift from more or less isolated buildings towards a more a compact village appearance. However, even in these days, Tepe Gawra

was never a very large settlement. This is most clearly illustrated by the completely excavated upper strata X-VIII, representing the latest 4th millennium phases of occupation at the site. Each of these strata indicates a limited area of inhabitation, consisting of 6-10 houses surrounding a plaza in front of the temple. The size of population during these phases may be roughly estimated at 50-80 persons at most. Although the later strata at Tepe Gawra may be considered to be the most monumental ones at the site (cf. Redman 1978: 252), Gawra probably never could compete with the contemporary urban centers in the south. However, when viewed against local conditions and when taking into consideration the presence of large temples, Gawra may very well have acted as a center, fulfilling a kind of service function for a vast region.

Secondly, on a regional scale, some important changes seem to have taken place in northern Mesopotamia around the middle of the 4th millennium. Many of the formerly inhabited sites seem to have been abandoned and occupation probably shifted or contracted to several more isolated sites. Generally, settled population density seems to decrease in the north at this time. An excellent example of this is found in the Hamrin area where no sites have been found which can be dated in the Uruk period. After the 'Ubaid 4 period, this area seems to be wholly devoid of permanent settlements (Jasim 1985: 201). Interestingly enough, the reverse seems to hold true for southern Mesopotamia. Although here in some regions the number of sites seems to decrease, too, in others newly founded Uruk settlements appear in impressive numbers. Moreover, several sites (e.g. Uruk-Warka) give evidence of an excessive growth, thus rising to the status of large urban centers (Adams 1981: 60ff). Generally speaking, the decline of population in the north seems to be counterbalanced by a dramatic increase of population in the south. Here a highly complex society develops, marked by a hierarchically organised and strongly interdependent settlement system.

Despite the vast numbers of Uruk settlements in the south, our information on this period in that region stems almost entirely from the excavations at Eridu (levels V-II in the Temple Sounding) and Uruk (Eanna precinct). Here a number of large and elaborately finished, niched buildings of tripartite plan were unearthed which on close analogy with the earlier 'Ubaid temples and the later Sumerian sanctuaries are interpreted as temples. No domestic architecture has yet been uncovered in southern Mesopotamia, but inferences on this kind of architecture may be made from archaeological work at Uruk sites in neighbour-

ring regions (Iran, Syria and Turkey). These excavations have yielded Uruk material almost indistinguishable from that found in southern Mesopotamia. The appearance of Uruk culture in the outlying regions seems to be of a sudden nature and may perhaps be considered as a direct implantation of southern features in the Mesopotamian periphery.

The most impressive evidence of Uruk culture outside southern Mesopotamia no doubt stems from the sites of Habuba Kabira, Tell Kannas and Jebel Aruda on the Syrian Euphrates. When looking at the architectural remains found here, the most striking feature is the regular tripartite structure of both domestic and sacred architecture. The so-called *Mittelsaalhäuser* of Habuba Kabira consist of a large central room flanked on two sides by a series of smaller side-rooms. These buildings display a strong symmetry in size of rooms and location of doorways, and suggest a careful planning. Occasionally, for some reason one row of side-rooms was omitted but these buildings no doubt are functionally-defined variations upon the basic tripartite scheme (Heinrich *et al.* 1973: 11ff; Strommenger 1979). At Tell Kannas, situated in the middle of the walled enclosure at Habuba, a number of tripartite Uruk temples have been revealed, closely comparable to those found at Uruk in Mesopotamia (Finet 1975, 1979). Similar architecture (both secular and sacred) as that found at Habuba Kabira/Tell Kannas was uncovered at the Jebel Aruda (Van Driel and Van Driel-Murray 1983). A detailed discussion of Uruk material culture goes beyond the scope of the present paper and therefore I will briefly summarise some of the main features:

- well-planned, tripartite secular and sacred architecture
- development of hierarchically-organised, urban centers
- strong increase of settled population in southern Mesopotamia
- appearance of Uruk »colonies« or »trade posts« in the Mesopotamian periphery
- appearance of fortifications, e.g. at Habuba Kabira
- appearance of mass-produced, wheel-made and largely undecorated pottery
- appearance of writing

Settlement and Architecture: Discussion

When looking at the settlements and architectural evidence in the light of the theoretical frame outlined above, several interesting points emerge. In northern Mesopotamia, all settlements are rather small. Even at the largest sites in the area, e.g. Gawra or Abada, the actual area of occupation does not seem to go beyond 1 ha, comprising an estimated population ranging between 50 and 100 persons at most. The majority of the sites, however, seem to be built up of only one or two houses, thus suggesting a very small population. True centers are largely absent; only some of the larger sites can perhaps be considered as such. These sites probably will have had a higher and more diversified economic potential, thus being able to produce some kind of buffer to survive in case of calamities. The numerous small sites will have been much more vulnerable and hardly able to survive long periods of set-back. Perhaps this underlies the apparently short period of occupation often shown by the smallest 'Ubaid settlements. Until now, only few indications are found of internal ranking on the basis of architecture. At Abada level II a large tripartite building was uncovered which, in view of its dimensions, elaborate finishing and finds inside, is considered to represent the house of the village head-man (Jasim 1985: 203). None of the other investigated 'Ubaid sites in the north has yielded such evidence and the present picture is one of a weakly developed hierarchy in settlement patterning and organisation. 'Ubaid society in the north seems to have had a strongly egalitarian character, i.e. any vertical social differentiation is largely absent.

