

The Site: Description

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Bonatz, D., The Site: Description, http://www.fekheriye.de/pdf/02_sitedescription.pdf (Date: 18.05.2011).

Tell Fekheriye is located at 40° 04' 04 east and 36° 50' 03 north on the southern edge of the modern city Ras al-‘Ain in the Al Hasakah Governorate of northern Syria. The name Ras al-‘Ain (Arabic: “head of the source”) refers to the fertile region surrounding the source basin of the Khabur River in which the two ancient centres of Tell Fekheriye and Tell Halaf, two kilometres southwest, are located. Even in dry years the average rainfall in the area is between 200 - 300mm, with exceptionally rainy years reaching an average of 800mm. In addition many karstic springs fed by groundwater from the mountainous region Tur ‘Abdin to the north guarantee the water supply all year round. Until recent times a sumptuous pasture landscape was observable from the northern edge of the mound. Here surfaced one of the most abundant karstic springs that fed an inlet of the Khabur River flowing eastwardly around the tell. These circumstances presented themselves to the American excavators in 1940. They were in part published (McEwan et al. 1958: pl. 13) and in part can be found in the excavation inventory in the archives of the Oriental Institute Chicago. Due to the current intensive extraction of groundwater for agricultural irrigation a dramatic decrease in spring activity has been registered. The watercourse at Tell Fekheriye is completely dried out, as are many springs.

In addition to the favourable water supply conditions and fertile soil for agriculture the locality of Tell Fekheriye has always offered advantages for trade and transportation. The passage that leads through the Jabal ‘Abd al-‘Aziz mountains in the south and the Tur ‘Abdin mountains in the north forms one of the key links from Assyria to the northern Levant and to Anatolia. The timeless importance of this route, which the Assyrians called the ‘royal road’, is still evident in the tracks of the Baghdad Railway forming the border between Syria and Turkey and passing through the station of Ras al-‘Ain, one of the important border crossings. Even without delving further into the history of Tell Fekheriye it is evident that this site possesses a favourable climatic and geo-strategic position, which is most probably the basis of continuous settlement in this region.

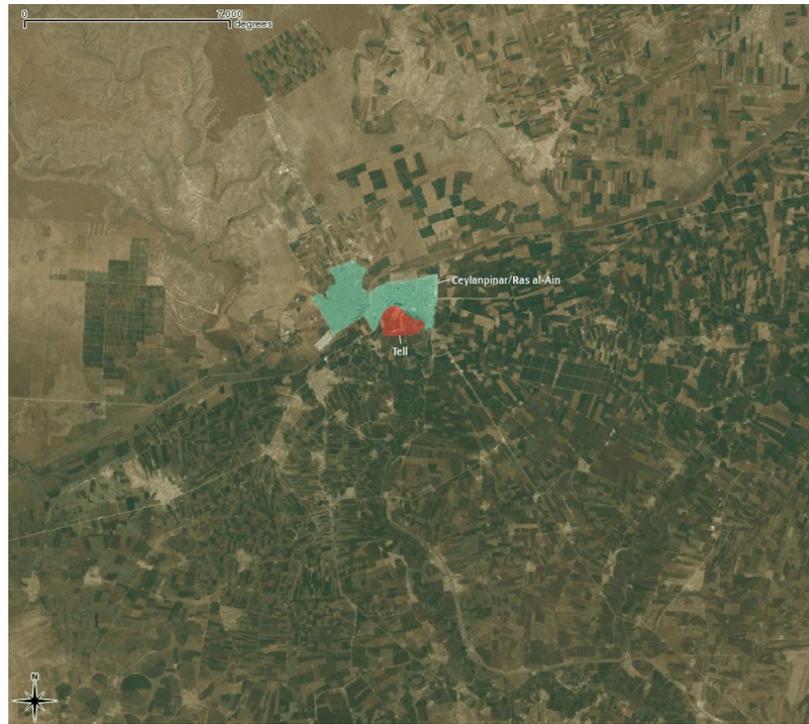


Fig. 1: Satellite image of the vicinity of the site.



Fig. 2: The main mound of Tell Fekheriye as seen from the east. In the foreground the dried out river bed of the Khabur River with one of the few still active spring ponds is situated.