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RENATA PEREGO - AGNESE VACCA, *The Italian Archaeological Expedition in the Erbil Plain, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Preliminary Report on the 2016-2018 Excavations at Helawa* p. 1

ABSTRACT: The article is a preliminary report on the excavations conducted at Helawa by the Italian Archaeological Expedition in the Erbil Plain (MAIPE), Kurdistan Region of Iraq, during the 2016-2018 seasons. The site was surveyed in 2013 and 2015, revealing consistent occupation dating to the Late Chalcolithic period and briefer re-occupation in the mid-2nd millennium BC. Helawa is one of the largest 5th millennium sites in the Erbil Plain, probably reaching an area of 10 ha, and was abandoned at the beginning of the 4th millennium BC (early LC 3). The excavations (Step Trench B, Operations B1 and D, sounding G) established the chronological sequence, bringing to light a 5 m thick sequence of superimposed buildings and structures dating from the Ubaid to the early LC 3 period, located on the terraced southern slope of the higher mound, Middle/Late Bronze dwellings equipped with fire installations and storage facilities in Operation D, built directly over the last LC occupation at the site and an Islamic and LC 2 occupation in Operation G.

KEYWORDS: Helawa; Erbil; Iraqi Kurdistan; Urbanization; Chalcolithic; Bronze Age; Classical and Islamic periods.

NOEMI BORRELLI, *Invisible People and Elite Customers. Fowlers and Bird Breeders in the Social*

Network of the Ur III Province of Ġirsu/Lagaš » 105

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to offer an overview of the socio-economic dimension of the individuals involved in the exploitation of marginal resources, specifically birds, which were nonetheless perceived as prestige products by the royal elite. Drawing from Ur III sources, the policy adopted by the state to dispose of these goods is scrutinised. Despite the meagre documentation, glimpses of the strategies used by fowlers to capitalise on state allowance return a vibrant image of this sector of society. The scenario here proposed confirms the careful planning so peculiar to the Ur III economy, strengthening however a new perspective, which increasingly focuses on a hidden regionalism and on dynamics of intra-societal cooperation.

KEYWORDS: Ġirsu/Lagaš; southern Mesopotamia; Ur III; Mesopotamian history; economy; birds; fowlers; elite.

MICHELE CAMMAROSANO - KATJA WEIRAUCH - FELINE MARUHN - GERT JENDRITZKI - PATRICK L. KOHL,

They Wrote on Wax. Wax Boards in the Ancient Near East » 121

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ABSTRACT: By dispensing with the need for ink while simultaneously providing a writing surface that retains plasticity over time, wax boards represent the precursors of modern *tablets* and one of the most relevant media in human history. Their origin can be traced back to the Ancient Near East, where they were used along with clay tablets in a variety of contexts, from administration to literary collections. Originating from the interdisciplinary research project “Cuneiform on Wax” at the University of Würzburg, the study combines the analysis of the available archaeological, philological and iconographical evidence with experimental results. Following a discussion of the phenomenology of wax boards and of the presence of honeybees and related products in the Ancient Near East, we first assess the role and diffusion of this medium in the various areas and periods under consideration, then examine the extant material evidence, and finally focus on the composition of the wax paste and the related writing techniques. The results presented include a reassessment of the terminology for wax boards in Bronze Age Anatolia, the reconstruction of an ivory diptych from Assur, and a new interpretation of the motif of the so-called “grooved stylus”.

KEYWORDS: Writing technology; beeswax; wax boards; cuneiform; ancient Near East; apiculture.

FEDERICO ZAINA - PIETRO BARALDI - VITTORIA CARDINI - MARZIA CAVRIANI - PAOLO ZANNINI, *Archaeometric Characterization of a Blue Ingot from the Palace of Sargon II at Karkemish (Turkey) and the Distribution and Function of Egyptian Blue in the Near East during the Iron Age* » 181

ABSTRACT: Several fragments of a blue ingot were found during the 2016 excavation campaign at Karkemish in the Iron III palace of Sargon II (Area C). In order to identify it as Egyptian blue, the microstructure and chemical composition of the ingot have been investigated by means of X-ray fluorescence (XRF), Raman microspectrometry and FT-IR spectroscopy. Moreover, we analyzed the archaeological context from which they have been recovered to tentatively provide its functional interpretation. Lastly, we compared the Karkemish ingot with other published specimens from stratigraphically defined contexts, with the aim of understanding the distribution and function of the Egyptian blue in the Near East between the early Iron Age and the Achaemenid period. Finally, we discussed the chronological, geographic and functional trends in light of the historical events of these periods.

KEYWORDS: Archaeometry; Egyptian blue; Iron Age; Karkemish.

ENRICO FOIETTA, *Movable Altars and Burners in Stone from Hatra* » 197

ABSTRACT: This paper presents some results of an ongoing study about the movable altars and burners in stone from Hatra (2nd-3rd cent. AD). The catalogue comprehends all the published objects from the Iraqi Expeditions and burners from the Building A and the North Street discovered by the Italian Expedition at Hatra. The find-spots, the possible functions and the comparisons will be analysed in order to shed light on this interesting class of objects.

KEYWORDS: Altars and burners; Hatra; Parthian period; religion.

AHMAD ADDOUS, *The Founding of the First Arab-Islamic Cities According to Ancient Arab Sources. The Model of Kūfa* » 219

ABSTRACT: This study looks at the foundation and development of the Arab-Islamic city according to the main ancient Arab sources and focuses on the town planning model of the city of Kūfa which, after a short period of being a military field camp involved in an unstoppable expansionist process of conquests (or *futūḥ*, “openings”, as Arab chroniclers referred to it), was one of the first sites to be planned and transformed into a genuine city. A series of political, economic, social and strategic reasons, such as the centralizing of power, the consolidation of the emerging state, the influx of substantial economic resources and the presence of specialized skilled workers within new borders, made a profound contribution to the foundation of a primary nucleus of urban centres which, in the years to come, would become powerful cities. The study recounts and analyzes these reasons, which made Kūfa the urban centre *par excellence*, where a new concept of Arab-Islamic society was revealed and an organization of space was conceived whose general model was then repeated and renewed in different geographical and environmental contexts. Furthermore Kūfa, which in the first century of the *Hiġra* was repeatedly at the epicentre of political and religious rebellions and revolts involving the entire Muslim world, was a cosmopolitan city and a genuine melting pot, together with the neighbouring rival Baṣra, of Arab-Islamic culture for over four centuries.

KEYWORDS: Arab-city; Kūfa; *tamṣīr*; traditional sources.

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