

NEWCOMERS AND AUTOCHTHONS. PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2014–2015 SURVEY IN THE KURDISTAN AUTONOMOUS REGION, IRAQ

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Abstract: The paper presents the results of the “Newcomers and autochthons” project conducted within the framework of the UGZAR field project in the Upper Greater Zab region in 2014–2015 (continued from 2012 and 2013). A preliminary recapitulation of the Late Chalcolithic 3–5 settlement pattern focuses on the so-called Uruk expansion, manifested in the presence of artifacts belonging to the southern Mesopotamian Uruk culture on some of the surveyed sites.

Keywords: Late Chalcolithic, Late Uruk, Uruk expansion, Kurdistan Autonomous Region, archaeological survey

The project “Newcomers and autochthons”, supported by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, has been conducted since the fall of 2013 within the frame of the Upper Greater Zab Archaeological Reconnaissance (UGZAR) project directed by Assoc. Prof. Rafał Koliński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań). The research program focuses on a detailed analysis of archaeological remains belonging to the Late Chalcolithic (LC) and Ninevite 5 periods (approximately 4200–2550 BC) found during the survey, with emphasis on the Late Chalcolithic 3–5 settlement and the so-called Uruk expansion, marked by the presence of artifacts belonging to the southern Mesopotamian Uruk culture

(for the results of two earlier seasons, see Ławecka 2015). The present report discusses, at some length, settlements which have yielded LC 3–5 pottery, leaving a preliminary review of the entire LC and Ninevite 5 settlement patterns to a time after the completion of fieldwork in the course of two more seasons planned for 2016 and 2017.

During the four field seasons carried out so far, 28 sites [*Fig. 1*] with Late Chalcolithic pottery were found and documented. Their identification is based on a preliminary analysis of the collected material. An exclusively LC 1–2 assemblage was noted on five sites (S056 located approximately 3 km south of S054, S068, S069, S078 and S095 in the Navkūr

plain [Table 1]). Late Chalcolithic 3–5 ceramics were found on 23 sites [Table 1; for the location see Fig. 1]. About half of the sites yielded only one diagnostic sherd each.¹ Such evidence is far from satisfactory, but further detailed examination of all the documented pottery fragments collected from these sites may yet provide new argu-

ments to reinforce the proposed chronology of at least some of them. Nevertheless, the pattern of settlement seems rather clear and consistent. With the exception of one site (S047), there is no evidence of any Late Chalcolithic 3–5 settlements in the mountainous zone and S047 is a small, three-hectare, multi-period tell with meager

