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**TERQA**, modern Ashara, site located directly on the banks of the Euphrates River (34°55' N, 40°34' E). The identification of the tell was one of the very first proposed in Syrian archaeology: it was established in 1910 when Ernst Herzfeld found on the surface of the site a cuneiform tablet that related the construction of the Temple of Dagan in Terqa (E. Herzfeld, “Ḫana et Mari,” *Revue d'Assyriologie* II [1910]: 131–139). The tell itself is no more than 10 ha (25 acres); it seems certain that part of the ancient city has been lost to river erosion, possibly as much as half, though there is no way of determining this with precision. While no trace of an outer city has been found, it is likely that it existed and that it was swept away by flooding and/or covered by the alluvium. It has been traditionally assumed that the name of the region (Khana) was used in the titulary of the kings who ruled from Terqa. While this may still be the case (e.g., as it had been for the kings of Mari), it has been shown by A. H. Podany (1991–1993a) that the term occurs in texts that were not excavated at Terqa: accordingly, the connection between the so-called Khana texts and Terqa cannot be taken for granted.

The site is largely covered by a modern settlement, so that only about one fourth of the tell is available for excavation. The modern site has become the center of a large and populous *nahiya* (township), so that current references to it tend to omit the qualification of “tell,” which is found regularly in the early literature. The site is a few kilometers south of the confluence of the Khabur River with the Euphrates, and as such it controlled the traffic on the waterways, including the canals that flowed southward toward Mari in the narrow agricultural corridor called *ah Purattim* in antiquity and *zôr* today. It is also likely that Terqa was the starting point for caravans to Tadmor (Palmyra) and the Orontes River basin.

An intensive survey conducted around Terqa by Kay Simpson (1983) has produced evidence of only a handful of Bronze Age sites, although it is known from ancient texts that many existed. The likely explanation is that these settlements were abandoned before they could develop any sizable depositional accumulation. As a result, they came to be covered by the alluvium (probably 3 m deep in historical times) and are thus altogether invisible to a regular surface survey.

**History of Excavations.** The first published cuneiform document originating from Syria was a text mentioning Terqa, and it had probably been found there. Because several other tablets of the same type had come to light, and because their provenance could be linked to the site of Tell Ashara, two French philologists, François Thureau-Dangin and Paul Dhorme decided to start a trial excavation there in 1923. No tablets were found during these excavations.

In 1974, Theresa Howard-Carter secured a permit from the Syrian government on behalf of Johns Hopkins University to conduct some preliminary work at the site, which was followed by a ten-day season in 1975 under the direction of Delbert Hillers. This is considered the first season. In 1976 Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati assumed the direction of the excavations on behalf of the International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies and the University of California and California State University at Los Angeles. This was the second season and the beginning of the Joint Expedition to Terqa (which other institutions later joined). They directed the project until the tenth season, in 1984, when the field director was Daniela Buia. Beginning with the eleventh season, in 1985, Olivier Rouault became field director, and in 1989, the permit for the excavations was turned over to him; five more seasons of excavations followed. The initial long-term research strategy was to identify as many levels of the Khana period as possible and to study their relationship to earlier strata.

**Occupational History.** Because settlement in the lower levels of the *zôr* did not begin until the dawn of historical periods, it is not surprising that there should be no prehistoric levels at Terqa. The nearby site of Qraya, some 5 km (3 mi.) to the north, was settled in the late Proto-literate period and then abandoned for some time: this suggests that there was a shift in settlement from Qraya to Terqa at the beginning of the third millennium. The best evidence of early third-millennium occupation comes from the construction of the first phase of the defensive system, the inner wall, which dates to about 2900 BCE; the subsequent two phases were built about one century after each other. The city walls remained in use until the middle of the second millennium BCE, with evidence of local repairs in later periods. In areas B and J, evidence was found dating to late Early Dynastic III and even the Sargonic period. A sounding in area K proved to be the most promising for the late third millennium.

The end of the third millennium (known in the terminology of Mari as the period of the *Shakkanakus*) is attested primarily from the lower strata in area F, where an extensive administrative complex has been uncovered. [See Mari.] The building shows a stratigraphic continuity with the period of the Amorite dynasties of Mari, which is otherwise known also from several finds from later contexts. [See Amorites.] It seems likely that Terqa was never independent but was always a provincial capital subject to the kingdom of

Mari. After the fall of Mari, it is generally assumed that Terqa became the capital of the kingdom of Khana—and if not then still one of its major urban centers (Podany, 1991–1993). The major strata from this period are in area C, where excavations have revealed a city quarter that includes the Temple of Ninkarrak and a domestic residential area, including what has been called the house of Puzurum from the individual most prominent in the tablets stored in one of the rooms. In area E, remains of a large structure were found that may correspond to a public building (the palace?).

Possible architectural remains dating to the early Mitanni period were found at the top of area E, but they are very limited at best. [See Mitanni.] (Rouault [1992] seems to date all of area E to this period, but from personal observations it appears that the level in which the Mitanni tablets were found is higher in elevation and farther south than most of the structures excavated earlier.) A good case has been made by Podany (1991–1993a) for stretching the period of “Khana” kings into the sixteenth century BCE and beyond (thus bridging the so-called dark ages), though their main center was in all probability no longer at Terqa. It still seems that, with the virtual abandonment of Terqa, an effective deurbanization took place in the region of the Middle Euphrates.

