

## **The ophidians**

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### **Abstract:**

The terracotta figurines are considered some of the most important archaeological evidence, whether in terms of morphological features, the type of material used in their production, or the extent of their spread in a variety of geographical areas. The figurines we are discussing, recognized as the "ophidians", are rare but outstanding models due to their facial and head features. They are considered one of the characteristics of the great and famous Ubaid civilization, which covered larger areas of ancient Mesopotamia. And as such we must discuss the places which speared-in this unique style, as well as the resemblances and differences between each of them, in addition to the significance of its emergence.

### **Key words:**

Terracotta- figurines- ophidians- reptilian- Ubaid.

### **Introduction:**

The term "ophidians" is used for a type of terracotta figurines of the Ubaid civilization. The "ophidian" literally means "like a snake, or in the shape of a snake." it is the long head, tipped nose, coffee-bean eyes, and clay pellets or painted spots on the torso, at times identified as snakes' scales, that obtained the identification as ophidian to these figurines (fig.1). their snaky naturism as Neumann described them, is assured by an elongated body with angular shoulders and tiny feet mostly ending with a tip, which averts the figurines from standing. <sup>(1)</sup> the reclining position these figurines thus necessarily adopted confirms their snake-like or reptilian nature. <sup>(2)</sup>

it was hard to decide their exact chronology due to the age of the excavations, but they will be placed in the fifth millennium, in its second half. They are among the first objects that have contributed to distinguishing the Ubaid of southern Mesopotamia as they are only compared to the series of female prehistoric figurines from northern sites close to their forms, headless in a seated position, supporting their chest with their hands. <sup>(3)</sup>

This study is based on a selective terracotta figurines group from different sites of Southern Mesopotamia and a group of comparative examples from the central and Northern Mesopotamia

### **1-Southern Mesopotamia:**

(1)-Tell el oueili was a southern Mesopotamian site, a few figurine fragments were found at the site

-A figurine comes from the Ubaid layers. It is a 4 cm high female figure of which only the neck, arms, and waist are kept <sup>(4)</sup> (LO 87 .11). The general form is very arched, this figure was shaped then buffed and burned carefully. the legs are modeled separately, some black traces on their break as well as on the neck suggest that the figurine was broken and reattached with bitumen, this figurine is remarkable for its extraordinary modeling, but above all for its black painted decoration: a band of paint rounds the neck, from which start two other bands that cross in the middle of the back

(the crossing is represented by three stripes horizontal lines) and between the breasts. Another band is placed above the elbow on each of the arms, representing a kind of bracelet. shoulders and arms are covered in dots and the sides and navel are outlined with one or more vertical rows of dots. (Fig .2)

-another figurine, LO 87 14, was gathered from the surface of the Tell. The body is cylindrical and ended with a concave base. The head is diminished to a small appendage <sup>(5)</sup> (fig 3)

-another fragmentary figurine LO 89 21, comes from the ash layers of Ubaid. Only the leg and the left buttock as well as the size of a feminine figurine. The two legs were shaped separately and then glued together at the height of the buttocks. The general ratios are quite heavy with a marked profile and short legs. The freeing of the left arm is kept at the level of the waist and the hand, indicated by lines of paint on the hip. Two more red-brown paint strokes underline the hip and the foot. A vertical line marks the spine, another finally underlines the belly. <sup>(6)</sup> (fig 4)

-a small painted head (L O 89 14). elongated in shape, with “coffee bean” eyes. The profile is very rounded, ending at one end by a pointed nose, and the top of the skull. The nostrils are shown by two holes and the chin, although set back from the nose, is very marked. A band of black paint outlines the profile from the top of the head to the tip of the nose. The inside of the eyes is also painted and a stain of paint is seeable on the neck. This figurine prefigures the later ophidian figurines of the final Ubaid period. These few figurines, spotlight the most distant periods of southern Mesopotamia. and the discovery of painted figurines (and more particularly of the Ophidian head) is very unique. <sup>(7)</sup> (fig5)

Besides those figurines, older fragments were found on the site. all the ‘oueili “ophidian” figurines were found above the ground, their morphology suggesting continuity in figurine making through the Ubaid periods at least at the site of tell el-oueili. if any figurine could be called ophidian, it would be the ‘oueili <sup>(8)</sup> that unearthed in an ash layer in the area of building 37<sup>(9)</sup>. Although only the head remains, its dimensions correspond with the general height of later figurines produced in southern Mesopotamia. more fragments were found in Ubaid remains layers of the settlement <sup>(10)</sup>, suggesting that it was produced for daily life and was dumped inside the settlement, and never planned for tombs. All four fragments found inside the settlement of ‘oueili seem to be prototypes of the typical “ophidian” figurines of the Ubaid: heads are elongated, painted dots adorn the torsos, the breasts are small, and the dimensions and overall finishing match with later figurines.

