

sift through for those who have studied and experienced the highly regulated foundations of Tibetan village life.

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ROCCO RANTE and DJAMAL MIRZAAKHMEDOV:

The Oasis of Bukhara, Volume I: Population, Depopulation, and Settlement Evolution.

(Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World 12.) xiv, 292 pp. Leiden:

Brill, 2019. €139. ISBN 978 90 04 39621 0.

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This new volume on Bukhara promises a different approach to the city known to so many as a pivotal historical urban centre of Central Asia. An approach that understands Bukhara not in terms of its metropolitan core, but as a conglomeration of settlements within an environmental “oasis”. In doing so it follows a number of recent analyses in the region considering systems of cities (Salvatori and Tosi, *The Archaeological Map of the Murghab Delta*, Oxford, 2008; Stride et al., “Canals versus horses”, *World Archaeology* 41/1, 2009, pp. 73–87; Wordsworth, “The hydrological networks of the Balkh Oasis after the arrival of Islam”, *Afghanistan* 1, 2018, pp. 182–208). The study presented here by Rante and Mirzaakhmedov differs in two significant ways from most comparable surveys, however. First, it sets out to explain diachronic urban development in the region through differing site morphology. Second, their large-scale survey of the region was accompanied by substantial archaeological excavations at a number of settlements, the results of which are incorporated into the discussion. The first of several forthcoming volumes on the archaeology of the Bukhara Oasis, this book presents a broad synthesis of new data from a range of well-known and less well-known sites to attempt to disentangle the pattern of urban development in the long first millennium CE.

Bukhara’s history is intimately intertwined with its riverine environment – a closely managed dendritic network of canals which have evolved from the spreading delta of the Zarafshan River. These systems take centre-stage with regard to Rante and Mirzaakhmedov’s volume, whether in the discussion of oasis-wide settlement patterns, or for individual archaeological sites. This reflects the partnership of Rante and Fouache, who have previously used geoarchaeological methods to trace the environmental history of the western Zarafshan (“The role of catastrophic floods generated by the collapse of dams since the Neolithic in the Oases of Bukhara and Qaraqöl”, *International Journal of Geohazards and Environment* 2/2, 2016, pp. 150–65), the research from which crops up regularly here. At the start of the book the authors sketch out the development of the river delta, as a slowly morphing island of agricultural development, eventually becoming a green bridge which facilitated the flow of goods across the semi-arid desert which surrounds it. The latter point, trade, is repeated several times as the primary stimulus for urban economic growth in the region, and it emerges unequivocally in the conclusion as the determining factor in settlement structure.

The second and third chapters examine the evidence for urban settlements in the oasis as observed from remote sensing (satellite imagery, maps) and field surveys, including a large number of topographic contour plans of individual sites. With

these tools at their disposal, the authors are able to augment earlier surveys published in Shishkin's *Arkhitekturnye pamiatniki Bukhary* (Tashkent, 1936) and *Arkheologicheskie raboty 1937 g. v zapadnoi chasti Bukharskogo oazisa* (Tashkent, 1940), plotting the distribution of specifically *tepe* sites across the irrigated zone – settlement mounds created by centuries of accumulated mudbrick structural remains and occupational debris. They go further, to distinguish three types of settlement: tripartite, bipartite, and unique sites, echoing the classic division of medieval cities of Iran and Central Asia into *qohandez* or *arg* (citadel), *shahristān* (city proper, often walled), and *rabad* (suburb). Across a corpus of 1,040 sites, they observe patterns for these types in both site distribution and the chronology of their occupation based on surface ceramic assemblages, suggesting that the tripartite cities are of greatest antiquity with continuous occupation from the third century BCE to the fourteenth century CE, with the subordinate bipartite cities developing as satellite units from the beginning of the Common Era.

