

NWCDTP NORTH WEST CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP



Standard Application form for students applying for a +2 or +3 studentship in the Arts and Humanities
(September 2021 entry)

1. Studentship applied for (please tick):

- +2 (PhD - current students)
 +3 (PhD)

2. Ring fenced studentship you wish to be considered for (please tick):

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)
 Known Disability

3. Institution in which you have been offered a place/or have applied to:

- Lancaster University
 Manchester Metropolitan University
 Royal Northern College of Music
 University of Liverpool
 Keele University
 University of Manchester
 University of Salford

4. Candidate's details:

Name:	██████████
Application / Registration number:	██████████
Address:	████████████████████
Town:	██████████
Postcode:	██████
Country:	Italy
Telephone:	██████████
Email address:	████████████████████
Nationality/Resident Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> UK National <input type="checkbox"/> UK Settled status <input type="checkbox"/> EU National not resident in the UK <input type="checkbox"/> EU National resident in the UK for the past three years



Other: Italian with a Limited Leave to Remain until 30th July 2025

5. Project details:

Mode of Attendance a. Full time b. Part time

Pathway:	Heritage
Institution:	University of Manchester

Project title (+2/+3):	The social, organizational and technological context of pottery production in mid-3rd millennium Southern Mesopotamia
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6. PhD Proposal (to be completed by all students):

6a) Please provide between 6 and 10 keywords that describe your research

Near Eastern Archaeology	Pottery Production
Southern Mesopotamia	Ceramic Analysis
Pottery Technology	Material Culture Studies
Experimental Archaeology	3 rd millennium Society
X-radiography	Chaîne Opératoire

6b) Please describe the proposed research using up to 1,500 words, referring to the guidance. Include a word count.

Research context:

The transition from the Early Dynastic III to the Akkadian period (ca. 2450-2250 BC) in southern Mesopotamia was a period of great social and political change which saw a shift from land being controlled by independent city-states to territory being unified under a central administration. The transformation of the social organization led to a more complex administrative structure, where the authorities of the individual centres were no longer independent but acted on behalf of the ruler [4]. Raw materials and specialized craft production became highly centralized, with specialists working under the elites' control. Administrative and economic texts [6] reveal much detail about specific crafts, such as textile and metal working, including production output, worker numbers, internal organization, and affiliation with political institutions. In contrast, little information is available for potters and ceramic manufacture [6].

The Early Dynastic III/Akkadian pottery production has received little scholarly attention and it is assumed that pots were wheel-made, standardized and mass produced, all traits typically associated with a state-organized society [3]. The first evidence of potter's wheels goes back to the 5th millennium BC, and they seem well established in the mid-3rd millennium BC. However, recent studies have highlighted that the manufacturing process was much more complex, involving wheel-made, handmade and hybrid techniques, thus inviting a reassessment of the pottery production and questioning the assumed regulatory relationship between potters and the state. The proposed PhD aims to clarify the role, organization, and performance of potters within a centralized economic system and their interaction with the institutions. To achieve this, my research will reconstruct the pottery manufacturing process through the study of the material culture from select southern Mesopotamian sites.

The main site to be investigated is Abu Tbeirah located 7 km south of Nasiriyah in southern Iraq that has revealed strata from both periods and has been excavated to high modern standards. The excavations led by La Sapienza University unearthed a large settlement of 42 ha that was occupied by the Early Dynastic III/Akkadian period with a continuation in the Ur III and Old Babylonian period (ca. 2112 – 1763 BC). Information about Early Dynastic III/Akkadian pottery comes from Areas 1 and 4, in the northeastern and southeastern parts of the site, where articulated buildings, graves and traces of different activities (fireplaces, hearts) were found. Preliminary analysis showed, in contrast with traditional assumptions, a limited use of the wheel. One of the PhD's broader aims is to establish whether this represents merely a local characteristic or whether it might reflect the production contexts also at other Mesopotamian sites.