(2)- the Ubaid figurines were found at al-Ubaid found above the ground

- A part from a clay figurine painted with black TO. 405. The head is non-human, the eyes long made with used strips of clay, the hair goes into a peak behind, painted black, and the nostril is represented by a small hole. A black band around the neck, with pendant lines, represents a necklace; the breasts are small well-marked, and the figure is clearly feminine. <sup>(11)</sup> (fig 6)

- another fragment of Clay figurine TO. 407, with details painted in black. the Part, from the waist to the knee, of a figure of a man wearing tight knickerbockers laced down the front and tied around the waist and at the knee; Loose in soil. <sup>(12)</sup> (fig 7)

(3)-from Eridu Tell Abu Shahrain Hall mentions an alike piece to T.O 405. A little figurine of a man with a reptilian face and elongated head; long oval eyes and applied strips of clay for a head-dress; body simple; wedge-shaped shoulders <sup>(13)</sup> (fig 8)

And from Eridu comes the most important ophidian it is the only complete one known of a male figurine his hands are placed on his tummy, and at the same time he is holding a mace or a stick in his left hand, (IM.54931) <sup>(14)</sup>(fig 9)

The other fragmentary ophidians from the same site have special importance for the difference they reveal from Ubaid figurines because they were found in pre-standard Ubaid levels.

a- upper part of a female figurine, with a noticeable chest. The face is a reptilian type without a wig. (IM.54933).

b- upper part of a female figurine but with a less apparent chest, (E. 340).

c- upper part of a female figurine with studs on shoulders, (IM. 54932).

d-Female figurine; head, feet, and hands are lost. (IM. 54939).

e-upper part of a female figurine pre-Ubaid period. it has the lizard face figurine. The hands and legs are missing but there are traces that the hands were positioned on the waist; the top of the head is open. two black lines around the neck and dots on the belly.

f- A lower half of the figurine shows traces on the waist of the attachment of the right hand. The upper and lower parts of this figurine are painted in black with a horizontal line and wavy vertical wide lines; it represents a striped dress (IM. 54936).

g- the lower half of a figurine shows horizontal and wavy vertical lines in black paint which represent a striped dress. (IM. 54934).

h- A middle part of a female figurine. (E. 338).

<sup>(15)</sup> (figs.10)

(4)-From Reijibeh X -a low mound 12 miles west Ur- a fragment of Terracotta figurine; with the number n.25134 in Baghdad Museum. the head, and body to the waist, of a nude female; the skull elongated in dome-like fashion, the eyes aslant. (U.18169/ IM.25134) <sup>(16)</sup>

(5) - more than twenty-five figurines were found at the site of Ur only, most of them were made according to the usual late Ubaid tradition. two of them were found in a house in pit F, dated to the early Ubaid period. they were found with household and practical artifacts such as pottery, pounders, grinders, hoes vouching to their use during daily activities. and the other Ubaid figurines that come from pit F were found loose in the soil, mixed with Ubaid pottery of the earlier phases, along with querns, stones, and sickles. the figurines that were found were all female, with two of them representing a woman breastfeeding a baby. these, as well as the other Ubaid period figurines, found in Ur, are among the finest of the figurines fashioned in this specific tradition, they are also the only figurines found inside graves of Ubaid-period sites. <sup>(17)</sup>

1- A nude female terracotta figurine, (U.15385 in Penn Museum.31.16.733.) standing and with her hands against her waist; a bitumen covering her high head-dress is preserved. <sup>(18)</sup> (fig11)

2-A nude female terracotta figurine (U.15379; P.31.16.734) with her hands against her waist; with a high headdress originally covered with bitumen; traces of black paint in the eyes and of red paint on the cheeks. found broken in two pieces <sup>(19)</sup> (fig 12)

- 3-A nude female terracotta figurine U.15507 (IM.8574.) standing with her hands against her waist; with a bitumen covering her high head-dress. <sup>(20)</sup>
- 4-A nude female terracotta figurine (U.15380, BM. 122872.) her hands against her waist. remains of bitumen on her high headdress. The face is damaged parts of it have flaked away, and her left lower arm is missing. <sup>(21)</sup> (fig.13)
- 5- A nude female terracotta figurine, (U.15506, IM.8564.) holding a baby; the high head-dress is covered with a wig of bitumen; the baby head is painted black; pellets of clay added on the shoulders may represent tattoo marks. Restored from fragments, the feet missing. <sup>(22)</sup> (fig 14)
- 6- A terracotta figurine, (U. 18417 /P.33.35.17; U.18416 /P.33.35.16.) modeled in dark clay. Made to the hips only; in the flat base is a hole to attach the figurine to something. The head is very tiny and birdlike, and the arms just like wings <sup>(23)</sup>
- 7-A terracotta figurine, (U.15398 /P.31.16.736.) the head of the usual type with a high skull, full face, horizontal slit eyes, and small mouth; the face painted bright red with traces of black stripes on the high head-dress
- 8- A terracotta with the head missing, (U.15376 /BM.122873) with details in black paint. A nude female figure suckling a baby; dots on her right shoulder and stripes on her left may be tattoo marks; she wears a necklace and bracelets and a girdle rendered in paint. <sup>(24)</sup>(fig 15)
- 9- a nude female terracotta figurine fragment (U.1405./BM.117136.); preserved from the waist to the ankles. <sup>(25)</sup>
- 10- a nude female terracotta figurine (U.19976 / BM .123591), with details in black paint; her arms and the body below the waist missing. <sup>(26)</sup>
- 11- A nude female terracotta figurine (U.15399/IM.25131.) with details in black paint; the head and body to the waist preserved. (fig .16)
- 12-nude female terracotta figurine, (U.15516 /IM.25132.) a fragment of; the head and body to the waist (arms missing) (fig.17)
- 13- nude female terracotta figurine (U. 18629/IM.16420.) preserved from neck to waist, arms broken. The arms are covered with clay pellets probably imitating tattoo marks. <sup>(27)</sup>
- 14-two nude female terracotta figurines (U.15356 /P.31.16.735,737.) with details in black paint; (A) trunk only, from neck to waist, (B) from waist to below the knees. <sup>(28)</sup> (fig.18)
- 15-nude female terracotta figurine (U.15603.) with hands below breasts, the head, and body below waist missing. with traces of black paint.
- 16 -nude female terracotta figurine (U15566/BM. 124486.) with hands-on breasts, head, and legs missing.
- 17- Four fragmentary Clay figurines, of nude females, (U. 14424- P.31.16.739/ U.18527- P.33.35.20/ U.15349- P.31.16.738/ U.12770- BM. 124469) the body above the waist and the feet missing; around the waist a belt. all of them are the same type with little difference in measurement) <sup>(29)</sup>
- (6)- Genouillac presented a group of fragmentary Clay figurines from Tello. the important pieces of this collection:
- 1-A body without a foot or head of a female figurine painted black on yellow terracotta in louver museum A.O. 14442. (T.G 5766). (fig.19)
- 2- Two small round painted figurine feet. A.O 14442 B, A.O 14442 D (T.G5768)

