

Tell Beydar / Nabada

An Early Bronze Age City in the Syrian Jezirah: 10 Years of Research (1992–2002)



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with the collaboration of

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Introduction

Marc Lebeau & Antoine Suleiman

The aim of this publication (in French, English and Arabic) is to present to the public of non-specialists an overview of the current archaeological excavations at Tell Beydar.

The site of Tell Beydar is located in Upper Mesopotamia and more precisely in the Upper Syrian Jezirah, a region called “Khabur’s Triangle” (**Fig. 1**), a sort of delta without sea, formed by the tributaries of the Euphrates’ main affluents.

Upper Mesopotamia is not an alluvium land and the environment is very different from Lower Mesopotamia, the historical Land of Sumer. There artificial irrigation is a basic need for agriculture, which is developed on very large, flat surfaces, lacking of any geographical and topographical marks.

In Upper Mesopotamia the rate of the annual rainfall is high enough to allow for a rain-fed agriculture, which is practiced on a large scale in the plains extending from the Euphrates to the Tigris.

We are in the period when the Sumerian city-states flourish in the South, about one hundred years before being conquered by king Sargon of Akkad and being finally included in his empire (c. 2350 BC) (**Fig. 2**). From the chronological point of view, we are therefore slightly later than the construction of the pyramids of Gizeh, in Egypt. However, in spite of the well established contacts between Egypt and the Levant, cultural and political links between Egypt and Mesopotamia are still very few at that time.

This period also corresponds to the first golden age of Ebla, a period documented by the archives of kings Igrish-halab, Irkab-damu and Ishar-damu.

Upper Mesopotamia is not settled by a Sumerian population. It is a Semitic land, different from the South in several respects: in environment and language, as well as in culture and social organization. Up to now, no ethnic, nor cultural qualification is attested to identify its inhabitants. We might call them “Jezireans” by referring to the Arabic geographical designation.

The sites in this region have not the huge dimensions of the large cities of the South, like Uruk, Ur, Larsa, Lagash, Isin. The main sites in the North are Tell Brak, the ancient Nagar, Tell Leilan, the ancient Shehna, Tell Khuera, to be possibly identified with Abarsal in the Ebla sources, and Tell Mozan, the ancient Urkish. These sites do not exceed 100 ha in surface. However, the density of the villages and the urban settlements is considerable in the North. These urban centres control medium and small size cities, as well as a whole net of villages and agglomerations.

Tell Beydar is a rank 2 city, a medium size “crown city” of the Early Bronze age.

In Upper Mesopotamia, the first and second third of the 3rd millennium are characterized by the sequence of two different cultural horizons: the *Ninivite 5* culture (**Fig. 3-4**) and the *Metallic Ware* culture (**Fig. 5-6**).

Around 2700–2650 BC, a new culture emerges in eastern Syria, spreading from the valley of the Balikh river eastwards, up to the region of the W tributaries of the Khabur. This culture will be dominant in the area until the conquest by Sargon of Akkad. It is the first urban culture in Upper Mesopotamia and is characterized by the presence of a very typical, fine ceramic called *metallic ware*.

The people belonging to this culture built numerous sites. A dozen of these have a particular morphology, based on concentric circles (**Fig. 7**). These “crown cities” are located in a specific portion of Upper Mesopotamia, following axes that can most probably be identified as the main roads of the time (**Fig. 8**). Most of them are concentrated N of the Djebel Abd-el-Aziz and in the W part of the Khabur triangle. Tell Khuera, with its 75 ha, is the largest among these “crown cities”.

Beginning with the end of the Early Jezirah II (ca. 2650–2600 BC), the W half of Upper Mesopotamia is dominated by this cultural horizon, that can be perceived in particular in the urban settlements.

The urban civilization in the area reaches his apex in the Early Jezirah III, between 2600 and 2350 BC, a period of great prosperity for the whole region.

We have scanty information about the reason why these cities were abandoned. Besides the economic decline due to the desertification of the region, one major factor of crisis seems to be linked to the appearance of the first centralized regional power in Mesopotamia, under the reign of Sargon of Akkad.

The excavation team

The joint Syro-European archaeological mission of Tell Beydar is organized by the European Centre for Upper Mesopotamian Studies, in collaboration with the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria. The European universities being part of the Centre are, to date (september 2003), the Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München (W. Sallaberger), the Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia (L. Milano), the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Ph. Talon), the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the Universidad de Murcia (represented by R. Martín Galán). In a recent past, other universities also participated in the project: the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K. Van Lerberghe), the Wilhelms-Westfälische Universität Münster (J. Bretschneider), the Oriental Institute of Chicago (T. Wilkinson) and the Université de Lille III (D. Parayre).

The European part of the mission is directed by Marc Lebeau, the Syrian one is lead since 1995 by Antoine Suleiman (by H. Hammade in 1994). From 1992 to 2002 eleven seasons of excavation have been carried out.

Tell Beydar

Tell Beydar *stricto sensu*, i.e. Beydar I, the crown city of the 3rd millennium BC (**Fig. 9-10**), is an urban site extending on a surface of 25 ha. It is located 35km NNW of Hassake at the cross point of two major roads: the E-W road leading from the Tigris to the Euphrates, and the N-S road that leads to the Diyarbekir plain and to the region of Altinova.

The topography of the site consists of a circular city (**Fig. 11**), protected by perimetral fortifications with seven gates (**Fig. 12**). This site clearly dates to the 3rd millennium BC and was partially reoccupied in the Hellenistic period.

At the base of this circular site there is a lower city of more than 50 ha, built during the Mitannian period (**Fig. 13**), probably in the 14th century BC, which was abandoned and later rebuilt in the neo-Assyrian period (this part of the site is called Beydar II). Antoine Suleiman has also identified a third settlement, called Beydar III, about 1km S of the 3rd millennium tell. A sounding was opened there in 1996. The virgin soil has been reached and Late Chalcolithic 1 and 2 levels have been recognized (c. 4300–3700 BC).

Tell Beydar: The Early Phases

Lucio Milano, Elena Rova & Marie-Eve Sténuît

Early Jezirah IIIa phases on the Acropolis

In the years 2000 and 2001 three soundings have been made by the ECUMS team (Florence Rey, Stephanie Rost and Marie-Eve Sténuît) on the acropolis (Upper Terrace), in order to reach the EJ IIIa level under the EJ IIIb buildings: 1) under the floors of the W part of the EJ IIIb Palace – Phase 1; 2) in a large Akkadian pit located in the banquet room of the Palace; 3) under the floor of the main room of the EJ IIIb Temple A.

Sounding under the western part of the Palace – Phase 1

A very dense pattern of bricks, found immediately under the floors of three rooms belonging to Phase 1 of the EJ IIIb Palace, has revealed the presence of another official building, anterior to the EJ IIIb Palace. This ancient building is preserved only on two or three layers of bricks. Those EJ IIIa rooms had been erased at the beginning of the EJ IIIb period and filled with bricks in order to prepare a terrace on which the walls of the first phase of the Palace were founded. Two successive Early Jezirah IIIa phases have been identified, characterized by a different format of bricks (square bricks for the later EJ IIIa phase, rectangular bricks for the earlier EJ IIIa phase).

a. Early Jezirah IIIa – Later phase

After removing the filling of the foundations (2 brick layers) and the other remains of Phase 1, a triangular building appeared. Its main entrance was located in the S wall, a wall which is reinforced on its S face by five buttresses (**Fig. 14**). This entrance was preceded by an apparently open courtyard. The building seems to be subdivided in three rooms, the largest one to the E and two smaller rooms in its W part. The E large room has a trapezoidal shape and is accessible from the NE by a recessed door. The room's floor (or preparation floor) is cut by two canalisations. One of these is equipped with a clay pipe. To the W, a very small room is reached by the main entrance and, N to it, the third room leads to the N, through a plaster sided door opened in the N wall of the building.

b. Early Jezirah IIIa – Earlier phase

After removing the floor of the open space to the S of the buttressed S wall of the EJ IIIa – later phase building, a wall belonging to an earlier building was discovered, buttressed as well, but this time on its N face. This wall, oriented W/E, is cut by a door. Another wall, running N/S and perpendicular to the previous one, was also partly excavated.

Sounding in the Akkadian pit

Two EJ IIIa wide walls have appeared under the bottom of the Akkadian pit. Built of rectangular bricks, these walls may be related to the EJ IIIa earlier phase, like the two walls found more to the W under the W part of the EJ IIIb Palace – Phase 1. The study of the sections of the pit allowed to identify two rooms separated by a thinner wall and developing to the S.

Sounding under the floor of the main room of Temple A

The EJ IIIa level was reached under the main room of the EJ IIIb Temple A, under a thick terracing layer (1.50m) composed of brick and pebble layers which seems to have served as a foundation for at least the N part of Temple A. Like in the two other soundings, two successive EJ IIIa phases have been identified. The later phase consists of a small room equipped with a basin and three grinding stones *in situ*. The earlier phase, just below, is attested by imposing walls built of rectangular bricks and covered with a thick plaster.

Two fragmentary door sealings have been found in this area. Their refined iconography, very different from the Brak style, can be compared to the best productions of Central Mesopotamia.

In summary, those three soundings have revealed an EJ IIIa level (with at least two phases) on the upper terrace of the acropolis, characterised by the presence of one or several official buildings with thick, imposing walls, as well as smaller constructions and installations. The EJ IIIa dating of these levels is confirmed by the homogeneous corpus of ceramic, which is superior in quality to the ceramic of the following period.

Field I: EJ II–IIIb occupation in the North-Eastern Inner City Gate area

Excavation in Field I has been carried out since 1997 by a team of "Ca' Foscari" University of Venice (Italy) under the responsibility of L. Milano, in collaboration with E. Rova. This Field occupies the N-E slope of the 3rd millennium Upper City, just inside the Inner City Wall, where the presence of a deep gully approximately on the line of one of the major gaps in the Outer Wall suggested the presence of one of the ancient accesses to the Upper (Inner) City. Six seasons of excavations (1997–2002) resulted in the discovery and in-depth investigation of the N-E Gate and the surrounding area. The opening in the fortification wall was protected by two huge, massive brick structures projecting on its internal side (**Fig. 15**). Through this passage, a narrow street lead from the Outer City toward the mound's central plateau. This street was flanked on both sides by large complex buildings, possibly official in character, and by small open spaces occupied by graves and dumping areas. With the exception of some Hellenistic pits, excavated layers date between the EJ II/IIIa and the early EJ IIIb period. The dates obtained from a number of 14C samples from different parts of the field cluster between 2600 and 2400 BC cal. — in general agreement with those proposed on the basis of the pottery sequence. Virgin soil has not yet been reached, but various elements (notably some early pottery fragments) suggest that the area was occupied since the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC.

Up to now, the archaeological activity has been focused on two areas, a "Western Sector" and an "Eastern Sector".

a) In the W Sector, a step-trench opened in 1997 in the upper part of the slope has been progressively expanded both in N direction (to join the S limit of the Inner City Wall) and in E direction, towards the bottom of the gully, where the sherd-paved street leading toward the Outer City has been discovered.

b) In the E Sector, the course of the street has been followed in northern direction until the limit of the Inner City Gate and beyond; at the same time, the Gate structure and the buildings flanking the street on both sides have been investigated.

The Western Sector

In the W Sector, S of the limit of the Inner City Wall system, the uppermost occupation (Phases 1 and 2, dating back to the EJ IIIb period) was probably domestic in character, and consisted of parts of different rooms and open air areas equipped with different installations (fire-places, *tannurs*, and white-plastered basins). Under it, there were the remains of more substantial architecture, probably belonging to a building of some importance. The building showed a considerable continuity throughout the late EJ IIIa / early EJ IIIb period (Phases 3 and 4, with different sub-phases). It was characterised, in its E part, by three massive parallel walls (ca. 2m wide) running in E-W direction, which showed several remakings. They served at the same time as a retaining structure against the natural slope of the mound, and as the limit for the building's rooms (**Fig. 16**). Walls running N-S were thinner and less regular. The W limit for this complex is probably to be identified with a buttressed wall discovered at the W limit of the excavated area, thus giving a total width of ca. 15m for the entire building. Two parallel rows of rooms of the building have been excavated, on at least three different floor levels. The rooms had white-plastered wall faces and well preserved floors, with some *in situ* material. Some of them were provided with different installations: *tannurs*, fire-places, clay braziers, and white-plastered basins (**Fig. 17**). The discovery of a few clay sealings and, most notably, of a fragment of cuneiform tablet bearing an administrative text, in addition to that of some valuable objects (a fine stone vessel, a metal pin), make it probable that the complex had an official function (**Fig. 18**).

The S portion of the building was investigated in the course of soundings carried out in 1997–1999 (**Fig. 19**). In this area, the building proved to be founded on a large platform of massive mud-bricks, which was rebuilt at least once after cutting the building's walls almost to ground's level. The NW corner of the excavated area was occupied by a courtyard delimited to the S by a large mud-brick wall coated with a thick gypsum plaster, which also covered a bench running along the N face of the wall. To the SE of this, the remains of a stone-paved canalisation were preserved, which run under the floor's level (**Fig. 20**). The canalisation was first built during phase 4d, cutting into the earlier platform, and was rebuilt twice, with a slightly different course, during sub-phases 4c and 4b.

A doorway, delimited on its N side by a buttress showing an elaborate system of multiple white-plastered steps, gave access from the courtyard to a room located to the E. This room measured 3.70 x 2.40m.; it was completely rebuilt, between sub-phases 4d and 4c, and remained in use, after that, until the end of phase 4. It showed a well-preserved sequence of eleven different floor levels, and was equipped with various installations. A

white-plastered bench along the N wall was present throughout the room's history, while other installations – e.g. a stepped threshold in the doorway area, a low brick platform in the SE corner; a fireplace in the centre and/or along the N wall, and a small grain-filled jar – varied in number and location according to the different floor levels. From the room, beside objects pertaining to normal domestic activities, especially food preparation (grinding stones, carbonised grains, pottery fragments), come a group of about 50 clay sealing fragments and a clay tablet bearing possible numerical marks. Some of the sealings show complex miniature designs on two registers, probably to be dated to the early EJ IIIb period and possibly contemporary with the cuneiform tablet mentioned above, that seems to be earlier, on palaeographical ground, than the other texts already found at Tell Beydar.

Remains belonging to an earlier occupation phase were uncovered in the easternmost part of the sounding. They consisted of small units (probably partially open-air or covered with light material) delimited by low thin walls, equipped with a series of complex installations (multiple white-plastered basins and receptacles). These were probably used in a set of connected activities (we may suggest grinding cereals and possibly mixing the resulting flour with some liquids) on a scale that, again, seems to exceed normal domestic needs.

The Eastern sector

In the E sector of the excavation (**Fig. 21**), the system of access to the Upper City through the NE Inner City Gate located on this side of the mound was investigated. The whole area had been severely damaged by rain erosion, which caused a thick slope-wash layer to accumulate in its lowest part, and by the action of the *wadi*. This at first followed the ancient course of the street, but then deviated from it, to cut its way through the ancient gate structure. The street was followed for ca. 41m, from the point in which it climbed up the mound's slope and reduced itself to a narrow path, to a point outside of the Inner City Wall. In its S part, the street was relatively wide (ca. 1.60m) and followed a straight line, gently sloping toward the N (**Fig. 22**); it was flanked by alignments of flat-topped stones, which may have served as sidewalks. Its central part had been repeatedly plastered with layers of pottery sherds. Further N, it seemed to follow a more tortuous way, narrowing between the two sides of the massive gate structure. It then rose to give access to a small raised space, which had stone-based walls, a stone threshold and a sherd-paved floor.

The small size of this space (only 1.80 x 1m) and the presence of a heavy door, suggested by a large *in situ* door-socket (**Fig. 23**), point to a strict control over people and goods passing through the NE gate. The space lead to an irregular stairway, or ramp, made of large flat basalt stones interspersed with compact mud and pottery sherds, which descended toward the Outer City (**Fig. 24**). In the EJ IIIa period, the stone stairway was 3.40m long, and covered a difference in height of ca. 1.20m. Beyond the gate's limit, the street continued toward the N, resuming the shape of a gently sloping, rectilinear sherd-paved path. During a previous phase, which can now be firmly dated in the EJ II period, the stone stairway was at least 5m longer. When its lower part went out of use, its steps were covered with a hard filling, over which the sherd-paved street was laid, joining the upper part of the stairway.

The City Wall and the Gate structure

On both sides of the street, the Inner City Gate complex was a huge, massive structure which extended for several meters in both directions. The top of the structure appeared rather wearied and eroded. It was certainly standing for a long time, and was probably repeatedly modified and repaired. Its base has not been reached, and it predates all the street pavings excavated so far. A *terminus ante quem* for its erection is represented by the later layers and structures leaning to it, which date between the EJ II and the beginning of the EJ IIIa period.

The Gate structure was remarkably asymmetrical: the limits of the E wall were shifted of ca. 4m in N direction in comparison with those of the W wall. The latter extended for 15m in N-S direction, along the street, and for at least 7m from W to E. The E face was articulated into a series of irregular buttresses. The N face was also rather irregular, and was joined to the N by a system of glacis-like superimposed sloping layers of compacted clay and debris, retained by a series of smaller mud-brick walls. The northernmost of these walls was used, during the EJ IIIa period, as the S limit of a building flanking the continuation of the street in the Outer City area.

One room of this building could be completely excavated (**Fig. 25**): it was accessed from the N through a narrow corridor, while a second door opened to the W, into what seems to have been an open space outside of the Inner fortification wall. The room had a fine, light-plastered floor, which raised into a low bench running along its N and E walls. On its E wall, along the street, there were two niches, in which small, window-like openings were probably located. The presence by this phase of rooms joining the external side of the Inner City wall confirms the suggestion that this had already lost its original defensive function, which had been advanced to explain a similar situation encountered in Field H on the Outer City Wall.

The limits of the opposite side of the Inner City Gate wall were less clear, since the area had been heavily disturbed by the *wadi*; it is sure, however, that it extended for more than 15 x 6m. Both walls were built with a mixed technique which alternated sections of proper mud-brick walls with sections filled with *pisé* and miscellaneous debris filling layers. In the lower part of the wall, large, very fine, sandy bricks of greyish-yellowish colour were used. These were covered by layers of crumbly, reddish bricks, which probably represented a later phase in the life of the Inner City Gate structure.

The areas E and W of the street

Inside the limits of the Inner City Gate complex, the street was flanked on both sides by series of rooms and small open spaces. On the E side, two different buildings separated by a small open space were partially exposed. Almost nothing is known of the N building: only part of a room was excavated, which was accessed from the side opposite to the street. N of it, there was a 5 x 3.50m open space, which was used as a small burial ground. It contained three rectangular built graves, which are probably contemporary with the S building, since they all follow its general orientation and one of them leans to its external wall. The building was accessed from the street, at its S corner, through a series of irregular stone steps. It consisted of several rooms, including a small courtyard of irregular shape. Traces of at least two different phases of use, involving some reshaping of the building's walls, were preserved, which could be correlated to two different pavings of the street.

The layout of the area to the W of the street is more complex, and underwent significant changes in the course of time. Originally, there must have been a small open space beyond the limit of the gate wall, opposite to the one

discussed above, and roughly symmetrical to it. The area was, however, completely covered by a huge stone collapse, which was not removed during excavation, and may represent the remains of a stone structure which was leant in a later phase against the Inner City Gate wall, in order to extend it along the street and rectify its profile. Further S, a large continuous wall, probably contemporary with the gate structure, flanked the street. Beyond this wall, there seems to have been at first a building of some importance, with massive walls made of the same large, yellowish-greyish bricks which were used for the gate walls. This was later abandoned, and multiple ash and debris layers accumulated in its rooms. The area was then used as a burial ground for children graves (six of these were excavated). Still later, a number of narrower walls were built over the remains of the earlier building, leaning to the S limit of the Inner City Wall. These delimited a series of rooms whose function – in spite of the recovery of a series of floors and of some activity areas (ash lenses, etc.) – remains dubious, since they were abandoned rather quickly, while new graves were sunk in the area.

Further S, there was a large open area, which was progressively covered with multiple layers of ashes and other debris, into which mud-brick built graves were sunk (**Fig. 26**). At different times, mud-brick walls were founded on the ash layers, probably with the only aim of retaining them, since they delimited no real rooms, and were filled and covered by successive ash layers. Later still, the dumping area was reduced in size, and a series of small rooms with plastered walls and real floors were built on its E and S sides.

Conclusions

To sum up, the 1997–2002 excavations in Field I have contributed to the understanding of the general topography of the settlement, providing new data on the layout of the NE Inner City Gate and surrounding areas. The excavated layers belong to the EJ II – early EJ IIIb period; it is rather certain, however, that the topographical layout of the area was not significantly different in the later EJ IIIb phase, contemporary with the Official Complex and the other private and public buildings unearthed on the Upper City plateau.

Synchronically, the most interesting feature is the presence in this area of a highly protected, secondary access to the central plateau. It is interesting to compare it, in this respect, with the main access to the official complex located on the S, opposite side of the mound, whose impressive stone-paved stairway obviously shows quite different concerns for monumentality and ostentation. The area inside the NE Inner City Gate was characterised by series of complex buildings on both sides of a narrow street. The area was not occupied by simple domestic units, but rather by larger, more complex structures, possibly of official character, which included open-air areas in which “industrial” activities took place, and where administrative tasks were also performed. The concentration of graves in the area parallels similar finds made during the earlier campaigns in different sectors of both the Outer and the Inner City wall, thus confirming the urban walls as a favourite neighbourhood for burial grounds, and showing that the choice was not limited to the external side of the wall. Excavations in Field I have also provided fresh data about the Beydar Inner City wall, previously investigated in the neighbouring Field G. The most important discoveries here are the exceptional width, and the complex building technique of this wall, which represents a significant contribution to the study of the poorly known fortification systems of the EJ III Upper Mesopotamian cities.

From a diachronic point of view, the Field I excavations have recovered important information on the earliest history of the IIIrd millennium *Kranzhügel*. It is clear by now that the widespread EJ IIIb occupation of the upper

mound was preceded by an uninterrupted EJ IIIa sequence of layers, and still earlier by an unexpectedly substantial occupation dating back at least to the EJ II period. In particular, the early date of the Beydar fortification has been confirmed, together with its partial loss of function already by the EJ IIIa period. This remarkable change in the site's topography marks the transition from the early history of the urbanisation at Tell Beydar to its full flourishing in the EJ IIIa–EJ IIIb periods.

Field G: The Northern Stratigraphical Sounding

Field G is located on the outer side of the Inner City, in front of the N Gate (Field H) of the Outer City wall surrounding the IIIrd millennium BC settlement (**Fig. 27**). Excavation consisted of a 41m long, 4.5–3m wide, 14m deep step trench, from the top of the Inner City mound slope down to the ring-shaped depression which surrounds it. In the upper part of the sounding, which was carried out by the European team in 1993–1994, two 3rd millennium layers dating to the EJ IIIb period and characterized by domestic architecture and ash layers were found under the Seleucid-Parthian occupation (**Fig. 28**). Excavation stopped when the top of the Inner City wall was discovered (**Fig. 29**), to be resumed in 1997 by the Syrian team under the direction of Antoine Suleiman. The 1997 excavation allowed to obtain a complete sequence of the early IIIrd millennium occupation of the Upper City mound, from the EJ IIIa down to the EJ I period, under which virgin soil was encountered (**Fig. 30**). The investigated area was divided into three different sectors, from the top to the bottom of the slope.

The first section of the sounding: domestic occupation inside the Inner City Wall

In the southernmost part of Field G, a sequence of domestic buildings leaning against, and partially cutting into, the internal side of the large Inner City wall was unearthed. Five different levels could be distinguished; the latest of which belongs to the EJ IIIa, the earliest of which dates back to the EJ II period, while the levels in-between show transitional EJ II–IIIa features. Rooms had white-plastered gypsum floors, and were provided with different types of installations (fireplaces, *tannurs* and kilns) (**Fig. 31**).

The second section of the sounding: the Inner City Wall sequence

The second excavation area was located on the external side of the Inner City wall, which was 4.10m wide, with the double aim of exposing its N face, and to investigate the development of the Inner fortification system. The most important result in this respect was the discovery that the wall had gone through three successive phases of rebuilding, all of them characterized by a massive mud-brick wall doubled on the outer side by a sloping “glacis”, whose upper surface was repeatedly coated with a layer of hard clay (**Fig. 32**). While the latest wall can be attributed to the early EJ IIIa period, the second wall dates back to the EJ II period (a considerable amount of excised Ninevite 5 pottery (**Fig. 3**) was recovered from associated levels). As for the earliest wall, the presence in layers underlying it of some associated fragments of local dark-red painted wares (“Karababa-like” pottery) suggests dating its construction at the very end of the EJ I period. Under these layers, virgin soil was reached in

this area, thus allowing to date the first occupation within the EJ I period. A grave was found some 0.65m outside of the external limit of the Inner City wall (**Fig. 33**). It had been dug, probably at the time of the latest wall, into the glacis of the previous phase, and contained two Metallic Ware vessels, four bronze toggle-pins, and a necklace of beads of different colours (**Fig. 34**).

The third section of the sounding: the moat

Beyond the limit of the area described above, excavation was continued in N direction, first by a deep sounding which did not encounter any anthropic deposit, then by a narrow trench, until the depressed area which surrounds the central mound. The nature of the lowest strata encountered supports the hypothesis that this area was swampy in ancient times. In 1998, a long, narrow trench was opened to connect the central mound with the Outer City Wall. The recovery of some pottery sherds from its base proved that the depression is man-made, and was purportedly dug to serve as a moat for the defense of the settlement.

Fields H and K: Investigations on the Outer City Wall

Two different sections of the Outer City Wall of the Beydar *Kranzhügel* have been investigated so far (Fields H and K). The remains of the wall are still visible on the ground, as an annular raised area 4–7m above the surrounding plain, with a diameter of 600m (**Fig. 35**). Seven large gaps which presently cross it mark the gates of the ancient settlement, which are mentioned in the cuneiform texts discovered at the site. From the outer gates, streets following a radial pattern lead toward the Inner City mound, crossing the Inner fortification circuit at points which are presently marked by deep gullies on the central mound slope. According to the result of our investigations, the Outer City wall was built early in the site's sequence, probably at the end of the EJ I period. During the following EJ II period and later, a number of graves were dug on its sides, while in the following EJ IIIa period the wall went out of use and was partially dismantled, and small private houses and workshops were built against and partially over it.

Field H

Field H, on the E side of the NE Outer City Gate, was excavated in 1993–1994 and again in 1997 by members of the European team (**Fig. 36**). In this area, a 4.50m wide massive wall made of successive layers of clay blocks was found (**Fig. 37**). This was originally overlain by a mud-brick wall, of which however no traces could be detected, and which was probably dismantled in ancient times. On its N outer side, the wall was protected by sloping layers of hard clay, into which a number of adult and children burials were dug. Both simple pit graves (**Fig. 38**) and more complex brick-lined cist graves (**Fig. 39**) were present; burial goods generally consisted of a few ceramic vessels and ornaments (metal pins, stone, gypsum and shell beads and pendants) (**Fig. 40**). On the basis of the recovered pottery, most graves can be dated between the EJ II and the EJ IIIa periods.

During the EJ IIIa period, small domestic units and workshops were built on the internal side of the City wall, partially leaning to it, and extending from its face in S direction for at least 10m (**Fig. 41**), and partially overlying the top of the wall. These consists of small-sized rooms with tiny mud-brick walls, equipped with plastered benches, *tannurs*, storage and “industrial” installations, which showed at least three occupation phases. A few children graves were found under their floors.

Field K

Excavation in Field K, in the NW part of the Outer City wall, just E of the present road crossing the external fortification, took place in 1999 and 2000 under the responsibility of the Belgian team of the Leuven University. The excavated area is located on the inner slope of the rampart (**Fig. 42**). Under a thick mixed accumulation, a layer characterized by graves of the final EJ IIIa – earliest EJ IIIb period was encountered. One was a rather elaborate vaulted mud-brick chamber (**Fig. 43**), which contained the remains of a middle-aged male, possibly a warrior (**Fig. 44**), equipped with a decorated metal axe, a metal dagger, a pin and nine pottery vessels (**Fig. 45-46**). Beside this, an oval shaft grave containing individuals of differing age and six pottery vessels was found in the area.

The next layer contained the remains of rather poor mud-brick architecture. A further layer of domestic occupation was found, this time characterized by stone basements of mud-brick walls. Under this, what seems to be some sort of public building was found. This consisted of a single room with a plastered floor and a low bench running along the base of the walls (**Fig. 47**). The room has a stepped access on its NW side, and a deep niche was set on the wall next to it. N of the room, there was a stone-paved area equipped with two *tannurs* (**Fig. 48**). S of the room, a mud floor and a vaulted child burial were found. These structures can be dated to the early EJ IIIa period.