Research objectives:

The interdisciplinary approach that will be used combines macroscopic, scientific analyses and experimental archaeology to gain a contextual understanding of pottery production. The project key objectives are:

- I. To study the pottery from the site of Abu Tbeirah through macroscopic examination and X-ray analysis alongside experimental reconstructions. The first step is to determine the *chaîne opératoire* of each vessel shape. The research hopes to clarify the use of the wheel within the *chaîne opératoire*, the ability of potters to use it, and to understand whether its introduction influenced the production process by replacing or supplementing previous handmade manufacturing techniques, or whether they continued to be used without major changes.
- II. To place the Abu Tbeirah data into the wider Mesopotamian administrative and socio-economic context. My results will then be compared with well-published data from other mid-3rd millennium southern Mesopotamian sites, such as Abu Salabikh, Ur, and those of the Diyala region [1, 5, 8]. Pottery assemblages from these sites are held at the British Museum and the Oriental Institute in Chicago, which are also accessible online.
- III. To reconstruct the potters' *status* in the Early Dynastic III/Akkadian society in southern Mesopotamia, investigate their role within the changing centralized economic system and their connection with the institutions. The aim is to understand whether they were attached or independent specialists, whether they were involved in mass or local community production, and whether they were attached personnel (and, if yes, what was their degree of dependence on the central institution).
- IV. To investigate to what degree ceramics production mirrors the situation of other crafts (i.e., textile and metal working) with regards to organization, accessibility and cost of raw materials, manufacturing arrangements, final use of these objects, and intended recipients.

Materials and method:

The proposed interdisciplinary research project marries together macroscopic, radiographic, experimental, and contextual archaeological approaches:

1. Macroscopic and radiographic studies:

Since I am directly involved in the on-going ceramic research and publication at Abu Tbeirah [7] I have been granted full access to its ceramic collection. All the material recorded so far is available in the online database including detailed information on each vessel and sherd (~2681). This includes measurements, context information, photos, and X-rays. The results of clay, fabric and firing analyses (Neutron Diffraction and Neutron Resonance Activation Analysis) have already been published [2], thus providing a comprehensive dataset to draw on for advanced analysis. Although, further annual excavation seasons are planned, the impossibility to go to Iraq might arise preventing the direct study of the material. Fortunately, sufficient material is already available for the purpose of my PhD research. The use of X-rays is well established at this excavation thanks to the long-standing collaboration with the nearby Alhikma and Alsaray clinics in Nasiriyah.

2. Experimental archaeology

Alongside macroscopic and scientific ceramic analysis, experimental replicas of Abu Tbeirah's vessels will aid in the identification and replication of manufacturing techniques. Two expert potters, and , will be involved in creating vessel reproductions. Both have a long-standing affiliation with the department and are greatly experienced in creating reproductions of ancient ceramics. Drawing together information from the ceramic analysis and experimental work, the thesis aims to identify recurrent *chaînes opératoire* employed by potters that characterize a specific production and/or distinguish between production set-ups over time. I will pay particular attention to the skills involved in the potters' practices, their technical choices, and behaviours.

3. Data contextualization

Comparison of the results from Abu Tbeirah with data from other mid-3rd millennium Mesopotamian sites will allow me to place the site into its broader historic context and draw out the differences and similarities in the ceramic production between sites. Comparison of the pottery production with other crafts will highlight to what extent their organizational structure differed or overlapped.

The University of Manchester is the most suitable academic unit to undertake this research due to the presence of internationally known experts: is a specialist on experimental archaeology and X-radiography, and is involved in several archaeological projects in Iraq and is a ceramic specialist. The department has long-standing relationships with several professional potters experienced in reproducing replicas of ancient shapes, wares and potting equipment.

Project timetable:

Year 1

- Fieldwork activities in Iraq (2 months) recording new material and X-rays.
- Abu Tbeirah pottery analysis from the technological and radiographical point of view.
- Literature review mid-3rd millennium Mesopotamian social organization, crafts specialization, and pottery production.

Year 2

- Fieldwork activities in Iraq (2 months) recording new material and X-rays.
- Experimental research of Abu Tbeirah's vessels.
- Abu Tbeirah data analysis.
- Data analysis of the other Mesopotamian sites and comparison with Abu Tbeirah production.

Year 3

- Data analysis continued.
- Comparison of ceramic production with other craft production set-ups.
- Thesis writing up and submission.

This PhD project is a great opportunity to develop my studies and expertise in the organization of Early Dynastic III/Akkadian pottery production in southern Mesopotamian and will allow me to gain a clearer view of manufacturing techniques and potter-society interactions. My thesis will fill a major gap in our knowledge by focusing on pottery production, the most widespread and least understood, craft activity in mid-3rd millennium Mesopotamia, through the utilization of a targeted interdisciplinary approach that combines macroscopic, X-radiographic, experimental, and contextual approaches.

References:

[1] Delougaz, P.

1952 *Pottery from the Diyala Region*, Chicago.

[2] Festa, G., Forte, V. and Romano, L.

