

Excavations revealed a sequence of fortifications at the site.



Cuneiform tablet with an account of Sargon's campaign against Urartu and destruction of Musasir in 714 BC. AO 5372 (Louvre Museum). *Naissance de l'écriture* p. 199 no. 133.

SARGON'S MARCH: A NEW TRANSLATION

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In the eighth year of his reign (714 BC), the king of Assyria, Sargon II (721–705 BC), led a campaign into the Zagros mountains in order to aid his vassal Ullusunu, the ruler of Mannea. He then turned north, invading the powerful kingdom of Urartu, whose ruler Rusâ (or Ursâ) had been giving trouble to Mannea. The exact route of Sargon's march is much debated, but he may well have gone all the way around Lake Urmiah. On the way back to Assyria, a lunar eclipse that occurred on October 24 was interpreted to mean that he should attack Musasir, an important religious center of the god Haldi. While most of his army continued on its way home, Sargon and 1,000 soldiers advanced on Musasir.

"I let the terrifying (war) cry of my troops resound [again]st that city (Musasir) like (the thunder of) the storm god...Its people, (even) old men (and) old women, climbed up onto the roofs of their houses, crying bitterly[...]. In order to save their live(s), they crawled around on all

fours...Because King Urzana, their ruler, had not respected the command of the god Ashur, but had (instead) thrown off the yoke of my overlordship and despised his position as a vassal to me, I planned to take the people of that city into captivity and I ordered the removal of the god Haldi,

RAP 2013–2014

The RAP research region contains diverse environmental zones ranging from precipitous gorges to high mountains and lush mountain valleys. We conduct research in all these areas to develop a complete profile of ancient lifeways. Today's residents practice highly productive farming in the valleys—fruit trees and grapes are a regional specialty—and herd cattle, sheep, and goats in the highlands. Our botanical and zoological studies conducted by zooarchaeologist Dr. Tina Greenfield (University of Cambridge/University of Manitoba) and archaeobotanists Dr. Alexia Smith and Lucas Proctor (University of Connecticut) tentatively show similar patterns in antiquity as well as the hunting of diverse wild game up to the early modern era.

Since the RAP research region is virtually unexplored, developing a regional chronology must be an immediate objective. To that end, RAP conducts excavations at the high mound of Gird-i Dasht located

at the center of the Soran Plain. This multi-period mound represents the remains of several millennia of continuous occupation from at least 2000 BC to the early modern era. Kyra Kaercher (Penn Museum) and Melissa Sharp (University of Cambridge) are developing a ceramic chronology based on the Gird-i Dasht results combined with other RAP excavations and material from archaeological surveys conducted by Marshall Schurtz (University of Pennsylvania). Excavations on the high mound in 2013 and 2014, supervised by Dr. William Hafford (Penn Museum), Dr. John MacGinnis (University of Cambridge), and assisted by Anashya Srinivasan and Danny Breegi (Boston University) revealed a long sequence of successive fortifications consistent with the interpretation that the site served as a fortress controlling the plain and access to one of the main outlets to the Rowanduz Gorge. This site function continued up to the Ottoman period (19th century AD). Excavations on the

(the god) on whom the land Urtu relied (for protection). Triumphantly, I had (Urzana) sit in front of his city gate as I led away into captivity his wife, his sons, his daughters, his people, (and) the members of his paternal family. I reckoned (them) together with 6,110 people, 12 *kūdanu*-mules, 380 donkeys, 525 oxen, (and) 1,235 sheep (and) goats, and brought (them all) inside the wall(s) of my camp..."

"I took (all these things) as booty, as well as many, countless (other) valuables of his, (and) this does not take into account the objects of gold, silver, tin, iron, bronze, ivory, ebony,

boxwood, and every other kind of wood that the troops of the gods Ashur (and) Marduk took in countless numbers as booty from the city, palace, and temple. I loaded the property of the palace of Urzana and of the god Haldi, together with his (Urzana's) many valuables that I had taken as booty from the city Musasir, on (the backs of) the massed troops of my extensive army and I had (them) convey (it) to Assyria. I considered the people of the district of the city Musasir to be among the people of Assyria and I imposed on them (the performance of) labor duty (and) corvée duty as if they were Assyrians."

"Rusâ heard (of this) and threw himself on the ground. He ripped his garments and bared his arms. He tore off his headdress, pulled out his hair, and beat his breast (literally: heart) with both (fists). He lay flat (on the ground), face down. His mood became angry and his temper burned (hot). Woeful lamentations were on his lips. I caused cries of mourning to be uttered throughout the entire land Urtu and established wailing in the land Na'iri for all future time."

(Selections from lines 343–349 and 405–414 of Sargon's Eighth Campaign text)

EDITOR'S NOTE: All the official inscriptions of Sargon II will be edited in a volume being prepared by Grant Frame. This will be the 5th volume of inscriptions to be published by the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, a research project directed by Dr. Frame that has received support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Pennsylvania.

