

TELL EL-RETABA 2017. THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD SETTLEMENT

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Abstract: One of the current projects of the Polish-Slovak Archaeological Mission in Tell el-Retaba is the exploration of a large area of the Third Intermediate Period settlement. During the 2017 season several houses belonging to this settlement were partly excavated. House {2147}, in which several phases of occupation could be distinguished, was particularly interesting. This house yielded an unusually rich set of small finds, including a bronze forked butt of a spear, and a set of lead fishing-net sinkers.

Keywords: Third Intermediate Period, settlement, Tell el-Retaba

1. Introduction

The Polish-Slovak Archaeological Mission in Tell el-Retaba continued the exploration of the Third Intermediate Period settlement remains in Area 9

in 2017 (Fig. 1).¹ The research project, launched in 2016 and planned for three seasons,² aims at uncovering a larger fragment of the settlement in the area located between two structures discovered in 2010 and 2012: The stable {518} (close to the northwest corner of the area marked in Fig. 1) and the house {991} (in the southeast corner). The main goal of the ongoing project is to recognize the structure of the settlement, its evolution during the several centuries of the Third Intermediate Period and the status of the community that lived there.

2. Third Intermediate Period: Phase C

The phasing system established as a result of over ten years of works of the Polish-Slovak Mission is summarized in Table 1 below. The phases described in the present report are marked in bold.

Phase	Sub-phase	Dating	Main features
G	G3	Second Intermediate Period	Early open settlement and cemetery
	G2	Second Intermediate Period	Open settlement and cemetery
	G1	Second Intermediate Period	Open settlement and cemetery
F	F4c	Early 18 th Dynasty	Cemetery – changes of burial practices
	F4b		The cemetery is overbuilt by a settlement
	F4a		Settlement of the so-called Green houses
	F3b	Early 18 th Dynasty	Settlements of the Green and Black houses
	F3a		Settlement of the so-called Black houses
	F2	Early 18 th Dynasty	Scattered settlement remains
F1	Late 18 th Dynasty	No archaeological record yet	
E		19 th Dynasty	Fortress of the 19 th Dynasty and settlement
D		20 th Dynasty	Fortress of the 20 th Dynasty
C	C4	Third Intermediate Period	Settlement
	C3b	Third Intermediate Period	Settlement
	C3a		
	C2b	Third Intermediate Period	Settlement
	C2a		
C1	Third Intermediate Period	Settlement	
B		Late Period	Settlement with tower houses
A		Modern	Ottoman ovens and pipes, among others

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¹ Reports from previous excavations of Third Intermediate Period remains in Tell el-Retaba can be found in RZEPKA et al. 2009, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2017.

² Financed by the Polish National Science Centre, grant 2015/17/B/HS3/00597, and supported by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology.

