

Second Millennium in Iraqi Kurdistan: New Results, New Perspectives

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The increase of archaeological excavations in Iraqi Kurdistan since the mid-2000s has led to the discovery of more than twenty sites that have yielded remains dating to the 2nd millennium BC. These new data reveal a mixed picture. In the lowland areas, we observe the existence of local kingdoms, some of which were integrated into larger territorial structures, such as the Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia formed by Samsi-Addu, Mittani and the Assyrian Empire by the end of the period. In the foothills, on the other hand, it is often challenging to recognize 2nd millennium levels: pottery is less well defined and, generally speaking, the history of these regions is less documented by textual sources.

An overview of knowledge acquired over more than 10 years in Iraqi Kurdistan seems to be necessary. Therefore, we invite the archaeological teams currently excavating sites dated to this period to propose papers that will allow an initial assessment to be made and some salient reflections to be identified, which will be able to highlight future avenues of research.

The orientations of this colloquium tend more particularly towards archaeological remains, dating and chronology, historical issues in the light of textual sources and studies of material culture as a whole. We draw attention on the will to address these questions in a global and integrative approach, and prefer to limit topics focusing on a particularly exclusive aspect.

Abstracts

Johnny Samuele Baldi (CNRS, UMR 5133 Archéorient), Melania Zingarello (La Sapienza University of Rome) & Claire Padovani (Université Paris I)

Together, but Separately. Making Pottery in Logardan at the Dawn of the Late Bronze Age: A First Interregional Assessment

After a long hiatus of at least half a millennium, at the transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age, the site of Logardan, in the western Qara Dagh area, is reoccupied, first by some food workshops (equipped with silos, pits and tandoors), and finally by a enormous ceramic workshop. It is not clear whether at this time the lower terrace of the hill, now intensively cultivated, housed a small village or only a few scattered dwellings. In the second millennium BCE, Logardan and the surrounding sites already had a long tradition of large ceramic workshops, but the organisation of the early Late Bronze Age factory is quite different from the previous ones and can offer some valuable clues about the

production and distribution patterns characterising in this phase the Trans-Tigridian area compared to other regions (especially in southern Mesopotamia). In order to underline both local specificities and similarities with other contexts, this paper focuses (technologically and typologically) on the ceramic manufacture, which combines a very large-scale production and a multiplicity of traditions, suggesting a substantial absence of centralisation.

Ulrike Bürger & Peter Miglus (Universität Heidelberg)

Bronze Age Bakr Awa in the Second Millennium BCE

The site of Bakr Awa is located in Halabja Province of Iraqi Kurdistan. It is the largest tell in the southern part of the Shahrizor Plain, a fertile plateau nestled within the Zagros foothills. Settlement layers cover the last five and a half millennia, from the Late Chalcolithic period until today. Since 2010, six seasons of excavation have been conducted by the University of Heidelberg, with research primarily focusing upon the Bronze Age occupation. During this period, and especially in the 2nd millennium BC, Bakr Awa was a prosperous centre with trans-regional contacts. The site's material culture shows influences from Mesopotamia as well as Iran and beyond, while in other respects is distinctly local in character. Our presentation of the archaeological evidence will be complemented by results from bioarchaeological and archaeometrical analyses, and textual evidence from a Late Bronze Age cuneiform archive.

Costanza Coppini (Freie Universität Berlin) & Jesper Eidem (Università di Pisa)

The Second Millennium BCE on the Rania Plain and Beyond

On the Rania Plain (Sulaymania Governorate, KAR) the site of Tell Shemshara, excavated 1957-59 by Danish and Iraqi teams, and more recently re-investigated by The Pisa (- formerly NINO) Archaeological Project, has provided unique documentation for the earlier centuries of the 2nd Mill. BC. in NE Iraq. The paper will present an overview of this evidence in both archaeological and historical perspectives. It will discuss how the region of the Rania/Pishdar Plains, located in the foothills of the Western Zagros, functioned as a buffer-zone between Mesopotamia proper and contemporary cultural spheres centred further into the Zagros. It will also approach the question of mid-to-late 2nd Mill. occupation on the Rania Plain, and how to identify such evidence beyond the clear appearance of Middle Assyrian influence at a few key sites. The paper will draw on older as well as the most recent investigations and studies conducted by the Pisa project.