When comparing the various 'Ubaid settlements, a remarkable homogeneity in material culture is perceptible. The findings from one site are hardly distinguishable from those at another and suggest a close contact between the various 'Ubaid groups. In the case of architecture, the most striking similarities are found in the tripartite structures. This well-conceived kind of building gives evidence of a long tradition which, however, is never static but in continuous change and further development. Whereas the maintenance of this tradition to some extent was merely due to custom, more structuring principles seem to be at work. As stated before, »tradition« is not a meaningless and repetitive mechanism but serves to organise and bind together a society by creating a past shared by all members of a society. By acting within the traditional frame, one acknowledges and pays respect to the past and, ultimately, to the present, or, stated in another way, one accepts the

ruling ideological system. In the case of the 'Ubaid tripartite buildings, it seems that these structures have not simply been raised according to the wishes of their individual builders but according to the rules of society. The tripartite architecture seems to express part of the world view of 'Ubaid society; it is both a component and a product of the regulating systems of society (cf. Fritz 1978; Kus 1981). One may wonder whether the tripartite plan was still visible at the time when a building was completed. When fully raised, these buildings, at least from the outside, were simply rectangular structures, hiding the internal tripartite layout. Thus, the basic plan only becomes evident in the initial planning and conceiving of the building. Here tradition and ideology are most prominently present; the actual construction and completion of the building is of secondary importance. The basic plan defines the attachment to the prevailing societal values. Obviously, ideosyncratic behaviour is not wholly ruled out (not all buildings are completely identical) nor are any functional considerations. The latter, however, cannot account for a tradition, mainly because function is not an independent variable but strongly related to individual roles and preferences.

Tradition will have interfered with all aspects of daily life in 'Ubaid society. A strong reliance upon the past is indicated, which necessitates considerable ritual behaviour and gives 'Ubaid society a highly formalised and regulated character. The close similarities between the various settlements suggest that a well-developed system of symbols and ritualised behaviour tied the various settlements closely together. On the other hand, the weak evidence for any social stratification or ranking in northern 'Ubaid society, both on the level of the individual settlement and on a more regional scale, suggests that 'Ubaid communities were each highly autonomous. Any relations of power and dominance hardly go beyond the level of the individual settlement. In most cases, each settlement consisted only of a few households, leaving little space for any complex social differentiation apart from that based upon age or gender. As will be shown in the next section on burial practices, age definitely underlies some degree of social differentiation but evidence for differentiation based upon sex is hardly available. It seems reasonable to suggest that each 'Ubaid community consisted of but a few households, based upon kin relations and with an elder or elders at the head.

Towards the end of the 4th millennium some important changes took place in architecture and settlement of northern Mesopotamia. The

tripartite building structure is largely abandoned and more irregularly constructed, functionally-defined buildings now dominate (cf. Tepe Gawra). In contrast with earlier times, idiosyncratic behaviour seems to be more prominently present. The wishes and needs of the individual now strongly underlie the construction of a building, thereby largely neglecting the earlier traditional values and rules. The individual is emphasized, giving the individual more power and opportunities to expand his own sphere of influence.

Most interestingly, the earlier formalised and ritualised behaviour or tradition in architecture does not disappear completely but confines itself to monumental buildings, *viz.* temples and large residences. Here the tripartite plan, or a close derivation of it, is maintained and developed further. Whereas the temples clearly fulfilled a public function, the various residences seem to be of a more domestic nature and perhaps represent the seat of the village head-men. The latter view is clearly illustrated by strata X-VIII at Gawra, representing the last stages of the 4th millennium at the site. Stratum X gives evidence of a small settlement, consisting of only 8-10 houses (cf. Tobler 1950, Pl.III). Beside small-scale architecture of clearly domestic nature, a temple is present in the center of the site whereas another large and thick-walled building with recessed facades, double entry and regular layout is found at the edge of the settlement. A similar picture is found in stratum IX (*ibid.*, Pl. II). Here again, in the center a large temple building is present, connected by means of a pavement with another impressive building of almost identical dimensions. Tobler (1950: 9) suggests that this building represents the residence of the temple priests. Gawra thus repeatedly gives evidence of large monumental buildings, apart from the temple, and it does not seem unreasonable to consider these structures as elite residences. Apparently, tripartite architecture is now used to indicate social inequalities or, more precisely, social dominance. Interestingly enough, this dominance is not solely expressed by impressive constructions but also by clear reference to the past via the building's layout. Tradition thus seems to be used to legitimise the present; the dominant groups try to consolidate their position by rooting it into the past and giving it the status of ever-existing. Social differentiation is presented as being inherent in the existing society.

It goes without saying that religion is one of the most conservative features in society, being a highly formalised construction of ritual behaviour and symbolic expression. Religious systems are hardly accessible to change or discussion. It is thus not surprising to find strong

traditional traits in religious edifices. More interesting is that these religious structures (at least in a fully developed manner) appear in northern Mesopotamia at a time of apparent tensions and social contradictions in society. The strongly egalitarian 'Ubaid society seems to fall apart; it gives rise to a society which is socially more differentiated and explicitly organised along hierarchical lines. Whereas in earlier times, religious thoughts and beliefs seem to have been expressed in an egalitarian manner, more or less at the level of the household, these now become part of more institutionalised structures, requiring clearly marked areas of worshipping (temple) and one or more specialists (priests). At this time, the temple definitely becomes an instrument of power. The close relationship between religious edifices and elite buildings suggest an intimate mingling of interests of both the secular and clerical powers, perhaps being united in one person. Thus, the development of true temple constructions and the rise of elite groups in society is closely associated. The degree of this apparent social differentiation should, however, not be overestimated. In the case of Tepe Gawra, it seems that the settlement is simply too small to give rise to a complex hierarchy. The present information suggests a simple two-fold division, with, on the one hand, the village head-man and his relatives, probably representing both the secular and spiritual powers, and, on the other hand, the »common people«. Nevertheless, when looking at the graves and the small finds at Tepe Gawra, the commoners, too, seem to indicate some degree of differentiation, based on material wealth. Any clear-cut stratification, however, is not perceptible. Small communities like Gawra, having a population of 50-80 persons at most, will hardly be able to support any true specialists and economic diversification seems to be weakly developed. Part-time specialists may, however, have existed.

