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Texte-Fakten-Artefakte: Beiträge zur Bedeutung der Archäologie für die neutestamentliche Forschung

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When archaeology meets text exegesis, two questions emerge: Do text scholars notice? If so, how do they go about relating one to the other? These questions have been treated extensively in recent scholarly publications. Traditionally, New Testament exegesis has been less affected by such discussions than have other text-based enterprises, exegesis of the Hebrew Bible included. This tide is definitely changing, however, and English-speaking scholarship has seen a number of fine, methodologically skilled contributions in the past two decades. The picture is a little different when it comes to German New Testament scholarship. Despite the ever-impressive quality of philological and historical-critical contributions to New Testament exegesis, German New Testament scholarship has only recently started to branch out in the untrodden grounds of the ancient material world. It is common knowledge that this situation in Germany is an outcome of the long dominance of the kerygmatic approach. This is why those fairly few recent publications on the German scholarly book market that focus on the interface between New Testament exegesis and archaeology¹ tend to lament New Testament scholarship as an “archäologiefreie Zone” (P. Pilhofer).

1. Aside from articles in scholarly journals, notable recent publications include P. Pilhofer, *Die frühen*

A new effort to map largely unknown territory has been made in the publication under review, an edited volume comprising seven articles. Max Küchler and Karl Matthias Schmidt have undertaken the effort to prepare for publication papers read at the February 2005 conference of German-speaking Catholic New Testament scholars in Fribourg, Switzerland. The contributors to this volume all strive to demonstrate the importance of archaeological research for New Testament interpretation and suggest ways to correlate archaeological and textual data. As such, this volume is meant to ardently promote the integration of archaeology with New Testament studies to an audience of (German) text scholars.

After a short introduction by the editors, which lists three reasons why archaeology is needed to provide the context for New Testament texts (“Texte müssen geerdet werden”; “Texte müssen entgrenzt werden”; “Texte müssen verortet werden”), a first article by Jürgen Zangenberg sets out to establish a methodological framework for the correlation of text and artifact. This contribution is followed by two articles (J. Zangenberg; H.-J. Fabry) that highlight the most controversial relation between text and artifact currently to be encountered in the scholarship on Hellenistic-Roman Palestine, namely, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Khirbet Qumran. While this discussion has no immediate bearing on New Testament issues, the remaining articles focus more closely and directly on aspects related to the New Testament and are designed to address the major locales relevant for New Testament exegesis: Jerusalem (M. Küchler; C. Cebulj); Galilee (W. Bösen); and Asia Minor (H.-J. Klauck).

In his methodological considerations, “Von Texten und Töpfen: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von literarischen und materiellen Relikten antiker Kulturen bei der Interpretation des Neuen Testaments,” Zangenberg describes texts and artifacts each in their way as “products of a cognitive construction of reality” that symbolically depict aspects of life and their interpretations (3). He points out that archaeology, which illuminates developments diachronically over long periods, can hardly be relevant for New Testament studies that deal with a much shorter time period than Hebrew Bible studies. Rather, New Testament scholars must be interested in archaeological research that centers on regional history, the conditions of life in a certain region at a given time

Christen und ihre Welt: Greifswalder Aufsätze 1996–2001 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); S. Alkier and J. Zangenberg, eds., *Zeichen aus Text und Stein: Studien auf dem Weg zu einer Archäologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Francke, 2003); A. Weissenrieder, F. Wendt, and P. von Gemünden, eds., *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). The Neukirchener Verlag announces C. Claußen and J. Frey, eds., *Jesus und die Archäologie Galiläas* (Neukirchen-Vluyn). See also a new textbook: K. Erlemann et al., eds., *Neues Testament und antike Kultur* (5 vols.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004–2008).

and the interaction between locales in that region. Zangenberg stresses that text exegesis and archaeology are two disciplines of equal importance; New Testament exegesis does not enjoy a special status over against other historical endeavors. Texts and artifacts first must be studied each in its own right using the appropriate methods developed for each field before they can be joined together; in other words, two monologues must precede the dialogue. Since both text and artifact studies reveal only fragmentary evidence of worlds past, scholars who try to integrate the two often must be content with data that do not yield themselves to a reconstruction of the “one past reality.” Data might even be conflicting, and scholarly hypotheses concerning what went on in the past have to accommodate such findings. In a final paragraph Zangenberg demonstrates the benefits of archaeological data for four different areas of research related to the New Testament (Samaritans; everyday religiosity; regional history of Galilee; Asia Minor).

