A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT HALAF AND UBAID PERIOD
SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND THE TELL KURDU CASE

HALAF VE OBEYD DÖNEMLERİNİN TOPLUMSAL ÖRGÜTLENME GELİŞKENLİĞİ
AÇISINDAN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI VE TELL KURDU ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT
While the Uruk Period is generally accepted as the earliest state society in the Near East, assessing the social, political and economic organization of the antecedent Halaf and Ubaid phases has been a matter of longstanding debate. Over-schematized evolutionary categories like “tribes” or “chiefdoms” provide little resolve in characterizing the socio-political complexity of Near Eastern prehistory because they fail to account for the variability these phases encompass. This paper invites us to move beyond typological categories, yet considers issues of political economy and explores conscious strategies towards social complexity between these two well-known phases of Near Eastern prehistory. Located in the Hatay province of southern Turkey, Tell Kurdu has relatively wide horizontal exposures dating both to the Halaf-related and to the Ubaid-related phases, providing a unique opportunity to explore at a single settlement the contrasting levels of social complexity in the sixth and fifth millennia BC.

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INTRODUCTION

The Halaf and the Ubaid Periods, spanning the sixth and fifth millennia BC respectively, have received considerable attention because both phases are characterized by widespread material cultural expansions extending far beyond Mesopotamia into southeast Anatolia and the northern Levantine coast. The discovery across broad distances of similar or even identical styles in ceramic shape and decoration, as well as in architectural plans has prompted archaeologists to search for explanations about the nature and reasons for the spread of archaeological culture in the respective phases (Perkins 1949; Redman 1978; for the Halaf Period see: Davidson 1977; Hijjara 1997; Watkins and Campbell 1987; for the Ubaid Phase see: Artz 2001; Esin 1989; Oates 1983, 1993, 2004; Stein and Özbal 2007). The extensive distribution of pottery motifs and other elements has traditionally been treated as a sign of political complexity (Oates 1977: 469-470; Redman 1978). For the Halaf Period, for example, Watson and LeBlanc suggest that the “high degree of similarity in painted pottery and shapes may be a reflection of the role these items played as status goods” and further extrapolate that this fact underlies their reason for suggesting that Halaf society was hierarchically organized (Watson and LeBlanc 1990: 137).

Changing perspectives in recent years have led to a general reluctance towards questions on social complexity and have driven researchers instead to address local site-specific issues focused on social practices. However, because both the Halaf and Ubaid Periods are considered the antecedents of the earliest state societies, the level of social complexity these phases exhibit continues to lurk as a topic of widespread interest (Campbell and Flether in press; Frangipane 2007, 2010; Redman 1978; Yoffee 1993, 2005). Overall, it has become clear that Elman Service’s (Service 1962) predetermined templates for “tribes” and “chiefdoms” find their best correlates in the New World or Polynesia (Flannery 1999; Frangipane 2007). The numerous modifications to which Service’s evolutionary rungs have been subjected when applied to Near Eastern prehistory show how incompatible these categories are for the dataset at hand.

This paper invites us to move beyond typological categories like “tribes” or “chiefdoms,” yet considers issues of political economy and explores strategies towards social complexity. The main aim of the paper is to examine the socio-political scenario in northern Mesopotamia in the Halaf and Ubaid Phases of the sixth and fifth millennia BC, and a major part of the paper is devoted to outlining the scholarly discussion in an updated context. The paper continues with a brief case study from Tell Kurdu. The settlement is compared with its north Mesopotamian contemporaries with reference to issues of complexity. This discussion in turn enables us to highlight transformations that occur in the fifth millennium BC, not only at Tell Kurdu but also at fifth millennium sites in general.

Excavations at Tell Kurdu exposed relatively wide horizontal exposures dating both to the Halaf-related and to the Ubaid-related phases, providing a unique opportunity to explore the contrasting levels of social complexity between the sixth and fifth millennium BC at a single settlement. Tell Kurdu is geographically considered on the outskirts of the zones of influence of the Halaf and Ubaid cultures. However, during the Ubaid-related Phase, the inhabitants were, in fact, very much in tune with the developments taking place in Greater Mesopotamia. This paper demonstrates that the relationship Tell Kurdu maintained with the Ubaid sphere of influence extends far beyond material aspects and that the inhabitants were also aware of strategies of administration and craft production practiced at Ubaid sites.

On the other hand, elements of the local Amuq culture heavily dominate the assemblage and architecture during the preceding Halaf-related Phase. Halaf-type wares are rare and the architecture shows little commonalities with typical Halafian sites. Nonetheless, in terms of political complexity, the emerging picture from Tell Kurdu closely follows the developments taking place in Greater Mesopotamia. The paper proceeds first with a broad and up-to-date overview of the socio-political situation during both the Halaf and the Ubaid period:
THE HALAF PHASE

Elements of Halaf culture have puzzled researchers since the early twentieth century. Not only did finely decorated, high-quality pottery seem out of place in the tiny settlements of less than two hectares, but striking similarities in ceramic motifs and architectural plans could be found across bewildering expanses (Perkins 1949; Redman 1978: 206; Watson and LeBlanc 1973: 130). Attempts to characterize Halaf society in a framework of tribes and chiefdoms have failed to clarify these incongruities. Some researchers in the 1970s and early 1980s focused on the indications for complexity and proposed that there was ample evidence to argue for Halafian chiefdoms (Redman 1978: 206; Watson 1983: 242-243; Watson and LeBlanc 1973). Many others since then, however, have maintained that Halafian society was organized at a pre-chiefdom level or that headmen existed only in subtle ways (Akkermans 1993; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003; Breniquet 1996; Flannery 1999; Frangipane 2007; Hijjara 1997). The latter group of researchers based their assessment on a weakly-developed settlement hierarchy (Frangipane 2007: 155; Hijjara 1997: 84-96), the lack of evidence for inherited status in mortuary remains (Akkermans 1989a; Frangipane 2007: 162-163), the domestic character of practically all architectural structures (Akkermans 1989b; Frangipane 2007: 155-157; Merpert and Munchaev 1993b), and the use of household technologies in ceramic production (Hijjara 1997: 102; Nieuwenhuys 2008).

