Archaeological Survey of Girdi Qala North Mound

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From October 3rd to October 5th, a surface survey was carried out on the North Mound of Girdi Qala (Fig. 1). The team was composed of four members: Régis Vallet, Rateb al Debs, Clélia Paladre and Adel Hama Amin. This surface survey allows us to realize the great damages caused by the field labour. Indeed, the site was heavily torn apart by deep passes made by the tractors. Thus, archaeological material and large stones were taking out of the ground causing great loss for the scientific knowledge (Fig. 2a and 2b). Nevertheless, these ravages had at least the merit of giving us an idea on the nature of the sediment (colours and textures) and the richness of this field.

Fig. 1 - Girdi Qala North Mound, seen from the Main Mound.

Fig. 2a - Deep ploughed land and stones removed from the ground by ploughing, at the centre of the mound, view from the East.

Fig. 2b - Other view of the site, from the West.

Methodology

The site was carefully subdivided into eight zones, numerated from I to VIII. We based this subdivision according to the results of the geomagnetic survey carries out by Lionel Darras, to the micro-topography of the mound and to preliminaries observations on the concentration of archaeological material and stones visible on the surface.

The extremities of the mound were isolated. It composed the zones I, II and VIII (the west extremity was subdivided into two parts because of the substantial extend of the area). The centre composed the zone IV. Topographically, it is the highest point of elevation of the site. The north face composed the zone III. The anomalies detected by the geomagnetic survey and the concentrations of material visible on the surface were also taken into account to establish this zone. The south face composed the zones V and VI (as with the zones I and II, we had to subdivided it face to its substantial extend). It was characterized as the exact opposite of zone III; very few archaeological materials were visible on the surface and only a small amount of anomalies was detected during the geomagnetic survey. Finally, a micro elevation just after the centre of the mound was isolated based on the high concentration of archaeological material and of the high number of anomalies detected during the geomagnetic survey. It composed the zone VII.

Results (Fig. 3)