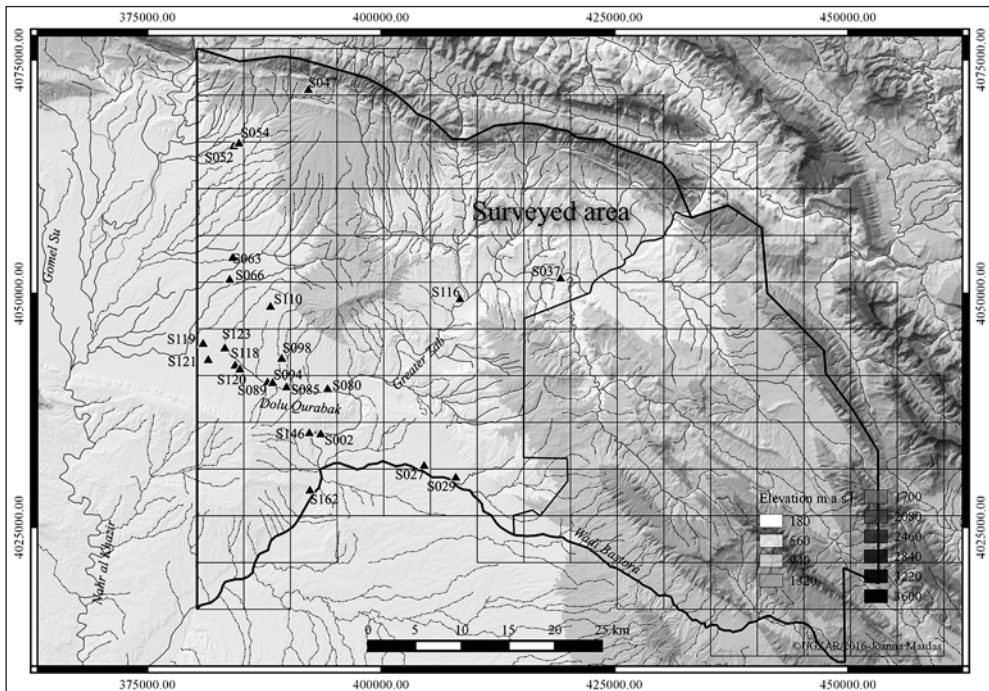


Fig. 1. Distribution of Late Chalcolithic 3–5 sites found within the frame of the UGZAR project (Compilation D. Ławecka, digitizing J. Mardas)

Team

Dates of work: 28 August–24 October 2014; 13 August–16 October 2015

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¹ Preliminary pottery dating used Jason Ur's unpublished catalogue of the major diagnostic pottery forms (see Ławecka 2015: Note 6). Only S146 was surveyed in its entirety; the larger sites were sampled and pottery was collected from selected areas.

Table 1. Sites with Late Chalcolithic pottery

Site No.	Locality name	LC 1–2	LC 3–5	Southern Uruk
S002	Kavrasor 2		+	+
S027	No name		+	+
S029	Kile Spî	+	+	
S037	Grd-î Makrdan	+	+	+
S047	Grd-î Perbebî 2	+	+	
S052	Grd-î Bedrî	+	+	
S054	Grd-î Kalakê 2		+	
S056	Grd-î Talbûk	+		
S063	Grd-î Rovîa	+	+	
S066	Grd-î Şix Barakat	+	+	
S068	Xarab-î Xamê	+		
S069	Xarab-î Doştek	+		
S078	Xarab-î Alî Şane	+		
S080	Grd-î Çemê Geüre	+	+	+
S085	Grd-î Aşî Kiçke	+	+	
S089	Grd-î Aşî Geüre	+	+	
S094	No name	+	+	
S095	Xarab-î Afifa	+		
S098	Xarab-î Çiaskan	+	+	+
S110	Grd-î Darbêstan	+	+	
S116	Ban-î Haşek	+	+	
S118	Grd-î Mûhammad Maülûd		+	
S119	Xarab-î Qûç		+	
S120	Xarab-î Farîç	+	+	
S121	Xarab-î Şabak		+	
S123	Sal-î Bağian	+	+	
S146	Kaür Kalan		+	+
S162	Hamrîn			+

local LC 1–2 and LC 3–5 sherds, situated in a valley leading to the Günduk Gorge in the Akre Massif.

Two sites, S052 and S054 were found in the highlands or the rolling plains to the southwest of S047. A large cluster of 13 sites (S063, S066, S080, S085, S089, S094, S098, S110, S118, S119, S120, S121 and S123; see *Table 1* and *Fig. 1*) was identified further to the south, mainly in the western Navkür plain which is generally rich in ancient settlement remains. Last are the seven sites located on the banks of major watercourses (S002, S027, S029, S037, S116, S146 and S162): five on the Greater Zab and the other two on the nowadays seasonal stream of Bastora Çai [see *Fig. 1*]. Unexpected and still incomprehensible is the total absence, observed in 2014, of any sites, not only Chalcolithic, but also from all periods preceding the Parthian, in the eastern part of the surveyed area (including the right bank of the Upper Greater Zab), which seems quite hospitable to settlement.

Southern Uruk pottery was found on a few sites only. One possible example is S098, which otherwise yielded a purely northern Late Chalcolithic assemblage. Three fragments were found on S080, a large tell with a lower city, apparently a local center continuously inhabited from at least the beginning of the Late Chalcolithic through the Late Assyrian period. A single fragment of beveled rim bowl was identified at S162, a site located on the right bank of the Greater Zab, in its southwestern run.