2020 Area 1 Pottery – Part 2: Clay, Fabrics and Firing Technology, in Romano, L. – D'Agostino, F. (eds), *Abu Tbeirah Excavations I. Area 1: Last Phase and Building A. Phase 1*: 323 – 369, Rome.

[3] Glatz, C.

2015 *Plain Pottery Traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East: Production, Use, and Social Significance*, Walnut Creek, CA.

[4] Laneri N,

2011 The Life-History of the Potter's Wheel, in Scarcella, S. (ed.), *Ancient Near East, Archaeological Ceramics: A Review of Current Research*, BAR International Series 2193: 62 – 74, England.

[5] Moon, J.

1987 *Abu Salabikh Excavation Vol. 3. Catalogue of Early Dynastic Pottery*, London.

[6] Moorey, P.R.S.

1994 *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence*, Indiana.

[7] Romano, L. – Zingale, M.

2019 Area 1 Pottery. Part 1: A Preliminary Assessment on Typology, Technology and Use, in Romano, L. and D'Agostino, F. (eds), *Abu Tbeirah Excavations I. Area 1: Last Phase and Building A – Phase 1*: 323 – 369, Rome.

[8] Woolley, C.L.



1934 *Ur Excavation. Vol. II: The Royal Cemetery. A Report on the Predynastic and Sargonid Graves excavated between 1926 and 1931*, New York.

Word count: 1,500

6c) Please provide information on how the proposed research and postgraduate training will contribute to your career development (max 250 words)

The proposed project will contribute to the development of my career. Following the successful achievement of my PhD I plan to pursue further post-doctoral research opportunities focusing on the relationship between society/potters, including collective social and economic identities and cultural behaviours. The study period at the lively research environment in Manchester will significantly enhance my academic experience and my career prospects after the completion of the three years of research. The Department of Classic, Ancient History and Archaeology will offer me this kind of training under the supervision of , the foremost authority on pottery technology and ceramic imaging, in particular X-radiography and I would be able to draw on support from , who is an internationally recognized scholar on Near Eastern archaeology and ceramic studies. Furthermore, the experimental section of my PhD with specialized potters will offer me a practical approach to pottery production. The on-going collaboration with the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and the research studies at the University of Manchester will provide me with an international research network with opportunities to build up my academic networks during my PhD. The Department also provides a stimulating research environment with a vibrant community of academic staff, students, and post-doctoral researchers. Weekly departmental research seminars foster a strong community spirit and allow me to network with established scholars who are visiting Manchester. The School has a well-established portfolio of training courses for PhD students and we can also draw on the training courses available university-wide.

6d) Please provide information on how the proposed research engages with issues relating to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Sustainability (max 100 words)

The PhD project investigates the economic relations between classes of different social status within an ancient society. On the one hand, it reflects on the role played by a group of craftsmen engaged in ceramic production; on the other it investigates central institutions that held political and economic power. My proposed research explores the social situation of potters and the nature of their relationship with the élite, with particular reference to the concept of 'independent' and 'attached' specialists. The aim is to reconstruct the social status of potters and to understand their social position within a centralised economic system.

6e) Please provide information on how the proposed research might be undertaken should the COVID-19 pandemic continue (max 100 words)

The proposed research could be undertaken without major problems should the COVID-19 pandemic continue and if it will be not possible to travel and carry out fieldwork research in Iraq. The research activities planned for the first year will focus on analysing the data collected so far and already available and reviewing the literature. While it will no doubt be a challenge to commence a PhD during the COVID-19 pandemic, online access to databases and publications is readily available, and could even be undertaken if access to the university and its facilities remained impossible or restricted.

7. Qualifications:

Year awarded	Qualification type	Qualification Subject	Awarding institution	Level	Class
2018	MA	Archaeology	University of Rome “La Sapienza”	110/110	1 st
2015	BA	Archaeology	University of Rome “La Sapienza”	106/110	2.1
Description:	Masters Degree with 110/110 with Honors				

