

## General Conclusions

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A comprehensive analysis of the architectural structures (and of their stratigraphic sequence), of the pottery, lithic and other finds which have been unearthed at Tell Karrana 3 allows a general, albeit tentative, evaluation of the nature of this ancient settlement. One factor which certainly affects any interpretation of the character of the site is the original size of the site itself. As we have seen, the old settlement is located on top of a relatively high and steep mound: the surrounding wadis certainly played a role in the continuing process of erosion, although the present disturbed morphology of the entire area does not permit any conjecture about the possible phases of erosion, their intensity or duration over some 5000 years. In this connection, however, it should be emphasized that there is a total absence of pottery finds outside the *present* area of the ancient Karrana settlement: only a limited amount of sherds was collected - during the 1984 preliminary survey - along the upper part of the eastern and southwestern slope of the mound. If we are correct, this suggests a limited amount of erosion of the late 4th - early 3rd millennium site, whose original shape and dimension ought not to have altered significantly during this long span of time<sup>1</sup>.

Once all this be taken into account, there can hardly be any doubt that the remains of Tell Karrana 3 point not to a small village, but rather to some sort of isolated agricultural complex (a farm-house, a "*villa rustica*" or such like) which served for the purpose of processing and storing cereals (cf. analysis of the paleo-botanic remains, pp. 237-250) as well as meat and other products produced from livestock breeding (cf. analysis of the animal bones, pp. 233-236). The combination of the two activities of the basic primary production in northern Mesopotamia at the end of the 4th millennium B.C., is clearly mirrored in the archaeological finds of Tell Karrana 3. Noteworthy is the great amount of lithic finds (cf. analysis of the lithic industry, pp. 145-202)<sup>2</sup> which certainly testify to intensive agricultural activity and various forms of animal husbandry.

The relatively scarce remains of living quarters contrasted with the considerable number of functional installations (Parallel Wall Structures, kilns, wide open courtyard), whose function is attested by the abundant remains of cereal seeds

and animal bones, offer clear evidence for a "specialised" rural settlement under the management of a restricted number of people that had access to or control of a relatively wide region. It is noteworthy in this connection that our 1984 and 1985 surveys, which systematically covered an area stretching for at least 2km all around the Karrana mound, have yielded no traces of ancient (ancillary) settlements and no significant and/or comparable piece of pottery. Thus, it appears that our "villa" stood quite isolated: the closest settlement inhabited in the same period, is Tell Fisna (Fuji et al. 1987, pp. 43-49), which lies directly on the eastern bank of the Tigris, ca 2.5 km west of Tell Karrana 3, and which offers the best parallel evidence for the "transitional" ceramic sequence of our site.

The life of Tell Karrana 3 was relatively short; it probably encompasses no more than 300 years (from the end of the Late Uruk to the early phase of Ninevite 5 periods) and does not exhibit any earlier or later phases of occupation - the Islamic burials being comparatively recent intrusions. As already observed, there are no gaps and no major changes in the general layout and function of the tell, except for those which have been described in the chapter dealing with the architectural remains. The relatively brief existence of Karrana has few, if any, parallels at other ancient sites in the Eski Mosul region. Aside from the minor changes observed in the periods represented by Levels 3 and 2, the overall settlement pattern remains basically unaltered, although one might ask whether the presence of flat *hellan* stone foundations in Level 1 - whose superimposed mudbrick structures were completely eroded - imply a substantial modification both in concept and in strategies of the entire settlement. In light of the insufficient data this question must remain unanswered. On a different level, it should also be noted that, in contrast to Levels 4 and 3c, Level 3b-a and Level 1 yielded no burials (one burial only is attested in level 2: Burial n. 9, in square S 18). Whether this reflects a significant change in funerary customs or whether it is simply due to the accident of discovery, also remains an open question.

The isolated and seemingly sparsely populated installation of Karrana bears testimony to a remarkably high standard of technological advancement and economic welfare; at the same time, it discloses interesting insights concerning the overall scenario of the north Mesopotamian network of agricultural settlements dated to the end of the Late Uruk and succeeding periods. The prominent socio-economic standard of Tell

<sup>1</sup>Cf. also C. Zaccagnini in this volume, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Otte / Behm-Blanke 1992, Pl. 4 at p. 176, where Karrana 3 is listed among the 12 Anatolian, Syro-Palestinian and Mesopotamian sites that have yielded the so-called "Canaanite" blades, in addition to Hassek Höyük.

Karrana 3 and of its inhabitants can be reasonably deduced from a cursive evaluation of some of the evidence yielded by our excavation:

1. Some burials (most of which pertain to children) exhibit precious funerary goods: copper objects (a pin and a fine cylinder seal) in Burial 10, a necklace including a carnelian bead with the superb engraving of a feline (Burial 13). In Burial 14 remains of a fine net-woven tissue were found; due to the total petrification of the ancient fabric, it was impossible to determine whether the original, woven fibres consisted of sheep's wool or of some other tissue (e.g. linen).

2. A great amount of the Tell Karrana 3 pottery - as shown in Rova's analysis - is of high standard: it is important to underscore that it has been found not only in burials but also in the domestic area (and in the overall surface of the tell). This implies that the ancient inhabitants of Tell Karrana 3 made use of remarkably refined pottery artifacts for daily life and/or for special events and that, in any case, they did not restrict themselves to use it exclusively for funerary purposes. On the other hand, the discovery of pottery kilns testifies to a local production whose original character represents one of the outstanding features of the Karrana "transitional" cultural phase.

