



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Halaf-Ubaid Transition in Northeastern Mesopotamia: The Potential of Museum Collections

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Abstract

This paper discusses the potential of legacy collections from the 20th century housed in museum storerooms in investigating Mesopotamian prehistoric pottery. In particular, I will focus on the changes in ceramic manufacturing between the 6th-5th millennia BC in the Tigris Region. Towards the end of the 6th millennium BCE the spread of the Ubaid horizon across Northern Mesopotamia catalyzed profound social changes among local Halaf communities. Within the sphere of ceramic pottery production, the shift from the elaborately painted Halaf wares to the so-called “black on buff” tradition is generally regarded as one of the most indicative outcomes of this process. By presenting the cases of the Tepe Gawra and the Kara Tepe assemblages kept in the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, this paper will reflect on the methodological possibilities and challenges of carrying out ceramic analysis on museum repertoires, also as an aid to ongoing field research in the area. Moreover, it will also stress the importance of an integrated approach which combines the study of artefacts with that of archival materials to achieve a better understanding of the collections and the process of their formation.

Keywords

Halaf, Ubaid, Tepe Gawra, Museum collections

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