Just four sites in the southern part of the UGZAR project area yielded more abundant collections of southern Uruk pottery (at least a dozen specimens each). All were situated at the waterside, two on

the left bank of the Greater Zab river (S002 and S037), one (S146) on the right bank, while the fourth one, S027, was located on the right bank of a large seasonal stream, Bastora Çai, which constitutes the southern border of the project area. S037 is a small (about 0.6 hectare), steep, multi-period tell, with traces of continuous occupation from the Halaf to the Khabur period in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. Recent intensive construction has left pottery lying on the surface in abundance. Numerous Late Chalcolithic specimens were recorded. Both northern Late Chalcolithic 3–5 and southern Uruk sherds were found. In the southern material not only fragments of beveled rim bowls, but also of jars, bowls and red slipped sherds were represented.

Other sites with southern pottery were small and flat settlements with no traces of earlier occupation, such as S027, which revealed an almost purely southern Uruk

pottery collection, consisting, like S037 assemblage, of beveled rim bowls and other bowl and jar fragments. Site S002, featuring not only a substantial assemblage of Uruk pottery, but also clay wall cones and a fragment of terracotta sickle blade of southern origin, was identified already in 2011 (Ławecka 2015: Figs 4, 5). Regrettably, during our visit in October 2015, we found the site almost completely destroyed by a large gravel-pit [Fig. 3 top]. Only a tiny scrap of the settlement survived in the west; more sherds were collected from this area [e.g., Fig. 5:1, 4–12, 14].

S146 is undoubtedly the most interesting Late Chalcolithic settlement found during the last two seasons of fieldwork. It lies in the vicinity of S002, but across the river, on a high cliff, approximately 70 m above the bottom of the valley [Fig. 2]. Although the site is situated between two steep gullies, there is a convenient path, on the eastern side, leading down to the

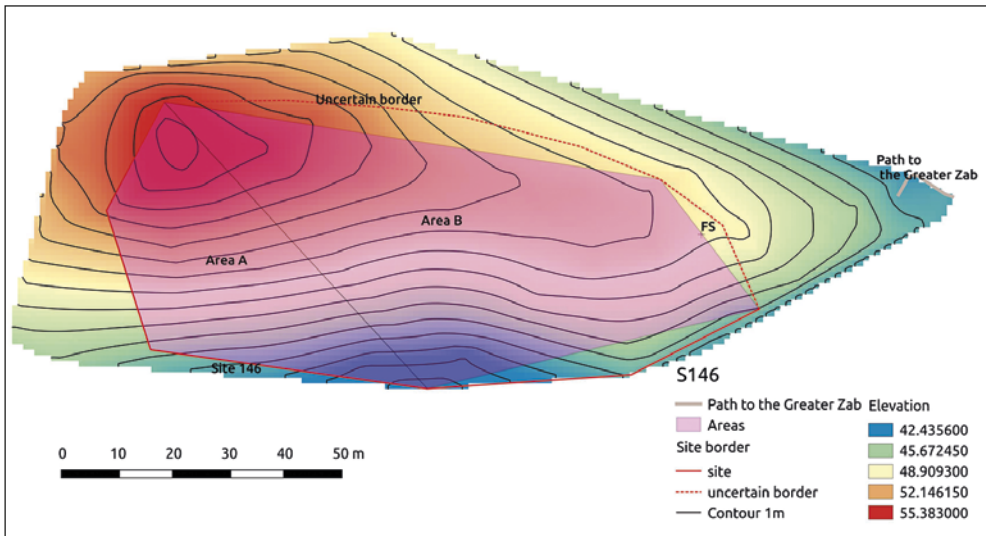


Fig. 2. Plan of Late Chalcolithic site S146
(Drawing X. Kolińska and J. Mardas, © UGZAR)

river. The settlement was clearly very small; the area marked on the plan includes also the slopes of small hillocks, where eroded material was found on rocky outcrops, apparently in secondary position. The pot-

tery collection consisted of a mix of southern Uruk and local Late Chalcolithic 3–5 sherds, with dozens of beveled rim bowl fragments scattered on the surface [see *Fig. 5:2, 3, 13, 15, 16*]. The main difference is