The growing evidence for (semi) nomadic habitation during the sixth millennium BC evokes a completely different lifestyle and presumably a different level of social complexity (Flannery 1999). Especially Syrian sites like Sabi Abyad, Khirbet esh-Shenef, Damishliya and Umm Qseir (Akkermans 1993; Akkermans and Duistermaat 1997; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 117-121; Akkermans and Wittmann 1993) and a few located in modern-day Turkey like Fıstıklı Höyük and Nevali Çori (Bernbeck et al. 2003; Pollock 2009) may fall within this framework. A semi-nomadic lifestyle in no way precludes socio-political complexity, but it undoubtedly makes complex social formations, as Flannery frankly states, “hard to identify” (Flannery 1999: 44).

Yet recent discoveries in the northern reaches of the Halaf sphere of influence indicate once again that the situation in the sixth millennium BC was more varied and intricate than previously thought: Turkey and parts of northern Syria harbor a number of sixth millennium BC sites, with Halafian type ceramics, that range between 10 and 20 hectares, far larger than the typical 1-2 hectare Halaf sites (i.e. Takyan Höyük, Kazane, Domuztepe, Tell Kurdu, Mounbatah, Tell Badan/Nisibin and Samsat, see Akkermans 1989c: 129; Algaze 1989: 229; Algaze et al. 1991; Bernbeck et al. 1999; Campbell et al. 1999; Lyonnet 2000; Özbal et al. 2004; Özdoğan personal communication; Yener, Edens, Harrison et al. 2000; Yener, Edens, Casana et al. 2000). Although what percentage of each site was occupied simultaneously awaits to be researched, the fact that these sites are substantially larger than contemporaneous sites in other parts of northern Mesopotamia is undeniable; some may even represent regional centers in two or even three-tiered settlement hierarchies (Algaze et al. 1991: 195).

In sum, we are now beginning to see just how multifaceted the sixth millennium BC was; while at one end of the spectrum, large sites of immense proportions have been discovered, on the other, researchers continue to encounter tiny village settlements with evidence for seasonal or transhumant dwellings. Given that all the large sites are located in the northern reaches of the Halaf World where average annual rainfall is higher, Frangipane contends that environmental factors may have played a role in constructing this dichotomy (Frangipane 2007: 155). Yet the main thread of her stimulating argument, especially with reference to the dryer regions, is that the “egalitarian character” of sixth millennium BC settlements prevented them, by nature, from growing and supporting large groups of people (Frangipane 2007: 161). She believes that the newly created daughter communities that split off from an enlarged parent settlement affirmed their cultural connections with their forebears by replicating aspects of material culture, especially the expressive pottery designs we associate with the Halaf Period. The homogeneity we see in Halaf material cultural elements could there-
fore result from the perpetual cultural affirmation that newly formed groups felt compelled to maintain (Frangipane 2007). This argument contributes much to our growing knowledge on the undeniable uniformities we see in Halafian designs across broad distances.

In fact, although Frangipane formulates her argument with reference to the plethora of small Halafian sites, her ideas on the egalitarian character of the communities at this time may also be applicable to large settlements. Domuztepe, the most extensively excavated large Halaf settlement to date, yielded intentionally laid and maintained ditches and terraces, which may have formed boundaries between different neighborhoods of this 20 ha settlement (Campbell 2008; Carter and Campbell 2008: 124). If so, this would suggest, in line with Frangipane, that the settlement was also comprised of several independent sub-communities that were presumably also egalitarian in their social organization (Campbell and Fletcher in press). In other words, Frangipane’s argument, that the Halaf Period in general lacked the hierarchical control to sustain substantial populations, is still applicable to large sites like Domuztepe, if they were in fact comprised of an agglomeration of smaller bounded and independently managed neighborhoods (Campbell and Fletcher in press; Frangipane 2007). Future research at Domuztepe may be able to test Frangipane’s hypothesis on the perpetuation of ceramic form and decoration to maintain group affiliation and investigate whether there are differences in ceramic motifs and the grammar of decoration across Domuztepe’s various terraced neighborhoods.

The idea that the ditches may have denoted the boundaries of distinct corporate groups is also supported by fact that the “Death Pit,” in which disarticulated and butchered bones of close to 40 individuals were found, was dug precisely at the edge of one of these terraces (Campbell 2008; Carter et al. 2003: 121; Kansa et al. 2009). This large burial pit was marked by substantial upright posts and no structures were built in its immediate vicinity for several generations, suggesting that this area must have carried special significance over an extended period of time (Kansa et al. 2009: 163). Based on observations made several decades ago by Arthur Saxe (Saxe 1970, 1971) and Lynn Goldstein (Goldstein 1981), the visible demarcation and maintenance of the area used for the disposal of the dead could be a way in which residents of the terrace in question maintained links with their ancestors and ultimately legitimated their claim to their neighborhood terrace or their section of the settlement (Campbell 2008). Highly visible grave-markers supported by large posts, as was probably the case at Domuztepe, are among the ways in which rights to the local resources could be reaffirmed.

