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LOCATION OF THE BATTLE OF GAUGAMELA IN THE LIGHT OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

The battle of Gaugamela, fought between the Macedonian-Greek forces **led by Alexander the Great**, King of Macedonia, and the Persian army under the Achaemenid King Darius III in 331 BCE, has frequently been labeled as **one of the most important battles in the history of the ancient world**. Indeed, its final result led to both the effective collapse of the Persian Empire – an empire that spanned two centuries – and the emergence of a new age, now commonly labeled as **the Hellenistic period**. It was the Hellenistic period that brought about the unprecedented export of Greek culture all over the ancient Near East (as far as modern Pakistan), which in turn made its indelible mark on the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds that continue to this day.

Despite the great importance of this battle, **its exact location is not certain**. This situation results from the state of the extant ancient sources. First, the ancient writers do not provide us with precise geographical and topographical information (at least not to the extent that would satisfy modern geographers and cartographers). As a result, it comes to no surprise that modern scholars have not agreed on one location for the Gaugamela battlefield, suggesting several different locations, esp.: Karamleis, Qaraqosh, Tell Aswad, (south of) Wardak, and Tell Gomel.

The current state of research on Gaugamela clearly features several deficiencies. First and foremost, **past identifications have not been based on detailed on-site examinations**. Two reasons in particular may incline us to now take up this long-debated question of the identification of ancient Gaugamela. First, **the recent period of political stability in the Kurdish Autonomous Region** in northern Iraq has brought modern archaeology into full bloom in the region. More than forty international archaeological missions have commenced their work in Kurdish Iraq in the last decade, and every year this number grows. Second, **the development of modern technology (especially remote sensing and GIS studies)** allows us to work with much better techniques than even several decades ago, not to mention in the 1940s, when the two major identifications of the Gaugamela battlefield were formulated.

The scientific aim of the project is to establish the exact location of the Battle of Gaugamela in the light of multidisciplinary research, especially including the methods of ancient history and landscape archaeology (use of ancient textual evidence, scholarly literature, past and recent cartographic data, satellite remote sensing imagery, GIS [Geographic Information System] capabilities, and fieldwork, including selected geophysical surveys). A comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach towards the identification of the Gaugamela battlefield may also **bring many new insights into other research fields closely related to the identification of Gaugamela** (e.g., Macedonian military warfare; communication routes in the Tigris region; source criticism of the Alexander histories; and new case studies of satellite remote sensing and GIS in ancient history and archaeology).