

## **Transcript: Early Prehistoric Sites in Iraqi Kurdistan - Mabast Ali Amin**

Mehiyar Kathem 0:00 Welcome to the new Nahrein Network. My name is Dr Mehiyar Kathem. And we're here today with Mabast Ali Amin, scholar of the Nahrein Network, British Institute for the Study of Iraq scholarships program. Hello, Mabast, how are you? Good to have you. And you've just completed or you're about to complete a two month scholarship at Liverpool University. Could you tell us a bit about your background and your research?

Mabast 0:27 Okay, great to see you today. My name is Mabast. I'm from Kurdistan Region, parts of Iraq. I work at Garmian University in Garmian University is basically located in city of Kalar. I work in history department, I teach in that department. I teach, like two subjects and ancient history of Iraq and ancient history of Kurds and some, like arts and architecture in Mesopotamia. I concentrate on archaeology of Kurdistan In my research I have done before, and I'm currently working on a research project at Liverpool University, which will be great for my future work. Yes.

Mehiyar Kathem 1:27 Great. Thank you for that Mabast. And Garmian is in Kalar, which is in Sulaymaniyah, which is a province in Iraqi Kurdistan. Could you tell us a bit about your the reason why you chose archaeology? I know you're in history department. But the reason why you chose archaeology as a career,

Mabast 1:45 My specialization is archaeology. So basically, I'm archaeologists, so but due to the fact that they archaeology department is not exist at Garmian University at the moment. So therefore, I currently work in history department, but working on archaeological subjects and working on archaeology. So that's why I'm archaeologists, but I work in history departments, with my concentration on archaeological matches and archaeological subjects and doing like archaeological researches,

Mehiyar Kathem 2:28 and how has the scholarship at Liverpool University benefited your own research.

Mabast 2:34 This helps me a lot, a great scholarship. And it's, you know, I was about to discuss with various professionals, academics, and Liverpool, not only at the level at university, but others who have been working on heritage and cultural sites, and Heritage Preservation in the UK. And in Liverpool, it was a good opportunity for me to discuss the matter with them how they face the challenge of cultural and heritage destruction in the UK. And Nahrein also has great support for me in are just working towards the development of a cultural and heritage preservation in Kurdistan region. So my research project was a new topic. It's may not be worked on, previously, this is very, very new. And so that's why this is a good opportunity for me. And it provides me a lot to concentrate on this very new topic in a developed country, like the UK, because, you know, the I gained knowledge and gathered information to do something in future on cultural preservations.

Mehiyar Kathem 4:20 Great. And could you tell us a bit more about your research? What type of topics are you addressing? What kind of new information have you been exposed to or has become now part of your research? What kind of things have you learned when you were University of Liverpool?

Mabast 4:37 My research topic is preserving prehistoric sites in Iraqi Kurdistan. You know that the cultural heritage of Northern Mesopotamia specifically its prehistoric heritage is rich and diverse. The Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq in particular you is of significance for understanding global scale

developments in the history of mankind. So, you know, this is really a good area to look at prehistoric sites it contains evidence of human evolution, and key development, animal husbandry and farming activities, you know, these living unique prehistoric sites in Kurdistan. So, these prehistoric sites are really important to to be preserved to be promoted to make sure we will not use it in future. So, during my research, I realized that there are distractions and destroying to the archaeological or prehistoric sites, we can notice, obviously, so I collected data about the prehistoric sites, indicating factors threats, which threatening archaeological sites and prehistoric prehistoric sites in Iraqi Kurdistan. So at the end, we came out with the fact that, you know, there are various factors threatening archaeological sites in Kurdistan, and preservation and promotions are urgently needed to stop losing partially or completely our prehistoric sites in Iraqi Kurdistan. Mehiyar Kathem 6:36 And if we can just focus a bit more about the threats to cultural archaeological historic sites, what are the main threats that you see that need to be addressed?

Mabast 6:46 According to my data collection, we categorized threats and factors contributing in destroying archaeological sites into five main drivers. So each drivers contains a few threats and actions. The main drivers are economic development, urban development, looting, military activities, and natural disasters. There are the main five drivers, which are currently the main factors of destroying and destruction of our prehistoric sites in Kurdistan region. And there are other risks and actions, each of these drivers in our content, like pluing in economic developments, like are constructing dams, like you know, there are threats and actions or values. So we may not be able to talk about in this interview in this in detail. So that's why just focus on the main factors and threads and actions here.

Mehiyar Kathem 8:12 You'll be going back a few days, what kind of work will you be going back to what kind of new projects or current projects or initiatives or activities in this field will you be working on?

Mabast 8:24 There are a few plans, we we will do it in a near future. So basically, I'm planning to continue researching and delivering articles with in collaboration with professionals and academics. I met in the UK and in Liverpool, specifically, two days ago, I was talking to my supervisor, and we talked about future our future plan. And we hopefully agreed that we will do something else in the near future, we we will continue researching and to make our own our current role in being reached. So we will, we will do it after as long as we finish this project. We'll do all the research and delivery articles with my research supervisor. And in April, me and my supervisor will present a webinar at Garmian university so hopefully, he accepted my invitation to my university, and we will present webinar, Garmian university to scholars, professionals, local communities, students on staffs, staffs of my university so Oh, thankfully, he accepted my invitation. And we will do it in Kurdistan. And at my university, and we, we will do something in the Kurdistan region for local communities just to raise their awareness, like presenting webinars in public, or presenting seminars and webinars online. These are all plans for future really, there are things that we can do in future to make sure that we preserve and promote our archaeological heritage sites in Iraqi Kurdistan and in Iraq, as the general. So this, so we need to reform legislations and regulations in Parliament to make sure we can preserve our archaeological sites. And there are other actions that we can take towards sustainable developments of our heritage and archaeological sites. So basically, there are organizations, international organizations, which are working on heritage sites, culture and archaeological sites, their main goal, and aim is to preserve these archaeological sites and their place of work are mainly in Middle East. So it's really important to connect to these international organizations much more better than today. We need to bring them into our country, to the you know, because they care about heritage sites in in the world. They work to preserve them, they fund projects in various

countries to preserve their cultural heritage. So we need to bring them into our country. I know they're in our country, but we need to connect to them in a better way, because they could fund our project, our preservation project in radicalism, and then we can record riches or important archaeological sites in their, in their records in their lists, like UNESCO and organization. These are organizations. And it's really important to make, you know, a perfect connection with these organizations.

Mehiyar Kathem 12:47 On that note, thank you my past, this has been a superb podcast, I wish you well on your journey to safeguard cultural heritage and to strengthen the work of Iraq's cultural infrastructure. Thank you for the discussion. And I hope that you continue with the great work you're doing.

Mabast 13:04 Thank you very much for having me. Thank you again. Thank you.

Mehiyar Kathem 13:08 Thank you very much, my best.