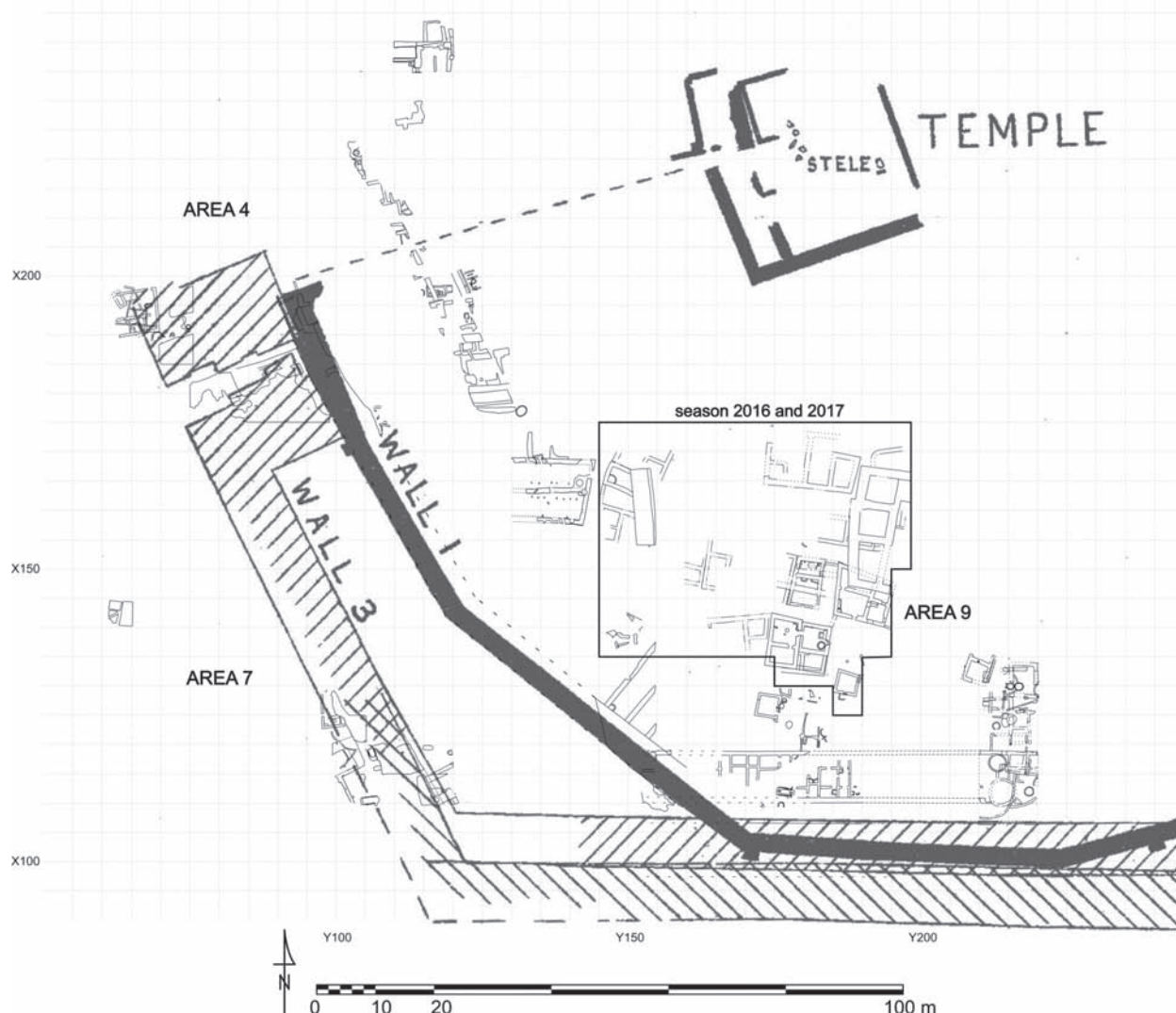


Fig. 1. General plan of the western part of the site with location of areas excavated in 2016 and 2017 (drawing Ł. Jarmużek, based on PETRIE and DUNCAN, PL. XXXV)

The overall view of the settlement from phase C discovered in Area 9 in season 2016³ changed considerably after season 2017. The main changes concerned phases C3 and C2 in the area of building {2147} (Figs. 2, 13, 14, 25). Fieldwork in 2017 showed frequent changes in the layout of structures in the area. Thus, it was necessary to distinguish sub-phases C3b, C3a, C2b, and C2a.

2.1 Settlement: Phase C3b (Fig. 2)

2.1.1 Buildings {2664} and {2637}

Buildings {2664} and {2637} were only partly excavated (Figs 2, 3, 4). At the present state of

work, it seems that both structures originated in phase C4 but were also in use in phase C3. Walls of both buildings abutted each other, but it is plausible that they were independent structures. The unearthed fragment of building {2664} was probably a room measuring 2.40×1.40 m. Walls of the room, 0.65-m thick, were relatively well preserved. An entrance to the room has yet to be located, but it seems to have been placed in the eastern wall of the room. The room was used as a dump during phase C3b. A thick layer of debris (2683), which marks the end of use of the room, was covered with two layers of ashes (2674, 2681). Seven fragments of limestone vessels were found inside these

³ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 55–68.

