



INTRODUCTION

Régis Vallet

The third campaign of the archaeological mission to Girdi Qala and Logardan (fig. 1) lasted from 16 September to 12 October, 2017, through four weeks of field-work. The team, under the direction of Régis Vallet (IFPO-CNRS), gathered 18 researchers and engineers from France, Belgium, Italy, Syria and Iraq (by alphabetic order): Hawkar Ahmed Abdullrahman (Salahaddin University, Arbil, archaeologist), Rateb al Debs (archaeologist), Johnny Samuele Baldi (IFPO, archaeologist and ceramologist), François Bridey (Musée du Louvre, archaeologist), Victoria de Casteja (CNRS, database expert),



Fig. 1 - Map of Northern Iraq showing the localization of the sites.

Laurent Colonna d'Istria (University of Liège, epigrapher and archaeologist), Alisée Devil-
 lers (University of Liège, archaeologist), Alain Gaulon (archaeologist), Micheline Kurdy
 (architect), Hugo Naccaro (University of Paris 1, archaeologist), Sidonia Obreja (Univer-
 sity of Paris 1, archaeologist), Clélia Paladre (University of Paris 1, archaeologist), Nariman
 Khana Rahim (Salaheddin University, Arbil, archaeologist), Kamal Rahoof (Directorate of
 Antiquities of Sulaymaniah, archaeologist), Martin Sauvage (CNRS, archaeologist), Claudia
 Venier (University of Liège, archaeologist), Lorvan Walika (drawer) and Melania Zingarello
 (University of Strasbourg, archaeologist and ceramologist) (fig. 2). Mustafa Ahmad (Univer-
 sity of Lyon 2, archaeologist and ceramologist) studied the pottery from Girdi Qala Trench
 B and Vincent Tournadre (ICONEM) joined us later on to start the aerial mapping and



Fig. 2 - Part of the 2017 team, at Logardan Trench E.

modelling of the sites and their surroundings (appendix B). The logistic team was composed by Garmian Ruzgar Fatah and Jaza Kader (site guards), Hallo Wasie Karim (cook), Faizulla Abdullah Muhammad, Muhammad Tahir and Kamal Jalal Muhammed (drivers) and Jamal Jalal Muhammad, steward of the expedition and keeper of our storage (fig. 3). The whole team was accommodated in the city of Chamchamal, close to the sites, few kilometres to the south-east¹.

1. Needless to say that nothing would have been possible without the assistance of the 22 fine workers that worked with us. We are very grateful to the authorities of Shorsh and Chemchemal for their friendly welcome and efficient help. We wish to express our warmest thanks to Kamal Rashid, director of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage of Suleymaniah, for his constant support, greatly appreciated by all of us. The project is sponsored by the Excavations Committee of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MEAE), the IFPO and the cultural service of the french embassy in Iraq, the University of Liège (Belgium), the University of Paris 1 and the CNRS.



Fig. 3 - Kak Jamal Jalal Muhammad, steward of the expedition.

Excavations on the sites of Girdi Qala and Logardan started in fall 2015, after two brief surveys in 2014 and 2015. The scientific purpose of the project is to study the formation of complex societies, the appearance of territorial polities and long-term intercultural processes. Indeed, despite recent developments (Kopaniias and MacGinnis 2016), southern Kurdistan remains poorly documented. The project is more specifically focused on the Chalcolithic, following on from our previous work at both ends of the Fertile Crescent, at Tell el 'Oueili in southern Iraq and Tell Feres in northern Syria, and on the Bronze Age, two periods for which the redefinition of cultures on a regional basis is a major issue. The main goal of the first campaigns was to begin to establish the sequence of the sites, by excavating well-preserved in situ levels.

In 2016, beside a the long-term stratigraphic Trench B in Girdi Qala, we had opened three new trenches,

after geophysics and archaeological surveys : Trench D on the north mound of Girdi Qala, and Trenches D and E at the top of Logardan, respectively at the north edge of the summit and on the upper terrace of the site. The promising results collected in the four trenches (see our 2016 report) led us to continue and enlarge the same operations in 2017.