Barbara Couturaud (Louvre Museum/Ifpo)

Amyan: Some First Archaeological Evidence of a Second Millennium Urban Centre

The site of Amyan lies in the Navkur plain, caught between the Zagros Piedmont in the north, and the Nineveh plain in the south. This rich area was highly occupied from the Neolithic up to Medieval Times. Amyan, a medium size mound of 4 hectares, 26 metres high, and surrounded by a lower town of approximately 15 hectares, stands in a strategic location, as it is the first important site when entering

the plain from the south, 40 km from Nineveh. The second millennium BC represents a pike in the occupation, as shown by the research led by the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project. Whereas the political history of this area remains to be uncovered, the excavation led in 2019 in Amyan and recent studies of the material found, which will be presented in this paper, have shown that the site was an important local urban centre. Indeed, the archaeological vestiges have revealed an important building, probably administrative, surrounded by a massive defensive wall. Ceramic material has shown a local well-mastered production, as much as the insertion into wider regional production networks. At last, the discovery of peculiar objects such as wall nails are evidence of the presence of a local elite within the city, comparable to what has been found in other currently excavated neighbour sites in Bassetki, Kemune or Gomel.

Claudia Glatz (University of Glasgow)

The Second Millennium BCE on the Sirwan/Upper Diyala River: Results of Excavations at Khani Masi

The Sirwan or Upper Diyala River valley forms a critical communication and transportation corridor connecting lowland Mesopotamia with the Zagros highlands, and features prominently as a contested political space in the historical record from at least the mid-third millennium BCE. Since 2013, the Sirwan Regional Project has explored this strategic highland-lowland borderland using a combination of regional archaeological survey, remote sensing, test soundings and large-scale excavations. From 2016, excavations focused on the Khani Masi site cluster, a sprawling series of low mounds covering c. 60 ha, which was occupied primarily during the second millennium BCE. This paper presents the results of completed excavations at Khani Masi and situates its findings in a wider historical and regional context.

Noman Jumaah Ibrahim & Aziz Mohamad Amin Zebari (Salahaddin University Erbil)

The Results of Archaeological Excavations in Tell Kalak Misk in Erbil. Exploration Seasons 2010-2013

The site of Kalak Misk is one of the important archaeological sites located inside the city of Erbil, on the southwestern side of the citadel, about 5 km. The site is an archaeological mound approximately rectangular in shape, its length from north to south is 290 m, its width from east to west reaches 240 m, and its height is above the neighbouring land (15) meters and at sea level (401.5 m), and the hill is registered as an archaeological site in the records of the Department of Antiquities and the Atlas of Archaeological Sites in Iraq, and its archaeology is announced in the Iraqi Gazette No. 2345 for the year 1946. As for the name of the site, it is not known for now, and the word “Kalak Misk” is a local name in circulation. Among the inhabitants of the region, it means in the Kurdish language (mouse’s tail). The hill was chosen to train and qualify the students of the Archaeology Department at the Faculty of Arts on the methods of excavation and archaeological surveying, and to inform them of the scientific foundations used in excavation science. Excavations began at the site since April 2010 and continued until mid-2013 for four intermittent seasons, during which they discovered a number of residential layers, which included the structural remains of residential units. Large numbers of machines, various tools and pottery were found inside these buildings, characterized by a variety of shapes and decorations.

Most of the site's discoveries date back to the medieval and modern Assyrian eras, as well as the discovery of antiquities from the late Islamic period, including a pottery jar dating back to the sixth century AH. The site of Kalak Misk has gained historical and archaeological importance through the possibility of providing a sequence of layers and cultural roles in it. The research will deal with details of the results of archaeological excavations for the four seasons at the site.

Marta Luciani (Universität Wien)

The City and its Hinterland: Chemchemal and the North West Sulaimaniyah Region in the Second Millennium BCE

The Orient Department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI Orient-Abteilung) and the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Sulaimaniyah Antiquities Department have conducted two excavation seasons on the citadel of Chemchemal (Spy Hasar) and several field and study campaigns in this tell's hinterland to the North, in the frame of the North West Sulaimaniyah Survey (NWSS). Beyond presenting the pottery findings from the site and the wider region, we will evaluate the meaning of specific small finds that can be dated to the Late Bronze Age: beyond clay nails (Sikkatu), of peculiar significance is the exceptional eye stone with the inscription of the Kassite king Kurigalzu made of the semi-precious agate. As this find is a stronger indication of the construction of cultic buildings or religious furniture on the site, it opens the question of political, cultural and religious affiliation of this northern region to the south Mesopotamian kingdom of Karduniaš.

