

# EARLY BRONZE AGE IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Edited by Barbara COUTURAUD

## IRAQI KURDISTAN DURING THE EARLY BRONZE AGE FROM TEXTUAL SOURCES. AN ATTEMPT AT SYNTHESIS

Philippe CLANCIER & Laurent COLONNA D'ISTRIA

This article proposes a historical synthesis for the Early Bronze Age, i.e. the 3rd millennium BCE, of the modern regions of Iraqi Kurdistan. The current sources documenting these regions are essentially texts from southern Mesopotamia exposing the interactions that southern kingdoms had with the regions east of the Tigris and the Zagros foothills, since important routes leading north (Tur Abdin, Iraqi Jezirah) and northeast/east (Zagros) passed through these areas. The political organization of these regions is difficult to grasp, and at times it seems that these regions, composed of small political entities, were partially united against a common opponent.

**Keywords:** Early Bronze Age, 3rd Millennium BC, Iraqi Kurdistan, Mesopotamia, Tigris, Zagros, Cuneiform Texts

## THE AREA OF THE UPPER GREATER ZAB ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE (UGZAR) PROJECT IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE

Rafał KOLIŃSKI

Fieldwork in the area located on both banks of the Greater Zab River, north and northwest of Erbil, revealed ample information on the nature of the earlier and later 3rd millennium BCE archaeological assemblages in the region. The earlier period, representing the so-called Ninevite 5 culture, corresponding to Early Tigridian (ETG) 2–4 periods, feature not only distinct decorated Ninevite pottery but also some local specimens of painted and incised ware and a regional chipped stone industry based on local chert sources. The assemblages from the later period, corresponding to ETG 7–9 periods, besides typical pottery, yielded various categories of small finds: terracotta animal figurines, cart models and wheels, etc. Last but not least, three rock relief panels carved in the Gündk cave during the Late Akkadian period belong to the same phase.

**Keywords:** Mesopotamia, Early Bronze Age, Pottery, Settlement, Rock Relief

THE PLAIN OF KOI SANJAQ/KOYA (ERBIL, IRAQ) IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE.  
HISTORY, CHRONOLOGIES, SETTLEMENTS, AND CERAMICS

Cinzia PAPPI & Costanza COPPINI

The archaeological Survey of Koi Sanjaq/Koya (ASK) project, begun in 2016, is designed to assess the archaeological landscape of the region of Koi Sanjaq/Koya (Erbil, Iraq) in its entirety, including a chronological and typological analysis of the settlement patterns and the material culture of the region. Though the surface investigations, conducted so far in the southern and eastern sections of the area, indicate a consistent increase of settlements and settled areas at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, the fieldwork has also revealed a group of settlements associated with a rich repertoire of Ninevite 5 ceramics, including painted and incised-excised types. This paper provides an overview of the settlements and the material culture in the Koya plain and provides new insights into the historical geography of the area.

**Keywords:** ASK, Koi Sanjaq, Koya, Settlement Pattern, Ceramic, Survey, Iraq, Early Bronze Age

THE 3RD MILLENNIUM EVIDENCE FROM THE NORTH WESTERN SULAYMANIYAH SURVEY (NWSS).  
A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Marta LUCIANI

Since 2011, the international team of the North Western Sulaymaniyah Survey has carried out five field seasons (2011-1, 2011-2, 2012-1, 2012-2 and 2019) and two study seasons (2016 and 2018) to explore the pristine hilly region at the foot of the Zagros, in the provinces of Aghjalar, Surdash, the northern part of Bazyan and Chamchamal Merkez, i.e., sheets 82, 83, 84, 97 and 98 of the Iraqi Atlas of Archaeological Sites. Eighty-six sites were investigated, including several that had never been identified before. In about one quarter of the sites there were finds, mostly pottery sherds, that can be dated to the 3rd millennium BCE. This contribution provides a preliminary assessment of the results and discusses similarities with assemblages excavated in the area (e.g. Logardan) or north of the Lower Zab.