Discussion of Khirbet Qumran occupies fully one third of the book. Both Zangenberg’s and Fabry’s articles treat that subject extensively and give a good impression of how passionate the discussion of Qumran archaeology can get. Zangenberg’s “Region oder Religion? Überlegungen zum interpretatorischen Kontext von Chirbet Qumran” restates his repeatedly published understanding of Qumran as an agricultural and industrial outpost of Jericho. For his interpretation of the site he follows two of his methodological outline’s key propositions. When defining the settlement’s purpose, he argues from the context of the greater Dead Sea region and asks how this foundation fits into the ancient regional economy, with the result of linking Qumran to the priestly-royal city of Jericho. Zangenberg refuses to derive an identification of the settlement’s purpose from the scrolls found nearby; rather, he advocates two monologues (scholarly interpretation of the scrolls and scholarly interpretation of the archaeological site) that only at a later point should be joined in dialogue. More than in earlier publications of his thesis he pays attention to a possible link between the priestly elite from Jericho and Qumran. In that he agrees with H.-J. Fabry, whom he explicitly cites.

However, turning to Fabry’s contribution, “Archäologie und Text: Versuch einer Verhältnisbestimmung am Beispiel von Chirbet Qumran,” this seems to be the only point of agreement on Qumran between the two authors. Fabry, in a rather ardent and at times pointed essay also tries to determine the relationship between the scrolls and the architectural remains. As opposed to Zangenberg, however, he reaffirms strong links between scrolls and ruins that enable him to interpret the site as a settlement established and used by the authors of the scrolls. In support of his appraisal, Fabry reviews the most common arguments advanced in favor of the consensus model. Diverging from the consensus model, however, which identifies Qumran’s inhabitants as the Essenes, Fabry follows Schiffman’s proposal favoring a priestly characterization of the Qumran group, which, given the critical attitude of many scrolls toward the Jerusalem temple, must have

been a deviant faction. Fabry pinpoints events in Judean history that might have triggered the formation of oppositional priestly groups, one of which might eventually have found a home near the Dead Sea. This latter suggestion is certainly a thought-provoking facet. Curiously, Fabry disregards most English contributions to Qumran scholarship, including a complete neglect of S. Sheridan's analysis of the so-called French collection of human remains from Qumran. Lamentable is the author's polemical style and errors resulting from this (e.g., when he characterizes the participants in the 2002 Brown University conference on Qumran archaeology as "größtenteils sonst völlig unbekannte ... 'Archäologen'" [71] and then in an accompanying footnote subsumes them under "selbsternannte 'Experten'").

Moving north from Qumran, the two following contributions focus on Jerusalem. Max Küchler's "Die hellenistisch-römischen Felsengräber im Kedrontal: Priesterlich-aristokratische Grabpracht im Angesicht des Zweiten Tempels" is a hardly noticeably revised version of chapter 10.2 in his seminal new study and travel guide to Jerusalem (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). A description of the exact location of the rock-cut tombs is followed by a discussion of the names of these structures and an overview of their history and the history of their interpretation through Crusader times. A detailed guided tour through the antiquities with numerous illustrations concludes this essay. The great merits of Küchler's extensive research on Jerusalem's material remains are of course beyond discussion. However, since his revisions in this volume of the original text published in the study guide amount to nothing worthy of mention and the accompanying pictures are actually of better print quality in the Jerusalem guide, this chapter's inclusion in the volume under review is somewhat redundant. Instead, to aid the premise of this book, one would have welcomed a comprehensive assessment of how the remains in the Kidron Valley contribute to an understanding of the priestly class in New Testament times (Zangenberg's and Fabry's *desideratum!*).