3-A painted figurine, torso, and head were thrown back. in louver museum AO. 14441 (TG 5782) <sup>(30)</sup>(fig 20)

Parrot believed that he had more luck than Genouillac, so he obtains 33 copies of the ophidian figurines. It is easy to differentiate between men and women. In the former, the head is generally caused by a stretching of the pinched paste; the shoulders are summarily modeled, with no sign of arms. The female figurines were more carefully processed. Unfortunately, all were headless at the time of the find and no head was uncovered. Sometimes painted lines were placed, which must have represented tattoos. No figurine of a woman with child, as at Ur. <sup>(31)</sup> (fig21)

(7)-From Nippur, A very fragmentary figurine, the only, preserved part, is from the neck to just above the waist. The shoulders are square, the arms lost and the breasts are pointed. Both arms are broken just below the elbow, but there are signs that they were bent toward the front. black spots are painted in a decorative pattern on the shoulders and arms. <sup>(32)</sup> (fig.22)

another clay figurine from Nippur is a body without a foot or head of a female figurine painted black on yellow terracotta <sup>(33)</sup> (fig. 23)

(8)- The site of Uruk produced the majority of the southern Ubaid figurines, more than 250 fragments were found at this site only. A greater number of figurines were used along with the sherds of the Hajji Muhammad and later Ubaid periods to harden the mudbricks that were used for the ziggurat of Anu. Domestic remains of all kinds, pottery, and figures were used for shaping the bricks. other Ubaid figurine fragments from Uruk were recovered during nearby surface surveys <sup>(34)</sup>. more fragments were found in the excavation of the different Ubaid strata. one is a male figurine rescued from the stratum K V ii <sup>(35)</sup>, which is similar to the single male figurine from Eridu. three fragments, come from late Ubaid layers <sup>(36)</sup>

considering the large number of figurines on this site, speaking briefly on their common and unique features should cover most of them

the collection has several gorgeous pieces

-the upper part of the female figurine (W 16545a -VA 14626). The head is damaged at the front, with a tip projecting far backward and elongated, eyes; only the left eye is split by a slit, the shoulders are flat and wide, the arms are attached under the broken-off shoulder joints. The high, tipped breasts are separately formed. dark brown strips of paint on the Head; elongated dots across the eyes; stripes hanging down from the wide neck. In front between the breasts, another vertical stripe; the breast tips are also painted. Extent Wavy lines go down the chest and shoulders. <sup>(37)</sup> (fig.24)

-Upper part of the figurine (W 16513) the left shoulder with the left arm is missing, and under the wide, flat shoulder of the right arm is attached, which ends in a broken-off pointed joint, the big, pointy Breasts were not placed symmetrically. The reptilian-looking head above the short neck and the eyes are large with slits. On the shoulder, a series of tiny round spots can be seen, perhaps representing scars. On the front of the body is a broad vertical dark Stripes preserved between the breasts <sup>(38)</sup> (fig 25)

- the upper part of a female figurine (W 16551 a); the breasts are damaged. And the right shoulder with the right arm is missing while the left arm is preserved: it is flat and very short, raised to the side, and looks like a wing. The head elongated backward with Long sliced eyes. There is only a stripe of dark paint around its neck and a wide stripe at the point of the wrist, and small dots on the tips of the breasts. <sup>(39)</sup> (fig26)



