**Crafts in the Ancient Near East**

**古代近东的工匠**

Some of the earliest human civilizations arose in southern Mesopotamia, in what is now southern Iraq, in the fourth millennium B.C.E. In the second half of that millennium, in the south around the city of Uruk, there was an enormous escalation in the area occupied by permanent settlements. A large part of that increase took place in Uruk itself, which became a real urban center surrounded by a set of secondary settlements. While population estimates are notoriously unreliable, scholars assume that Uruk inhabitants were able to support themselves from the agricultural production of the field surrounding the city, which could be reached with a daily commute. But Uruk’s dominant size in the entire region, far surpassing that of other settlements, indicates that it was a regional center and a true city. Indeed, it was the first city in human history.

一些最早的人类文明是在公元前四千年前的南美索不达米亚出现的，现在这片区域属于南伊拉克。在后五百年，在乌鲁克城南方附近，被永久居民占用的地域在大幅度增长。大部分的增长都发生在乌鲁克城内，使其成为了一个真正的中心城区，并被一些后续的定居点环绕着。虽然人口估计数通常是不可靠的，但学者们认为乌鲁克居民可以通过日常与周围地区的通勤，得到周围地区产的农业产品以自给自足。但乌鲁克在整个地区最大，远远超过了其它居民点，这说明它是这个地区的中心，是一个真正的城市。事实上，它是人类历史上的第一个城市。

The vast majority of its population remained active in agriculture, even those people living within the city itself. But a small segment of the urban society started to specialize in nonagricultural tasks as a result of the city’s role as a regional center. Within the productive sector, there was a growth of a variety of specialist craftspeople. Early in the Uruk period, the use of undecorated utilitarian pottery was probably the result of specialized mass production. In an early fourth-millennium level of the Eanna archaeological site at Uruk, a pottery style appears that is most characteristic of this process, the so-called beveled-rim bowl. It is a rather shallow bowl that was crudely made in a mold; hence, in only a limited number of standard sizes. For some unknown reason, many were discarded, often still intact, and thousands have been found all over the Near East. The beveled-rim bowl is one of the most telling diagnostic finds for identifying an Uruk-period site. Of importance is the fact that it was produced rapidly in large amounts, most likely by specialists in a central location.

绝大部分人依然从事农业活动，甚至包括城市居民。但由于该城市是区域的中心，其中的一小部分人开始全心从事非农业工作。生产方面，专业工匠的多样性有了增长。在乌鲁克时期早期，对未装饰的实用陶器的使用可能就是专业化大量生产的结果。在乌鲁克的发现的四千年前早期的Eanna考古遗址中，有一种陶器刻画了这种专业化生产过程的特征，即所谓的斜面边碗。这种碗相当的浅，是利用模具简单制作的;因此，只有有限的几种大小。由于一些未知原因，很多被丢弃的碗还是完整的保存下来了，而在近东的各地有上千件出土。这种碗是最好的判断乌鲁克时期遗址的发现之一。最重要的是这种碗被大量快速生产，最可能由中心位置的专业工匠制作。

A variety of documentation indicates that certain goods, once made by a family member as one of many duties, were later made by skilled artisans. Certain images depict groups of people, most likely women, involved in weaving textiles, an activity we know from later third-millennium texts to have been vital in the economy and to have been centrally administered. Also, a specialized metal-producing workshop may have been excavated in a small area at Uruk. It contained a number of channels lined by a sequence of holes, about 50 centimeters deep, all showing burn marks and filled with ashes. This has been interpreted as the remains of a workshop where molten metal was scooped up from the channel and poured into molds in the holes. Some type of mass production by specialists was involved here.

多种文件记录说明，曾经作为家务被家庭制作的商品，在后来由熟练技工制作。一些图画描述了成群的人们，大部分是女人，正在编制纺织品。这种活动，从其后三千年前出土的文献可知，是当时经济的重要部分，并且已被中央管理。并且一个专门从事金属制造的工厂可能也已经小区域的在乌鲁克地区开挖。它包括了一定数量隧道连接着一系列约50厘米深的洞，它们都有燃烧的痕迹，也盛满了灰烬。这被认定是工厂的遗址，在这里融化的金属从隧道中聚集，然后倒入洞里的模具中。这里包括一些由专业人士进行的大量生产活动。

Objects themselves suggest that they were the work of skilled professionals. In the late Uruk period (3500-3100 B.C.E.), there first appeared a type of object that remained characteristic for Mesopotamia throughout its entire history: the cylinder seal. This was a small cylinder, usually no more than 3 centimeters high and 2 centimeters in diameter, of shell, bone, faience (a glassy type of stoneware), or various types of stones, on which a scene was carved into the surface. When rolled over a soft material---primarily the clay of bullae (round seals), tablets, or clay lumps attached to boxes, jars, or door bolts---the scene would appear in relief, easily legible. The technological knowledge needed to carve it was far superior to that for stamp seals, which had happened in the early Neolithic period (approximately 10,000-5000 B.C.E.). From the first appearance of cylinder seals, the carved scenes could be highly elaborate and refined, indicating the work of specialist stone-cutters. Similarly, the late Uruk period shows the first monumental art, relief, and statuary in the round, made with a degree of mastery that only a professional could have produced.

产品的本身就说明了它们是由专业技工制作的。在乌鲁克时期末期首次出现了一种在其整个历史中象征美索不达米亚的物品：圆柱章。它是一个小的圆柱体，一般不高于3厘米，直径2厘米，材料为贝壳，骨头，陶器或是各种石头，在其表面刻着一个场景。当它滚过柔软的材料的时候---主要是被连接在箱子，罐子或是门栓上的粘土圆章，纪念碑，泥土块——这个场景就会清晰简单的出现在上面了。相对于新石器时期(大约是公元前10000-5000年前)的封章，这种雕刻技术依然是很先进的。从圆柱章的出现开始，被雕刻的图像就非常精致精美，这表现了石头切割者的专业技术。同样的，在乌鲁克时期晚期出现了第一个大师级别制作的永存的艺术和雕刻，这是只有非常专业的人才能做出的。