Our understanding of issues of social complexity during the sixth millennium BC is bound to change again as excavations at large Halaf settlements continue and the organizational dynamics of small settlements are better understood. The claim that Domuztepe was comprised of a number of independent units separated spatially from one another and the assumption that such a set-up was preferred because it allowed residents to evade hierarchical governance is compelling (Campbell and Fletcher in press). This type of social organization could, to use Carol Crumley’s terminology, be called a type of heterarchy (Crumley 1995; Stein 1998). According to Crumley, “Heterarchy may be defined as the relation of elements to one another when they are unranked or when they possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways. For example, power can be counterpoised rather than ranked. Thus, three cities might be the same size but draw their importance from different realms: one hosts a military base, one is a manufacturing center, and a third is a home to a great university…” (Crumley 1995: 3).

The concept of heterarchy, in other words, allows for flexibility and an alternative to the problematic evolutionary band-tribe-chiefdom-state model proposed by Service (Crumley 1995: 3-4). Current evidence suggests that Halaf society may, in fact, have followed such “alternative” pathways towards complexity (Flannery 1999).

THE UBAID PHASE

Based on the scenario described above for large Halaf settlements like Domuztepe, one could argue that the nearly complete lack of settlements exceeding about 10 ha in the Ubaid Period is per-
haps a consequence of the emergence of hierarchy by the fifth millennium BC. In other words, it is quite possible that the first attempts in attaining and maintaining political and economic power could only be realized with modest groups of people. If the Ubaid Period is considered an incipient phase of hierarchical complexity, fifteen or twenty hectares, as known from the preceding Halaf Phase, may simply have been too large a territory for a chief or an elite class to govern. Indeed, when compared with the Halaf Phase, in the Ubaid Period one undeniably finds more evidence for social inequalities, for specialized crafts as well as for public and monumental structures, although evidence for hierarchies becomes notably more pronounced by the end of the fifth millennium BC (e.g. Pollock 1983).

As in the Halaf Period described above, much of the discussion concerning the Ubaid Period has circled around how well the period can be classified within the traditional “chiefdom” concept (Akkermans 1989b; Berman 1994; Frangipane 2007; Matthews 2003; Pollock 1983; Stein 1994). Yet, Near Eastern pre-state societies simply continue to defy such predetermined templates, and so opinions on socio-political complexity have remained divided: some researchers argue that the Ubaid Period lacked socially stratified communities altogether (Akkermans 1989b; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 178; Forest 1983: 77; Hole 1983), while others maintain that the evidence for social complexity is compelling (Berman 1994; Forest 1996; Frangipane 2007, 2009; Jasim 1985; Stein 1994, 1996; Pollock 1983, 1999; Wright 1984; Yoffee 2005). Part of the reason for this disagreement stems from the fact that a number of sub-phases and a broad geographical expanse often tend to be engulfed within the term “Ubaid,” but much of the confusion is based on the inadequacy of Service’s evolutionary categorization scheme for the Near East.

A well-known argument made for the Ubaid Period in reference to the mismatch between the chiefdom concept and the available data on socio-political complexity is the idea that the Ubaid system of power and authority was built not on items of wealth but on agricultural surplus (Stein 1994). Yet, their power was in no way institutionalized, and the system would have functioned on the principle of tight kinship ties. All evidence, in other words, for hierarchical differentiation would have been intentionally suppressed and hidden behind egalitarian facades (Stein 1994: 43). This argument would, in essence, provide an explanation for the apparent lack of items of wealth, status, power and social rank across the Near East in the Ubaid Period. While the relative rarity of prestige goods over nearly a century of excavations cannot be ignored (Stein 1996: 29), given the alluvial overburden overlying Ubaid levels in southern Mesopotamia, Matthews points out the flaws in basing arguments on the absence of evidence and reminds us of the sumptuous goods like lapis lazuli and carnelian beads discovered in Gawra XIII (Matthews 2003: 105; see Tobler 1950: 192). Similarly, a large number of imported copper artifacts, mostly axes, were found at Susa (Hole 1983: 318), but as in the Gawra XIII example above, these also date to the terminal Ubaid when the earliest signs for chiefs and a distinct elite class were visibly beginning to emerge (Frangipane 2009: 136; Frangipane 2010; Pollock 1983). These data must be viewed as evidence that the Ubaid Phase is one of great internal variability with clearer evidence for hierarchical organization beginning to take root later in the development of this period.

The idea that the earlier Ubaid system of power and authority was built not on items of wealth but on agricultural surplus is not only plausible but also quite convincing. However, the associated archaeological correlates are subtle and can be read in several interpretative ways. For example, silos for the collective storage of grain and storage rooms for other surpluses already existed in the Late Neolithic Phases in northern Mesopotamia at sites like Sabi Abyad (Akkermans and Duisermaat 1997; Akkermans and Verhoeven 1995), Tell el-Kerkh (Tsuneki et al. 1998: 11-12, fig. 11), Umm Dabaghiyah (Kirkbride 1975), Yarim Tepe I (Merpert and Munchaev 1993a: fig. 6.3), and the Yumuktepe “silo base” (Caneva and Koroglu 2008: 85-86; Garstang 1953: 47-50).