RAP conducted excavations at the mound of Gird-i Dasht.



low mound supervised by Dr. Richard Zettler and Katherine Burge (University of Pennsylvania) revealed some of the earliest periods of occupation at the site attested by painted and plain Khabur Ware ceramics of the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1600 BC). In 2014, a geomagnetic survey crew from Ludwig-Maximilians Universität headed by Dr. Jorg Fassbinder mapped large sections of the low mound, revealing the full extent of occupation and many interesting rectilinear anomalies that probably represent the outlines of buildings and streets.

Economic development can often run fast ahead of archaeology. In 2013, the Soran Department of Antiquities was alerted to the disturbance of a large number of archaeological sites—mostly cemeteries—caused by the widening of a road linking modern Sidekan to the Kel-i Shin Pass/Iranian border. In 2013, we conducted a survey along the long road cut and rescue excavations of a stone-built tomb of the late Achaemenid period at the site of Ghabrestan-i Topzawa. The tomb contained burials from two periods with over 20 individuals interred with ceramics, jewelry, and food offerings. Osteoarchaeologist Kathleen Downey (The Ohio State University) is studying the human remains from the tomb as well as other burials excavated by RAP.

Our survey of the road cut produced tantalizing evidence of several burned early Iron Age settlements near the original findspot of the Urartian Topzawa Stela that mentions Musasir. Radiocarbon dates from one of the largest burned sites, dubbed Gund-i Topzawa, indicate a construction date in the early 1st millennium BC. The pottery from this site suggests it was intentionally destroyed in the Iron III period, a date consistent with Sargon's conquest of Musasir. In 2014, we excavated Gund-i Topzawa and Jorg Fassbinder's team conducted geomagnetic surveys at early Iron Age sites in the surrounding area first documented by Rainer Michael Boehmer in the early 1970s.

MUSASIR LOCATED?

Our excavations at Gund-i Topzawa revealed multiple stages of well-preserved masonry buildings terraced into a hillside overlooking the Topzawa Valley and River below. These excavations were supervised by Darren Ashby (University of Pennsylvania), Dr. Conrad Christian Piller (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität), and Dr. John MacGinnis (University of Cambridge) with the expert assistance of Hardy Maaß (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität), Daniel Patterson (University of Pennsylvania), and our capable



In addition to RAP's research objectives, our program is also charged with conducting rescue excavations and site assessments with the Soran Department of Antiquities, headed by Abdulwahhab Suleiman. Allison Cuneo (Boston University) works closely with the Soran Directorate in her ongoing study of cultural heritage management practices and policy in Iraqi Kurdistan. The rapid pace of development in Kurdistan, driven by oil exploration and tourism, jeopardizes many

archaeological sites. In 2013, RAP conducted emergency excavations and site assessments at a number of locations. We completed one of the more interesting rescue projects at the Islamic site of Qalat Lokhan near modern Rowanduz. Here we completed test excavations and the mapping of a masonry structure that local history associates with Mir Mohammad, the last ruler of an independent Kurdish state, the Sorani Emirate, that thrived here from AD 1530 to 1835 before being

absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. Other rescue excavations and site assessments were completed at the early 6th millennium BC Halaf farming village of Banahilk where house construction in a suburb of Soran threatens the archaeological remains. RAP also documented the archaeological deposits of a burned village of the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods in modern Sidekan disturbed by the construction of a new bank building for the town.

LEFT TO RIGHT: A masonry structure is surveyed at the Islamic site of Qalat Lokhan. One of several rescue excavations conducted at Banahilk. Archaeological remains can be seen just above the trench. The archaeological remains of an ancient burned village (notice the black layer on the cut) were exposed during the construction of a new building.

government representative, Dlshad Mustapha. Our 2014 excavations focused on the lowest terrace of this building complex where we uncovered the well-preserved remains of kitchens and storage areas. The terraced architectural methods resemble depictions of Musasirian architecture on Sargon's Khorsabad palace relief (see page 29). The excavated buildings were destroyed by fire while still in use based on the numbers of *in situ* ceramic vessels and other artifacts found. Our surveys show other sites along the Topzawa River were similarly destroyed at this time, compelling circumstantial evidence of Sargon's campaign.

Jorg Fassbinder's geomagnetic survey team likewise produced tantalizing results. At the hilltop early Iron Age fortress of Qalat Mudjesir, their mapping produced detailed

plans of the underlying buildings. Even more exciting, in the village of Mudjesir the surveys produced signs of a monumental structure in the area where Boehmer and other archaeologists—key among them Kurdish archaeologists Dlshad Zamua and Abdulwahhab Suleiman—have tentatively located the Haldi temple based on scatters of early Iron Age pottery and stone column bases. Have we located the position of the Haldi temple? Only future excavation seasons will produce conclusive results, but we seem close to pinpointing the elusive kingdom of Musasir. ●

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