

An eHRAF Workbook Activity

# Great Discoveries: Royal Tombs of Ur

Human Relations Area Files
at Yale University



# In this activity

## Topics We'll Cover

- Learn about the Royal Tombs of Ur
- Read passages in eHRAF Archaeology
- Answer questions about this archaeological discovery
- Find out what makes the Royal Tombs of Ur a "Great Discovery"



# ROYAL TOMBS OF UR

From 1922 to 1935, archaeologists Leonard and Katharine Woolley led an **excavation of Ur**, the burial site of what may have been many Sumerian royals. This massive project was co-sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania and the British Museum.

Predating the famed pyramids of Egypt by thousands of years, this southern Mesopotamian site developed its own rich culture and monumental architecture, notably **the ziggurat**, a stepped structure topped by a temple.

**Did you know?**

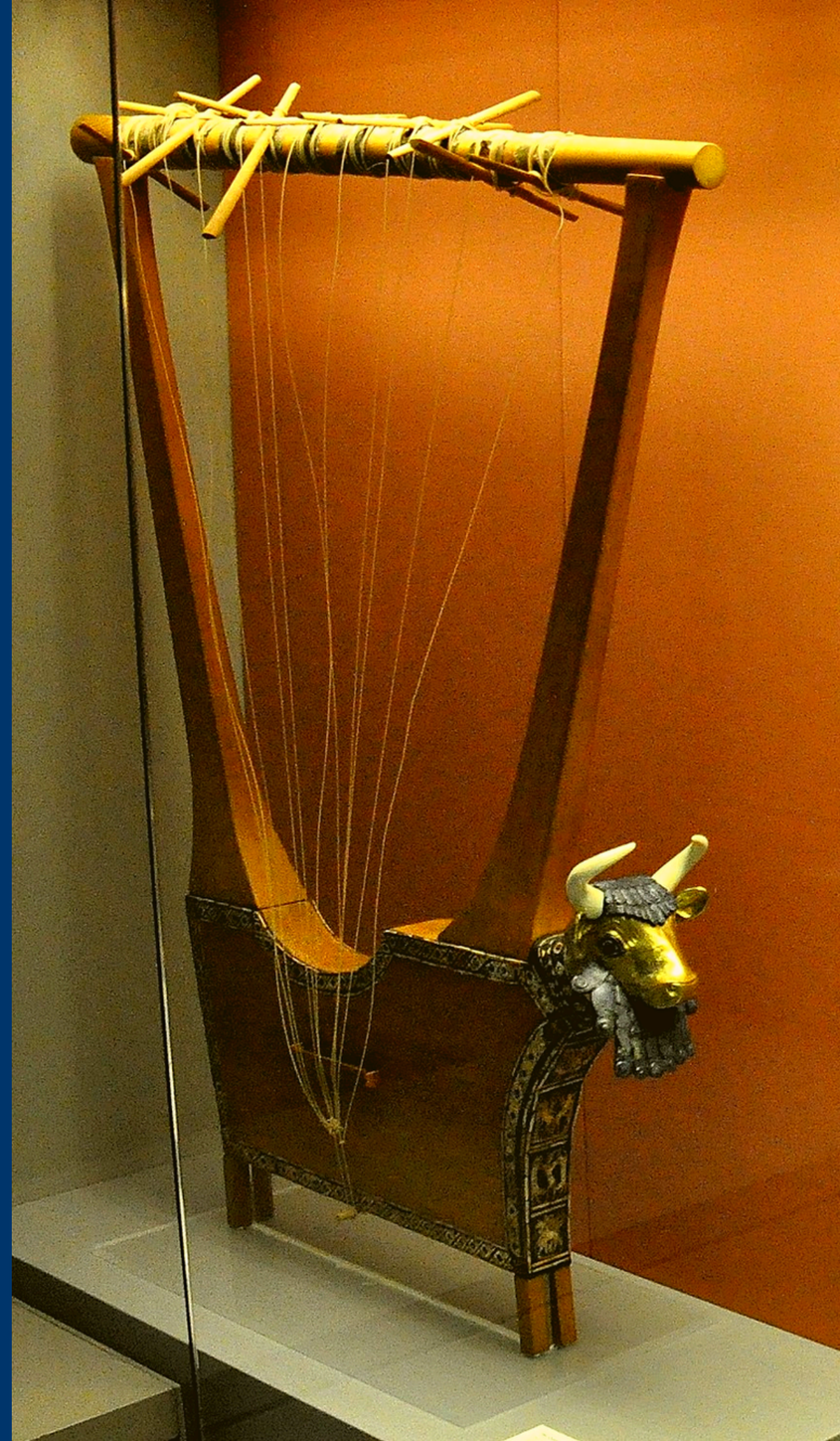




The Woolleys and their team made important archaeological discoveries, including the Bull-Headed Lyre, the Copper Bull, and a pair of Ram in a Thicket figurines. The tombs contained great material wealth, including gold and silver jewelry and large paintings of ancient Sumerian culture at its zenith. The most extravagant tomb was that of "Queen" Puabi, an important person during the First Dynasty of Ur. The novel *Murder in Mesopotamia*, by Agatha Christie, was inspired by the discovery of the royal tombs. Christie later married the Woolleys' young assistant, Max Mallowan.

To get started, review these videos about the Royal Tombs of Ur:

- **Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur**
- **Penn Museum – The Royal Tombs of Ur**
- **Ur: The Rise and Fall of the Ancient Sumerian City State**
- **What Woolley Pulled From Under Ur in 1929**