8. Relevant Experience: (max 350 words)

Description of relevant experience:	Internship:
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	<p>2020: Post-degree Scholarship at University of Manchester (6 months with).</p> <p>Fieldwork experiences:</p> <p>2019: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Abu Tbeirah (Iraq – 2 months) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2018: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Abu Tbeirah (Iraq – 1 month) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2017: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Abu Tbeirah (Iraq – 2 months) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2016: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Abu Tbeirah (Iraq – 2 months) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2015: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Colle Palatino (Rome - 1 month) and at Abu Tbeirah (Iraq – 1 month) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2013: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Colle Palatino (Rome - 2 weeks) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2012: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Colle Palatino (Rome - 2 weeks) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2011: Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Colle Palatino (Rome - 1 month) with University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>Publication:</p> <p>Romano, L. – Zingale, M. 2019 Area 1 Pottery. Part 1: A Preliminary Assessment on Typology, Technology and Use, in Romano, L. and D’Agostino, F. (eds), <i>Abu Tbeirah Excavations I. Area 1: Last Phase and Building A – Phase 1</i>: 323 – 369, Rome.</p> <p>Conference:</p> <p>2018: (Be)Ware of Sumer! Preliminary Studies on the Technology of the Abu Tbeirah’s Pottery. 11th ICAANE (1-7 April 2018) Munich.</p> <p>2017: “La formazione archeologica in Sapienza. Un vaso che viene plasmato”. Opening Ceremony of the Academic Year 2017 – 2018. University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p> <p>2016: “Cinque anni del nostro Iraq”. Cinque anni del nostro Iraq – Iraqi-Italian Mission at Abu Tbeirah. University of Rome “La Sapienza”.</p>
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9. Supervision

Please propose up to 3 prospective supervisors for your PhD:

Institution	Supervisor
University of Manchester	
University of Manchester	

10. Research Training previously undertaken (max 250 words)

10a) Please give details of the Masters programme and research training undertaken previously:

<p>My Masters at La Sapienza University provided me with a solid foundation for my PhD. I attended several modules of “Archaeology and Art History of Ancient Near East” and practical courses aimed at reproducing material culture, such as ceramic vessels. These activities allowed me to better understand the multitude of ways in which vessels can be made.</p> <p>Throughout the fieldwork at Abu Tbeirah, I gained an excellent knowledge of the site’s pottery typology and technology and I have been actively involved in the X-ray analysis. Through my contribution, I have been invited to co-publish preliminary studies on Abu Tbeirah’s pottery and to join the excavations in 2021 and 2022. In 2020, through a six months scholarship-funded internship at the University of Manchester with of I carried out X-ray</p>
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analysis of vessels from Abu Tbeirah and I attended an 'Introduction to archaeological X-rays' course with from the University of Bradford.

10b) Relevance of Masters and other previous training to your PhD project (up to 100 words):

For my MA Dissertation, I explored the mid-3rd millennium pottery production, from the raw materials to the firing process, analysing the archaeological record from Abu Tbeirah together with the context of existing publications. I improved expertise on technological and radiographic analysis during my internship at the University of Manchester with and by attending a radiography training course led by , University of Bradford. At Manchester, I attended 's (*Origins of State*) and 's modules (*Experimental Workshops*) developing my knowledge on Near Eastern and experimental archaeology.

11. Research Training needs (max 250 words)

11a) Please give details of the anticipated research training needed for your PhD project, including difficult language training:

N/A

11b) Please give details of the kind of resources you will potentially need during your PhD. Please also indicate whether your research project will require you to undertake research abroad.

Funding will be required to support the experimental activities in the pottery lab, my participation in international research events and periods of two months par year for the ceramic fieldwork at the site of Abu Tbeirah and the Nasiriyah Museum.

12. Collaboration with External Partners (max 250 words)

12a) Is this or does it have the potential to be a collaborative PhD? If so, give the name of the partner organisation, and describe the planned collaboration. Indicate what discussions you have so far had with the partner organisation. You must also attach a letter from the partner organisation indicating its support in principle.

N/A

12b) Please give details of any potential collaboration you may plan to develop with external organisations during your PhD programme (industry, cultural organisation, government bodies etc...), including possible placements.

N/A

13. Additional Applications

Have you been nominated for or applied for any other studentship this year?

If yes, please provide details:

President's Doctoral Scholar (PDS) Awards in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures PhD Studentships

Have you previously been enrolled onto a PhD programme?

If yes, please provide details:

14. References / Transcripts



- Your institution will need to attach two references and your transcript(s) from your programme application to this application form.

15. How did you hear about us?

Please let us know how you have heard about the NWCDTP and its studentships:

University of Manchester

16. Acknowledgement

I confirm that the information I have provided in this form is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge at this date. I fully understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the relevant forms are submitted to the relevant office in due time and that any missing information may render my application incomplete and ineligible. I authorise the North West Consortium DTP to disclose to the AHRC any information that is relevant to my application.

Signature: (Type Name if submitted electronically)	
Date:	04/02/2021