**Keywords:** Iraqi Kurdistan, NW Sulaymaniyah, Early Bronze Age, Aghjalar, Chamchamal

THE ERBIL PLAIN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE.  
NEW DATA FROM THE EXCAVATION AND SURVEY AT ALIAWA (KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ)

Luca PEYRONEL

The Erbil Plain, located at the conjunction between central Mesopotamia, the Upper Tigris, and the Zagros mountains, is a key area in which to investigate the cultural development during the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE, when the region experienced the Akkad and Ur III expansion. However, the late Early Bronze Age is still poorly known in the plain and only a few new sites currently investigated are revealing stratified sequences dated to this period. One of these is Aliawa, a 25 ha, multi-period settlement, which showed a substantial occupation especially for the EBA to LBA periods. The site – a 25 m high mound of 2 ha surrounded by an extensive lower town – displayed an uninterrupted occupational sequence from the Ubaid to the Islamic period. Excavations started in 2019 along the southern slope of the mound bringing to light a sequence of buildings and handicraft facilities dating to the final phase of the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2300–2000 BCE), with abundant material *in situ*. The article presents a preliminary evaluation of the Aliawa 3rd millennium evidence, combining data from the intensive survey and stratigraphic trench, and focusing on pottery and small finds, which are compared with materials from other settlements in Iraqi Kurdistan and discussed in the wider context of cultural developments in the Trans-Tigridian region.

**Keywords:** Aliawa, Iraqi Kurdistan, Early Bronze Age, Pottery Kilns

## A NEW CONCEPT OF SETTLEMENT IN NINEVITE 5 UPPER MESOPOTAMIA

Christophe NICOLLE, Raphaël ANGEVIN &amp; Juliette MAS

The emergence of several regional cultures follows Urukian disruption. Among these regional cultures, one corresponds more or less to the spread of the Ninevite 5 ceramics and to the foundation of new settlements, some of which were built on terraces. Neither villages nor towns, these settlements contrast with the urban planning in neighbouring regions, particularly the northwestern *Kranzhügeln* area, the Middle Tigris and Diyala Valleys. Recent excavations at Bash Tapa on the Erbil Plain have made it possible to study the design and evolution of these terrace systems throughout the period. They highlight the originality of the building of such settlements and the specificities of the social organization of the groups that built them. The long duration of this urbanistic practice leads to a reconsideration of the nature of the Ninevite 5 period.

**Keywords:** Ninevite 5 Period, Iraqi Kurdistan, Upper Mesopotamia, Bash Tapa, Settlement Patterns, Site Foundations, Terraces

## RURAL AND SMALL, YET CONNECTED AND COMPLEX. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE OCCUPATION AT KANI SHAIE AND BAN QALA IN THE BAZYAN-QARA DAGH CORRIDOR OF SOUTHERN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Steve RENETTE, Antonietta CATANZARITI,  
André TOMÉ & Terri TANAKA

The Early Bronze Age of southern Iraqi Kurdistan has not yet been substantially documented and has been somewhat difficult to detect in archaeological surveys. Excavations at two sites, Kani Shaie in the Bazyan Valley and Ban Qala in the Diwana Valley, have recently produced the first stratigraphically anchored evidence for settlements from the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE. These sites lie within a narrow corridor between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah defined by the Qara Dagh range to the west and the Baranand range to the east. Both are small sites, but the material evidence – pottery, architecture, sealings and other small objects – reflects their position between the Trans-Tigridian hilly lowlands and the Zagros Mountains. While contemporary sites north of the Lower Zab River share Ninevite 5 cultural practices and sites to the south on the lower Sirwan/Diyala River produced Scarlet Ware pottery, the material culture from Kani Shaie and Ban Qala cannot be as easily classified within these distinct traditions. In this paper, the overall Early Bronze Age material culture of the Bazyan-Qara Dagh corridor is summarized and contextualized. An archaeological assemblage of this period that has been documented at both Kani Shaie and Ban Qala is presented, as well as an analysis of site location and morphology documented by surface survey. This contribution aims to demonstrate that the Early Bronze Age of the Trans-Tigridian and Zagros regions was characterized by a highly varied, but profoundly connected cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** Kani Shaie, Ban Qala, Sulaymaniyah, Site Morphology, Cultural Assemblages

## FROM A MILITARY FORTRESS TO A MONUMENTAL COMPLEX. A FIRST TENTATIVE FUNCTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACES IN LOGARDAN

