



Central Mesopotamia (RG10)

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Second Regional Workshop in Blaubeuren February 5 – 9, 2009

Scientific Report

I. Summary

Between February 5 – 9 the team of the Regional Group 10 met at the Heinrich Fabri Institute, a meeting center of the Eberhard-Karls-Universität of Tübingen. The meeting was held in conjunction with the third meeting of Regional Groups 07 (Middle Euphrates) and 11 (Southern Mesopotamia). A joint meeting especially with RG 11 was considered highly desirable due to common thematic and logistical challenges and an overlap in team composition. The following topic coordinators and excavators (including representatives of ongoing research and publication projects) attended the meeting:

Name	Institution	Country
Butterlin, Pascal	Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines	F
Dezzi-Bardeschi, Chiara	University of Milan, Milan	I
Evans, Jean	Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York	U.S.A.
Gibson, McGuire	Oriental Institute, University of Chicago	U.S.A.
Hockmann, Daniel	University of Münster	D
Luciani, Marta	University of Vienna, Vienna	A
Mathot, Hubert	Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines	F
Reichel, Clemens	University of Toronto/Royal Ontario Museum	Ca
Rumaydh, Salah	Department of Antiquities, Baghdad (currently Damascus, Syria)	Iraq

The following topic coordinators were unable to attend:

McCarthy, Andy	University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh	Glyptics 1	UK
Vallet, Regis	CNRS, Paris	Town planning	F
Monteró-Fenollos, Juan-Luis	University of La Coruna, La Coruna	metallurgy	E
Beuger, Claudia	German Archaeological Institute, Berlin	Pottery 1	D
Beyer, Dominique	Institut d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de l'Orient Ancien, Strassbourg	Glyptics 2	F

Objectives:

In a previous meeting of the CM group (July 2007) the available material from archaeological sites in the project area had been sighted and the feasibility of its inclusion had been discussed. In compliance with ARCANE's guidelines the principal objective of the second meeting, therefore, were:

- Harmonization of data collection and data entry
- Development of an overarching chronological scheme for the project region
- Establishment of a realistic time frame and work schedule for an accompanying volume on Central Mesopotamian chronology

Challenges:

The geographical setting of the project region, the current state of research as well as the political situation in the region under discussion created numerous challenges for systematic data input, notably in accordance with the guidelines and standards used by other ARCANE groups:

- Geopolitics: The largest part of the Central Mesopotamian region is in Iraq, where archaeological fieldwork has been difficult since 1991. Embargo restrictions have prevented foreign missions from working in Iraq since then.
- Resources: Expeditions by Iraq's Department of Antiquities since 1991 largely were rescue projects in response to the widespread looting of archaeological sites, hence not conducive toward the systematic collection of inventories as set down by ARCANE's guidelines. These projects also suffered from lack of supplies due to post 1991 embargo restrictions.
- Standards of Data Collection: Large, comprehensive excavations had been undertaken during the 1930's (especially in the Diyala region), producing a wealth of stratified cultural material, including both artifacts and pottery. These excavations, however, predate the advent of C¹⁴ dating, precluding the definition of securely dated inventories in absolute chronological terms. Rescue excavations undertaken during the 1970s produced C¹⁴ samples, but the size of these excavations generally was much smaller, restricting in smaller assemblages of cultural artifacts.
- Methodological complexities: Excavated artifacts are primarily dated by their archaeological provenance, providing relative dates and chronological correlations to contemporary, earlier and later materials by means of stratigraphic placement. Early on, however, the abundance of artifacts from unsystematic as well as clandestine excavations in Central and Southern Mesopotamia gave rise to art-historical approaches that use stylistic criteria to date artifacts independently from archaeological contexts. The recovery of historical material (cuneiform texts) in excavations often resulted in an interpretive assignment of artifacts to historically known time periods instead of a neutral placement in the relative archaeological stratigraphy of a site. Accordingly, the existing chronological schemes for third millennium B.C. Mesopotamia are a mixture of archaeological, art-historical and textual dating schemes, with often were correlated based on vague assumptions. Central Mesopotamian material was crucial in the establishment of this sequence, hence the methodological shortcomings of these older approach had be addressed and discussed within the group.
- Different absolute chronological schemata: The abundance of textual sources (royal inscriptions, date formulae, astronomical texts) has resulted in the establishment of a historical absolute chronology for Mesopotamia, which extends into the later part of the Third Millennium B.C. A source gap in the middle of the second millennium B.C., however, has left the absolute placement of the earliest 500 years of historical coverage (Akkadian, Ur III, Isin-Larsa, Old Babylonian) ambiguous. The most widely used scheme is the "Middle Chronology," which places the end of Ur III at 2,000 B.C. Recent