Large grain storage repositories continue into the Ubaid Period (Arzt 2001: 34-36; Forest 1991: 95-
96; Fukai et al. 1970; Hammade and Koike 1992; Hole and Arzt 1998; Tobler 1950). Researchers, however, have questioned whether they were used collectively under the control of chiefs in charge of staple-finances (Frangipane 2010: 80; Stein 1994) or individually as storage annexes to houses (Arzt 2001: 36). Level 1 at Tell Ziyadeh yielded a grill structure interpreted as a granary. Jennifer Arzt believes, based on its small size and its proximity to a residence that “each household probably stored and controlled all the grain it produced” (Arzt 2001: 35-36; also see Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 161). She argues that this is the case also for other grill structures like those brought to light at Tell al-'Abr in Level 7 (Hammade and Yamazaki 2006: 43) and Tellul eth-Thalathat level XIII (Fukai et al. 1970: 18, see also pl. 65). These grain repositories are of modest proportions and appear to be close to or connected with residential structures. Yet Arzt also makes a similar argument even for Oueilli Level 1 (Arzt 2001: 36), which is a considerably large complex and is likely to have been used communally (Forrest 1983: 76-79; Frangipane 2010: 80). Like Frangipane, I believe a corporate use can be justified for the pigeonhole structures of Oueilli (see especially the plans for Level Ubaid 0 in Huot 1983), which could indicate the presence of hierarchies, either overt or concealed (Frangipane 2007, 2010). Frangipane interprets the latter structure as having been used by a large social unit or an extended family but rightly assumes it would not have sufficed for the entire community (Frangipane 2009: 167; Frangipane 2010: 80). The same can probably be said for the substantial grill building foundations we find at Tepe Gawra, especially in Level XV (Tobler 1950).

Yet the Ubaid Period sees grill structures also in close proximity to temples, perhaps confirming Stein’s view (Stein 1994) of a staple good based economy, especially at sites like Eridu. Excavations yielded grill structures near Temple XI and Temple X (Safar et al. 1981: figs 44A, 39:11, 39:10). Although interpreted by the excavators as platforms on to which temples were erected, the fact that they are adjacent and not superimposed could argue that they served a different purpose. If the grill structures were in fact the foundations of granaries, then the idea that they were linked with temples may be especially significant; it suggests that temples were repositories for grain and that temple personnel were in charge of overseeing the storage and distribution of staple goods (Stein 1994).

Later in the Ubaid Phase, especially at Eridu Temples VII-VI (Lloyd and Safar 1943; Safar et al. 1981: 103-110) and Gawra XIII (Frangipane 2009: 136; Tobler 1950) the process of redistribution may take on ritual elements and become increasingly linked to ceremonial acts. There is disagreement, however, over whether Ubaid temples denoted a growing ideology for legitimating inequalities in social rank. While some argue that religious leaders carried few privileges beyond their ritual specialization (Oates 1977), others believe that a few religious leaders had elevated statuses and possibly functioned as paramount chiefs (Pollock 1989; Wright 1984). The fact that “temples” contain paraphernalia that would not be out of place even in simple dwelling contexts (like spindle whorls and grinding stones) is noteworthy, though temples do stand out in most cases with their unusual ceramics, elaborate niched and buttressed architecture and other unusual artifacts like carved stone seals (Frangipane 2009: 136; Pollock 1999: 87; Rothman 2010: 18-19, fig. 1; Safar et al. 1981: 156; Tobler 1950).

Identifying houses of “headmen” or residences with special importance is equally difficult. Given the large horizontal exposures and the possibility to compare different houses, Building A at Tell Abada (Jasim 1983, 1985) has often been cited as a chief’s residence (Pollock 1999: 88; Stein 1994: 38). The size of the structure exceeds all others, and the concentration of infant burials under the floors of this structure suggests that it carried special significance. Nonetheless, in line with the idea that wealth in the Ubaid Period was based more on the control of staple products than of prestige goods, is the fact that the artifacts found within the structure are mostly domestic in nature. Excavations did yield higher numbers of stone mace heads and carved gypsum or marble vessels than in other structures, but no sumptuous materials or prestige items were found (Jasim 1985). Since few other sites have such broad exposures, comparable case studies are difficult to come by, but the excavations at Late Ubaid Değirmentepe, located in the Malaty province of eastern Turkey, uncovered an area over 2500 m² yielding at least
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A final argument used in assessing the level of social complexity during the Ubaid Period is the evidence for craft production (Berman 1994; Nissen 1989: 248-249). The Ubaid period witnesses efficiency in many aspects of ceramic production (Nissen 1988: 46). While the shaping and decorating of ceramic vessels were aided by the tournette or slow wheel, we also find clusters of kilns, suggesting that pottery was produced in specialized workshops rather than in the domestic sphere. There is no question that these craft improvements are all signs of emergent complexity, yet it is unclear whether this skill and efficiency in ceramic production was produced in craft facilities under chiefly control. Given the great consistency in design among Ubaid ceramics, for example, Susan Pollock argues that Susa’s exquisite painted wares, known from the end of the Ubaid Period, were made for and used by elites, suggesting that they were produced beyond the domestic sphere, perhaps in chiefly workshops (Pollock 1983). She further maintains that the complexity of the designs and the consistency of the motifs support the presence of chiefly power.

Basing her argument on the clays used in production, Judith Berman’s neutron activation analysis of Late Ubaid ceramics from the Susiana plain show that though remarkably homogeneous in design, there is great variability in clay sources used (Berman 1994). She suggests, therefore, that Ubaid ceramics were made in a range of different production locales and not in singular workshops that were presumably under chiefly control. This is in line with the argument made by Brumfiel and Earle (Brumfiel and Earle 1987) that specialized crafts can also be produced by skilled artisans in ateliers that are not necessarily attached to given patrons. In sum, research over the Ubaid Period with reference to socio-political complexity has yielded conflicting results on many fronts. Some, like Stein, Berman and Frangipane, have taken a middle path and argued for alternative pathways to social complexity (Berman 1994; Frangipane 2007; Stein 1994).

