

Foreword

It is a special pleasure for me to write this preface, and not only because of the number and quality of the contributions, 21 in all, that are contained in this volume of the 5th Broadening Horizons proceedings. The greatest satisfaction – that I know the co-organizers of the conference, Katia Gavagnin, Costanza Coppini, Rocco Palermo and Francesca Simi, share with me – is due to the success that it enjoyed. In January 2016 we decided to take on the responsibility of organizing “Broadening Horizons” (BH) in Udine – but with some trepidation, since the previous edition had been held in Turin in 2011 and two subsequent opportunities (2013 and 2015) had been missed, with the result that at the time the BH series seemed “abandoned” and destined to be forgotten. However, we organizers believed that the idea of an international academic meeting aimed especially (though not only) at young/early career researchers, offering a more relaxed than usual environment to present and discuss the results of new work, was definitely a good idea that deserved to be kept alive. The previous editions (Ghent, Lyon, Barcelona and Turin) had been successful and we are indebted to the organizers and founders of the BH conferences who created the basis of the series. We also felt that BH could be further enhanced, convinced that this type of conference was essential in an academic world where harsh competition may complicate the presentation and discussion of work that in some cases offers brilliant insights into the past of human societies.

We thus took the organization of the conference as a challenge, and believe that – with the participation of 122 scholars (more than the double the number attending Turin 2011) and 104 papers presented by researchers from Europe and elsewhere, including renowned specialists – it has been a great success. This confirms the importance of the BH conferences and spotlights the positive effect of constant confrontation between young and experienced generations of archaeologists. We are convinced that this dialogue permits the former to consolidate and improve their research methods and offers the latter the stimulation of being continuously in touch and experimenting new lines of research.

A further, particular gratification is that at the time of writing, the following BH6 has been held in Berlin with an even greater number partaking (159 participants and 114 papers given) and the 7th edition has been announced in Rome. For me, the continuation of the conference together with the regular publication of the proceedings was of special importance, so I am therefore glad to know that, after Udine, the BH has been and will be organised in prestigious academic centres such as Berlin and Rome.

The present volume contains the papers of the two sessions that I followed more closely (Session 1 – The Neolithic-Chalcolithic transition in Upper Mesopotamia. Subsistence strategies, economy, society and identity; Session 2 – The Levant in the Bronze and Iron Age: crossroad or frontier between

different cultures?). Personally I enjoyed them very much and I take the opportunity to thank all the participants for the brilliant contributions that were submitted. We are particularly indebted to the two keynote speakers, M. Frangipane and A. Maeir, who agreed to come to Udine and present papers that gave clear-cut views on themes that are fundamental for Upper Mesopotamia's prehistory and the Bronze and Iron Ages in the Levant. I hope that this volume will repay them and all the participants for the time spent preparing their papers. The publication of this volume has been a long and difficult task in which I have been helped by a number of people: the former (B. Callegher) and current (F. Zanini) director of the Inter-University School of Specialization in Archaeology (SISBA), the EUT staff, in particular G. Clabot who worked painstakingly on the digital editing of the volume, Francesca Minen, Maddalena Scattini, Sara Zampa and Giulia Toniato have helped me to correct the proofs. Their assistance was invaluable. A special thank-you goes to the Scientific Committee and the colleagues who accepted to review the 21 contributions in accordance with the editorial line (double blind peer-review) that we use for the

electronic journal *West & East* and its monograph series, within which the current proceedings appear. We believe that this is the second, but by no means less crucial part of the "BH spirit", i.e. to follow the international rules of high quality research.

The organization of BH5 in Udine was possible thanks to the constant support given by my university and the economic help received from the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Authority: to all the people in my department who were involved – colleagues and those in administration –, and to the direction of the university and the Friuli Venezia Giulia International Cooperation Office I wish to express my personal thanks. I hope that the present volume will be a reward for the time and effort we put into the BH5 together.

A final thank-you to my friends and colleagues Katia, Costanza, Rocco and Francesca with whom I organised this conference. BH5 has been a great adventure that has enriched us personally – and also, I believe, will continue to bestow professional benefit.

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