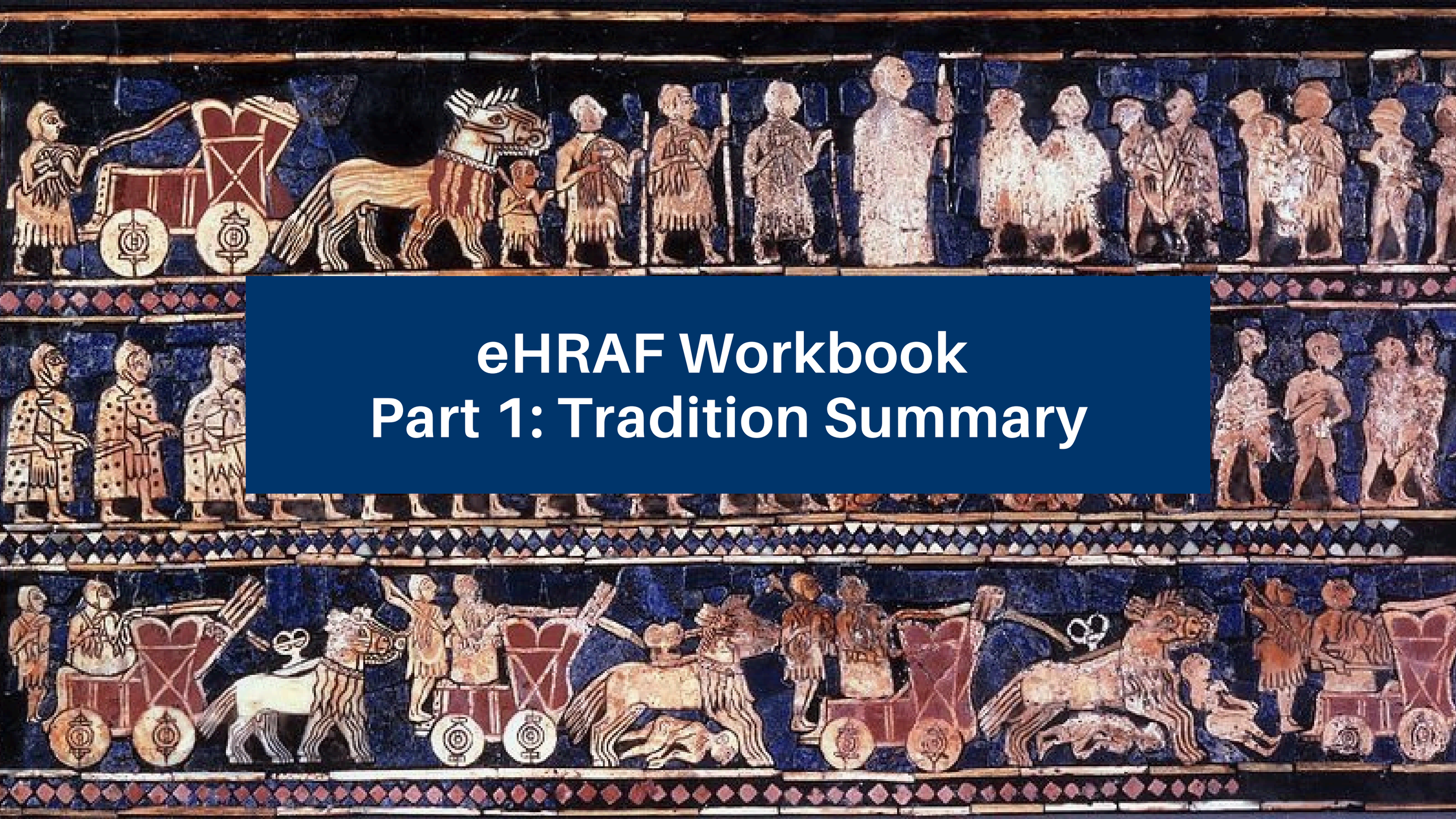
## Articles about the Royal Tombs of Ur

Current World Archaeology – Issue 49
Great Discoveries – Royal Tombs of Ur

Penn Museum – Ur and its Treasures:
The Royal Tombs

What Do We Know About the People Buried in the Royal Cemetery?

Standard of Ur and other objects from the Royal Graves



# eHRAF Workbook
# Part 1: Tradition Summary



**eHRAF Archaeology**

# Tradition Summaries

A brief overview for traditions in eHRAF Archaeology is provided in the form of **Tradition Summaries**.

The format, general outline, and headings are the same for each summary. You will find a basic overview about the tradition, such as its time period, location, history, environment, and sociopolitical organization.

**To find a tradition summary, go to the** Browse Traditions **tab and enter the tradition name into the box, then click on** Tradition Summary **below the tradition name to read it.**

# Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (MH64)