At Girdi Qala Trench B, at the top of the southern slope of the main mound (15m) of the site (Fig. 4)², work focused on level 6, now entirely cleared at the bottom of the trench,

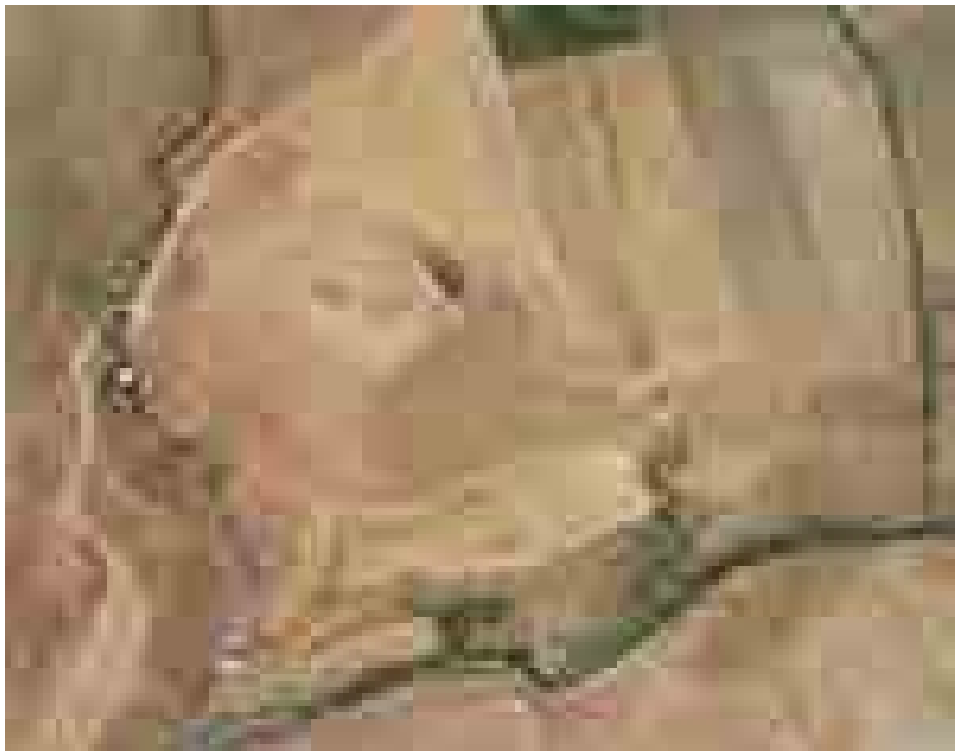


Fig. 4 - Aerial view of Girdi Qala.

2. For a physical description of the two close sites (2.5 km away) and their natural settings, see our 2015 report.

2.4m below the surface, after removal of the heavily disturbed (by later pits) remains of level 5, a multi-phased Sasanian house provided with some kind of a forecourt (Laurent Colonna d'Istria, Alisée Devillers, Claudia Venier and Mustafa Ahmad). Level 6 below (Fig. 5),



Fig. 5 - Orthostatic view of Girdi Qala Trench B.

contains a monumental Hellenistic building, with strong mudbrick walls (up to 1.8m wide), preserved on more than 1m height, coated by several layers of fine plaster (Fig. 6). The building has indeed a long history, and displays a final phase of occupation by some kind of squatters (level 6A). The material yielded dates to the beginning of the Hellenistic period (with a



Fig. 6 - Girdi Qala Trench B: Alisée Devillers (right) and Claudia Venier (left) surveying the Hellenistic building of Level 6.

piece of motif existing since the Achaemenid period -Mustafa Ahmad). Because of the obvious interest of this official building, we plan to enlarge Trench B next year, in order to excavate level 6 more extensively.

On the North Mound of Girdi Qala, we know since 2016 that most of its surface is occupied by a small Uruk colony (see our 2016 report) that Trench D, on the northern slope of this low mound, has begun to explore. Five levels of domestic architecture were already known. In 2017, the trench was lengthened of four new squares, reaching a total length of 30m (Fig. 7). This allowed us to recognize about ten successive levels of occupation, all of



Fig. 7 - Orthostatic view of Girdi Qala Trench D.



Fig. 8 - Girdi Qala Trench D: Level 6 appeared just under the stone and sherd floor of level 5 (on the right, Rateb al Debs).

them dating back to the Middle Uruk period (Clélia Paladre, Régis Vallet, Alain Gaulon, Kamal Rahoof and Rateb al Debs).