The City of the Early Jezirah IIIb Period

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This chapter is devoted to the excavation results concerning the 3rd millennium city of the Early Jezirah IIIb, corresponding to the Early Dynastic IIIb in S Mesopotamia. The excavation has revealed several later levels, three of them belonging to the Akkadian period, as well as traces of more ancient occupations from the Early Jezirah I to the Early Jezirah IIIa. Let us concentrate here on the city at one period, between 2500 and 2350 BC.

The topography is based on concentric circles. Starting from outside, we encounter first a fortification circle (diameter: 600m, perimeter: 2km), which clearly represents a rampart (**Fig. 11**).

Inside this perimeter and at an altimetry slightly lower than the plain, lays an empty space corresponding to the lower town. Deep soundings carried out a few years ago in this area have revealed that a wide and deep moat, dating most probably to the Early Jezirah II, surrounded the upper city. This moat was rebuilt or deepened in the Early Jezirah IIIa period. A natural and very deep filling of pure clay, in the centre of the section, suggests the presence of water on this spot for a long time.

Further inside rises an upper city, of a diameter of 400m that culminates at 20m, while at the centre of the site stands a small acropolis (diameter: 60m, height: 7.50m).

Several gates can be identified that cut both the outer perimeter and the flanks of the upper city (**Fig. 12**). A modern graveyard occupied the central acropolis and the S and E parts of the upper city. This cemetery was partially removed to allow the excavation of the levels protected by the acropolis.

The site is located along the wadi 'Awaidj (**Fig. 6**). Pedologic analysis has demonstrated that in the Bronze Age its course was regular and quite abundant. Its spring is situated in the plain, next to the Turkish town of Mardin, a city that controlled one of the main roads to SE Anatolia, the access to the rich Diyarbakir plain and to the metal ores of the Altinova region.

Seventeen excavation areas have been set up in the "crown city" (**Fig. 49**). Two of these areas, fields H and K, were set up on the N part of the outer fortifications. Thirteen fields were opened in the upper city, on and around the central acropolis; fields G and I are stratigraphic soundings on the N slope.

The tell basically illustrates the evolution of a 3rd millennium city, while its top level, in the upper city, is to be dated to the Hellenistic period. In the last centuries before our era Tell Beydar was but a large village, characterized by single-room houses, often with central pillar, and by a public building ("palace") with an economic function. Field A is devoted to the study of this Hellenistic occupation, which is presently carried out by a Spanish team.

The tell itself, as we wrote before, is protected by an outer perimeter of fortifications. A stratigraphic sounding on the N slope of the upper city has allowed us to identify an inner perimeter of fortifications as well, but this one

preceeds the period we are discussing here. The natural erosion has unfortunately destroyed the Early Jezirah IIIb inner rampart.

The Palace

The small central acropolis is 7m higher than the upper city and 27.50m higher than the plain. The presence of an acropolis is not at all a common feature of the “crown cities” of the 3rd millennium (**Fig. 50-52**).

Here, under an Hellenistic and several Akkadian levels, the excavations have brought to light a large official building of the Early Jezirah IIIb period, which can be interpreted as the Beydar “palace”. The excavation seasons carried out from 1993 to 1997 allowed to confirm this interpretation through the excavation of an entire Official Block that was probably built around 2500 BC and then partially rebuilt twice, before the beginning of the Akkadian period (**Fig. 53**).

The main function of this building seems to have been of ceremonial nature. A second storey certainly existed, which was the residence of the city ruler.

First building, ca. 2500–2475 BC (**Fig. 54**)

The first phase of the Palace, around 2500–2475 BC, is recognizable by its walls built with pale mud bricks. In this phase the palace was composed of thirteen rooms and one courtyard, while in a later period (still in the EJ IIIb) it was partially reorganized and reoccupied. A thick layer of plaster covered the floors. Despite some missing portions, due to the presence of Hellenistic and Akkadian pits, the basic structure of this building can be easily reconstructed.

This palace should have had a second storey covering more than half of its surface. Its shape is trapezoidal and its approximate dimensions are 32 x 21m, the ratio between length and width being of three to two. The main entrance to the building is located on its S façade. It consists of a small room leading, to the E, to a bathroom and to a double-flight staircase allowing to access the upper floor of the building, and, to the N, to a squarish courtyard showing arches on two sides that stand on square pillars. The presence of these square pillars is unusual in the context of contemporary palatial architecture (**Fig. 55**). Three massive buttresses reinforce the W façade of the central courtyard (**Fig. 56**). Eastwards the courtyard opens, through two arches, to a long rectangular room.

From this courtyard it was possible to access, westwards, to the main room of the building (ca. 50m²) — a room that we believe to be a reception room (**Fig. 57**). This main room, the walls of which are very well preserved, was the key point for the circulation to the W part of the Block, and the main access to a small trapezoidal room, equipped with a podium delimited by a small brick wall (**Fig. 58**). Another recessed door leads from the main room to a long corridor that originally hosted a staircase leading to the second floor, the residential part of the building.

Let us remark that the W part of the Palace, in its 1st and 2nd occupation phases, almost completely disappeared, the walls having been erased up to the first layer of bricks by the builders of the 3rd phase. The new free spaces so obtained were then raised two metres high.

The original building illustrates well the 3rd millennium tradition of Mesopotamian official architecture, characterized by the presence of central spaces surrounded by wings of smaller rooms. Despite its rather modest dimensions, the building is remarkable for the high quality of the construction and the clarity of its plan. SE of the Palace, a wide street paved with stones gives access to the entrance of the building (**Fig. 59**). This street is equipped, in its middle part, with a gutter. In its present state, the street belongs to the 3rd phase of the building, but it is certain that this monumental access existed already in the first phase. “Main Street” ran from the S gate of the upper city to the entrance of the Palace. Its upper section is flat.

Second building phase and spatial reorganization (ca. 2475–2450 BC) (Fig. 60)

The building was enlarged during the second occupation phase, still in the EJ IIIb period, by the construction of new architectural units, composed of series of two or four small rooms, E and N of the original façades (**Fig. 61**). The NE corner of the Palace at the 2nd and 3rd phase is unknown due to the natural erosion of the tell. The number of rooms is doubled: the second phase counts 26 or 27 rooms. Despite these modifications, the original plan and the first phase walls are entirely preserved. The NW staircase is however erased and transformed in a corridor giving access to the four rooms of the new NW wing.

The previous E façade is pierced by a door giving access to one of the small rooms of the E wing and the inner circulation is deeply modified. Several doors are blocked; others were cut into the mass of the ancient walls (**Fig. 62**). The pillars in the central courtyard were reinforced and, as a result, the width of the arches is reduced. The excavations also reveal that the Palace is separated from the rest of the upper city by a glacis made of pisé all along its N façade and perhaps along its E façade as well (**Fig. 63**). This glacis is most certainly a remake of an earlier glacis, dating to the first phase.

Third building phase and spatial reorganization (ca. 2450–2415 BC) (Fig. 64-65)

Deep modifications affect the structure of the building around 2450 BC. The ruler of the city — whatever the nature of his power or its degree of independence from Nagar, which was the regional capital at that time — does not seem to have neither the resources nor the liberty to order a complete reconstruction of a palace, whose walls are seriously weakened or damaged. Therefore, he reoccupies the intact part of the building (the E half of the original palace), keeping the original floor level. The surface of the courtyard is reduced by the construction of three small annexes (**Fig. 66**). In the W half of the palace, where the walls of the first phase, made of pale mud bricks, are still preserved but weakened, the walls are erased and the spaces are filled in with regular layers of bricks 2m high. On top of this filling, red mud brick walls are built, either on top of the erased walls of the first phase, or slightly shifted (**Fig. 67**). All these modifications or reconstructions are made with very clayish red mud bricks of poor quality and seem to have been hastily made. The construction is rough and hidden by a thick white plaster. The quality of the architecture is considerably lower than in the first phase. The general planning is less readable, even if the function of the rooms in the central part of the building remains similar. One can notice

however the presence of some interesting installations, like a toilet built on top of an 18m deep sewer made of half jars embedded the ones into the others (**Fig. 68**); and a domestic canalisation that evacuates the rain waters from the central courtyard (**Fig. 69**). One may also remark the existence, in the SE corner of the block, of a very nice mud brick staircase leading to the second floor, which is a refection of earlier staircases (**Fig. 70**). The conservation of the walls is rather exceptional, some doors being preserved on their complete height.

Twenty tablets have been found in the Palace, in an archaeological context datable of the 3rd phase of occupation of the Early Jezirah IIIb building. Sixteen administrative tablets were discovered in 1996 in a small room of the N wing of the building.

To conclude this short analysis of the building, let us come back shortly on the original plan, most probably conceived around 2500–2475 BC (**Fig. 54**). The basic plan of the first phase is centred on a sequence of three main central spaces: the “pillar courtyard” and two rooms, one of which is equipped with a plastered podium on the floor. Service rooms surround those three spaces. The sequence of a courtyard and of two elongated spaces is one of the main features of the Mesopotamian palatial architecture, from the Amorite period on, around 2000 BC (**Fig. 71**). These reception suites are composed of a courtyard, often very wide, and of a first rectangular room followed by a second one that seems, in most cases, to correspond to the “throne room”. The official blocks are obviously invested with a ceremonial function. They constitute the core of the palatial complex. The other official blocks known so far are all later than the Early Dynastic III. The most ancient palaces known in southern Mesopotamia, like the palaces of Kish or Eridu, for instance, do not present such an architectural sequence. The most ancient plan known to date, characterized by such an official block, is probably the one corresponding to the ancient phase of the building called “Northern Palace” at Tell Asmar, dating, on the excavators opinion, to the Akkadian period. The plan of the 1st phase – EJ IIIb building of Tell Beydar is remarkably close to it.

It is thus possible that the Tell Beydar building represents one of the earliest palaces of this type, dating back to the Early Jezirah IIIb period, that is, to the Early Dynastic IIIb, with a suite of reception rooms composed of one courtyard and two central spaces.

Temples

The site is built on terraces up to the centre of the acropolis. The progression of these terraces is mild in the N half of the upper city plateau and sharper in the S part of it (**Fig. 72**). Several buildings are built on the upper terrace, in the centre of the upper city, the main one being the palace. On this same terrace, leaning to the S side of the palace, stands an imposing building, Temple A with its annex consisting of a series of storerooms. Towards the SE, the palace is flanked by another rectangular building consisting of a sequence of four rooms, the function of which is uncertain. It may be an administrative building, a kind of warehouse where the goods were checked and registered. Along the W side of the Palace, stands another building whose function is to be ascertained as well (**Fig. 73**).

S of this upper terrace, a building faces Temple A. It is much damaged by the Akkadian restructuring and by Hellenistic conical pits. It consists of a series of storerooms, associated to Temple A and separated from it by a small street equipped, lengthwise, by a large stone canalisation.

More to the S and onto an intermediary terrace (about 2m lower than the level of the upper terrace), a series of buildings are located on the same axis, from W to E: a sort of bakery consisting of a small grinding workshop and two rooms with domestic ovens, followed by two more temples, Temple B and Temple C (**Fig. 74**). Eastwards, on the other side of the street connecting the S gate to the entrance room of the Palace, stands Temple D. On this same terrace and facing part of Temple B and the S façade of Temple C, a long building, divided in five sections separated by common walls, seems to constitute a series of workshops in close relation with the aforementioned temples. This building has been fired up and has given a considerable inventory of complete ceramics, a majority of which are storage jars. The street that separates these workshops from Temples B and C is narrowed at two different spots by what were probably checkpoints. The passage to this intermediary terrace is marked in the main street by a monumental basalt stairway.

The four remarkable buildings that we identify as temples share many common points (**Fig. 72, Fig. 75-77**). First they are all accessible through a recessed door and by a staircase, either made of stone or of baked bricks (**Fig. 78-79**). In the case of two of them, low walls border this entrance staircase. Then the outer space close to the entrance of these buildings is emphasized either by a free space, a kind of square (in front of Temple A), either by an enlargement of the stone-paved street (in front of Temples B, C and D). The space preceding the access to these buildings are by these means underlined and amplified. Two of the temples include an entrance room paved with baked bricks arranged in a herringbone pattern (**Fig. 80-81**) and a narrow, long rectangular passageway precedes this paved room.

The three buildings which have been fully excavated have two (or more) bathrooms each. These bathrooms are equipped with toilets, the benches of which are in most cases delimited by a screen wall.

The central space is invariably characterized by following elements: a high mud-brick block applied against the inner face of one of the walls, decorated with a series of niches and recesses, a low plastered bench running at the base of the decorated block and a large low podium on the floor at the left side of the mud-brick block (**Fig. 82-84**). We do not know if the block was reaching the ceiling of the room. At the best preserved point, it reaches about 2.10m, a height comparable to the height of the wall against which it was standing. No upper surface has been observed. The height of this block does not allow to identify it as an altar, even if its decoration could lead us to think about it. Its orientation is not constant: it is placed to the N in Temples B and C, to the E in Temple A and to the W in Temple D. However it is always located to the right when one enters into the central space from the entrance room and it is visible only after the door has been passed. In order to reach it, a change of direction is needed. This fact cannot be fortuitous. In all cases, simple or double recessed doors or passages underline the access to the central space (**Fig. 85**).

The central space gives access to two rooms, one of which is a bathroom, located in the part of the building that is the most distant from the entrance. The second room accessible from the central space is the *cella*.

Temple C has two outer façades decorated with niches and recesses (10 niches for the S façade, 2 for the E façade) (**Fig. 86**). The S façade of Temple B is ornated with one niche only. The outer face of the W façade of Temple D is ornated with deeper niches. On the other hand, none of the Temple A façades seem to have included

niches. It must be noted however that the S façade is preserved on a very small height, which makes it impossible to detect any niches that did not reach the base of the wall.

The walls of these buildings are made out of bricks light orange in colour; they have identical thickness and dimensions. The façades are generally covered with the same kind of plastering: a rather solid white chalk layer covered by a thin orange soil plaster.

Moreover, a variety of other equipments or installations, either on the floor or at the base of the walls, are either identical, or very similar in each of the temples. They can be described as follows:

- A large plastered basin is installed in the NW corner of the ceiled room paved with baked bricks in Temples B and C (**Fig. 79-80**).

- Bathrooms of all temples are equipped with benched toilets provided with a screen wall (except for Temple A) (**Fig. 87-89**). These equipments have in all cases a double drain system: a vertical one, consisting of a very deep pit equipped with a series of jars embedded the ones into the others, and an sub-horizontal one, slightly sloping, that runs through a step at the base of the bench and is connected to the vertical drain. This system allows for the evacuation of water coming from the ablutions that could have been accumulated in the bathroom.

- In addition to these benched toilets it is worthwhile to notice the presence of large open jars embedded in pits dug in the floor, which it is tempting to identify as shower basins. An almost cylindrical ceramic container has been found smashed on the floor, in one of these bathrooms. It was pierced near the base by a small hole, in which a clay stopper was still inserted (**Fig. 90**). These bathrooms are all accessible by one door only, which could be closed from the inside, as attested by the location of the door sockets.

- The presence of two bathrooms in a temple is an unique and surprising feature at Tell Beydar. Should we consider the first bathroom as a “semi-public” one, accessible from the paved room, at the disposal of the visitors, and the second bathroom, a “private one”, exclusively reserved for the personnel, the access to which was only possible through the central space? No difference appears between both rooms and the quality of the equipments is similar.

- Another room accessible from the central space, the *cella* of Temples A, B and C, is equipped with an installation that could have served as a stand or the base of a platform (**Fig. 91**).

- All the temples are equipped with baked brick canalisations that allow to evacuate either the waste waters from the bathrooms (in case the above mentioned small canalisation connected to the vertical drain would not suffice), or the excess of water used in the entrance paved rooms (**Fig. 80**).

- Except for the paved baked brick rooms, all the floors were covered with a white plaster. In some of the bathrooms, this plaster covers a baked brick paving.

- Only Temple A seems to have had an upper floor, accessible through a double-flight staircase (**Fig. 92**). The existence of this staircase, which starts N of the entrance room, can be inferred from the plan of the building. The steps have been destroyed during the reoccupation of the building at the Akkadian time. In Temple B, however, some steps belonging to a mud brick stairway have been preserved, but in this case it did not lead to the roof of the building or to a second storey. In fact, neither the staircase is long enough for this purpose, nor is its range enough for a second flight. It is quite possible that the function of the staircase was that of giving access to the upper

terrace of the site. One room of Temple C was probably equipped with a double-flight staircase leading to the same terrace, but the bad state of preservation of the walls in this area does not allow for any sure interpretation.

The plans of the four temples excavated so far at Tell Beydar seem, at a first sight, to belong to a new morphological type, but this impression is to be slightly corrected. The plan of these sanctuaries is to be compared with the most frequent type of plan adopted in Mari and also widely attested in the Diyala valley, associating a central space to a *cella*. An *ante-cella* is also often present in the Diyala sanctuaries, as well as in Tell Brak. The type of floor in the entrance rooms of the four temples and in the Temple A courtyard, characterised by a baked brick herringbone pattern, seems to be a trade mark of the Nagar Kingdom, as we find it in Brak as well as in Beydar. Some elements of the monocellular Syrian temples with pseudo-antes (Halawa: Tell B; Hariri/Mari: Temple of Dagan of the 3rd millennium BC, Temple of Ninhursag) seem to be present also at Tell Beydar, as for instance the two small low walls on each side of the entrance stairways of Temples A and B and the general arrangement of the entrance room in Temple A. The presence of two bathrooms, equipped with benched toilets, seems to be a characteristic of the Beydar buildings, the presence a second bathroom reducing the dimensions of the *cella*.

Storerooms and workshops

Most of the Beydar temples are built in front of less monumental buildings, the function of which is most probably complementary. These are storerooms and workshops related to the temples (**Fig. 72, Fig. 74**).

A street equipped with a canalisation separates Temple A from a rectangular mud brick building of at least seven rooms. Its dimensions are 19.70 x 9m. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of rooms, and this for two reasons. The first one is the bad state of conservation of this area, heavily damaged by a number of Hellenistic pits. The second reason is that portions of only two floors have been preserved. The other floors have been either completely destroyed by later perturbations, or they are not detectable anymore. As a consequence, the plan proposed here is at the same time the plan of the foundations and, even if only partially, the plan of the elevation (e.g. the entrance room with its baked brick floor). The plan shows a juxtaposition of elongated rectangular rooms, sometimes divided in two. This subdivision may be the rule, but this is far from being sure. It could even represent the mere grill structure of the foundation system. The E limit of this block of storerooms leans to Main Street. It must be noted that at the W limit of the building, in front of Temple A, is an outer free space. The S wall of this series of storerooms stands on a wider wall providing the limit of the upper terrace of the acropolis. It lounges the N face of the N wall of Temple C.

This building, going back to the last phase of the Early Jezirah IIIb, covers a more ancient and very damaged one, which has a different plan and dates to an earlier Early Jezirah IIIb phase.

Parallel to the S façade of Temple C and to part of the façade of Temple B, on the other side of a stone street, stands a long rectangular mud brick building (**Fig. 93**). It is a vast complex of at least sixteen rooms (fourteen

rooms at least and two corridors), built as a whole but divided into five sectors. In spite of the many damages occurred in this area, the general plan is however readable.

The maximum length is 33.25m and the maximum width is only 6.25m. This long building had suffered from a violent fire, either of an accidental nature at the end of the EJ IIIb, or of an intentional one, at the arrival of the new settlers of the city at the beginning of the Akkadian period, i.e., at the beginning of the EJ IVa. Contrary to the floors of the storerooms facing Temple A that contained almost no material, the floors of the building in front of Temples B and C revealed a vast ceramic inventory with a number of big storage jars (**Fig. 94**): hence the possibility that this complex building represented a series of workshops tightly associated with Temples B and C, testifying an intense economic activity. From the large number of various installations on the floors or along the walls, it may be deduced that this economic activity consisted probably in the processing of some materials or food products.

There are two accesses to the building on its N façade: two doors allow, from the street, to reach stone floor corridors that were most probably not ceiled (**Fig. 95**). These corridors distribute the circulation inside the building. The five sectors have a comparable plan: a group of three rooms with — in two occasions — the stone floor corridor.

Bakery

We have already mentioned the presence of a bakery close to the temple sector. This bakery consists of three rooms (**Fig. 72**). One of them was devoted to the grinding of cereals, which was practiced on special tables where basalt grinding slabs were placed (**Fig. 96**). The floor was divided into two compartments, a detail that attests for a control of the production. This room was situated at a higher level than the two others, which were equipped with large ovens (**Fig. 97**).

Main Street

Main Street connected, in a S-N axis, the S gate of the upper city to the Palace entrance. Its straight course crosses the town and leads up to the central terraces of the city. Close to the Palace entrance, its upper section is flat and equipped with a canalisation (**Fig. 98**). Towards the S it is continued by two small baked brick staircases that allow to cross a checkpoint sector. Further on, it becomes a monumental stairway made of large basalt steps (**Fig. 99**). The base of this staircase leads to a small stone-paved area opening on Temples C and D. On its continuation towards the south, Main Street crosses a second checkpoint and joins another basalt staircase ending with another area paved with baked bricks (**Fig. 100**).

Granary

Field E was opened in the E part of the tell, close of the steep gully corresponding to one of the ancient ways leading to the upper city. The top of the walls of a large 3rd millennium building appeared under a thick Hellenistic level.

One deals with an official building 26m long and 7.50m wide that was, at the end of its existence, purposely filled in with mud brick layers (**Fig. 101**). The building, damaged by several conical Hellenistic pits, is much elongated and consists of a sequence of four square rooms of identical size: 5 x 5m. The entrance is situated to the W, i. e., towards the inner city. These four rooms are interconnected through monumental vaulted openings (**Fig. 102**). They are rather well preserved, even if the elevation is not complete. The gates are 2.50m wide at the base. They are located in the middle of the walls that separate the rooms from each other and are arranged on the same axis, which is rather rare in the large-scale Mesopotamian architecture. The floor was reached. It slopes down to the rear part of the building (**Fig. 103**). An Early Jezirah IIIb private house was discovered along the rear wall, characterised by thin walls and by the small size of its rooms.

The function of the building remained enigmatic for a long time. The dig of 1996 gave us finally a clue for a possible interpretation (**Fig. 104**). In fact, the excavation of the foundation level revealed a grill plan in the first two rooms, that were made for allowing air circulation under the floor (**Fig. 105**). This grill plan is replaced in the next two rooms by a large terrace in which trenches were dug following an axis different from that of the building (**Fig. 106**). As a matter of fact, small walls arranged in a grill plan are often linked to cereal storage. The hypothesis of a granary, already suggested by one of the epigraphers of the team but without any proof, seemed more and more probable, even if we have not found any traces of grains in the building, all the floors having been carefully cleaned before the filling of the rooms.

Sheepfolds

Northwards and eastwards, the Palace is separated from the rest of the upper city by a glacis (**Fig. 107**). At the base of this glacis, to the N, stands a building of a peculiar shape. This building consists of large rectangular rooms grouped around an open space crossed by two small stone-paved streets and hosting small workshops (**Fig. 51-52**). These rooms are accessible only by the open space. The shape of the building is a sort of crescent formed by elongated rooms of large dimensions and rather thin walls (**Fig. 108**). The rooms have no equipment of any kind and the floor is rough, made of compacted earth. The large rooms, one of which had a curved plan, open all on a small street crowded with small domestic areas bordered by low walls (**Fig. 109**). Some of these spaces include ovens. The function of these rooms remained problematic until the presence of many small round imprints on the floor was noticed. These imprints were compared with those made by sheeps and goats in the modern village of Beydar in a rainy day, before and after drying up. This leads us to interpret this huge building as sheepfolds, which

had been located at the base of the glacis of the upper city, close to the Palace, and which were probably controlled by the central administration.

A few tablets and a good number of bullae with short inscriptions and seal impressions were discovered in this field in 1999 (**Fig. 110**). This discovery allows us to better understand the functioning of the administration of the city (**Fig. 111**). These documents were most probably discarded pieces, thrown away from the Official Block. They document several handicraft activities, one of them being wool processing.

Dwellings

Several fields have been set up in order to locate and study the private house area of the city. It is the case of fields P and Q. Recently opened, their results are still too fragmentary to be commented here. N of the stables, Field B allowed us, from the very beginning of the excavations, to investigate a private quarter, consisting of houses of various sizes, in most cases arranged according to a specific cadastral plan. This private quarter is settled on both sides of a sloping stone-paved street equipped with a canalisation (**Fig. 112**). The dwelling pattern is very close to the one attested in other contemporary sites of the region, i. e., very concentrated groups of houses, forming a compact urban texture, well equipped with stone canalisations. The partial plans of six or seven houses and one complete building have been reconstructed so far.

A group of 141 3rd millennium cuneiform tablets was discovered in 1993 and 1994, under the original floor of a three-room building (**Fig. 113**). The archaeological context and the ceramic context in particular are very clear: Early Jezirah IIIb. Recent C14 analyses suggest a date around 2450–2400 BC for the whole corpus. These documents are contemporary with the tablets found in the Palace and therefore date back to the last occupation phase of the Early Jezirah IIIb Palace (**Fig. 114-115**).

The impact of this discovery was so remarkable that it brought us to organise, a few years later, an exhibition about Syria and the origins of writing. Written documents continue to be found at Tell Beydar: every new season gives us a set of tablets, fragments of tablets, bullae and tags. The total number of inscribed documents from the site amounts to 216 and they are the most ancient written documents found in Syria, contemporary or slightly earlier than those from Ebla. Our archive dates to the time of kings Iblul-il of Mari, Igrish-halab of Ebla and Marai-il of Nagar (**Fig. 116-122**).

It is in Beydar that cuneiform presargonic tablets were found for the first time in NE Syria, at this crossroad of trade routes that was indeed the “Khabur triangle”.

Of course, Tell Beydar did not play a primary role in the transmission of cultural elements from Central Mesopotamia to Syria. However it must be admitted that the discovery of these tablets confirms the importance of the region at this period. It was certainly not a cultural desert. Writing, as well as the administrative systems that we know thanks to the Ebla, Mari, Fara and Abu Salabikh tablets, were also spread in the North. We have a sort of “missing link” between Sumer and Ebla.

The tablets of Tell Beydar are difficult to interpret. We know that they are administrative texts, lists of personnel, as well as accounts of animals, oxens and donkeys, to which rations are distributed. They represent the range of activity of the central administration.

Early Jezirah IIIb objects

Besides the pottery, the objects found at Tell Beydar are relatively few. Among them we find terracotta figurines featuring human figures, mostly female (**Fig. 123-126**), animals (**Fig. 127-129**), chariot models or miniature chars (**Fig. 130**), metal objects, usually weapons or toggle pins (**Fig. 131-134**), beads, necklaces made of stones, mother-of-pearl or baked clay, a few amulets figuring animals, leads of hematite (**Fig. 135**), moulds for metallic objects, some plaster or gypsum objects (**Fig. 136-138**).

Ceramic

Ceramic is by far the most common category of objects found at Tell Beydar. Tens of thousands of common sherds and hundreds of complete vases, patiently restored, drawn and studied, allow us to recognise the pottery used at different periods and to date the archaeological levels encountered during the excavation. The common unpainted ceramic constitutes the most important part of the inventory. Other categories of pottery however appear in a smaller quantity: cooking ware, fine ceramic, storage ceramic, “metallic” ware, “Ninivite 5” ware, “combed wash” ware, “bichrome Jezirah” stands. A few examples of imported ceramic give us very useful information about the cultural and commercial exchanges between the different regions of Upper Mesopotamia (**Fig. 139-141**).

Glyptic

The presargonic glyptic from Tell Beydar deserves a special attention. The Early Jezirah dwellings have provided a few cylinder seals. The style is geometric or somehow naturalistic (**Fig. 142-143**). On the other hand, a more elaborated glyptic is documented by a large amount of sealings or fragments of sealings mostly coming from doors, which belong to palace officials (**Fig. 144-145**). Some of them have been found in the granary filling, but the vast majority come from floors or from a gap between two walls of the Palace and are to be dated from the 3rd phase of occupation of this building. These sealings — no cylinder seal has been found in the Palace so far — speak in favor of a very strict control of the inner circulation inside the official building. Most of them, indeed, have been found near door sockets. Their iconography is refined. The style is elegant, sometimes miniaturist. Scenes are often arranged in several registers and show many features typical of N Mesopotamia (**Fig. 146**). The

most frequent themes are banquets, animal combats, and contests between animals and humans. A large number of them represents chariots or wagons pulled by equids, sometimes in combination with the other themes just mentioned. Let us notice the presence of the Boat-god and of monsters so far unknown in the repertoire of S Mesopotamia, like a variant of Anzu — the lion-head eagle — featured at Tell Beydar with a human chest. One can also observe a particular taste for animal head friezes, lions or human headed bulls (**Fig. 147**). Some elaborated scenes go even further and give us a representation of myths and rituals still to be interpreted, like the beautiful sealing showing a combat between enemies with the intervention of chariots and in presence of a sort of procession centred on a triangular object from which three human torsos emerge (**Fig. 148-150**).