The second part of the book, beginning at chapter 4, details excavation work at six of the sites in the Oasis, as exemplars for the trends observed in the broader survey, as well as in-depth studies in their own right. The authors' long-standing excavations at the large urban sites of Ramitan and Paykend form the backbone of this section, with shorter excursions on stratigraphic trenches placed in other sites that had largely seen no previous work. That the book includes profiles of some of these sites from their earliest layers upwards is a remarkable achievement in itself, given the sheer depth of the deposits, and the terrifyingly deep *sondages* required to record them. In the case of Ramitan these excavations uncovered some evidence for population in the third century BCE, followed by a walled settlement in the first century CE, the creation of the *shahristān* in the fourth century CE, and an unwalled suburb shortly thereafter, with the later Islamic settlement appearing in the suburban area. For Paykend, where the excavations are more extensive and complement those of ongoing Russian work (Omel'chenko "Issledovaniia Bukharskoï arkheologicheskoi ekspeditsii v Paikende" *Vostok – Oriens*, 2019, 6, pp. 85–99), a different sequence is observed where the early Islamic city covers much of the previous urban core, which was apparently initially formalized in the first century CE. In this section, one of the most fascinating and unparalleled aspects is the superb excavation of part of a long-lived medieval ceramics production quarter, headed by Berthier. As with all of the excavations presented, this also whets our appetite in anticipation of the forthcoming volumes where the radiocarbon dates and material culture from these investigations will be fully published.

The concluding chapter brings together the data from the whole volume to sketch a long historical narrative of this Transoxanian landscape from the Middle Pleistocene to Timur's fourteenth-century empire. Chronological patterns of occupation are sketched out across the Oasis, defining waves of change in settlement style and material culture across the sites surveyed approximately every three–four centuries from the third century BCE onwards. It is evident, however, that Rante and Mirzaakhmedov document in their excavations a plurality of city histories, where in some cases occupation entirely shifts its focus (Ramitan, Iskijat, Kashkituvan), and in others the urban palimpsest occupies more or less the same space (Paykend, Bukhara). This variety rather reinforces Kennedy's historical observations on cities after the coming of Islam in "From Sharistān to Medina" (*Studia Islamica* 102, 2006, pp. 5–35), i.e. that different scenarios can be observed with regard to the abandonment of old settlements and the continuity of life in others. It also flags a warning, that while multi-part sites can be considered segments of a complex urban whole, large sections are often abandoned for long periods of time or entirely, obfuscating any view of city morphology based on the extant

topography. This volume illustrates the importance of new archaeological data in beginning to unpick some of these complexities.

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BÉRÉNICE BELLINA (ed.):

Khao Sam Kaeo. An Early Port-City between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

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This volume presents the results of excavations at Khao Sam Kaeo (KSK), one of the most important sites connected to early maritime trade in the South China Sea in late prehistory. Lying on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus, the narrowest part of the Thai–Malay Peninsula, KSK likely benefitted from its position on the land bridge between two vibrant spheres of maritime trade and activity, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. It was inhabited between *c.* 400 BCE and 100 CE – a period of growing Indian Ocean interaction, yet one for which few sites have been studied in any detail. For these reasons alone, the reader can guess at the archaeological significance of the site. This comprehensive and authoritative report not only details the findings of investigations at the site, but also sets a new standard in the archaeological examination of early ports and settlements in Southeast Asia.

The book begins with an engaging contextualization of the study in scholarship on the Indian Ocean and globalization, as well as the historiography of cultural exchanges between South and Southeast Asia. In doing so, it positions the report extremely well in terms of its contribution to our understanding of Indian Ocean exchange and associated societal developments. It is made very clear at the outset that an overarching aim is to elevate the study of craft products and technologies beyond the usual fixation on commodities of trade; and instead take into account their wider sociopolitical and cultural dimensions.

There follow 22 chapters written by 26 authors, arranged into four parts. Part 1 focusses on the geographical and environmental setting of the site. Three chapters (on the geoarchaeology, archaeobotany, and identification of plant resins respectively) expertly reconstruct the physical geography of the upper Peninsula, the taphonomic processes that have affected the site, and the past ecological system and agricultural practices that took place. The latter two are well supported with detailed appendices presenting their data.

In part 2, we turn to the settlement of KSK. This is very much the core of the archaeological site report. It begins with an account of the complex morphology of the 35 hectare site spread over four hills on the bank of the Tha Taphao River. This is followed by a report of the ways space was found to be used across the site, the density of occupation, and how activities were organized within it. This builds on the results of archaeological investigations, which included 135 test-pits and numerous surface surveys of accessible areas. It is disappointing that the detailed results (section drawings, site plans, finds catalogues, etc.) are not presented or made openly accessible. Yet the report is clear in the way it presents the methods that were used, and the cumulative results. This is particularly evident in the ways the dating and spatial analyses of the site are articulated.