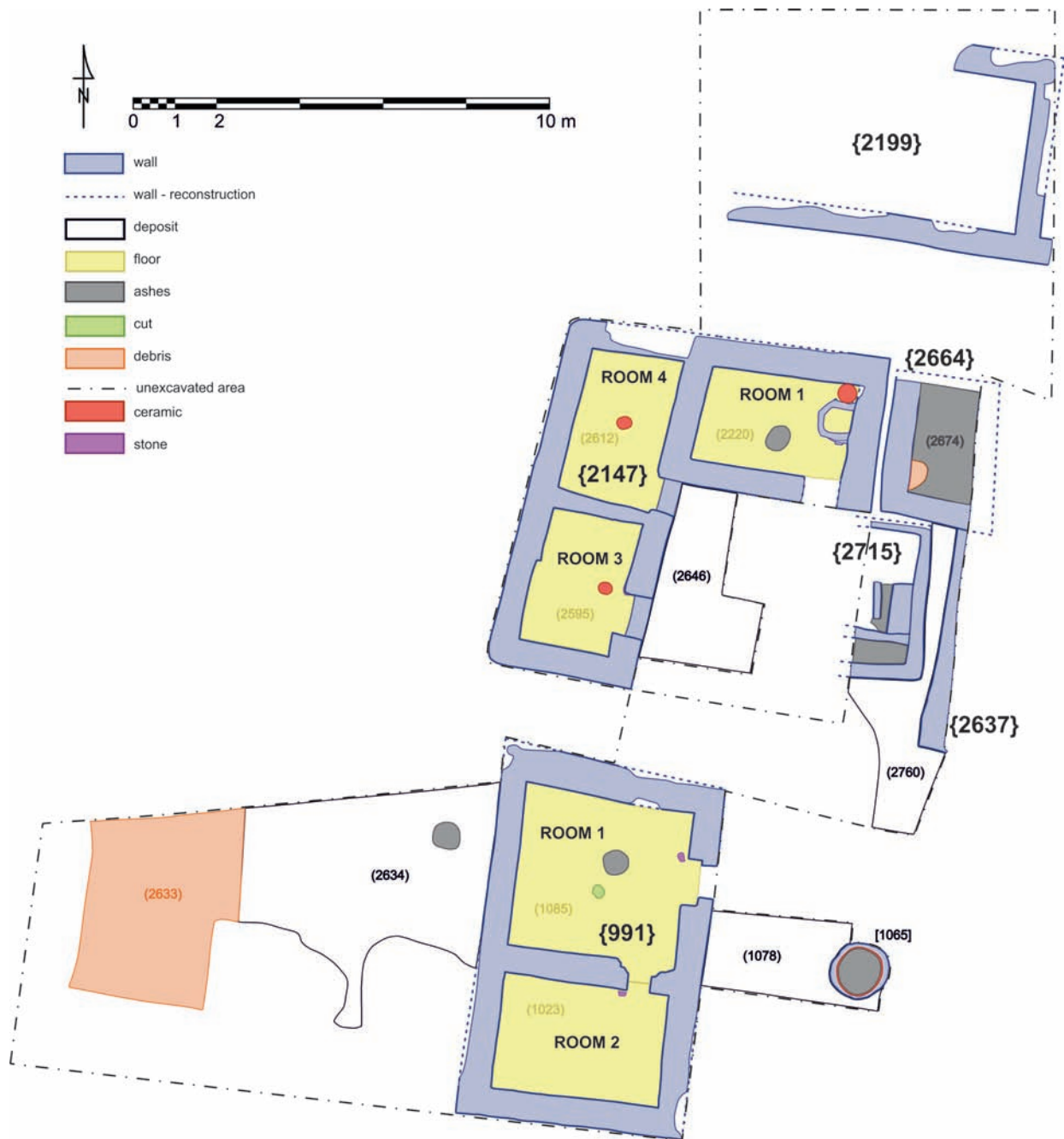


Fig. 2. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phase C3b (drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

units. Moreover, there was a fragment of a pottery vessel with remains of bronze slag attached to its walls. It was most probably a melting pot.

The west wall of building {2637} was at least 5.30 m long and 0.60 m thick.

2.1.2 Building {2147} (Figs. 2, 3, 5)

Building {2147} was built to the west of building {2664}. There was a 0.15-m gap between the walls

of these two structures. Building {2147} turned out to be much bigger than previously assumed.⁴ The ground plan was L-shaped and comprised three rooms and a small open courtyard in front of them. The eastern part of the courtyard was occupied by structure {2715} (see below, 2.1.3).

Room 1 was partly excavated in 2016⁵ and the results can now be reassessed in the context of the investigation of the area as a whole. Room 1 measured 3.7×2.3 m. The entrance, roughly 0.80 m

⁴ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 55–58.