Generally speaking, the glyptic from Tell Beydar is almost identical to the one of Tell Brak, probably the ancient Nagar, which is not surprising since we know from the texts that Beydar fell under the control of Nagar around 2450–2400 BC (**Fig. 151**). In that case are we dealing here with an original glyptic from Tell Beydar or rather with a glyptic from Nagar, used by officials either appointed, or sent by the capital city? Also, when we mention a Palace at the time of the 3rd phase of its occupation, is it still a Palace, or rather the residence of a governor who would have occupied, after some transformations, the Palace of the Lord of a city formerly independent?

Environmental program

A research project on the ancient environment of Tell Beydar was started in 1995, to study the surrounding region through the analysis of flora and fauna remains. Karel Van Lerberghe and Lucio Milano have taken in charge the coordination of this project and several European specialists from Belgium, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have been so far involved in it. Ongoing activities take advantage from the cooperation with other archaeological missions working in the Jezirah. Tony Wilkinson, from the Oriental Institute of Chicago, carried out a few years ago an archaeological survey of the region, in collaboration with cartographers from the University of Ghent (**Fig. 152**). An archeometric and technological program were also initiated for the study of metals and ceramic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the excavations of Tell Beydar illustrate the importance of Upper Mesopotamia in the diffusion of the 3rd millennium urban culture. These results should be added to what we already know on the subject from other excavations, such as Tell Brak, Tell Leilan, Tell Mozan and Tell Khuera, not to mention the huge amount of new data from Mari, Terqa and the numerous salvage excavations on the Euphrates and the Khabur (**Fig. 1**).

That archaeological concentration on the Early Bronze settlements in Upper Mesopotamia demonstrates the significant role assigned to this region, not only for the study of economy and trade, but also for the transmission of cultural trends and the creation of original concepts.

If, on the one hand, Tell Beydar represents the 3rd millennium most important urban centre of the W part of the “Khabur Triangle”, on the other hand its size is not comparable to that of the most important cities of the region, to the E (Tell Brak/Nagar, Tell Mozan/Urkish, Tell Leilan/Shehna) and to the W (Tell Khuera).

The only real metropolis of Upper Mesopotamia is Mari, extending on 200 ha at the Early Dynastic time. This is the only city, the dimensions of which may be compared to the large centres of central and S Babylonia. Compared to it, sites such as Tell Brak, Tell Mozan, Tell Leilan and Tell Khuera look like important regional powers. Compared to these cities, Tell Beydar seems a rather modest settlement in the Early Dynastic period, with its 25 ha and only the upper city densely inhabited. Like Tell el-Hawa and Hammam el-Turkman, Tell Beydar is a medium size urban centre, of a sub-regional scale, a caravan station dominating on a district consisting of villages, hamlets and rural communities.

May we go further? The importance of equids is apparent in the texts of Tell Beydar, where several species of *anshe* (literally “donkey”) are named. It is also well known that these equids were highly appreciated at Ebla. The god Shamagan, master of the steppe animals, is attested several times. It seems that a sanctuary was dedicated to him. The lord of Nagar comes to Beydar to accomplish sacrifices in his honour. One of the months of the calendar bears also his name. The god Shamagan is presumably one of the main gods worshipped at Tell Beydar.

The mention of professional cartwrights at Tell Beydar and the abundance of chariots and wagons representations, either covered or not, in the local glyptic, as well as the frequent mention of the visits paid by the *en* —i.e., the Lord of Nagar— at Tell Beydar: all these elements suggest that the site had an important function as caravan trade station in an area that was ideal for equid breeding, and at a time very close to the beginning of the horse domestication.

A mixed economy based on the control of small rural centres and on the breeding of particular equid species, a solid position on an important commercial road, and the existence of specialized professions are the main features of an Early Dynastic city of the Syrian Jezirah, which was inhabited by a population that we may estimate to 2000 to 3000 residents.

Walther Sallaberger, one of the epigraphers of our team, identified the name of the city a few years ago: Tell Beydar would be the ancient Nabada. An external reference goes in the sense of this identification. A text from Ebla, published by Alfonso Archi, reckons the names of the cities belonging to the kingdom of Nagar. It mentions some of the most important settlements, i. e., Nagar (Tell Brak), Taidum (probably Tell el-Hamidiye), Kakkaban (a place the name of which was transformed in Kawkab and indicates a city close to the volcano near Hassake) and Nabatium. Nabatium would have had the same status as the cities of Taidum and Kakkaban, most certainly the status of an administrative centre depending on the capital Nagar. It is very tempting to see in Nabatium the Eblaic equivalent of the word Nabada, used in the Beydar texts.

This city was flourishing and probably independent around 2500 BC, then it fell under the control of Nagar at the end of the EJ IIIb, while its economy did not apparently undergo important changes. Around 2350 BC, during the reign of Sargon, Tell Beydar was controlled by the Akkadians and that was the beginning of its rapid fall. Its size diminishes considerably, becoming less of 1 ha. Only one temple is reoccupied, the upper Temple (**Fig. 153-154**). The Palace is abandoned. Temple D is transformed in a residence for the new ruler — a military chief,

according to its grave that we had the chance to discover. This grave consisted of several mud-brick chambers, built through two large pits cutting the floor of the central space in Temple A. In one of these chambers were found the remains of the warrior, surrounded by his toilet tools, his weapons, bronze vessels and a large number of ceramics (**Fig. 155-157**).

Less than one century later, the upper Temple is completely rebuilt, following a fine rectangular plan (**Fig. 158-159**). We are probably at the time of Naram-Sin. Still later, around 2100 BC, a small square temple still survives on top of the acropolis, last relict of a long sequence of sanctuaries, the city all around having completely disappeared (**Fig. 161-162**).

The Third Millennium Cuneiform Texts from Tell Beydar

Walther Sallaberger

The presence of written documents separates history from pre-history. Written sources provide information on the language, the society and economy or the history of a culture. Therefore the sensational discovery of cuneiform tablets in Tell Beydar in 1993 opened a new window into the history of the ancient Near East, and new texts could since then be added almost every excavation season. Today (2003) 216 cuneiform texts are known from this site.

Before 1993, only a handful of third millennium texts were known from the Syrian Jezirah. But in the past decades, archaeological excavations had revealed a fascinating urban culture of the third millennium BC in this region of N Mesopotamia, characterized by a dense population which was not reached until the 20th century AD. The large mounds, partly in the characteristic form of *Kranzhügel*, disclosed city walls and gates, large public buildings like palaces and temples, storage facilities and living quarters. This urban culture experienced a sudden decline at the end of the Early Jezirah III period, at about the time of the rise of Sargon of Akkade (ca. 2300 BC). The few textual documents already known from the Jezirah from Tell Brak, Tell Mozan and Chagar Bazar came mostly from this later period after the decline of the early urban culture. Before the 1990s, the written history of the Khabur region had started with the military campaigns of the kings of Akkade, Sargon and especially Naram-Sin, founder of a fort at Tell Brak. The texts from Tell Beydar, however, belong precisely to the last phase of the flourishing urban culture before the decline, which is designated as Early Jezirah IIIb and which corresponds to the Pre-Sargonic period in S Mesopotamia (ca. 24th century BC). The information provided by the texts found since 1993 makes Tell Beydar a paradigmatic case for other third millennium sites of the N Jezirah and especially the Khabur region. Therefore with the Tell Beydar texts a new chapter has been added to the history of ancient Mesopotamia.

Before investigating the information provided by the texts, we will first give a description of the writing. Cuneiform texts are written on clay tablets, the single wedges are impressed with a stylus into the soft clay. At the time of the Beydar tablets, a sharp-edged stylus is used which produces the fine and elegant writing typical for this early period. A similar style of script can be observed in S Mesopotamia or in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Mari or the very earliest texts from Ebla/Tell Mardikh; but the overwhelming majority of the Ebla texts was written with a slightly broader stylus. The form and style of the cuneiform signs allows a quite precise dating of the texts in the time before the rise of Sargon of Akkade. As no unequivocal historical data are mentioned by our texts, this is the most important source for determining the date of the texts.

The cuneiform signs consist of a combination of wedges which are ultimately derived from pictographic representations. At the time of the Beydar tablets, the pictographic origin is not visible anymore, but the sign forms are still quite complex, composed of horizontal, vertical and oblique wedges, differing in scale from more pronounced, heavily impressed wedges to very fine strokes. This differentiation in the drawing of signs is lost in later writing. Any visitor of the museums of Syria will remark the markedly differing appearance of cuneiform

tablets of the second or first millennium, for example the tablets from Dur-Katlimmu/Sheikh Hamad, which can be seen in the museum of Deir ez-Zor: there a much broader stylus is used, signs are composed of far less wedges, the number of oblique wedges is reduced in favor of horizontal and vertical ones, all wedges are of the same thickness.

The Beydar tablets are typical for their early period: small tablets of only 4 to 5cm diameter are nearly round (**Fig. 163**), whereas larger ones of up to 12cm are square with rounded corners. Both sides, obverse and reverse, can be inscribed with cuneiform signs. The surface of the tablet is divided into columns, each column in cases. One case is inscribed with one word or a word group; later in the third millennium, when the division in narrow columns was given up, these cases developed into lines. In our example of **fig. 163**, both the obverse and the reverse are divided into two columns, to be read from left to right on the obverse and from right to left on the reverse.

Fig. 163: *Subartu* 12, Text 158: Sheep for plucking entrusted to Lushalim

Transliteration and translation of text 158:

Obv. i	1	udu ur ₄	"Sheep for plucking:
		udu nita	The rams
	3	lu-sá-lim	of Lushalim:
		1 mi-at	one hundred;
ii	1	munus-udu	the ewes:
		1 mi-at	one hundred
	3	1.25	and 85 (i. e. 60+20+5);
		3 LAK.20	3 he-goats:
Rev. iii	1	silá ₄ ú 43	the pastured lambs: 43.
iv	1	ITL.SAR ^d utu	Month of the Sun-god."

As mentioned above, before 1993 no cuneiform texts of this early period were found in the Khabur region, even the language of the texts remained unknown. Therefore, the texts could not simply be "read" like texts of the second or first millennium, but by combination of what is known for this early period, the contents of the texts emerged. In the following paragraphs, we will proceed step by step towards an explanation of the simple text represented in **fig. 163**. This explanation should also explain some of the basic principles of cuneiform writing especially of the early texts of the third millennium BC.

A first glance at the Beydar tablets shows that we deal mostly with administrative texts: we see the numbers impressed with a special round stylus. Almost all texts from Tell Beydar are of administrative character. Therefore, they clearly stem from a larger, public institution which was responsible for so many individuals that a

written account had to be given. The distribution of tablets to the north of the 'Official Block' in field B and within the palace indicates that this public institution once had its seat within the palace itself, but even now we still cannot identify precisely the head of this institution. The administrative texts from Tell Beydar record the goods entrusted to the dependents, like the sheep handed over to shepherds, the workmen or the oxen and donkeys as plow animals for agricultural work. Lists were kept indicating the place of work of individuals of the town. The institution received goods, for example wool from its sheep, and it distributed them, such as food maintenance to workers, and both processes were documented in writing.

As these examples show, administrative texts mention commodities, persons and numbers. The numbers are the most easily understandable part of the texts. The horizontal half-circles represent units (1, 2, 3 etc.), the round impressions tens (10, 20, 30). In the text of **fig. 163**, the number in the top right corner (i. e. column iii, case 1) has to be read $4 \times 10 + 3 \times 1 = 43$. The numerical system employed is a sexagesimal one, the "big 1" is not 10, as in our system, but 60. This can be seen in the second column, third line of our text where we see the following numerical signs: "big 1" + $2 \times 10 + 5 \times 1 = 60 + 20 + 5 = 85$.

To read the cuneiform text is more complex, and only some basic principles can be explained here. Most signs can be identified because they are known in similar forms in texts from lowland Mesopotamia. If a sign is identified, one can apply the known readings in order to obtain a text; signs can represent either words or syllables. How this came into being and how this can be detected in our text of **fig. 163** is described presently.

Cuneiform writing was invented in S Mesopotamia at the end of the fourth millennium in order to fulfil the needs of a complex economy. The earliest signs are often pictographic representations, so the first two signs in **fig. 164** represent clearly WATER and ARROW, whereas the third sign, the sign for SHEEP, does not give an image of a sheep but is derived from a symbol used in the stage before writing. The earliest cuneiform signs were used to write Sumerian, a language of southernmost Mesopotamia without any known affiliation. The Sumerian words for the signs of our example are: "water" is *a*, "arrow" *ti*, and "sheep" *udu*.

Fig. 164: The signs A, TI and LU in their chronological development (1: pictographic, 2: Tell Beydar (ca. 24th century BC), 3: Neo-Assyrian, ca. 8-7th century BC)

The sign for SHEEP, Sumerian *udu*, can be used as a logogram, a sign identifying one concept, in this case a kind of small cattle. If we would still use cuneiform writing today, the sign for SHEEP would be read "*sheep*" in English, or "*Schaf*" in German. Logograms can be understood at once, but they do not indicate the underlying language. A sign for "sheep" and a number means simply "*n* sheep", and the same holds true for other designations of animals (see **Fig. 163**), or for other commodities, names of professions, etc. So we can easily see that our text deals with various kinds of sheep, even if we cannot read it properly.

The next step in the development of the cuneiform script is the correlation of signs with Sumerian words, not only with concepts. The cuneiform signs were read in Sumerian; the word for ARROW is *ti* in Sumerian. Now every sign could be used to write other Sumerian words which sounded similarly; *ti*, representing an arrow which means *ti* in Sumerian, could represent the similarly sounding word *ti* or more exactly *til*, "life, to live". Since the origin of the cuneiform script is linked with the Sumerian language, Sumerian words can be used even outside the

land of Sumer itself. This is explained by the transmission of the cuneiform script itself: the pupils learning to write had to copy long lists of words, and these lists were written in Sumerian. By chance even a literary text in Sumerian was discovered at Tell Beydar; it may have belonged to the scholarly world or it may have been used in religious rites where this prestigious language was employed even outside Sumer like the texts from Ebla testify. Four small school texts with writing exercises have also been found in the excavations of Tell Beydar.

In this case of the so-called Sumerograms, we can read texts without knowledge of the language. In the example of **fig. 163** the second sign is the Sumerian word *ur₄*, meaning "to pluck (wool)". Therefore the sheep listed in our text are intended for plucking at the annual control. The very last line of the text, the left column of the reverse, is inscribed with Sumerograms indicating the month: "month of the Sun-god". At Beydar, all months are named after deities, some of them known also in later centuries like Ishkhara, a goddess of love, whereas others appear for the first time like the "Lord of (the settlement) Sulum". This document is only one of a group of texts about the plucking of sheep which always means an annual control of the herds at the central institution. All texts of this group are dated to the same month, the "month of the Sun-god", which therefore dates probably to the springtime when the plucking takes place.

Finally, signs can represent syllables, not only concepts or words. So, the three signs of **fig. 164** represent the syllables *a*, *ti* and *lu*. These signs can be combined to form words of any language. So, a word *adi* can be represented by the two signs *a-ti*; there is no differentiation between *t* and *d* in this early stage of writing. This word *adi* along with other words indicates the language the texts are written in: it is a dialect of Akkadian, the Semitic language of this time in N lowland Mesopotamia and to which the dialect of Ebla shows many affinities. *adi* is a preposition meaning "to(wards), until", and prepositions are among the most precious words determining a language especially in administrative texts. Another Semitic word is the word for "hundred", *mi'at*, which also features in our text of **fig. 163**.

With syllabic signs, all names can be written. In line 3 of the first column of our text in **fig. 163**, we find the name of the person to whom the sheep are entrusted: *lu-sá-lim*, read *lushalim*. The name of this person is also Semitic, in the same language as the language of the texts; its meaning is "may he be healthy", a wish of the parents for their new-born child. In the ancient Near East, names were understood by everybody and therefore are mostly in the language used by its bearers. As administrative texts contain many personal names, from high officials to lists of plain workers, these texts give us a good estimate of the ethnic background of a settlement at a given time. The names of Tell Beydar demonstrate clearly that speakers of a Semitic language, a dialect of Akkadian, inhabited the town of the 24th century BC. No names of other languages could be identified and interestingly no Hurrians are present at Beydar. Hurrians are known to have inhabited Tell Mozan and Tell Brak only a relatively short time later and they are widely spread in N Syria in the second millennium.

The simple text in **fig. 163** lists a number of sheep, in total 326, entrusted to a person named Lushalim. As we have seen, also modest documents like this reveal much information on the writing traditions, the date of texts, the language of the people and their names and the economic background. In this case, more can be learned. There are more texts about sheep and goats entrusted to shepherds, and more shepherds are known by name. This leads to an estimate of ca. seven to eight thousand animals of small cattle owned by the central institution of Tell Beydar. These sheep and goats lived in the fields surrounding Tell Beydar after the harvest and could be transferred to the Ardh esh-Sheikh when the grain was growing in the fields. The existence of documents like our example of **fig.**

163 suggests that sheep husbandry was ultimately controlled by the towns central institution, and little space seems to be left for nomads at that time.

Other texts deal with the administration of the agriculture: apparently, the arable land was owned by the institution which organized the field-work in and around Tell Beydar. From such texts it was possible to deduce the ancient name of Tell Beydar, namely Nabada. Other place names mentioned refer to settlements depending in their administration from the town Nabada. The number of dependent settlements around the town can be compared to the actual archaeological remains of settlements of the third millennium, thus giving a more precise idea of the landscape around Tell Beydar with some larger or smaller villages, the large barley fields in between and roaming herds of sheep and goats.

The most important cereal was barley, wheat and emmer wheat were grown more rarely. The use of plow oxen allowed the cultivation of larger areas. A single family, however, would hardly have succeeded to feed a plow ox, and therefore the institutional agriculture provided the best means for an optimal exploitation of the natural resources.

The collective agricultural work demanded the work-force of all members of the society at certain seasons only, first of all during harvest. But in other seasons, people practised various professions. For their duties they received rations in grain given out every month, and also lists of these rations are preserved which give a good overview of the activities of the town: persons working in agriculture and animal husbandry, craftsmen like basket-weavers, potters, leather-workers, a number of scribes to whose labors we owe the tablets, guards of gates or the prison. The number of persons employed seems to indicate that the central institution of our archive comprised the complete settlement. Apparently private business did not play an important role at that time. This is the picture of a society and economy known from lowland Mesopotamia in the third millennium, but archaeologists had not expected the same for N Mesopotamia including the Khabur region.

Among the craftsmen a conspicuously high number of cartwrights is listed. That Tell Beydar has some importance in overland traffic by donkeys and carts can also be inferred from another group of administrative texts about the distribution of grain. The grain is given out to persons and as fodder for donkeys, often to the donkeys of the ruler coming to our town and staying there for a few days. The combined evidence of the texts indicates that the ruler's seat is Nagar, the ancient name of Tell Brak. He had to visit Nabada/Tell Beydar also for cultic festivals or, once, for a meeting of the assembly. Administrative documents on the expenditure of grain as additional fodder to the ruler's donkeys and mules thus disclose important facts about the political status of Tell Beydar, ancient Nabada, as a provincial centre depending on the state's capital Nagar/Tell Brak.

The kingdom of Nagar has been known for some years from the texts of Ebla/Tell Mardikh which stem from the royal palace. Some administrative texts list the distribution of gifts, among these to the courts to which good diplomatic relations are entertained. Nagar plays an important role for the distant town of Ebla. But whereas the latter archives inform us about the palace culture, prestige goods and international relations, the tablets from Tell Beydar stem from a provincial capital, concentrating on more mundane activities like agriculture, animal husbandry or the distribution of grain. The archive of Ebla is one of the most important textual finds of the ancient Near East, Tell Beydar cannot be compared to it in size, state of preservation and complexity. But even if we acknowledge this, it has become clear that Tell Beydar provides a fantastic supplementation to the palace archives of Ebla: the view from a provincial town, the situation in the Khabur region, the activities in agriculture, animal

husbandry or handicraft. But this more profane world is also present in the archaeological record, and both philological and archaeological evidence may be combined to learn more about the fascinating early urban culture of Tell Beydar and its region.

The Akkadian Occupation

Véronique Van der Stede

Around 2400 BC, the Official Block, the political and administrative centre of the city, was no longer in use. Was its abandonment caused by the reversal of the regional political balance or by a natural event, like an earthquake? A definitive answer to this question is still lacking. The excavations in the private quarters demonstrate that the city existed for some period even after it was deprived of its central authority. It was however nearly completely emptied of its population, like the majority of the cities in the region. The quantity of the collected finds is remarkably small. No traces of fire or a deliberate destruction were observed; the city simply seemed to have been abandoned. The reasons which caused the abandonment of the N Mesopotamian city states are still object of much debate and several scholars presented different hypotheses. For some, the desertification of the region was responsible for the progressive decline of these cities. Others blame a demographic growth for the exhausting of the region's natural resources.

At about 2350 BC, the site was reoccupied by a new population. Their material culture is closely related to the Akkadian period. Following the narrowness of the reoccupied zone, the population numbered only a few people. Actually the Akkadian occupation concentrates on the S sector of the acropolis. Two phases, termed 'Early' and 'Middle Akkadian', can be distinguished here. A third occupation phase, provisory called 'Late Akkadian' may be attributed to the very end of the Akkadian period, or the beginning of post-Akkadian. The ceramic material of this latest phase, though of high quality, was not collected in sufficient quantity to allow a more precise dating.

The architectural remains

Early Akkadian (Fig. 153)

In this phase, the area of the acropolis underwent profound structural changes. In the N half, the ruins of the Official Block were levelled and the outer floors which have risen due to accumulation formed a high terrace on which tiny installations were identified. The S part of the acropolis remained, on the other hand, densely occupied. Temple A was reoccupied and partially rebuilt, while its function remained unchanged (**Fig. 153**). Even though the Official Block has otherwise disappeared completely, one of its rooms was preserved and integrated into the temple.

The transformations within temple A were not of the same scale in the different parts of the building. In the central space and the bathroom besides it, the modifications were restricted to minor details. The W part of the S central space wall was dismantled and replaced by a new wall slightly shifted to the S (**Fig. 165**). The three small rooms in the very E of the building underwent only small changes too (**Fig. 166-168**). The toilet-seat installation in

the southernmost of these rooms was reconstructed, while the middle room was transformed into a metallurgical workshop. This room was equipped with an oven and a bench and yielded a mould for metal casting and ceramic fragments which served to blow air into the oven (**Fig. 169**). The transformations in the W half of the building went much farther (**Fig. 170-171**). Actually the rooms of this sector were erased at a height of about 1m and a new floor was laid on this higher level. The W part of the temple reached thus about 1m above its E half. A staircase of three steps allowed the communication between both sectors. The SW corner of the building, rectified by the construction of a new outer wall, formed then a right angle. The inner organisation of space was considerably modified by the edification of new partition walls. Only the two rooms in the NW corner of the building kept their original proportions (**Fig. 172**).

The long street, which, in the EJ IIIb period, led to the Official Block, now only gave access to the chain of four rooms situated further to the E. Its stone pavement which contained a drainage canal was then covered with a thick sherd layer and a trodden floor. The four-room block evidently kept its original function and was still used by artisans as a storage facility.

Temple D underwent transformations, too. Some rooms were reduced in identical shape, but with raised floors. In other rooms, the walls were erased to the ground, but no reconstruction occurred (**Fig. 173**). It is possible, though hypothetical, that these unfinished works were done in the intention to transform the temple into a private dwelling (**Fig. 174**).

Middle Akkadian (Fig. 158)

During that phase, temple A was destroyed and a new building, which may have been of cultic character, was built immediately on top of it. Some parts of temple A, as the three small rooms in the E, were reused and integrated in the layout of the new building.

The new temple consisted of at least thirteen rooms (**Fig. 158**); it is a construction of good quality built on solid foundations (**Fig. 159, Fig. 175**). The E part is occupied by a large rectangular space, probably a courtyard. The small rooms in the NW corner of the building evidently saw some activities which required intensive use of water (**Fig. 176**). One of them was equipped with a large circular basin completely covered by plaster (**Fig. 177**). A small drain, built at the height of its N side, allowed the liquid to flow to a second basin of much smaller size. Finally it was evacuated by a vessel which was partially sunk in the floor. The new temple surpassed its immediate environment in the E by about 1m. A staircase, built in the SE corner of the courtyard, assured circulation between the two levels.

The corridor and the adjacent block of four rooms were equally object of important works. The floor of the corridor was lifted and the space itself was subdivided in five small rooms by buttresses (**Fig. 178-180**). Some of them were surmounted by plain arches. All rooms were equipped with benches. Every of the four adjacent rooms were covered by a dome-shaped roofing. Their floors were rebuilt and new triangular-shaped doors were installed. The last of these rooms was equipped with two benches, a fireplace, and a basin.

Late Akkadian (Fig. 161)

During this phase, Tell Beydar became virtually abandoned. Only one building remained on the tell summit. This rectangular building of modest dimensions (10 x 11m) consisted only of one room (**Fig. 162**). It was accessible by a doorway located at the very S of the E façade. The beaten earth floor of the room was partially covered by a small plastered layer which also runs at the base of the walls. In the centre of the room, remains of a pillar were uncovered, which most probably once supported the roof.

The layout of this building, as well as its inventory, suggest that it was a small temple (**Fig. 181**). A rectangular podium, made of small-sized bricks, leaned against the S face of the pillar. Small mud-brick walls form the limits of another podium situated in front of the W wall. It is flanked on its N side by a rectangular basin built of bricks. A third podium with a surface decorated by a sherd pavement was built between the two others. Finally a large fireplace made of pisé, decorated with horn-shaped applications at the corners, was found crushed on the floor in the NE corner of the space.

The tombs

Two tombs dated to the beginning of the Akkadian Period are characterised by the wealth of their material and the quality of their construction.

The first one was discovered in 1994 within a door of the EJ IIIb Official Block. The coffer of bricks, built on a platform, was built using a corbelling technique. It was covered by an oval made of bricks laid out in a herringbone design. The dead, laid down in the E part of the tomb, is lying in a contracted position at its right side, with the head to the W and the face to the S. The buried person was equipped with a quality inventory: numerous ceramic vessels were placed in the W half of the tomb, others laid to the right of the skeleton (**Fig. 182**). Bronze ornaments and pearls were doubtlessly part of the defunct's personal equipment. Most surprising was finally the discovery of two bird's skeletons in the grave, which were identified as cranes.

The second tomb, richer than the first one, was discovered during the season of 2000 under the main room of Temple A. This tomb was built up to 3m under the floor level by two rectangular shafts. Two small chambers occupied the base of the E shaft. A door in the wall which separates the two rooms was sealed and covered with mud plaster. The bones of an animal, probably a dog, were lying on the floor of the NE room. The SE room yielded about twenty vessels which had preserved their original content.

The W shaft consisted only of a single space. It is extended to the E by a narrow corridor and widened by a covering of corbelled bricks. Two large storage jars, and two bowls, one of ceramic and another of bronze, were discovered in the corridor. In the large chamber, the defunct was lying in contracted position, the skull oriented to the W (**Fig. 155**). An axe and a dagger blade of bronze were placed near the skeletons hands. Besides twenty-one bronze objects, including bowls of different sizes, a seal, a two-dented fork and dagger blades, the burial chamber revealed forty-two potteries, two necklaces, a figurine of unbaked clay, and a silver bracelet (**Fig. 156-157**). The tomb further contained two enigmatic stone heaps. One of them covered the bones of a large animal, perhaps a

bovid. A dagger blade was thrown into the other heap. Regarding the dimensions of this tomb and the quality of its burial gifts, there is no doubt that it contained the remains of an important character.

The material

The Akkadian levels yielded material of high quality. Besides numerous complete ceramics, the inventory consists of objects made of terra-cotta and unbaked clay, of stone, bronze, bone, shells, and gypsum.

A mould for metal casting made of unbaked clay was found in one of the rooms of Temple A which were reoccupied at the beginning of the Akkadian period (**Fig. 183**). It served to cast blades and two kinds of circular medallions. This room also yielded an unbaked clay axe (**Fig. 184**), which was possibly conceived as a positive for the fabrication of a mould.

Among the numerous anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines found in the Akkadian levels (**Fig. 185**), the head of a female figurine found in the early level is of particular interest (**Fig. 186**). Made with great care, it is characterised by its heart-shaped face, the coffee-bean eyes, its elongated skull and the particular hairdressing made of applied clay pellets.

