

Khabur region and of Chagar Bazar based on the more recent surveys and excavation results. Naturally, they focus on the Halaf period, on the end of the Hassuna period with its parallels to Proto-Halaf period materials, the fuzzy transition from Proto-Halaf to Halaf, and finally the transition to the Ubaid period (chap. 11.2). The results from Chagar Bazar essentially shine a convenient spotlight on the developments from the Proto-Halaf to the peak of the Halaf period (chap 11.3), now dated to the 7th to 6th millennia BC.

The first report of the new excavations on Chagar Bazar provides a new topographic map of the tell, a modern analysis of the prehistoric pottery types, a refinement of the stratigraphic sequence of the Halaf period on Chagar Bazar, some archaeo-botanical and archaeo-zoological analysis, and is backed by new C₁₄-dates, adding to our knowledge of the Halaf period in the Khabur region and in general. It provides valuable information and a modern base for a re-evaluation and embedding of this important site in the prehistory of Syria and the Ancient Near East.

Finally, in times when funding is short and budgets reduced, one must also mention the very reasonable format and price of the book, without loss of quality in the material published.

Cf. also: McMahon, A. et al.: New Excavations at Chagar Bazar 1999-2000. In: *Iraq* 63, 201-222.

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MORANDI BONACOSSI, D. (ed.) — Urban and natural landscapes of an ancient Syrian capital. Settlement and environment at Tell Mishrefeh/Qatna and in Central-Western Syria. Proceedings of the international conference held in Udine, 9-11 December 2004 (*Studi Archeologici su Qatna*, 01 (SAQ 1 = DAS XII)). Forum, Udine, 2007. (28 cm, 350, 3 attached plates). ISBN 978-88-8420-48-9 €70,-

The volume under review here inaugurates a new series of publications: *Studi Archeologici su Qatna*. In this series the results of the Italo-Syrian excavations at Tell Mishrifeh and their study of the wider area of Central Syria will be published. Tell Mishrifeh, ancient Qatna, was initially excavated by the French Comte du Mesnil du Buisson (in 1924, 1927-1929). Recently, a Syrian expedition under the direction of Michel al-Maqdissi, Director of the Excavations Service and Archaeological Studies in Syria, began the new excavations at Tell Mishrifeh in 1994. In 1999 this excavation project was expanded into the ongoing Syrian-Italian-German Archaeological Research Project. The Italian team is provided by the University of Udine, while the University of Tübingen provided the German team.

This first volume of *Studi Archeologici su Qatna* is — simultaneously — the twelfth volume in the series *Documents d'Archéologie Syrienne*. In the fourth volume of the latter series (al-Maqdissi et al. (eds.) *Excavating Qatna I*) the preliminary reports on the excavations of 1999 and 2000 had been published along with several ethno-archaeological

studies from the (recently abandoned town as well as the) modern town of Mishrifeh. This new volume contains the proceedings of the "international conference on the reconstruction of the urban history and the natural and anthropogenic landscapes of Mishrifeh and Central-Western Syria," which was held in Udine in December 2004.

The list of authors not only reflects the international cooperation between the Syrian, Italian and German teams, but it extends to several other recent archaeological projects in Central Syria. Whereas *Excavating Qatna I* consisted of a detailed account of the stratigraphy and finds from the different excavation areas at the site, this volume focuses on Qatna's position in the wider settings of the regions geography, climate, settlement patterns and economy.

This book consists of five sections. The first section consists of summaries of the archaeological research of the three teams. In the first article ('Notes d'archéologie Levantine X. ...') Michel al-Maqdissi provides us not only with a general stratigraphy of the entire site, but also outlines the results of the Syrian excavations. In addition, he presents the results of a survey in the area surrounding Tell Mishrifeh and the accompanying soundings at Tell Sh'eir and Rastan.

Peter Pfälzner guides us through the German excavations in the second article ('Archaeological investigations in the royal palace of Qatna'). The palace is discussed room by room and the new interpretations are explicitly discussed where they differ from Du Mesnil du Buisson's original interpretation. To mention just one example, the reinterpretation of the 'Haut-Lieu' as the palace's bathroom is of great interest as it eliminates one of the rare occurrences of aniconic worship in Bronze Age Syria (see Mettinger, T., 1995, *No graven image?*). Pfälzner also summarizes his arguments for dating the foundation of the royal palace (except for the extension in Operation H) to the MBA II(A) period. The discussion of the lay-out and contents of the royal hypogeum also provides an introduction to the scientific research projects that study elements of the tomb in greater detail. Preliminary reports of many of these projects are included in this volume.

Daniele Morandi Bonacossi integrates the results of the Italian excavations on the tell with those of the Italian geo-archaeological survey done from 2000-2003 in the next article ('Qatna and its hinterland during the Bronze and Iron Ages. ...'). He discusses these results in chronological order. Despite some remains dating to the Chalcolithic 4 period, the continual occupation of the site seems to have begun in the EBA III period. During the EBA IV period the site may have been restructured as a large round city that functioned as the region's redistributive center. Qatna was transformed during the MBA I period into a square city by the building of the city walls. These walls must have divided the lake and incorporated it partially into the city. For the founding of the royal palace Morandi Bonacossi still prefers a (slightly) later date: the MBA-LBA transition. There is no doubt however that the lower city palace in Operation K dates to the LBA period proper. The site was unoccupied during the Iron Age I period, but became again a small city during the Iron II and III periods.

