



Prehistoric Fortifications in the Basalt Desert of Eastern Jordan

Researcher of the German Archaeological Institute discovers most ancient fortified settlements in Southwest Asia

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Since 2010 the Orient Department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) has been carrying out a research project in the basalt desert of Northeastern Jordan, which is funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft –DFG). In the context of this project several fortified settlements have been discovered which were built in the early to mid-4th millennium BC on volcanos in this region and are therefore among the earliest fortifications in Southwest Asia.

For a detailed investigation of these newly discovered Early Bronze Age settlement activities in this arid region, the DAI carried out several expeditions to these sites in the last two years. Surface investigations and excavations revealed not only fortification walls and simple dwelling structures, but also terraced gardens that were irrigated through sophisticated irrigation systems with run-off rainwater to enable the cultivation of grain.

Due to these discoveries a hitherto as peripherally considered region comes into the focus of the exploration of the Near Eastern civilizations of the 4th millennium BC, which to date concentrated on the cultural developments in Mesopotamia and the Southern Levant.

The 4th millennium BC is a crucial period in the history of civilization as this phase is characterized by the beginning of cultural evolutionary processes that enabled the development of the subsequent cultures and had also effects on Europe. Among these processes are the beginning of urbanisation, the evolution of artificial irrigation, mass production of commodities, long-distance trade, and finally the invention of the precursors of writing and economic administration.

For further information please refer to the project website:
<http://www.dainst.org/project/2104243>

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