

## The Jemdet-Nasr Period

The brilliant decoration of Tell 'Uqair shows a taste for colours was not foreign to the Uruk period, even when the characteristic al-'Ubaid painted pottery was gradually replaced by plain prune brown or black wares, highly polished, and by buff wares decorated with incised lines and stamped reliefs. Better vessels were made of copper and precious metals, or cut out of calcite, alabaster, diorite, soapstone or dark volcanic stone. But the tradition survived, and after the Uruk period painted pottery asserted itself, at least in southern Mesopotamia, in a brilliant renaissance, known as the Jemdet-Nasr period. The site, seventeen miles northeast of Kish, was first excavated in 1926 by Professor Stephen Langdon. Associated with the painted vases were found clay tablets with pictographic inscriptions decidedly more recent than the Uruk period. The interval of time between the two periods may be measured by the discovery at Tell 'Uqair of similar Jemdet-Nasr painted wares and pictographic inscriptions in a small chapel at a level 1.50 m. above the foundations of the Painted Temple oval platform. Good examples (*Figure 28*) may be seen in the Babylonian Section of the University Museum.

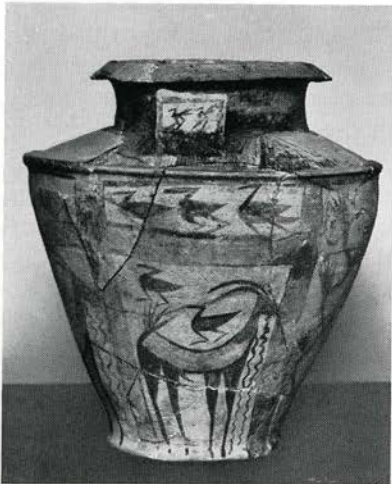
## Kish (Uhaimir)

Kish, eight miles east of Babylon, is, according to the king's lists compiled about 1800 B.C., the site of the first royal dynasty after the Deluge. Over twenty kings reigned here, an incredible number of years, until the kingship passed to Uruk in the Sumerian south. Early explorers were tempted by the extensive field of ruins. Its thorough excavation was undertaken in 1923 by the Joint Expedition of Oxford University and the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, under the direction of Professor Stephen Langdon, assisted by Ernest Mackay and after 1926 by L. Watelin. On either side of the old bed of the Euphrates, massive brick towers mark the sites of the temples of the local gods: on the west the war god Ilbaba, on the east the twin towers of the goddess Ninlil, the Ishtar of Kish. Here again the original mud towers have been buried below the larger constructions and restorations from the days of King Sargon of Agade to the Persian king, Cyrus. The traditional plan

the boat-shaped lyre; the bearded bulls' heads of gold, cast or plated, which decorated other lyres; and finally, the rampant goat in the bush, a polychrome work blending metal and mosaic, gold, copper, shell and lapis.

The excavation of Fâra begun by the Germans (1902-3) was resumed for a short season in 1931 by Dr. Erich Schmidt representing the University Museum.

Traces of a great flood have been found also at Ur. A deposit more than three metres thick of water-laid sand, covering the remains of the al-'Ubaid period, was discovered by Mr. Woolley at the bottom of the great pit in the Royal Cemetery. The original sea-level was 4.50 m. below it.



*Figure 28.* Painted jar of the Jemdet-Nasr type. Goats, birds, plants, in black and red, are framed in rectangular panels.  
Found at Khafaje



*Figure 29.* The "Markhur Goat's Head in Copper" found at Fâra in 1900 by Prof. H. V. Hilprecht