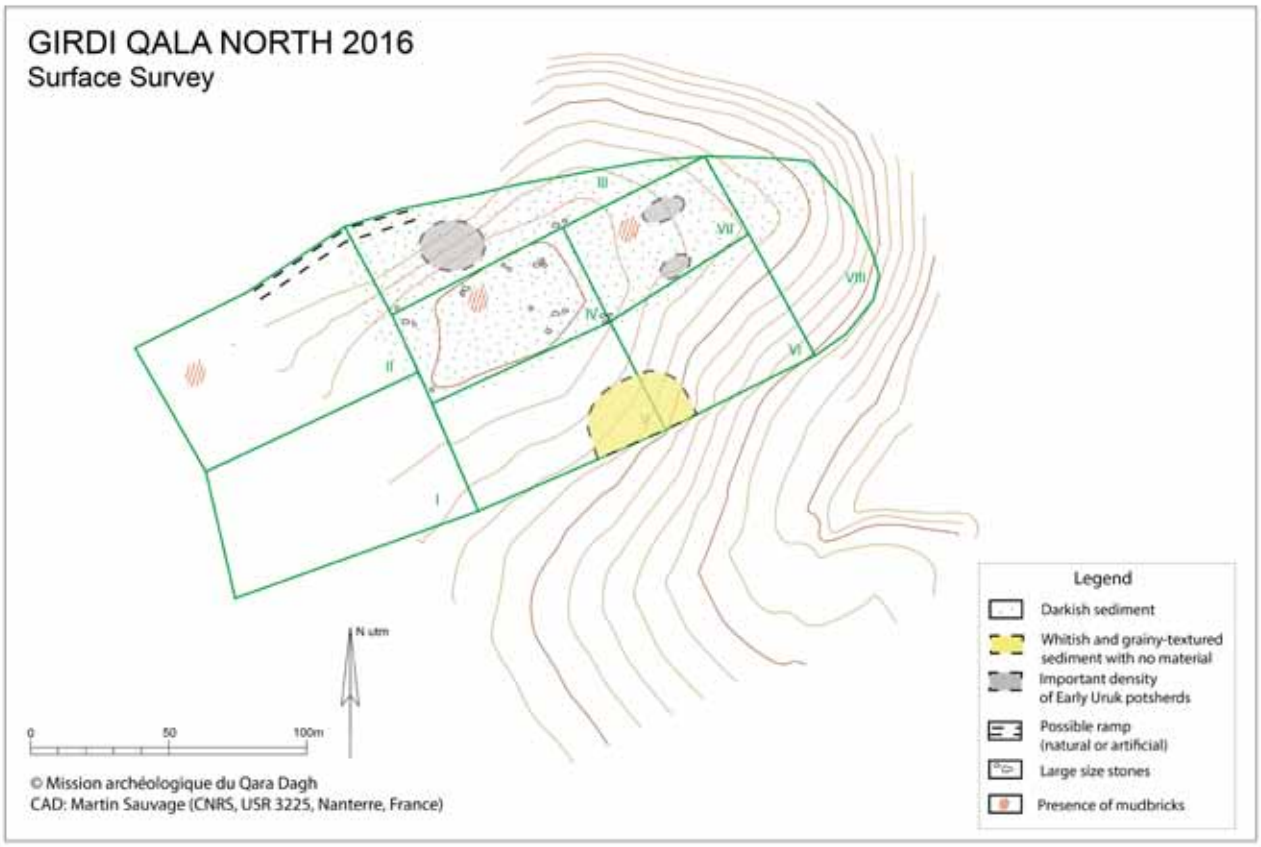

Fig. 3 - Plan of the archaeological survey, compilation of the observations made on the field.

Zone I and II

These zones provided an especially low proportion of materials (only 372 diagnostic sherds for zone I and 306 for zone II). The majority of the sherds are coming from the area near the zones III, IV and V. Just at the border with zone III and IV, a dark clay sediment characterized the ground. However, it has to be noted that some mudbricks fragments and some clayey sediment were observed in the western part of the zone II.

Zone III

It yielded an especially high proportion of materials (1036 sherds). In the centre, a high concentration of sherds and almost complete southern Uruk ceramics (BRB, Flower Pots and plates) and animals bones were observed. This concentration corresponds to an important anomaly detected during the geomagnetic survey. The entire ground was characterised by a darkish clayey sediment. Moreover, at the north-west extremity of the zone, a path along the slop, leading down to the river below, was visible. It could be an ancient ramp, artificial or natural (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 - Picture of the possible ramp in zone III, view from the North.

Fig. 5 - Basalt weight from zone IV (GQD P 1205.1).

Fig. 6 - Painted ceramic pastille from zone IV (GQD TC 1205.1)

Fig. 7 - : *In situ* stone in zone IV, view from the West.

Zone IV

This zone delivered an average proportion of archaeological materials: 601 sherds, a door socket, a basalt weight (Fig. 5) and a painted ceramic pastille (Fig. 6). Here again, we can observe that the ground was composed of darkish clayey sediment and some mudbricks fragments could also be observed. Moreover, many stones (middle and large size) were scattered in the entire zone (Fig. 7).

Fig. 8 - Ceramic cone from zone V (GQD Tc 1206.1).

Fig. 9 - Stone mortar from zone VI (GQD P 1207.1).

Zone V

It was especially poor in archaeological material: only 142 sherds and a ceramic cone discovered next to the border with the zone IV (Fig. 8). The ground was composed of an easily distinguishable sediment; it was clearer and grainy-textured. Moreover, a large "patch" of much clearer sediment with no archaeological material was noted that in the southeast corner of this zone.

Zone VI

It provided an average proportion of archaeological material: 738 sherds and a stone mortar (Fig. 9). However, this proportion gives a distorted image of its occupation since the majority of the material is coming from the northern edge of the zone, along zone VII. A clear subdivision of this zone was also visible from a sediment point of view. In the north part (along zone VII), it was a darkish clayey sediment, whereas the rest of the surface displayed a light grainy-textured sediment. It has to be noted that the "patch" visible in the zone V also appears in this zone with the same characteristics.

Zone VII

This zone yielded an especially high proportion of materials (1003 sherds). Moreover, it showed two important concentrations of southern Uruk ceramics (BRB, Flower Pots and plates) and animals bones, that correspond to anomalies detected by the geomagnetic survey. The sediment was clayey and darkish.

Zone VIII

This last zone was especially poor in archaeological material (only 209 sherds). As in zone VI, the majority of the material comes from the north sector. Moreover, here again, a clear sedimental subdivision of the zone was visible, dark clay and in the north part, lighter and grainy-textured in the south part.