Fig. 3. Mutual position of sites S002 and S146 (location of sites marked) (Photos D. Ławecka)



Fig. 4. Fragments of clay cones from site S146
(Photos D. Piasecki, © UGZAR)

Fig. 5. (opposite) Selection of Uruk-style pottery from sites S002 (1, 4–12, 14, collected in 2015) and S146 (2, 3, 13, 15, 16) (Drawing L. Kachraman Walika)

1–3, 5 – beveled-rim bowls

Comparanda for 4–16:

4 – Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pls 10:G35, 62:G 907 (fine conical cup, string cut);

6, 8 – Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pl. 19:G 225; Oates 1985: 185, Fig. 3:43; Delougaz and Kantor 1996: Pl. 83:CC;

7 – Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pl. 19:G 227, 229;

9 – Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pl. 17:G 179, decoration: Pl. 17:G 186, 188, 189; photo: Pl. 80; Delougaz and Kantor 1996: Pl. 85:A;

10 – Stein et al. 1996: 237, Fig. 23:J (combed decoration);

11 – Delougaz and Kantor 1996: Pl. 90:A; Stein 2002: 166, Fig. 10:B;

12 – Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pl. 30:G 441, decoration: Pl. 76:D 103, 114; Delougaz and Kantor 1996: Pl. 109:F;

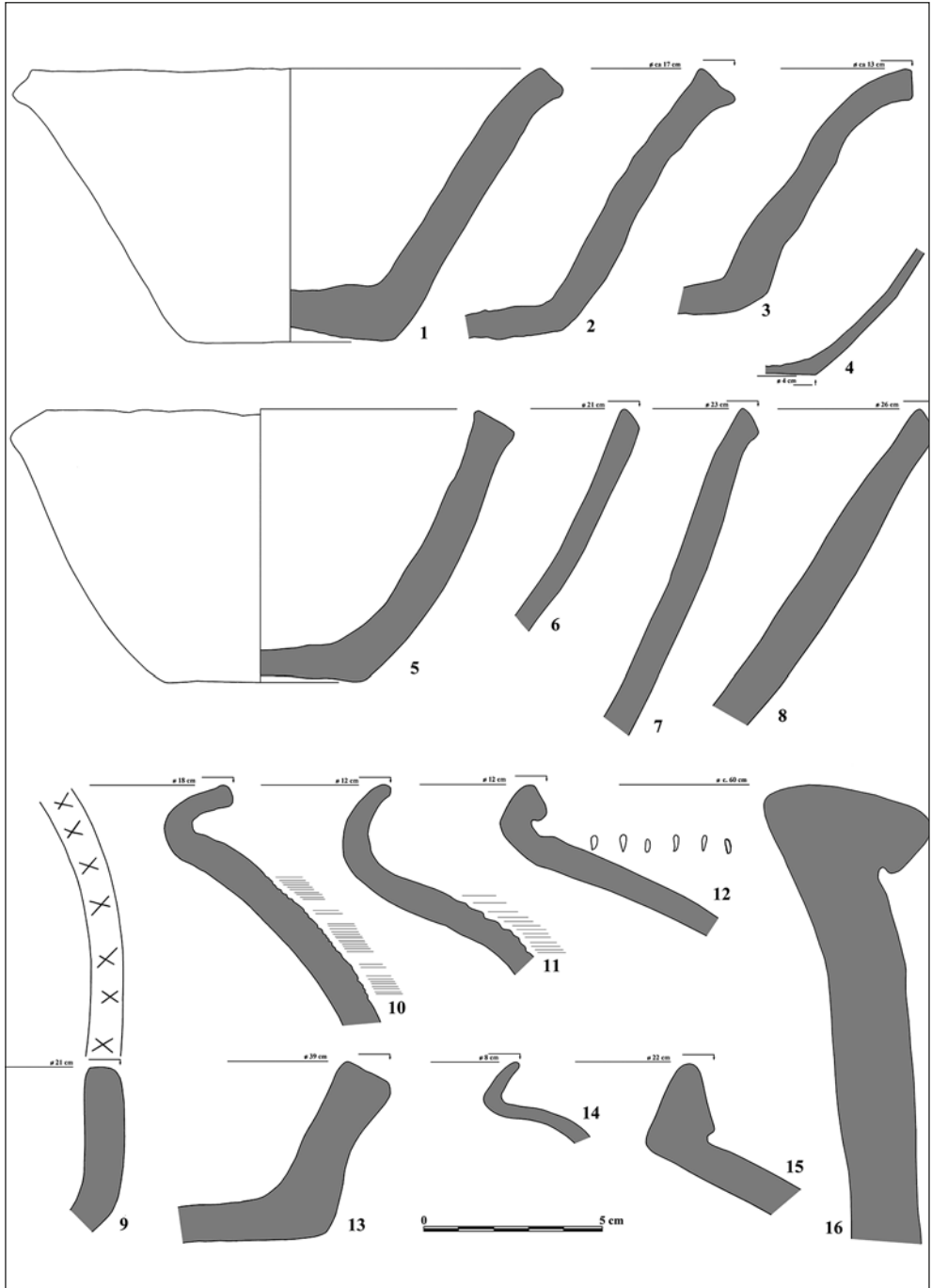
13 – Stein 1999: 17, Fig. 6:N;

