Kurdish Chalcolithic Conundra: Regional Identities and Local Variation at Surezha and Greater Mesopotamia

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Main Mesopotamian Chalcolithic sites in the 6th-5th Millennia BC
Erbil Plain and Surezha (Kurdistan Region, Iraq)

(Map – courtesy of Jason Ur and EPAS)
Surezha
Op. 1 Step Trench
Stratigraphic section
(drawing: Abbas Alizadeh)
Surezha
Chalcolithic sequence

Middle Uruk period (=LC4)
3600-3300 BC

Late Chalcolithic 3 (LC3)
3850-3600 BC

Late Chalcolithic 2 (LC2)
4350-3850 BC

Late Chalcolithic 1 (LC1)
4800-4350 BC

Ubaid : 5300-4800 BC (?)

Halaf : 5800-5300 BC (?)
Surezha Calibrated AMS Radiocarbon Dates

**LC1:** ca 4800 – 4350 BC (end point uncertain).

**LC2:** ?? 4350 (beginning uncertain) – 3950 BC

**LC3:** ca 3950-3650 BC

**LC4:** ca 3650- 3350 BC
Goals:

* Define the LOCAL ceramic sequence and chronology for Surezha and the Erbil Plain

* Trace development of economic differentiation and social complexity from Ubaid \(\rightarrow\) LC1 \(\rightarrow\) LC2

* Map changes in the role of inter-regional interaction with Mesopotamia and other regions in the development of complexity on Erbil Plain
Surezha High Mound and 2017 excavation areas

UAV image – courtesy J. Ur and EPAS
Operation 2: LC1 and Ubaid stratigraphic sequence
Surezha Operation 2:
Domestic Architecture shows strong continuities from Ubaid to LC1
Ubaid phase at Surezha-

*First evidence for emergence of Elites
*Close material culture ties to Ubaid South Mesopotamia
Surezha:
Ubaid ceramics & clay nails/mullers

Reconstructed Ubaid style
Lenticular vessel (“Tortoise jar”)
from Surezha –
Possible ritual vessel for use in temples?
Ubaid Prestige goods at Surezha:

Polished stone Palettes:
A. Zeidan, B. Surezha, C. Gawra

Carved stone stamp seal
Micro-archaeological sampling of house floors to reconstruct domestic economy
LC1 phase at Surezha-
**Changes in Subsistence Economy**
**Reorganization of Inter-regional Interaction**
Blades are locally produced from local raw materials
Erbil Plain Connections to Eastern Anatolia in the Ubaid (& LC1) Period:

**LC1 Long-distance Obsidian exchange**
From Eastern Anatolian sources – Mainly Nemrut Dag (and Meydan Dag)
Surezha Archaeobotanical Remains

Rain-fed agriculture focused on drought tolerant crops – Barley and Emmer Wheat – most common

Wood charcoal - rare. Dung fuel was used – indicating either deforestation or natural open grassy steppe vegetation

(Data: Lucas Proctor 2016)
Surezha Faunal Remains (2016 field season)

Sharp Increase from Ubaid to LC1
in ratio of sheep/goats relative to pigs-
possible evidence for intensified wool and textile production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Taxa</th>
<th>Post-Halaf</th>
<th>Ubaid</th>
<th>Ubaid-LC 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ovis/Capra</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>(0)</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1*)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(data: Max Price 2016)
Surezha LC1 Craft Economy - Textile Production:
Weaving tool, looms, loom-weights, needle, spindle whorls
The Erbil Plain and its Neighbors: Changing Patterns of Inter-Regional Interaction
Ubaid Period:
Local Culture of Erbil Plain
has ties to South (Mesopotamia),
and ties to Anatolia through the obsidian trade
LC1 Period: Local Culture of Erbil Plain expands scope of interaction—continuing ties to: South Mesopotamia, Anatolia, While establishing new ties to: North Mesopotamia (Jazira), Northwestern Iran
Surezha LC1
Local Style Incised Ware Ceramics:
"Deep Comb Incision" and "Herringbone Incised"

Tell Ibrahim Bayis- Makhmur: Amin & Mallowan 1950
Erbil Plain Connections to South Mesopotamia in the LC1 Period:

At Surezha - LC1 Ubaid-derived painted ceramic styles continue –
BUT they are now CHAFF TEMPERED WARES
(in Ubaid period – mineral tempered painted wares)

Ubaid levels: Mineral tempered wares

LC1 levels: Chaff tempered wares
Local version of "Sprig Ware"

Unique occurrence of a Jazira LC1 diagnostic type at Surezha
Erbil Plain Connections to North Mesopotamia in the LC1 Period: “Blister Ware”
Diagnostic Jazira LC1 Pottery at Surezha
Erbil Plain Connections to Northwest Iran in the LC1 Period: “Dalma Impressed Ware”
Solduz-Ushniu-Urmia region Diagnostic LC1 Pottery
Occurs in latest LC1 phase at Surezha
Dalma Impressed Ware from Dalma Tepe
Lake Urmia Region – Northwest Iran

Dalma ware - found at NW Iranian sites such as: Hajji Firuz, Pisdeli, Hasanlu, Dinkha, (Hamlin 1975:119-120)

Dalma Phase (= Hasanlu IX) :
ca 5000-4500 BC in NW Iran (Voigt and Dyson 1992)
Contemporaneous with Late Ubaid and LC1 at Surezha
The Erbil Plain and its Neighbors: Changing Patterns of Inter-regional Interaction in the 6th-5th mill. BC
Conclusions:

* The Erbil Plain Chalcolithic cultures had a strongly local character, even during periods of increased interaction with Mesopotamia (e.g. the Ubaid)

* The Ubaid period - earliest evidence for elite emergence in the region

* LC1 period shows great continuities with the earlier Ubaid period, even though interaction with southern Mesopotamia declines in the LC1.

* LC1 shows three main developmental changes –
  1. Economic Intensification: Shift toward greater importance of sheep/goats and woolen textile production
  2. Sharp increase in inter-regional interaction, with a new focus on contact and trade with North Mesopotamia and Northwest Iran
  3. Gradual increase in economic and social complexity from the Ubaid through LC1 (reaching full development of urbanism and political centralization in the LC2)
Acknowledgments:
The Surezha excavations are supported by the National Science Foundation, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute, and the generosity of private donors.

We thank Mr Abu Bakr Othman (Mala Awat), the General Director of Antiquities for the Kurdistan Regional Government (Iraq), and Mr. Nader Babakr, Director of Antiquities for the Erbil Governate for their support. We also gratefully acknowledge the staff of the Surezha project, and the workers from Erbil and Surezha village who carried out the excavations.