⁵ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 55–58.

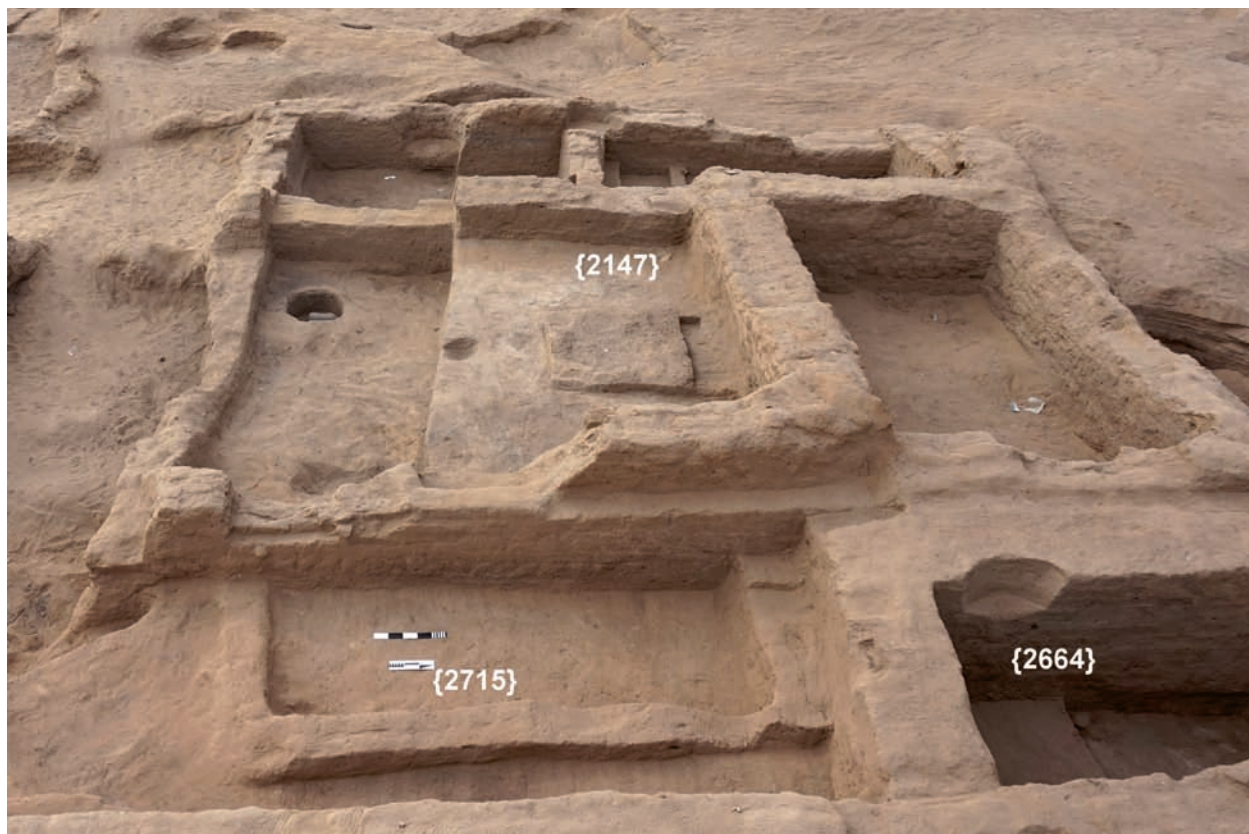


Fig. 3. Buildings {2147}, {2664} and {2715}, belonging to various phases of the Third Intermediate Period settlement (photo S. Rzepka)



Fig. 4. Oven {2677} located between building {2147} (wall [2147]), building {2664} (wall [2665]) and building {1095} (wall [2077]); underneath structures from earlier phases: Building {2715} (walls [2715], [2716]) and building {2637} (wall [2637]) (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