Conclusion (Fig. 10):

It seems clear that a distinction needs to be done between the north east part and the rest of the mound. The difference of sediment (darker and clayey), the crushing majority of southern Uruk ceramics and the geomagnetic results allow us to suggest the location of an Uruk site

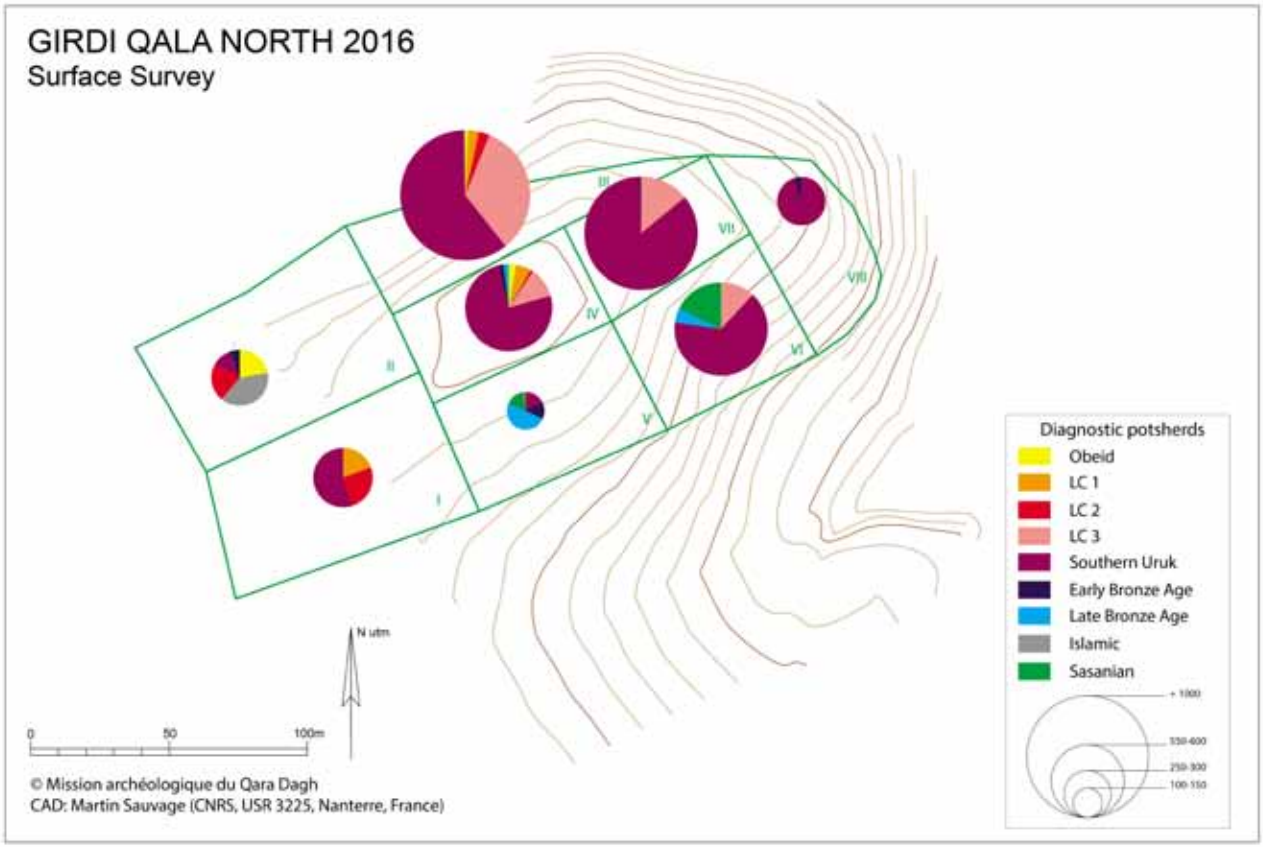

Fig. 10 - : Plan of the archaeological survey, results of the ceramic study.

in this part of the tell. It corresponds to the zone III, IV and VII. If zones I, VI and VIII delivered also a high proportion of southern Uruk ceramics, the majority of the Uruk material comes from the areas along the precedent zones. By there, these zones give us the southern limits of the Uruk site (Fig. 11), as confirmed by the geophysics (*supra*). If we add the fact that storage vessels and cooking wares were predominant and the discoveries of a stone mortar and a basalt weight, we can suggest a residential function to the Uruk occupation. This point is corroborated by the discovery in zones IV and V of a ceramic cone and a painted ceramic pastille, and by the excavations (Trench D, *infra*).

