THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ AND ADJACENT REGIONS

Edited by

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY
Contents

List of Figures and Tables........................................................................................................................ iv
Authors’ details ........................................................................................................................................... xii
Preface........................................................................................................................................................... xvii

Archaeological investigations on the Citadel of Erbil: Background, Framework and Results.............. 1
Dara AL YAQQOBI, Abdullah KHORSHEED KHADER, Sangar MOHAMMED, Saber HASSAN HUSSEIN, Mary SHEPPERSON and John MACGINNIS

The site of Bazyan: historical and archaeological investigations........................................................... 11
Narmin AMIN ALI and Vincent DEROCHE

Short notes on Chalcolithic pottery research: The pottery sequences of Tell Nader (Erbil) and Ashur (Qal‘at Sherqat) .......................................................................................................................... 19
Claudia BEUGER

New Evidence of Paleolithic Occupation in the Western Zagros foothills: Preliminary report of cave and rockshelter survey in the Sar Qaleh Plain in the West of Kermanshah Province, Iran .................................................................................................................................................. 29
Fereidoun BIGLARI and Sonia SHIDRANG

Activities of Sapienza-University of Rome in Iraqi Kurdistan: Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Duhok ............. 49
Carlo Giovanni CERETI and Luca COLLIVA

The Achaemenid Period Occupation at Tell ed-Daim in Iraqi Kurdistan ................................................... 57
John CURTIS and Farouk AL-RAWI

‘Inscription D’ from Sennacherib’s Aqueduct At Jerwān: Further Data and Insights................................. 65
Frederick Mario FALES and Roswitha DEL FABBRO

The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project: A Preliminary Overview on the Pottery and Settlement Patterns of the 3rd Millennium BC in the Northern Region of Iraqi Kurdistan .............. 75
Katia GAVAGNIN

Animal husbandry and other human-animal interactions in Late Ubaid-Early Uruk northern Iraq: the faunal remains from the 2012 excavation season at Tell Nader................................. 87
Angelos HADIKOUUMIS

Hawsh-Kori and Char-Ghapi: Why the Sassanids built two monuments in the west of Kermanshah and the south of Iraqi Kurdistan .............................................................................................................. 101
Ali HOZHABRI

Across millennia of occupation: the Land of Nineveh Archaeological project in Iraqi Kurdistan: The prehistory and protohistory of the Upper Tigris rediscovered ............................................. 125
Marco IAMONI

The Iraqi Institute: Education for Archaeological Research and Conservation ....................................... 135
Jessica JOHNSON, Abdullah KHORSHEED and Brian Michael LIONE
Two seasons of excavations at Kunara (Upper Tanjaro): An Early and Middle Bronze Age city...... 139
Christine KEPINSKI and Aline TENU

Excavations of the Chalcolithic Occupations at Salat Tepe on the Upper Tigris,
Southeastern Anatolia ........................................................................................................... 147
Tatsundo KOIZUMI, Minoru YONEDA, Shigeru ITOH and Koichi KOBAYASHI

Insights into the settlement history of Iraqi Kurdistan from the Upper Greater Zab
Archaeological Reconnaissance Project ............................................................................ 163
Rafał KOLIŃSKI

Two Ottoman Trade Buildings (Qaisariya) in the Bazaar of Erbil from Building Archaeology
to Refurbishment Planning ........................................................................................ 173
Dietmar KURAPKAT

Ninevite 5 – culture or regional pottery style? ................................................................. 181
Dorota Ławecka

Back to the Land of Muṣaṣir/Ardini: Preliminary report on fieldwork (2005-2012)............. 189
Dlshad MARF

New Researches on the Assyrian Heartland: The Bash Tapa Excavation Project .............. 201
Lionel MARTI and Christophe NICOLLE

Materials from French Excavations in Erbil Area (2011-2013): Qasr Shemamok ............. 209
Maria Grazia MASETTI-ROUAULT and Ilaria CALINI

Current Investigations into the Early Neolithic of the Zagros Foothills of Iraqi Kurdistan........ 219
Roger MATTHEWS, Wendy MATTHEWS and Kamal Rasheed RAHEEM

About Bakr Awa .................................................................................................................. 229
Peter A. Miglus

Magnetic investigations in the Shahrizor Plain: Revealing the unseen in survey prospections ...... 241
Simone MÜHL and Jörg FASSBINDER

The Bazaar of Erbil within the Context of Islamic Trade Routes and Trade Buildings ........... 249
Martina MÜLLER-WIENER and Anne MOLLENHAUER

Halaf Settlement in the Iraqi Kurdistan: the Shahrizor Survey Project .............................. 257
Olivier NIEUWENHUYSE, Takahiro ODAKA and Simone MÜHL

Contextualizing Arbīl: Medieval urbanism in Adiabene ................................................ 267
Karel NOVÁČEK

Filling the Gap: The Upper Tigris Region from the Fall of Nineveh to the Sasanians.
Archaeological and Historical Overview Through the Data of the Land of
Nineveh Archaeological Project .................................................................................... 277
ROCCO PALERMO

