

Materials und seiner Formgebung ist folglich befundbedingt nicht oder nur äußerst begrenzt möglich. Das gilt sowohl für die Befundkontexte der Objekte wie auch die ikonographischen Darstellungen, die als Vergleich herangezogen wurden/werden können.

Derartige teilweise grundlegende Mängel verstellen bedauerlicherweise den Blick für die große Leistung, die dem vorliegenden Buch zugrunde liegt, das in der Systematik der Sammlung der Befunde und der Untersuchung ihrer technologischen Aspekte einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Forschung leistet.

Melanie Wasmuth (Basel)

## Alter Orient und Altes Testament

Aruz, Joan; Benzel, Kim & Evans, Jean M. (eds.): *Beyond Babylon. Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008. XXIII + 548 pp. ISBN 978-1-58839-295-4. 49,95€.

This volume comprises an oversized exhibition catalogue. As such, it is similar in format, style and scope to a work from 2003 edited by Joan Aruz in cooperation with Ronald Wallenfels, *Art of the First Cities: The 3rd Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2003). While the latter tome was preoccupied with formations of states and their artistic expressions, the present work takes a step into the hubbub of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium: an era of well-documented long-distance trade, of artisanry and canonization of written knowledge. In connection with the exhibition *Beyond Babylon*, a scholarly symposium took place, and the results of this symposium await publication at the skilful hands of the main editor and her associates.

Aruz and her co-editors have brought together a few dozen scholars to present syntheses on their respective areas of expertise, and to provide descriptions of objects contained in the catalogue. Over and above these, dozens of scholars and professionals in institutions and museums from the Near East and the West have contributed their knowledge and their efforts to locate objects, to ensure that loans were made possible, or to make pieces available for photographs. Objects were borrowed from collections in Armenia, Belgium, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, the UK, and the US.

*Beyond Babylon* encompasses a few hundred pages of text and descriptions, 15 maps and plans covering areas, sites, and individual buildings; more than 20 satellite and aerial photos, pictures from sites, including objects *in situ* as well as half a dozen underwater shots from the excavations of the Uluburun shipwreck; 30 facsimiles and computer drawings of original objects and motifs; and more than 450 photographs of objects, individually and in lots, 95% of which are in full colour. Of the photographs, many of them represent inscribed objects where the writing is clear enough to be read, though sometimes only one side of a two-sided inscribed object is shown. In short: there is a veritable smorgasbord on offer here. The bibliography at the end amounts to just under 50 pages; and the cross-referencing index covers almost 19

full pages, which makes for a helpful tool in finding a particular motif, site, or historical persona.

It is of course inevitable, in an exhibition catalogue such as this, to use, or rather re-use material which has featured in many an overview of the art and archaeology of the area. Certain objects have become part and parcel of a specific site or object category. Hence, a lot of the images portray the usual suspects. But in many cases, these well-known motifs and objects are reproduced in better quality, from more than one angle, or they feature alongside pieces in the same style, or pieces which are manufactured from the same materials. Also, there is some exclusive material published for the very first time. Thus, the publication is suited for many different categories of readers, novices as well as experts; art or cultural historians as well as language buffs; anyone interested in the vibrant era of far-reaching international contacts and exchange that make up the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE in the eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern area.

Two temporally defined parts make up the book, corresponding to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, respectively. They correspond roughly to the two halves of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, and the latter part is awarded more space than the first, although many interconnections exist between the two. Weight is naturally put on evidence of economic and cultural contact; on material and professional exchange, on the movement of people for reasons of trade, diplomacy, workmanship, or military conquest, where the one factor did not necessarily rule the others out. Many scholars have contributed with their professional knowledge, but space forbids naming them all. In the following, a few details from the wealth of material are highlighted.