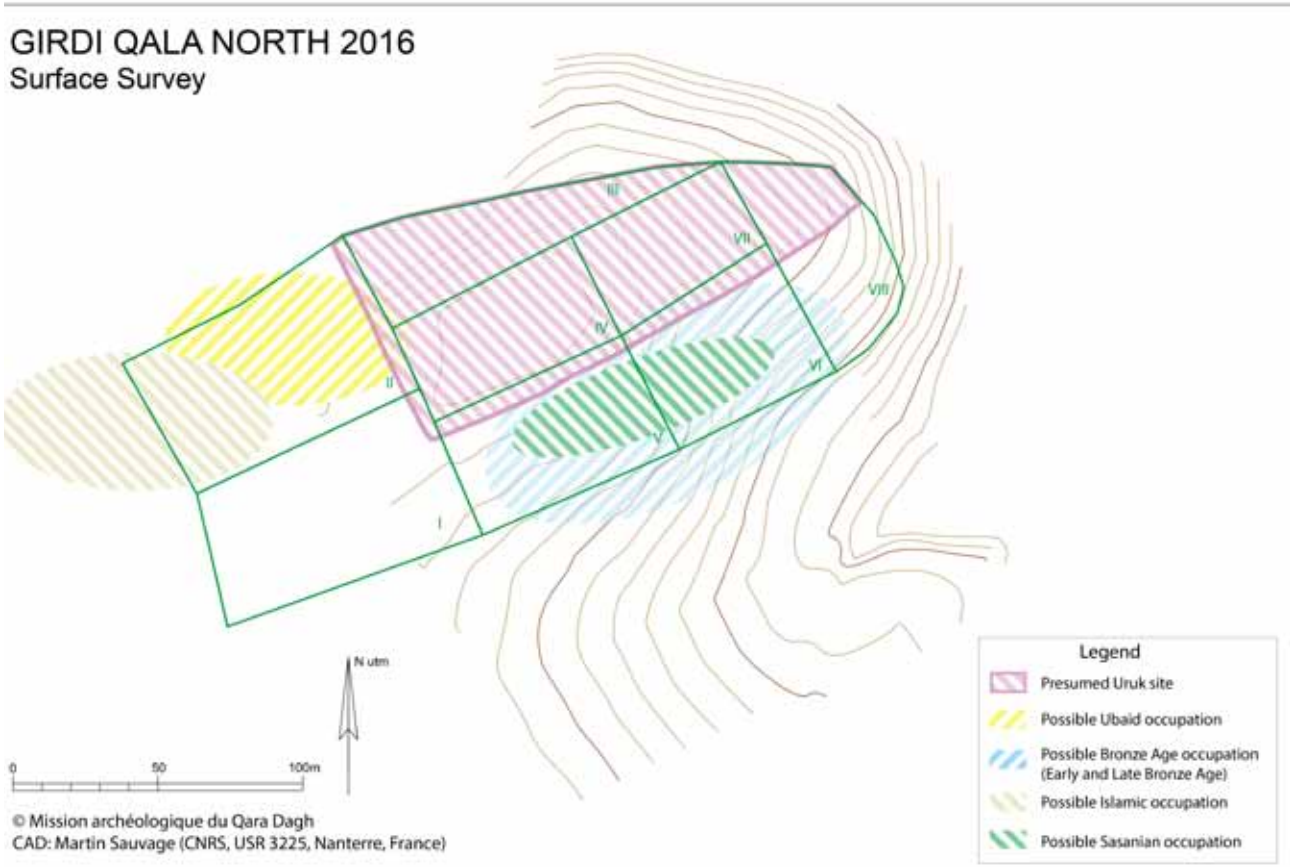

Fig. 11 - : Location of the possible ancient occupations at Girdi Qala North Mound.

However, some sectors have yielded a relatively significant amount of pottery dating back to others periods. Zone I delivered Islamic sherds while zones V and VI Sasanian fragments. An occupation of the north mound of Girdi Qala dating back to these periods would not be a surprise. Moreover, zones V and VI delivered an important amount of Bronze Age potsherds (Late and Early Bronze Age). Thus, we can suggest a scattered occupation of the south part of the mound at this period, especially if we refer to the quite different nature of the sediment (clearer and grainy-textured) compare to the north-east part. Last but not least, a high proportion of Ubaid and LC1 sherds was identifying in zone II and some were also attested in zones III and IV. This suggests an earlier occupation of the north-west sector of the mound[1].

1. For the chalcolithic material from Girdi Qala North Mound, see Baldi, *infra*.