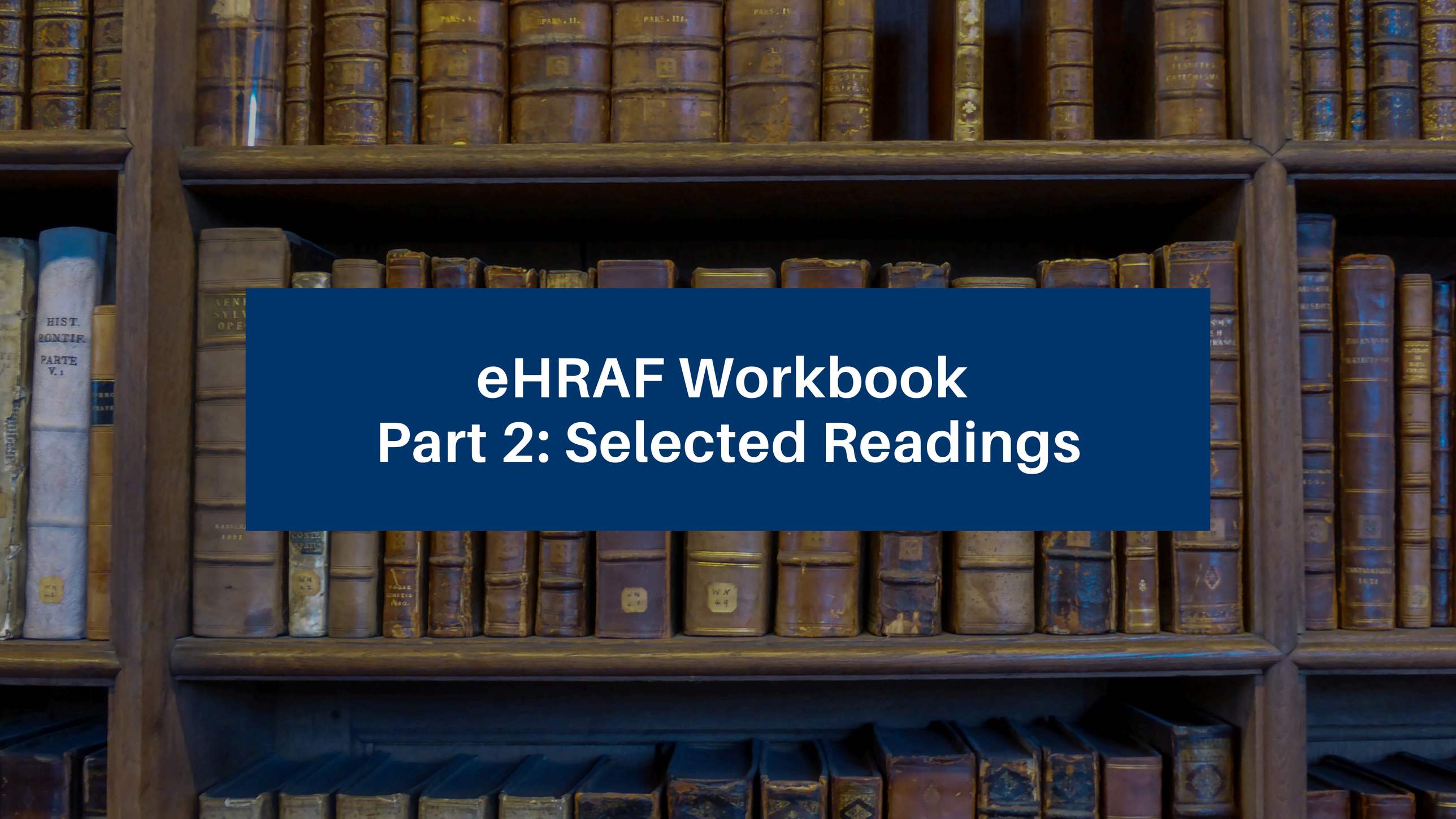
PART 1

Begin by learning more about the **Early Dynastic Mesopotamia** tradition. First, read the eHRAF Tradition Summary:

🌐 https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/000

Then, write a brief description of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia indicating any significant archaeological elements that stand out to you.






# eHRAF Workbook
# Part 2: Selected Readings

# To read documents or pages in eHRAF:

**INSTRUCTIONS**

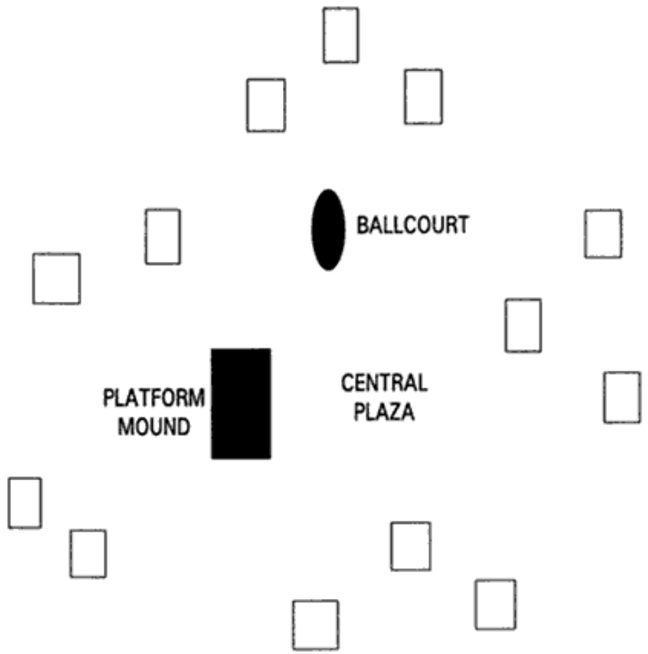
**First, follow the permalinks provided in the activities below to get to the relevant documents.**

For example:

🌐 **https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/nt76/documents/001**

**Then, use the Page List dropdown menu to navigate to the required page(s).**

**Figure 3.2.** Schematic map of a village plan.




102 Maps
128 Organization And Analysis Of Results
344 Public Structures
345 Recreational Structures
361 Settlement Patterns

PREV NEXT

Page List
40

Page Focus

Original Page

Tradition (OWC) Hohokam (

Region North Am

Sub Region Southwest And

Field Date No

Coverage Date 1050-550 BP (AD 950-

Place Coverage Phoenix Basin, Arizona, United S

Section Title(S)

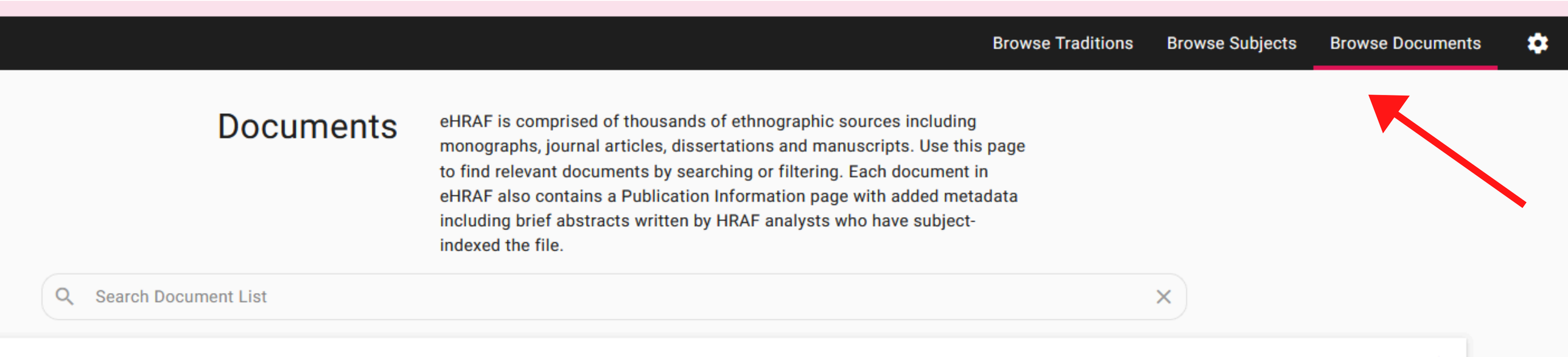
Political Communities • Residential Community

# Finding documents without permalinks

INSTRUCTIONS

Follow these steps if you are having trouble with permalinks from off campus while using a proxy or VPN service, or if you have been provided with a HRAF-issued username and password.

- **Sign in via your library proxy or VPN, or using the HRAF-issued credentials.**
- **Go to the Browse Documents tab.**
- **Enter the author's last name into the Filter Index box.**
- **Click on the required title to access the document, then select the page number from the Page List dropdown menu as shown above.**



PART 2

## The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character (Kramer 1963)

https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/004

**Pages:**

- 100-102, 103-104, the Royal Tombs of Ur

## *Of priestesses, princes and poor relations: the dead in the royal cemetery of Ur* (Pollock 1955)

https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/009

**Pages:**

- 171, 173,175, 177,180, 182-189, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Royal Burials at Ur



PART 2



## *Sumer and the Sumerians* (Crawford 1990)

https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/002

**Pages:**

- 103-122, Chapter 6 Life, Death, and the Meaning of the Universe

## *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (Postgate 1992)

https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/010

**Pages:**

- 99-100, the Royal Cemetery of Ur



# eHRAF Workbook
# Part 3: Advanced Search



# Part 3: Advanced Search

Now that you have read selected passages from eHRAF Archaeology, dig deeper with **Advanced Search**. This will enable you to find specific passages in documents that have been indexed by HRAF anthropologists at the paragraph level.