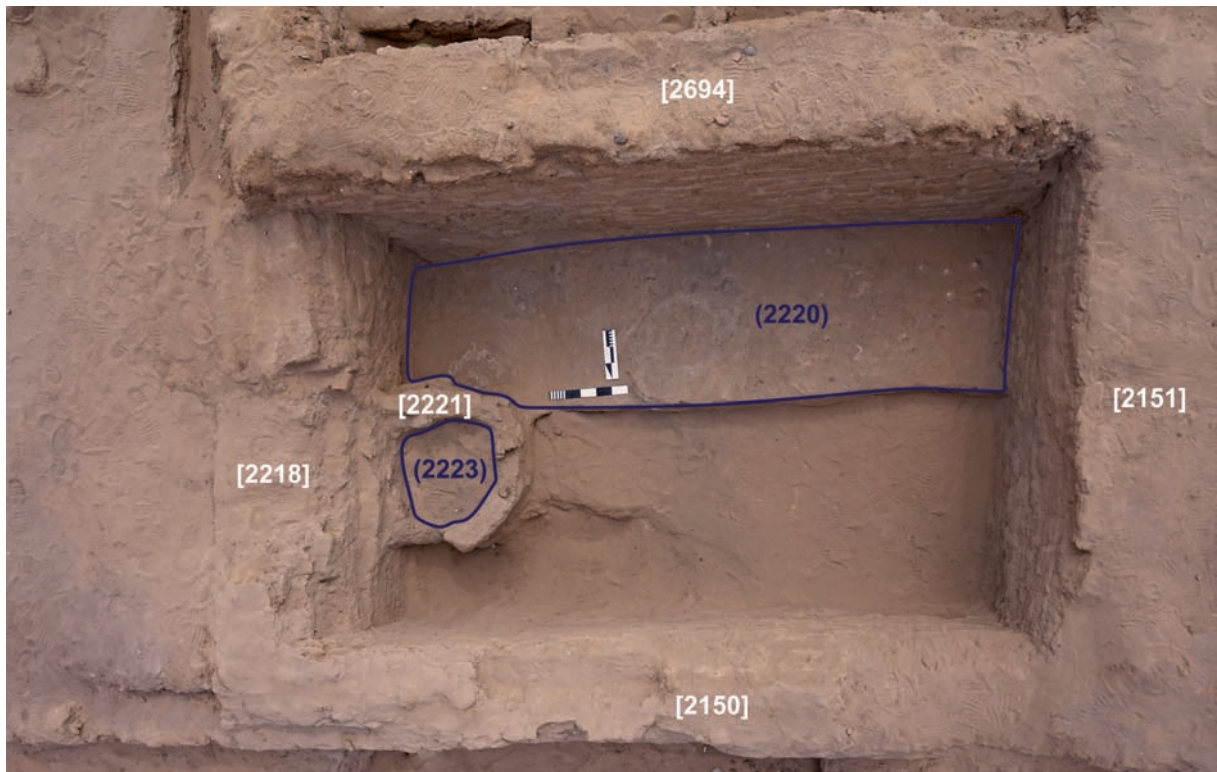


Fig. 5. Building {2147}, room 1: Bin [2221] standing on the floor (2220) (photo S. Rzepka, processing L. Jarmużek)

wide, was located in the eastern part of the south wall. A single floor level (2220) was recorded inside the chamber (Fig. 5). An oval cut <2615> filled with a layer of ashes (2614) was in the middle. A semicircular bin [2221] was constructed in the northeastern corner; at a later time, the bin was partly destroyed by a round cut <2214> intended to hold a large storage vessel. Remains of two storage vessels were found within: 2240, only the bottom part of which was extant, and 2213, its completely preserved replacement. The assemblage of finds from the floor constituted a relatively rich set: Earlier work in 2016 had yielded nine loom weights of unbaked silt, a limestone spindle whorl, three grinders, three fragments of querns, a slate palette, a fragment of a stone vessel and a faience scarab.⁶ Exploration of the rest of this floor in 2017 yielded more small finds, including a particularly interesting bronze artifact S3414 (Fig. 6). This elongated object is composed of four parts: A hollow shaft socket, prongs with rounded points and a crossbar between them, and a vertical bar below. Rare though they were, objects of this kind were in use in Egypt and Palestine mainly as tomb



Fig. 6. Bronze forked butt S3414 (photos O. Bagi)

equipment. The most numerous analogies, usually dated from the 13th to the end of the 11th century BC, come from, among others, Beth Shean⁷ and Nebesheh.⁸ Two silver specimens originating from the tomb of Psousenes I and one of his officers in Tanis are also known.⁹ Their function remains

⁶ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 55–58.