Johnny Samuele BALDI &amp; Régis VALLET

The currently available data on military and monumental architecture of the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE in the Trans-Tigridian region and the Zagros Piedmont are extremely limited. For this reason, the levels from the third quarter of the 3rd millennium brought to light during the latest excavation seasons on the summit of Logardan (Chamchamal area, Sulaymaniyah Governorate) represent significant evidence of the structures used first to defend and then to administrate a ‘border’ region. At present, the vestiges of the stronghold – later converted into a monumental complex – are only partially known. However, stratigraphic and architectural analysis, as well as the distribution of archaeological materials associated with the built spaces allow an initial reconstruction of the internal organization of these two structures. Their design features

are the result of local architectural traditions, Mesopotamian influences, and effective adaptive expedients with respect to the topography of the site. They compose a built environment with few definitive parallels, but with very clear functional qualities. However, the details of the defensive and monumental attributes of this frontier station raise many questions. How should the very notion of ‘frontier’ be interpreted in this particular area until recently considered as an irrelevant Mesopotamian periphery? And what might have been the political entities that established and administered their mutual boundaries in the Qara Dagh area?

**Keywords:** Logardan, Qara Dagh, Military Architecture, Monumental Architecture, Early Bronze Age IV

#### SEALINGS AND SEAL IMPRESSIONS FROM KANI SHAIE

Steve RENETTE

Excavations between 2013–2016 at Kani Shaie in the Bazyan Basin near Sulaymaniyah in southern Iraqi Kurdistan retrieved a range of artefacts with seal impressions from the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. The Late Chalcolithic clay sealings and a sealed numerical tablet are consistent with administrative practices documented throughout Greater Mesopotamia. In contrast, the Early Bronze Age sealings form a varied corpus, consisting of seal-impressed ceramic vessels, clay sealings that were attached to containers, door sealings, and wall sealings, from a range of archaeological contexts. Although present evidence is still limited, the imagery of the sealings correlates with different sealing practices: animal file scenes are only documented on seal-impressed jars, while clay sealings that were attached to containers all have a geometric design. This imagery connects Kani Shaie with contemporary sites within the Trans-Tigridian region and the central Zagros, where similar groups of seal impressions have been documented. However, despite widely shared glyptic styles, local communities developed their own sealing practices according to their specific, local needs. Finally, by the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE, a cultural reorientation took place toward central Mesopotamia and the Susiana, which is also visible in the glyptic evidence from a single jar sealing with a figurative design of the Early Dynastic II period.

**Keywords:** Kani Shaie, Trans-Tigridian Region, Seal Impressions, Glyptic Styles

#### ROCK RELIEFS IN PERSPECTIVE. A CONTEXTUAL READING OF GUNDIK AND DARBAND-I GAWR ICONOGRAPHY

Barbara COUTURAUD

Rock reliefs have always been considered as ideological landscape monuments. If we believe that reliefs have a close relationship with geography and landscape, then Iraqi Kurdistan during the Early Bronze Age is indeed one of the most propitious places for the development of rock art. Nevertheless, compared to reliefs of the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE, the four reliefs dating of the 3rd millennium BC in Iraqi Kurdistan that are studied in this paper have been less analysed. Three of them are grouped together in the cave of Gundik, near Akre (Duhok Governorate) and the fourth is in the Darband-i Gawr pass (Sulaymaniyah Governorate). In this paper, these reliefs of Iraqi Kurdistan are considered as the mark of a society or a local power to consecrate a place. Firstly, with the reliefs of Gundik, the iconographic program is revisited in connection with the context of the cave, and the extent to which these reliefs bear the seeds of an iconography that could be defined as northern Mesopotamian and more particularly associated with the current region of Kurdistan is also examined. Then the relief of Darband-i Gawr is compared with the stele of Naram-Sin and its relationship to the figuration of landscapes, and the question of whether the former could have inspired the latter is raised, in an attempt to sketch a reflection on the iconography of northern Mesopotamia.

