

CHALCOLITHIC CERAMICS FROM GIRDI QALA TRENCH D (NORTH MOUND): MORPHO-STYLISTIC FEATURES AND REGIONAL PARALLELS

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The assemblage from Girdi Qala Trench D processed during the 2017 campaign does not present any surprising feature and largely confirms the typological and chrono-cultural characteristics already observed in 2016. Almost all (about 97%) the 11.808 sherds belong to a standard southern-Mesopotamian Middle Uruk repertoire, with a very limited quantity (less than 2%) of local late LC3-early LC4 chaff-tempered pottery and sporadic (about 1,5%) Early Bronze samples or Ubaid specimens (with black-on-buff painted decorations or combed wavy lines)¹. This little quantity of 5th millennium intrusive sherds, confirms that a late Ubaid-LC1 installation has existed at least in the north-western sectors of Girdi Qala northern mound (see Paladre *et al.* 2016, 89-97).

Generally speaking, the large amount of the assemblage fits well with the structures identified in Trench D. Medium-sized bowls, domestic storage jars, some fine containers and cooking pots belong to morpho-functional categories consistent with everyday activities carried-out on a domestic scale by south-Mesopotamian settlers in their-own residential areas.

The only noticeable difference from the 2016 material is the amount of the sherds (much more abundant in 2017) because of the excavation of several large pits filled with pottery. Nevertheless, despite the amount of ceramics in secondary deposition, the fragmentation ratio is very high (about 43% all levels and all ceramic types combined), as confirmed by the quantity of complete pots collected. It indicates that the materials from the different levels identified in Trench D have to be considered as a unitary and remarkably homogeneous assemblage whose deposits were relatively undisturbed over time.

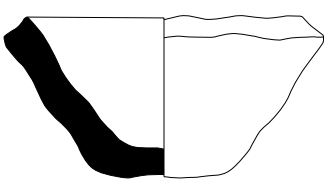
Amongst open shapes, the large majority of the specimens is represented by serially produced BRBs² (Pl. III.1-2 – Fig. 1): their dimensional variability is the same observed in 2016, with three categories (diameters of 12-14 cm, 16-18 cm and 22-24 cm). Medium- and little-sized hemispherical bowls



Fig. 1 - Bevelled-rim bowl from Girdi Qala Trench D.

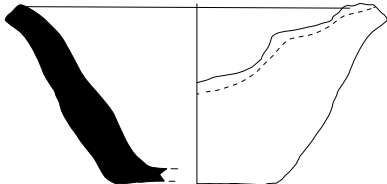
1. For parallels, see for instance at Tell Abada (Jasim 1985: fig. 214), Tell Abu Husaini (Chiocchetti 2007: fig. 2.d), Surezha (Stein and Alizadeh 2014: fig. 12) or Khirbet Hatara (Fiorina 2001).
2. They have always rims sharply bevelled towards the exterior. Therefore, they match with the mature shape of these containers and are quite different than the Early Uruk proto-BRBs from Trenches D-E at Logardan or from Levels 10-8 of Trench C at Girdi Qala, see Vallet (ed.) 2015.