On the following slide, you will find an example of an advanced search. Try this search and then experiment with different subjects and/or keywords.

# Part 3:
# Advanced Search

In the Add Traditions column, select the tradition category:

**Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (MH64)**

In the Add Subjects column, select the subject category:

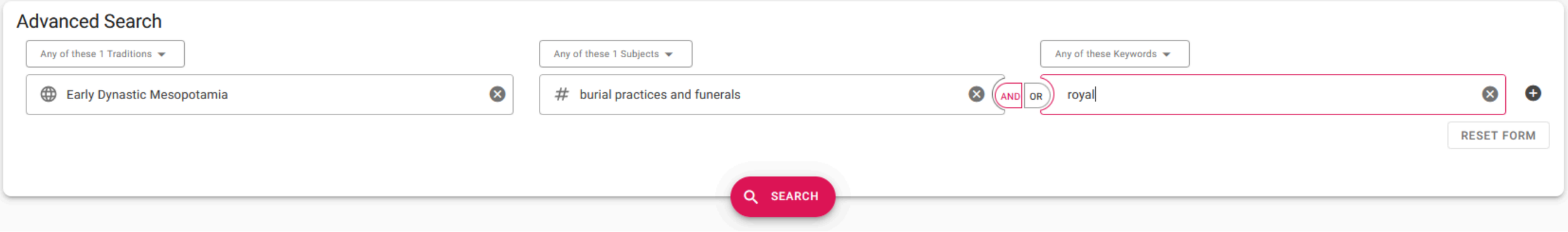
**Burial practices and funerals (764)**

In the Keyword section, type **royal**.





# ADVANCED SEARCH




**Add tradition:**
Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (MH64)

**Add subject:**
Burial practices and funerals (764)

**Add keyword:**
royal

**Results for:** *traditions:"Early Dynastic Mesopotamia" AND (subjects:"buria...*

**Filtered to:** Early Dynastic Mesopotamia

*Found 54 paragraphs in 6 documents across 1 traditions*

**SEARCH RESULTS**

| Document | Results | Samples | Published Year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pollock, Susan, 1955-<br>Of priestesses, princes and poor relations: the dead in the royal cemetery of Ur | 28 | —— | 1991 | |
| Postgate, J. N.<br>Early Mesopotamia: society and economy at the dawn of history | 3 | —— | 1992 | Early Dyna |
| Kramer, Samuel Noah, 1897-<br>The Sumerians: their history, culture, and character | 3 | —— | 1963 | 5th millenium BP or 5000 B |
| Crawford, Harriet E. W.<br>Sumer and the Sumerians | 15 | —— | 1990 | Early Dyna |
| Kohl, Philip L., 1946-<br>The balance of trade in southwestern Asia in the mid-third millennium B.C. | 4 | —— | 1978 | 5th millenium BP or 5000 B |
| Jacobsen, Thorkild, 1904-<br>Early political development in Mesopotamia | 1 | —— | 1957 | |

**Results for:** *traditions:"Early Dynastic Mesopotamia" AND (subjects:"buria...*

**Filtered to:** Early Dynastic Mesopotamia

*Found 54 paragraphs in 6 documents across 1 traditions*

**SEARCH RESULTS**

| Document | Results | Samples | Published Year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crawford, Harriet E. W. Sumer and the Sumerians | 15 | —— | 1990 | Early Dynastic periods or 4900 BP - |

**Early Dynastic Mesopotamia**

Middle East > Middle East • Agro-Pastoralists

(1990) Sumer and the Sumerians

Section: AGRICULTURE

By: Crawford, Harriet E. W. • Page: 42 • Published: 1990

The most important crop produced by the garden plots south of the Hit–Samarra line in the third millennium was almost certainly dates, although the archaeological and textual evidence for the production of dates at this time is surprisingly flimsy. Date stones are reported in a late Ubaid context at Eridu (Wright 1981: 324) and at Tell Ouelli, but an isolated find like this cannot be taken as evidence for cultivation. A plant thought to be a date palm is shown on a stone plaque of ED IIIa from Lagash and on a soft stone vase now in the Louvre (Fig. 3.1). More date stones were found in the grave of queen Puabi in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, which is approximately contemporaneous (Ellison et al. 1978). The textual evidence from pre-Sargonic Lagash mentions dates, and after the Agade period we have economic texts dealing with date gardens and reports of imports of special sorts of date from Dilmun. In one version of the story of the birth of Sargon of Agade his adoptive father is described as a labourer in a palm garden, who spotted the basket containing the remarkable child caught in the rushes on the banks of the river where his garden lay. It seems that we can be reasonably sure that the date palm was cultivated by the middle of the period we are dealing with, but we still cannot say when it was introduced into Mesopotamia. Some wild species have been reported from the Gulf and this seems the most likely source.

OCMS

1211 Dating Methods In Archaeology

137 Flora

245 Arboriculture

5311 Visual Arts

764 Burial Practices And Funerals

OWC

MH64 Early Dynastic Mesopotamia

FULL CONTEXT NOTEBOOKS CITE

The most important crop produced by the garden plots south of the Hit–Samarra line in the third millennium was almost certainly dates, although the archaeological and textual evidence for the production of dates at this time is surprisingly flimsy. Date stones are reported in a late Ubaid context at Eridu (Wright 1981: 324) and at Tell Ouelli, but an isolated find like this cannot be taken as evidence for cultivation. A plant thought to be a date palm is shown on a stone plaque of ED IIIa from Lagash and on a soft stone vase now in the Louvre (Fig. 3.1). More date stones were found in the grave of queen Puabi in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, which is approximately contemporaneous (Ellison *et al.* 1978). The textual evidence from pre-Sargonic Lagash mentions dates, and after the Agade period we have economic texts dealing with date gardens and reports of imports of special sorts of date from Dilmun. In one version of the story of the birth of Sargon of Agade his adoptive father is described as a labourer in a palm garden, who spotted the basket containing the remarkable child caught in the rushes on the banks of the river where his garden lay. It seems that we can be reasonably sure that the date palm was cultivated by the middle of the period we are dealing with, but we still cannot say when it was introduced into Mesopotamia. Some wild species have been reported from the Gulf and this seems the most likely source.