The next section of this paper will address these issues across the Halaf and the Ubaid-related Phases at Tell Kurdu. The exposures for both the sixth and fifth millennium BC levels of this site approach 800 m² each. The sixth millennium BC levels correspond with the Halaf Phase of northern Mesopotamia when Amuq C ceramics were locally produced at Tell Kurdu (Fig. 1) while the fifth millennium BC levels, when Amuq E ceramics were being used, correspond with the subsequent Ubaid Phase (Fig. 2). Eight hundred m² is substantial enough to allow us to contrast the nature of the deposits here in terms of political organization. As a result, this juxtaposition allows us to evaluate the emergence of corporate facilities and specialized crafts at a single settlement and provides a way to characterize the interaction with the greater Mesopotamian region.

TELL KURDU: BACKGROUND TO THE SITE

Tell Kurdu is a large prehistoric mound, located in the Amuq Valley of southern Turkey approximately 30 km northeast of the modern city of Antakya (ancient Antioch, Fig. 3). The temperate climate, the multiple sources of water, natural resources and agricultural lands combined with the strategic location of the region have contributed to the allure of the Plain of Antioch for prehistoric communities (Yener et al. 1996; Yener 2005) (Fig. 4). Being by far the largest prehistoric mound in the plain, Robert and Linda Braidwood selected Tell Kurdu to bring clarity to this time segment of the occupation history of the Plain of Antioch (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 15-18). The excavations conducted at the site in 1938 were limited to two weeks and four trenches. Though brief and hurried, their work proved crucial in understanding the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic phases in which local variants of North Mesopotamian types of Halaf and Ubaid wares were present (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 137-225). These phases, labeled Amuq C-E (6-5th millennium BC), were designated by Robert Braidwood as part of his regional pottery sequence (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960).

No scientific excavations took place at Tell Kurdu in the half century to follow, although the mound underwent significant bulldozing and destruction. In the mid 1990s, Aslihan Yener reinstated the excavations at Tell Kurdu, led campaigns at the site in 1996, 1998 and 1999 and in 2000 transferred the responsibility to the author and Fokke
Gerritsen (Edens and Yener 2000a; Özbal et al. 2004; Yener, Edens, Harrison et al. 2000; Yener, Edens, Casana et al. 2000). Trenches excavated in 1938 on both the southern and northern flanks of the site yielded Amuq C pottery (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 18), suggesting that the Amuq C occupation spread across the whole site. This observation was confirmed by recent intra-site settlement surveys (Branting 1996; Edens and Yener 2000a: 199), which have shown that the mound may have been as large as 15 ha in the Halaf-related sixth millennium BC phase but that it did not exceed 5-7 ha in the subsequent millennium during the Ubaid-related phase; the habited mound appears to have shrunk to about half its original size in the latter period. This observation follows trends seen at other sites and regions in northern Mesopotamia as described above.

Both the 1938 excavations and the 1996-1999 seasons centered on the Ubaid-related levels on the higher south mound (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960; Edens and Yener 2000a; Yener, Edens, Harrison et al. 2000), while the work conducted in 2001 specifically focused on the highest preserved Amuq C or Halaf-related level in the northern part of the mound (Fig. 5). The transitional Amuq D Period, which bridges the phase between the two major phases, is little understood. The ceramic assemblage suggests that the inhabitants continued to be influenced by north Mesopotamian styles of vessel production and decoration, although this is more apparent in the Ubaid-related fifth millennium assemblage. Painted Halafian vessels are rare and contrast sharply with local Dark Faced Burnished Wares, which represent a tradition that was practiced in the region since the Ceramic Neolithic. North Mesopotamian influences are much stronger in the Ubaid (Amuq E) phase when Ubaid-like ceramics dominate the assemblage and local styles of burnishing almost completely disappear. The following section first describes the situation during the Ubaid-related Amuq E Phase and thereafter provides a summary of the apparent sociopolitical situation during the Amuq C Phase.

The Ubaid-Related Amuq E Phase

The exposures of the Amuq E Phase of the fifth millennium BC encompass approximately 800 m², but this is an aggregate value of smaller 200-300 m² exposures across at least three different areas of the site. As mentioned, even though the Amuq Valley is geographically on the edges of what is often considered the Ubaid sphere of influence, aspects of the ceramics, figurines and architectural organization display distinct Ubaid elements (Özbal 2010). Overall, the picture emerging from the Amuq E levels at Tell Kurdu is one of variability; each sub-area had a different character, forming part of a varied settlement fabric. In addition to residential structures, excavations of the Ubaid-related levels, for example, yielded an area with what appears to be a large granary and another with a pottery production facility (Özbal 2010). Such structures are typically found across Ubaid settlements in greater Mesopotamia. The discussion below will explore the nature of these different complexes in terms of social and political complexity.

The architectural complex believed to be a granary was discovered on the summit of the mound, in trenches 1, 6 and 9 (Figs 6-7). Dating to the Early Amuq E, the grilled structure was either associated with or built upon a large platform and enclosed within a massive 10 x 9 meter building. The grills had a foundation made of stacked beds of woven reeds (Edens and Yener 2000a: 44) (Fig. 8). The fact that large quantities of stamp seals, baling tags, tokens and other administrative devices were found in association with the structure (Edens and Yener 2000a: 44) was further interpreted as evidence for large-scale grain storage (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 163). Too narrow for activities, the grills were likely constructed to elevate the structure to ensure that the floor (and the stored grain) remained dry. Such granaries, as described above, are quite typical of the Ubaid Period. Especially the Early Ubaid sees many examples at sites like Ziyadeh Level 1 (Arzt 2001: 34-36), Tell al-ʿAbr in Level 7 (Hammade and Yamazaki 2006: 43), and Tellul ith-Thalathat level XIII (Fukai et al. 1970: 18, see also pl. 65). Grill structures are also known from Tepe Gawra XV, XVA and XVI (Tobler 1950) and possibly even Eridu Temple XI and Temple X (Safar et al. 1981: figs 44A, 39:11, 39:10, see discussion above). If, as discussed above, the relative size of grain storage depots and proximity to other structures (either residential or ritual) are con-
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Considered, it may be possible to extrapolate whether such granaries were used by singular households or communally, perhaps under the control of "chiefly" elite.