There is limited evidence of a first-millennium BCE occupation—graves (especially in the trenches of area MP) and meager sherd scatters embedded in wind-blown deposits (area E). There is, however, the mention of Sirqu (a later form of the name *Terqa*) in the Assyrian annals and a Middle Assyrian stela of Tukulti-Ninurta found on the surface in 1948. However, any sizable occupation of the site seems unlikely in these later periods either at Terqa or in the region (in spite of Podany’s remarks): the few pertinent sites on the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur appear to be Middle Assyrian, and the Assyrian annals do not describe any real urban presence in the area. After a long period of abandonment, the site was reoccupied in medieval times as a specialized craft center for the manufacture of ceramics and glass objects. [See Glass.]

**Major Architectural Remains.** The city’s defensive system consisted of three solid mud-brick walls, for a total width of about 20 m. Horizontal exposure was obtained only in area B, but several sections cut through the wall in the trenches of area MP indicate that the construction found there was most probably generalized throughout the site; the projected perimeter is estimated to have been some 1,800 m long. The inner wall (chronologically the first) is 5–6 m wide, with an apron of limestone boulders along the outer face: it must have served as a complete system, against both enemies and river flooding. The second wall (9–10 m wide) was built against the first one and had a girdle of limestone boulders embedded at its base. The third wall was 4–6.5 m wide and included an open space about 2 m wide, possibly

a walkway within the defensive system. A wide moat encircled the outer wall.

An interesting feature of the administrative building in area F was a scribal installation—a place where it is presumed that a scribe would carry out his task. [See Scribes and Scribal Techniques.] A platform of baked bricks provided a clean surface on which to crouch; a jar placed next to the platform provided the supply of clay for making tablets; behind the platform was a bin that was probably used to store reference material; and baskets (like one found just outside the doorway) would have held tablets in current use. [See Writing Materials; Tablet.]

The Temple of Ninkarrak exhibits the same plan and dimensions as a temple of Kahat known from a cuneiform text. The layout of the temple follows a characteristic Mesopotamian plan, with a bent-axis approach, engaged columns, and rabbeted doorjambs. Only the base of the altar is preserved. A large service area (the circulation patterns are not well understood) was accessed through a small doorway from the long side of the large hall. The residential area on the other side of a street across from the temple shows no architectural particularities. [See Temples, *article on Mesopotamian Temples*.]

**Epigraphy and Glyptics.** Twenty-three tablets not found during regular excavations but generally known as Khana texts, and probably originating, in great part at least, at Terqa, are mostly legal contracts of various types (see Podany et al., 1991–1993). They share many characteristics of form and content (e.g., a punishment clause that calls for asphalt to be poured on the head of the transgressor). About two hundred tablets and fragments have been found in excavations. The best-known group is the small archive from Puzurum. Its stratigraphic setting is recorded in great detail: the texts had been scattered (rather than properly deposited) in a storage room with a mixture of household items. While the tablets were, for the most part, complete, their envelopes were mostly shattered into dozens of small pieces. The condition of the envelopes indicates that they had been broken before being placed in the room and thus the documents had lost any current value. Dated to about 1720 BCE, the texts are mostly contracts for the sale of land. Of the unpublished texts, the most interesting are those dated to the later periods because they expand what is known of the interaction between Terqa and outside controls, on the part of Babylon first and then the early kings of Mitanni. [See Babylon.]

The tablets found in the house of Puzurum were sealed by a number of witnesses, providing a well-dated collection of private seals in use by individuals at Terqa in about 1720 BCE. The style of the seals is characterized by the prominence of circular drill holes left as part of the pattern, the design of staffs, hats, and rosettes, in particular. The divinity is often shown seated on the left, with the resulting reversal of the action of the other figures who are shown as ap-

proaching the divinity. An Old Babylonian cylinder seal excavated in a tomb in area F identifies the seal owner as Belum.

**Artifacts and Other Finds.** Significant results have been drawn from botanical and zoological analysis. [See Paleobotany; Paleozoology.] Some cloves were found in a vessel resting on the floor of a pantry next to the storage room holding Puzurum's archive. Because cloves were grown only in the Far East, this is the first evidence for trade with that remote area. The study of animal bone remains has shown that culling patterns were not in keeping with what would be expected of full-time, specialized pastoralists, leading to the suggestion that herding practices were those of local farmers who doubled as herders, as is still the case in the area (Galvin, 1981). [See Pastoral Nomadism; Paleopathology.]

Next to the altar in the Temple of Ninkarrak, a small dog was excavated; a dog is the animal associated with this goddess, who represents good health. In a corner of this same cella, 6,637 beads were clustered tightly in what must have been a cloth bag that had completely disintegrated. The beads were of semiprecious stones, including lapis, carnelian, agate, and chalcedony. Seven Egyptian scarabs were part of this hoard.

The ceramics from the house of Puzurum and the Temple of Ninkarrak are dated by the tablets found on associated floors in the Khana period (as opposed to a proposed re-dating by Tubb [1980]). The stratified ceramic sequence from the Mari period to the Khana period in area F has been studied by Buia (1993). A clay plaque from area F came from the same mold as a plaque found at Mari.

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**TEXTILES.** [This entry surveys textile remains and the development of the technologies used to produce them. It is chronologically divided into two articles: Textiles of the Neolithic through Iron Ages and Textiles in the Classical Period. For a related discussion, see also Clothing.]

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