A gypsum figurine of the “snow-man” type was uncovered in one of the rooms of the Middle Akkadian temple (**Fig. 187**). Its cubic body, lacking any further details rests on an instable base and its arms, reduced to simple stubs, are stretched sideward. The large head, which is immediately on the shoulders, shows nothing else than two great round eyes.

A very nice eye made of white stone was found on the floor of the small temple of the Late Akkadian or even post-Akkadian period (**Fig. 188**). The pupil is rendered by a subtle relief and the carved iris was probably incrustated by stone or bitumen. Regarding its dimensions, it probably was part of a statue of considerable dimensions. A jar handle, decorated by a serpent’s head, was found outside of this building.

The Akkadian levels revealed only one cylinder seal (**Fig. 189**). Four persons are depicted. The god Ea, lord of knowledge and wisdom is easily recognisable by the water fountains pouring out from his shoulders. He is holding a vessel in his hands and wears a *kaunakes* garment and a horned crown. On his right, a nude person is leaning against a door jamb. On his left Usmu, the two-faced god and vizier of Ea, is leading a prisoner. This scene evokes a passage of the famous myth of Anzu, the bird-man. After stealing the tablets of destiny to become the lord of the gods, he is brought before Ea to be judged.

The ceramic of the Early Akkadian levels (EJ IVa) is clearly distinguished from the one of the preceding EJ IIIb levels. Even if the shapes did not underwent a major evolution, the production technique did change and proved the use of a faster potter’s wheel. The plain ware pottery is more regular, finer and clinkier than before (**Fig. 190**). Within the open shapes, one may note the appearance of the bowls or goblets with concave base and beaded rim which, in contrast to the preceding period, never kept their string-cut base (**Fig. 191**). Bowls with folded rim appear in this period, too, as well as bottles with rounded and incised rim. A very typical feature of the

Akkadian pottery is the presence of corrugation on the shoulders of closed vessels (bottles and storage jars) (**Fig. 192**). The Metallic Ware disappears rapidly from the general repertory and it is doubtful if it was still produced in the Early Akkadian period. Within the cooking-pot ware, the jars with triangular lugs on the rim are decreasing significantly.

The Seleucid-Parthian Settlement at Tell Beydar and its Importance in the Context of Hellenistic Upper Mesopotamia

Rodrigo Martín Galán

Following the mid of the 6th century BC, after the fall of Assyrian power and the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, a new era began in the Near East. This is the last great step of the ancient history of that region before the arrival of Islam. It is an era of great empires, which reached far behind the frontiers of Mesopotamia, which was part of all these large states. The Achaemenids, the Seleucids, the Parthians and finally the Sassanians created empires characterised by a territorial expansion unknown before the 6th century BC. Central to all these empires, Mesopotamia played a leading role both in the economic sector and in the network of internal communications.

The Achaemenid Empire covered a vast territory which stretched from the Aegean coast to the E limits of Iran. Its system of government based on the monarchy of the Achaemenian family; the main residence being in Susa in SW Iran. The territory was divided in administrative units called “satrapies”. One of these units was Assyria-Babylonia, which consisted of Upper and Lower Mesopotamia. Following Herodotus, this satrapy was in the 5th century BC, together with Egypt, the wealthiest and yielded the highest taxes to the central government.

Our interest is based on the fact that within the satrapy of Assyria-Babylonia, the old Mesopotamian towns preserved their cultures, their languages and their internal organisations. Aramean, already common in the whole region, became the *lingua franca* of the empire. The Mesopotamian cities continued their economic and intellectual development and in consequence kept the ancient Mesopotamian culture.

In 331 BC Alexander the Great entered Upper Mesopotamia, causing the final downfall of the Achaemenid Empire. After the death of the Macedonian in Babylon in 323, the struggle between his generals for the control of the empire breaks out. At the end of the 4th century BC, the two most important states of the Hellenistic world had already established themselves: the state of the Ptolemaeans in Egypt and the one of the Seleucids in Asia. Seleucos I founded two capitals: Antioch on the Orontes, near the Mediterranean coast in Syria, and Seleucia on the Tigris, near the old Babylon.

The Seleucids inherited the Achaemenid administrative order: they maintained the system of satrapies, which were divided in minor subunits, the eparchies and hipparchies.

The old Mesopotamian cities continued, as in the preceding period, their own life under the Seleucids. The two most important cities in Upper Mesopotamia were Nisibis, the modern Nusaybin, and Harran on the upper course of the Balikh. At Harran the cult of the moon god Sin enjoyed a great international prestige since the 2nd millennium BC. The town of Hierapolis-Bambyke, the actual Menbij, was the main centre of the divine couple Hadad and Atargatis.

Outside these old towns, the first Seleucids developed an important politics of city founding. They established a series of cities in the heart of their empire, which were based on the Greek model, which means a relative political autonomy with a government and institutions elected by its citizens, but also submission under the royal

will. The most prominent of these cities in Mesopotamia are (besides Seleucia on the Tigris) the twin cities of Seleucia-Zeugma and Apamea on the Euphrates, Nikephorion, the actual Raqqa, and Dura-Europos. Of further foundations only the name is known, but not the localisation. These are Ichnai, Amphipolis, Antioch on the Euphrates, and others.

One of the most important aspects of the Hellenistic Period is the relation between Orient and Occident; two worlds which discovered each other, which interacted, which mixed and which produced a new world characterised by features of both E and W origin. This new world is defined by a new culture which became known under the name Greek-Semitic. It strongly manifested itself after the 1st century BC in the Roman province of Syria and in Mesopotamia and dominated the appearance of the Near East in the first half of the first millennium AD. It also deeply influenced the culture of the Islamic Orient and the medieval Christian West.

The Hellenistic era was the formation period of the Greek-Semitic culture, which was completely developed in the first century B.C. One of the great problems of Syrian and Mesopotamian archaeology is the lack of data for the formative phase of this culture, which is both important and influential for the later periods.

Of Dura-Europos, one of the Greek towns, the city of the 1st century AD and later, which has a Greek-Semitic culture, is well known. From the beginning of its existence, only few archaeological facts are known until now. In the other Greek towns in Mesopotamia, as Seleucia on the Tigris, or in Syria, as Apamea on the Orontes or Antioch, the situation is similar. The site of Jebel Khaled, where an Australian Mission is excavating a Greek city of the Hellenistic period, promises an extension of our knowledge on the topic.

Concerning the indigenous settlements, the situation of our work is even worse. From the archaeological point of view, nothing is known about cities like Nisibis or Harran. For the small communities dispersed in the region, there is some information available, however David and Joan Oates excavated in the fifties the settlement which had developed in the Hellenistic period at Nimrud. This is a model excavation from the methodological point of view, but since only a few soundings were realised there, we still have no picture of the site as a whole. The Spanish excavations at Tell Khamis provided us with a rather clear picture of a small indigenous community on the banks of the Euphrates. At Tell Barri, the Italian mission is making very interesting discoveries at a site, where the Achaemenid, Seleucid, and Parthian periods are present in the sequence. The same situation is true at Tell Sheikh Hamad, excavated by a German mission, where all periods between the beginnings of the Hellenistic period until Parthian times are represented.

At Tell Beydar, an indigenous settlement is under study, which started at a moment still to be precised within the first half of the Hellenistic period. This settlement was abandoned in the mid-first century BC. It is a rural settlement of considerable size which covered the whole surface of the Upper Town of the 3rd millennium (**Fig. 13**). The habitat constitutes of single-room houses of rectangular shape and of a size of approximate 25m², equipped with small walls and the installations necessary for daily life (**Fig. 193**). It is important to note the presence of a large number of pear-shaped silos in the ground, which served without doubt for cereal storage (**Fig. 194**). This feature is common for the majority of Hellenistic sites in the region, like Tell Khamis, Tell Arbit and Tell Muhammad `Arab (on the Tigris in Iraq). In some cases, as in Tell Khamis, the number of silos is much higher than what one would consider as necessary for the population of the known extent of the site. These kinds of constructions indicate not only large agricultural activities in a region which produced considerable quantities of cereals in this period, but also a large rural population which produced these rich harvests.

Without doubt, the palace under excavation in Field A is the most important discovery within the Hellenistic settlement at Tell Beydar (**Fig. 195**). This building was erected at the very N end of the tell, giving a perfect view of the N Khabur region, the course of the Wadi Awaij, the Tur Abdin mountains as well on the route which follows the Wadi Awaij and enters the mountains at the Mardin gap.

In Field A three Hellenistic phases were identified. The first one is the least known. Its chronological position is to be placed to a yet not precisely defined date in the first half of the Hellenistic period. Of this phase, only an outer space and one square room of approximately 25m² were excavated. The room is characterised by pisé walls and some domestic installations of unspecified function (**Fig. 196**).

In Phase IIa a large building was constructed, which can reliably be dated to the mid-2nd century BC by numismatic finds and by pottery of well defined stratigraphic context. The building is not yet completely excavated, but its dimensions (about 700m² uncovered so far) and the quality of its construction lead us to define it as palatial architecture (**Fig. 197**).

The building was reoccupied later during phase IIb and on the few places where the excavation has already reached phase IIa floors, they were found completely empty. Therefore, we have no evidence for the interpretation of the single spaces of the building during the first phase of its use. However the architectural analysis provides us with valuable information.

The construction technique of the building is purely Mesopotamian. Regarding the internal distribution of space, we also met a purely Mesopotamian tradition, which is reminding us a 2nd millennium BC palace. The rooms are distributed symmetrically along an axis running NW/SE, defining a rectangular or square ground plan (**Fig. 198-199**). The only part where the outer limits of the building were reached is situated in the west of the building. The façade is provided with a series of buttresses of Mesopotamian style. On the other side, a large rectangular space of twenty meters length (**Fig. 200**) served as an antechamber for a main room which can be found in the centre of the N wing of the building (**Fig. 201**). It is important to pay attention to two features:

1. The access from the antechamber to the main room is not located in a straight axis, but is bent. One has to turn first to the left and then to the right to enter the main room (**Fig. 202**). This is one significant feature of the Mesopotamian palatial and sacral architecture.
2. The mentioned main room can be found in the centre of a series of five aligned rooms which are distributed along a NE/SW axis. This row of aligned rooms can be found regularly among many palaces of the ancient Mesopotamian architectural tradition (**Fig. 203-204**).

The discovery of this building has primary implications for the study of the Upper Mesopotamian history in the Hellenistic period. Until today we have some small knowledge of the evolution of Greek architecture in Upper Mesopotamia, principally due to the discoveries at Dura-Europos and Jebel Khaled. We do not know the evolution of the indigenous architecture. The excavations at Tell Beydar demonstrate that the ancient Mesopotamian traditions had not yet lost their strength and continued to express their peculiarities at a time when the region had already received an important influence of Greek architecture. Most important is probably that we now start to get information about the different elements which played a role in the formative period of the Greek-Semitic culture. This period and the evolution of the indigenous elements within it are still nearly completely unknown to us.

The Tell Beydar palace was constructed at around the mid-2nd century BC. During the whole second half of this century, Upper Mesopotamia was the theatre of war and of advances and retreats of the Seleucids and the Parthians which fought for the dominance on the region. We therefore can not decide whether the building was one of the latest constructions under Seleucid dominance or one of the first under Parthian rule.

The features of the building show us that it is an official construction. We do not know if it was erected to represent a central power, be it Seleucid or Parthian, or by a small local power. Both hypotheses are possible. It was already remarked that the Seleucids controlled their territory by a division in satrapies, eparchies and hipparchies. Nothing contradicts a hypothesis, after which our building is connected with one of these minor territorial units.

We know, on the other hand, that the Seleucids, as well as later the Parthians, had a number of indigenous entities incorporated in their states, as already the Achaemenids had. These cities, small local principalities, temple-states and other entities kept a relative autonomy which allowed them to live according to their old traditions. The leaders of these small entities continued to live in an indigenous and traditional ambience.

As the reader may have remarked already, every new archaeological discovery of this period in Upper Mesopotamia creates as many problems as it provides new data for the historian who is lacking even the basic knowledge on that period.

After a not very extended utilisation, the whole N façade of the building collapsed down the N slope of the tell. After a period of abandonment which left its traces on the walls, the building was reoccupied in a new phase (IIb). The walls were repaired, where they were most damaged, some doors were blocked to subdivide the space into small habitation units and the rooms were equipped with installations necessary for daily life.

This phase is the best known of the building, since it yielded a large quantity of finds consisting of an assemblage of items used for daily life. The fact that the last houses were suddenly abandoned allows the archaeologist of today to have an insight into the daily life of a small rural Upper Mesopotamian community of the 1st century BC. This presents an opportunity to know the habitat and the life of its inhabitants and allows setting up a series of ethno-historic studies on the daily life in Mesopotamia in the 1st century BC (**Fig. 205-214**).

Besides that, the presence of a vast quantity of archaeological material *in situ* allows us to study a significant sampling of material culture situated in a precise chronological context.

The date of the final abandonment is given by the material culture. A series of lamps which appears regularly on the latest floors characterised by a moulded fabric with a radial decoration is dated to the mid-1st century BC (**Fig. 215-217**). Further, there is no element which allows us to speak of an even later dating.

Finally it remains to discover the reasons for the sudden abandonment of these last habitations on the tell. A glance at the political situation of this period may be instructive. During the whole first half of the 1st century BC, the Parthians find themselves in endless civil wars. King Tigranes of Armenia took profit of this situation and conquered the region. After the Romans had defeated Tigranes, they crossed the Euphrates intending to conquer the whole region, but suffered a major defeat at Carrhae in 54 BC.

This period was one of great political instability and of important military activities in the region. It is a constant feature of Mesopotamian history that in periods of weakness of central powers, nomads intensified their raids against the sedentary communities. Finally a careful study of classical authors, like Xenophon, Polybius or

Strabo shows us how the armies in time of war provided themselves with supply, slaves and booty in general from the small communities they found on their way. A very reasonable hypothesis is therefore that the general insecurity of this period caused the abandonment of the last settlement which had developed at Tell Beydar.

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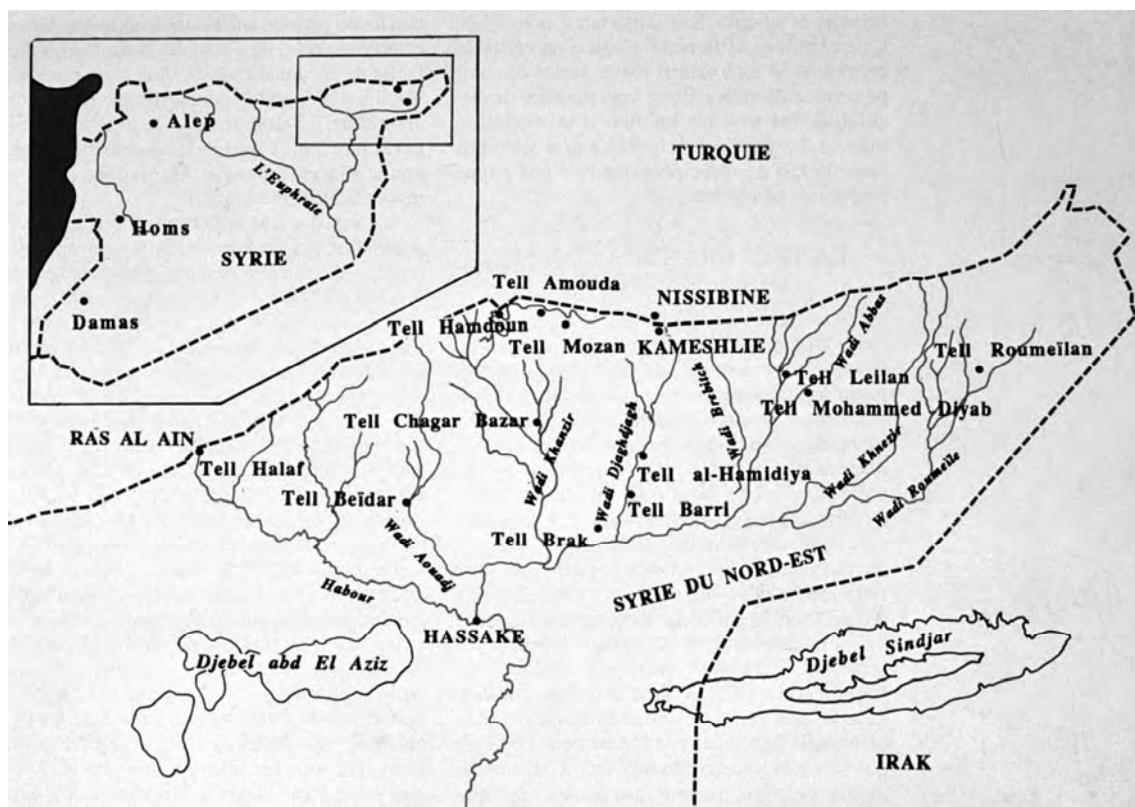
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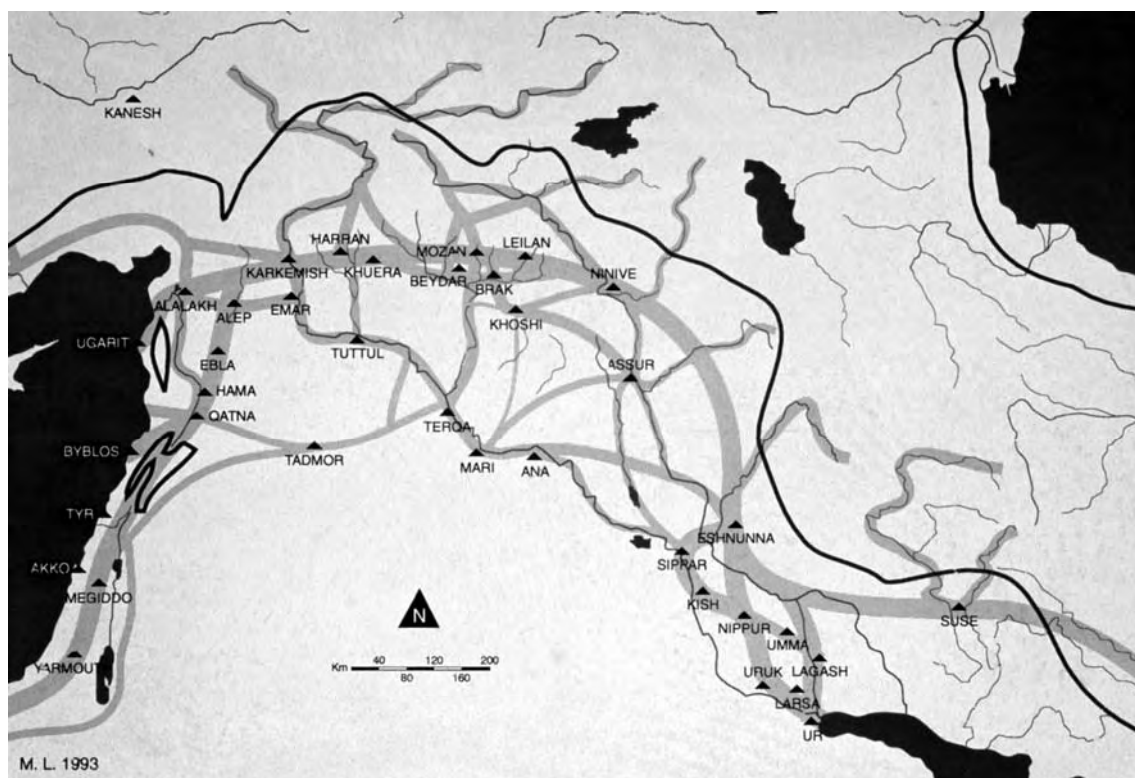
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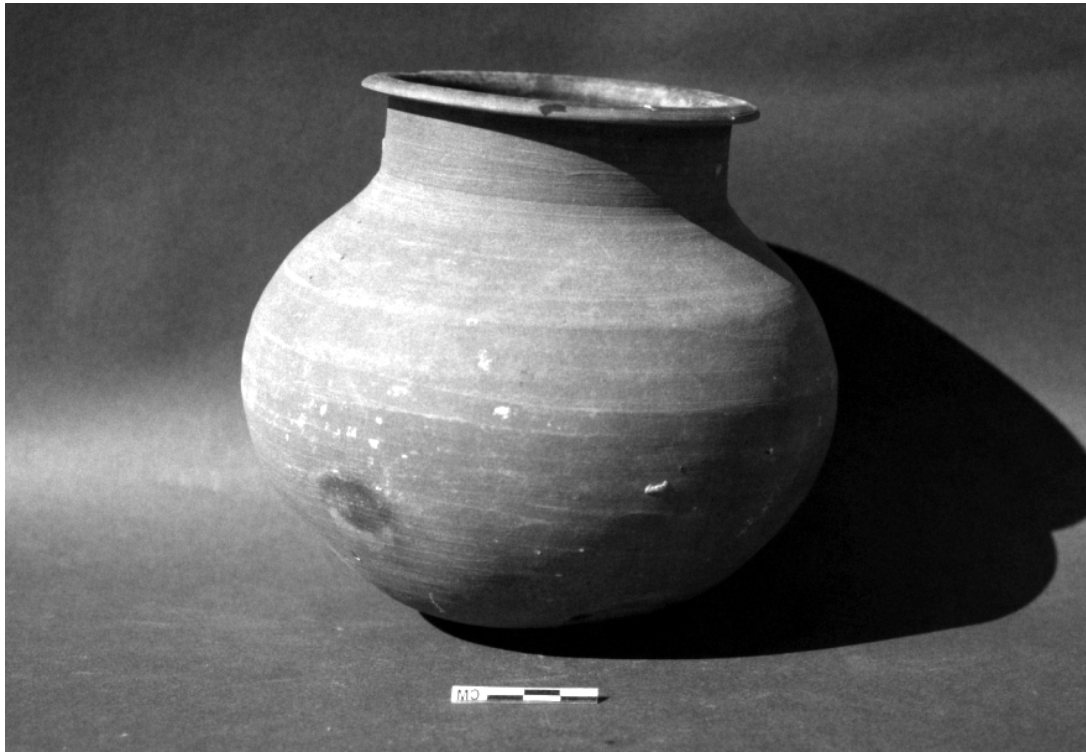
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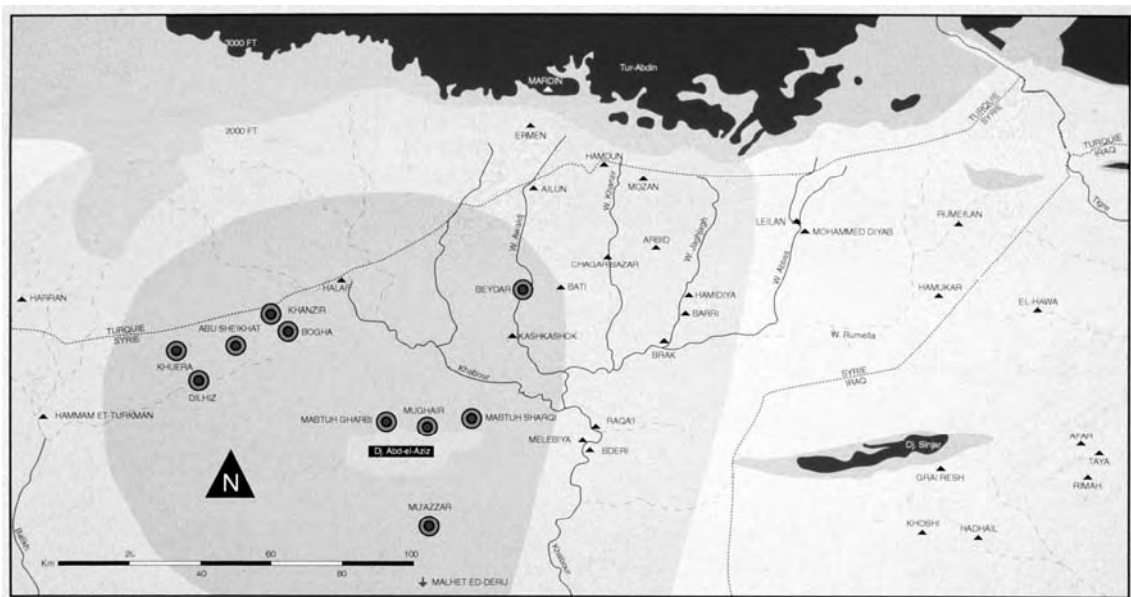
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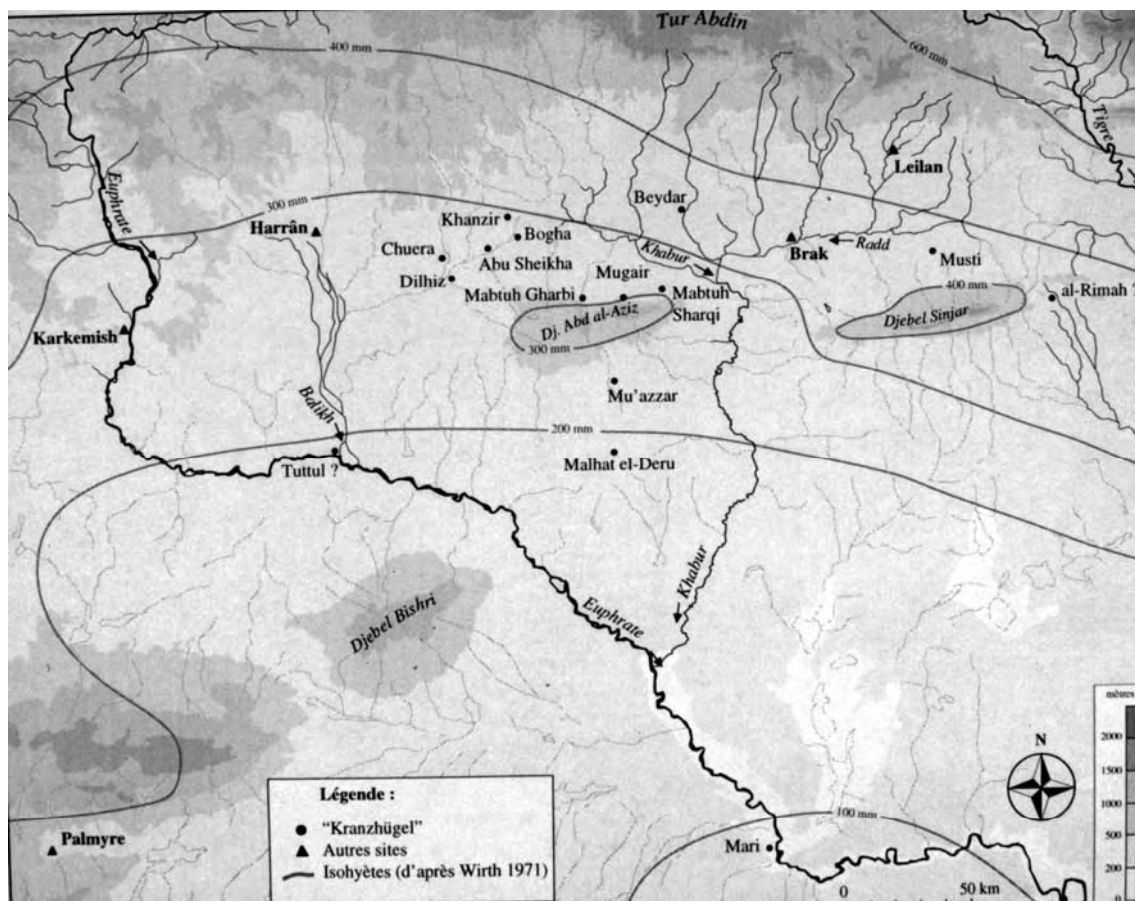
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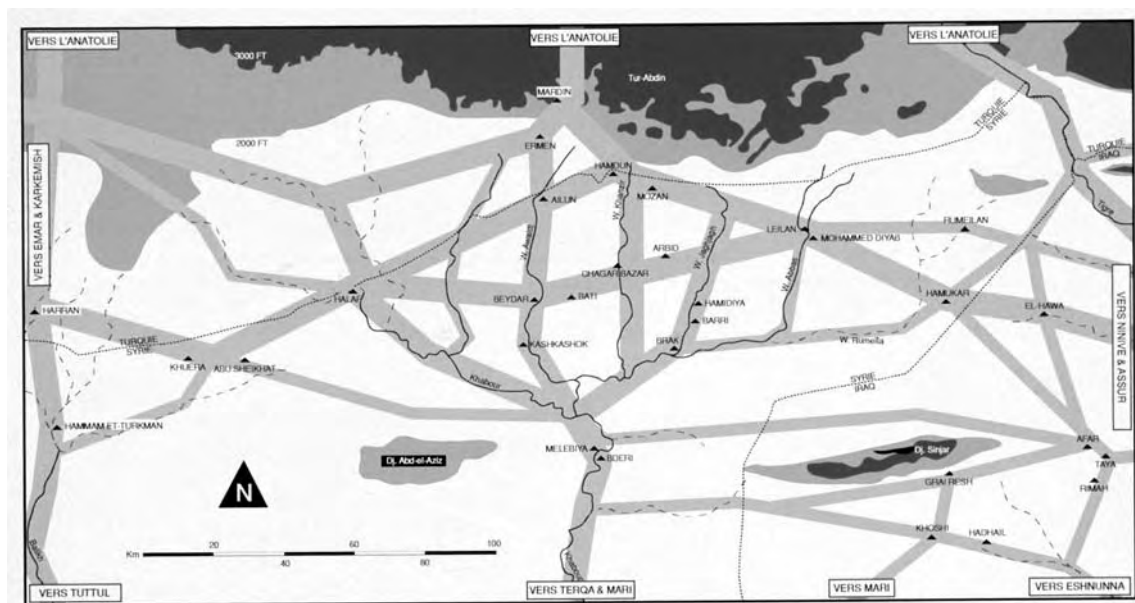
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- Fig. 6