C. Cebulj follows with "Texte, Teiche, Theorien: Zum Stellenwert archäologischer Befunde für die Exegese von Joh 5." The author employs a "lokalgeschichtliche Methode" (following G. Theißen and P. Pilhofer) in his analysis of the Johannine story of the healing at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–9). He argues that the archaeological excavations of a pre-Herodian pool ensemble near Jerusalem's Church of Saint Anne attest to the Fourth Gospel's reliability vis-à-vis Palestinian, especially Jerusalemite, topography. Archaeology thus adds further color to the way in which John uses topographical details theologically in the shaping of his distinct Christology, which presumes a sharp distinction between Galilee and Jerusalem.

W. Bösen seems to echo the general concern of this book in not treating archaeology as a "Cinderella discipline" (S. Freyne) in dialogue with exegesis, when he entitles his essay

“Mehr als eine freundliche Gesprächspartnerin: Zur Bedeutung der Archäologie für die neutestamentliche Exegese.” Concentrating on Capernaum first, which receives a good measure of attention in the Gospels, then on Nazareth, which is much less documented in that body of literature, and, finally, on Galilee as a whole, an “inhaltsleere Chiffre” as far as the Gospels are concerned, Bösen demonstrates how archaeology has important information to add whether or not a locale is well-attested in written sources. While this claim is certainly appropriate, Bösen unfortunately chooses a decidedly text-dominated approach to prove his point. He allows for archaeology to fulfill a “wichtige Hilfsfunktion” (161) and asks: “Wie nun aber hilft uns hier die Archäologie, die Lücken in den Evangelien zu füllen?” (177). It is clearly the text exegete who sets the agenda of the questions to be asked and the issues to be investigated. The danger of such an approach is in a constricted perspective that focuses “on *where* Jesus walked instead looking at *how* Jesus walked by studying his message within his world as reconstructed by archaeology” (Jonathan L. Reed, *The HarperCollins Visual Guide to the New Testament* [New York: HarperCollins, 2007], 74.)

H.-J. Klauck, in a fine concluding essay to this volume entitled “Die Johannesoffenbarung und die kleinasiatische Archäologie,” draws the reader’s attention to various archaeological materials from Asia Minor that correspond to issues raised by the canonical book of Revelation. Klauck suggests a combined model of two approaches to the incorporation of archaeological data into exegetical work. One tries to illuminate “Mentalitätsgeschichte,” that is, the wider religious and cultural mindset at a given time in a given area that influences all cultural expressions. Archaeological data are one set of data that contribute to Mentalitätsgeschichte, as Klauck demonstrates in his discussion of an inscription from the theater and the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, two coins minted under Vespasian and Domitian, respectively, the *Gemma Augustea* from the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, and the Sebasteion in Pergamum. All serve to illustrate aspects of the emperor cult as it materialized in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and thus this material bears on Revelation’s allusion to the cult. The other approach pinpoints archaeological objects for immediate comparison with the literary text (“punktuellem Einzelvergleich”). While generally allowing for such comparisons, Klauck critically comments on a number of such comparisons that have been advanced in the scholarly literature on Revelation and urges caution in applying them, since the danger of naïve parallelization is immanent.

This volume lacks indices, and its editorial quality varies; for example, both articles on Qumran are flawed by a number of typing mistakes.

In sum, this book is certainly fit to advance the cause of integrating results of archaeological research into the field of New Testament studies in German-speaking

scholarship. The editors and authors are to be congratulated on that. At the same time, and rather unwittingly, the volume highlights the present breach between German- and English-speaking New Testament scholarship in this matter, the latter being long accustomed to archaeology as a natural discussion partner for exegetes. While the discipline of biblical archaeology in North America is slowly changing not only its name (to Syro-Palestinian archaeology or the like) but also its face, incorporating more and more questions and theoretical frameworks developed in anthropological archaeology, hardly any hint of such new developments is discernable in the volume under review.