Plate III



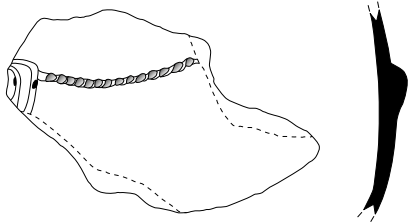
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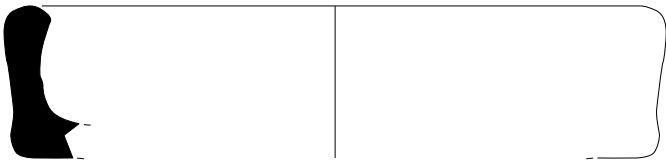
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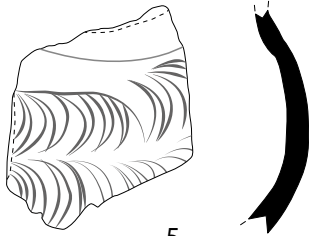
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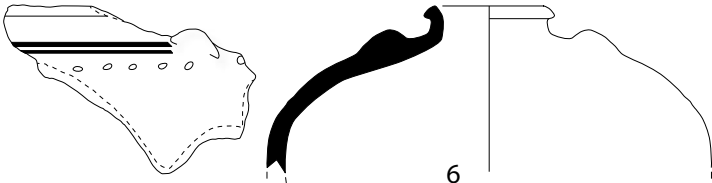
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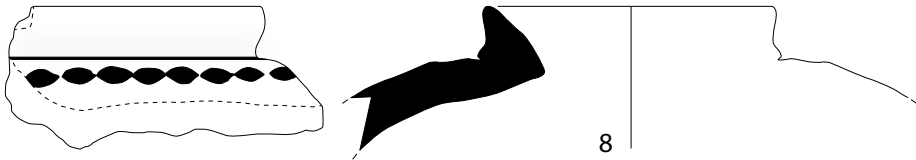
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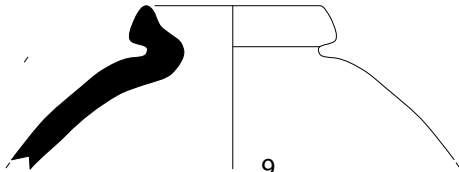
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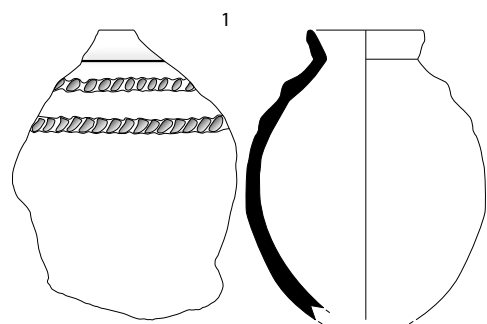


Plate III.

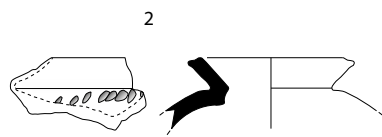
with plain rounded rims³, carinated bowls⁴, in-turned rim bowls⁵ and V-shaped bowls with thinned rims⁶ are also largely attested (10% of the assemblage). Amongst the V-shaped ones, several samples with pouring lips⁷ belong to a very distinctive Middle Uruk type. The same observation can be made about shallow basins with thick walls and bases used for cooking and presenting food (Pl. III.4)⁸.

The whole range of the closed shapes constitute 35% of the assemblage from Trench D. Some small neckless samples with a diameter varying between 4 and 8 cm have rounded, thinned-pinched, or quite square flaring rims (Pl. III.6, IV.2)⁹. However, the most widespread jars belong to a medium-sized type with interior-angled rims. These neckless containers are typologically similar to the small jars, but their average dimensions are much bigger, with diameters varying between 18 and 26 cm. Their bevelled or rectangular section flaring rims display a sharp interior angle at the junction with the shoulder (Pl. III.7-8, IV.3). These typically Uruk jars, are often characterized by little pierced handles on the shoulder (Pl. III.3)¹⁰. Other typically Uruk samples of interior-angled jars have rims with a triangular section and a