Level 2 is represented by small constructions, maybe tripartite in plan, which we planned to clear more extensively but that turned out disappointing, disappearing quickly in the ploughing. Level 3 contains a large building, with stone foundations up to 1.2 m in width. The building was provided with pottery pipes (similar to those found in the Late Uruk colonies) to drain wastewaters and some clay cones were found in the associated layers. It was severely levelled and followed by a period of abandonment (level 2B), not of the entire site but of that specific place, during which a tomb was dug through one of its walls.

In the slope to the north, the numerous floors of level 4A provided most of the findings of the trench (including a nice stamp seal - Clélia Paladre *infra*), while level 4B contains a building with an especially wide entrance (1.1m wide). Level 5 is a carefully pebbled open space, entirely covered with stones and sherds, cut to the north by large pits full of pottery, especially BRB. Those large tips, at the periphery of the settlement, where probably in use during the whole life of the enclave. Finally, level 6, immediately below the floor covering of level 5 (Fig. 8), is attested by another building provided with stone foundations (but thinner walls than level 3), and the sequence could continue below as we stopped here.



Fig. 9 - Aerial view of Logardan.

The most significant feature is that any local shapes or wares are virtually absent: 98% of the pottery of Trench D belong to the south-Mesopotamian Middle Uruk horizon (as at Uruk Eanna VIII-VI, Abu Salabikh Uruk Mound, Nippur Inanna XX-XVII or Gurga Chiya). The whole panoply of the Middle Uruk assemblage is documented (Johnny Samuele Baldi), with massive amounts of Bevelled-rim bowls, that we stop collecting after we get 1200 pieces.

At Logardan (Fig. 9), the excavations provided also clear evidence for an Uruk presence. In 2016, Trench D opened at the top excavated on four levels, on a surface that reached more than 400 sq. m in 2017 (Fig. 10), with a height difference of about 6m between the surface and the deepest vestiges (Johnny Samuele Baldi, Hugo Naccaro and François Bridey). Level 4 is represented by three distinct architectural phases of a monumental complex dating from Early Uruk (Eanna XII-IX) and beginning of Middle Uruk (Eanna VIII-VII). The Early Uruk buildings of Levels 4b-4c yielded the same assemblage collected in the bottom levels (8-10) of Girdi Qala Trench C (for our 2015 results, see now VALLET R., BALDI J. S., NACCARO H., RASHEED K., SABER S. A. AND HAMARASHEED S. J. 2017), while the assemblage of Level 4a matches with GQC Levels 7-3. However, unlike Trench C at Girdi Qala, where a local LC2-LC3 tradition was also documented, Level 4 of Logardan Trench D contained exclusively south-Mesopotamian-related shapes (Johnny Samuele Baldi).