- Fig. 7



- Fig. 8



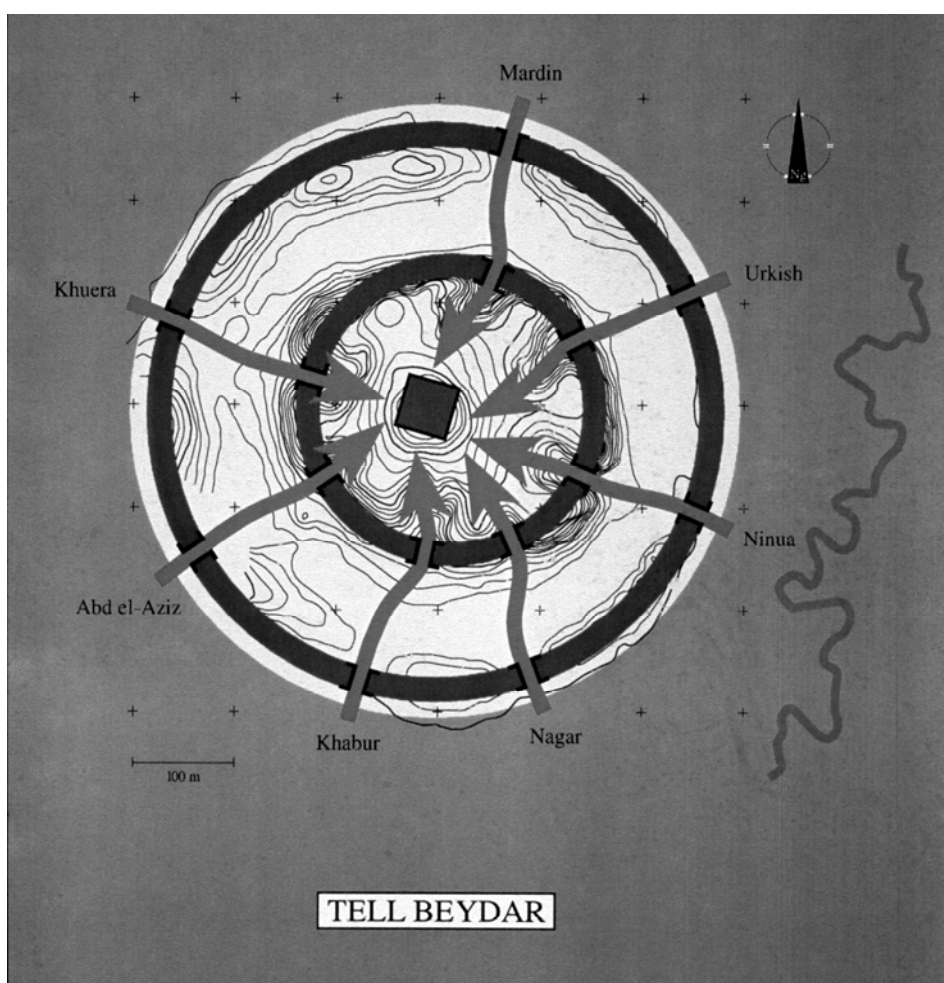
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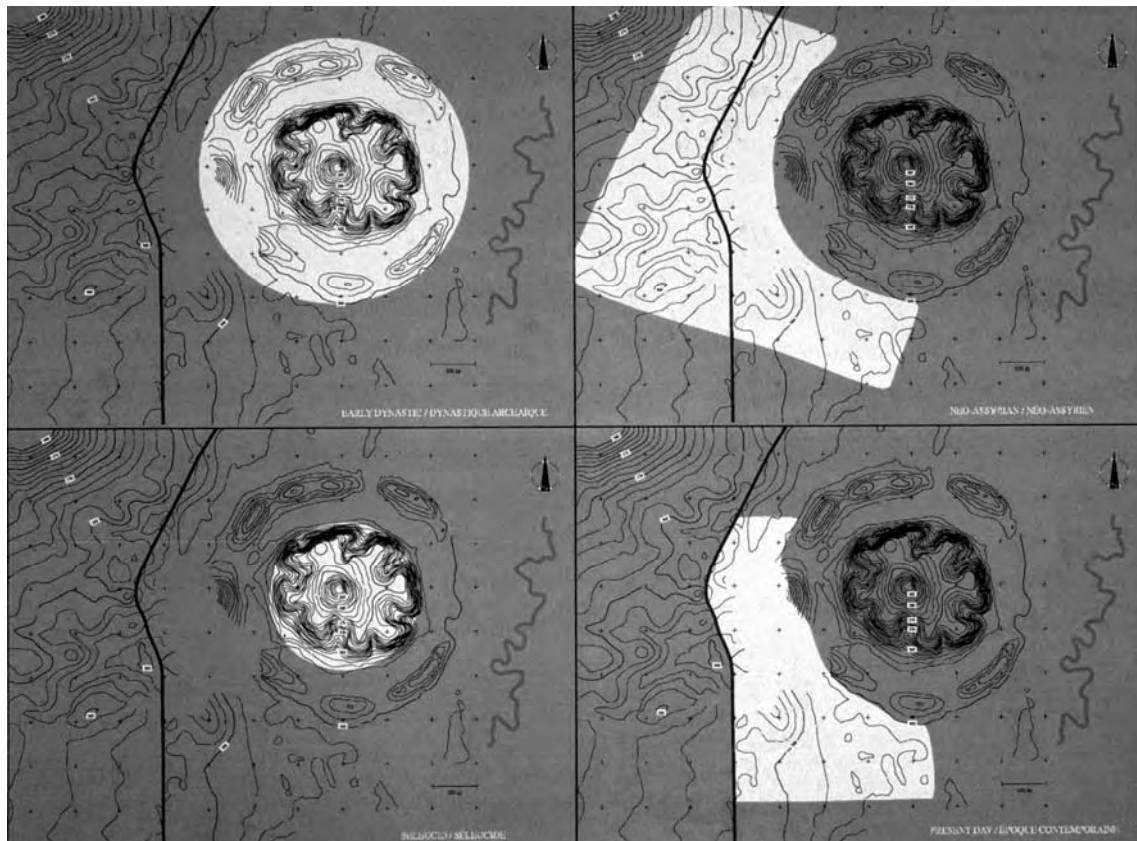
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- Fig.11



- Fig. 12



- Fig. 13



- Figure 14



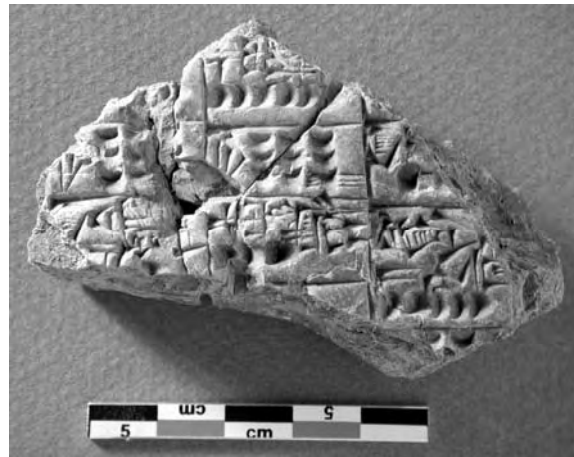
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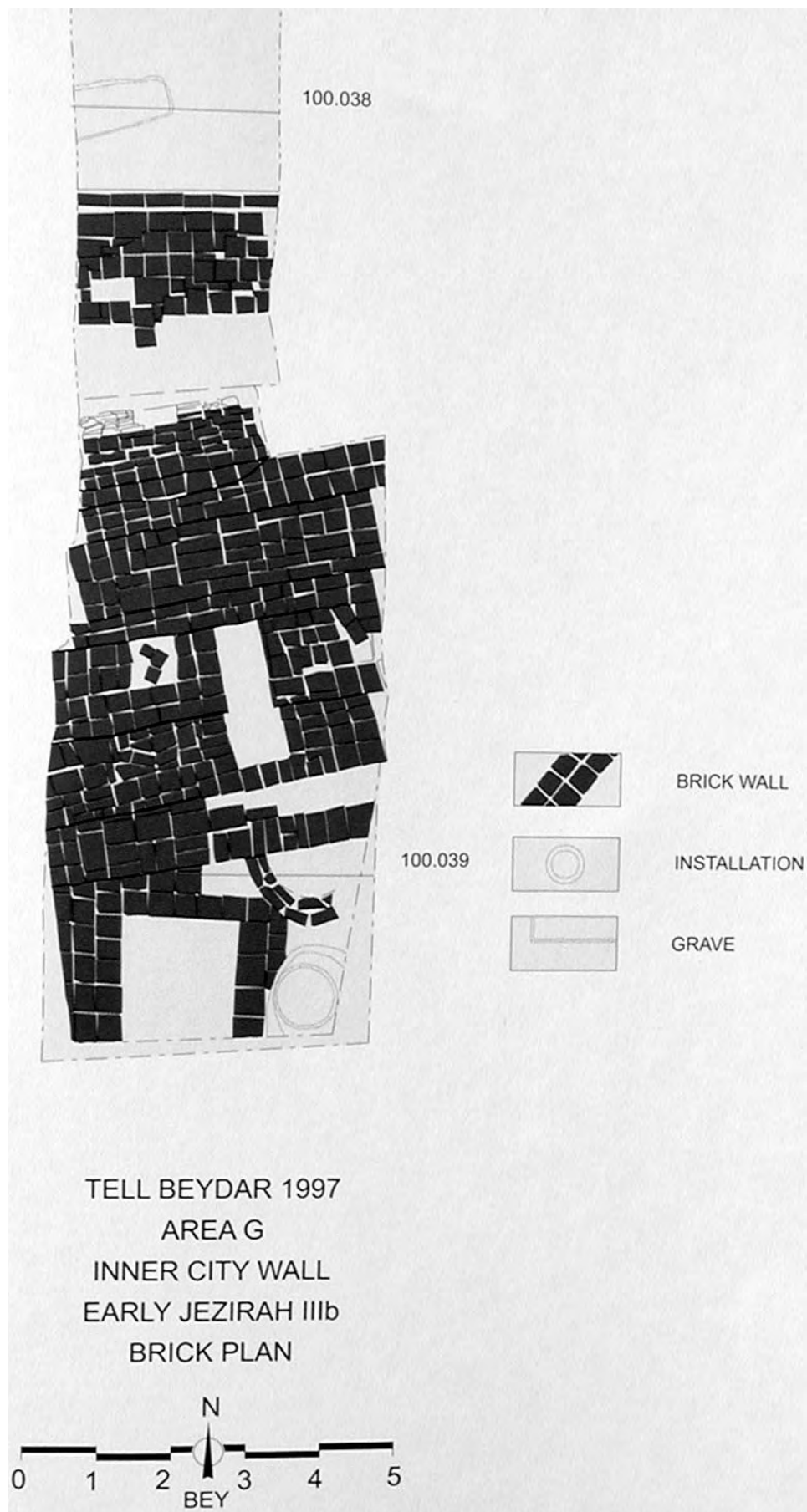
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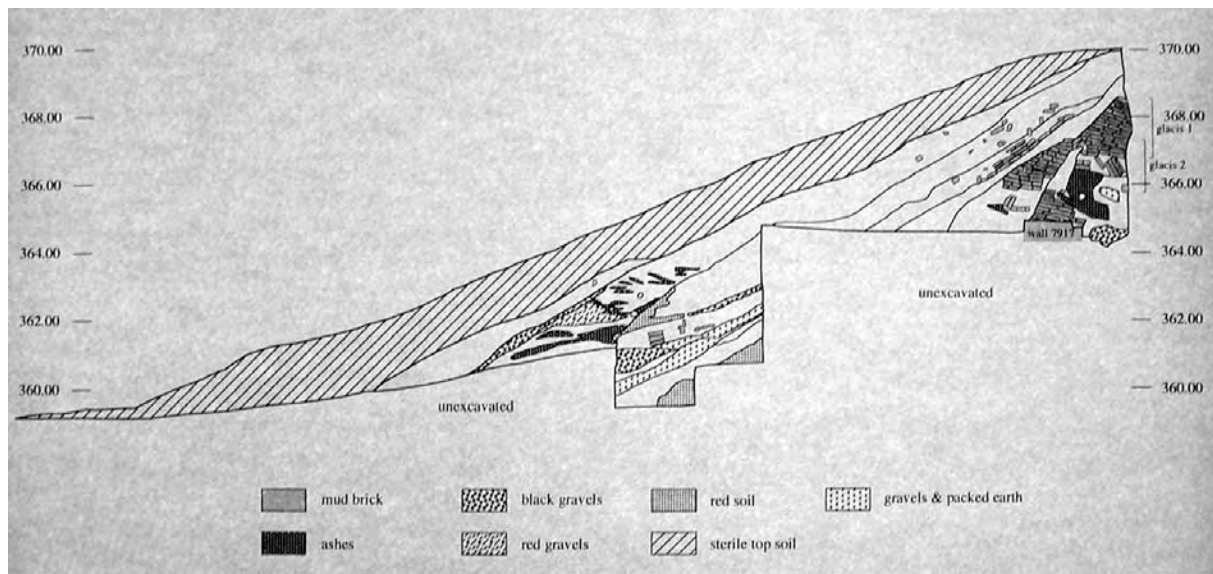
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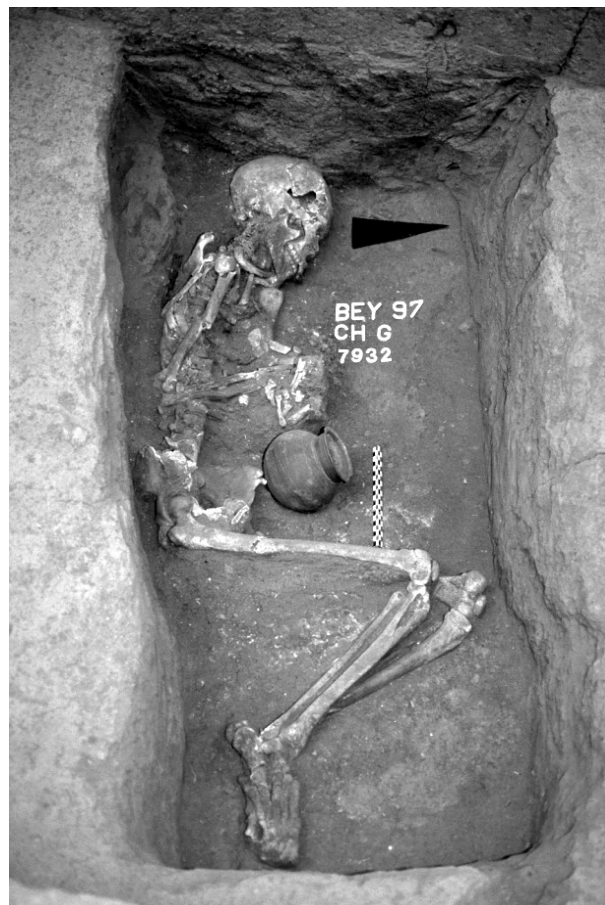
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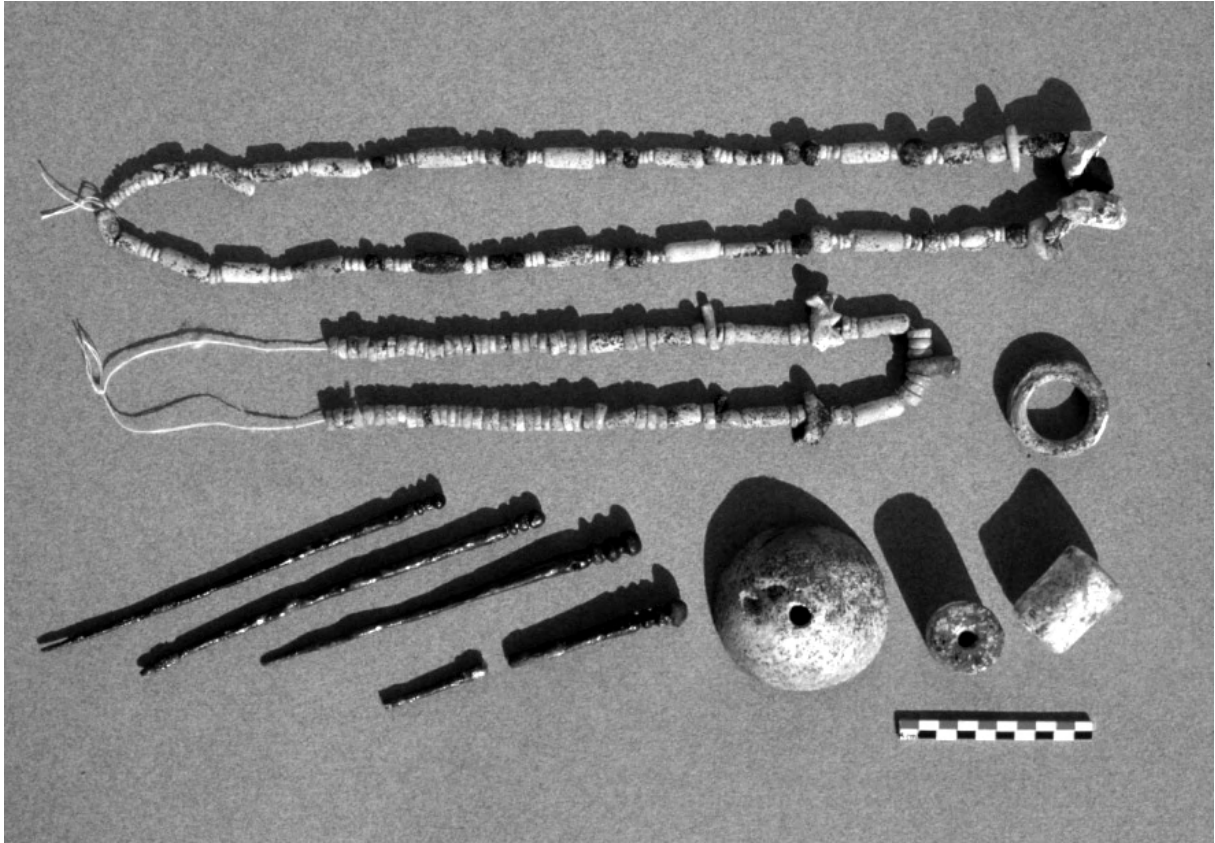
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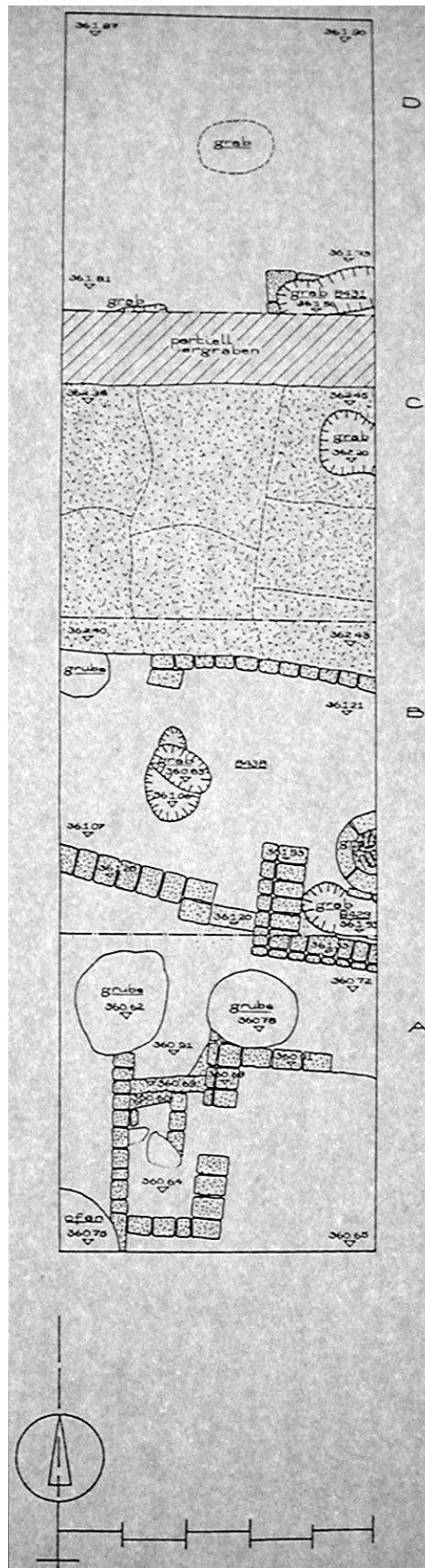
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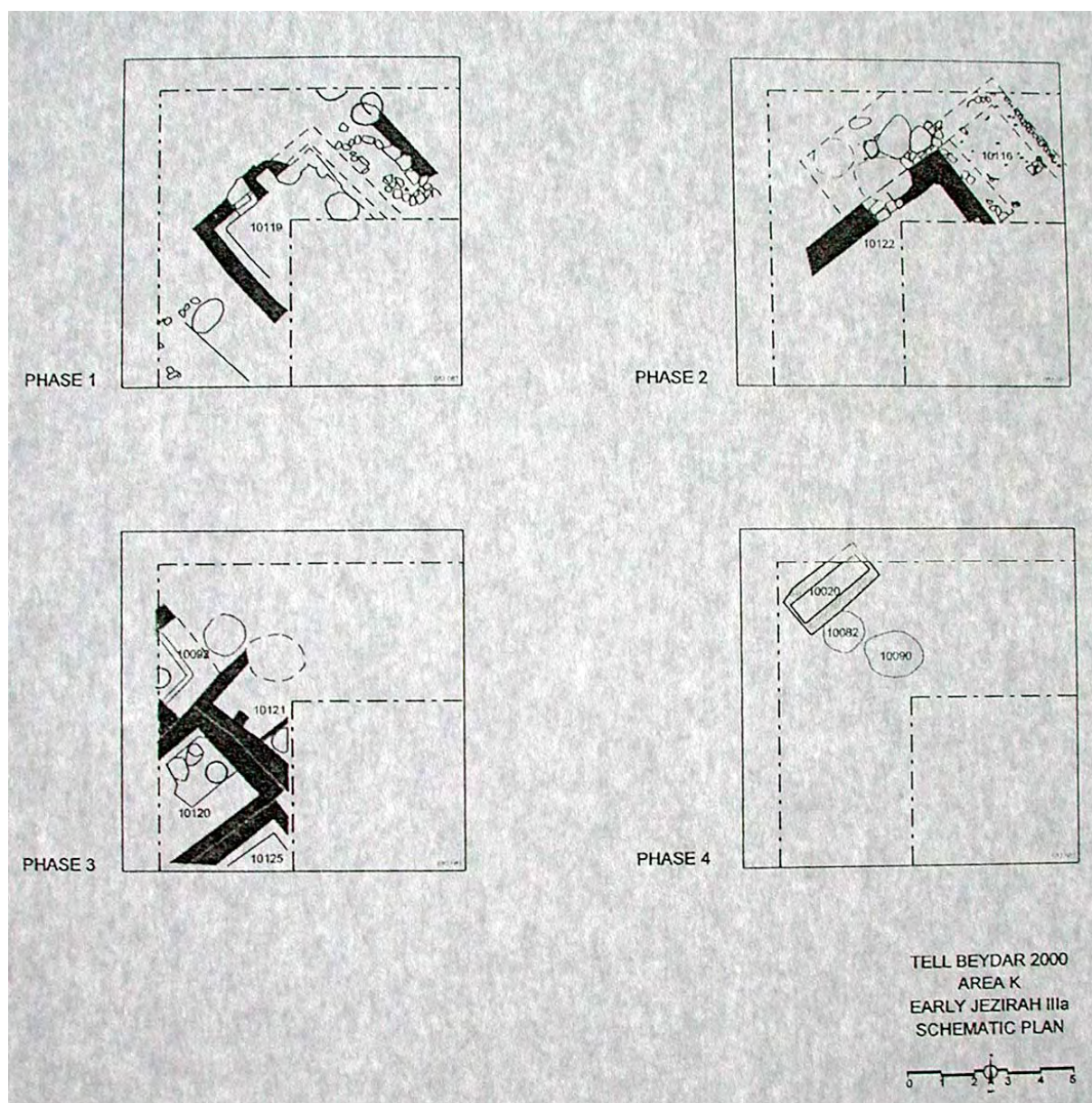
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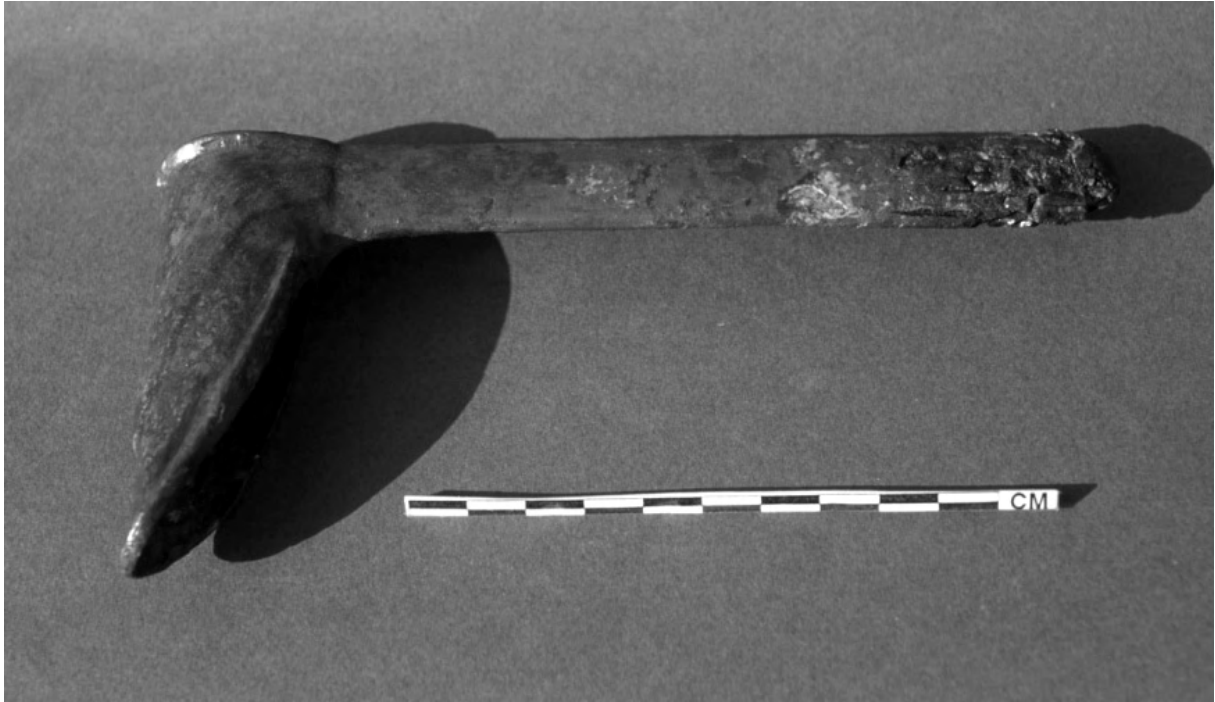
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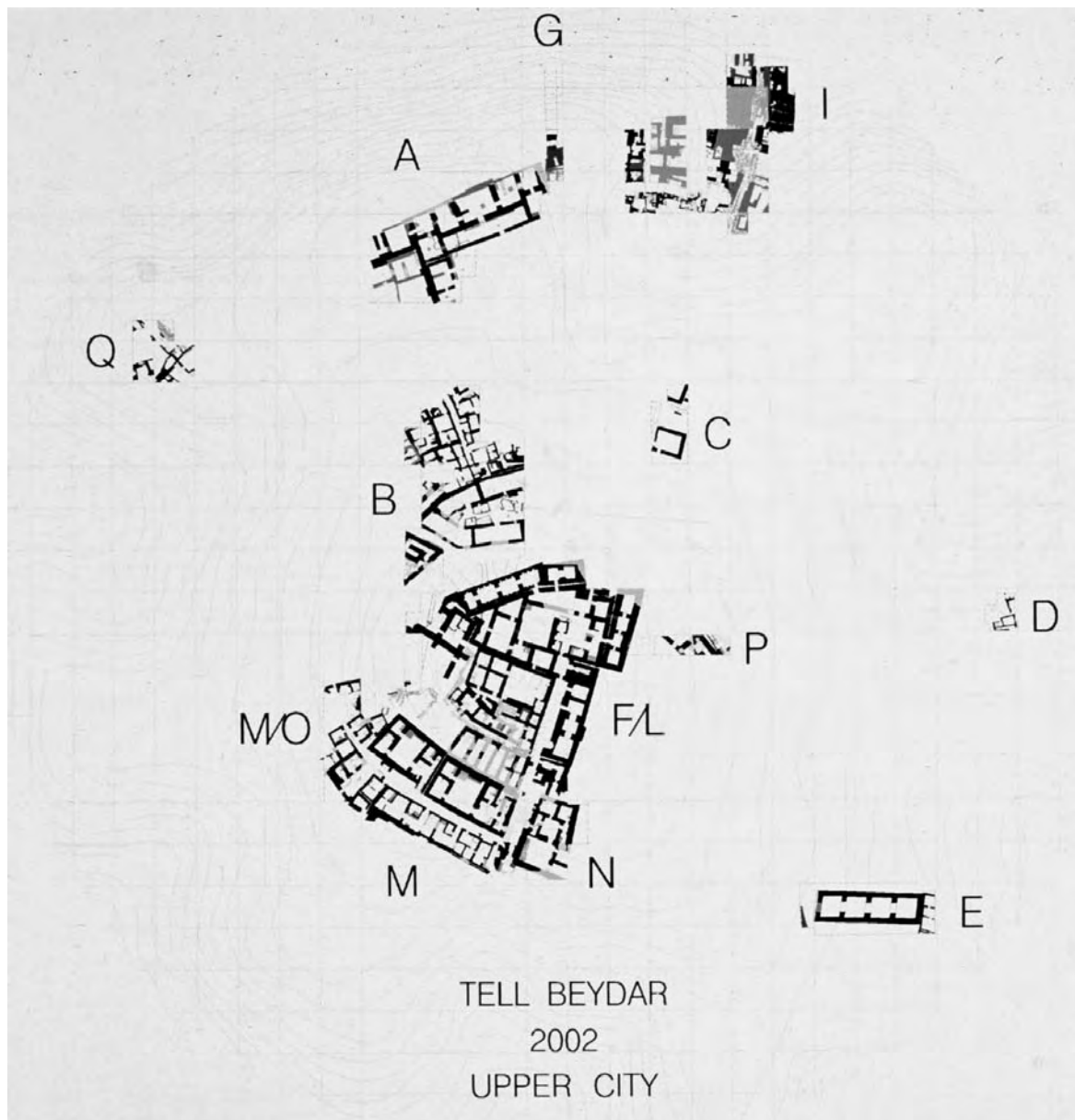
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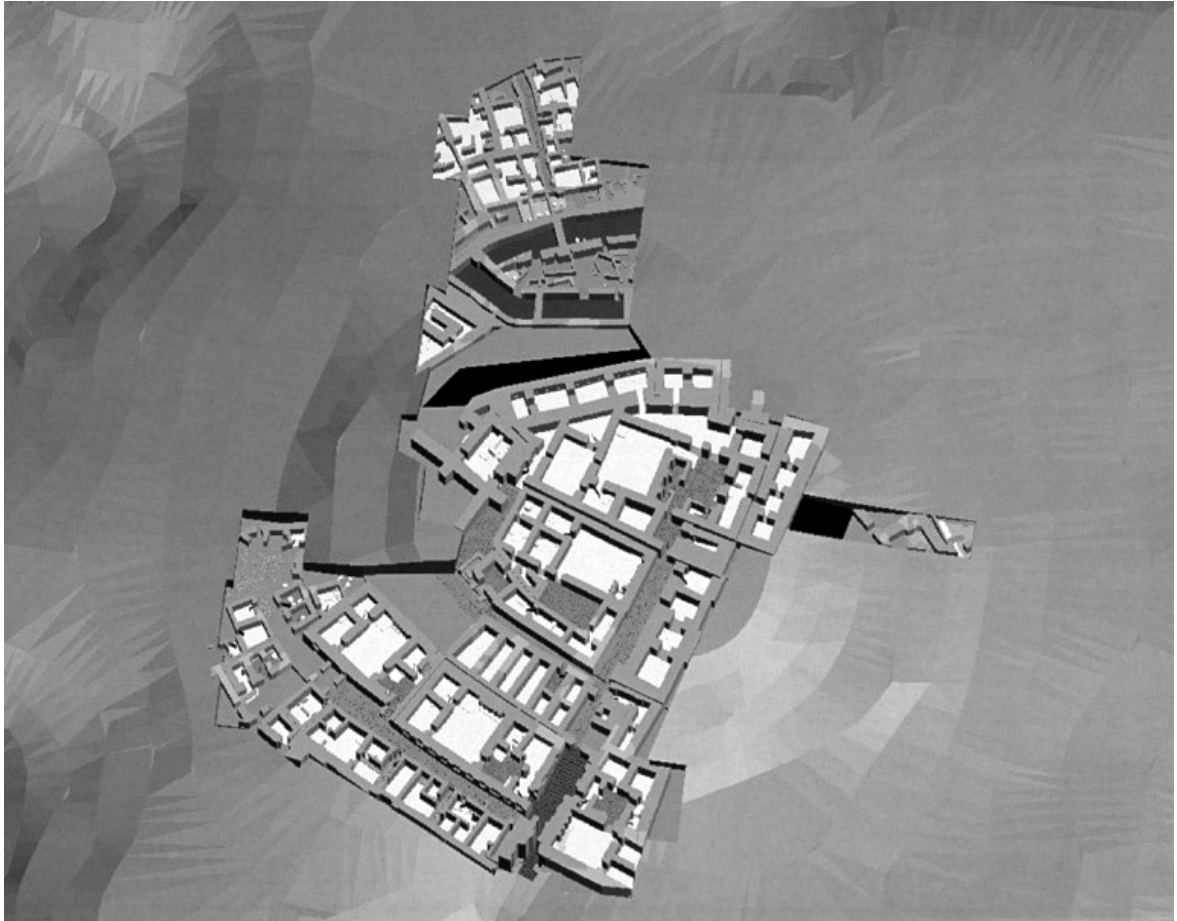
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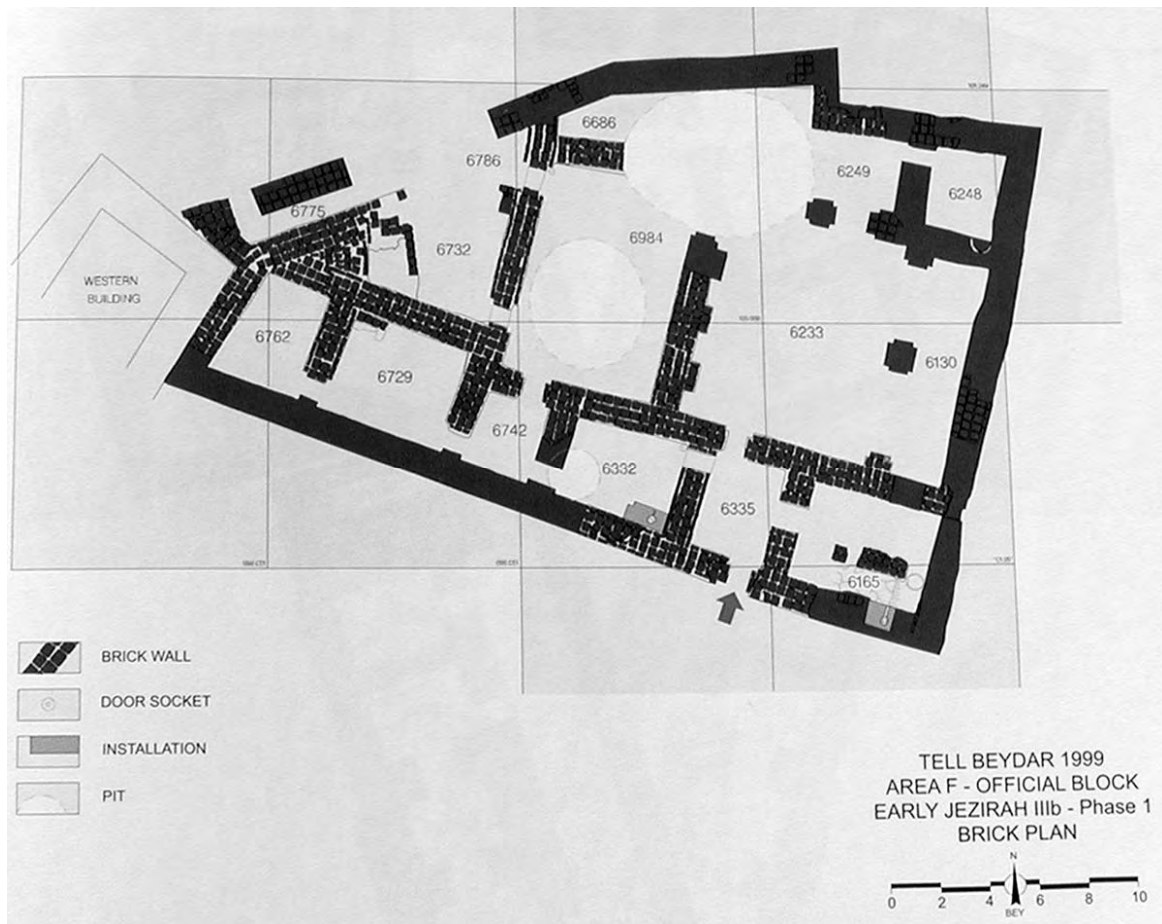
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- Figure 54