chronological reanalyses of the archaeological and historical materials, notably by H. Gasche and S. Cole in “Dating the Fall of Babylon” (1999) have proposed a shorter chronology, which shorten this framework by about 2000 years. While this system has found widespread acceptance among Mesopotamian scholars, C¹⁴ data from sites in Syria seem to support the Middle Chronology. For an interregional chronological model as proposed by ARCANE these contradictions need to be addressed.

II. Description of the scientific content and discussion

The program consisted of three main parts:

- a. Lectures by four guests on subjects of common interest (plenary meeting of RG 07, 10, 11)
- b. Presentation of the development stages of the database, problems and first results (plenary meeting)
- c. Individual meetings: team member presentations / Proposing a regional periodization for Regional Group 10.

a. Lectures

Four lectures were being presented during the plenary sessions on Friday afternoon (for a full listing and review of all lectures see RG 07 Report 3). Two of them directly addressed issues concerning the chronology of Central Mesopotamia

- In his lecture “*New results from Mari 2008*” Pascal Butterlin, director of the Mari Expedition and member of RG 10, recounted recent excavation work at Mari. New excavations at the Massive Rouge provide a comprehensive overview over the Early Dynastic sequence at Mari. The discovery of texts dating to the “Shakkanakku period” may close an important gap between the Akkadian and the Ur III period.
- In his lecture “*The chronology of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia: a problem of method, vision and cooperation*” Nicholò Marchetti (University of Bologna) reviewed methodological approaches to a reconstruction of the Early Dynastic sequence, pointed out their limitations, and appealed for open sharing policy of unpublished data in web-based databases.

Both lectures provided numerous discussion points in the subsequent RG 10/11 meeting on regional periodization.

b. Database Presentation

Though ARCANE’s underlying database had been presented at the July 2007 meeting of RG 10 numerous questions remained concerning data input. The fact that Stefano Anastasio and two other members of the Metra Group were invited to Blaubeuren to give a presentation of the database, explain recent changes and addition and to answer questions and address concerns, therefore, was welcomed by all member of RG 10. The improvements in layout and handling since the release of the first version in 2006 was clearly visible (version 3 was released three weeks after the end of this meeting). A key problem in the database remains the entry of incomplete or faulty site identifiers, which remain result in broken links which have to be fixed by the database administrators.

c. Topical Presentations

Topical presentations of available material were given during the first meeting of RG 10 and not part of this meeting, but two exceptions were made: Daniel Hockmann, who had been unable to attend the first meeting, gave a presentation of the tombs and burials at Ashur. The addition of Hubert Mathot, pottery analyst of the Mari Expedition, gave us a welcome opportunity to first-hand see a more recent periodization of the Mari pottery which had been developed in conjunction with Pascal Butterlin.

d. Central Mesopotamia Periodization

Due to the large overlap in team members between RG 10 the meeting on periodization was held jointly with RG 11. A joint meeting offered itself for other reasons as well:

- The border line between RG 10 and 11 is fluent; accordingly, the assignment of certain key sites in the border regions to one of the other region is somewhat arbitrary
- The definition of the “Early Dynastic” Period, the earlier part of the established cultural sequence in both Central and Southern Mesopotamia, was largely based on the Diyala excavations, located in Central Mesopotamia. The definition of the Akkadian and Ur III periods, on the other hand, are largely based on materials from Southern Mesopotamia.
- The logistical challenges (putting data from from older excavations into a new chronological framework) is the same in both groups.