**Keywords:** Iraqi Kurdistan, Relief, Rock Art, Iconography, Gundik, Darband-i Gawr

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GIRDLASHKIR (ERBIL, IRAQI KURDISTAN) TO THE KNOWLEDGE  
OF METALLURGY IN NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA DURING THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

Joaquín SISA-LÓPEZ DE PABLO, Anna BACH-GÓMEZ,  
Ignacio MONTERO & Miquel MOLIST

This paper contributes to the investigation of Ninevite 5 metallurgy in the Kurdistan region. Although there are a few studies about this topic focusing on northern Mesopotamia during the Early Bronze Age, there is a lack of information coming from the Iraqi Kurdistan area. This is also true for other aspects of the material culture since most information comes from archaeological sites in the Khabur basin. Recent archaeological fieldwork at Gird Lashkir (Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan) has revealed a stratigraphic sequence related to the Ninevite 5 period. Among the multiple episodes of occupation, a set of singular objects (such as animal figurines) and a stone mould related to the metallurgical production processes was recovered from floors and pits that had been intentionally refilled. An analysis has been carried out to understand the technological process used and its social implications regarding Early Bronze Age communities settled on the Erbil Plain. The ability to acquire metal artefacts is attested by the presence of a dagger and a pair of small rings, both found in a funerary context from the immediately following periods. An archaeo-metallurgical study (X-Ray Fluorescence) has been carried out to identify the raw materials and hypothesize about the extraction areas. This data will help to shed light on the manufacture, use and/or control over mineral resources and metal objects in northern Mesopotamia during the Ninevite 5 period.

**Keywords:** Metallurgy, Ninevite 5, Early Bronze Age, Upper Mesopotamia

THE CONTEXT OF WRITING AT KUNARA (3RD MILLENNIUM BCE)

Aline TENU & Philippe CLANCIER

Kunara is located less than 10 km from the present-day city of Sulaymaniyah in the valley of the Tanjaro, a perennial river in the Tigris basin. The main occupation dates from approximately 2200–2100 BCE. During this period, public buildings were constructed according to a comprehensive urban plan both in the upper and lower town. Two archives of cuneiform tablets of an administrative nature were discovered in buildings in the lower town. The first was a ‘flour office’ which recorded reception and deliveries of different types of flour. It was found in four of the six rooms of a half-buried building, which also yielded a large amount of pottery, mainly for storage (Area C). The second archive comes from another public building discovered to the north of the lower town (Area E). On one of the only tablets that is still legible, large quantities of produce were recorded. The fragmentary state of the document makes it impossible to determine the nature of the goods, but the volumes far exceed the needs of even an extended family. In this article, the cuneiform tablets are addressed as archaeological objects by considering their material characteristics as well as their conditions of manufacture, writing and conservation. The aim is to place these epigraphic discoveries in their archaeological context in a multi-scalar perspective.

**Keywords:** Early Bronze Age, Iraqi Kurdistan, Writing Practices, Destruction by Fire, Administration

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE AT QASR SHEMAMOK AND ITS CLOSE ENVIRONMENT.  
A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE CERAMIC EVIDENCE

Ilaria CALINI

Since 2019, the operations carried out by the French Archaeological Mission at Qasr Shemamok have revealed for the first time the presence of a 3rd millennium settlement in Area B-North, in the northern part of the citadel. The excavation of a large, mud-brick terrace, most likely dated to the Late Bronze Age, led to the discovery that this structure had been built directly on the surface of an ancient *tell* formed by the remains of a Ninevite 5 period occupation. The ceramic material found in some of the fill layers associated with this level clearly belongs to this tradition, already attested in the region.

Given these preliminary results, this article provides an initial presentation of the Early Bronze Age ceramic material and diagnostic elements attested at Qasr Shemamok, comparing this situation with late EBA evidence discovered during the same 2019 season at the nearby Kandara Qal, as well as with the data from surface surveys and ongoing excavations in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

**Keywords:** Qasr Shemamok, Iraqi Kurdistan, Ninevite 5, Comb-Incised Ware, Early Bronze Age

REGIONALIZED TRAJECTORIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE EARLY BRONZE AGE ZAGROS PIEDMONT.  
A CASE STUDY FROM KANI SHAIE, IRAQI KURDISTAN