1211 Dating Methods In Archaeology
137 Flora
245 Arboriculture
5311 Visual Arts
764 Burial Practices And Funerals

The date palm is ideally suited to the conditions in south Mesopotamia: it flourishes with its roots in stagnant, salty water and, as long as it is kept wet, pollinated and pruned, can be relied on to produce heavy crops south of the 35th parallel. As far north as Qurna it is not even necessary to irrigate because of the backup from the tidal regime on the head of the Gulf. The trees not only produce a highly nutritious food which is a staple part of the diet, but the sap provides a useful sweetener and can also be used to make a sort of fermented date wine. Even the stones can be used as fuel, while the leaves provide fibre, and the trunk wood.

245 Arboriculture
262 Diet
263 Condiments
273 Alcoholic Beverages
372 Fire

The other plants grown in the garden plots were vegetables such as onions and 43

244 Vegetable Production
245 Arboriculture
262 Diet

3.1 Soft stone vase showing date palm



FULL CONTEXT

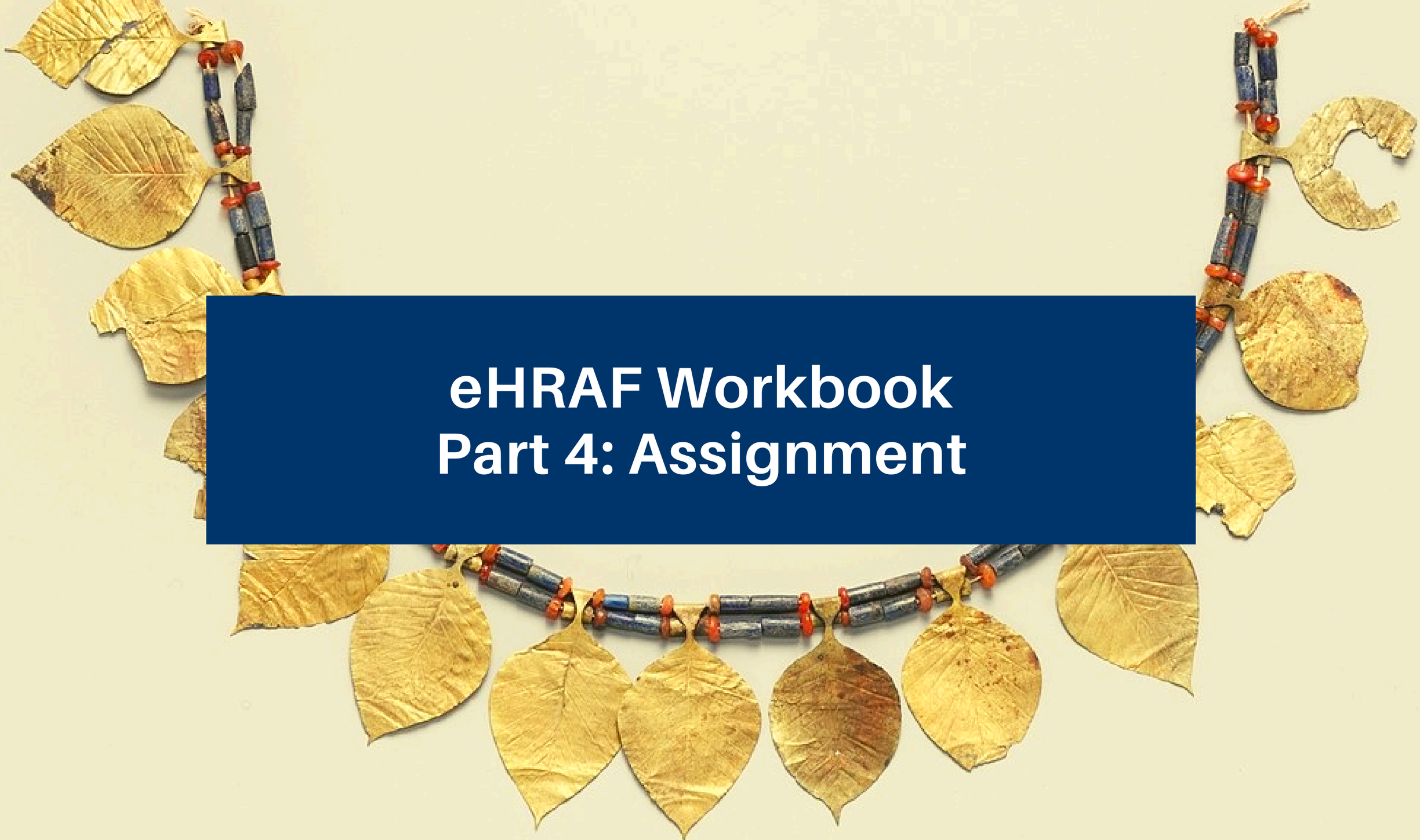
Field Date

Mesopotamia including the Diyala and Hamrin valleys; Ira

Section Title(s)