When turning to southern Mesopotamia, some interesting differences with the north are perceptible. In the south, the process of social differentiation seems to have started already at a much earlier date. Apart from the possible shrines in the lower levels at Eridu, the first true temples appear in the south at the beginning of 'Ubaid 3. In the north, this kind of structure does not seem to appear before the 'Ubaid 4 period. As in the north, early 'Ubaid in the south will probably have been marked by a strongly ritualised and egalitarian social structure, but the shift towards a more complex, stratified society set in at an earlier stage. In contrast with the generally small settlements in the northern regions, the south gives evidence of much larger communities.

As early as the beginning of the 'Ubaid 2 period some sites as large as 5 ha are known, whereas by the end of the 'Ubaid period some sites may have been as large as 10 ha (Adams and Nissen 1972: 11; Adams 1981: 58ff). Sites of this size cannot be classified as simple villages. Eridu at its climax may have been inhabited by as many as 2000 to 4000 people, thus rising to the status of an urban center (Redman 1978: 247).

However, as in northern Mesopotamia, the southern communities hardly give evidence of any complex ranking, i.e. differentiation beyond the level of leader versus commoners. As will be shown in the next section on the burials, hardly any need seems to have existed to express social inequalities explicitly. Also in the architectural and settlement evidence, we may find some indications as to a lack of social differentiation, although these do not stem so much from the 'Ubaid period as well as from the next Uruk period. We assume a close relationship between 'Ubaid and Uruk societies, considering Uruk as a direct outgrowth of 'Ubaid society. The traditional 'Ubaid tripartite plan remains in use for both domestic and sacred architecture until the end of the 'Ubaid period (as shown by 'Oueili) and seems to continue into the Uruk period. The various Uruk temples uncovered in Mesopotamia and adjacent regions hardly differ from the late 'Ubaid religious edifices. Here a definite tradition is perceptible, providing the Uruk religious system with a remote past and historical backing. The domestic architecture, too, strongly refers to the past by copying the basically 'Ubaid tripartite plan and further developing it. When looking at the domestic buildings from Habuba Kabira, we can note a remarkable homogeneity and similarity in layout of these structures, suggesting the existence of some kind of symbolic framework underlying their construction. The remarkable uniformity of the settlement at Habuba Kabira points towards strong societal regulations and indicates a highly formalised and ritualised society.

Mortuary Practices

To begin with, I should point out that any analysis of 'Ubaid mortuary practices is severely hampered by the fragmentary nature of the existing data. The reports on 'Ubaid burials are often inadequate, either because they generalise the burial evidence or because they omit many details of utmost importance in further analysis (like sex and age). Another difficulty is the nature of the burial sample itself. Whereas 5th and 4th

millennium burials have been found in large numbers in Mesopotamia, we are dealing in most cases with infant or children inhumations underneath the floor of houses. Apparently, adults have been largely interred in separate cemeteries, only very few of which are known at present (Arpachiyah, Eridu). Thus, the available mortuary evidence is highly biased, showing only a fraction of the total range of mortuary variability by site.

The burial ground found at Arpachiyah covers the earliest stages of 'Ubaid expansion in northern Mesopotamia. The cemetery is found in the low-lying grounds immediately west of the actual settlement on the mound and consists so far of 45 graves, some of which contained more than one individual. Additional graves are found in the northwestern outlying areas, outside the proper limits of the cemetery (3 graves), and on the mound itself (2 graves). The cemetery at Arpachiyah shows a strong internal cohesion and temporal association (no overlapping of burials) although on the basis of the depth of the various graves and on stylistic diversity of the pottery found in these graves, some chronological distinctions are perceptible. Mallowan favored a late date for the Arpachiyah cemetery on the basis of some close similarities between vessels found in the graves and some ceramics from Gawra XIII and Eridu 7-6 (Mallowan 1970: 398ff). However, when looking at the ceramic inventory of the graves as a whole, an earlier date (*viz.* Gawra XIX-XVII) for most graves at Arpachiyah is more likely.

The majority of the burials at Arpachiyah seems to consist of inhumations in simple, more or less rectangular pits. Most of the dead had been laid in a contracted position on either the left or the right side and were covered by mud bricks. Since none of the burials overlapped, the position of the graves must have been marked by some feature or another. Mallowan (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 35) points out that the 'Ubaid burials at Arpachiyah were generally oriented E-W (regardless of the position of the head) but when looking at the map (*ibid.*, Fig.3) a NW-SE orientation is more precise for most graves. The latter orientation of the corpses is also the dominant one in the early levels at Gawra and other sites and does not seem to be without importance. It clearly refers to some kind of normative frame defining the location and outline of graves. A wide-spread symbolic system seems to exist, largely eliminating any idiosyncracies. Interestingly enough, we may notice a strong similarity in orientation between the graves and the settlement architecture: both features are oriented with their corners towards the cardinal points of the compass (assuming that graves are ideally rectan-

gular pits with straight edges). Not only at Arpachiyah but also at most of the other 'Ubaid sites, the settlement architecture shows this orientation². Whereas in the case of these buildings some practical reasons may, at least partially, account for this particular orientation (e.g. prevailing wind directions; cf. Jasim 1985: 207), it is evident that in the case of the graves no such arguments have validity. Hardly any functional variables can be found which necessitate a particular grave orientation and, consequently, other, non-functional, reasons must underlie this choice of orientation. Death is most closely associated with ritual behaviour and in the case of the 'Ubaid burials this seems to be already perceptible at the basic level of grave construction. The close link in orientation with the village architecture may suggest that the grave was viewed as the house of the dead, thus being a transformation of the house of the living. However, other ideational views may also have been at work (cf. Fritz 1978; Kus 1981).

Unfortunately, little can be said about the position of the skeletons in the graves. Mallowan simply notes that most of the bodies were laid either on the right or the left side, with the head sometimes at the east and sometimes at the west end of the graves (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 37). Only in very few cases, a specification is given. Mallowan devoted most of his attention to the so-called »fractional burials«, which he considered to represent a special type of burial but which later turned out to be the most badly preserved graves³. Although speculative (due to the large number of unknown cases), Mallowan's account of the graves suggests a slight preference for laying the corpses upon their right side. In most cases, the head seems to be at the east end of the grave (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 38-41 and Fig.3).