Satu Qala: an Assessment of the Stratigraphy of the Site ............................................... 297
Cinzia PAPPI
Helawa: A New Northern Ubaid/Late Chalcolithic Site in the Erbil Plain ........................................ 309
Luca PEYRONEL, Agnese VACCA and Gioia ZENONI

From the banks of the Upper Tigris River to the Zagros Highlands. The first season (2013) of the Tübingen Eastern Ḫabur Archaeological Survey ........................................ 323
Peter PFÄLZNER and Paola SCONZO

Gre Amer, Batman, on the Upper Tigris: A Rescue Project in the Ilisu Dam Reservoir in Turkey ................................................................................................................................. 333
Gül PULHAN and Stuart BLAYLOCK

In the Neo-Assyrian Border March of the Palace Herald: Geophysical Survey and Salvage Excavations at Gird-i Bazar and Qalat-i Dinka (Peshdar Plain Project 2015) ........................................ 353
Karen RADNER, Andrei AȘANDULESEI, Jörg FASSBINDER, Tina GREENFIELD, Jean-Jacques HERR, Janoscha KREPPNER and Andrea SQUITIERI

New investigations at Shanidar Cave, Iraqi Kurdistan ..................................................................................................................................... 369
Tim REYNOLDS, William BOISMIER, LUCY FARR, Chris HUNT, Dlshad ABDULMUTALB and Graeme BARKER

Materials from French excavations in the Erbil area (2010): Kilik Mishik........................................ 373
Olivier ROUAULT and Ilaria CALINI

Kurd Qaburstan, A Second Millennium BC Urban Site: First Results of the Johns Hopkins Project ............................................................................................................................. 385
Glenn M. SCHWARTZ

The Sirwan (Upper Diyala) Regional Project – First Results ............................................................................................. 403
Tevfik Emre ŞERIFOĞLU, Claudia GLATZ, Jesse CASANA and Shwkr MUHAMMED HAYDAR

Tracking early urbanism in the hilly flanks of Mesopotamia – three years of Danish archaeological investigations on the Rania Plain ........................................................................ 411
Tim Boaz Bruun SKULDBØL and Carlo COLANTONI

The Activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Iraqi Kurdistan (MAIKI): The survey area and the new evidence from Paikuli blocks documentation ........................................ 417
Gianfilippo TERRIBILI and Alessandro TILIA

The Kani Shaie Archaeological Project ............................................................................................................................... 427
André TOMÉ, Ricardo CABRAL and Steve RENETTE

Philological and scientific analyses of cuneiform tablets housed in Sulaimaniya (Slemani) Museum ....................................................................................................................... 435
Chikako WATANABE

‘Carrying the glory of the great battle’. The Gaugamela battlefield: ancient sources, modern views, and topographical problems ........................................................................ 437
Kleanthis ZOUBOU LakIS
Preface

The present volume is the outcome of a conference held at the University of Athens, November 1st-3rd 2013, under the title ‘Archaeological Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Adjacent Areas’. The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars working in all the countries of the region, an aim in the event achieved resoundingly, with more than 100 scholars from across the world participating in the first forum of its kind to be held outside of the region itself. While the greater part of presentations related to research in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, other contributions dealt with analysis of material from sites in Syria, Turkey and Iran.

Kurdistan is home to some of the most important archaeological sites in the world, ranging from the Stone Age to the most recent past. These include cave shelters, mounds and low sites, canals and rock reliefs, castles and bridges, mosques and bazaars. For many years political and other factors held back the exploration of this heritage. The last decade, however, has seen a resurgence of archaeological activity in Kurdistan to the extent that it has become one of the most vibrant areas of near eastern archaeological research. More than forty international projects have commenced work in the region and others are in the pipeline. A major part has been played by regional survey projects which are for the first time systematically documenting the archaeological inventory in order to produce an exhaustive record of the region. The maps generated will in their turn be able to serve as the basis both for heritage management and for the study of settlement history. At the same the area has seen a flourishing of excavations investigating every phase of human occupation from the palaeolithic onwards. Together these endeavours are generating basic new data which is leading to a new understanding of the arrival of mankind, the development of agriculture, the emergence of cities, the evolution of complex societies and the forging of the great empires in this crucible of mankind. These field activities are complemented by epigraphic studies, numismatics and historical researches. There is a new focus on the conservation and preservation of both sites and finds, spearheaded by the Erbil based Iraqi Institute for the Conservation on Antiquities and Heritage.

We would like to express our deep thanks and appreciation to everyone who helped make this such a stimulating venture: to all who came to Athens to take part, to colleagues who while unable to attend nevertheless ensured that their work was represented, to everyone involved in researching and documenting this region’s rich heritage, and last but not least, to Mr. Mala Awat, Head of the General Directorate of Antiquities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and to all our colleagues from the Directorates and Universities of Kurdistan who have led the way and who have been so welcoming to the archaeologists and scholars from across the international community.

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