
Rosetta

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Kämmerer, T.R. & Rogge, S. (eds.) 2013. *Patterns of Urban Societies. AOAT Bnd 390/2*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag. £81.37 hardback. pp. xii+260, illustrations. ISBN: 978-3-86835-097-5.

This edited volume is the result of a workshop held in November 2010 organised by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Cypriot Studies, the Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Near Eastern Archaeology (both from University of Münster) and Seminar for Ancient Oriental Languages and Cultures (University of Tartu). Called ‘Cultural contacts in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean and their impact on the development of urban structures (3rd-1st Millennium BC)’, the aim of this workshop was to include the invaluable research of philologists alongside that of archaeologists.¹ Immediately we can see the international flavour of this workshop, as out of the eight contributions, five are in English, two are in German and one is in French. This is problematic for those like myself who cannot speak all three of these languages, and makes it difficult to assess whether the central aim of this volume has been reached: an incorporation of philology into an otherwise archaeologically-driven field. Compounding this is a lack of consistency concerning the inclusion of an abstract, and what language this should be written. Contributions which include an abstract do not all write them in the same language. Perhaps the best approach of the editors would have been to ensure all contributions had an abstract, and was written in English.² This would mean that the content of these articles would still be accessible to those who have limited language skills, and there would be consistency throughout the volume. In the face of these issues, I will only be able to review those contributions which were written in English.

Another general remark is to be made regarding the organisation of the contributions. This volume is organised alphabetically according to the authors’ surnames. This may have been a missed opportunity for integrating philological and archaeological contributions – perhaps a thematic or geographic organisation would have benefitted the theme.

The introduction by Driessen gives a brief overview of the main theories regarding urbanisation (pp.xi-xii). For those who are not specialists in urbanisation, this makes

¹ The aim is based upon the success of a previous workshop in 2008 organised by the University of Münster on ‘Patterns of Urbanisation and Cultural Exchange in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean Regions from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC’.

² This would follow the example of Wicke’s contribution (pp. 233-254).

the subject matter much more accessible, as it outlines the main themes present in this volume – mainly that urbanisation ‘maintains, generates and recreates social interactions’ (p. xii), and that studying urbanisation allows us to study power relations in society (p. xii). This is vitally needed as a framework to situate the contributions which follow, and to explain the need for assessing urbanisation patterns in general.

This volume is a rich resource with regards to urbanism, and despite the language problems and the organisation it is a good starting point for those interested in urbanism. The volume discusses religious, political and economic patterns which can be seen through urban structures. The first English contribution is second in the volume, by Dietrich (pp. 17-34). They discuss the phenomenological implications of the orientations of temples to male deities in Northwest Syria in the Late Bronze Age through a comparative approach. This proves to be an effective tool, and Dietrich proves that not only are these temples linked to Mount Şapanu, but this pattern extends across to the Euphrates, and raises the possibility that the orientations of the temples of female deities may be incidental.

Dittmann’s contribution on glyptics used in sealings in early Mesopotamian history follows this (pp. 35-137). A main difference between this contribution and Dietrich’s is that there is no allowance here for non-specialists, with little to no explanations of technical terms. Having said this, there are ample tables, maps and appendices which could only be improved by perhaps including them alongside the text as opposed to following it. Another suggestion would perhaps be organising the evidence by themes such as the types of glyptics. Dittmann’s contribution is doubtless a very detailed and thorough report, but lacks some finesse in terms of organisation.

Kõiv’s is the only contribution which does not deal with the ancient Near East, but with early Greece (pp. 149-208). Kõiv discusses the interaction between urbanisation and the formation of the *polis*, and demonstrates the variety in models which can be used. Here we see a more text-based approach incorporating archaeological data, and is perhaps the best example of the aims of this volume being met. This combination of approaches allows Kõiv to demonstrate there is no single system for the development of the political unit of *poleis* alongside the urbanisation of these locations.

Van Lerberghe’s contribution assesses the impact of political refugees in the Old Babylonian period as the son of Hammurabi lost control over Nippur (pp. 209-214). In

the same manner as Kōiv, Van Lerberghe is able to include texts in their assessment, thus presenting a contribution which meets the aims of this workshop. Van Lerberghe demonstrates how only cultic staff remained in Nippur to keep the cults functioning, and assesses the impact of the refugees on Dur-Abieshuh on the Tigris River. Van Lerberghe concludes that the similarities at both Nippur and Dur-Abieshuh in terms of the archaeological record and urbanisation was at least partly due to the Nippurian refugees.

The final English contribution to this volume deals not with political change or religion, but with economy and trade (pp. 215-231). Selz challenges the traditional theory surrounding the Uruk period expansion which dictates that this was purely about trade routes and connections, and suggests an alternative theory.³ Selz proposes that large scale and organised warfare could have played a significant role in this expansion, with trade posts also functioning as military outposts. Perhaps a comparative approach could have benefitted this theory, as garrisons of troops were stationed at towns throughout the Neo-Assyrian empire to aid in the trade relations.⁴ Despite this, Selz presents a very convincing argument which I believe would require some work to refute.

Overall, despite some significant organisational flaws and language issues, this volume has certainly met its central aim of incorporating more philological approaches to the overwhelmingly archaeologically based topic of urbanism. The volume is largely focussed on the ancient near East, and provides detailed assessments of archaeological and textual data, as well as proposing new ideas for the study of urbanism.

³ For an example of this traditional view, see Astour 2000: 1403-1406.

⁴ For example, after the defeat of Samsi, Queen of the Arabs, a garrison of 10,000 soldiers was placed over her in order to protect the wealthy trade routes which flowed through the region (RINAP 1 49 r.21).

Bibliography

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