

Archaeology of the rise and fall of urban life in the Ancient Near East, between steppes and highlands (late 4th to 2nd millennium BC). A comparative view.

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ABSTRACTS

Pascal Butterlin (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

From Uruk to Mari, urban growth along the Euphrates from the 4th to the 3rd millennium

It is now commonly agreed that different processes of urbanization occurred in the Middle East during the fourth and third millennia BC, leading to a major reevaluation of the role played by cities like Uruk in this process, for instance. This paper will focus on the way urban fabric has largely been embedded in major socio-political cycles which shaped first of all a network of porto-urban centers (from the end of the fifth millennium on) and only later major mega centers like Uruk linked to major political mutations in Southern Mesopotamia. The emergence of the first cities came as the natural solution to the crisis of the Uruk system at the end of the fourth millennium. Defining those urban landscapes is of course largely beyond the scope of this paper. Concentrating upon the case of Mari, I would like to emphasize how the urban fabric evolved along major mutations during the third millennium, this means both in time and space, from a round city to a major city state and a royal capital of the middle Euphrates, three cities, three different urban models.

Marcella Frangipane (Accademia dei Lincei e Fondazione Sapienza)

States without cities: different developments, types and degrees of urbanization in Greater Mesopotamia and Anatolia in the 4th and early 3rd millennium BC. The case of Arslantepe.

The paper will focus on the relationship between urbanization and State formation in the earliest centralized and hierarchical societies of the Near East. The analysis will try to emphasize the great variability in the urbanization degree in different regions and cultural environments of this wide composite area, pointing to profound structural differences in terms of social, economic and political organization of the communities.

The crucial role of Near Eastern urbanization that was recognized by V. Gordon Childe in his 'Urban Revolution' and by Robert McC. Adams in his fundamental studies on the Mesopotamian alluvium should be revisited, in that the earliest developments of societies with a powerful central government did not necessarily go hand to hand with a parallel growth in

the demographic concentration of the population in large urban centres, though the high degree of society integration and systemic interaction brought about by urbanization was of crucial importance in the stability of the early State systems. Its absence or weaker development as a matter of fact appear to have been a basic factor of tensions and crisis in some of the emergent centralized societies in the 4th millennium BC.

Mesopotamian and Anatolian cases will be in particular compared, using as a very significant example of 'State without cities' the evidence from Arslantepe, in SE Anatolia.

Stefania Mazzoni (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Urban growth in North-Western Syria: the Late Chalcolithic premises.

Tell Afis with its megalithic stone escarpment constitutes a local model of Late Chalcolithic walled citadel and provides evidence of a process of emergence of centralization connected with the control of the rural hinterland, and the intensification of dry-farming. In the same period, other centres offer further, albeit different, cases that attest the diffusion of this process in the Levant. The paper will revise this evidence and focus on whether and how the the "Uruk colonization" may have affected the Levantine rural organization and settlement landscape at the eve of the Early Bronze Age.

Augusta McMahon (University of Cambridge)

Living in cities in north and south Mesopotamia in the 4th-3rd millennia BC: Working, walking, viewing

This paper will address urban settlement forms and internal landscapes in Mesopotamian cities of the 4th to 3rd millennia BC. The aim is to address the lived experiences of the city inhabitants, to frame the city as lived place rather than urban space, and to connect urban form to social and economic actions and relations.

Data will be drawn from northern and southern Mesopotamian cities. These will include both the earliest cities of the 4th millennium BC, which were completely new experiments in group living, and mature city-states during the 3rd millennium BC height of urbanism, when city living had become commonplace. I will particularly examine the ways that inhabitants' work and daily movements interacted with the structuring of space and created the distinctive visual effect of cities. In addition, variable population densities and the locations of industrial production zones intersect with the definition of neighbourhoods and flow of urban traffic. Mesopotamia's earliest cities experienced many of the same challenges as do modern mega-

cities, such as crowding, poverty and poor sanitation. Some of the earliest cities may also exhibit very modern developments such as suburbanisation and urban sprawl.

Alexander Pruß (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

The circular settlements of the Jazirah steppe (Kranzhügel) and their development in the 3rd millennium

Upper Mesopotamia experienced the development of a dense network of urban sites during the 3rd millennium BC. As a result of increased research in the region since the 1980ies, different urban landscapes have emerged in the region, with partly much different patterns and developments. This presentation will concentrate on the Western part of the Syrian Jezirah, where a particular type of cities with a concentric plan and circular outline (the so-called *Kranzhügel*) is attested. In the case of Tell Khuera, the largest of these settlements, a very early 3rd millennium date for the founding of a large urban settlement is attested. The evidence of this site and others in its vicinity will be contrasted with the one from adjacent regions (Upper and Middle Euphrates valley, Central and Eastern Khabur triangle). While the focus of the presentation will be on the flourishing period of the urban network until ca. 2340 BC, its collapse during the last third of the millennium will also be discussed.