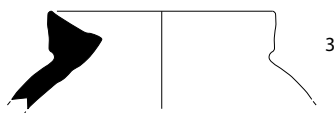
3. See Ahmad al-Hattu (Sürenhagen 1979: Abb. 10), Godin "late" VI (Badler 2002: fig. 7: N3 34 #26, B20 #251), Abu Salabikh 'Uruk Mound' (Pollock 1987: fig. 5: c, d), Nippur 'Inanna' XXXV (Hansen 1965: fig. 5), Sheikh Hassan 10 (Boese 1995: 41, Abb. 9: b, d; 42: Abb. 10: d; 85: Abb. 22: b), or Sheikh Hassan 7/6 (Bachmann 1998a: Abb. 7: n; Boese 1995: 50, Abb. 18: d).
4. See Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 28: 18), Sheikh Hassan 10 (Boese 1995: 85, Abb. 22: f, g), Abu Salabikh (Pollock 1987: fig. 5: f; 6: b), or Uruk/Warka "Eanna-Tiefschnitt" VI (von Haller 1932: Taf. 19A: u').
5. See Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: 45; fig. 28: 10), Ahmed al-Hattu (McAdam and Mynors 1988: 45), Farukhabad (Wright 1981: fig. 41: e, f; fig. 46: i, j), Nineveh (Gut 1995: Taf. LVII.840), or Godin "early" V (Badler 2002: fig. 10: B17#132). In southern Mesopotamia, this same type is characterized by a more angular profile, as at Abu Salabikh "West Mound" and "Uruk Mound" (Postgate 1983: fig. 37-38; Pollock 1987: fig. 5: g, h).
6. See Sheikh Hassan (Boese 1995: 40, Abb. 8: f-k, 80, Abb. 17: d; 85, Abb. 22: a; Bachmann 1998a: Abb. 7: d-k), Uruk/Warka "Eanna-Tiefschnitt" VI (Sürenhagen 1986: T/20, Nr. S/32; von Haller 1932: Taf. 18C: y; 19B: g, h, i, q, o Taf. 19C: y'), Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: 44-45, fig. 28: 6, 11), Abu Salabikh "Uruk Mound" (Pollock 1987: fig. 5: a, b; Pollock 1990: fig. 4: c), Nippur 'Inanna' XX-XVI (Hansen 1965: fig. 5), Susa "Acropole" I 18-17 (Le Brun 1978a: fig. 19: 6; 1978b: 32: 7), Farukhabad (Wright 1981: fig. 40: e; 45: a, b, i, m), Hacinebi B2 (Stein and Mısırlı 1994: fig. 15, J-L; Pearce 2000: fig. 13: g).
7. See Sheikh Hassan (Boese 1995: 84 fig. 21; Bachmann 1998a: pl. 7.d-g), Hacinebi B2 (Stein 2001: fig. 8.6, J-L), el Kowm 2 (Cauvin and Stordeur 1985: fig. 6.2), Tell Brak TW 13 (Oates and Oates 1993: fig. 51.33-35), Susa "Acropole I" 18 (Le Brun 1978: fig. 32.7), Choga Mish Protoliterate (Alizadeh 2008: fig. 26.E).
8. See Abu Salabikh "Uruk Mound" (Pollock 1990: fig. 5: I), Nippur "Inanna" XX-XVII (Hansen 1965: fig. 8), Uruk/Warka 'Eanna-Tiefschnitt' XI-VI (von Haller 1932: Taf. 18B: y; 19A: d'; Sürenhagen 1986: Nr. T/99), Sheikh Hassan 10 (Boese 1995: 84, Abb. 21: f), Hacinebi B2 (Stein 2002: fig. 11: k), Godin "middle" and "late" VI (Badler 2002: fig. 7: B20 #252, P4 20 #4), Ahmad al-Hattu (Sürenhagen 1979: Abb. 10), Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 37: 140).
9. Concerning the samples with rounded rim, see Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 32: 67) Abu Salabikh "Uruk Mound" (Pollock 1987: fig. 7: e, i; 1990: fig. 3: d), Nippur "Inanna" XIX (Hansen 1965: fig. 13), Uruk/Warka 'Eanna-Tiefschnitt' VI (Von Haller 1932: Taf. 19B: s'), Sheikh Hassan 8 (Boese 1995: 77, Abb. 14: b, j, k) and Hacinebi B2 (Pearce 2000: fig. 15: b). About the variant with rectangular-section or square rims, see Godin "middle" and "late" VI (Badler 2002: fig. 8: B23 #366, B20 #239), Abu Salabikh "Uruk Mound" (Pollock 1990: fig. 4: b) or Sheikh Hassan (Boese 1995: 78, Abb. 15: b).
10. See Hacinebi B2 (Stein 2002: fig. 10: e, fig. 11: g), Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 31: 66, fig. 34: 98-99), Abu Salabikh "Uruk Mound" (Pollock 1987: fig. 7: m; Pollock 1990: fig. 3: e), Nippur 'Inanna' XVIII (Hansen 1965: fig. 14), Uruk/Warka 'Eanna-Tiefschnitt' VI (Sürenhagen 1986: Nr. T/48, 77, 93), Sheikh Hassan 7/6 (Bachmann 1998a: Abb. 12: a; Boese 1995: 172, Abb. 10: d, e), Susa "Acropole I" 18 (Le Brun 1978: fig. 32.13).



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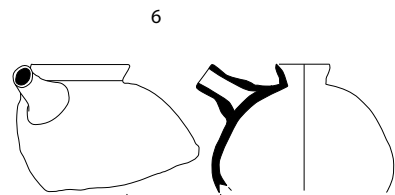
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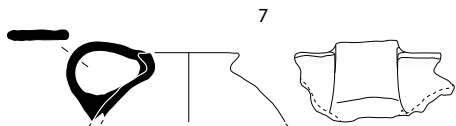
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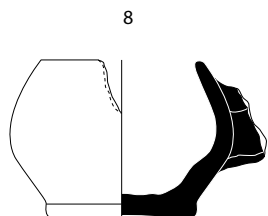
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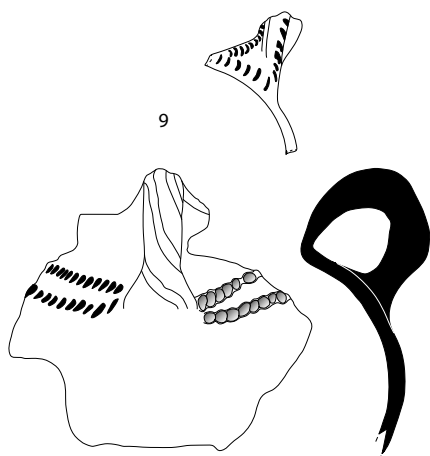
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GQND 1383.3