- in W 9659 the stomach and hips are slightly accentuated, which makes this figure appear better modeled than figure W 16395/VA 12264 <sup>(40)</sup>; the first piece also lacks the same hump between the shoulders of the other figure. Both pieces have arms that attach laterally to the shoulders with a high, narrow cross-section (fig 27). With W16395, most of the head has been preserved on a short neck. This piece, with incisions on the front and back of the cylindrical body, reveals the split of the legs; her body with her legs is still formed from one cylindrical piece of clay, but the ratios are slender, and the hip and buttocks are sometimes slightly accentuated. The pubic triangle is marked, as are the lines separating the legs in front and behind, often very narrow and crooked, which in some cases go down to the far protruding base ring. In addition to these figures formed from a single cylindrical piece of clay, another type is made of three parts, the body, also cylindrical but enlarges at the sides and back, and the separately formed legs. A good example of a figurine in this way is W 9434/ VA 11478 <sup>(41)</sup> (fig.28); these pieces have strongly accentuated buttocks under the very slender body. The line of attachment of the legs is very well drawn and is sometimes covered by a painted belt stripe. In these figures, the legs were either close together with the inside entirely flat, leg W 16214/ VA12269 <sup>(42)</sup> (fig.29) must have belonged to such a piece; or the legs were made round three-dimensionally, then they stood separately with specially formed feet or even without them on the base plate, which had a slightly bent curved surface. examples of such Base plates are pieces W 8668/ VA 11518 <sup>(43)</sup> and W 10271/ VA 11516 <sup>(44)</sup>. The one greatly widened below round foot W 8385/ VA 11513 <sup>(45)</sup>, could have belonged to a figure similar to W 16562 d/ VA 14628 <sup>(46)</sup>. In some of the female figures, formed from a single cylindrical piece, the torso is wide and sometimes flattened, and attached to the arms which, as some pieces show W 16132/ VA 12266 <sup>(47)</sup>, sometimes not asymmetrical in their pose. In others, for example, W 313/ VA 6216 <sup>(48)</sup>, it is only the paint that creates the effect of asymmetry. Like W 16395/ VA 12264 <sup>(49)</sup>; W 16562b <sup>(50)</sup> has a substantial hump between the shoulders. In the more advanced types, the body and legs are formed and made in three pieces. Such figures, also those made from a single cylindrical piece of clay, include the flat torsos with rounded shoulders, edged at the top, and barely bent backward, of which the arms descend far from the body W 16251, <sup>(51)</sup> (fig 30) ; the arms are bent with pointed elbows and the arms are extended out with the hands grasped in front. In another variant, the hands rest on the belly below the breasts W 16132/ VA 12266 <sup>(52)</sup>. The entire right arm is preserved in the fragment of the small, somewhat worked figurine W 9242/ VA 11493 <sup>(53)</sup> in all other examples both arms are broken. Only the hands below the breasts are kept. Piece W 10936/ VA 11495 <sup>(54)</sup> shows another variant: the breasts here applied as flat, round discs, and the same kind of discs around the shoulders. The small piece W 9763/ VA 14605 <sup>(55)</sup>, which is roughly modeled, has the same flat, rounded breasts, and the head is preserved. The heads of most of the female figures are broken off. the preserved, are identical, as is the head of piece W 16395/ VA 12264 <sup>(56)</sup>, with their elongated form, with long, slits on the sides laid eyes. A good example is the single found head W 16408/ VA 12268 <sup>(57)</sup>. Only head W 10241/ VA 14606 <sup>(58)</sup>, which is also broken off, has an extension with three transverse holes. The impressive thing about all of these Heads is the eyes. with no explanation for the extended shape of the skull In the Ubaid period, there were males' terracotta in addition to the female terracotta, in most cases, these are

defined with the beard, and it is missing too in some pieces. from the Ubaid period, there were two models of men, from Warka W 16547<sup>(59)</sup> and Eridu in Baghdad Museum, while The Berlin collection has no such piece, for all non-female Ubaid figures in the Warka collection, the legs were joined, the cylindrical bodies are prolonged to form a hollowed base ring. The rough piece W 9724/ VA 11508 <sup>(60)</sup> shows that the male figures also have arms with a strong round cross-section, but none has been preserved.

piece W14199/ VA 11543 <sup>(61)</sup>, which is the design in all Ubaid figures, but with the right arm preserved with the hand raised to the shoulder. Another special example is defined by W 17052 <sup>(62)</sup>, in which the arms are just side stretching of the flat upper body.

there are also pieces that are quite fine, such as the figurine W 10268/ VA 11521 <sup>(63)</sup>. On some of the heads like the female figures, the eyes are set on the sides as elongated, slit strips of clay see W 9722/ VA 11522 <sup>(64)</sup>. the body of both the male and female figures are covered with black-brown paint. Most female figures have a belt stripe. sometimes extends from the belt up to between the breasts W 16513.IM <sup>(65)</sup>; it can be substituted by dots of paint W 8848a/ VA 11543 <sup>(66)</sup>, stripes often encircle the ankles and wrists, sometimes also the knees and the base of the head. The front of the thighs is sometimes adorned with dots or ornaments. On the head, stripes of color accompany the eyes. The chest and shoulders are sometimes painted with double wavy lines, and the shoulders sometimes have a double border or decorated with spots of color. we cannot decide with certainty whether this paint is intended to represent jewelry, or tattoo; The paint of the male figures is usually less rich. It is just a strip around the waist. The tall, slender figures have a stripe placed over the left shoulder, and the shoulders are sometimes decorated with dots and zigzag lines. The heads are painted like those of the female figures. The piece W 17052 <sup>(67)</sup> with the rounded arm has a belt stripe and a wide neck stripe, from which a row of thin vertical stripes hangs down at the front and back. Wing arms can be decorated with color lines like W 8316/ VA 11496 <sup>(68)</sup>.