- Figure 55



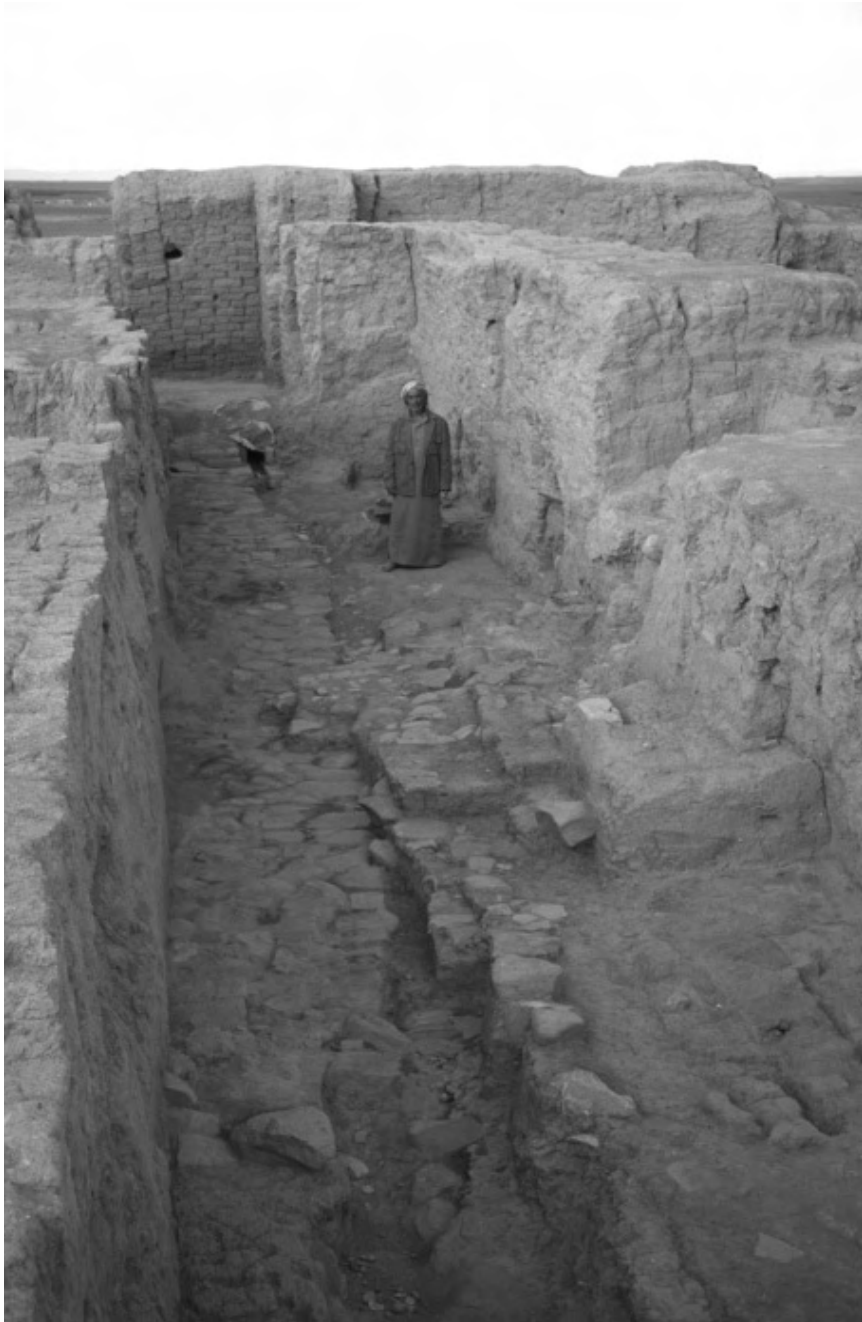
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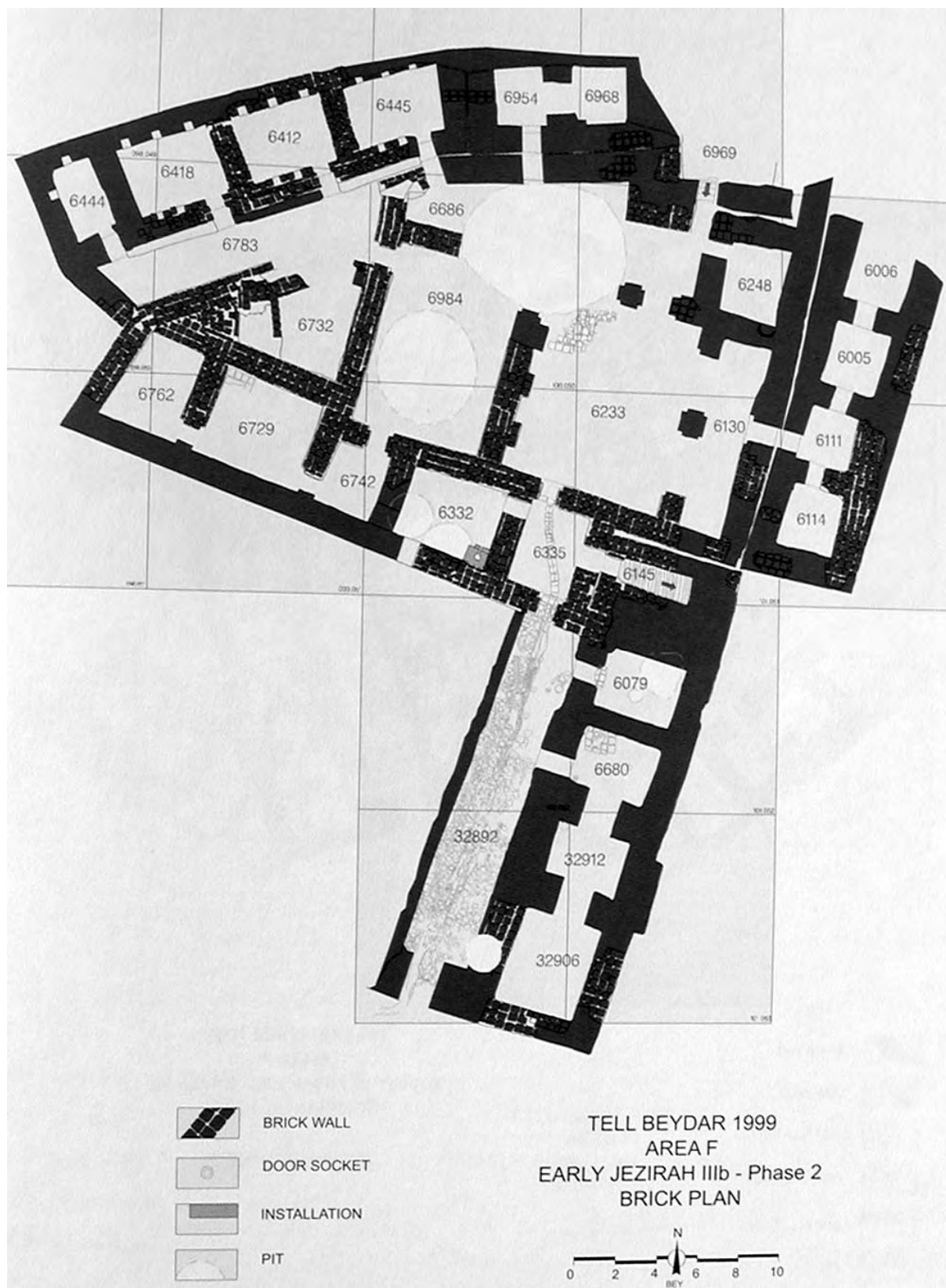
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- Figure 60



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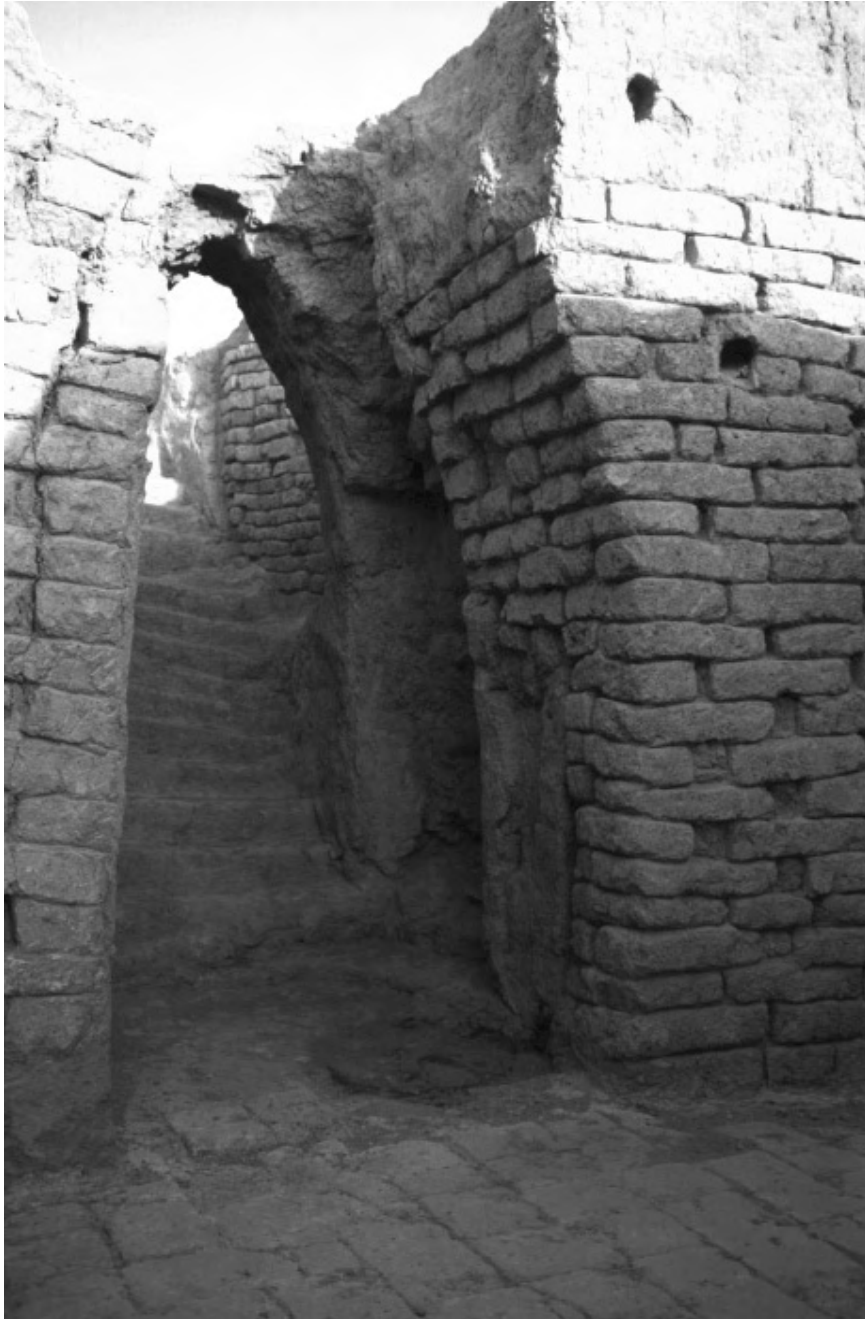
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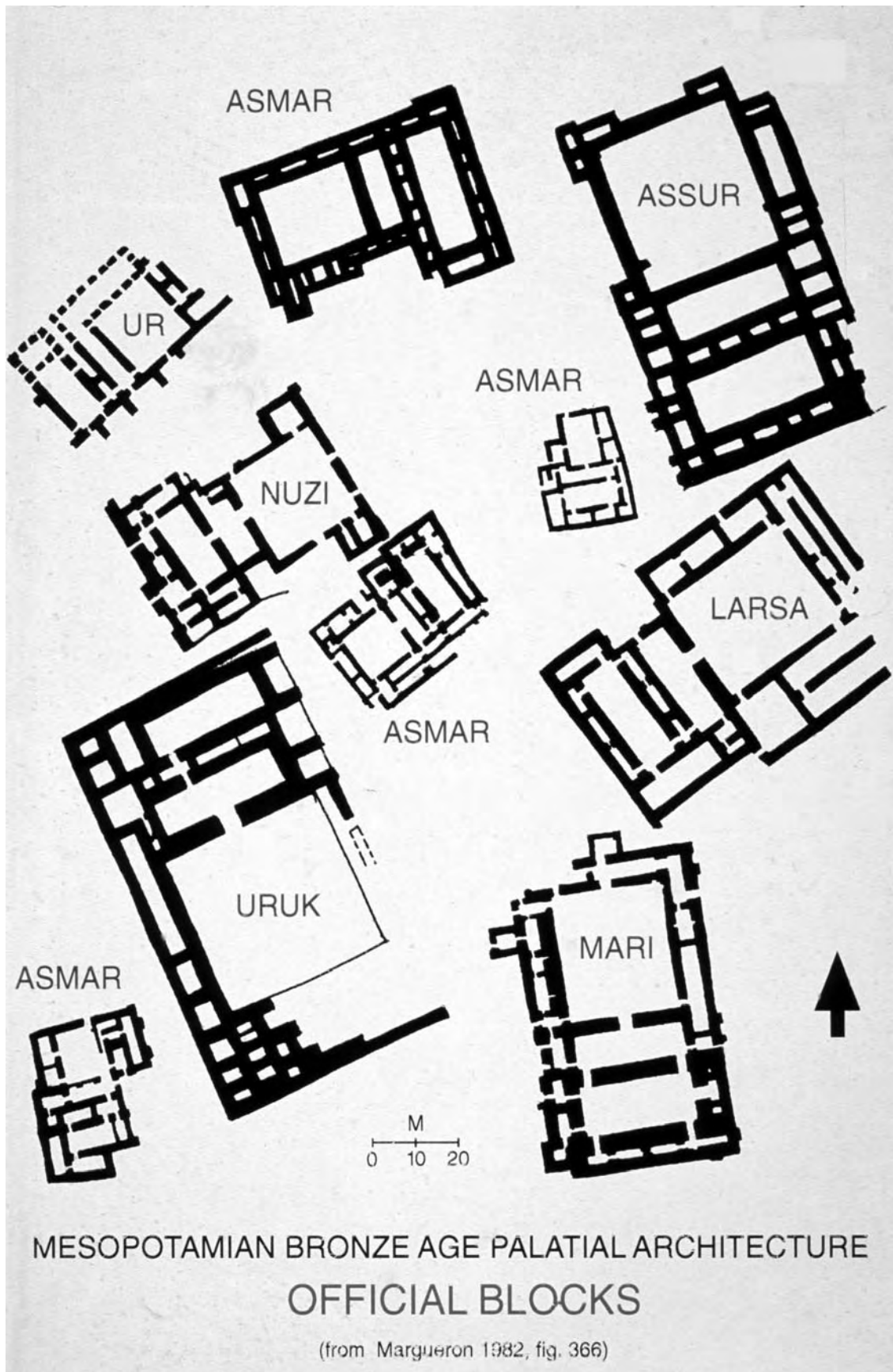
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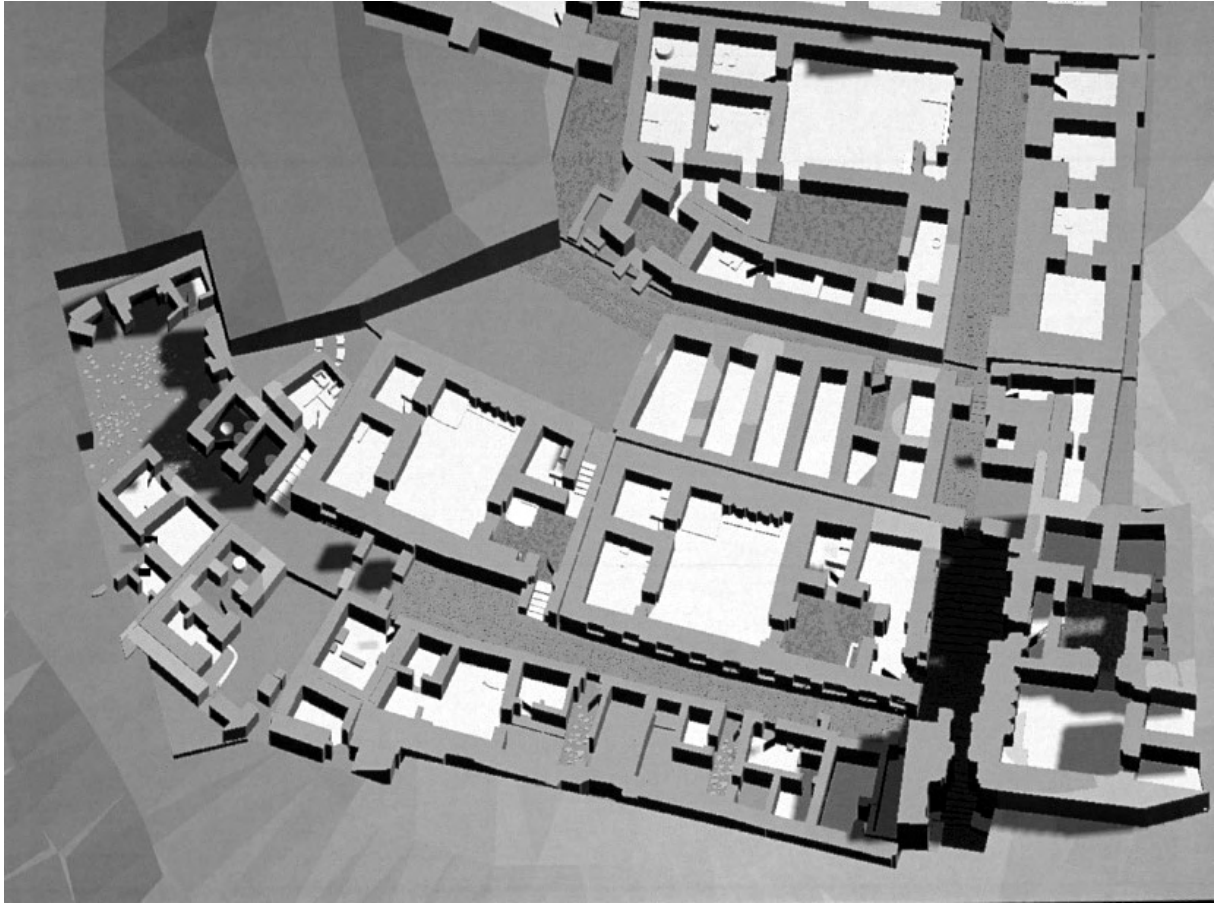
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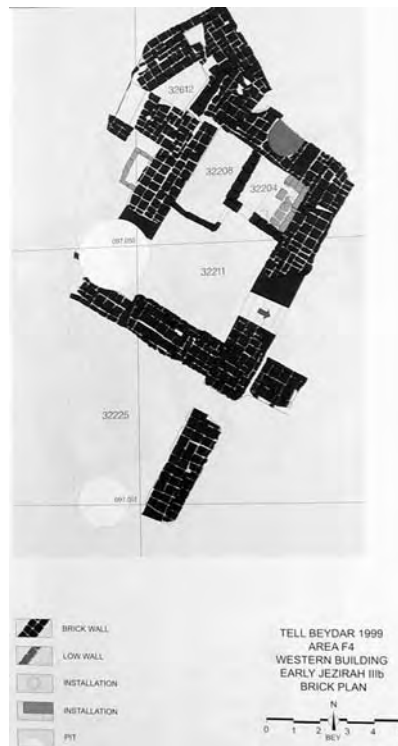
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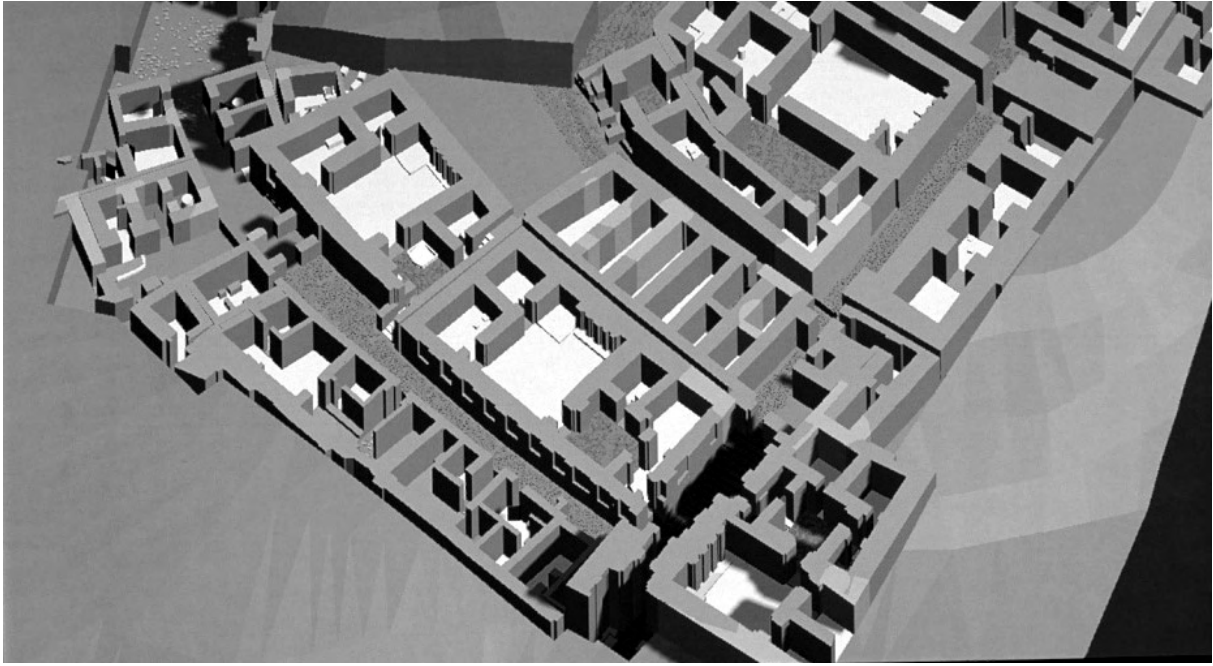
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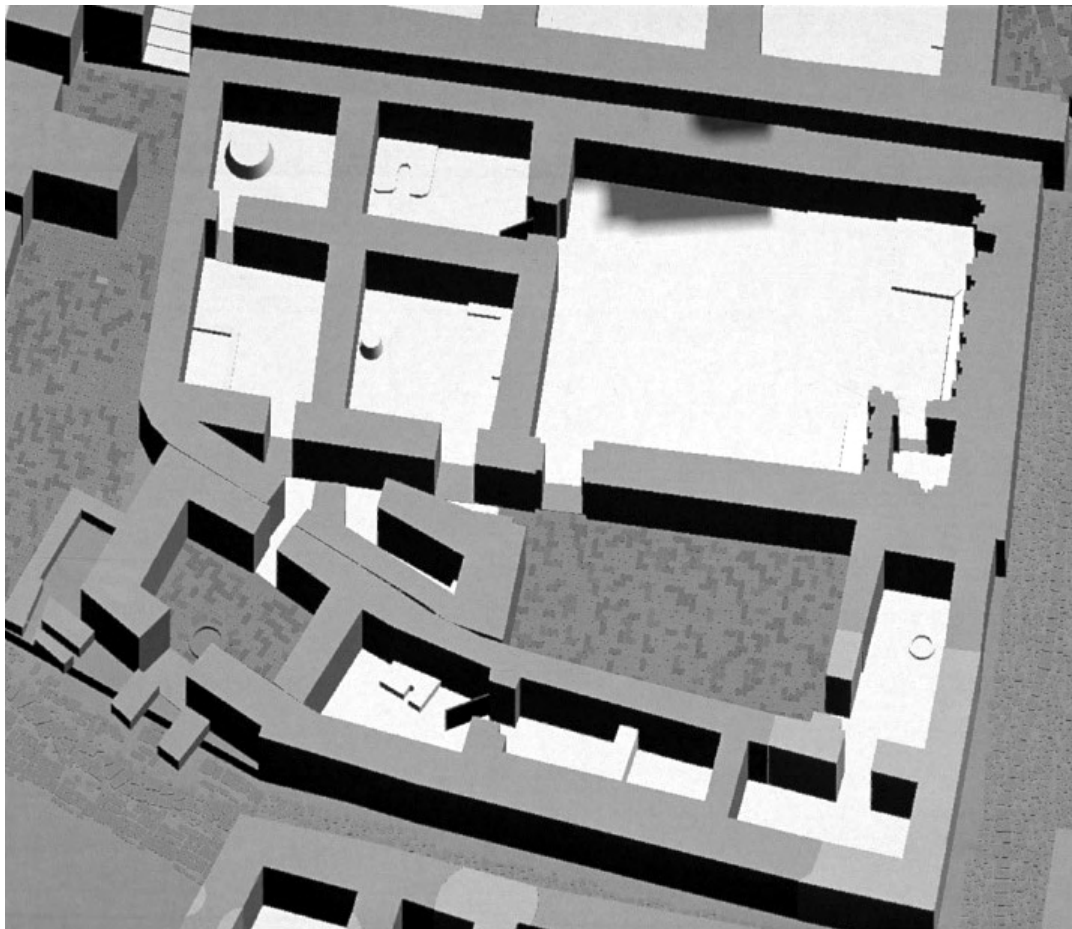
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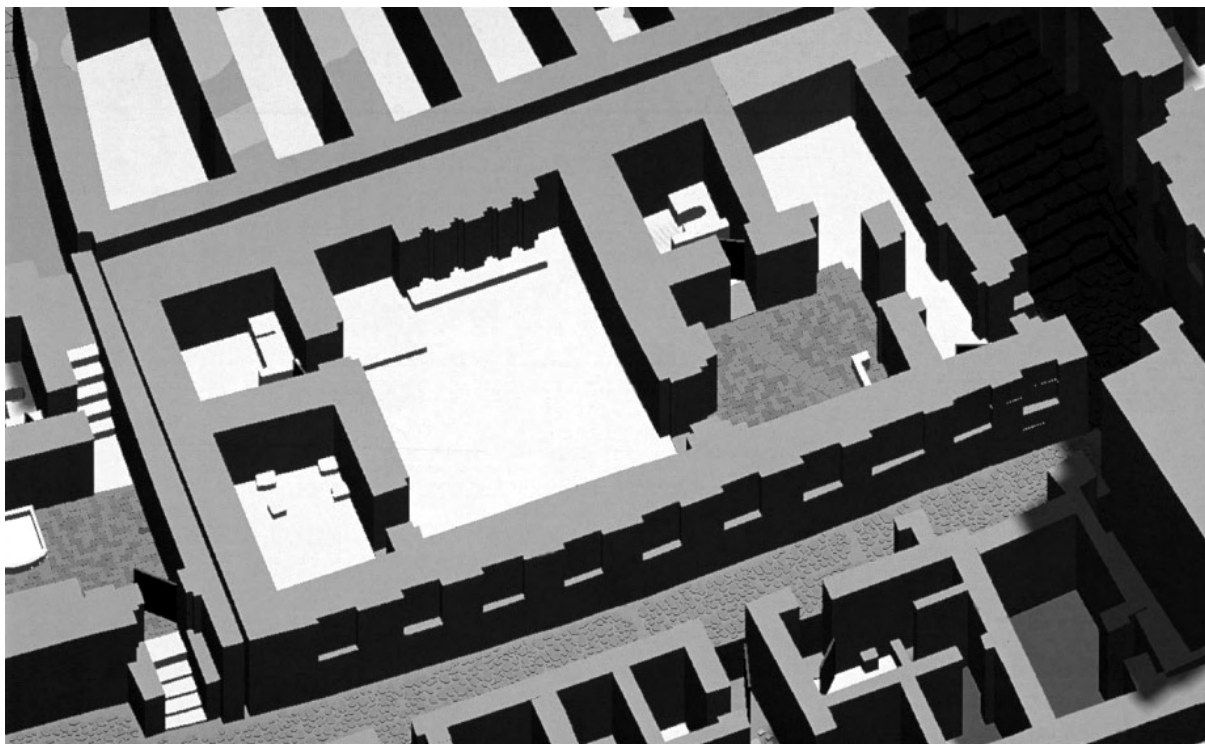
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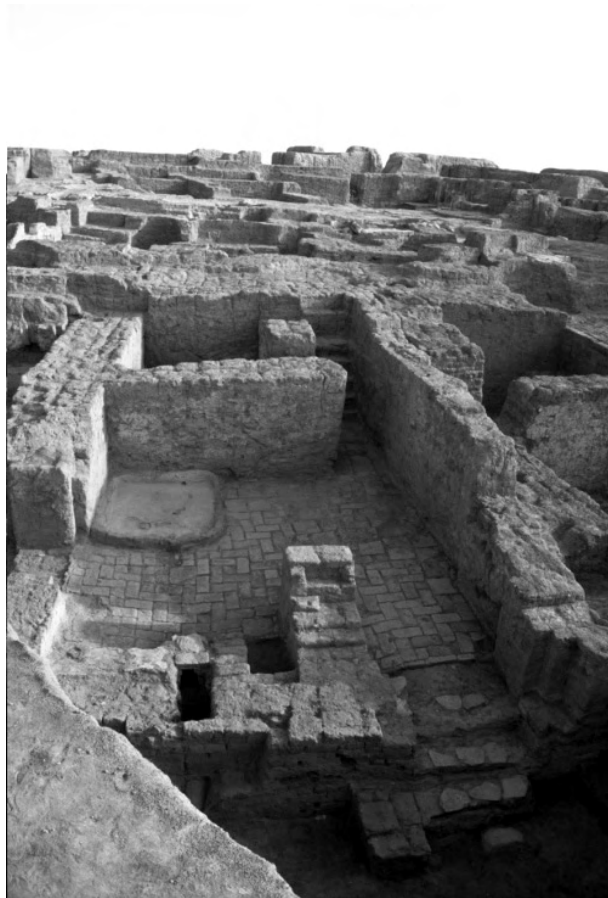
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- Figure 81



