



Identifying the Cultural Sequence of Marivan Plain; Based on Archaeological Field Survey

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Abstract

In recent years, an increasing number of archaeological investigations have produced new evidence for the prehistoric development (both in chronology and settlement patterns) in the westernmost provinces of Iran. Prior to the commencement of the MPAP an earlier survey in the Marivan region had been carried out by the Department of Archaeology at Bu Ali Sina University in Hamadan (Iran). Research focused on the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods and, unfortunately, evidence from the Chalcolithic periods is yet to be published. The Marivan Plain Survey Project, by Morteza Zamani Dadaneh from the University of Kurdistan, Kurdish Studies Institute, conducted a first season of systematic survey for four weeks in the summer of 2018. The goal of MPAP is to reassess previous survey work in the region. Archaeological project of Marivan plain in 2018 resulted in identifying 60 sites from Neolithic to more recent time. Among identified sites: 1 site dating back to PPN Neolithic, 14 site to chalcolithic period (early, middle and late), 2 site to Bronze Age probably, 11 site to Iron Age, 28 site to historic (Parthian) period and 12 site to Islamic era. Regarding the settlement pattern of prehistoric sites (Neolithic and chalcolithic period), it become clear that all prehistoric sites distributed in the northern and southern shore of Zeribar lake. Most probably such pattern influenced from Zeribar sea level and access to the fertilized agricultural lands in this area in Neolithic and chalcolithic times. But the distribution pattern of historic and Islamic sites is somewhat different from prehistoric pattern and is similar to pattern of nowadays residential areas. Current and historic/Islamic residential area placed close to permanent water sources in the narrow valleys surrounded the Zeribar lake. Of course, part of the Marivan Plain is located in the east of the current Marivan City, which is far from Zarivar Lake, and dispersed settlements in this section formed on the edge of the main river, one of the branches of the Garan River.

Keywords: Marivan plain, PPN, Early Chalcolithic, J pottery, Late Chalcolithic, Iron Age, Lake Zeribar

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Intuoduction

In the central western Zagros, archaeological surveys and excavations have documented extensive evidence for the Epipaleolithic to Neolithic transition at sites such as Tepe Asiab, Ganj Dareh, Gouran, Sarab, and most recently Sheikh-i Abad. Further north, however, in the Iranian province of Kurdistan, very little information has been available to assess the pervasiveness of this transition in the small intermontane valleys. In 2002, a team from Bu Ali Sina University conducted fieldwork in the plain around Marivan where they were able to identify early prehistoric sites Mohammadifar & Motarjem, ۲۰۰۲). The team discovered two cave sites (Ashkaft Rivas; Ashkaft Ascule) dated to the Epipaleolithic based on the presence of Zarzian industry lithics and an open air site (Kich Gawr) with Mousterian industry lithics. In addition, they documented one small early Neolithic site (Tepe Hamaomin) located at the external edges of the plain near perennial springs (Mohammadifar & Motarjem, ۲۰۱۵). The lithic artifacts from these sites compare well with Ganj Dareh and Abdolhossein near Kermanshah, while the lack of ceramics at the site point to a single-period occupation during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN). Additional research was not able to detect occupation of the later Neolithic, with the earliest sites dated to the Dalma period of the fifth millennium BCE.

This paper will present new results of the Marivan Plain Survey project (MPAP) that fill this gap. The site of Qala Zewa (Figure 5) shows evidence for continuous occupation during the Late Neolithic through Early Chalcolithic (Zamani Dadaneh et al 2019) (Zamani Dadaneh, 2018) Pottery from this site shows clear connections with the Mahi Dasht/Kermanshah region based on sherds that have good parallels in the Sarab and J ware traditions (Figure 6 a - 6 b). While these results demonstrate that communities inhabiting the more difficult to access intermontane valleys actively participated in the major socioeconomic changes of the Neolithic, planned future work will focus on reconstructing settlement patterns, chronology, and variations in subsistence economies.

The following period is Represent by new ceramic assemblage (Dalam related; Dalma Impressed, Dalam red-slipped, Dalma painted, Dalam-Ubaid/DUP) (Figure 8-9). The following period is Represent by diagnostics Dalma related (especially the typical Dalma Impressed ware). The Dalma assemblage was found at 3 sites but Just Qala Zewa continue from perevious period and 2 other one laid on virgin soil. The pottery found at these sites including plain red-slipped and painted and impressed wares. In comparison with previous period in Marivan area like almost entire western Zagros there is clear increasing in the number of sites. All sites located outside of Marivan plain distributed in northern, southern and south-eastern highland of plain. Sites are small village size mound with extension less than 1 hectare.

Preliminary studies of the material collected during the survey resulted in the identification of about 7 sites dating to Iron Age period; it was possible to differentiate the material sufficiently to allocate occupation at the sites to the Iron Age I-III. Generally calling the sites would be divided to 3 main group: settlement site, cemetery and defensive (fortress) sites. After this short introduction the site will be as follow.

A look at the studies and excavations carried out in the Marivan region reveals that most of the identified artifacts in this region are related to the historical period, especially the Parthian period. Of course, this situation is not only related to Marivan and many artifacts from the Parthian period have been identified in other parts of the province, but the obvious difference between Marivan and other parts of the province is the unusual number of Parthian cemeteries that are not comparable to other parts of the province. Also, in terms of the density of cemeteries of this period, fewer regions can be compared to Marivan in the west of the country. In the following, we will introduce the identified artifacts from the Parthian period in the Marivan plain, which can be examined in four sections: 1- Settlement sites, 2- Cemeteries related to the settlement, 3- Cemeteries without Relation to deployment, 4- Defense fortifications.

2018 Fieldwork: The Marivan Plain Archaeological Project (MPAP)

In recent years, an increasing number of archaeological investigations have produced new evidence for the prehistoric development (both in chronology and settlement patterns) in the westernmost provinces of Iran. Prior to the commencement of the MPAP an earlier survey in the Marivan region had been carried out by the Department of Archaeology at Bu Ali Sina University in Hamadan (Iran). Research focused on the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods and, unfortunately, evidence from the Chalcolithic periods is yet to be published (Mohammadifar & Motarjem, 2008). The Marivan Plain Survey Project, by Morteza Zamani Dadaneh from the University of Kurdistan, Kurdish Studies Institute, conducted a first season of systematic survey for four weeks in the summer of 2018. The goal of MPAP is to reassess previous survey work in the region.

Marivan plain

The Marivan Plain is a small elongated alluvial plain (UTM 38S 603000E, 3930000N) which lies at the westernmost extent of the Zagros Mountains in the Iranian province of Kurdistan and around 80km west of the provincial capital, Sanandaj (Figure 1). The plain is c. 65km from the Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah and less than 20km from the Sharizor Plain in Iraq to the west. In the past, the plain of Marivan with its picturesque Lake Zeribar was an important node in the communication routes between Iraq and Iran. The Marivan Plain is the southernmost plain of a north-south series of plains. From these plains there are only a few east-west passes that connect to the plains on the Iraqi side of the border. From Marivan, it is possible to travel further south through rugged terrain that connects small intermontane valleys leading to the Mahidasht and Kermanshah plains. The plain is located between two archaeologically important regions of western Iran: The central Zagros to the southeast and the Lake Urmia region to the northeast. Early studies of prehistoric periods were mainly conducted in these two regions, while little attention was paid to the region of Marivan.

Recent work in the Marivan region in 2002 identified a few Early Neolithic sites, but they did not report any Late Neolithic to Early Chalcolithic sites. This raised the question about the nature of occupation during this important transitional period. The MPAP initiated new survey work and was able to identify two sites that shed light on this period.