Dlshad A. Marf, Sara A. Mahmood, Ali H. Mohammed Gharib, Jaza Sh. Hamasharif, Aram A. Ham Amin, Amanj R. Ameen & Gashbeen Shamal (Department of Archaeology at University of Sulaimani)

Dekon Archaeological Project: Seasons I-II 2021

Gird-i Dekon is located on the west bank of the Qliasan/Serchinar river in the western part of Sulaimani City. The Department of Archaeology at the University of Sulaimani leads the Dekon Archaeological Project; every academic year we do archaeological excavation, train the students of our department, and also survey a part of the banks of the Qaliasan/Serchinar river and the foothills of the Sherkuzh mountain range northeast of it. We record the nearby contemporary settlements, raw materials, and the ecology of the district.

In the spring and autumn seasons of 2021, we had two fruitful seasons; a multi-room public building with thick stone foundations was revealed, and a central room with brick pavement was discovered as well. We reached two different layers; the upper one dates back to the Late Bronze Age, and the lower one dates back to the Middle Bronze Age. The discovered materials at these levels showing multicultural interaction during the second millennium are lots of Shamlu Ware that we think is a typical Bronze Age Ware of the Lullubies; Babylonian/Kassite style jars and potsherds, lots of Kassite goblets; a few Late Khabur Ware potsherds and a seal impression. Moreover, we discovered two cuneiform tablets; one of them is complete, has a knob with a hole at its top, and the other one has an edge that bears a few line inscriptions. Our epigraphs are still working on it.

The site was only used during the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age. It was not a living settlement; no private houses were discovered there. This big multi-room public building was probably used as a contemporary palace to the Kassite kingdom & the Mittani Empire.

Maria Grazia Masetti Rouault (EPHE) & Ilaria Calini (UMR 8210 ANHIMA)

The Region West of Erbil During the Second Millennium BC, from Middle Bronze to Iron Age I. New Data and New Questions

Recent research carried out by the French Archaeological Mission at Qasr Shemamok (Iraqi Kurdistan), located west of Erbil, as well as in the area around the site, have produced new data sets allowing us to modify and deepen our understanding of the history of this region. Identified as the Assyrian city of Kilizi since the end of LBA, up to now the site has seemed to offer an opportunity to study mainly — if not only — the formation of the Middle Assyrian empire, and later, after its reorganization during Sennacherib's reign, its crisis and evolution. In the last years, excavations in the citadel have revealed that the first Middle Assyrian levels cover there the remains of a large urban occupation, a Hurrian/Akkadian city called Tu'e, belonging to the state of Kunsih, possibly a part of the Mitannian federation. Our paper will show, on one hand, how the architecture, urban structures, ceramics, and cuneiform texts from these levels help reconstruct the context where the Assyrian empire itself was conceived, as well as the shared culture of this region before its integration under the Assyrian control — thus suggesting a different story from the narratives established by the Assyrian royal inscriptions. On the other hand, it will also try to discuss the meaning of the discovery of this kind of society with respect to the reconstruction of the MBA history of the region, comparing its possible evolution with the history of the neighboring Syrian Jazireh and Middle Euphrates valley.

Daniele Morandi Bonacossi (Università degli studi di Udine) & Costanza Coppini (Freie Universität Berlin)

Gir-e Gomel and the Transtigridian Plains in the Second Millennium BC: Middle and Late Bronze Age settlement patterns and stratigraphic sequences

Recent extensive and intensive surveys conducted by the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project and the Tell Gomel Archaeological Survey in the Duhok Governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and excavations at the site of Gir-e Gomel by the Duhok Directorate of Antiquities and the Udine University have made it possible to trace the history of settlement and land use in the Navkur Plain during the second millennium BC. The presentation discusses the Middle and Late Bronze Age occupation patterns in the region and the contemporary levels at Gomel focusing on its stratigraphic sequence and the diachronic development of the site's material culture. The ceramic sequence and its relative dating, combined with C14 dates, contribute to achieve a reliable chrono-typological sequence of the second millennium Gir-e Gomel ceramics, thus establishing the site's ceramic sequence as a reference for future research in the Navkur Plain and neighbouring areas. These data and the evidence from the excavation — among others public architecture and an extended elite graveyard with monumental vaulted hypogea

– emphasize the centrality and importance of the site of Gomel as the major regional centre in the Transtigridian plains between the Upper Zab to the East and Bassetki/Mardaman to the West.

Christophe Nicolle & Lionel Marti (CNRS, UMR 7192 PROCLAC)

In the Shadow of Empires. Living at Bash Tapa in the Second Half of the Second Millennium

In the background of the confrontations between the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Hittite, the great powers at that time, local lives take place in the plain of Erbil. Excavations at Bash Tapa reveal several occupation levels documenting different kinds of public buildings (palace, storehouses, ...), urban planning, and original earth building methods. These buildings provide pieces of information about the nature of the occupations on the tell. It appears that Bash Tapa was a small burg, probably unfortified. It was the seat of local potentates and served as an administrative center for the surrounding region. From our excavation complemented by the analysis of several texts and inscriptions, it is possible to draw up in some broad-brush themes the geopolitical organization of the Erbil region and its insertion in the Assyro-Babylonian world.