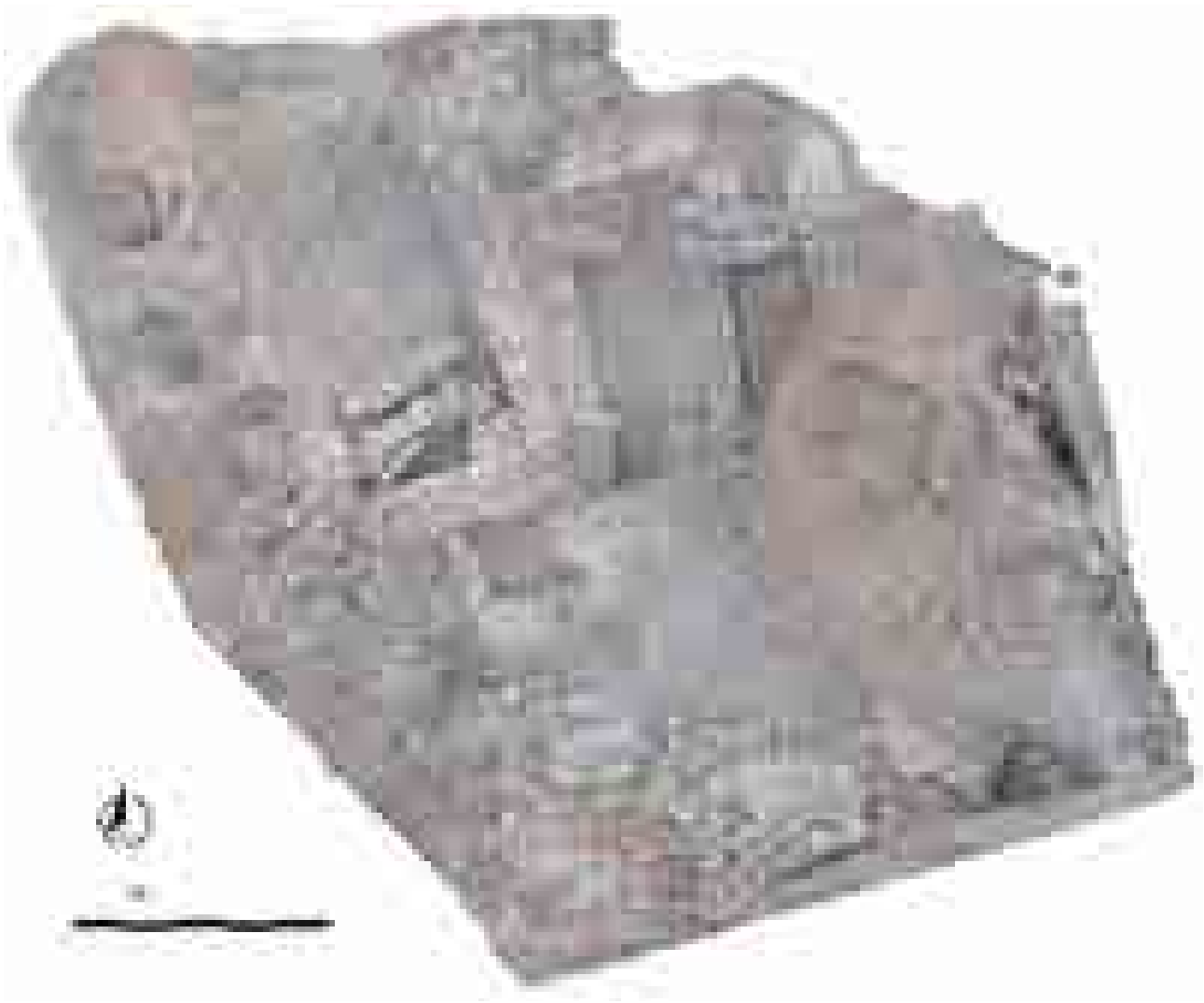


Fig. 10 - Orthostatic view of Logardan Trench D.

In 2017, the clearing of the monumental building of level 4b remained our main objective, but didn't progress very much in plan, due to the increasing amount of later deposits as the excavations progress towards the inside of the tell (Fig. 11). However, we have now a much better understanding of the stratigraphy and the evolution of the successive occupations. The first Early Uruk phase recognized so far, Level 4c, that sees the initial building of the mudbrick terrace (without buttress during this phase), is still very little known but could be characterized by some agglutinated architectures rather than wide planned structures as in the next level. During a second phase (Level 4b), the terrace is rebuilt and raised to constitute the base of the west wing of a large complex, of which we have for the time being the west wing (with a main room of 7m x 3.5m, i.e. 24.5 sq. m) of a possibly bi-partite building, part of an acropolis probably covering the whole summit of the site (see Trench E, below). Level 4a represents the last stage dating back to the 4th millennium occupation and a major phase in the evolution of the area. The monumental building of Level 4b no longer exists, replaced by quite small agglutinated units, with narrow doors through very strong walls, suggesting that the complex became some sort of stronghold.



Fig. 11 - From left to right: Hugo Naccaro, Johnny Samuele Baldi, Victoria de Casteja and Rateb al Debs, standing on Level 3c. In the back, the east section of Trench D, with levels 1-2-3a1-3a2 and 3b. Level 4 is deeper as we progress to the south-east



Fig. 12 - Logardan Trench D: Micheline Kurdy surveying the architectures of Levels 3c-3d that just appeared, nested in the Uruk ruins.

As the trench was enlarged to the East, we discovered, almost nested within the ruins of the Uruk building and systematically taking advantage of it, an additional early Bronze Age level (3d), ED III in date, provided with nice stone paving, which could represent, after a long gap and together with the following level 3c, another stronghold overlooking the site (Fig. 12). The following Bronze Age levels, labelled 1-3a-b from top to bottom (3a divided into two phases, 3a1 and 3a2), saw the construction and use of more than 45 pottery kilns, some of them offering a unique perspective on firing technologies that were not documented for the 3rd millennium. The Early Bronze pottery assemblage finds the most consistent parallels in the ED III to 'Ur III' phases of the Tigridian Region, with connections with the neighbouring areas (Hamrin, Upper Diyala and Khabur Valley), including limited but important parallels with Southern Mesopotamia (Melania Zingarello).



