

## Preface

In 2016–2020, the Syrians for Heritage Association provided information about bombings by fighter planes, shell and rocket impacts, illegal excavations, stone theft and antiquities theft with reports and photos on the situation in Qal‘at Sim‘an and numerous ruined sites in the northern Syrian Limestone Massif. The positive memories of many years of work in Syria were overlaid by the shock of the drastic changes in the very places I was familiar with.

The publication of my last project was accompanied by the reports on the events in Syria. It was finished in 2015 and I was able to celebrate it together with the excavation team over a meal in my favourite Italian restaurant. I then began writing down negative and positive memories – for my son Julian and as a kind of therapy for myself. I attempted to understand: What were you experiencing in the decades before 2011? Which memories do you have of conversations and situations during the last excavation campaigns in al-Andarin?

I have not drawn on the many photos and drawings of my publications in the following reports. Although they are archived in an institute of my scientific discipline, I could have made a large selection. Yet I hope that these reports are illustrative despite the few photos that I have added in the style of notes. I do not quote the Arabic place names here in the transcription that predominates in French publications, and which I also adopted in my publications. In view of the bilingual nature of my reports, I have – *nolens volens* – chosen the citation method preferred in English publications. I wish to thank Claudia Badde for the English translation of the text.

Far too many of the staff and supporters who appear in the illustrations are no longer alive. They belong to the events and memories recounted here and that is why a few plates of individuals are added after the images of places and monuments – *in memoriam*.

I would like to thank my son Julian, Renate Marzloff and Achim Arbeiter, who convinced me that it made sense to publish these reports. It was only after the events in Qal‘at Sim‘an that I realised that they could be a small contribution to forward-looking projects of SIMAT, ‘Syrians for Heritage Association’ and the ‘Syrian Heritage Archive Projekt’.

As an Archaeologist in Syria

I am grateful for the acceptance and support of my publication by Katrin Bemann and her team. The necessary steps for a publishment as an e-book were overwhelming, and yet Fedor Schlimbach mastered them – to him I owe special thanks.

Heidelberg 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022.