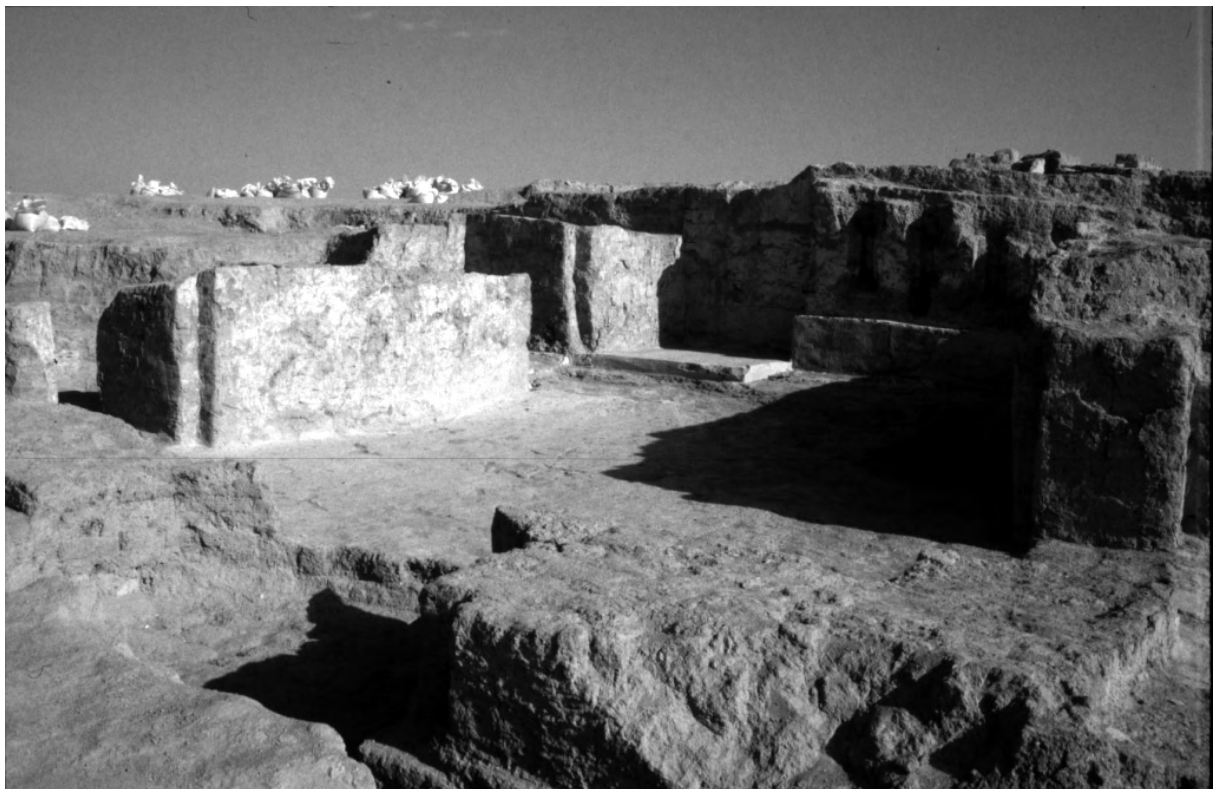
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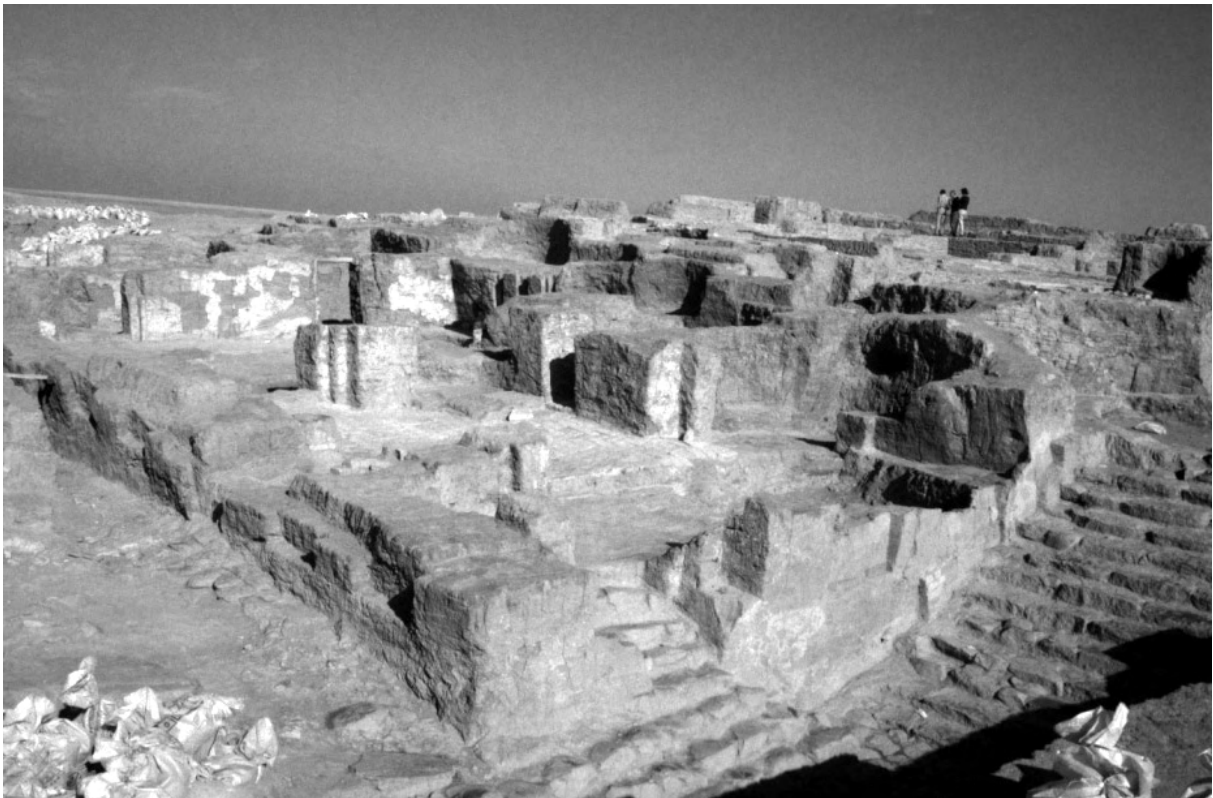
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- Figure 86



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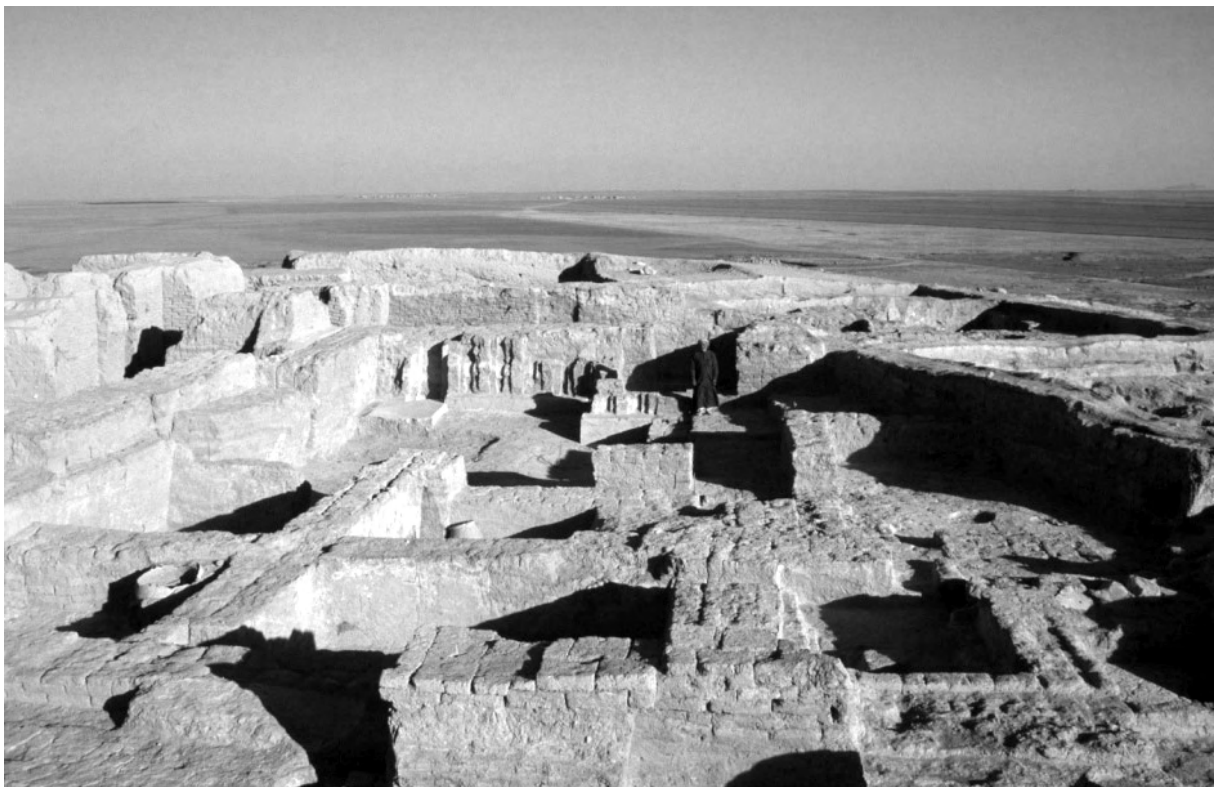
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- Figure 90



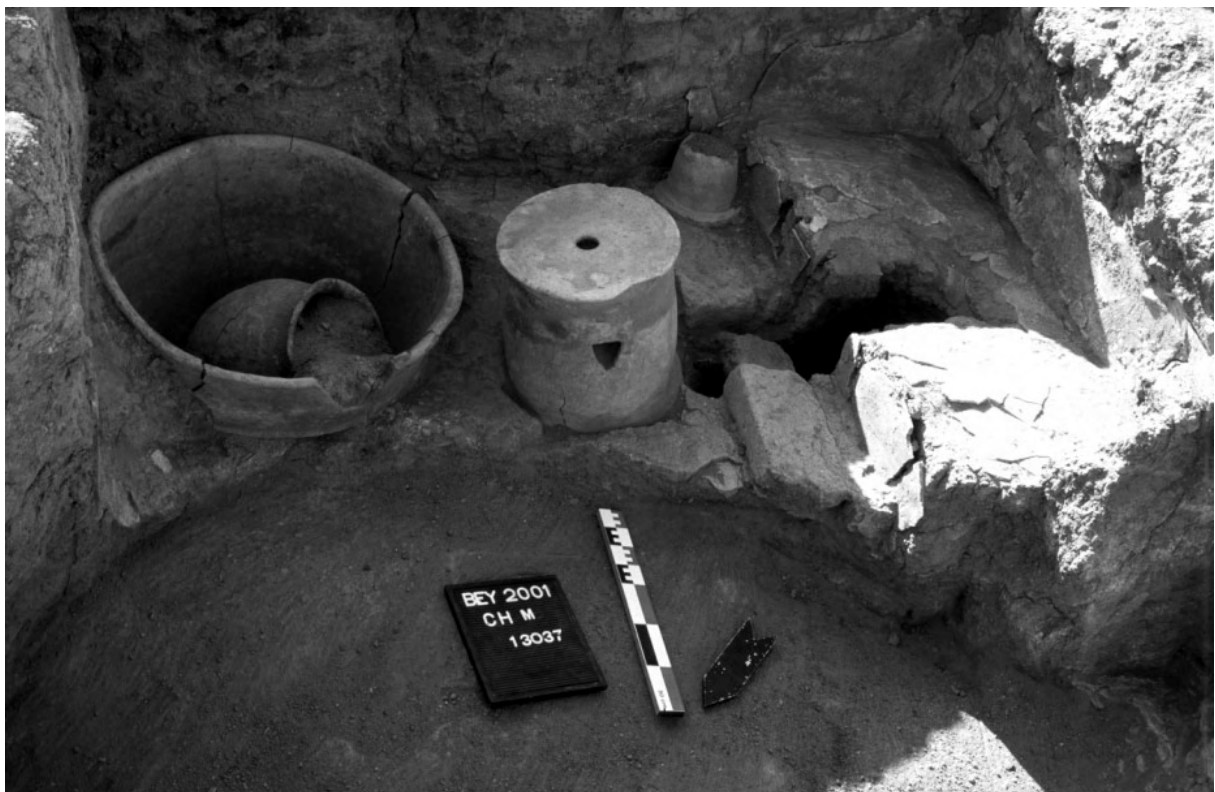
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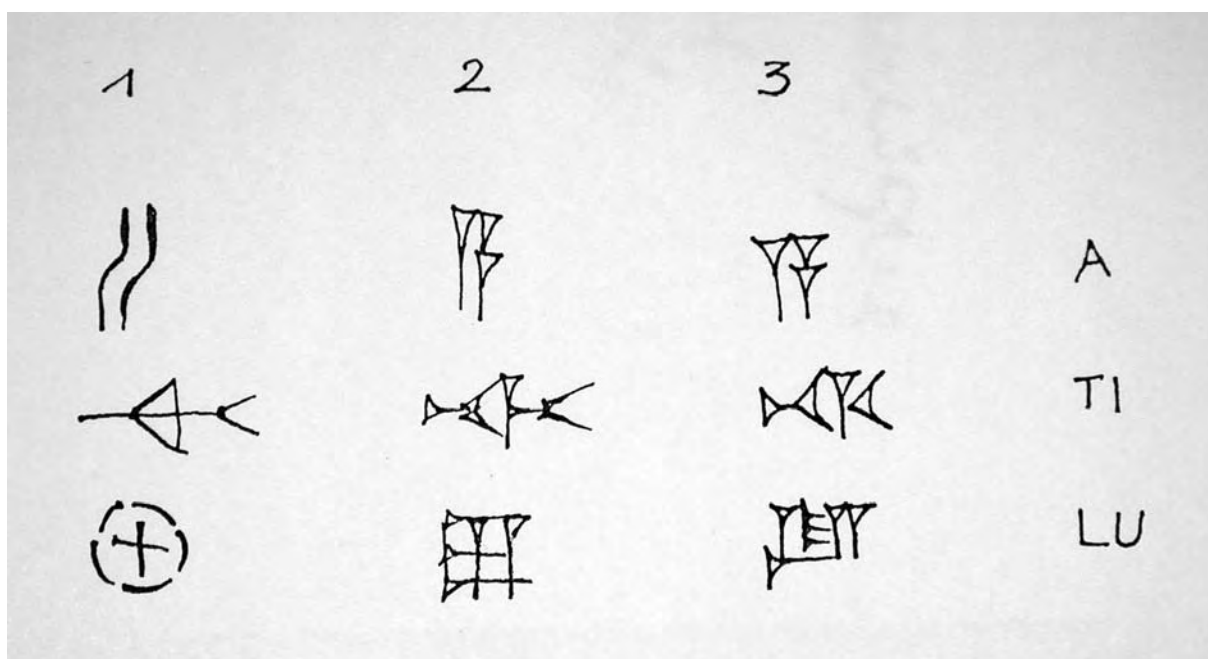
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- Fig. 163