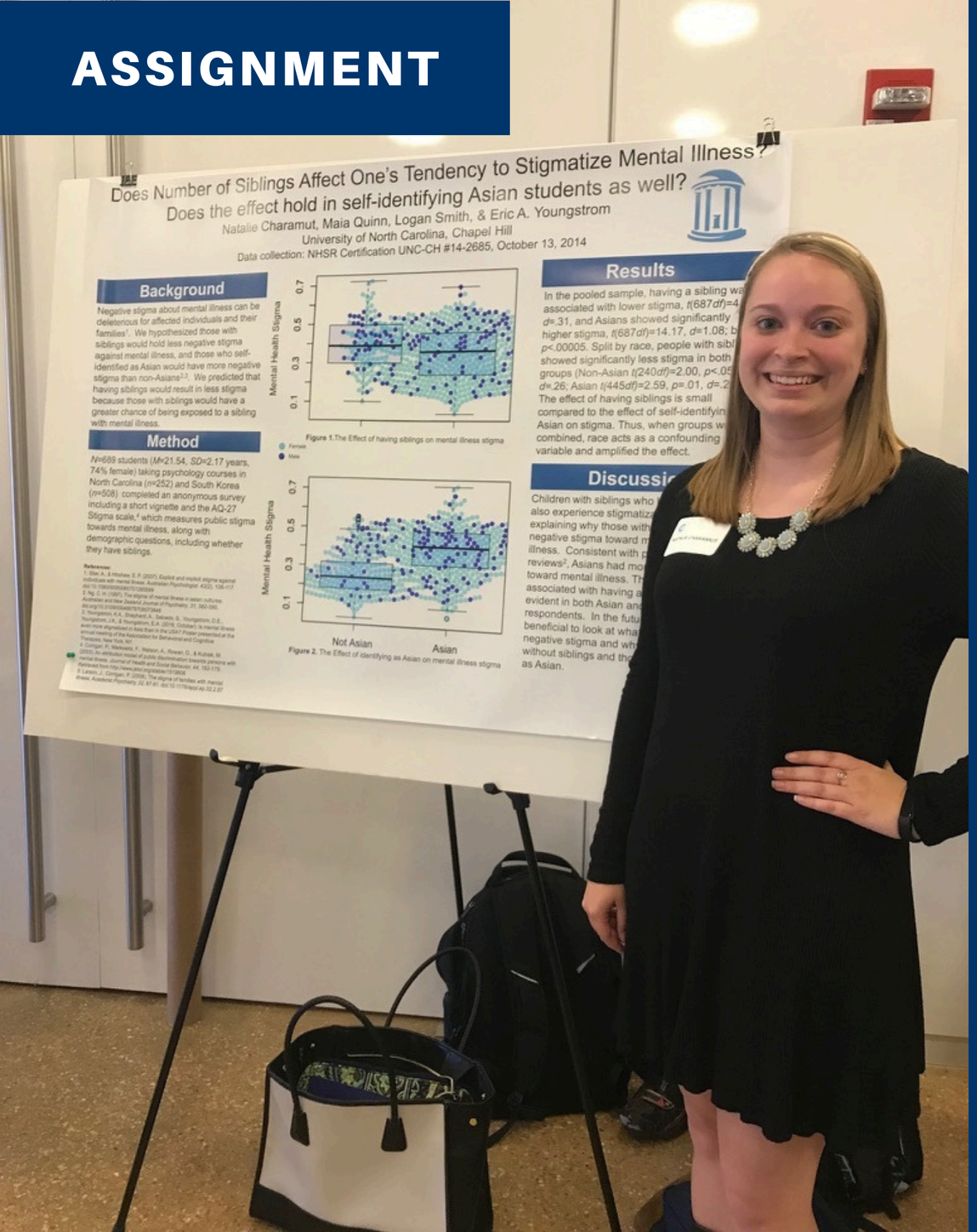
Table of Contents


Publication Information
FRONT
BODY
Chapter 1 THE REDISCOVERY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EA
THE PHYSICAL BACKGROUND
PASTORALISTS AND FARMERS
COMMUNICATIONS
Chapter 2 HISTORY, CHRONOLOGY AND SOCIAL ORGANI
ABSOLUTE DATING
HISTORY AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION
Chapter 3 PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURE
PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT
AGRICULTURE
Chapter 4 TOWN PLANNING AND TEMPLE ARCHITECTU
BUILDING MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES



# eHRAF Workbook
# Part 4: Assignment

# ASSIGNMENT




The purpose of this assignment is to present a report summarizing your findings about this great discovery.

This can be done in the form of a group project or an individual paper.

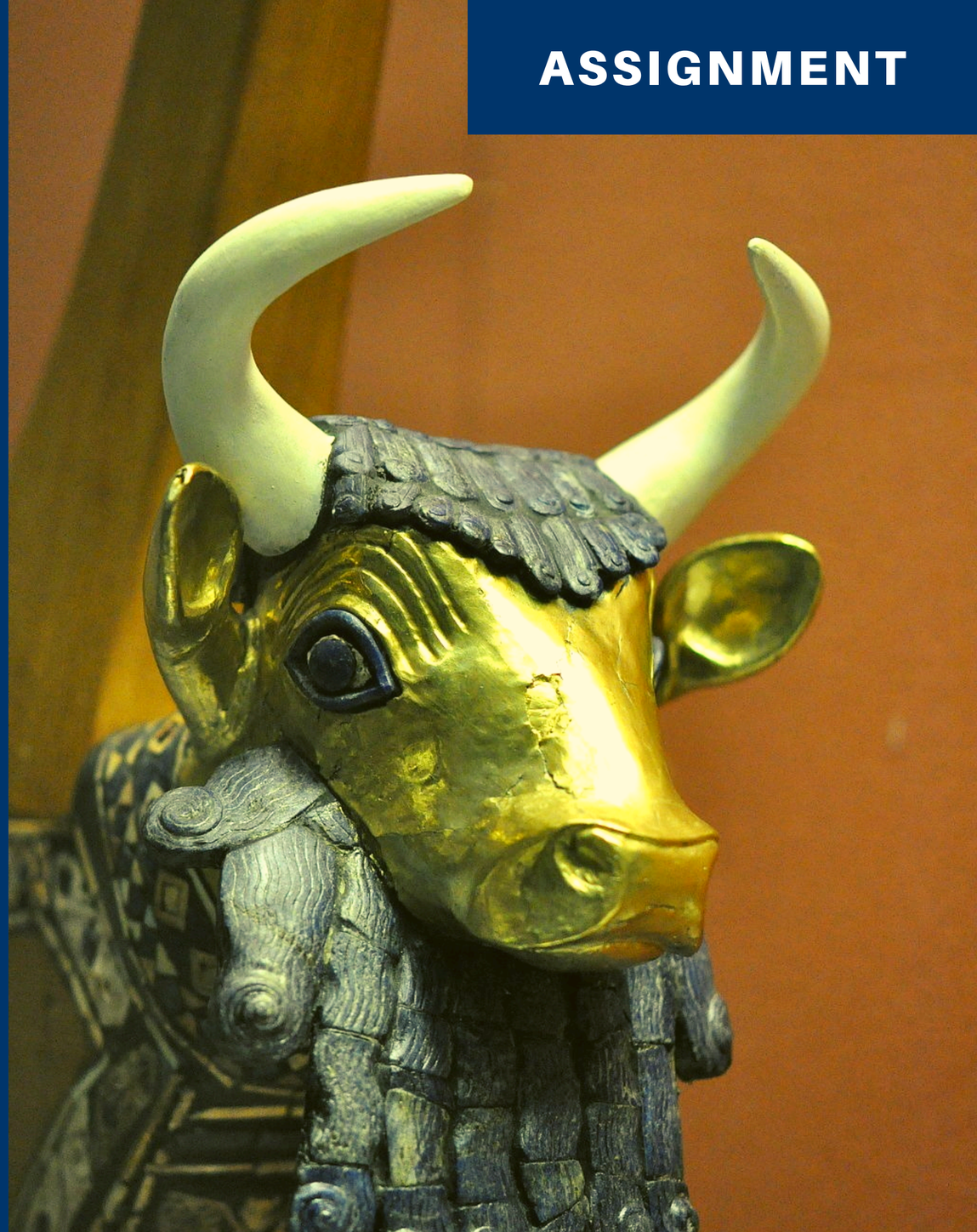
Groups can divide the questions that follow, with each student contributing information about a specific question.

