



Abstracts

Archaeology of the Invisible. Forced Migration and Modeling Materiality in Contexts of Cultural Mobility in the Ancient Near East and beyond

3 and 4 June 2019

Aaron A. Burke (University of California, LA)

“Climate, Migrations, and Social Change in the Near East during the Late Third Millennium B.C.”

In July 2018, the International Commission on Stratigraphy formally recognized a tripartite subdivision of the Holocene, the last phase of which is known as the Meghalayan. The onset of the Meghalayan occurred at 4.2k BP (2200 B.C.) and was characterized by an arid period in the Near East that lasted for several hundred years (c. 2200–1900 B.C.) during which marginal zones contracted substantially. While less debate now surrounds the identification of the climatic regime of the region, little agreement exists concerning the cultural implications of a decline in rainfed agriculture across the marginal steppe land of the Fertile Crescent. Yet, it seems increasingly likely that the impact of aridification in the region known as the “Zone of Uncertainty” contributed to substantial population movements to more humid neighboring regions, such as the Euphrates, Tigris, and Orontes river basins. This necessitated substantial shifts in subsistence and livelihood strategies by these displaced populations, thus contributing to considerable social change between the late third and early second millennia. This paper summarizes the evidence available to date for these population movements, highlights the potential implications for regional archaeological records and cultural traditions, and outlines potential avenues for further investigation of this subject.

Caitlin Chaves Yates (Boston)

“Hidden Patterns of EBA Urban Networks: Using Network Analysis to Explore Northern Mesopotamian Polity Interaction”

Following the theme of the Archaeology of the Invisible, this paper investigates the connections among Early Bronze Age (EBA) city-states in Northern Mesopotamia using network analysis to look for hidden or previously unseen connections. Using published excavation reports the EBA Network project attempts to investigate the question of interconnectedness between EBA city-states, a dense web of relationships that, until now, has only been examined on a cursory level with an assumed connection based



roughly on geographic boundaries. Previous analysis of inter-site connections has generally focused on specific cultural markers such as written records, ceramics or urban layout (i.e circular cities) and consists of dividing Northern Mesopotamia into vague 'zones' or 'spheres' which are commonly indicated by the presence and/or absence of a particular trait (e.g. Ninevite 5, Metallic Ware, Reserved Slip areas). The EBA Network Project examines these categories alongside all of the other potential connections to avoid giving precedence to any one data source or type. Network analysis, using cities as nodes, can be used to show patterns of connection that are not strictly limited to geographic areas. Furthermore, the network patterns vary depending on the types of finds investigated, revealing a complex set of interactions between sites as well as the utility of approaching any question from multiple perspectives. The experimental approach opens new avenues for exploration and highlights the potential of network analysis for disrupting common archaeological assumptions about 'interconnection,' 'exchange' and 'migration' as explanatory forces for the archaeological record.

Jesper Eidem (University of Pisa)

"Abrupt Settlement Oscillations on the Rania Plain (Northeastern Iraq)"

The Rania Plain in NE Iraq is a well-defined intermontane region of the Lower Zab river basin, located in the foothills of the Western Zagros. The core of the plain is since 1959 partially inundated by an artificial lake following completion of the Dokan Dam. Archaeological salvage survey and excavations 1955-60, as well as recent similar efforts from 2012 onwards, have documented apparent drastic oscillations in settlement of the Rania Plain. This presentation will provide an overview of the pertinent evidence with a particular focus on three scenarios:

1. The apparent interruption of settlement on the plain in the initial Ninevite 5 period (early 3rd Mill. BC).
2. A textually documented episode of forced mass deportation (early 2nd Mill. BC).
3. The disintegration of settlement evidence due to periodic flooding by Lake Dokan (late 2nd - early 3rd Mill. AD).

It will be argued that the two former scenarios pertain to the geo-strategic position of the plain as a potential bufferzone, while the third relates to the prolific construction of modern dams across the Middle East.

Maja Gori (University of Bochum)

"The Visible and the Invisible: A European and Mediterranean Perspective on Migrations during the 3rd Mill. BC."