Virtually nothing is known about the age and sex of the occupants of the Arpachiyah cemetery. In only one case (burial G23) an indication of sex is given, although it is not clear upon what arguments this assignment has been made. Age is indicated at a broad level (infant, adult) in only 4 instances: 1 adult and 3 infants. Most of the early burials at Arpachiyah included some furnishings, mainly pottery vessels. Occasionally, one or two beads (and in one case: a necklace of beads) were found. Thirteen graves contained no grave goods at all. Almost invariably, the ceramic inventory consisted of one bowl and one jar, both placed at the feet of the deceased. For matters of convenience, a more detailed picture of the grave goods from Arpachiyah will be given in conjunction with the funerary gifts from Tepe Gawra.

At the latter site, hundreds of burials have been found in the various

strata, mostly simple infant or child inhumations. Adult graves appear only in very low numbers, thus suggesting that interment within the settlement was largely limited to infants and children, whereas adolescents and adults as a rule were interred within a specific burial ground outside the settlement. This picture is confirmed by excavations at other sites, e.g. Tell Abada or Yarim Tepe III. In the Gawra site report (Tobler 1950), the burial remains have been discussed in general terms; any detailed description is limited to the some of the rich or exceptional burials. Sex determinations are wholly absent whereas age is indicated only in broad terms, *viz.* infant, child, young adult and adult. Recently, the mortuary evidence from Tepe Gawra has been discussed in great detail by Forest (1983a: 19ff) and there is no need to repeat this study here. I will limit myself to some of the main points, stressing the similarities with the Arpachiyah cemetery in particular. As at Arpachiyah, most burials closely follow the orientation of the architecture, *viz.* with the corners towards the cardinal points of the compass. Most burials seem to be oriented NW-SE but a SW-NE direction also appears commonly. In the early strata at Gawra, most corpses were laid in a contracted position on the right side. Grave furnishings, when present, were usually placed at the feet of the deceased. In very few cases were the grave goods placed elsewhere. When looking at the grave furnishings in association with the age indications of the persons interred, a link between age and quality/quantity of grave goods is perceptible, which can be summarised as follows:

- infants: no grave furnishings
- children: string of beads
- young adult: one bowl or a string of beads or one bowl, one jar and a string of beads
- adult: one bowl and one jar or one jar or one bowl, one jar and some objects of varying nature

A clear-cut division thus seems to exist between infants and children on the one hand, and adults on the other hand. The intermediate group of »young adults« is less clearly defined and seems to include traits of both other classes⁴. Beads seem to constitute a characteristic feature of child inhumations, whereas pottery vessels are mainly found in adult graves. When extrapolating the Gawra evidence to the Arpachiyah cemetery, we may here postulate a differentiation based upon age as well:

- the graves into which one bowl and one jar were placed can be ascribed to adults
- the graves with beads can be ascribed to children
- the graves without furnishings may have been occupied by infants and young children, although this is not a necessity; as at Gawra, some adolescents or adults may have been buried without grave goods

Reviewing the mortuary evidence from the earliest stages of 'Ubaid occupation in the north as shown by Arpachiyah and Tepe Gawra, we may come to the following conclusions: a) an overall uniformity in funerary practices seems to exist and b) grave goods were differentiated on the basis of age. Differentiation based upon gender cannot be recognised.

Towards the end of the 'Ubaid period, the prevailing funerary practice underwent some important alterations. These changes were not abrupt but part of a slow and steady process of innovation, starting in the late 'Ubaid period and gradually continuing into the Late Chalcolithic period. Again, Tepe Gawra is most informative in this respect. Only a few graves at Arpachiyah belong to the later part of the 'Ubaid period, but these burials closely support the evidence from Gawra. At Tepe Gawra, the distinction in funerary treatment between the early strata XVIII-XVI and the later strata XV-VIII is most clearly drawn by the following features:

- changes in orientation of the corpse. In the later strata, an end seems to come to the earlier practice of burying the dead on their right side. The skeletons are now found resting on either side in nearly equal numbers
- the number of urn burials sharply increases in the later strata, at the expense of the simple pit inhumations
- appearance of well-constructed mud-brick or stone tombs in the later strata, some of which contained more than one individual
- the later graves are marked by a wider variety of grave goods (particularly in the tombs)
- in the later strata, the grave furnishings are no longer exclusively placed at the feet of the dead; they may now be found in all parts of the grave
- in the later strata, the cover of the pit inhumations changes. Whereas the early graves had no cover at all, now a new variety appears in

which the occupants of the graves are covered by matting, mud bricks, stone slabs or plaster

Another difference is that most pit inhumations from strata XV-VIII rarely had grave furnishings other than beads. However, this is probably not due to changes in mortuary practices so much as to the age of the dead; apparently, we are here dealing exclusively with infants or children. Generally speaking, around 3500 B.C. an end seems to have come to the rather uniform mortuary practices of the 'Ubaid period. The old tradition now falls apart and a much more diversified and apparently less regulated spectrum of funerary ritual emerges.

In southern Mesopotamia, late 'Ubaid cemeteries have been partially unearthed at Eridu and Ur. At the former, the cemetery is found in the areas northwest of the main mound (Safar et al. 1981). Only parts of the necropolis have been excavated, yielding 193 graves. The cemetery as a whole may contain up to 1000 graves. Mainly on the basis of the pottery recovered from the tombs, the Eridu cemetery can be dated at the end of the 'Ubaid period (*viz.* Eridu Temple Sounding level VI, and Eridu Hut Sounding levels IV-VII). Some tombs, however, may date to the Uruk period. Recently, the Eridu cemetery has been discussed by Pariselle (1985) and Wright and Pollock (1987); here only a few points will be made. The most characteristic trait of the Eridu necropolis is the tombs made of mud bricks and virtually all oriented NW-SE. Simple pit inhumations constitute a minority, although they still account for over a quarter of the graves found. Most of the tombs contained only one individual, although tombs having two occupants are also fairly numerous. In one case, a triple burial was uncovered, consisting of two adults and one child. Over half of the double interments indicate one male adult and one female adult. Safar et al. (1981: 119) consider the latter as »family burials«. The vast majority of the bodies was laid on the back with the arms by the sides. In only very few cases, the body was laid on the side or in a flexed position. On osteological grounds, and occasionally on the basis of the associated grave furnishings, the sex and age of most of the occupants of the Eridu cemetery have been determined. Concerning the age, it seems that both children and adults were proportionally represented, although the present picture may have been distorted by the rather large number of indeterminable cases (cf. Pariselle 1985: 4-5). Infant burials were very rare, clearly indicating that infants were interred elsewhere (either in a separate part of the grave ground or, more likely, within the associated settlement). The