GQND 1383.2

sinuous or vertical exterior profile (Pl. III.9)¹¹. Short-necked jars with thinner walls and pinched rims are uncommon, but still quite distinctive of the Middle Uruk phase¹². Spouts are associated with all these categories of jars without any kind of regularity. Not only each type of jar can have a spout, but these ones were also of different shapes: both upwards conical and slightly drooping (Pl. IV.5-6 – Fig. 2). The strongly drooping samples, typical of the Late Uruk phase, are extremely rare at Girdi Qala northern mound (one sample collected in 2017)¹³.

During the last campaign, Girdi Qala Trench D also yielded some other peculiar Middle Uruk types, as pots with flattened (and sometimes incised – Pl. IV.4, 9) handles attached directly to the rim (Pl. IV.7)¹⁴, a little-sized flattened-base container with a low spout close to the bottom (Pl. IV.8)¹⁵ and a twisted handle (Pl. IV.9)¹⁶.

Decorations are exclusively documented on closed shapes and they are typical of the Middle Uruk period. In particular, besides finger-impressed, dot-impressed or incised cordons (Pl. III.6, IV.1-2, 9)¹⁷, decorative knobs (Pl. III.6)¹⁸, herringbone and triangular incised motifs



Fig. 2 - Slightly drooping spout of a Middle Uruk jar from Girdi Qala Trench D.

11. See Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 31: 57, 59; 32: 73; fig. 32: 78), Abu Salabikh “Uruk Mound” (Pollock 1987: fig. 7: t, u, v), Uruk/Warka ‘Eanna-Tiefschnitt’ and ‘Sagegraben’ VI (von Haller 1932: Taf. 19B: q’, t’; Surenhagen 1986: Nr. S/9), Sheikh Hassan 8/9-12/13 (Boese 1995: 77, Abb. 14: i; 82), Hacinebi B2 (Pearce 2000: fig. 15: e), Susa “Acropole I” (Le Brun 1978: fig. 32.2, 3).
12. See Sheikh Hassan 13/12, 10 and 8 (Boese 1995: 45, Abb. 13: a; 75, Abb. 12: e; 79, Abb. 16: a, b; 201: Abb. 13: h), Abu Salabikh “Uruk Mound” (Pollock 1987: fig. 7: o; 1990: fig. 5: f), Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 32: 76-77), Uruk/Warka ‘Eanna-Tiefschnitt’ VI (von Haller 1932: Taf. 19C: u’), Hacinebi B2 (Pearce 2000: fig. 15: c; Stein 2002: fig. 11: c, f).
13. Just three samples come from Trench D, while one specimen has been collected during the survey of the Area VI, where it is difficult to establish whether this late drooping spout, identified along with some sherds of Early Bronze goblets, dates back to the very end of the Late Uruk phase or rather to the Early Bronze Age. Moreover, all the samples from Trench D have a slightly curved shape, quite different from the strongly arched profile of the Late Uruk drooping spouts (see for instance at Susa “Acropole I” 17 – Le Brun 1978: fig. 34.8; Choga Mish Protoliterate – Alizadeh 2008: fig. 31.E, I-K).
14. See for parallels at Tell Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 33.83, 87, 90).
15. See for parallels at Tell Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 36.116, 117), or at Uruk/Warka “Eanna-Tiefschnitt” VI” (von Haller 1932: Taf. 19B: u’).
16. This type, represented by only one occurrence at Girdi Qala Trench D (as for instance at Rubeidheh – McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 33.93), becomes more widespread during the late Uruk (see for instance at Susa “Acropole I” 18 – Brun 1978: fig. 32.1).
17. See Susa “Acropole I” 18 (Le Brun 1978: fig. 32.2-3), or Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 30.46; 34.100; 36.122).
18. See Abu Salabikh (Pollock 1987: 133), Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: 44-48, 51), Sheikh Hassan (Boese 1995: 249-271), Tell Leilan (Schwartz 2001: 241, fig. 7.5; Wright 2001: 125-126; Brustolon and Rova 2007: 23).



