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The steatite *Bowl* uncovered at Pu-abi's tomb in ancient Ur demonstrates the Mesopotamian culture's concerns with artistic regularity while also demonstrating their limitations in technology. One of a few soapstone items in a collection of mostly alabaster, it stands out due to its color and materiality, but also due to its geometrical, nearly cylindrical massing and the patterns carved into the exterior surface of its sides.

Carved out of *steatite* or soapstone, the bowl could easily have served a practical function. Its nearly-vertical sides allow it to easily contain liquids even while carried, and the stone it is carved out of is both non-porous and heat resistant. A three-pronged trivet appears to be attached to the bottom, its arms looping up over a wavy line carved at the bottom—whose patterning is then continued on top of this attached hook so as to avoid disturbing the pattern. Although it appears to be clamping on the bottom, in fact from the inside the bowl shows itself to be of a piece. The purpose of the trivet-like attachment is therefore unclear, though if the bowl were to be used for food it could have been intended to help dissipate heat. However although the interior is smooth, the deep and myriad grooves of the exterior's incised pattern would have made it hard to clean on the outside. Thus while the bowl could conceivably be used for serving food, particularly dry items, for this reason (and by evidence of it having been buried as a treasure with such a high-ranking lady), it was unlikely to have been used in the cooking process.

The design of the bowl follows a simple geometric pattern: circular in plan, it demonstrates radial symmetry through its central Z axis. The interior is smooth, and the exterior incised with an axially-symmetric zig-zag pattern filled with hatching and bordered on either side with wavy lines carved in relief. The rougher surface of these incisions reflects a light green-gray color, providing a stark luminosity contrast with the polished darkness of the rest of the soapstone surface. Contrasting with the harsh, dynamic, and angular geometry of the pattern, however, is the graceful curve of the bowl's profile and the soft feeling of its fine-grained monochromatic soapstone. The bowl's lip curls out at the top, while the outer surface sweeps inward underneath and then smoothly back out before tucking under the bottom. The interior transitions smoothly and roundly from the sides to the bottom.

In terms of technical execution, however, the bowl's actual geometry is irregular. Its circularity is about as accurate as a first-year student's freehand drawing, and the zig-zag pattern is noticeably imprecise. The quality of the interior shows skill in surfacing, but there appears to be a lack of geometrical tooling to maintain the regularity and precision of the overall shape or its carved patterns. The straight lines are not straight, the intervals are somewhat irregular, the thickness of the zig-zag lines vary, and the raised shape of the waves are not consistently repeated. Neither is the bowl quite circular, nor is its curved side profile reliably maintained. None of these appear to be intentional deviations.

Like its narrative artwork organized in rigid registers and its ziggurats with their straight-edge-derived shapes, the linear and angular patterning of the Bowl found at Ur reflects Mesopotamia's interest in regular geometry and order, while the subtle and elegant curves of its form reveal a deeper sophistication in design thinking than a reliance on simple geometric shapes. Nonetheless, the limitations in technology—specifically the apparent lack of rigorous measuring and marking tools—causes the stone bowl's execution to fall short of its intended design.