- Fig. 164



- Fig. 165



- Fig. 166



- Fig. 167



- Fig. 168



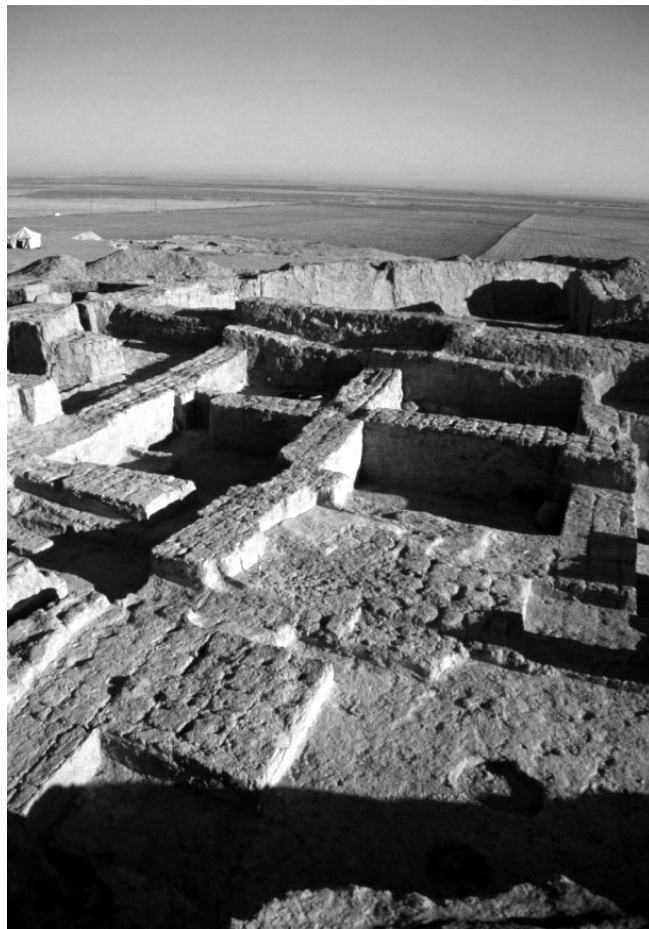
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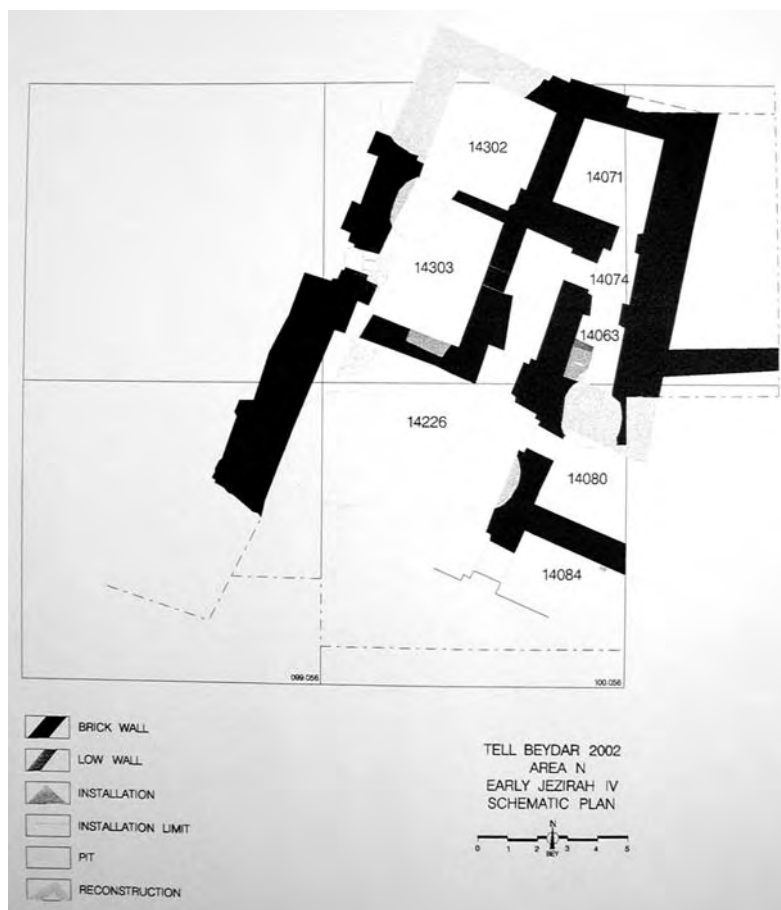
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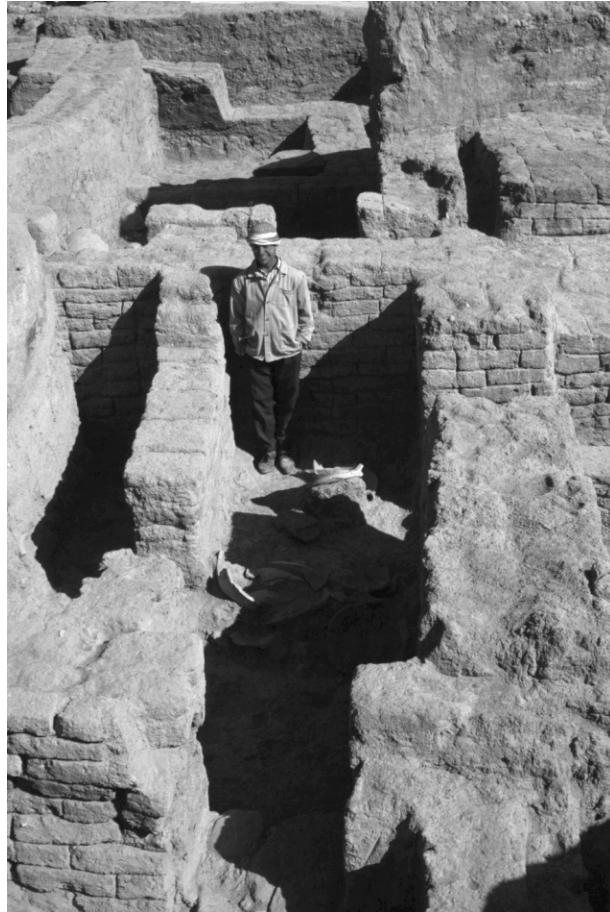
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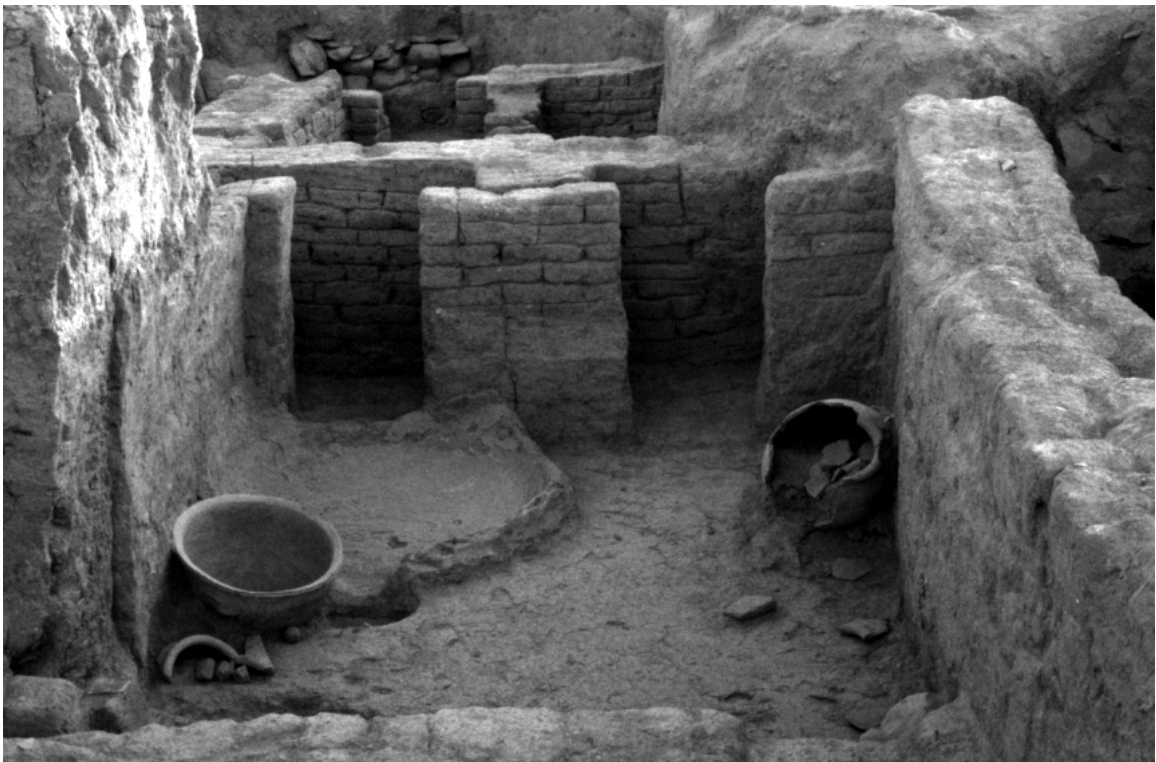
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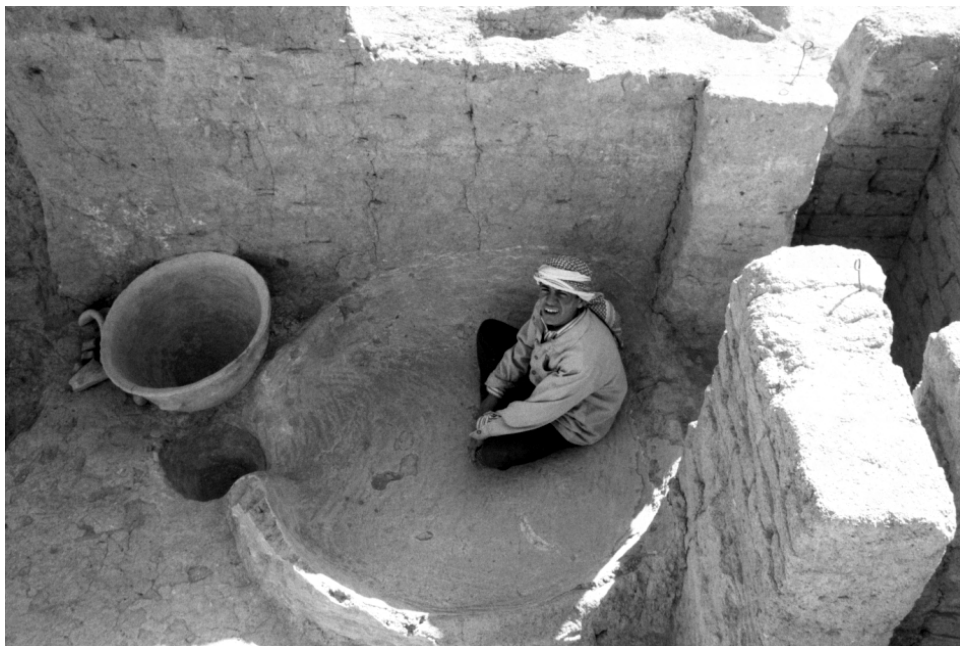
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- Fig. 175



- Fig. 176



- Fig. 177



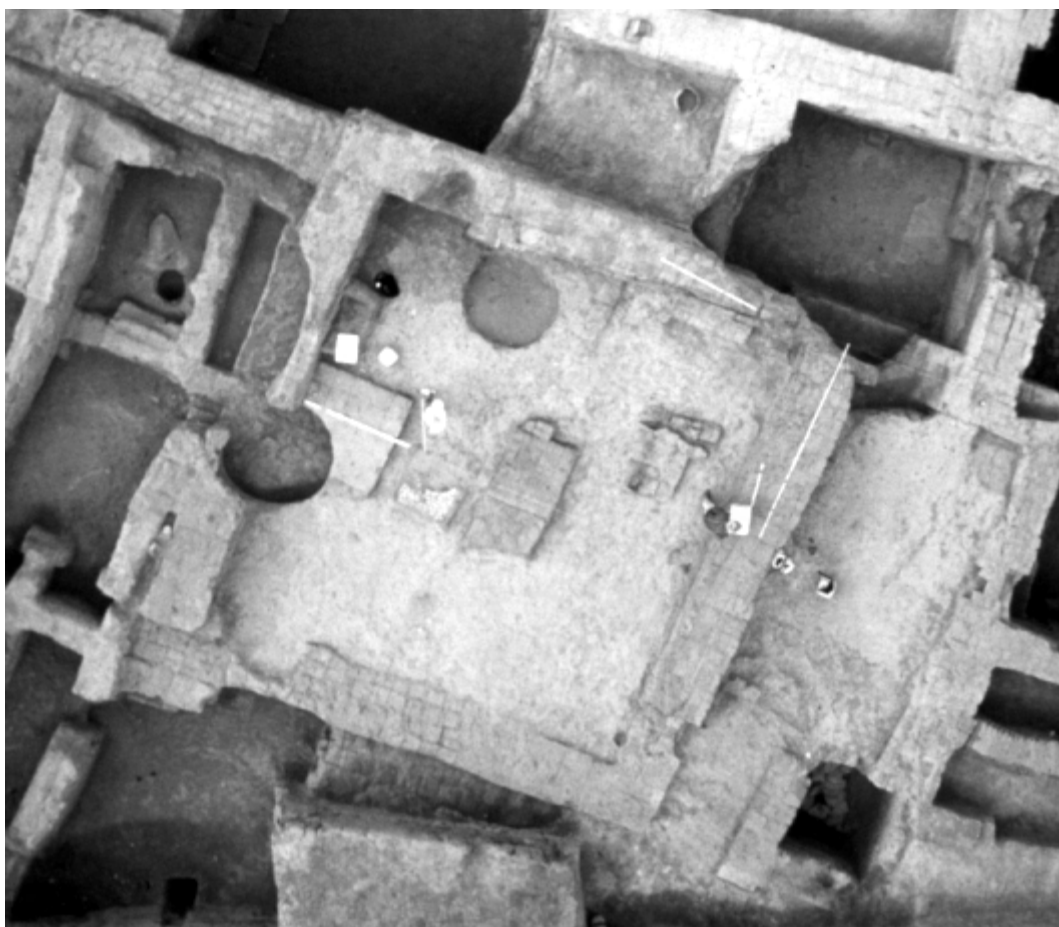
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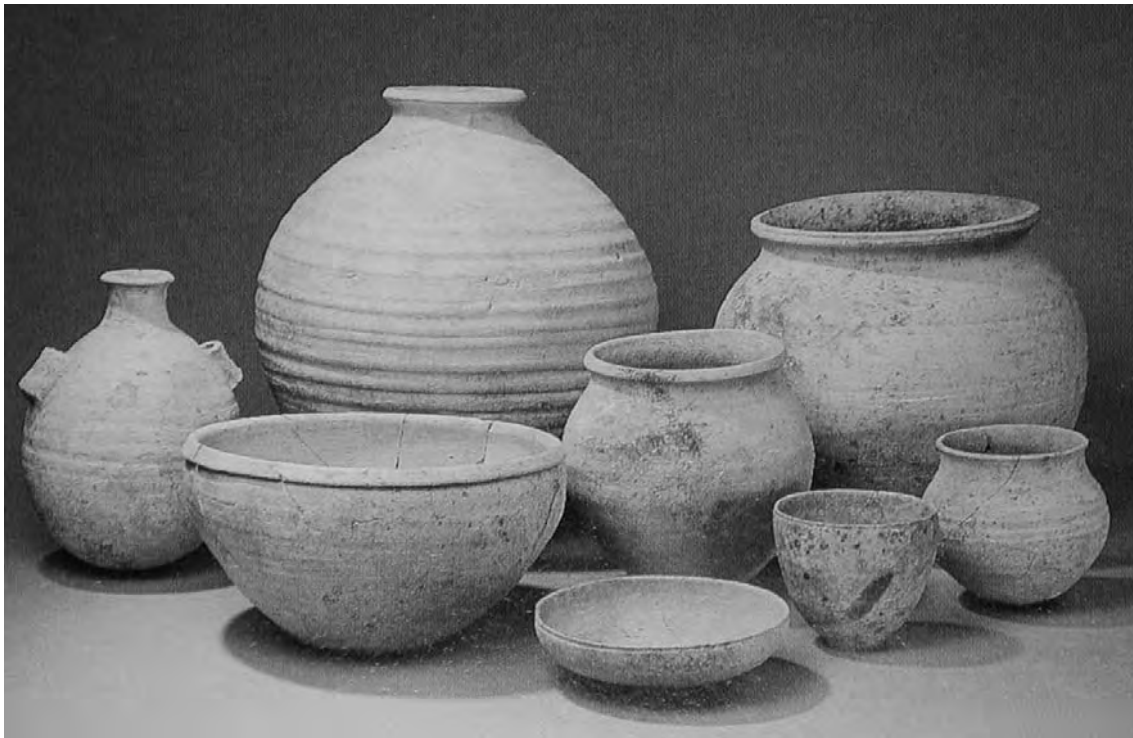
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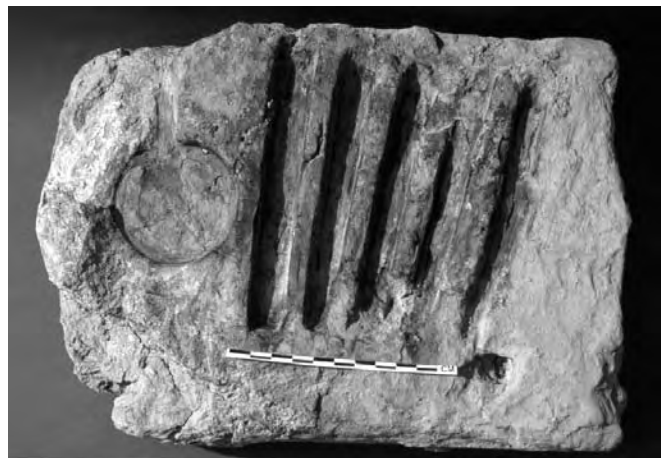
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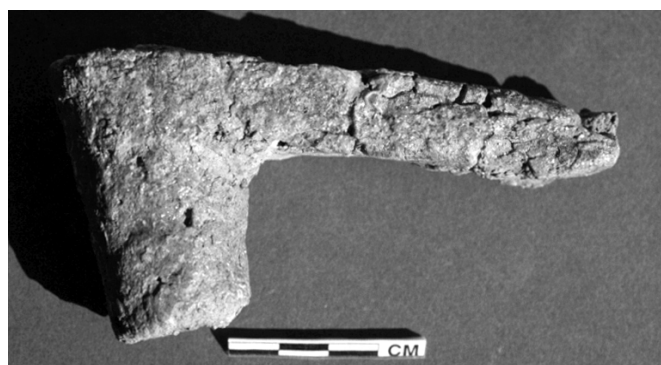
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- Fig. 182



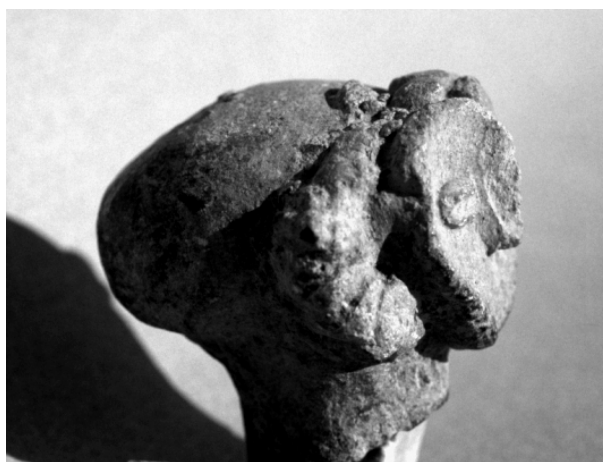
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- Fig. 184



- Fig. 185



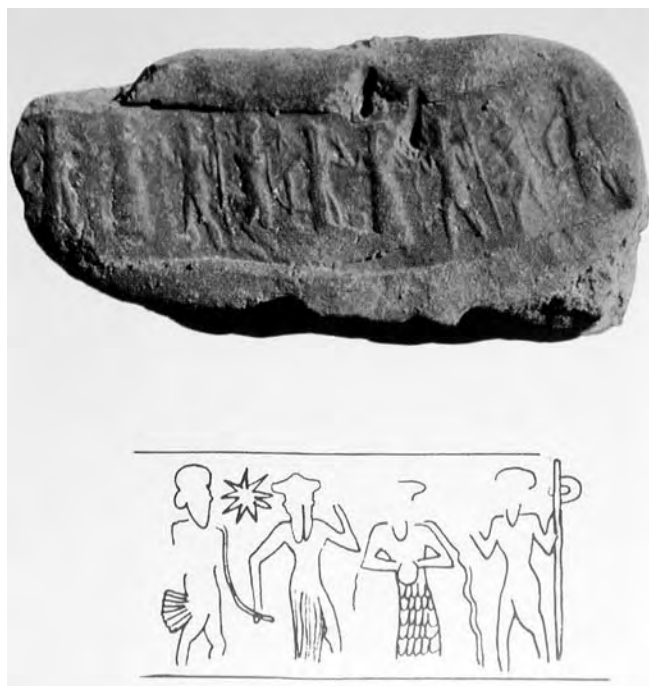
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- Fig. 187



- Fig. 188



- Fig. 189



- Fig. 190



- Fig. 191



- Fig. 192



- Fig. 193



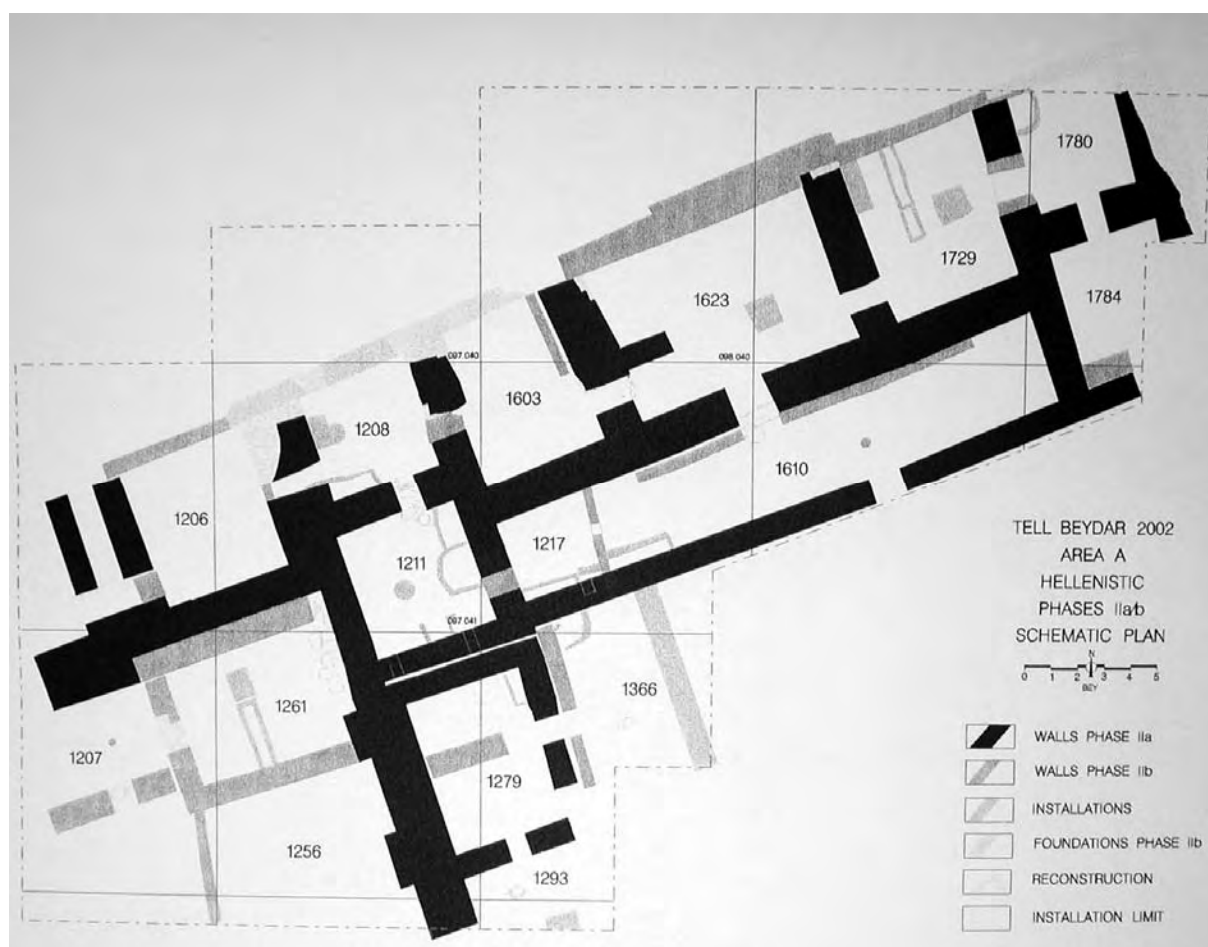
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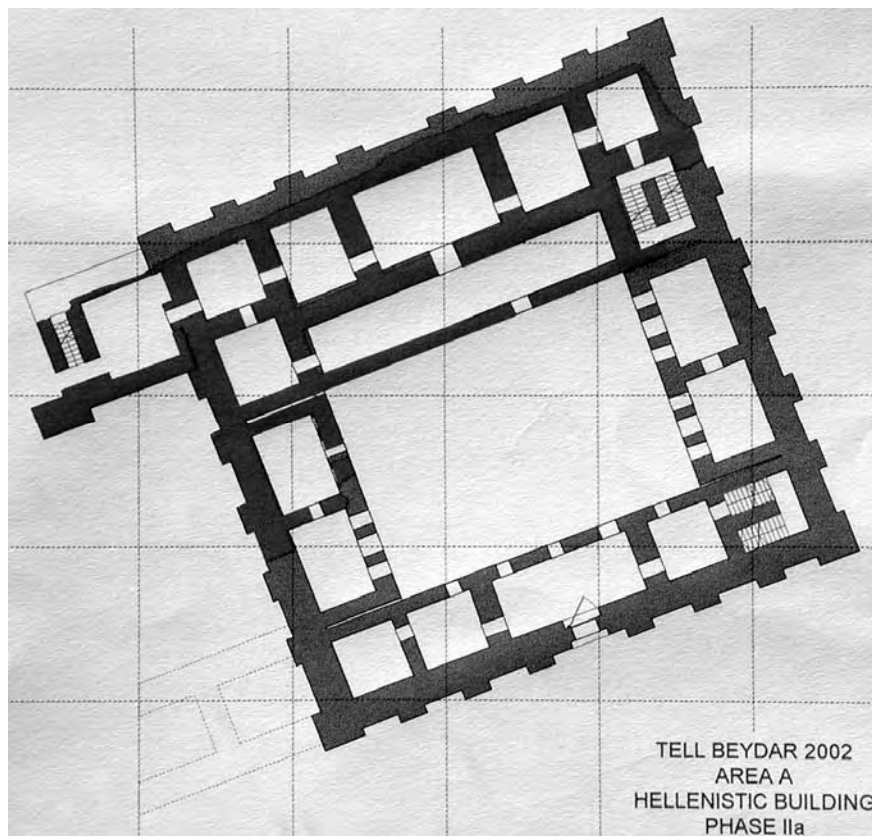
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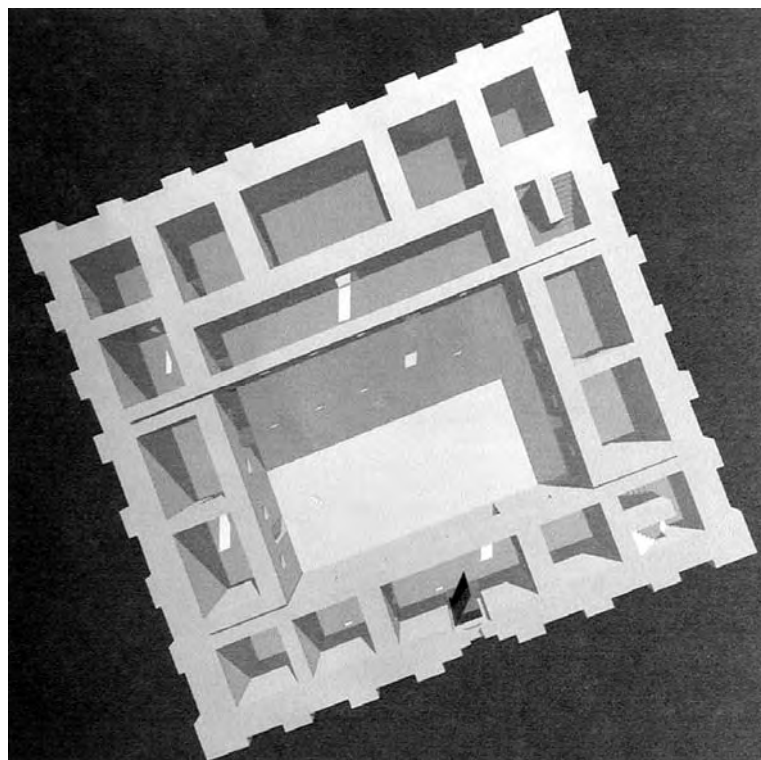
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- Fig. 197



- Fig. 198



- Fig. 199



- Fig. 200



- Fig. 201



- Fig. 202



- Fig. 203



- Fig. 204



- Fig. 205



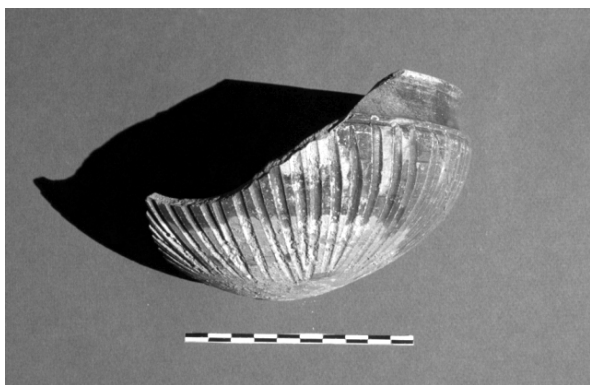
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- Fig. 207



- Fig. 208



- Fig. 209



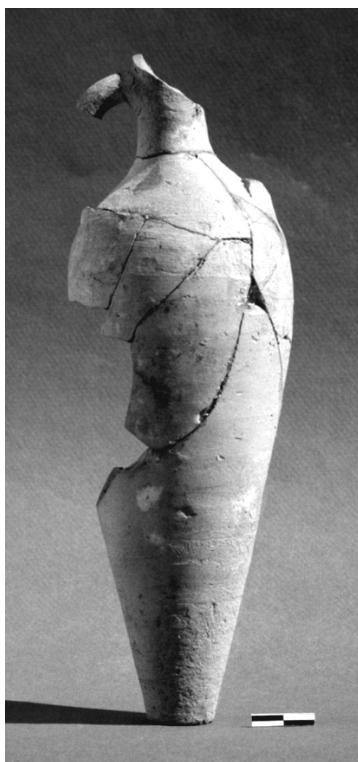
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- Fig. 211



- Fig. 212



- Fig. 213



- Fig. 214



- Fig. 215



- Fig. 216



- Fig. 217