

Northern Levant (RG 02)

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RG02 SECOND REGIONAL MEETING Florence, 4-6 February, 2010

Scientific Report

The Northern Levant Group of the ARCANE Project (RG 02) held its second regional meeting at the Università degli Studi of Florence from 4th to 6th February, 2010. In addition to the topic coordinators of the NL group, guest scholars from the regional or neighbouring groups were also present, including M. Lebeau (co-Chairman of the Project) and Graham Philip (member of the Steering Committee). All in all, 22 participants representing 7 countries (see full list of participants in Appendix III).

Assistance by Florentine students and colleagues of S. Mazzoni and by METRA (S. Anastasio) was invaluable and widely contributed to the success of the meeting.

An additional, informal meeting will be organized during the ICAANE congress in London (April, 2010).

Aims of the meeting

- The main objective of the meeting was the final selection and full discussion of the material and assemblages which will be retained as primary evidence for the publication of the NL regional volume. For this reason, emphasis was put on general discussions and short presentations of well-defined material assemblages sorted out according (1) to the ARCANE topics (pottery, architecture, C14, art, etc.) and (2) to chrono-stratigraphical units which can be used in building up the final chronological framework for our region. Such assemblages will form the basis of the final, new periodization. A step in this direction was achieved at a meeting organized in August of 2009 at the American University of Beirut by H. Genz and J.-P. Thalmann. Participants (mostly from the coastal region of NL) reached an agreement on the correlation of the main sequences relevant to the ARCANE project as a preliminary sub-regional chronology for NL-coast.
- The second aim of the meeting was to draw up the final plan and layout of the NL regional volume, according to the ARCANE specifications, and distribute work among the Topic Coordinators and other participants to the project.

Main results

• Review of available data

A review by all participants of data meeting the requirements of the ARCANE project showed that they are very unevenly distributed according to chronology, topics and geography (sub-regions) :

- generally, between the second half of the IIIrd millennium (all aspects of material culture will be represented in primary inventories) and the first half of the millennium (data are at best scanty, at worst missing),
- in different fields of material culture : glyptics will be represented by two major groups only (NL-coast : early IIIrd mill. and Ebla : later IIIrd mill.) ; « art » is available almost exclusively at Ebla ; lithics are poorly documented, except at Tell Arqa (NL-coast).
- regional differences between the coastal and inland areas will imply the processing of some topics (pottery, architecture, art/glyptics, lithics) on a sub-regional basis (NL-coast, NL-inland, NL-south) ; other topics can be processed on a regional basis.

This chronological, topical and regional heterogeneity will imply selecting and including with the necessary caution some data from « old » sequences (Hama, Amuq) or from altogether unreliable excavations(e.g. Byblos).

• *Archaeological periodization*

In spite of the above-mentioned discrepancies, a regional relative periodization in five main phases can be agreed upon.

The provisional periodization for NL-coast, as established at the AUB meeting of 2009 on the basis of three key-sites (Arqa, Fad'ous and Sidon) was presented in detail ; all phases, with the exception of ENL1, are documented by extensive pottery assemblages and primary inventories (cf. chart in Appendix I)

- (ENL0 : presently undocumented ; will be reserved for a « transitional » Late Chalcolithic/EB phase)
- ENL1 : roughly corresponds with « EB I », from ca. ? to ca. -3000 ?,
- ENL2 : roughly corresponds with « EB II », from ca. -3000 ? to ca. -2750,
- ENL3 : roughly corresponds with « EB III », from ca. -2750 to ca. -2450,
- ENL 4 = « EB IVA », from ca. -2450 to ca. -2250,
- ENL 5 = « EB IVA », from ca. -2250 to ca. -2000.

Phases ENL2 and 3 include a completely new definition of the material assemblages (pottery, architecture, lithics) and represent a major improvement over the « old » EB II/III terminology ; phases ENL4 and 5 are presently documented mainly at Arqa.