Given its substantial size and the discovery of significant quantities of administrative artifacts, the Early Ubaid grill structure at Tell Kurdu can most likely be interpreted as one of communal importance. Indeed, based on the scale of the building and the effort placed into constructing the foundations, Akkermans and Schwartz suggest that this building at Tell Kurdu likely carried "public" significance (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 163). Whether this is sufficient to argue for a staple-finance based chiefdom (Stein 1994) with elites controlling access to resources is difficult to say. The complex, though not fully excavated, would probably not have been sufficient to store all the grain for the community but was certainly excessively large for a single household. I would argue it was used communally, perhaps by the neighborhood residents.

In addition to the grain storage depots, excavations of the Amuq E levels at Tell Kurdu also yielded a pottery production atelier. The discovery of a craft facility for the bulk production of ceramics is in line with the growing efforts towards the efficiency in manufacture that we see emerging in the Ubaid Period (Nissen 1988, 1989). The pottery producers of Tell Kurdu are known to have resorted to other instruments of efficiency, like the multiple brush device, which significantly reduces the labor time in decorating if applied while the pot is rotating on a slow wheel (Braidwood 1939) (Fig. 9a-9b). The potters' wheel or tournette, perhaps the most obvious step in "simplifying" the production process, also appears for the first time in the Ubaid Period (Nissen 1988: 47). Finally, producing pottery in an atelier reserved for this task, perhaps by specialists, as we see at Tell Kurdu, is no doubt another way to make the process more efficient.

The pottery workshop at Tell Kurdu is located in Trench 11 and 15 in the southwestern part of the mound (Fig. 10). Excavations yielded at least four kilns and associated ash pits. All pyrotechnic features were set into a partially walled space. The fire hardened kiln installations and a large number of over-fired sherds or wasters in the vicinity indicate that these features must have functioned as ceramic kilns (Casana 2000). Small pottery firing workshop facilities are known across the Ubaid world and suggest that this activity was beginning to shift from a household craft to one that was practiced in small community workshop settings. Whether these were "attached specialists," to use Brumfiel and Earle's terminology (Brumfiel and Earle 1987), working for a given chief, is in most cases difficult to determine, although the evidence for elite production is usually weak. The pottery production facility discovered at Tell Kurdu is likely more in line with the situation Judith Berman describes for Susa (Berman 1994): small independent yet specialized centers for the manufacture of ceramics.

Kiln complexes not unlike those at Kurdu, were also discovered at Tell Abada (Jasim 1985: 53-54), Tell al-'Abr (Hammade and Yamazaki 1995; Hammade and Yamazaki 2006: 42), Kosak Shamali (Koizumi and Sudo 2001), Al-'Ubaid and Eridu (Moore 2002), Songor B (Matsumoto and Yokoyama 1995) and possibly also at Tell Ziyadeh (Buccellati et al. 1991; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 170-171; but see Hole 2008). It cannot go without mention, however, that high firing temperatures were already achieved using complex updraft kilns during the sixth millennium. Such facilities are found regularly across Halafian sites (see Streily 2000 for a discussion). These are, however, singular cases. The notable change found in the Ubaid Period is the switch to concentrations of multiple kilns in a single specialized locale (Streily 2000: 80). The production of ceramics in workshop facilities as a specialized craft may well represent a step taken towards greater social complexity.

In addition to the granary and the pottery production center, excavations also uncovered a small residential complex dating to the Amuq E Phase in Trench 2, located on the southeastern part of the mound along a bulldozer cut (Edens and Yener 2000a: 38) (Fig. 11). The discovery of three superimposed architectural layers in this trench, all of which appear to be residential in character, suggests that this area remained domestic for several occupational phases. Especially Phase 2 of the architecture is noteworthy because it yielded a web of small rooms with complete vessels and
grinding stones in situ as well as a series of small bins which still contained charred grain (Edens and Yener 2000a: 38) (Fig. 11). The rooms are small yet the overall appearance of such agglutinatively clustered structures is quite similar to the sixth millennium architecture on the northern mound described below (Fig. 12). The Phase 2 architecture does not extend to the eastern part of the trench, probably due to issues of preservation. Yet excavations in this area yielded part of a lower phase of architecture called Phase 3 (Edens and Yener 2000a: 39). Quite surprisingly, this structure is round and resembles a tholos. Although clearly Amuq E in date, this is not the sole example of post-Halaf tholoi (see Breniquet 1991: 25; Tobler 1950; Wilkinson et al. 1996; and possibly Nishiaoki et al. 2001: 58-59).

In sum, when we look at the overall evidence yielded by the Ubaid related levels at Tell Kurdu, we see great variability. Even though not all the areas exposed are exactly contemporaneous, the Amuq E deposits to date are comprised of at least three areas of different character: (i) a quarter reserved for the communal storage and possibly the (overt or covert chiefly) administration of grain on the summit of the mound; (ii) a residential area of different overlying housing complexes in the east; and (iii) a nearby specialized community craft workshop reserved for the production of ceramics. The appearance of such specialized facilities for the production of pottery and for the storage and redistribution of grain resembles examples known from Ubaid sites and suggest that the inhabitants of Tell Kurdu were also following the steps that other contemporary sites in Mesopotamia were taking towards incipient social complexity.