The 3rd millennium BC in Europe is an epoch characterized by the presence of large-scale and ideologically-motivated interactive networks that can be traced over extended areas. Bell Beaker features spread across western and central Europe starting from



around 2750 BC, and disappearing between 2200–1800 BC. Whereas at its south-eastern periphery, the Beakers-related Cetina culture spread over the Central Mediterranean by means of short and long-distance seaborne mobility starting from 2500 BC. The dynamic mechanisms of the Bell Beakers and Cetina expansions are the subject of a long-standing debate, where both cultural diffusion and human migration are indicated as the main reasons to explain the spread of related material culture and ideology. For a long time the debate has remained focused on the binary opposition between local and foreign elements visible within the material culture and the development of different ceramic traditions, as the movement of people was mainly inferred by using ceramics as proxy for migration. Recently, genomic and isotope research applied to the archaeological record have provided complex, however frequently contradictory, results on the degree of human mobility in the 3rd mill BC. Having definitely abandoned the “Volkswanderung model”, it is now ascertained that human migrations did occur and had an important role in the dissemination of the Beaker Complex and Cetina features. At present, mobility in the 3rd mill BC is by no means interpreted as a one-dimensional phenomenon. The combination of complex and multifaceted push and pull factors is acknowledged as background for 3rd mill. BC migration patterns. Besides sociocultural reasons and resource-getting strategies these comprise violent conflicts, economic crises, and environmental changes. By adopting a multidisciplinary and comparative approach, this paper seeks to address different migration models that can apply to the Bell Beakers and Cetina phenomena. Cases in which forced migration may have occurred will be outlined and discussed through the lens of the archaeological data at our disposal.

Manuela Heil (LMU)

“Defining the Pattern – Motifs of Painted Ceramics in 3rd Mill. BC Mesopotamia and their Communicative Value”

During the early third Millennium the use of painted wares is a characteristic hallmark of Mesopotamia’s cultural landscape. The painted pottery tradition of Scarlet Ware is spread among the societies in the different regional units of Central Mesopotamia and western Iran. So far, research has focused more on establishing a chronological framework for the material remains of this cultural sphere than on the social significance of its painted wares in use. Despite a pronounced regionality, the motifs of the Scarlet Ware are subject to a formal grammar, which has spread among the separate settled groups and thus can be understood as a medium of active communication. The variations in design are not only subject to temporal change but are also indicators of interregional transfer and interrelationships among the different societies on a production and consumption level. This movement/transmission of ideas beyond local communities requires various interactions on a material, conceptual and social level.

In this paper the interregional social group relationships hidden in the varying designs and patterns will be outlined and discussed on how they can be interpreted. It will be



addressed which mechanisms of mobility were required for the distribution among communities living in a differentiated socio-economic environment.

Azer Keskin and Reinhard Bernbeck (FU Berlin)

“Assyrian Expulsion, Dispossession, and Deportation: What happened to all the Women and Children?”

Neo-Assyrian imagery and texts provide ample evidence for deportation on a massive scale. The enemies, mainly men, were often executed, while women and children were forcibly removed. However, Assyrian sources remain moot about „life after deportation“. We discuss some of the forsaken localities where deportees likely ended up. Furthermore, we outline archaeological hints at Assyrian post-deportation strategies, mainly geared towards breaking any resistance by deportees. Our case study is a survey from the 1980s in the eastern Syrian Wadi ‘Ajij.

Nathan Morello (LMU)

“Forced Migration in the Assyrian Sources: An Overview”

Royal inscriptions, official letters, oath treaties and administrative documents are the most relevant written sources for the study of forced migration in Assyria, significantly aided by the analysis of the sculpted reliefs that adorned the walls of the royal palaces. Among the many aspects related to this theme, are to be included historical reconstructions, narrative analyses of the accounts on forced migration in the official media, and traces of means of internal and external propaganda in royal inscriptions as well as in everyday royal correspondence.