In the absence of new excavations the establishment of a new chronological sequence for Central and Southern Mesopotamia remains a challenge and poses some problems that are not easily overcome. A consensus is presented in Table I but requires some explanation (for clarity the RG 11 site in Southern Mesopotamia have been added as well). Two major problems had to be overcome in the new proposed chronology:

1. Placement of “ED II”:

- As indicated above, a major part of the sequence from Jemdet Nasr (labeled JN in Table I) was established in the Diyala Excavations, notably the definition of the “Early Dynastic” Period and its subdivision into Early Dynastic I, II and III (labeled ED I, II, III).
- The objective of the Diyala expedition had been the definition of periods based on stratigraphic levels and distinct artifact assemblages, including pottery. Recent reanalysis (notably by team members Gibson and Evans), however, have shown that ED II as defined in the Diyala is a composite period based on an artistic style with no architectural manifestation and no pottery corpus. The current Diyala team (Gibson, Reichel, Evens) views ED II as a later part of ED I. The same sequence is used for Nippur.
- Following the initial proposition and acceptance of this periodization, however, ED II was identified at other sites, notably Fara and Abu Salabikh in Southern Mesopotamia, partly based on the materials defined in the Diyala publications but also adding elements that cannot be found in the Diyala assemblages.

Consensus was found in a lengthening of ED I. The label ECM/ESM 2/3 reflect the current use of ED I “early” and “late.” ED II was retained as ECM/ESM 4 with the option of an eventual merger with ESM 3.

2. Placement of ED IIIb (ECM/ESM 6):

Early Dynastic IIIb is a sub-period that is well attested archaeologically as well as textually in the south of Southern Mesopotamia, notably at Al-Hiba, but more difficult to define in the remainder of Mesopotamia. In the Diyala Region it appears to correspond with

the subsequent Early Akkadian Period (ECM/ESM 7). There explanation for this contradiction is likely to be found in the gradual expansion of the Akkadian Empire (and the associate culture) south—the southern Mesopotamian city states of ED IIIb were still independent during the earliest parts of the Early Akkadian period. We have retained this distinction for all Mesopotamia, since corresponding lines can be drawn in the stratigraphic sequence of Central Mesopotamian site, even if the lack of change in material culture would not necessarily warrant a break-up into distinct periods on a local level.

Mainstream	JN	ED I	ED II	ED III a	ED III b	Early Akkad	Later Akkad-Guti (?) a	Ur III
SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA	ESM 1	ESM 2/3	ESM 4	ESM 5	ESM 6	ESM 7	ESM 8	ESM 9
URUK	K/L 12	K/L 12, Eanna						Eanna
AL HIBBAH		Area G			Area C, A			
FARA	DE 38/39	DE 38/39	DE 38/39	Trench 13 E-G				
ABU SALABIKH	3 G-81	2G 032 G 36, 6 G 54/64, gr 160 GR 193	6 H-82 6G 54/64	Area E Central C	Ash tip Graves			
NIPPUR	I-T 14 - 12 c	I-T 11-9	-----	I-T 8-7 b WF XIX-XVIII	WF XVII-XVI	WF XVI-XV	WA 50 c WF XIV-XI	WC-9 WF XI-IX
LARSA								
WILAYA				Area 15 L			Area 27 H	Area 27 H
UMMA								Area 1 Shara
CENTRAL MESOPOTAMIA	ECM 1	ECM 2/3	ECM 4	ECM 5	ECM 6	ECM 7	ECM 8	ECM 9
ASMAR	Abu Earliest Shrine	Abu Archaic Shrine I-IV, Square Temple I	-----	Abu Square Temple II-III	Abu Single Shrine I, Earlier NP	Abu Single Shrine II-III, Earlier NP Houses V- c-a	Abu Single Shrine IV Main NP Houses IV b-a	« Akkad » Houses, Shu-Sin Temple and Palace of the Rulers
KHAFAJE	Sin I-III Houses 12 and below	Sin IV-VII Houses XI-VII	-----	Sin VIII-IX, Houses 6-3	Sin X, Houses 2	Houses 1 Oval 3		
ASHUR				AIT H		AIT G, F, graves	AIT G,F, CTS IIIB 5-24, graves	AIT , CTS III B 3 ,E, graves
MARI		Ville 1 Chantier L	Tomb 300	Ville 2, Chantier N 1, Maquette F	Ville 2 (later), P1 Massif rouge 3 Ninizaza Temple	Palace P O	Mature Akkad/ Ville 3, Lion Temple, Chantier F, graves	Ville 3, Sahuru, Palais oriental Graves
JOKHA			Jokha 3 5-7 c, D,E 5-8 F, 6-8 G	Jokha 2, 5-7 D, E, 5-8 F, 6-8 G				
RAZUK		Round building houses				burials		
ATIQAQ						Atiqah 3-2	Atiqah 1	
GUBBA	Round Building VII	VI-IV						
YELKI							Level VIII	
KHEIT QASIM		Graves/ cemetery						
AHMED AL HATTU		X						
KISH				Palace A Burials	Burials	Burials		