### **Central Mesopotamia:**

(9) farther north at Tell Uqair site.three painted female figurines fragments as seen in the southern sites.

A- upper part of the female figurine from neck to waist, the arms are hanging from rounded shoulders the arms were broken off below the shoulder joint. The round breasts are attached separately

B- the lower half of a female figurine with black paint

C-a fragment of a female figurine; from below the breasts to upper the knees around the waist a belt in black paint <sup>(69)</sup>. (Fig 31)

As we have seen the ophidians in the southern major sites, Ur, Eridu, Nippur, Tello, Ubaid, and Oueili. whether complete or fragmentary have standard features that make them a series, however, one can notice variations in detail from one site to another. they are All are standing, the size is between 5 and 10 cm in height when complete, and their average is around 15 cm. <sup>(70)</sup>.

Their appearance is always slender bodies, legs together, standing on their toes (which prevent them from standing on their own. They must either be laid down or stuck on support), and elongated heads <sup>(71)</sup> may be as a form of artificial cranial

transformation <sup>(72)</sup>, and “ophidian” face, absence of neck, angular shoulders, hands reduced to waist level. All are gendered (with apparent domination from the female figurines, just two males).

The manufacturer follows traditions and uses modeled and baked clay. features are added to the shape they formed: eyes, pellets, incisions to represent the fingers, the pubic triangle, the separation line of the legs, and certain facial features, black paint sometimes on the torso or the back, also bitumen traces shown on the occipital extension which suggests a possible presence of material that might represent the hair.<sup>(73)</sup>

these figurines show a lot of similarity with others from Samarra in northern sites such as Chago Mami.

### **Northern Mesopotamia:**

10) some Choga Mami figurines are shown standing, like the later Ubaid examples. The hands meet at the waist, sometimes outlined in paint <sup>(74)</sup> (fig 32), sometimes marked <sup>(75)</sup> the feet are always of an exaggerated size as a balance to the big buttocks <sup>(76)</sup>. We observed that the legs were made separately and then attached with an external slide. just one broken figurine <sup>(77)</sup> clarifies the process of Assembly of upper parts; the head was inserted into the body on a cylindrical peg-like neck, and, where the arm is broken, a hole is visible as though the arm had been modeled on a stick. <sup>(78)</sup>. The waist of the standing figurine is always small and the upper and lower parts of the bodies are often joined at a big angle <sup>(79)</sup>. The figurines are much more elaborately decorated than the Ur -Ubaid examples except for the fragment found in the Halaf <sup>(80)</sup> which is different in both style and material from the Samarra examples, all figurines wore a necklace like those in Sawwan, but lacking on Ubaid figurines. the incisions on the back of figurine C.M.88 <sup>(81)</sup> are unusual but also seen at Sawwan all of the leg fragments are painted with stripes <sup>(82)</sup> Many heads style discovered in Chago Mami, the most closely to the ophidian models shown on <sup>(83)</sup> (C.M.5) (fig. 33) held the elongated heads.

These heads are of unusual interest because they are quite similar to one of the Ubaid figurines from Ur.

(11)-more figurines were also made at Samarran sites in Tell es-Sawwan. More attention was delivered to detail and body adornment. There the majority of figurines were made of clay while stone and gypsum were used also Some seated clay figurines from Tell es- Sawwan show jewelry through applied round pellets or bands of clay that indicate necklaces, bracelets, and anklets <sup>(84)</sup>. Clothes was also rendered using black paint, which was sometimes used to highlight the top of the head, the eyebrows, and part of the eyes, which were sometimes inlaid using the shell. These Sawwan figurines furthermore show a large conical head that may represent a type of cap or headdress, a type of hairstyle, or again may reference artificially modified skulls. Some clay figurines, such as the ones from Tell es- Sawwan <sup>(85)</sup>. The most of the Tell es- Sawwan stone figurines are sexless. Most striking is a range of carved human figurines, with arms close to or across the flat body. Although most of these figurines have been determined as female in the past, their flat chests and the lack of any sexual parts suggest these figurines are sexless <sup>(86)</sup> Some have large holes at the elbows that might have been used to hang the figurines on a wall, in a niche, or perhaps even on a person's neck. Most figurines were found in graves. They also appear in excavations,



either separately or with other stone artifacts, but without burial <sup>(87)</sup>. What is unique here is a group of figurines that must have been exceptional and never repeated at the site of Tell Al-Sawwan

-the upper part of clay figurine IM.69450. round head, triangular face with a pinched, aquiline nose, big coffee-bean eyes with traces of bitumen inside, abutting in two pellets, possibly planned to express nose studs. The eyebrows are filled in with bitumen. a small mouth. On the short neck, three rows of pellets represent necklaces, with no sign of arms, and the breasts are indicated by two irregularly shaped pellets. the sex of this figurine is considered female. Although its breast is confused with the pellets of the shoulders <sup>(88)</sup> (fig.34)