Cinzia Pappi & Costanza Coppini (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Living at the Margins of Mittanian State

After the fall of the dynasty of Shamshi-Addu and Ishme-Dagan, the area of Koya most likely underwent a period of political reorganization. None of the large polities attested in the Middle Bronze Age major archives seems to persist. The geographic horizon reflected by the corpus of Nuzi, the modern Yorghana Tepe does not refer to any places or polities securely located east of modern Kirkuk. Though the textual data doesn't attest to an extension of the political and economic influence of Nuzi into the region of Koya, stratigraphic investigations at Satu Qala and the fieldwork, conducted by the Archaeological Survey of Koya (ASK) Project recorded a number of sites in the plain of Koya that yielded ceramic materials finding parallels in recognizable associated Mittanian types, known both from the centers of the core of Mittani and from Nuzi. Aim of this paper is a regional assessment of the Late Bronze Age I ceramic materials, found at the eastern margin of the Mittanian state. These preliminary results, based on the stratified contexts from Satu Qala and from adjacent regions, will provide insights the local settlement patterns at the turn of the Middle to the Late Bronze Age, enlightening some dark spots in the eastern borderland of the Mittani state.

Luca Peyronel (Università degli studi di Milano) & Valentina Oselini (University of Bologna)

The Erbil Plain in the Middle and Late Bronze Age: The Second Millennium BCE Occupation at Helawa and Aliawa

The Italian Archaeological Expedition in the Erbil Plain (MAIPE) of the University of Milan is conducting fieldwork at Helawa and Aliawa, two nearby sites located in the Erbil plain, ca. 26 km south-west from the citadel of Erbil, not far from the archaeological site of Kurd Qaburstan. The excavations carried out in 2016-2019 at Helawa brought to light domestic structures dating to a timespan encompassing the mid-17th and the end of 16th century BCE, namely the transitional period between the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze Age (MBA and LBA). C14 analysis carried out on charred seeds corroborated the chronology mainly based on pottery comparison. The surface distribution of second millennium materials and the buildings brought to light in Operations A and D indicate that Helawa was a small centre, probably a rural village with houses and agricultural storage facilities and possibly a major residence built atop the high mound. Aliawa, just 3 km to the north-east, according to the surface materials collected in 2015-2016 and the soundings carried on in 2019, appears to be a relevant centre during the early second millennium BCE, still occupied later. Pottery dating to the MBA (2000-1550 BCE) was found scattered over the whole site in a reasonable quantity, and the survey collection indicates that Aliawa during the MBA reached its maximum extension, around 25 ha. Moreover, materials dating to the LBA (1550-1200 BCE) are still relatively abundant, including the easternmost sector of the site, indicating a 20-ha occupation. The paper presents the archaeological data from the ongoing excavations at Helawa and Aliawa, mainly focusing on the central centuries of the second millennium BCE, which are still poorly known either from textual sources or from archaeological sequences in Northern Mesopotamia. A functional interpretation of the contexts is discussed, and the two sites will be analysed taking into account also the geomorphological setting of the surrounding area, the relation with the settlement pattern, and the data from nearby sites, in primis with Kurd Qaburstan. The evidence from both sites allows shedding light on the interactions between rural and larger contemporary neighbouring settlements, in a crucial area of Northern Mesopotamia, in a period spanning from the rise and defeat of Qabra to the affirmation of the Middle Assyrian Empire, the latter documented by the recent discoveries at Erbil, Qasr Shemamok and Bash Tepe.

Aline Tenu (CNRS, UMR 7041 ArScAn)

Kunara and the Tanjaro Valley in the Second Millennium BCE: a Space of Borders and Contacts

Little is known about the 2nd millennium BC in Kunara and its region. However, the data that we have collected during the Tanjaro Survey in 2011 and since 2012 at Kunara itself reveal the singular place of the region at the margins of the Mesopotamian world. In the Middle Bronze Age, it shares the Mesopotamian ceramic culture, but the discovery of Shamlu ware shows the existence of locally rooted traditions. In the Late Bronze Age, the question arises of its relationship with the Mitanni and its role in Assyrian and Babylonian expansionist projects. The valley was most certainly crossed by the border that separated the Assyrian and Babylonian ceramic horizons.

The aim of this presentation is to provide a synthesis of what the data collected around Kunara over the last 10 years has contributed to our knowledge of the region, which was, until then, essentially known from Mesopotamian written sources.