----- Not a gap; ED II not recognized as a valid period by excavators or analysts of this site

Table I: RG 10/11 (Central Mesopotamian / Southern Mesopotamian) Periodization

Other shifts from the older chronological scheme, which have been proposed in recent publications and have been accepted by RG 10 / 11, include the re-dating of the “Proto-Imperial” period in the Diyala to Early Akkadian (ECM/ESM 7) and the reassignment of the “Late Akkadian” Period of the Diyala to early Ur III (ECM/ESM 9). The lack of a material cultural assemblage for the post-Akkadian Gutti period, largely known from

historical sources and probably overlapping to a large degree with the Late Akkadian period (ECM/ESM 8) did not allow for the creation of a separate period; it has been classified with ESM 8 as contemporary, even if potentially a distinct political/historical period.

3. Assessment of the results

The re-periodization achieved in this meeting still leaves some points to be discussed, but it represents an important breakthrough in light of conflicting chronological schemes that have been used in the past two decades, and once more highlights the importance of the ARCANE workshop in establishing such a framework. The interregional correlation of RG 10 and 11 with the Syrian Sequence (notably RG 07 and 08) and the use of the “Middle” versus “Lower” Chronology warrant further discussion.

4. List of addresses

For the addresses of the participants see separate list in Appendix 1.

Toronto, Canada
June 8, 2009



Clemens Reichel

PROGRAM

Thursday, February 5, 2009

ARRIVAL IN BLAUBEUREN

Friday, February 6, 2009

MORNING (plenary meeting)

- Opening Remarks (Marc Lebeau)
- 09:00 - 10:30 Organisational remarks (Uwe Finkbeiner)
- 10:30 *coffee break*
- 11:00 – 12:30 Database Presentation (Metra group).
- 12:30 *Lunch*

AFTERNOON (plenary meeting)

- 14:00 – 16:00 Presentation of the data of the Middle Euphrates Region. Preliminary version of the ME database (Metra group); discussion
- 16:00 *coffee break*
- 16:30 – 18:30 lectures:
 - “*New results from Mari 2008*“ (Pascal Butterlin)
 - “*The chronology of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia: a problem of method, vision and cooperation* (Nicolò Marchetti)
- 18:30 *Dinner*
- 20:00 – 22:00 individual discussion of database with Metra group (Stefano Anastasio, Pino Fenù and Francesco Saliola)

Saturday, February 7, 2009

MORNING (CM 10)

- 09:00 - 09:30 Organizational meeting
- 09:30 - 10:30 topical presentation: ceramic sequence at Mari (Hubert Mathot)
- 10:30 *coffee break*
- 11:00 – 12:00 topical presentation: Ashur graves (Daniel Hockmann)
- 12:30 *Lunch*

AFTERNOON (joint meeting with RG 11)

- 14:00 – 16:00 Regional Periodization I: stratigraphic correlations, pottery sequence
16:00 *coffee break*
16:30 – 18:00 Regional Periodization II: stylistic considerations, historical sources
18:30 *Dinner*

Sunday, February 8, 2009

MORNING (meetings of RG 07, 10, 11 topic coordinators)

- 09:00 - 10:30 discussion of regional periodization
10:30 *coffee break*
11:00 – 12:30 continued discussion of regional periodization; attempt at a multi-regional correlation

12:30 *Lunch*

AFTERNOON (plenary meeting)

- 14:00 – 16:00 Presentation of the periodization of the Regional group Jazirah (M. Lebeau), discussion
Proposal of a periodization by Regional group 7 (U. Finkbeiner and M. Novák)

16:00 *coffee break*
16:30 – 18:30 Presentation of the periodizations by Regional groups 10 (C. Reichel) and 11 (M. van Ess)
Guidelines for publications of Regional groups
Deadlines and other organizational questions
End of the Workshop

18:30 *Dinner*

Monday, February 9, 2009

Departure after Breakfast