⁷ OREN 1973, 118–119.

⁸ PETRIE 1888.

⁹ PETRIE 1888.

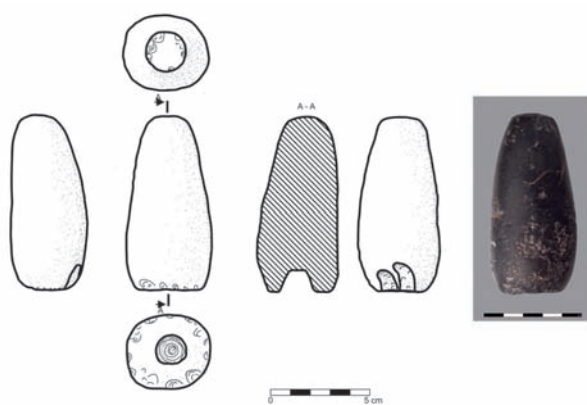


Fig. 7. Basalt pestle pounder S3415
(photo O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A. Rys)



Fig. 8a-b. Fused-together lead net sinkers S3357
(photos O. Bagi, drawing K. Szymańska/A. Rys)

unspecified, although Dothan, pointing to analogies in Egyptian art, claims them to be the ends of some kind of sceptre – objects of ceremonial function.¹⁰ Objects of this kind have been identified as the butt end of a spear,¹¹ but also as an anti-snake weapon.¹² Another object of obscure function was discovered nearby: A pestle-type pounder S3415, made of basalt, its function suggested by traces on its surface (Fig. 7). However, considering that basalt is rare in Retaba, the very regular shape of the piece and the round, precisely drilled depression at one end may suggest that it was an unfinished stone vessel, done on the outside but only started on the inside. Drilled depression may also suggest that the object was used as a capstone of a bow drill. The primary function of the object remains questionable but pounding traces clearly indicate reuse as a pounder.

¹⁰ DOTHAN 1976, 33–34.

¹¹ PETRIE 1917, 33.

¹² CHERF 1982, 86–97.



Fig. 9. Iron knife S3423 (photos O. Bagi)

A set of small objects made of lead was found on the floor as well. They are badly corroded but, at least in the case of S3357 S3372, S3373 and S3374, their shape and function is still recognizable (Fig. 8). They were probably net weights made of flat pieces of lead folded around a net cord.¹³ As other small pieces of lead of various shapes were found nearby (S3375, S3393, S3413), it seems more plausible that lead utensils were produced in this room than that it was simply a place for storing fishing nets.

Room 1 delivered yet another interesting object S3423 (Fig. 9). It is an iron knife of the straight type,¹⁴ with a double-edged blade, rounded end and handle with round cross-section. The location of this find was puzzling: It was discovered during the clearing of the top of the west wall of room 1 – it was literally inside the wall, near the southwest

¹³ WILKINSON 1988, Fig. 426; GALILI et al. 2013, 152–154.

¹⁴ PETRIE 1917, 26.

corner of the room. It must have been placed there during the construction of the wall: Whether this was done deliberately, or the knife was simply lost by one of the builders and accidentally covered with mortar remains an open question.

All the features inside room 1 were covered with a relatively thick layer of debris (2216). The layer was considerably thicker in the eastern part of the room, suggesting that the destruction of the east wall was more significant than of the other walls.

Room 4, which lay to the west of room 1 (cf. Fig. 2), measured 3.54×2.25 m. The entrance, 0.80 m wide, was in the southeastern corner. Two



Fig. 10. Bronze ring S3417
(photo O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A. Ryś)

floor levels were noted inside the room. There was a round cut <2611> for a storage vessel (2610) made in the surface in the middle of the first floor (2612). The floor featured a large number of artifacts, mostly stone tools – grinders, polishers, but also two fragments of limestone vessels and a bronze ring (Fig. 10). A limestone door socket was found *in situ*, built into the north wall of the doorway flush with the second floor (2594). The second floor also contained a large assemblage of weights (S3447, S3446, S3443, S3442, S3440, S3437, S3436, S3393, S3386, S3383) made of limestone, rectangular or oval in shape (Fig. 11). Objects of this kind, with a vertical groove along the longer axis, are fairly common in Third Intermediate Period Tell el-Retaba.¹⁵ Based on iconographic sources, one may assume they were used as net sinkers,¹⁶ and as loom weights.¹⁷ In addition to these five grinders, two fragments of querns and one fragment of a stone vessel were found.