The Halaf-Related Amuq C Phase

Excavations of the Amuq C Phase were concentrated on the north mound (Özbah et al. 2004; Yener, Edens, Harrison et al. 2000; Yener, Edens, Casana et al. 2000). The structures are either mudbrick or pisé and lack stone foundations. Given the proximity of the exposed levels to the surface, the buildings were in part damaged by plowing and other activities. Overall, the architecture is comprised of complex agglutinative structures arranged around a web of streets (Fig. 12). Unlike the Ubaid situation, the architecture is entirely residential. There are no craft areas reserved for specialists and no large granaries. The only variability present is among different residential complexes in how they organize their space. Evidence suggests that some houses were somewhat more private and that others preferred more open and communal arenas for activities like food preparation (Özbah 2006). What binds the whole Amuq C settlement together is the underlying residential character of all the Amuq C exposures in general.

Only one area, Area A, a private residential compound, is described here. The residence was arranged around a small courtyard (see Özbal 2006, in press, Özbal et al. 2004) (Figs 13-14). Entrance into the area was through room R10. The two postholes on either side of the entrance indicate that a gate restricted access into the compound. One presumes that only those who had the right to enter were welcome. Another posthole placed on the wall dividing rooms R07 and R10 suggests that the inhabitants and the visitors had to go through an additional door (this time stepping over a raised threshold) before they arrived at the main courtyard of Area A (i.e. courtyard R07). From the courtyard, one enters room R05, which has a door just south of the courtyard bin. This was a kitchen or food preparation area. In addition to a large bread oven, excavations here yielded two work platforms, one with a large grinding stone still in situ. Adjacent to this was a small semi-circular bin, formed by a small mud-ledge. The bin was equipped with two stones onto which the residents had balanced two large sherds, which may have acted as a shelf. The floor had other in situ materials on it including several more grinding stones and a complete large jar, several bone tools, sling pellets, tokens as well as two pot discs (Fig. 15), suggesting that other activities must also have taken place here (Özbah et al. 2004: 41-42). The discovery of grinding stones in the courtyard of the complex may indicate that room R07 was also used for grinding activities, perhaps also for food preparation. In addition, microarchaeological analyses showed that lithic knapping took place here (Özbah et al. 2004; Özbal and Healey 2008).

The northern room of the complex, room R06, was the presumed living-room of the compound.
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Although it too was restricted in size, it yielded a series of plaster floors, suggesting that it went through several episodes of maintenance and refurbishing. This was also the room selected for the placement of deceased family members. Two burials were excavated here, one placed beneath the highest and one beneath the lowest excavated floors. Noteworthy is the fact that neither of the burials were of infants as infants are the usual candidates for subfloor burials at Tell Kurdu. Interestingly, analyses of the DNA show that both individuals come from the same matriline, which may be used as evidence to show that the residents of Area A were kin (Mekel-Bobrov and Lahn 2004: tab. 15). Overall, the inhabitants of Area A were probably an independent household which saw to their own food production and craft activities. Although other areas of the site like Area E are not as restricted as this compound, we find a general lack of craft workshops and administrative complexes or other public structures within the exposed area. Future research may be able to determine whether these compounds were bounded in any way to divide the community into smaller neighborhoods (as in Domuztepe). At present however, one cannot argue for any centralized authority, any form of hierarchical organization or any evidence for craft production beyond the household sphere at Tell Kurdu in the sixth millennium BC.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned at the outset, the aim of this paper was to describe the differences we see in Mesopotamian social complexity in the Halaf and Ubaid Periods. A review of the literature has shown that there are significant changes that take place across northern Mesopotamia by the beginning of the fifth millennium. This observation is supported by the Tell Kurdu case study, a useful example that allows comparison between the phases in question at a single site. The Amuq Valley lacks evidence for hierarchy and craft specialization in the Amuq C phase, closely paralleling the situation across northern Mesopotamia in general at this time. However, as mentioned, neither the ceramics nor the architecture of the Amuq C phase shows strong Halaf influences. The architecture displays Levantine or Anatolian characteristics and local Amuq C ceramics comprise the great majority of the pottery assemblage (although characteristic Halaf-type painted ceramics are recognizable present in small numbers in the Amuq during the sixth millennium). In terms of architecture and social organization, there seems to be a general lack of functional variability. All excavated areas are residential as excavations yielded no workshops or organizational quarters.

The scenario in the Amuq E Phase at Tell Kurdu, on the other hand, is markedly different. The fifth millennium BC layers at Tell Kurdu display close resemblances - not only in the architecture, as described above, but also in ceramics, figurines and burial practices - to the developments taking place in Ubaid settlements to the southeast (Ozbal 2010). Nearly half of all rim sherd were painted in an Ubaid-like style, leading Braidwood and Braidwood to characterize the ceramics of this phase as having "an overwhelmingly Ubaid complexion" (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 511). Figurines with coffee-bean eyes and elongated heads, well known from southern Mesopotamia are present at Tell Kurdu, and inhabitants begin burying their dead in cemeteries as is common among Ubaid settlements (Ozbal 2010). The discovery of Ubaid architectural elements within the Amuq repertoire, especially large communal storage structures and kiln facilities, may suggest that the fifth millennium inhabitants of Tell Kurdu were adopting not just Ubaid materials and styles but also aspects of Ubaid social organization. Specialized craft production facilities suggest that household level economies at Tell Kurdu were beginning to be replaced by specialists. Moreover, communal storage facilities indicate that some sort of community organization and administration was necessary for the gathering and redistribution of staple goods.

