

Research problems

Dominik Bonatz/Peter V. Bartl

Bonatz, D./Bartl, P.V., Research problems, http://www.fecheriye.de/pdf/05_researchproblems.pdf (Date: 27.08.2011).

During the first attempt to process the initial excavations carried out under McEwan, which was also undertaken by colleagues from the Oriental Institute Chicago, the limits of that which is reconstructable using the expedition's field documentation became apparent. This is mainly due to the loss of large parts of the documentation during the American team's abrupt departure after 1940. There is, therefore, not only a lack of clarity in the allocation of finds to layers and/or floor-levels, but also in the inadequately described younger layers above the Bronze Age and Iron Age features. Also in other areas questions concerning the previously excavated complexes remain unanswered, for example the function and exact dating of the bit-Hilani building in the northern part of the site.

Despite this fact Tell Fekheriye has an exceptional potential, especially regarding the to be expected transitions from Khabur-Ware pottery (Old Jazirah II-III) to Mittani period ceramics (Middle Jazirah Ia & Ib), and from the latter to the Middle Assyrian levels (Middle Jazirah II-III). These ceramic traditions, including their interrelations and mutual exertions of influence which are still not fully understood, occur in consecutive sequences at Tell Fekheriye allowing the observation of an internal typological development and the incorporation into a supra-regional context.

A completely new research perspective was revealed during the American excavations in 1940 with the unearthing of two anthropomorphic statues, which have recently been dated to the early Neolithic in an article published by Bernd Müller-Neuhof in 2007. Their discovery along with the large amount of stone artifacts scattered around that area could point towards the location of a Pre-pottery Neolithic settlement, not yet identified through systematic excavations.

Beside the fact that many finds, including the especially spectacular ones such as the Iron Age Hadad Yi'si statue or the monumental statue of a Roman emperor, frequently cannot be associated with an exact find-spot, it is the circumstance that excavation activities never endured longer than one season that creates a crucial problem when trying to interpret the finds and features. Rarely large, coherent areas were unearthed and more often than not stratigraphic observations fell victim to former excavation methods. Likewise, all previous expeditions alluded to the enormous potential the site holds but also to the difficulties in grasping this capacity.