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The mega-site of Seleucia on the Tigris and its territory: new perspectives of research



Seleucia on the Tigris (35 km south of nowadays Baghdad, Iraq), was founded by Seleucus I in the last decade of the 4th century BCE. It was one of the most important cities of the ancient Near East until the 2nd century CE, claimed in ancient sources as a capital comparable only with Alexandria and Rome, and labelled as al-šarruti (the city of kingship) in Akkadian records.

The mega-site extends for more than 650 hectares on the west bank of the Tigris. Its dimensions, its centrality in the ancient road system between the Mediterranean and Asia, its location between the two rivers and the confluence of the royal canal Nahr Malka, made Seleucia a pivotal crossroad of trade and communication, integrated in an extensive network of overland routes and waterways: a reference point for our understanding of cultural interaction processes in Seleucid and Parthian Mesopotamia.

In 2022 the Italian Archaeological Expedition at Seleucia (IASE), sponsored by CRAFT and UniTO, resumed the work on the field drone-based survey and DSM, geophysical investigation in selected areas, test trenches), after a break of more than thirty years.