The lack of evidence for hierarchy and craft specialization in the Halaf-related Amuq C case at Tell Kurdu is noteworthy because it highlights the dramatic changes in terms of incipient social complexity that take place at the site by the fifth millennium. Overall, these results allow us to document, at a single settlement, examples of the greater critical changes that social and political organization and settlement dynamics were under-
going between the sixth and fifth millennia BC in the Near East.

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**NOTES**


2 i.e. “staple finance-based chiefdom” (Stein 1994); “vertical egalitarian system” (Frangipane 2007); “low-level chiefdoms” (Watson and LeBlanc 1973); “developed chiefdoms” (Watson 1983: 242-243).

3 Domuztepe is a marked exception; here the excavators have demonstrated concurrent occupation across the whole 20 ha site (Campbell et al. 1999).

4 Sites such as Eridu, Ur and Uqair in the south (Lloyd and Safar 1943; Oates 1977: 472; Wright 1981: 324-325) and Tell Al Abr, Tell Zeidan and Tell Hammam et Turkman in the north (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 165; Hammad and Koike 1992: 109; Stein 2009: 129) may have been around or even slightly exceeding 10 ha in size. We know that Susa in Khuzistan may have approached 15 ha, but this site dates to the very end of the Ubaid period when evidence on many fronts point to the development of a “proto state” society.

5 Typically, site sizes have been a direct reflection of the level of complexity. Yet there is a notable decline in site sizes between the Halaf and the Ubaid Phases in the Near East. Perhaps, in addition to size, we should also be looking at issues of organization. If large Halaf sites are heterarchical, and Ubaid sites are showing incipient hierarchies, this may provide some explanation for the apparent discrepancies.

6 The technology of constructing updraft kilns was already known during the Halaf Period and even earlier (Streily 2000). However, these are singular examples likely used by households or family work groups. It is not until the Ubaid Period that we see concentrations of kilns in what would have been workshop settings suggesting that this is when pottery production becomes a specialized craft (Streily 2000: 80).

7 Based on an analysis of Amuq E ceramics from Tell Kurdu, in fact, Fokke Gerritsen (Gerritsen 1994) proposed that pottery from this phase was likely produced by specialists in community workshop settings (also see Casana 2000). The excavated kiln facility at Tell Kurdu may represent such a community craft area.

8 The concentration of “kilns” noted at the Halaf Period site of Yunus (Woolley 1934: 149) is misleading and is likely a series of superimposed tholoi. Almost all other cases of kilns in the Halaf Period are singular (Streily 2000) although there are instances of rebuilding obsolete kilns in nearby locales giving the appearance of a multiple kiln facilities (e.g. Tsuneki and Miyake 1998).

9 The tholos has triangular inner supports, identical in size and layout to those excavated in the Halaf Levels of Yarim Tepe III, Level 3 (Merpert and Munchaev 1993b: 186-188).

10 There are other known examples of residential architecture at Tell Kurdu: excavated in 1999, Trench 14 also along the bulldozer cut, just south of this area, yielded two phases of architecture likely serving a similar function. In the upper phase of the latter complex, two bread ovens were discovered in the main room exposed (Edens and Yener 2000b: 40-41). East of the structure were a series of overlying lenses of ash and domestic debris. Unfortunately, the sounding here was relatively narrow and could not be widened given time constraints.
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11 The DNA is currently being reanalyzed by a second laboratory to ensure accuracy.

12 Unlike Domuztepe, at Tell Kurdu our knowledge of the ceramic assemblage is not refined enough to be able to assess whether the whole mound surface was occupied simultaneously, but even if the total occupied area at any one time was no more than a few hectares, we are undoubtedly dealing with a cluster of residential compounds.

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Fig. 1 - Examples of Amuq C painted pottery from Tell Kurdu (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives)

Fig. 2 - Examples of Amuq E painted pottery from Tell Kurdu (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives)

Fig. 3 - Map of southern Turkey indicating the location of the Amuq Valley (adapted from Gerritsen et al. 2008: fig. 1)

Fig. 4 - Map of the Hatay region and the Amuq Valley (adapted from Gerritsen et al. 2008: fig 2)

Fig. 5 - Map of Tell Kurdu showing the location of the current excavations (after Özbal et al. 2004: fig 1)

Fig. 6 - Plan of Trenches 1, 6, 9 on the summit of the mound (after Yener et al. 2000a: 24)
Fig. 7 - Photo of Trenches 1, 6, 9 showing the grill structure in the foreground (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives, courtesy of Aslihan Yener)

Fig. 8 - Photo of the reeds forming the foundation of the grill structure (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives, courtesy of Aslihan Yener)

Fig. 9a and 9b - A photo of an Amuq E vessel from Tell Kurdu (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives, courtesy of Aslihan Yener) and a reconstruction of a multiple brush device that may have been used to decorate such a vessel (after Braidwood 1939: fig. 8).

Fig. 10 - Plan of the kiln area in Trenches 11 and 15 (after Yener et al. 2000b: fig. 3)
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Fig. 11 - Plan of Trench 2 architecture (after Yener et al. 2000a:fig. 20)

Fig. 12 - Plan of the North Mound Operation (after Özbal et al. 2004: fig 2)

Fig. 13 - Plan of Area A (in the North Mound, after Özbal 2006 fig.4.4)

Fig. 14 - Photo of room R05. Notice the oven on the left and the platform with an in situ grinding stone on the right. (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives)

Fig. 15 - Photo of the artifacts found in situ on the floor from room R05 (photo: Tell Kurdu excavation archives)