

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE BISHRI REGION
— REPORT OF THE THIRTEENTH WORKING SEASON —

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The 13th working season of the Syria-Japan Archaeological Joint Mission to the Bishri Region is now in progress under the plan of survey with a duration from December 24 to December 30, 2009. The members of the joint mission from the Syrian and Japanese parties are as follows.

Syrian party: Mohamad Sarhan (Director).

Japanese party: Yasuyoshi Okada (Director), Saeko Miyashita, Naoko Fukami, Ryuichi Yoshitake and Sumiyo Tsujimura.

Before describing our activities, we would like to express our sincerest thanks to Dr. Bassam Jamous, the Director General of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, and Dr. Michel Al-Maqdissi, the Syrian Supervising Adviser for this joint mission and the Director of Archaeological Excavations and Research at the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, who made available their generous help and heart-warming cooperation. Our sincerest thanks also go to local staff at Raqqa Museum.

In this working season, the plan of our survey includes firstly the monitoring of the current condition of the site of Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali, and then the architectural investigations into the surrounding area. Particularly our major concern is about the construction of the ruins of Heraqlah, located in the western outskirt area of Raqqa, from the viewpoint of architectural comparison to our Bishri region.

Monitoring survey of the site of Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali and the architectural investigations into the surrounding area

Yasuyoshi OKADA (Professor, Kokushikan University, Tokyo)

Outline of the season’s work

The itinerary of the mission started at Damascus on December 24. On the way to Raqqa, we paid a visit first to the region of Palmyra, including an ancient dam site at Harbaqa and early Islamic fortifications of Qasr al-Heir al-Sharqi, both of which must be a proud of this country as great testimonies of ancient construction technology though not in the Bronze age. On December 26, we entered the Bishri mountain area, and then reached the site of Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali.

On December 27, according to our itinerary plan, we will undertake a preliminary architectural investigation at the site of Helaqra, of which the design and construction with mortared rubble is of our great interest not only in the excellent technology but in its mysterious character. On the same day, we are to move to the region of Aleppo and Hama. Further on December 29, we hope

to learn mud-brick masonry technique thoroughly at the site of Mishrifeh, ancient Qatna, representing the Early Bronze Age culture of Syria, parallel in the age with Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali..

Monitoring the current condition Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali

On December 26, following a visit to Qasr al-Heir al-Sharqi, we could reach Tell Ghanem al-‘Ali in the early afternoon and immediately undertook the detailed observation of excavated trenches and surrounding surface conditions. What should be noted are as follows:

- 1) Structural remains excavated in Trenches 1 and 2 so far seem to be gradually damaged under the open air condition (Fig. 1). The deep-sounding spot at the northern end of Trench 2 is well preserved, but is seemingly of danger for temporary visitors (Fig. 2).
- 2) The trench of the latest excavation on the northern slope is totally covered with a fabric sheet, and therefore appear to be preserved very well (Fig. 3).
- 3) On the surface of the tell, particularly eastern and western slopes, a lot of vestigial wall lines have appeared presumably thanks to the rainfall on the day before (Figs. 4 and 5).
- 4) In general, the tell is well maintained for preparation of further archaeological investigations including the work of our local guard.



Fig. 1 Trench 1



Fig. 2 Trench 2



Fig. 3 The latest opened trench



Fig. 4 Vestigial walls on the eastern slope



Fig. 5 Vestigial walls on the western slope

الموسم الثالث عشر من أعمال البعثة الأثرية السورية اليابانية المشتركة في منطقة البشري

فقد اقتصرنا أعمال هذا الموسم على التحضير لأعمال النشر لهذا البحث من خلال تقديم كل فريق من أعضاء البعثة تقرير عن نتائج الأبحاث والدراسات التي تمت في المنطقة خلال المواسم السابقة 0

حيث كان هناك تعاون مشترك مع المديرية العامة للآثار والمتاحف في أعمال الترجمة والنشر باللغة العربية في مجلة الرافيين 0

الشكر الجزيل لكل من ساهم في إنجاح كل المواسم السابقة من أعمال البعثة السورية اليابانية المشتركة في منطقة البشري وعلى رأسهم الدكتور بسام جاموس المدير العام للآثار والمتاحف والدكتور ميشيل مقدسي مدير التنقيب والبحث العلمي في المديرية العامة للآثار والمتاحف والمشرف المستشار لهذا البحث العلمي لما قدموه من دعم مساندة لعمل البعثة 0

احمد سلطان

مدير الجانب السوري

كاتسوهيكو اونوما

مدير الجانب الياباني