South of this chamber lay room 3, which measured 3.25×2.40 m and was entered from the east via a doorway that was about 1 m wide. The floor (2595) inside the room consisted of thin, silty laminas. Two mud-weights and a scraper were found inside the unit. A storage vessel (2668) was found roughly in the middle of the room (Fig. 12), but



Fig. 11. Assemblage of limestone weights S3447, S3446, S3443, S3442, S3440, S3437, S3436, S3393, S3386 and S3383
(photo O. Bagi)

¹⁵ RZEPKA et al. 2015, 60.

¹⁶ BREWER and FRIEDMAN 1989, 38–46.

¹⁷ JARMUZEK 2010.

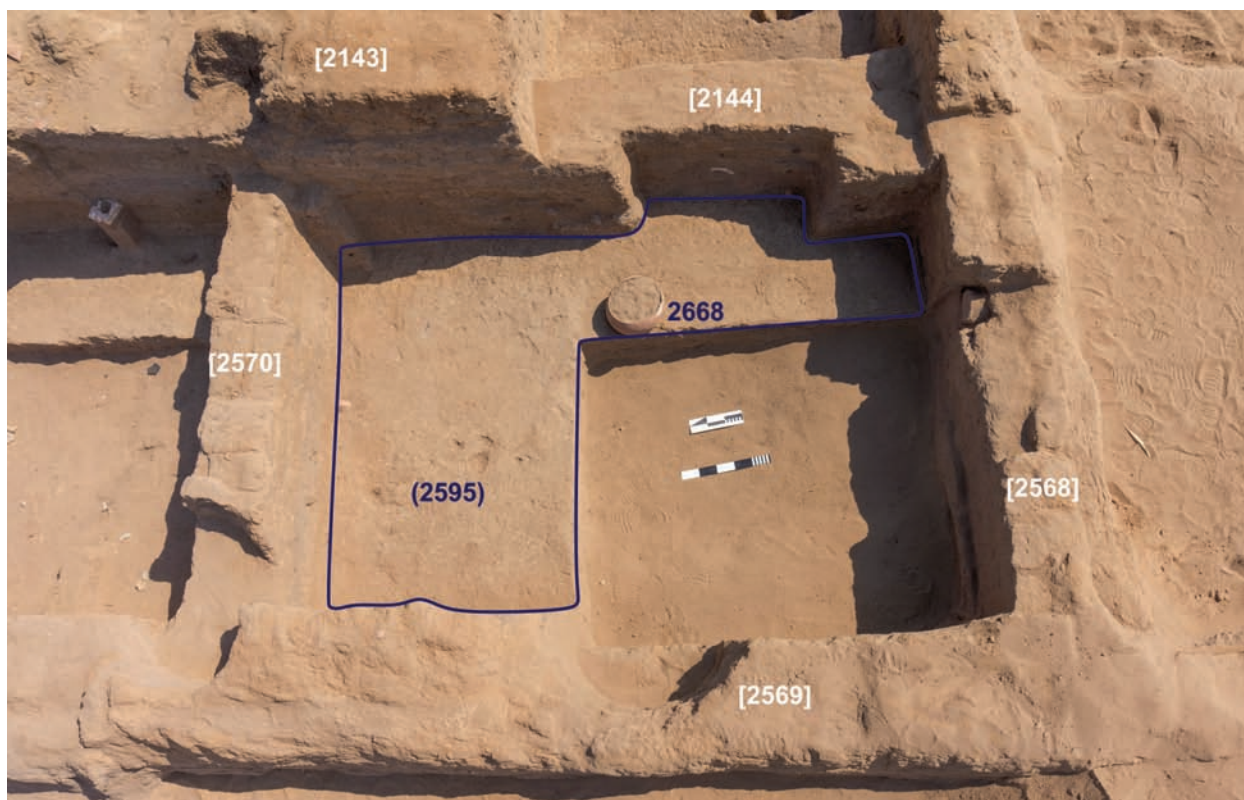


Fig. 12. Building {2147}, room 3 (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

instead of being cut into the floor, as was the case in the other two rooms, it stood on the walking surface. The successive layers of deposits that accumulated on the floor ultimately covered the vessel.

