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Salisbury Plain areas. John also proposes a mechanism for entrainment of bluestone erratics into a confluence of Irish Sea and Welsh ice, a model that incidentally would suggest preferential removal of bluestones from northern Preseli flanks. Significantly, the geochemical evidence suggests bluestone origins from those very northern outcrops.

John admits the dearth of field evidence for glaciation on Salisbury Plain, a lack which leaves the peripheral edges of the computer modelling without 'ground truthing' (there are indications of periglacial conditions on the edge of Salisbury Plain but firm evidence of substantial ice cover cannot be said to extend further inland than Bridgewater and Bath). John gives the usual explanations for this absence of evidence (which is not, as Aubrey Burl has pointed out, the same as evidence for absence) – field clearance, bluestones in pre-Stonehenge contexts constituting erratics, incomplete field research – but he notes, in addition, telling examples of glaciated yet 'driftless' areas of North America and eastern England.

The book – sufficiently referenced but lacking an index – tries to be both popular and academic, combining an informal writing style with (simplification of) a lot of serious literature. Mainly, it works. Personally, I have only minor complaints. I would not call Stonehenge an 'Axe Factory' (yes, some axe-heads are geochemically identical to some monoliths, but I'd prefer to think of adventitious use of other locally-available erratics). The Boles Barrow bluestone in Salisbury Museum is discussed, but the ambiguity over its reported weight does not seem to me to have ever been satisfactorily explained. There is limited consideration of evidence for archaeological parallels to bluestone settings, but since Aubrey Burl discussed these in his suggestions of Breton links (and John makes frequent reference to Burl's work throughout the book) this omission can be allowed. The reference to 'Early' (Neolithic) on page 79 when talking of prehistoric seafaring abilities seems out of place since bluestone transport is generally proposed for a later stage of the Neolithic. And I would have liked to see some mention of the 'other' Preseli axe type (the rhyolitic tuff axes) whose distribution from Preseli is as yet largely unknown.

Why *do* bluestones evoke such rancorous comments whenever glaciation is suggested? John suspects

: enthusiasm for an (sort), intransigence of rests. But none of these bearing whatsoever on

the science. Surely we are all, at heart, on the same side here – aren't we? – working our way towards a true understanding of Stonehenge, and agreeing to disagree in a civilised manner along the way.

Will the bluestone puzzle ever be 'solved' one way or another? Like Brian John, I doubt if a 'killer fact' will ever turn up. But I do believe that advances in glaciology will gradually lead to an acceptance of glacial ice extending, at its maximum, well into the south-west of England; and in future years, the controversy may perhaps have become a matter of purely historiographical interest. As John points out, Stonehenge is quite wonderful enough without resorting to bluestones-on-rafts. *The bluestone enigma* makes a good case for throwing out the rafts.

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DANIELE MORANDI BONACOSI (ed.). *Urban and natural landscapes of an ancient Syrian capital: settlement and environment at Tell Mishriféh/Qatna and in central-western Syria* (Studi Archeologici su Qatna 1). 350 pages, 172 illustrations, 31 tables & 3 colour fold-out plates. 2007. Udine: Forum; 978-88-8420-418-9 paperback €70 & \$105.

The mound at Mishrifé, in inland western Syria northeast of Homs, is completely unremarkable in itself. It represents a modest prehistoric settlement, but the roughly square dump rampart fortifications around the lower city, enclosing a square kilometre and rising to a height of 15m, are a different matter. Add to the size of the city



the fact that it had at its centre a monumental palace complex, below which a German team has recently found a suite of royal funerary chambers. Cuneiform tablets found more than seventy years ago in the early French excavations at the site, references in

the Amarna diplomatic archive in southern Egypt, and from the palace archives of Mari on the middle Euphrates, inform us that its name was Qatna, the capital of one of a series of kingdoms through the later third and second millennia BC.

This volume is the product of an international conference held at the University of Udine in 2004, where all the participants in the joint Syrian-Italian-German Qatna project (plus a number of others working in central-western Syria) came together to share results and discussion. The original excavations were begun in 1924, and resulted in a volume published in 1935. The new work was begun by the Syrian Department of Antiquities in 1994, and the Italian and the German teams joined them from 1999. As the title of the volume advertises, the project is not simply more excavations on an important site. While some archaeologists have undertaken fresh and very productive excavations within the Bronze Age city, other specialists have been working at archaeological and environmental survey around the territory that would have comprised the ancient kingdom.

The twenty-seven papers are arranged within five sections, and, apart from four in French, all are published in English. The papers as published were written some time after the date of the conference, and include more recently recovered information.

The first section has three contributors, the Syrian, German and Italian project leaders, who give us an overview of the site, the palace area in particular, and the region. Michel al-Maqdissi gives an account of more than ten years' work by the Syrian Department of Antiquities. Peter Pfälzner presents a lucid and valuable summary of Count du Mesnil du Buisson's early discoveries together with those of his own team. He is able to give us a general plan of the whole palace complex, as well as a history of the palace. And he identifies the functioning of a number of rooms, so that he can outline the structural organisation of the complex, differentiating its public and monumental core, the royal living quarters, the service and storage areas, and the area where the scribal administrators were accommodated. Pfälzner has two important subsections devoted to the great well within the palace and the royal hypogeum, the latter found sealed and undisturbed since it was last used around 1340 BC.

The third chapter, by Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, is especially valuable. He summarises and synthesises a great deal of material from the city site itself, and from

the archaeological and environmental surveys of the region in order to offer a preliminary reconstruction of the history of the city and its hinterland from the late fourth to the first millennium BC. The story is too complex to summarise here, but suffice to say that it is fascinating and full of new insights into the historical geography of a typical Levantine Amorite kingdom.

The second section of the volume consists of twelve chapters reporting on a very varied range of environmental research, plus one paper on the human remains from the royal tomb. At one level, we have a study of lacustrine and marsh deposits within the city; it concludes that, right from the formation of the city at the end of the third millennium BC, natural karstic springs were managed to form an artificial lake at the foot of the slope on which the palace complex was built. At another level, there are studies of the environmental and land-use history of the region around the city, which consisted of a dendritic system of seasonal water-courses draining into the Orontes river; Qatna itself sat on one of those water-courses at the very centre of the catchment.

The third section extends the perspective of the discussion beyond the kingdom and territory of Qatna itself. Six chapters discuss not only the settlement pattern of the hinterland of the city of Qatna but also areas of central-western Syria beyond. The fourth section brings together four contributors who can draw on the contemporary documentary data, both from tablets recovered at Mishrifé-Qatna, and from the rich archives of the palace at Mari. The final section consists of two brief essays under the general heading of 'Towards a First Reconstruction'.

There is a great amount of food for thought in this well-organised, well-produced and well-illustrated book. Perhaps because all the various specialists sat down together around the conference table to hear the original papers, the resulting chapters are not addressed only at fellow-specialists. Together with the contributions of the 'guest' authors, the large international team working at and around Mishrifé-Qatna encourages us to think that this singularly important region in the middle of the Levant is now receiving the detailed attention that its pivotal historical importance warrants.

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