The volume is divided into six main chapters, constituting the catalogue proper of the exhibition. These are then further subdivided based on temporal, geographic and thematic considerations, following a clear-cut and logical framework. The catalogue is followed by two appendices. An introductory chapter by Joan Aruz describes the driving forces behind interregional contact, the natural setting and the systems of trade and exchange, referring to relevant sections in the volume. M. Trolle Larsen opens the section called The Middle Bronze Age. J. Sasson (p. 95–100) interpolates information on foreign craftsmen, traders and other professionals, framing the narrative with a captivating summary account of the six-month journey of the Mari king Zimri-Lim northward and westward, to Ugarit via the Ḥabūr area and Tuttul. M. Liverani provides an overview of the Late Bronze Age. A chapter of its own is awarded to the Uluburun shipwreck and the horizon of traders in the Late Bronze Age, as described by C. Pulak. Together with a subsection on the role of Cyprus in the regional trade, at the hands of S. Cluzan, this ambitious chapter alone fills just under 100 pages. A chapter entitled “The Art of Exchange”, written by main editor J. Aruz and A. Caubet discusses the types of goods and materials in vogue during the Late Bronze Age. The final chapter of the catalogue is written by S. P. Morris and M. Feldman, and constitutes a cleverly devised look at the region in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, and some specifics of craftsmanship during that time. The narrative section of the book is concluded by two brief appendices treating chronological issues. In this final section, G. M. Schwartz and E. H. Cline adeptly summa-

rize the backs and forths of suggestions for an absolute chronology in the Near East and Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

This reviewer found especially rewarding the 20 pages worth of accounts of excavations in the Syrian city Qatna (Tell Mishrifeh). An outline of the excavation history of the site, and an overview of the architectural phases uncovered at Qatna, is given by M. Al-Maqdissi. Representatives of the three countries funding expeditions to Qatna, Syria, Germany, and Italy, all give reports on their work at the site. Some of the finds from the Syrian-German expedition to Qatna are described and published in photograph for the first time at the hands of P. Pfälzner (p. 219–231). The section on Qatna is rounded out by a brief report of the finds from the Syrian-Italian expedition, given by D. Morandi Bonacossi.

Depictions of foreigners in native artistic traditions, in two and three dimensions, are found among the Egyptian objects. Sometimes depicted in scenes of paying tribute or in bondage, these scenes underline the mixed blessings of intensified international contacts during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE: not all relations were of a peaceful nature. Bearing this in mind, a few objects featured in the book become very interesting indeed. They are formed by some appurtenances belonging to three foreign wives of Thutmose III, described by D. Craig Patch (p. 254–258). After their deaths, the three ladies were buried with full honours, in accordance with Egyptian customs, probably illustrating the oft-discussed phenomenon of so-called diplomatic marriages. The objects and their once owners become even more interesting when contrasted with stylized depictions of western Asiatic enemies in the form of glazed tiles (p. 268–269) from Medinet Habu.

The exhibition and its catalogue were realized by means of fundings from private persons, foundations, corporations and the US state; and the results are quite astounding. The volume is cheaply priced (save, probably, international shipping costs) and both research libraries as well as private libraries are bound to benefit from it. One might ask whether the internet has made this old-fashioned way of presenting exhibitions lose its significance or impact. The answer must be that printed catalogues of this quality, with such care shown for clarity of layout and integration of descriptions by world-renowned specialists in the field and crisp pictures can hardly be supplanted – although it might be complemented – by electronic versions.

The Metropolitan Museum and its benefactors, the editors and the individual contributors all deserve great thanks for their efforts, and for pursuing the publication of a wide variety of relevant materials from a rich cultural area which is under so much pressure these days, as at times it was also during the days in which the objects on display in this volume were produced. The themes of art, trade and diplomacy in ancient times, across physical boundaries and between cultures, bear looking at time and again.

Jakob Andersson (Uppsala)

---

<sup>1</sup> For 2nd millennium Mesopotamia and Anatolia, see now G. Barjamovic, T. Hertel & M. Trolle Larsen, *Ups and Downs at Kanesh: Chronology, History and Society in the Old Assyrian Period*. Publications de l'Institut historique et archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 120: Old Assyrian Archives, Studies 5, Leiden 2012.