The possible regional extension of this 5-periods framework to NL-inland and -south was discussed on the basis of the sequences of the main key-sites. Phases ENL1 and 2 are generally poorly documented, except in southern Syria (architecture) and at Nebi Mend (pottery). Phase ENL3 is represented at a few sites only (Qarqour, Umm el-Marra, Ebla « pre-palace G » - mainly pottery). Later phases are fully documented at all key-sites : the question of terminology was left open. Most excavators from inland Syria would prefer a « ENL4a/ENL4b » terminology, stressing the cultural continuity between both phases, whereas « ENL4/5 » would convey a mere chronological meaning : this issue should be settled at the additional meeting of the RG02 group in London.

The main topics reviewed in terms of chronologically/culturally significant assemblages were : pottery (L. Cooper, S. Mazzoni, J.-P. Thalmann), architecture (C. Castel-Nogrette), metal (G. Gernez), tombs (G. Schwartz).

• *Absolute chronology*

All available C14 dates (published and unpublished) were collected by O. Cichocki : a full processing will be presented at the forthcoming ARCANE meeting on dating technologies in Blaubeuren (9th -12th May, 2010). It is already obvious that the absolute dating of the main phases will vary slightly according to sub-regions (e.g. ENL4 beginning somewhat earlier in RG02-inland than RG02-coast). NL-coast is best represented with about 35 dates from 3 key-sites ; NL-inland with about 20 from all key-sites.

P. Matthiae gave a detailed presentation of the problems in relative, absolute and historical chronology correlations on the basis of the latest data from Ebla and the results of a recent conference in Vienna. The question of using the probable synchronism Ishar-Damu/ Pepi I/ \pm « in the time of Sargon » synchronism as a benchmark between ENL4a/b (or ENL4/5) must depend both on the fine-tuning of C14 dates from the best possible stratigraphical sequences and from a general assessment of sub-regional pottery developments.

O. Cichocki outlined the methodological problems in C14 processing and the correlation of absolute sample dates with archaeological strata on the basis of examples from Arqa, Fad'ous, Ebla, Afis, Umbashi, Qatna, and with reference to the dendrochronological sequence of the SCIEM 2000 project. The destruction of Ebla Palace G cannot presently be dated otherwise than within a range between 2460-2140 calBC, which leaves ample room for adjustments with the historical chronology.

It is however clear that, as was already observed at the SL regional meeting of May, 2009 in Blaubeuren, the most recently updated « historical » chronology will certainly remain at variance with the C14 dates. From ca. -2500 (historical) on, C14 dates are, as in Egypt, about 150 years or more « older » : this issue will require further investigations and might remain undecided within the time limits of the ARCANE project.

• *Present state of data processing and directions for future work*

S. Anastasio gave an updated presentation of the Database, with special reference to « primary » and « composite » inventories requirements. Separate working sessions between METRA and J.-P. Thalmann were devoted to finalizing the « searchable » version of the Database.

The list of the RG02 Inventories is not closed at the date of the present report. We must admit that, in comparison with other groups, progress in collecting data has been slow... This is in part linked to the fact that we wish to include recently excavated and typo-chronologically crucial data (some from the seasons of 2008 and 2009 which are not yet fully processed). They will however be available and included into the documentation for the regional volume.

