



AKKADIKA

Conspectus Librorum - Book Review:

Daniele MORANDI BONACOSSI, *Urban and Natural Landscapes of an Ancient Syrian Capital. Settlement and Environment at Tell Mishrifeh / Qatna and in Central-Western Syria. Proceedings of the International Conference held in Udine, 9-11 December 2004.*

[Studi Archeologici su Qatna 1 = Documents d'Archéologie Syrienne XII], Udine, 2007.

351 pages, line drawings, black-and white photographs, 3 colour plates paperback. ISBN 978-88-8420-418-9. List Price: EUR c. 70,-.

The present volume is devoted to the proceedings of the international conference on the interdisciplinary reconstruction of the ancient urban history and the natural landscape of Qatna (Tell Mishrifeh) and its surrounding regions, held at Udine in 2004. It presents the results of the research conducted by the joint Syrian-Italian-German mission (D. Morandi Bonacossi for the University of Udine, M. al-Maqdissi for the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums and P. Pfälzner for the University of Tübingen). More than ten years of methodological excavations yielded archaeological, environmental and historical knowledge of ancient Qatna and its territory, from the 3rd to mid 1st millennium B.C.

In an introductory section, the three directors of the joint Syrian-Italian-German mission present the most important archaeological discoveries made in Qatna since 1999, when the joint mission came into being. M. al-Maqdissi reports on the Syrian discoveries (p. 19-28), P. Pfälzner describes the investigation of the royal palace (p. 29-64) and D. Morandi Bonacossi reconstructs the settlement and urbanism of Qatna (p.65-92). The second and largest part is dedicated to the palaeoenvironmental study of the site and his region during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Twelve articles contain a wealth of geoarchaeological information (M. Cremaschi, p. 93-104), discuss the climate and vegetation (V. Valsecchi, p. 105-114), land use (L. Trombino, p. 115-122), husbandry (L. Peña-Chocarro & M. Rottoli, p. 123-144), archaeobotanical research (S. Riehl, p. 145-152), plant remains (G. Fiorentino & V. Caracuta, p. 153-160), fauna (E. Vila & L. Gourichon, p. 161-168), palaeopathological examinations (A. Canci & F. Bartoli, p. 169-172, C. Witzel & K. Kreutz, p. 173-188), soil analysis and biomolecular analysis of finds from a royal tomb (A. J. Mukherjee, M. A. James, P. Pfälzner, R. P. Evershed, p. 189-198, C. Pümpin, p. 199-206), and archaeometric and archaeomagnetic data on pottery (L. Maritan, C. Mazzoli & F. Speranza, p. 207-218). Archaeological and palaeoenvironmental research in the wider area of Central-Western Syria is presented in a third section. They contain articles on the Akkar plain (J.-P. Thalmann, p. 219-232), the Marl landscape east of Lake Qatina (G. Philip, p. 233-242), the Middle Orontes region K. Bartl & M. al-Maqdissi, p. 243-252), the Ghab Valley (M. Fortin, p. 253-268), North-Syria (B. Geyer, M. al-Dbiyat, N. Awad, O. Barge, J. Besançon, Y. Calvet & R. Jaubert, (p. 269-282) and the region of al-Rawda (C. Castel, p. 283-296). Finally, a fourth section features an analysis of the human settlement and the regional landscape on the base of philological sources from the Qatna archives (J. Eidem, p. 297-304), T. Richter, p. 305-310) and Mari (N. Ziegler, p. 311-318, C. Pappi, p. 319-330). Two concluding chapters summarize the results of the conference and propose preliminary reconstructive drawings of the urban and natural landscapes of the Qatna region (M. Cremaschi, p. 331-336), B. Geyer, p. 337-340).

An elaborate index (p. 341-350) facilitates further research on specific data. Good quality drawings, recent (black-and white) photographs and colourful reconstruction drawings (attached to the back cover) illustrate the 27 articles and make the volume not only enjoyable to read, but also a well-illustrated summary of ten years of research in the region. This admirable endeavour is one of the first environmental approaches to Syrian sites (cfr. also the environmental study of the Jebel plain on the Syrian coast, published by M. al-Maqdissi et al. in *Res Antiquae* 4-2007) and is a welcome contribution to the study of urban and natural developments in Central-Western Syria.

Vanessa Boschloos
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