
The power and ritual of water during the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age on the Euphrates river – The case of the Tilbes Project sites

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Résumé

The Turkish Euphrates region constitutes one of the main points where the first agrarian communities, the first cities and the first states of the Mesopotamian region arose. Here we offer an outlook on what the middle Turkish Euphrates meant for a series of archaeological sites located north of the modern city of Birecik (province of Urfa), and where a rescue mission at the Birecik Dam, the Tilbes Project, focused on the 4th and 3rd millennia BC, the local Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age.

The river is a source of water and life, but it also causes "storms". We were able to demonstrate at these sites evidence of severe flooding events during various archaeological phases of the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age. The archaeological sites on the left bank of the Euphrates river, north of modern Birecik town, also yielded evidence of rituals related to the water and its products (v.gr. fish seems absent in the diet during the periods under study and later on). Rituals of rebirth, in funerary or religious contexts near the river, took place there during the period under study. Additionally, an omnipresent theme in the iconography and artistic representations, found in these places from Birecik, is related to divinities of waters and fertility.

Mots-Clés: Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, Mesopotamia, Tilbes Project, water rituals

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