-Another clay figurine IM.69345 with a cylindrical body, the head and shoulders are marked with three projections, almost the same size. the whole body shows small incisions. some pellets are lost. <sup>(89)</sup> (fig.35)

-a male figurine IM 68967. One seated male is identified by its painted clay penis, although tiny breasts may also be shown, making the sex of this figurine more unclear. Furthermore, The eyes of the shell inlay. Painted pupils and eyebrows. topknot on the head and brown decorative stripe below the knee; necklace and girdle painted in pale light color, no indication of mouth <sup>(90)</sup>(fig.36)

-Female clay figurine IM 68513 the body is hollow. flat base, prominent buttocks, and shoulders; coffee-bean eyes, small breasts, and incised eyebrows. <sup>(91)</sup> (fig.37)

- a group of Seated female clay figurines of brown clay steatopygia's, hollow, breast missing <sup>(92)</sup>

and also, Many standing female figurines with the same characteristics; <sup>(93)</sup>(fig.38)

(12) more clay figurines were also found at the Samarra levels in Tell Songor A. showing the same details as Tell Es-Sawwan figurines only just one complete female figurine and the rest were fragmentary no male figurine was found. the complete figurine represented a hollow seated female. with a flat base, the elongated head looks like a modified skull, coffee-bean eyes, incised eyebrows, heavy buttocks, and small shoulders, the right one adorned with round pellets while the left one with black strokes; the arms rest under the small breast <sup>(94)</sup>. (fig39-a)

-the upper part of a standing female figurine, the body above the waist without the head and legs very similar to el-oueili slender figures, painted dots decorate the arms and breast, shoulders, and back, while the belly is clear <sup>(95)</sup> (fig 39-b)

- a group of three female lower parts figurines, cylindric, standing painted with black stripes <sup>(96)</sup> (fig.39-c)

-A separated elongated head or some kind of headdress with the coffee-beans eye with the huge nose <sup>(97)</sup>

(13) Further to the north in the site of Tepe Gawra, the figurines are solid and represent females, the male figures were quite rare, and all examples represented squatting women, holding their breasts. Heads are squeezed, and facial features are, in some cases, painted. <sup>(98)</sup>; another eight models of this type were found. But The models have an arm and both breasts are missing, and the eyes (and hair) are drawn in black paint; the lines on the shoulders and arms may represent dress or ornament. On the feet painted lines, as well as small pellets, perhaps showing anklets. Identical representations were produced at Tell Halaf in the same period.

the older example of this type of female figurine shows the torso only; the arms and legs are missing, and the head is represented only by a short projection. The breasts are noticeable. All details of the lower part of the body are exaggerated, the difference between the waist and hips being very great. Two sets of lines form a triangle below the navel. <sup>(99)</sup>

three other figurines were painted brown or red, usually over the necks and shoulders. Black paint is sometimes used. The heads are missing in fig 3, but Nos. 6 and 7 of the same illustration have squeezed heads. <sup>(100)</sup> (fig-40)

an armless type of female figurine lacking the pointed knees of the earlier type. The breasts are an excessive feature of this variety of figurines, and the heads are missing. <sup>(101)</sup>

Another difference between the two types is presented in the painted decoration. In all models of the present type, the painted details appear to represent a short kilt, held by a band attaching in front to two straps suspended from the shoulders; these straps cross on the back between the shoulders, and again between the breasts. Additional painted strokes on the back may indicate tattoos; while the four horizontal strokes on the lower part of the back may represent the spinal column <sup>(102)</sup>.

- female figurine with separated legs. no Breasts, no arms, and headless. The shoulders are shown as pointed projections, and the chest bears double lines in a V-outline. The back of the object bears traces of painted lines. the truth is without the breasts this figurine would hardly suggest the human form, <sup>(103)</sup>

- figurine fragment with prominent breasts, unrepresented arms, and crossed painted bands (in red) on the back and between the breasts. One breast and the lower part of the body are missing from this model, but the head is fortunately undamaged, except for a small chip missing from the top. The head of this figurine is higher than the others and is a simple, rounded projection from the shoulders, with a little squeeze in front to show the facial features. The eyes are defined by paint with simple dots

-a figurine we may suppose that it represented a squatting woman <sup>(104)</sup> (fig 40-b)

-another figurine in the shape of a cone and; a familiar squatting woman, particularly with the two projections at the base of the cone, which may represent the bent knees, with no other details. <sup>(105)</sup> (fig40-c)

- undecorated squatting woman fragment <sup>(106)</sup>

-a long head figurine with breasts, projection representing a shoulder. Part of an arm, apparently upraised, is attached to the other shoulder <sup>(107)</sup>

-the earliest type of female figurine fragments characterized by high, pointed knees, pinched heads, arms surrounding the breasts, and bands across the neck and shoulders. A later type occurs with the Halaf type also. all those types disappear completely near the end of the Ubaid period, particularly.