Michael LEWIS

The first half of the Early Bronze Age (EBA, ca. 3100–2500 BCE) is contrasted with the preceding Late Chalcolithic (LC, ca. 4400–3100 BCE). The dawn of the EBA in northern Mesopotamia saw the reversal of many of the developmental trajectories encapsulated by the LC. Whereas the LC featured the gradual homogenization of pottery traditions, resource accumulation and redistribution, as well as burgeoning household/settlement hierarchies, the EBA saw the reversal of many of these trajectories in northern Mesopotamia. In its place, the EBA featured dynamic and highly regionalized decorative ceramic traditions and rural settlement patterns. Rather than uninterrupted growth, when compared with the LC, the first half of the EBA appears to be a period of socio-political devolution, cultural diversity and even societal collapse. This paper focuses on the EBA pottery assemblage from Kani Shaie, a small site in the Bazyan Valley of southeastern Iraqi Kurdistan. Preliminary analysis of the pottery has demonstrated that during the EBA, the site lay at the intersection of several distinctive ceramic regions, and the pottery assemblage presented here is ultimately a reflection of this locale. Observations of this assemblage are presented and a comparative approach situates the site and its pottery within the regional context of an interconnected landscape centred upon the Zagros and Tigridian Piedmont.

**Keywords:** Kani Shaie, Early Bronze Age, Ninevite 5, Ceramics, North-West Iran

WHAT DO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CERAMICS TELL US ABOUT CULTURAL IDENTITY? EXAMPLES FROM KUNARA  
(KURDISTAN, IRAQ)

Cécile VERDELLET

The archaeological site of Kunara, in the western Zagros foothills close to present-day Sulaymaniyah, covers ca. 10 ha and was an important local centre. Six periods of occupation have been recorded and the main one, dating to the late 3rd millennium BCE, has revealed careful town planning and massive buildings. The pottery assemblages from this phase highlight the position of the area in the Mesopotamian world. By defining significant assemblages, classified according to fabric, it has been possible to compare the finds from Kunara with those from the neighbouring regions. The similarities show that practices, beliefs and knowledge were shared with regions both to the north and the south. Kunara was probably not fully integrated into either the Tigridian or the Diyala regions, but rather, was the link between the two cultural areas. Moreover, the observation of original variants and the identification of unknown pottery types reveals its regional distinctiveness and are a sign of local craft development. However, high proportions of known pottery types and the recognition of chrono-cultural markers, such as Carinated Bowls, snake *appliqués* and combed decorations, allow a precise dating to the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, according to comparisons with the Mesopotamian material culture of the Early Bronze Age. The study of the late Early Bronze Age pottery (periods 4–5) at Kunara also reveals that the city, located at the border of Mesopotamia, was connected to it but was also a local centre that controlled its own territory and developed its own practices.

**Keywords:** Iraqi Kurdistan, Pottery Study, Early Bronze Age, Material Culture, 3rd Millennium BCE

BETWEEN THE TIGRIS AND THE ZAGROS PIEDMONT. A MATERIAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE FROM LOGARDAN IN  
THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

Melania ZINGARELLO

The historical and archaeological dynamics characterizing the Early Bronze Age (EBA) in the region east of the Tigris have so far been unevenly documented. In the western part of the Qara Dagh area, the site of Logardan, excavated since 2015, offers new data on the socio-cultural, economic and political framework of northern Mesopotamia during the 3rd millennium BCE. The first EBA occupation at the site has yielded a significant pottery assemblage apparently not connected with the widespread Ninevite 5 and Scarlet Ware ceramic traditions. On the other hand, a sequence covering the last centuries of 3rd millennium BCE provides strong evidence of the full inclusion of Logardan into the historical and cultural dynamics of EBA Mesopotamia. This paper investigates the EBA contexts at Logardan through its material culture in order to bring out the complex reality of the interactions among Mesopotamian communities during this period.

**Keywords:** Qara Dagh, Logardan, Early Bronze Age, Historical Dynamics, Material Culture

THE HILL ON FIRE. STRATEGIES OF CERAMIC PRODUCTION AT LOGARDAN DURING THE SECOND HALF  
OF THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE

Claire PADOVANI

Around 2200–2100 BCE, several pottery workshops were built at Logardan, in the western Zagros foothill. At the very end of the 3rd millennium, the site became a large-scale production centre. This process is observed at the micro-scale, through the planning and architectural evolution of the working installations, especially the kilns. It reveals several internal strategies based on the gradual sharing of the means of production. Thus, to highlight the regional integration of the pottery manufacture, the organizational process of the layout of the production area is correlated to the environmental and socio-economic settings of the communities in the western Qara Dagh.

**Keywords:** Kilns, Workshop, Foothill Economy, Western Qara Dagh, Early Bronze Age