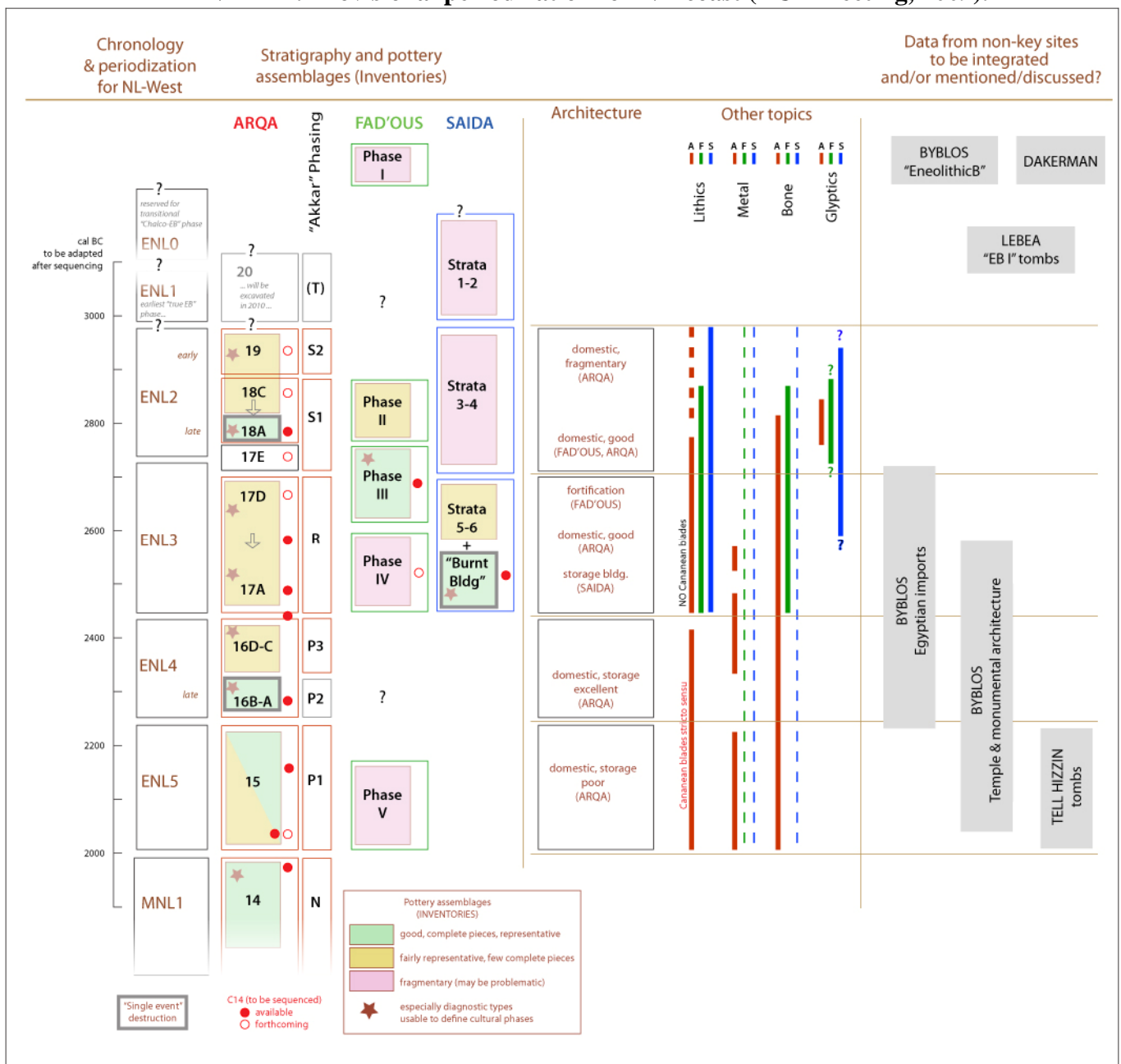
Planning of the regional volume was decided as follows.

Each chapter will be written/edited under the responsibility of the Tls or relevant TCs, but most of them will include substantial contributions written by other authors : in all cases, the names of all contributors will be mentioned. The proposed plan of the volume follows the ARCANE general guidelines, with adjustments made necessary by the heterogeneous nature of the evidence, as outlined above.

- Title pages and Foreword (2-3p) : *Tls*.
- Introduction (ca 25p.) : *Tls in consultation with all TCs*.
 - geographical limits and main geographical/climatological features of the region
 - general methodology
 - former periodizations and their problems/limits
 - key-sites and selected data ; (criteria for including « old » data ?)
- Stratigraphy (ca 25p., including tables and figs) : *contributing excavators, edited by Tls*.
 - stratigraphical sequences of key sites and their correlations
- C14 (ca 10p., including charts) : *O. Cichocki*
- Periodization (ca 15p. including charts) : *Tls in consultation with TCs*.
 - New ARCANE phasing, discussion of proposed absolute dates, sub-regional discrepancies
 - Possible historical correlations ?
- Pottery (on a sub-regional basis ; max 80p, including plates and tables) : *S. Mazzoni, L. Cooper, J.P. Thalmann, checked by all other contributors*.
 - Regional Types and Wares, by phase and with emphasis on chronological diagnostics. (final nomenclature of types and still to be decided).

