

# Foreword

Broadening Horizons is a series of international conferences on the archaeology and history of the Ancient Near East, dedicated to students and early-stage researchers in these fields. The fifth edition was held in Udine from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017, hosted by the University of Udine, and organized by Marco Iamoni, Costanza Coppini, Katia Gavagnin, Rocco Palermo and Francesca Simi. It followed the conferences in Torino (Italy) in 2011, Barcelona (Spain) in 2010, Lyon (France) in 2007 and Ghent (Belgium) in 2006. The main topic *Civilizations in Contact* served to emphasize the importance of cross-cultural interactions in the Near East over time. In particular, the present volume – *Interactions and new directions in Near Eastern Archaeology*, edited by Costanza Coppini and Francesca Simi – is devoted to the contributions from Session 7, “Civilizations in contact: current research and new approaches in Mediterranean and Near Eastern Archaeology”, and Session 6, “Marine connections: the gulf and the interactions between the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, the Iranian world and beyond”.

Session 7 “Civilizations in contact: current research and new approaches in Mediterranean and Near Eastern Archaeology” deals with new research carried out throughout the Near East in various fields. The Near East’s wide-ranging cultural diversity is addressed in detail by the session’s keynote speaker, Elena Rova, who highlights the changes under way in the archaeology of the Ancient Near

East, and how these changes alter the “spectrum of our present field activities and research interests” (*infra*, p. 4). The diversity in terms of geographical environments, historical periods, and topics in Near Eastern Archaeology is shown by the contributions to this session. Field research in relatively new regions, i.e. the Caucasus, is reflected in papers dealing with different aspects of archaeological investigations in these areas. Again with regard to field research, the resurgence of archaeological research in Iraq, especially in the Kurdistan region, is one of the main topics tackled in this session, concerning results from both archaeological survey and excavation. Besides traditional research topics, although developed with original approaches, this edition of Broadening Horizons looks also at contributions involving the use of computer science in archaeology, thus introducing the field of digital humanities.

Session 6 “Marine connections: the Gulf and the interactions between the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, the Iranian world and beyond” offers a wide-ranging view of archaeological and historical research carried out in the Arabian Peninsula, a region often considered peripheral with respect to Near Eastern Archaeology. The contributions collected in this volume do not reflect this tendency, dealing with many epochs in the history of this region, from the Neolithic to the Islamic period. The opening keynote lecture of Maurizio Cattani focuses on the interactions of the Arabian Peninsula

with other regions, some beyond the traditional limits of the Near East such as cross-cultural contacts with Mesopotamia and Iran, speaking of “a wide-ranging history of territories, peoples and culture” (*infra*, p. 315). These interactions can be readily observed with regard to pottery and the use of high-value materials that show links to Iranian traditions, as well as in the funerary practices in cemeteries in Oman.

These proceedings give a vivid picture of the exchanges and interactions that occurred during the presentation and debate of specialist papers in Udine at the conference. We would like to thank the University of Udine, and its Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage Studies in particular, for having accomplished this successful conference in a most stimulating environment. Our warmest thanks to the keynote speakers, especially Elena Rova and Maurizio Cattani – whose papers form part of this volume – for their invaluable contributions and the example they set for younger researchers and students.

During the initial organization and arranging of the papers published here the support of the Scientific Committee was invaluable: we thank them all, as well as all peer-reviewers of the papers

published here, without whom this volume would have not been possible.

The publication of this volume would have not been possible without the invaluable support of the former (B. Callegher) and current (F. Zanini) director of the Inter-University School of Specialization in Archaeology (SISBA) and the EUT staff, in particular G. Clabot. For the support in the organization of the conference, we are extremely grateful to the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Authority and the Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage of the University of Udine. A special thank goes to our friends and co-organizers Marco, Katia and Rocco for the time and the commitment that we shared.

Lastly, we would like to thank all contributors for their enthusiasm, collaboration and patience, and for the scientific value of their papers. We hope to have helped to broaden your archaeological horizons – as ours too were broadened during the process of organizing, managing and publishing the conference.

Berlin and Oxford, December 2019

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