-A single male figurine with no head, arms, and legs, is undecorated except for a spot of paint at the end of the phallus. Found near the Temple, which may suggest a connection with the building <sup>(108)</sup>.

as we have seen that the majority of figurines from earlier and contemporary northern and central Mesopotamian sites display seated and plump women but the figurines from the Samarra sites of Choga Mami, tell es-Sawwan, and Tell Songor are relative to figures from Ur. both of them, show resemblances in the way facial as well as body features are being represented. the heads are elongated and the facial features

have been painted. eyes are like coffee beans, represented in an oval shape with a deep slit. clay pellets or strokes of dark paint decorate the torso of each figurine, and the chest is always flat. the single feature that does not match the Samarra and the southern Ubaid figures is the pose, which is rendered seated and standing. For the rest, the features and details of the figurines match. <sup>(109)</sup>

Whereas the Halaf site in tepe Gawra shows more differences than mutual features. The figures in the northern areas are close to the prehistoric female statues by the excess of their forms, their almost non-existent head, their seated position, and the exaggeration in the lower part of the body, but we can still see some similarities. in the hands supporting their chest, the black painted lines over the body, and the small pellets, and before all of that the dominance of the female figurine.

many interpretations of ophidian figurines that we can discuss and refute

The similarity in scales and details makes us quite sure that they belong to the same classification and bear the same meaning and importance. The argument that these figurines represent the mother goddess or the fertility goddess is completely wrong because there are male figurines, and although they were rare in number, they got more attention, especially the figurine of Eridu

also, the figurines cannot be a representation of the dead, since they all show remarkable morphological parallels, and the similarity is not a Coincidence.

the belief that these figurines as objects accompanying the deceased to caring them in the other world contradict the fact that most of these figurines were found in the surface layers and that they were used by the living because they were in the layers of the remains of dwellings and also such belief was not a part of the Mesopotamian beliefs. nor should we look at them as children's toys, <sup>(110)</sup> as they were not found in children's graves

-the interpreting of these figurines with what was rehearsed in some of the early Ubaid societies of occipital elongation would create such cranial deformations This would be true if we accept a recent study of the skulls discovered during excavations on several Ubaid sites. this phenomenon seems to be universal, and can easily be formed by banding the heads of newborn children with strips. <sup>(111)</sup> and then we could consider the ornaments of the body as tattoos.

But that's left the phenomenon of the coffee-bean eyes and the perforations defining the nostrils which encounter each other at the level of the nose and on the chin and the unusual pellets without explanation

two explanations deserve more attention. the first

-These figurines were used in daily life by distinct people and buried with them after death. Those people had either a particular social class <sup>(112)</sup>, religious predilections, or other characteristics that unite and distinguish them from other residents <sup>(113)</sup>.

second. specific "anatomical" details to these figurines seem to suggest a rapprochement with the world of reptiles which means that it was an anthropomorphic figure mixing human and reptilian's elements and may relate to demons. These hybrids reptilians may turn in later periods to more complicated images representing more or fewer concepts the interpretations of which often remains approximate. <sup>(114)</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

The ophidian figurines, although they represent an important feature in the southern Ubaid civilization, it considers one of the historical, archeological mysteries, not only

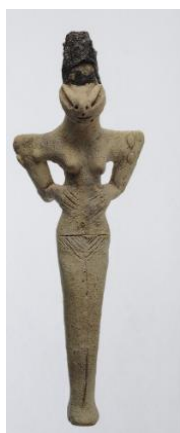
for facial features. Which retains features of several reptiles, such as the thermal dimples of the snake, the eyes of the lizard (the coffee beans eyes), and the pinched beak of the turtle. Which makes it difficult to return it to one species of reptile according to the facial features. Also, the elongation of the skull. the artificial modification of the skull does not provide a sufficient explanation for it. the upright posture of the body, the short neck, the angular shoulders, the pellets, the strokes of paint. every single detail is an enigma by itself

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(fig1) female from Ur male from Eridu



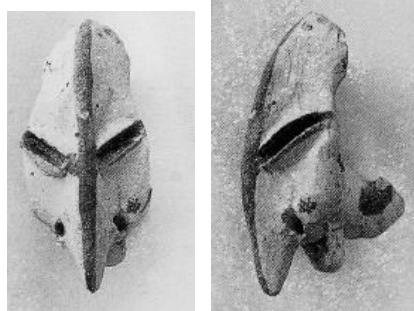
(fig 2) Breniquet 'Les petits objets. p 152; LO 87 .11, Pl. I, 4 and Pl. VI, 1-3



5. LO 87 14



(fig 3) Breniquet 'Les petits objets; LO 87 .14 (fig 4) Breniquet 'Les petits objets. LO 89 21, PL IV, 8



(fig 5) Breniquet. 'Les petits objets L O 89 14



T.O. 405. (3).

(fig 6) Hall & Woolley Al-'Ubaid, pl.XLVIII

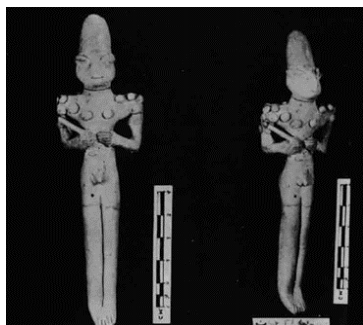


T.O. 407. (3).