3. The notable technological level of Tell Karrana 3 is also confirmed by the discovery of flint cores, of which blades were made. This means that the lithic industry was executed on the site and did not rely on imports of blades from other centres.

4. The slaughter of young domestic animals for consumption indicates a certain wealth (cf. Boessneck / von den Driesch / Ziegler, p. 234).

5. The presence of copper artifacts, carnelian beads, a water snail from the Indian ocean (see p. 138, no. 9) and - last but not least - bitumen (ample traces of which have been detected in the flint implements) bear indisputable witness to the participation of the inhabitants of Tell Karrana in medium and long-distance trade.

Up to now, the sites in the Eski Mosul area which were excavated during the Saddam Dam rescue project have only been the object of preliminary, and in most cases, very brief reports. Therefore, it is hazardous to take a stand on possible parallels to the ancient Karrana settlement. On the basis of the available information to date, it would seem that an adequate parallel to the finds of Tell Karrana 3 is provided by Tell Gir Matbakh, ca. 35km north-west of Karrana, on the west bank of the Tigris. According to the very brief preliminary reports (Ball, in RESEARCHES 1987, p. 80 = Ball 1987, p. 238), the ancient site is located on top of a small but very steep mound: below a level of the Khabur ware period, it has yielded con-

siderable ceramic material pertaining to a sequence of Ninevite 5 incised, Ninevite 5 painted and Late Uruk phases - an assemblage which has been described as "surprisingly high in overall quality" (Ball in press; cf. E. Rova in this volume, p. 110). We are not told what kind of architectural structures belong to this period at Tell Gir Matbakh. In spite of this, the situation displayed there would seem to correspond well to that at Tell Karrana 3, as concerns the location and the shape of the tell, its chronological setting (apart from the fact that Tell Karrana 3 does not have any Khabur period occupation) and the outstanding quality of its "intermediate" Late Uruk - Ninevite 5 pottery horizon.

Even more interesting and revealing is the comparison with the finds of Tell al-Raqā'i, a site located in the middle Khabur region, 12km south-east of Hasseke (Curvers 1987; Curvers / Schwartz 1990; Schwartz / Curvers 1992). The surface of Raqā'i, which lies on the eastern bank of the Khabur, is no more than 0.5ha, i.e. ca. 3 times the (assumed) original surface of Tell Karrana 3 - a very small site, at any rate. The phases of occupation of Raqā'i coincide with the youngest levels of Tell Karrana and probably extended for another 200-300 years: the oldest level of Raqā'i (i.e. the complex levels 5-7) has yielded one rim sherd of a Ninevite 5 painted vessel; level 4 exhibits, among others, fragments of Ninevite 5 incised pottery, whereas in the subsequent level 3, Ninevite 5 incised and excised sherds have been detected. Level 3, which is to be placed at the end of the Ninevite 5 ceramic period in the Khabur region, is followed by level 2, whose pottery horizon corresponds to that of Leilan II and Brak Late Early Dynastic III (= Taya IX), i.e. ca 2500-2400 B.C.

Levels 4, 3 and 2 at Raqā'i have yielded various burials, many of which contain children: Some of the graves consisted of mudbrick constructions, which are, to a great extent, comparable with Burial 13 at Tell Karrana. The brick constructed burials of Raqā'i exhibit notable arrays of grave goods, mainly consisting of personal ornaments such as beads and pendants of stone, shell, bone and sometimes copper/bronze, in addition to a variety of pottery vessels (Schwartz / Curvers 1992, p. 400; cf. p. 404).

The architectural remains of Raqā'i are certainly more sophisticated than those unearthed at Karrana, yet show significant similarities. The most interesting feature is the presence of "grill-like structures of parallel walls similar to installations identified as grain storage or drying facilities elsewhere" (*ibid.*, pp. 415-416; levels 5-7). The contemporary parallels cited in Schwartz / Curvers 1992, p. 416 include the PWS of Tell Karrana 3. In contrast to Raqā'i, no apparent traces of silos have been detected at Karrana, while, on the other hand, in the Khabur site there is no evidence suggesting the existing of animal husbandry.

Attention should also be drawn to "the remarkable small amount of pottery retrieved in the excavations at Raqā'i in all levels" (*ibid.*, p. 417) - a fact which is decidedly different from that of Karrana. Vice versa, both Raqā'i and Karrana have yielded great quantities of cooking pot sherds which point to "large-scale boiling and preparation of processed cereal foods" (*ibid.*, p. 417) and - at Karrana - possibly also of meat.

As in the case of Karrana, one of the fundamental topics of discussion is "which large centers or complex political units was the complex [*scil.* of Raqā'i] attached to" (*ibid.*, p. 417). Whatever the possible explanations (*ibid.*, pp. 417-418), both situations seem structurally identical.

In sum, the archaeological evidence brought to light at Tell Karrana 3 - modest as it is - finds isolated yet significant parallels at other sites in the northern Mesopotamian area and sheds important light on the organisation of rural activities and rural household structures between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd millennia B.C., at a period in which the process of urbanization, originating in the south, rapidly expanded to a multitude of "peripheral" areas. Further research in the vast and, up to now, largely unexplored region extending from the upper reaches of the Tigris to the Khabur basin will, it is hoped, provide important clues for a reliable reconstruction of this crucial historical period.

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