Reading the sources, forced migration can be divided into two main typologies: as integral part of the war and territorial policies of the Assyrian Empire, i.e. mass deportation, and as secondary effects of Assyrian expansion. Most studies have been dealing with deportees, offering, especially in recent years, important developments in the reconstruction of the historical complexity of this phenomenon, including studies on the process of resettlements, numbers involved, and the role of deportees in the Assyrian society. The second category deals especially with refugees and fugitives, including some Assyrians, and case studies of movement of populations across regions that can be reconstructed, although not always explicitly mentioned in the sources.

As anticipated by the present workshop’s call, contemporary everyday experience influences our sensibility on the themes of flight and migration, and the present represent the most appropriate occasion for a renewed reflection on interpretations, terms and definitions.



Simone Mühl (LMU)

“Refugees in Stratified Societies. A Case Study from Gird-i Shamlu and the Shahrizor Plain, Iraqi Kurdistan”

War and refugee movements represent a political reality during the 2nd millennium BCE in Mesopotamia. Identifying movements of refugees depends on addressing multi-factorial signs: the documentation of a historical event, which can cause forced mobility, on the one hand, and the identification and distribution of possible markers for such an event in the archaeological material. The validity of this interpretation depends on the acceptance, that an identification of refugee movements only represents one possible scenario amongst others. Therefore, the reconstruction of social structures of groups during and after the events and processes causing forced mobility, both at the point of origin and the destination of these movements is important, even though it may not always be possible to achieve in entirety.

As a show case I want to discuss methods and data from the regional contexts in the Shahrizor Plain, especially the rural site Gird-i Shamlu in southern Iraqi Kurdistan. There, remains of the Middle and Late Bronze Age show differences to contemporary contexts from regional urban centers. These contexts can be interpreted as remains of refugee groups from nearby regions embedded in a highly stratified society with diverse economic strategies. The reconstructed scenario is linked to historical events in the eastern Tigris region and a following “dark age” period, which is also mirrored by observations in southern Mesopotamia at the turn from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age.

Georg Neumann (University of Tübingen)

“‘It’s a big site, my man. You’ve got to dig a big hole’ – Continuity and Changes in the Early Bronze Age Sequence at Godin Tappeh as a marker of migration and mobility?”

The sentence „It’s a big site, my man. You’ve got to dig a big hole.“ derived from the famous archaeologist Max Mallowan who visited together with his wife Agatha Christie the site of Godin Tappeh in 1967. That „big hole“ is still very well visible at the site and even, 50 years later, the sequence excavated at Godin Tappeh represents the chronological backbone for the Central Zagros region reaching from Early Chalcolithic (Godin XI) to Islamic times (Godin I). The diversity of the archaeological material from the site was frequently discussed and studied. The coexistence for example of Godin VI:1 (formerly Godin V and the so-called „Uruk colony“; cf. Weiss/Cuyler Young 1975) with its characteristic „Uruk“-pottery (e.g. BRB’s, trays, four-lugged jars) and the Siyalk-related Godin VI:2 fascinated scientists since it was unearthed. The aim of the paper is to re-study the cultural developments and their origins of the succeeding Early Bronze Age periods IV and III:6-4 at Godin Tappeh by linking them with regional developments in the valleys of the Central Zagros (e.g. Māhīdāšt, Nehāvand, Harsīn).



Michael Roaf (LMU)

“Identifying Identity in the Ancient Near East”

Identity has become a crucial theme in modern approaches to archaeology. Surprisingly, the term identity in its modern sense was introduced to the social sciences via psychology in the 1950s. Since then it has permeated almost all branches of the humanities. Contrary to the original meaning of identity as "identicalness", identity now is interpreted to be a form of group membership. This concept is well attested in ancient sources which classify individuals according to numerous different criteria such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, family descent, social status, profession, language, city or country of origin, etc.

In this paper I will consider some of the challenges that confront the modern scholar in trying to establish how to engage with the concept of identity and will consider whether this concept retains the importance that has previously been attributed to it.

Workshop in the context of the DFG Emmy Noether Project
“Flucht – Migration – Interaktion. Artefaktbezogene Diversität in
altorientalischen Kontexten des 2. und 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr.”