vast majority of the graves contained some furnishings, mainly pottery vessels. The vessels, varying in number from one to six per grave, were placed either at the feet or at the head of the deceased. The number of vessels per grave depended upon the number of individuals interred (Wright and Pollock 1987: 327), but in most cases at least one bowl is found in combination with one jar. Grave goods other than ceramics were found in only a few tombs. In 11 graves some beads or strings of beads appeared, whereas two others have yielded a male figurine and a stone bowl, respectively.

As at Eridu, the graves uncovered at Ur »'Ubaid II« belong to the latest stages of the 'Ubaid period. Moreover, some of the burials should be properly placed in the subsequent, Uruk period (Forest 1983a: 112). The graves at Ur consisted of rectangular shafts, the floor of which was occasionally covered by sherds suggesting a kind of pavement (Woolley 1955: 20). The bodies were laid fully extended on the back with the arms by the sides and the hands folded above the pelvis. Nothing is reported about the orientation of the graves but, inferring from the direction of the bodies, most graves seem to have been NW-SE oriented (the head was lying to the NE, SE, SW or S). Grave furnishings other than pottery were very rare. The pottery vessels were as a rule placed at the feet of the deceased, although they may also appear in other parts of the grave. The graves ascribed by Woolley (1955) to »Ur 'Ubaid III« at the site differ from the earlier graves in various aspects. The main dissimilarity is the position of the body. Now, the corpses were laid in a slightly flexed position on the side with the hands before the face. Grave furnishings mainly include pottery but new types of vessels appear. Moreover, painted vessels are rare. New is the appearance of stone vessels and some other objects of stone (mace-head, axe). In one grave, a copper spear-head was found.

Burial Practices: Discussion

Assuming that the mortuary evidence from Arpachiyah and Tepe Gawra is representative for early 'Ubaid society in northern Mesopotamia, the general picture is one of minimal differentiation in burial treatment. The normative burial practice consisted of simple, primary inhumations in simple pits oriented with their corners to the cardinal points of the compass. Individuals were placed in a flexed posture on their sides. Grave furnishings, when present, were placed at the feet of the decea-

sed. Only these grave goods gave some evidence of differentiation or ranking, most likely associated with age. The mortuary evidence thus is of a strongly egalitarian nature. Embracing the current view that the treatment of an individual in death is strongly related to that individual's social position in life, our conclusion is that 'Ubaid society in the north was hardly differentiated socially. This was already inferred from the settlement and architectural evidence. It seems that these early 'Ubaid communities were too small to allow any complex ranking. Each site consisted of only very few households, probably representing one or more lineages, with an elder at the head. Kin relations no doubt largely dominated the social and economic framework, involving close personal communication (Tilley 1984). Any social inequalities other than those based on age and gender must have been limited.

The strong similarities in burial treatment, both at Gawra and Arpachiyah, point towards the existence of a widespread tradition. As argued before, traditions require a considerable amount of ritual behaviour and close adherence to the past. The highly formalised mortuary rituals, largely eliminating any idiosyncratic behaviour, emphasize the communal aspects of early 'Ubaid society in the north. Moreover, the existence of these mortuary practices throughout a considerable period of time, without any major modification, gives early 'Ubaid society a conservative character, strongly relying upon the past. In this respect, ancestor worship may have played an important role. The absence of any true temples or cult structures during the early stages of 'Ubaid in the north may point in this direction: the contact between the visible and the invisible world was omnipresent and did not require specific constructions. Perhaps death was not viewed as the end of human existence, but rather as a another rite of passage; the distance between the dead and the living may thus have been viewed as minimal. The evidence for age differentiation suggests that such rites of passage actually existed in 'Ubaid society.

Towards the end of the 'Ubaid period, important alterations took place in mortuary practices in northern Mesopotamia. Definite changes in grave construction, position of the dead, position and nature of the grave equipment etc., all mark the collapse of old traditions. It is true that this apparent break is not complete, and actually many graves still reflect old traditions, but the earlier highly formalised and uniform tradition as a whole is largely abandoned and replaced by a more varied burial ritual. As with the architecture, idiosyncratic behaviour now seems to be more manifest, emphasizing the role of the individual.

Most remarkable in this respect are the mud-brick and stone tombs at Gawra. At first sight, these tombs strongly resemble each other, but a more detailed look clearly reflects the changes mentioned before. Eighty tombs have been recovered from levels XIA-VIII B (Tobler 1950: 51ff; see, however, Forest 1983a: 19ff for a redating of the Gawra tombs). Most tombs contained children. Grave furnishings were present in 52 tombs and consisted mainly of beads and shell ornaments. Pottery was rare, appearing only in 12 tombs. Stone vessels were found in 7 cases. Five tombs, all containing adults, gave evidence of extremely rich grave goods, including stone vessels, stone mace heads, ivory combs, gold ornaments, beads and seals of ivory, gold, shell, turquoise and lapis lazuli. The latter tombs all belonged to the latest part of the 4th millennium, *viz.* Gawra VIII C-VIII B (according to Forest 1983a: 48).