The second section of this volume consists of preliminary reports of various archaeological science projects. The first two articles in this section are based on the geo-archaeological

work done by (part of) the Italian team. Fifteen geological cores were drilled outside Qatna's ramparts and 3 inside along with the excavation of five test pits. The deposits are dated through relative stratigraphy, ceramics and C-14 dating. On the basis of this fieldwork Mauro Cremaschi (in his article 'Qatna's lake: ...') reconstructs the history of the lake which was fed by karst springs and by a wadi. The pollen diagrams based on one of these cores (in Veruschkaa Valsecchi's article 'Vegetation and environmental changes...') covers only the second millennium and the first half of the first millennium B.C. Their conclusions are supported by Luca Trombino's micromorphological analysis of the sediments in a sinkhole to the South of the site. The stable isotope analysis of the archaeobotanical material performed by G. Fiorentino & V. Caracuta add to the picture of fluctuating aridity and humidity.

Additional archaeobotanical research was done on the 400 samples (almost all of them from Operation J) by Leonor Peña-Chocarro and Mauro Rottoli. In their article ('Crop husbandry practices ...') they discuss the results chronologically and attempt to reconstruct some of the changes in the agricultural practices. The study of the samples from the royal palace has only just begun and Simone Riehl presents a preliminary report in her article that, so far, fully supports Peña-Chocarro & Rottoli's results with one exception. Whereas emmer decreases in the domestic and productive areas of Operation J, it increases in the royal palace from the MBA to the IA. Additional information on the ancient diet stems from the archaeo-zoological analysis of E. Vila & L. Gourichon along with A. Canci & F. Bartoli's study of the human skeletal remains.

The final part of this section of the book consists studies on materials from the royal hypogeum. Christine Pümpin mapped the construction and use phases of the tomb in her article 'Micromorphological analyses of the soil ...'. Carsten Witzel and Kerstin Kreutz present a preliminary report on their study of the skeletal remains. They established the minimum number of individuals buried in the entire tomb at 15-17 persons, with both men and women present. More study is required, but microscopic analysis indicated that the bones had been exposed to heat. The individuals buried here lived a privileged lifestyle since their high age and the pathologies and physiological stress markers on their bones show their low burden of physical labour.

The contents of containers in the tomb are being studied through a chemical (lipid) analysis of the residues that were occasionally found inside a vessel and the residues that have permeated the ceramic matrix of the vessel itself. Preliminary results show that they contained degraded animal fat, but for a more precise derivation we will need to await their final report. Lara Maritan (et al.) deliver a scoop in their article 'Archaeometrical study of Bronze and Iron Age pottery ...': the very first archaeomagnetic measurements taken from a Bronze Age near eastern context. The bulk of the article, however, consists of a petrographic analysis of ca. 80 potsherds from Operations H, J and K. Observations through an optical microscope identifies several petrographic groups. It is clear that these groupings have value as chronological indices. In addition, a geochemical study of these sherds was performed. Unfortunately, the explanation of the statistical analysis of the results of this geochemical study is too brief to assess the significance of their conclusions.

The third section of the book provides preliminary results of several recent surveys in western and central Syria. The immediate context for Qatna is provided by the regional survey of Karin Bartl and Michel al-Maqdissi which has found already a 100 sites dating from the Upper Palaeolithic to sub-recent times. Interesting is that the settlement history of the entire region seems to conform to the occupational history of Qatna: an increase in occupation dating to EBA IV which is continuously inhabited during the MBA period. On the other hand, the spectacular LBA finds at Qatna correspond to a (slight) decline in settlement. Finally a remarkable absence of imported LBA pottery was observed in the survey. Part of the same region was studied by Graham Philip who focused on the marl landscapes.

Preliminary results of surveys in adjacent regions were reported by Jean-Paul Thalmann for the Akkar plain (who in this article focuses on late EBA and early MBA in the survey and the excavations at Tell Arqa) and Michel Fortin for the Ghab valley. Bernard Geyer et al. present the preliminary results of their arid margins survey (covering the area roughly from Salamiya to the Jabbul). They date the wall (ca. 1 m. wide) that runs over 200 km from the center of their survey area to the Anti-Lebanon to the (end of the) Early Bronze Age. Corinne Castel summarizes the results of the excavations at al-Rawda along with the survey of the 100 km² around the site.

The fourth section contains articles based on textual evidence. Jesper Eidem ('Notes on the topography ...') discusses the content of tablet MSH.03K.3849.701+ which was found in the Lower City Palace. This list of rations for workers who have been allocated to overseers of several institutions provides the names of five city gates that seem to match the gates visible in the topography of the site. Thomas Richter provides a gazetteer of the topographical names that appear in the archive of Idadda along with an argument for the Lebanese mountains as the location of the city Tukad. Based on the texts from Mari, Nele Ziegler provides a description of the Qatna's position in its ecology and the local (political) settlement structures, while Cinzia Pappi maps the locations of religious significance in Qatna's environs.

This volume provides on the one hand a great introduction to the results of the excavations of the different teams at Qatna. On the other hand it provides quite detailed preliminary reports on each of the ongoing research projects that study specific aspects of the site. This combination of general overview with detailed reports meshes very well together and will impress upon any reader the importance of this multi-disciplinary project. Now that this volume has informed us on the state of the current research on Qatna (and its environment) we are left to wait with bathed breath on the final publications of this important project.

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HAERINCK, E., and B. OVERLAET — Luristan Excavation Documents Vol. VI: Bani Surmah. An Early Bronze Age Graveyard in Pusht-i Kuh, Luristan. (*Acta Iranica*. 43). Editions Peeters, Leuven, 2006. (32 cm, VI, 182). ISBN 978-90-429-1664-7. € 90,-.