Fig. 3 - Crescent-incised decorations on a bodysherd of jar from Girdi Qala Trench D..

on the shoulder of the jars, as well as crescent-incised uninterrupted chains on the bodies (Pl. III.5 – Fig. 3)¹⁹ are also documented, according to a general Uruk tendency towards the middle of the 4th millennium BC²⁰. Moreover, two small groups of respectively 21 and 31 bodysherds display a thick reddish-brownish or grey slip on the exterior surface. They probably represent the so-called Red and Grey Uruk Wares, typical hallmarks of the Uruk period in southern Mesopotamia as well as in the Hamrin Basin²¹.

Although the ceramic typology of the different Uruk phases is controversial, the assemblage from the survey of Girdi Qala northern mound and from Trench D clearly belong to a “normative” Middle-Uruk²² repertoire and completely lacks

some typical Late Uruk indicators, as banded-rims bottles and bowls, twisted handles, long and bandy-shaped drooping spouts, or reserved-slipped vessels. Morpho-stylistic parallels emphasize the matching with Middle Uruk stages of both south- (Uruk/Warka ‘Eanna-*Tiefschnitt*’ VIII-VI, Abu Salabikh “Uruk Mound” and Nippur ‘Inanna’ XX-XVII) and north-Mesopotamian sites (Rubeidheh²³, Nineveh ‘Uruk B’, Sheikh Hassan 6-13²⁴, Hacinebi B2 and). Likewise, given the proximity of the Zagros range, it is not surprising to observe the very close similarities between the assemblages from Girdi Qala northern mound and Godin VI²⁵.

19. See for parallels at Tell Rubeidheh (McAdam and Mynors 1988: fig. 29.34, 33.88), or at Uruk/Warka “Eanna-*Tiefschnitt*’ VI” (von Haller 1932: Taf. 19D.a).

20. See Sheikh Hassan 7-5 (Bachmann 1998: figs. 8, 10, 12-13), Nineveh “Norduruk B” -37-31 (Gut 1995: pls. 60-62, pl. 68: 952; Gut 2002), Hacinebi B2 (Pearce 2000: fig. 15: d-e), Choga Mish Protoliterate B (Delougaz and Kantor 1996), Habuba Kabira Süd (Sürenhagen 1974-1975: pl. 27.95, pl. 28.130).

21. Despite the impossibility to distinguish red or grey (sometimes slipped and sometimes plain) Uruk traditions on the basis of very sketchy descriptions (von Haller 1932: 39), it seems sure that during the Early and Middle Uruk periods (Eanna XIV-VI at Uruk – von Haller 1932: pl.17.D. c’-d’, pl.18.B.r-s and d’-h’, pl.18.C.p, q, s, t, u; Inanna XX-XVII at Nippur – Hansen 1965: 202-204) this kind of productions have been a quite rare but constant presence within the Uruk repertoires (see at Ahmad al-Hattu and Rubeidheh, where red and grey wares represent about 4% of the assemblage – Sürenhagen 1979 :47-50; McAdam and Mynors 1988: 49).

22. See the differences in the chrono-typologies of Hansen (1965: 202-204), Johnson (1973: 56-58) and Wright (1981: 165-172).

23. Despite the evident parallels with Girdi Qala northern mound, the occupation at Tell Rubeidheh dates back to a late stage of the Middle Uruk and to an early phase of the Late Uruk period, as indicated by the presence of reserved slip bottles, strongly arched drooping spouts and other later types.

24. Bachmann (1998b) indicates these same levels as 15/13-6/5.

As already observed in 2016, the increase in number of small Middle-Uruk agricultural settlements in the Hamrin region (Invernizzi 1986) coincides with growing contacts between Godin and the Uruk cultural sphere. 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. In its southern sector, this system of connections between Mesopotamia and Iranian plateau followed the Diyala River and then cross the central part of the Zagros Mountains through a series of high fertile districts as the Mahidashat and the Kangavar Valleys (Henrickson 1994: 86). Similarly, in the northern sector, the main paths seem to have been the Shahizor Valley with its scattered Middle-Uruk installations (Wengrow *et al.* 2016) and the Sangao-Qara Dagħ road, with south-Mesopotamian settlements as Girdi Qala northern mound.