The later prehistoric levels X-VIII at Tepe Gawra show an increasing but uneven exposure of wealth in graves, and point towards the rise of a hierarchically differentiated society (Forest 1983a: 77ff). Funerary treatment now is used to stress interindividual differences beyond the level of age or sex. Forest (1983a: 86) suggests that at this time occupation and inhumation at the mound of Tepe Gawra is limited to elite groups, whereas the common people lived at the foot of the mound and were interred somewhere in the flat lands surrounding the site. The latter possibility is not unlikely in view of the extensive religious edifices at the site, associated with only a few domestic buildings. However, as already pointed out before, the degree of social differentiation at Gawra should not be overestimated. Whereas stratum VIII shows a remarkable amount of wealth exposure in burials, this is much less the case in the levels preceding stratum VIII. These strata, too, give evidence of some kind of social differentiation, but expressed in a less lavish manner. Any hierarchical system seems to be weakly developed. The growing importance of the individual in late Gawra society may have led to increasing tension and competition within the community, involving a search for prestige items to legalise the individual's place in the hierarchy. The stratum VIII burials may represent the ultimate result of this struggle for power.

In southern Mesopotamia, the process of social differentiation seems to have started at a much earlier time than in the north. The first true temples in the south appeared at the beginning of 'Ubaid 3 and the large size of many settlements, too, suggests a social organisation beyond the level of simple farming villages. Interestingly enough, however, the

burial record hardly gives evidence of social inequalities. The cemeteries at Ur and Eridu show but slight traces of social differentiation and suggest a largely egalitarian kind of society. This apparent contradiction (cf. Huot 1987c: 299-300) cannot be explained at present except in broad terms. Three possibilities are suggested:

- a) the present burial sample from Ur and Eridu is biased in that it does not include any elite interments
- b) in southern Mesopotamia the problems and tensions resulting from increasing social differentiation were dealt with in a wholly different manner when compared with the north
- c) mortuary practices are ill-suited as indicators of social differentiation

Although the latter possibility cannot be excluded, it seems unlikely in the light of current research (see e.g. the various contributions in Chapman et al., Eds., 1981).

In case of the first possibility, perhaps Forest's suggestion that at Gawra inhumation on the mound was limited to elite groups can be transferred to southern Mesopotamia, too. In that case, no elite burials are expected within the cemeteries excavated but instead are to be sought for within the associated areas of occupation.

The second possibility suggests that cultural development in southern Mesopotamia was strongly divergent from that in the north. At Tepe Gawra, true temples appear at a time when both individuality and social inequalities are openly expressed; here these temples seem to support the position of some hegemonic individuals or groups. In southern Mesopotamia, however, the appearance of temples is not directly associated with a segmentary type of society; the present burial evidence points towards a strongly egalitarian social frame. It thus seems that monumental public buildings in the south were used in an unitary manner, emphasizing the collectivity. Temples may have acted as symbols of unity, intended to create an image of representing the interests of all members of the community and thus aiming at the denial of any social contradictions. Collective behaviour seems to have been stressed in the south, largely to the elimination of the individual. A highly formalised and institutionalised society is perceptible, requiring considerable ritual behaviour. Rituals emphasise the existing social order and prevent the rise of contradictory views. By suppressing the role of the individual and instead emphasising the collectivity through ritual behaviour, the existing relations of dominance in society are secured and protected from evaluation.

Conclusions

Ubaïd communities in northern Mesopotamia seem to have been marked by little social or political differentiation. The architectural and burial evidence suggests that Ubaïd society was highly traditional and based upon strongly communal behaviour, rooted in the past. Around the middle of the 4th millennium B.C., Ubaïd society seems to break apart. Instead of emphasizing the community as a whole, the individual is now stressed, thus enabling the explicit exposure of social differentiation and inequality. In an architectural sense, these changes are shown by the appearance of temples and mansions whereas the burial record gives evidence of an unequal exposure of wealth. It is suggested that northern Mesopotamia at this time witnessed the rise of highly independent, locally oriented socio-political units. In southern Mesopotamia, this process of social differentiation must have started at an earlier stage but any social contradictions have largely been offset by a continuing emphasis upon the communal organisation of society. Here social inequalities seem to have been less explicitly expressed than in the north. Thus, whereas Uruk society in the south seems to have had a unitary character, the contemporary settlements in the north gave evidence of a highly autonomous and dispersed social organisation.

At present, one can only speculate what *stimuli* underlie the changes in late 4th millennium Mesopotamia. In southern Mesopotamia, an increasing emphasis upon irrigation agriculture may have required strong communal behaviour. In northern Mesopotamia, subsistence economy perhaps was more varied and less dependent on communal efforts. In this respect, it is of importance to stress the changes in settlement organisation towards the end of the Ubaïd period: many settlements are abandoned and occupation seem to have shifted or contracted to several larger sites. Apparently, a large part of the population now became mobile, thus being hardly within the reach of central authorities.

Acknowledgement

Research was supported by the Albert Egges van Giffen Instituut voor Prae- en Protohistorie (University of Amsterdam) and by the Foundation for Archaeological Research, which is subsidised by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

Notes

1. Perhaps these more elaborate buildings were already present in stratum XVI; compare the small structures consisting of rooms 1,2,4,7,8 and located in the southeastern area of the stratum XVI settlement (Tobler 1950, Pl.XVII) and the small stratum XV building consisting of rooms 3 to 9 (*ibid.*, Pl.XV).
2. It is true that not all 'Ubaid tripartite buildings show this particular orientation to the same degree. However, Roaf's suggestion (1984: 88) that 'Ubaid tripartite architecture does not show any regular orientation at all seems incorrect when looking at the plans of the various sites.
3. Tobler (1950: 111) already had his doubts on the fractional burials, and Mallowan (1970: 399), too, revoked his earlier interpretation, now suggesting that the fragmentary nature of these burials may be due either to animal activities or to the acid nature of the soil into which the burials were sunk.
4. The lack of more precise age determinations is most strongly felt here. The present age groups necessarily have vague boundaries. It is not clear upon which arguments these groups have been distinguished by Tobler. In the case of infants, this seems rather obvious, but as for the other groups Tobler's classification seems to be mainly based upon height and size of the skeletons and their individual bones. Particularly in the case of the »young adults« it may very well be possible that some of the skeletons ascribed to this category should actually be placed in one of the others (*i.e.* children or adults).