(fig 7) Hall & Woolley Al-'Ubaid pl XLV111



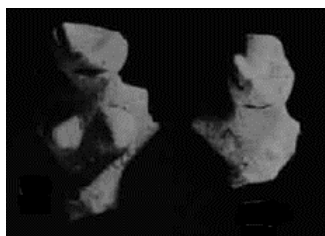
(fig 8) Hall, Ur and Eridu p 192.fig 7



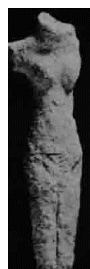
(fig 9) Safar &amp; Lloyd Eridu.fig 115A ;



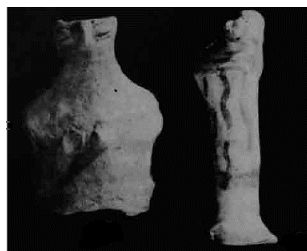
Strommenger, : Fünf Jahrtausende fig. 12a



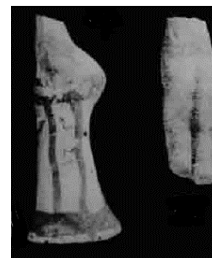
a-b



c



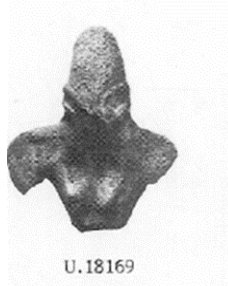
d



e-f

g-h

(fig. 10) Eridu figurines: Safar&amp; Lloyd. Eridu.fig 116



U.18169

(fig 11) Reijibeh X figuring Woolly .Ur Excavations ,pl 21



(fig .12)P.31.16.733



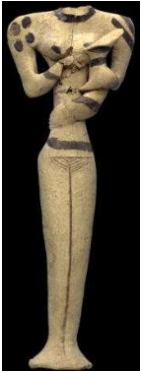
(fig.12)P.31-16-734



(fig.13) BM.122872



(fig.14)IM.8564



(Fig.15) BM. 122873



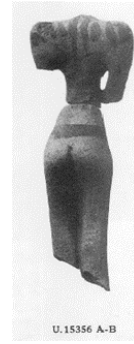
U.15399

(fig.16)



U.15516

(fig.17)



U.15356 A-B

(fig.18)

Woolley. Ur Excavations .pl 22



(fig.19) AO 14442 A ; TG 5766



(fig 20)AO 14441 ; TG 5782



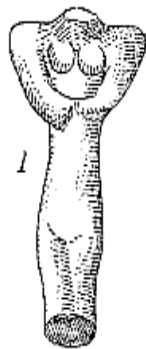
Genouillac.Telloh , Pl. 12



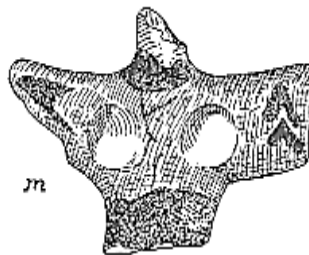
AO 15325



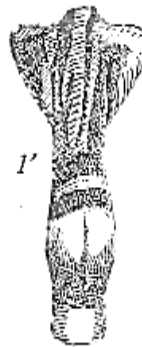
AO 15327 ; T 885.1 N.m



l



m



l'

(fig21) Parrot . Tello p37 fig 7 I/I' Tello t.2



(fig 22) Van Buren Clay Figurines 3, plate I. fig2



(fig.23) Donald Haines; :Nippur .p156.pl.164.C





(Fig 24) W 16545a-Abb9



(fig 25) W 16513-Abb10



(fig 26) W 16551 a.Abb11

Ziegler. Terrakotten von Warka

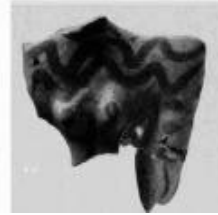


(fig27)W 16395 Ziegler 1962, Abb 2a-b

(fig28) W 9434 Ziegler 1962, Abb 17



(fig29) W 16214 .Abb 19



(fig 30) W 16251. Abb 8 a-c

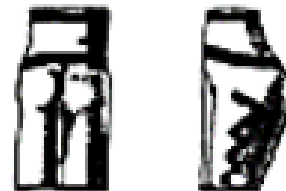
Ziegler. Terrakotten von Warka



A



B



C

(fig. 31) figurines from Tell Uqair Lloyd &amp; Safar. Tell Uqair. pl 18



(fig.32) Oates. Choga Mami plate XXVIII, c, XXIX c





(fig.33) Oates. Choga Mami pl XXV, a-c



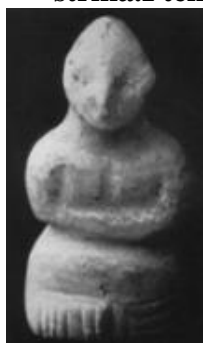
(fig34) IM.69450  
strika.I tell es-sawwan.



(fig 35) IM.69345



(fig36) IM 68967  
Oates Baked Clay pl XXXVIII



(fig.37) IM 68513 Oates Baked Clay plXLI



(fig.38) Al-Soof. Tell es-Sawwan pl 27-fig67



a



b



c

(fig 39) Kamada & Ohtsu Tell Songor, pl39

**a****b****c**

(fig. 40) Tobler: Tepe Gawra. pl LXXXId, nos. 3, 6, 7

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- <sup>20</sup>-Woolley. The Early Periods. Pl 20
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