Fig. 13 - Orthostatic view of Logardan Trench E.

Trench E (Fig. 13), on the upper terrace of the site, more to the East, gave probably the most unexpected results of the campaign, which led to a major revision of its sequence. Originally, following a detailed survey, geomagnetic and archaeological, it was devised to provide information on the Bronze Age occupation of the site. And in 2016 indeed, Late and Early Bronze material, and architecture, were found, a storage building and the access way to the 'Citadel' (see our 2016 report), even if we were wondering about the high quantity of mixed material, Uruk and Early Bronze in particular. It was clear that the stratigraphy was far from being set, but we were expecting an important Bronze Age sequence. In 2017, the Trench was

extended in all directions (except the north), and it turned out that the Uruk occupation was much closer to the surface than expected, and the late 3rd millennium material gathered so far entirely out of context.

Roughly, Trench E (Martin Sauvage, Melania Zingarello, Sidonia Obreja and Hawkar Ahmed Abdullrahman) produced the same sequence than Trench D, except that the late 3rd millennium occupation (ED III to Ur III) is here missing, replaced if we may say by Late Bronze layers (Levels IA-IB) displaying mostly kilns. Immediately resting below those layers are three levels, III, IVA and IVB, respectively early 3rd millennium (ED I), Middle and Early Uruk in date, the two latter contemporaneous with their counterparts of Trench D.

As we already knew, the entrance to the top of the site was located in the west end of the trench, its passageway being rebuilt and enlarged at the same place through time. In front of it, the slope is quite steep, and leads to a large rectangular courtyard, surrounded by rows of small rooms at level III, some of them equipped with a very narrow opening (0.2m) flanked by outward walls, possibly silos for the storage of grain. It is possible that the Uruk layout was quite the same, but we have not yet enough to say. At the opposite of the trench (Fig. 14), the room revealed by the survey proved to be a storage (containing jars in level III), turned into a craft area during level IVA, with a triple kiln of the same type than in Girdi Qala C level 7.



Fig. 14 - Logardan Trench E, from the east. In the forefront, the storage rooms under excavation.

It is probably too early to pretend to draw any definitive conclusions, but despite long-standing assumptions that the Uruk expansion began during the late LC3 phase, it seems now clear in the Qara Dagħ area that contact with Southern Uruk people occurred from a very early period (late LC2). In terms of absolute chronology, the Uruk expansion at Girdi Qala and Logardan does not appear around 3600 BC, but rather 3900 BC.

Moreover, the data collected so far begin to shed light on the history and organization of the south-Mesopotamian presence on the two sites. At the beginning of the 4th millennium BC, the upper part of Logardan was occupied by a monumental acropolis, while artisans were used to produce south-Mesopotamian ceramics at the foot of the Main mound of Girdi Qala (GQC levels 10-8), high mound that probably housed a LC village. Later, at the beginning of the Middle Uruk, the top of Logardan was reused for small-scale domestic activities, while Uruk ceramics were still produced at the Main mound of Girdi Qala (GQC levels 7-3). Finally, a bit later, during the mature Middle Uruk, Logardan was abandoned and south-Mesopotamian settlers lived in a small village (1 ha) on the North mound of Girdi Qala, but still produced pottery, at least for a while, at the foot of the Main mound (GQC levels 2-1). Needless to say that a lot of work remains to be done to corroborate this scenario (we don't have yet the foundation level of the Uruk colony neither on the North mound of Girdi Qala nor at Logardan, and only a part of the sequence of the Uruk occupation at the foot of the Main mound), but the available data point in this way.

Finally, it is most probable that the early Uruk diaspora was not confined to our sites, but spread on the whole plain of Chemchemal and neighbour areas (Kirkuk, Nuzi). However, it is possible that the Qara Dagħ represented the limit of its expansion in the late LC2, as there is not (yet) evidence of a Southern Uruk manifestation east of this range before the LC3. It is very likely that the valleys of the Zagros Piedmont in the Qara Dagħ area were part of crucial exchange zone centred on a main road network: the so-called Great Road of Khorasan. Girdi Qala and Logardan could represent initial steps of the building of the Uruk network in that direction.



From left to right: Kak Serkaut, Jaza Kader, Garmian Ruzgar Fatah and Jamal Jalal Muhammed at Girdi Qala Trench D.