



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Reassessing the crisis. A non-linear evolution perspective on the decline of the Uruk phenomenon between Iraqi Kurdistan and southern Mesopotamia

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Abstract

A vast archaeological literature describes the chrono-cultural change from the 4th to the 3rd millennium BCE with either chronologically vague terms (often mobilising the never well-defined concept of “transition”) or culturally catastrophic ones, favouring the notion of “crisis”. This picture uses a specific cultural process, the end of the Uruk phenomenon in northern Mesopotamia and western Iran, to portray the whole of this phase. Years ago, M. Frangipane questioned the very idea of a crisis in the southern Uruk world, subtly suggesting that an economic decline should rather be assumed to have affected northern Mesopotamian communities. Now, recent evidence seems to shift this perspective as well. In fact, while a cultural discontinuity is undeniable between the polities of the 4th millennium and the early cities of the first centuries of the 3rd millennium BCE, the Uruk phenomenon has left an extremely significant legacy in the North in terms of social practices and material culture. Thanks to recent data from the Zagros Piedmont and Southern Iraq, this paper suggests reconsidering the concept of “crisis” of the Uruk system, proposing a fresh reading of its differentiated cultural evolution between northern and southern Mesopotamia.

Keywords

Uruk phenomenon, Zagros Piedmont, Southern Iraq, Early Bronze Age, Cultural evolution

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