14 – Stein et al. 1996: 237, Fig. 23:I; Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig 2014: Pls 30:G 467, 56:G 818;

15 – Brustolon and Rova 2007: Fig. 5:4; Pollock 1987: 134, Fig. 7:d; Ur 2010: 247, Fig. B.15:15;

16 – Pollock 1987: 134, Fig. 7:a.

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a higher percentage of local pottery, which is hardly present in the S002 inventory, and the presence of many crude and very thick fragments of large vessels possibly for storage.

Here, as at Kavrator 2 (S002), clay wall cones constituted an astonishing discovery [Fig. 4]. Ten fragments were found on the slope in the northwestern part of the site, a strong indication that a building of non-domestic function existed once on the summit of a small hillock. Its presence there is exceedingly astonishing in view of the small size of the settlement with hardly enough space for a larger number of buildings.

Both sites, S002 and S146, were inter-related functionally. They were located within sight of one another [see Fig. 3]. They both were flat, small sites yielding predominantly Uruk pottery, and were inhabited rather briefly during the LC 3–5 period, with no trace of either earlier or later occupation. As far as it may be judged from a surface collection alone, Kavrator 2 was a small settlement, but with some kind of public building(s) adorned with clay wall cones; a fragment of sickle blade and an obsidian tool may point to the inhabitants engaging in some agricultural activities.

S146 is more intriguing as regards its function. It may have been a kind of small watch-tower or stronghold, situated high on a cliff, in a relatively secure place with good visibility of both S002 and a large segment of the river valley. However, it is futile to speculate on the function of

the site (which regrettably is rather badly eroded) without first conducting even limited excavation.

In the northern part of the project area (Dohuk province), the situation as far as Late Chalcolithic settlement is concerned seems to be quite different (with the exception of a few sites close to the river bank). Southern Uruk pottery was extremely rare and indigenous Late Chalcolithic 3–5 material predominated. There were no single-period sites with abundant southern Uruk pottery comparable to S002 or S027. Moreover, most of the sites yielded both LC 1–2 and LC 3–5 material, which suggests a well-marked continuity between these two periods. Out of the 14 sites in this area, characterized by purely local Late Chalcolithic 3–5 pottery, only four did not yield any Late Chalcolithic 1–2 sherds.

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis expressed in the first preliminary report (Ławecka 2015: 597), after completing the survey north of the Upper Zab valley, still holds true: the Greater Zab valley marked the reach of southern Uruk culture and its impact on the local pottery tradition. The overall picture emerging from this preliminary analysis of the occurrence of southern Uruk pottery in the western Kurdistan Autonomous Region of Iraq seems to be coherent. Quite frequent in the Erbil plain, southern ceramics were scarce or almost completely absent to the north of the Upper Zab valley.

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