Consider making a slideshow presentation to illustrate your findings.

# ASSIGNMENT

Your final report describing the **Royal Tombs of Ur** should have 6 sections which correspond to these 6 types of questions:

- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **Where?**
- **When?**
- **How?**
- **Why?**



QUESTION 1

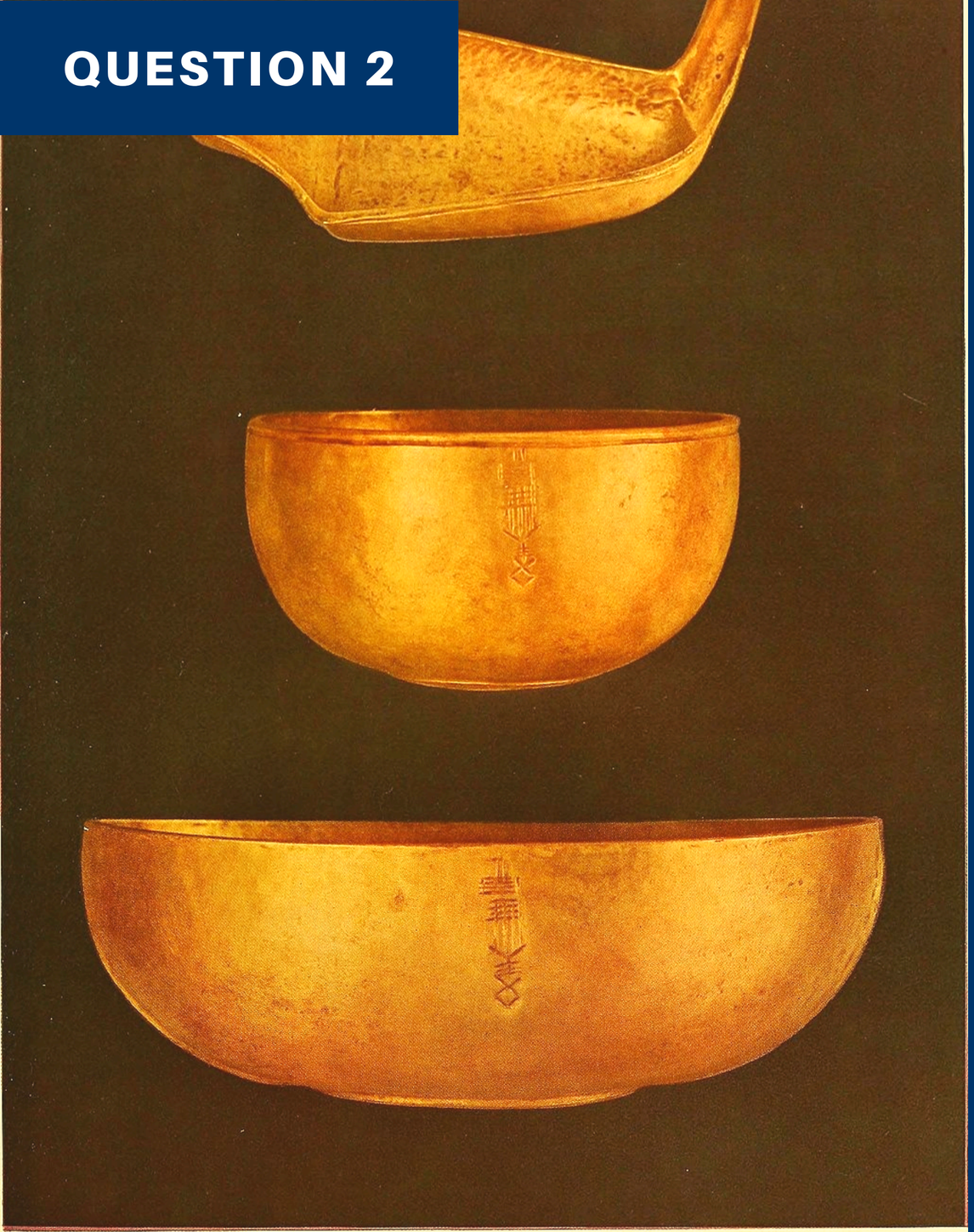



# Who?

Who are the main archaeologists associated with this discovery? Describe their biographical information, education and training, publications, etc.

Who are the people studied? Describe how people lived during this time at this place, such as: social stratification, division of labor, gender roles, economic life, food and subsistence, religious practices.

**QUESTION 2**



# What?

What did the archaeologists discover?

Provide a general description of the archaeological site.

Describe the material culture, structures, artifacts, etc.

Include relevant photos and/or interpretive artistic renderings.

QUESTION 3

# Where?

Where is the site located?

Describe the geography of this discovery, its location in the contemporary world, size, scope, etc.

Does the location have strategic importance?

How did the physical environment and natural resources shape cultural practices?





**QUESTION 4**

# When?

When were the discoveries made?

When in human history do archaeologists believe that this site can be dated to?

Describe the relative time period, what preceded it, and what followed it. What does this represent in terms of cultural evolution and progress?