Discussion of Peter M. M. G. Akkermans' paper

CHAIRMAN M. TROLLE LARSEN

ROAF: I'm a bit worried about your view of the evidence which seems to be rather different from mine. My impression in many points differs from yours. Gawra, except for Strata XIV and XIII, has a substantial number of different residences. The same is true at Abada, at Madhhur, at Thalathat, at Yarim Tepe, at Abu Husseini, and, as Hans Nissen was just showing me, at Degirmentepe near Malatya. It seems to me that there are a number of villages that aren't single-building residences.

AKKERMANS: Well, at Tepe Gawra, again, you can see in all levels that within the excavated areas you find only very few buildings, which is [much lower than might be expected given] the complete area of the site itself.

LARSEN: How large is the exposure?

ROAF: The exposure's not large.

AKKERMANS: That's not true, they dug a very large exposure, not for the earliest levels, but for the other ones they took away a considerable part of the site.

LARSEN: The latest ones.

AKKERMANS: The latest ones are completely excavated, the other ones are almost half-excavated.

ROAF: I think that brings me to another point, which is that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The absence of temples in northern Mesopotamia doesn't, at this stage, prove anything. We have so few sites excavated, and we have no major settlements excavated except for a small trench in Nineveh, a small trench in Leilan. We really don't have the evidence to base much on. And furthermore, the relative chronology of the end of the 'Ubaid and the early Uruk Tepe Gawra levels is not certain. Whether Ninevite 3 and 4 are later than Gawra XII-VIII, as I think, is much debated; many people will disagree with that. There seem to be considerable problems in resolving this. Regarding your [perception of the] difference from the 'Ubaid to the Uruk – "many of the formerly inhabited sites now seem to have been abandoned": Gawra continued to be occupied.

There is a change in the nature of occupation, in settlement organization, and it depends on whether you think Gawra XII is 'Ubaid or early Uruk or whatever, but it doesn't seem to me that there's evidence for many of them being abandoned. [Ed.'s note: for the most recent and thorough reanalysis of the 'Ubaid and terminal-'Ubaid/post 'Ubaid levels at Gawra, refer to Rothman 1988.]

AKKERMANS: [In my paper] I take an example of that in the Hamrin area.

ROAF: Many of them are abandoned long before the end of the 'Ubaid period.

AKKERMANS: It's a continuous trend.

ROAF: The Hamrin is exceptional in that there are only two Late Uruk sites, and there's Tell Gubba also.

LARSEN: It's a marginal area.

AKKERMANS: I'm not convinced about that.

ROAF: I'm not trying to convince you. All I'm saying is that there isn't much evidence on which to base these assertions. I would look at the evidence as not necessarily supporting them. "A strong emphasis upon sacred architecture ... there's the appearance of tripartite temples" – well, tripartite temples are in the 'Ubaid, so they are not a new introduction.

AKKERMANS: They are not new now [in the Uruk], that's correct, but there is an emphasis now. They must have originated from somewhere, of course. They cannot be new in the later part. I mean, there was not a simple »invention« of tripartite buildings.

ROAF: They are a continuation from the past. "A shift from an open and dispersed village structure to a more clustered settlement organization" – I just don't know where the evidence is.

AKKERMANS: Tepe Gawra again. You can see it very easily in Tepe Gawra.

ROAF: Which levels are you comparing?

AKKERMANS: I am comparing all levels from the areas from which they dug. You can see it very easily, from Level XIV [which] is the last one with an isolated building, then in Level XIII we have the temple buildings, and after that we get an increasing amount of smaller structures with streets and all kinds of other buildings. And then you get a real clustered society in the later

levels, with the temple buildings which they have dug completely. There are also irregularly constructed buildings.

ROAF: I just don't see that. Degirmentepe, the site near Malatya Tepe, which I've just been looking at, looks very similar to Gawra XII in the close packing [of the structures], and at Abada also the buildings are really quite closely packed.

AKKERMANS: I don't think you can take Tepe Gawra as an example of what happened in northern Mesopotamia.

ROAF: You can't take Tepe Gawra?

AKKERMANS: No, I don't think so.

ROAF: Ah, I thought you just took it.

NISSEN: You can't take Degirmentepe.

ROAF: You can't take Degirmentepe? No, that's probably true. "Appearance of fortified buildings" – is this the Round House at Gawra?

AKKERMANS: For example, yes.

ROAF: Any other examples?

AKKERMANS: No.

ROAF: Certainly the pottery seems fine. "The appearance of new types of pottery vessel, most notably the crudely shaped plain-rim bowls" – are these Beveled-rim Bowls?

AKKERMANS: No, not Beveled-rim Bowls. More likely, [?...?] bowls. They are not identical, but they look like [?...?] bowls. You don't see them in the earlier periods, too. And there are other shapes as well.

ROAF: Just one more point...it does seem to me that a case can be made for the tripartite house continuing in the Uruk period. At Qalinj Agha they certainly have buildings that are probably domestic which are tripartite. And at Habuba Kabira you have this very interesting combination of a tripartite house with courtyard – a sort of transitional type – again showing tripartite houses continuing.

AKKERMANS: That's quite all right, I would like to have a continuation. At least in the Uruk period I would like to see that. That's a difference between the North and the South, and in that case I see a site like Habuba Kabira as an implantation from the South, as an exponent of southern features, and there we can see these traditional features as expressed through tripartite structures.

ROAF: Finally on the question of chronology, you date the end of the 'Ubaid to the mid-fourth millennium.

AKKERMANS: Yes.

ROAF: Is this on radiocarbon dates or...? AKKERMANS: No, it's simply the traditional date.

ROAF: ... calibrated? Because I tend to put it to the end of the fifth millennium, which would allow more accommodation for the radiocarbon dates, and for what's happened.

AKKERMANS: No, without any calibration.