- Architecture (on a sub-regional/ chronological basis ; ca 30p, including plans) : *C. Castel-Nogrette, other contributors.*
 - Site layout and city planning
 - Complexes and Units by type and phase
 - Additional documentation from non-key sites
- Burial and funerary customs (max 25p) : *G.Schwartz.*
- Metal (ca 10p) : *G. Gernez*
- Lithics (max 10p) : *E.Coqueugniot*
- Glyptics/Art (ca 20p) : *S. Mazzoni, P. Matthiae.*
- « Small finds » (max 10p) : *H. Genz, L. Peyronel*
- Conclusions (ca 15p) : *TLs and all TCs, checked by all contributors.*
- Credits (max 5p)

APPENDIX I : Provisional periodization for NL-coast (AUB meeting, 2009).



APPENDIX II : Programme of the meeting

• Thursday 4th

Morning :

- Summary of aims and guidelines of the project. Present state of organization of the RG02 group, main issues and aims of this meeting (S. Mazzone, J.P.Thalmann)
- The NL inventories : the state of the data-base (S. Anastasio)
- Correlated stratigraphic sequences and relative chronology :
 - RG02-coast (presentation and discussion of the site sequences and tentative correlation)
 - RG02-inland (presentation and discussion of the site sequences and tentative correlation)

Afternoon :

- Relative chronology : outline of the new ARCANE periodization(s) (general discussion)
- C14 and historical data, Glyptics/Art from Ebla (P. Matthiae)
- Architecture and urbanism (C. Castel, all participants – first session)

• Friday 5th : Inventories and Topics as integrated within the ARCANE periodization(s)

Morning:

- Architecture and urbanism (C. Castel, all participants – second session)
- Pottery assemblages, diagnostic types (L. Cooper, J.P. Thalmann, all participants) ; methodological issues : ware, shape and type nomenclature.

Afternoon :

- Mortuary data (G. Schwartz)
- Art, Glyptics (S. Mazzone, L. Peyronel, H. Pittmann)
- Other topics : metal (G. Gernez) ; lithics, bone, « small finds » (all participants)

- Absolute chronology ; available C14 dates and their processing ; methodological issues (O. Cichocki, J.P. Thalmann, M. Lebeau)

• Saturday 6th : Directions for future work and publication

Morning :

- Brief summary of topics : evaluation of available evidence, gaps, etc... (S. Mazzone, J.P.Thalmann)
- Planning of the RG02 volume according to the project guidelines.

APPENDIX III : List of participants

Name		Function		Nationality
Mazzone	Stefania	RG02 TL		IT
Thalmann	Jean-Paul	RG02 TL		FR
Anastasio	Stefano	METRA		IT
Baffi	Francesca			IT
Batiuk	Stephen			CA
Braemer	Frank			FR
Castel	Corinne	RG02 TC		FR
Cichocki	Otto	RG02 TC		AT
Cooper	Lisa	RG02 TC		CA

Felli	Candida			IT
Fenù	Pino	METRA		IT
Gernez	Guillaume	RG02 TC		FR
Lebeau	Marc	Project Chairman		BE
Matthiae	Paolo	RG02 TC		IT
Morandi	Daniele			IT
Novak	Mirko	RG		DE
Peyronel	Luca			IT
Philip	Graham	SC Member		UK
Pittmann	Holly	TG02 TL		USA
Scaliola	Francesco	METRA		IT
Schwartz	Glenn	RG02 TC		USA
Valentini	Stefano	RG		IT

APPENDIX IV : Financial summary

ESF Credit 15600 €

Summary of expenses :

Travel	6451,91	
Accommodation	3975,00	
Meals	1640,01	
Administrative costs	0,00	
TOTAL	12066,92	€