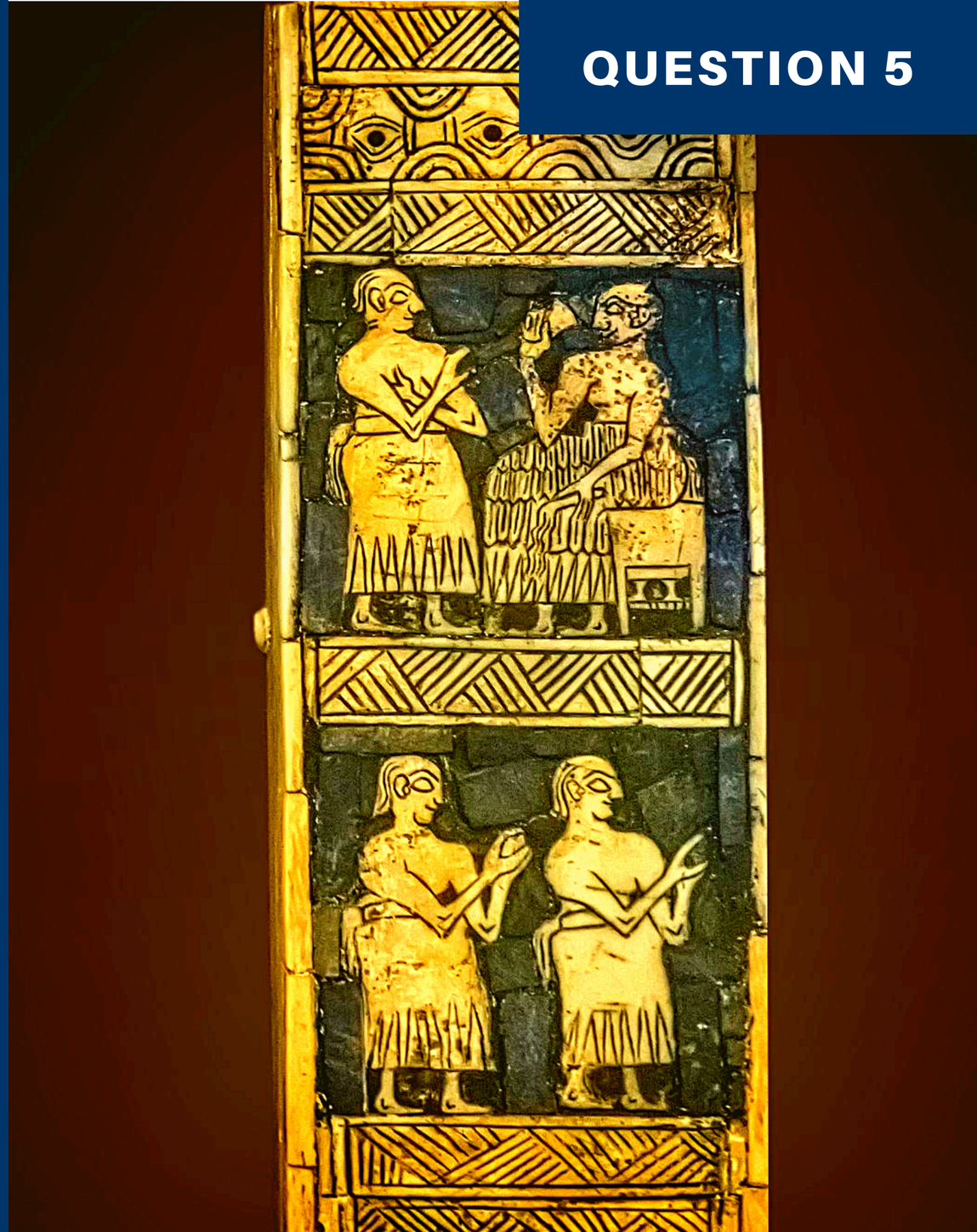
# How?

How did archaeologists excavate, analyze, and interpret this site?

Tell us about the scientific methods used for excavation and analysis of the materials founds.

What technologies were utilized by the people who lived during this archaeological time period?

How did they construct buildings and make artifacts (lithics, pottery, etc.)?



QUESTION 5

# QUESTION 6



## Why?

Why is this archaeological site considered a “great discovery”?

Describe how this site is important in terms of its place in human history.

Why should this great discovery be preserved and who should be responsible for preservation?

# References


Crawford, Harriet E. W. 1990. Sumer and the Sumerians. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/002.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. 1963. The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/004.

Pollock, Susan. 1991. “Of Priestesses, Princes and Poor Relations: The Dead in the Royal Cemetery of Ur.” Cambridge Archaeological Journal Vol. 1 (no. 2): 171–89. https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/009.

Postgate, J. N. 1992. Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History. London: Routledge. https://ehrafarchaeology.yale.edu/traditions/mh64/documents/010.

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Golden helmet of Meskalamdug, possible founder of the First Dynasty of Ur by Akieboy, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 2
Great Ziggurat at Ur, built around 2100 BC by King Ur-Nammu in present-day Iraq and dedicated to the moon god by Hardnfast, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 3
Golden bowl from the grave of Meskalamdug by Joint Expedition of the British Museum and of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania to Mesopotamia, No restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

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Expedition house and staff, C. Leonard Wolley, Katharine Woolley, 1928-29 by unknown author, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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Excavating grave material, 1928-29. In center foreground, Katharine and C. Leonard Woolley by unknown author, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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Queen's Lyre Ur Royal Cemetery by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Cylinder-seal of the "Lady" or "Queen" Puabi by Nic McPhee, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 8
The Standard of Ur, War Side, Tomb of Queen Pu-Abi; Mosaic, Medium Lapis, Red Limestone, Shell, inlaid on Bitumen by unknown author, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 9
Gold dagger, with gold studs in a restored handle. Royal cemetery of Ur, grave by Zunkir, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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A gold dagger and a dagger with a gold-plated handle by Internet Archive Book Images, no restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

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Reconstructed Sumerian headgear necklaces found in the tomb of Puabi, British Museum by British Museum, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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The gold lyre from the Great Death-Pit, Ur excavations by M. Louise Baker, no restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

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Sumerian Headdress Metalwork-Ornaments, Metropolitan Museum of Art by Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 1.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Bull's head of the Queen's lyre from Pu-abi's grave by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Joint Expedition of the British Museum and of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania to Mesopotamia by Internet Archive Book Images, no restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

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Gold vessels, Ur excavations, Internet Archive Book Images, no restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

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Ruins in the Town of Ur by M.Lubinski, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 29
The golden bull's head from the lyre, Ur excavations by M. Louise Baker, no restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 30
Lyre inlay of shell from the royal cemetery of Ur 2550-2450 BCE photographed at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Lyre inlay of shell from the royal cemetery of Ur 2550-2450 BCE (Penn Museum) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by Mary Harrsch, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Slide 31
Shell inlay depicting two goats, Early Dynastic III period, Grave PG 800, Royal Cemetery Ur, Housed at the British Museum by SpeakingArch, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

# Image Credits

NOTE: Images have been slightly cropped to fit the Canva presentation template.

# Great Discoveries: Royal Tombs of Ur

An eHRAF Workbook Activity

Produced by
**Human Relations Area Files**
at Yale University
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