WRIGHT: It's always impressed me as an enduring tragedy that the only extensively excavated [northern Mesopotamian 'Ubaid] site is this curious site on the northern margins of one of the northernmost plains of northern Mesopotamia, which, it can be argued on several grounds, is a kind of gateway community. I've tried to look at the available survey evidence, to see what is the range of variation in sites. Now northern Mesopotamia has a fixed topography. It doesn't have these moving river channels that not only abandon beautiful bits of settlement pattern for us, but also eat them up when they come back to their old location. The problem with the fixed topography is that you're likely to get, on top of an important 'Ubaid site at a river crossing, Uruk and Ninevite 5 and Neo-Assyrian and a little Islamic. And yet in the literature it seems to me that there are a few large 'Ubaid settlements. Seton Lloyd records a ten-hectare site in the Sinjar, and the Oates have said that they have seen similarly large sites in the Rimah area. Do you see, in your surveys in the North, large centers that simply have not been excavated because they are not in the salvage areas? Or in all your travels – those of you who have surveyed in this area – is it the case that there are not large 'Ubaid sites and that we really are dealing with a pattern of villages? I sense a selection by the archaeologists working in the North of the smaller, more manageable sites, except for the Hamrin, which doesn't seem to have very many big sites. And I pose the question ...

LARSEN: Who is that question directed to?

WRIGHT: Either to Michael, who has done quite a bit of survey in the North, or to Peter, who has synthesized the entire North for us, or to Catherine, who has also synthesized the North.

ROAF: Well, I haven't actually done very much survey, so I really can't say. I do think it very likely that sites like Nineveh, although the *Deep Sounding* didn't hit any 'Ubaid, do actually have 'Ubaid, and Leilan does have 'Ubaid, and I suspect that many of these large sites do have sizable areas.

AKKERMANS: Many of the large sites have 'Ubaid. In Syria in the Balikh Valley, we have very large sites like Tell Hammam et-Turkman, which is very large. Actually, the 'Ubaid part of the site, the 'Ubaid-related part of the site, is only a fraction of the total size of the mound. So, it's difficult to say, if we come to any large site and we pick up somewhere some 'Ubaid-like sherds, to say this must be a very important 'Ubaid site.

ROAF: I think the point should be made, we do have evidence for very large 'Ubaid period sites, so I think there is a change there. In 'Uqair I think Bob Adams estimated ten hectares.

ADAMS: By the way, there's a fragment of a very large wall in that site that's worth remembering, that's several meters thick. They just ran across it, they never tried to give us any picture of the building, but it's a 2.5 to 3 meter thick wall.

ROAF: But the fragment of the building they did find didn't look like an ordinary domestic structure or a temple. It looked like something more on the lines of a palace or a similar structure.

WRIGHT: 'Uqair is in the South.

ROAF: In the South, yes. There is certainly a development from smaller settlements to larger ones over time, and I'm sure that it happened piecemeal in different areas, and that a major step was between the 'Ubaid and the end of the Uruk, that this was really when things started developing. So I'm not in disagreement with Peter [Akkermans] about that at all.

LEVINE: McGuire Gibson has told me that the mound at Gawra is but a fragment of the settlement at Gawra, that there is a large outer apron of settlement

around the mound itself.

AKKERMANS: We have at least a large Gawra site, perhaps, but it's another question of course how large were [other northern 'Ubaid sites compared to] the Gawra settlement.

HUOT: Completely outside the present session topic, I ask a very general question which is probably out of date. I would like to know what are the strong arguments for making a differentiation between the temple and secular architecture. I don't know any real temples, strictly speaking, before ED II. What are the differences you see from the technical or structural point of view? Before the early 'Ubaid 3 period – because you are speaking of the first temples at the beginning of the 'Ubaid 3 period – what are the differentiations between buildings before that time limit and after that? I can't understand where the limits are, and why you speak of temples, strictly speaking, from that point on.

AKKERMANS: It's one of the major points concerning the North that actually we don't have these strong differences between the earlier tripartite buildings in the North and the later buildings which may be interpreted as temples. But actually we have some. In Gawra XII we have these very large buildings which probably can be interpreted as temples in view of their size and relations to later buildings. But there are not major differences in construction among those we have earlier. But until that time we don't have any buildings like that, of that size, of that elaboration in the earlier periods. And in southern Mesopotamia they seem to appear at an early date.

LARSEN: I can understand you do not agree about the size of the settlement in northern Mesopotamia in Late 'Ubaid, but then I would ask another question: Do you agree about when urbanization took place? Because if you don't have the sites or the settlements, then maybe you have problems also with the urbanization period.

AKKERMANS: Well, actually I think that northern Mesopotamia, and that [includes] Syria, developed along completely different lines in comparison with southern Mesopotamia. Northern Mesopotamia [underwent] a completely different development from what happened in the South. I think in northern Mesopotamia everything was on a much smaller scale, which, however, does not mean that it was »backwards«. It just responded to local conditions and to local development, which in northern Mesopotamia was simply completely different from what happened in southern Mesopotamia.

LARSEN: But you would propose a new time [for the appearance of] an urbanized society?

AKKERMANS: Well, at least in southern Mesopotamia, you could of course say that in the Uruk period, [and] that at least some sites suggest that this may have already happened in the later phases of the 'Ubaid, in southern Mesopotamia at least, which is different from northern Mesopotamia.

ADAMS: It's depressing to point this out, but explicit and unambiguous evidence supports the third point which you then dismiss, namely that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between wealth in graves and status or wealth in the living community. At least two unambiguous Early Dynastic texts deal with the petitions of individuals to richer and more powerful individuals to provide grave goods for members of the families of the petitioner. I don't want to say that you can necessarily carry backward from Early Dynastic times to 'Ubaid times, but it does introduce a practice which we need to keep in mind and which, as I say, is depressing. We're looking at dispensations of wealth that reflect the power of third parties not present in those graves. We can't exclude that possibility as we look at the South.

AKKERMANS: Well, I don't want to exclude that... I gave three possibilities and I can't say which one is true.