2.1.3 Building {2715}

The eastern part of the courtyard was occupied by structure {2715} (Figs. 2, 3, 4) which was partly excavated. Its walls turned out to be much thinner (0.36 m) than the walls of other buildings in the area. The excavated part of the structure was 3.90 m long and at least 1.80 m wide. Several thin walls inside the room formed a kind of bin, inside which a completely preserved cup (2744) was found. Space between the walls was filled with loose, ashy layers (2748, 2753) and the walls were subsequently covered by the floor (2749). The end of use of the building during this phase is marked by a debris layer (2745). Currently, structure {2715} is thought to have served an industrial purpose.

2.1.4 Building {991}

Building {991}, situated to the south of building {2147} (cf. Fig. 2), was excavated in seasons 2010–2012.¹⁸ During the last season, the area to the west of the building was explored. The southern and western limits of the area were destroyed by large cuts of a later date. The preserved part of the area was occupied by building {2662} constructed in phase C4. It seems that the building had already been ruined during phase C3b. Its remains were covered with a thick layer of debris (2663). Between the ruined building {2622} and building {991} was an open space, about 5.6 m wide. The space was covered with a vast layer (2634) (Fig. 2) containing a relatively large amount of coarse pebbles and small fragments of pottery sherds, but not a single small find. Within this layer, about 0.7 m to the west of building {991}, a shallow, round cut <2624> was recognized. The cut was filled with a large amount of ashes and charcoal (2623), which contained several completely preserved cups.

¹⁸ RZEPKA et al. 2014, 86–92.

An area to the east and northeast of building {991} has been partially excavated. An oven [1065] and a layer (1078) were found there in seasons 2011–2012.¹⁹ A part of layer (2760) was identified during the last season. The unit abuts structures {2715} and {2637} and continues below wall [1083], which became part of room 3 of building {991} in phase C3a (see below). Thus, at the present state of work, it seems that the area was an open space during phase C3b.

2.2 Settlement: Phase C3a (Fig. 13)

The sub-phase is marked by changes in the open space between buildings {2147} and {991}.

2.2.1 Building {2147}

Two storage vessels were found *in situ* in the western part of the courtyard. The first one, 2649, was placed in a round cut <2650> in front of room 3. The diameter of the cut was much bigger than the



Fig. 13. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phase C3a (drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

¹⁹ RZEPKA et al. 2014, 88.

diameter of the vessel. The second vessel, 2751, was placed in a round cut <2752> in front of the entrance to room 4.

2.2.2 Building {2715}

After the period of abandonment (see above, 2.1.3), the building was back in use. A floor (2730) was found inside the structure, covering its entire excavated part. The unit contained relatively large numbers of pottery sherds, animal bones and shells. The final abandonment of the structure is marked by a layer of loose black ashes (2714) (cf. Fig. 4), which covered its entire area including the walls.

2.2.3 Buildings {991} and {765} (Fig. 13)

After some time, the entire area to the west of building {991}, 10.5 m long and 6.5 m wide, was covered with a layer (2621). The unit was very sandy and contained some ashes, pottery sherds and animal bones. All data confirm that during the entire phase C3 the area to the west of building {991} was an open space.

On the eastern side of building {991}, room 3 was added. The room and building {765}, situated about 2 m to the southeast, were previously assigned to phase C2.²⁰ Both structures were moved to phase C3a on the basis of stratigraphic relationships between layer (2760), wall [1083] and structure {2715} (see above, 2.2.2). Between these structures, a vast layer (2609) was found. The unit was delimited from the north by buildings {2715} and {2637}. It most probably covered an area subsequently occupied by building {1095} (phase C2b, see below, 2.3.2). The western perimeter of the unit was limited by building {991}. In the south, the unit most probably abutted building {765}, but this area was not completely excavated, and neither was the eastern perimeter. Thus, it seems that for some time, the area occupied by unit (2609) was an open space devoid of structures.

2.3 Settlement: phase C2b2 (Fig. 14)

Phase C2b2 in Area 9 is marked by building {1095}, which stood on top of buildings {2664} and {2637}.²¹ The area west of building {1095}

was still occupied by building {2147} but its layout has changed considerably.

2.3.1 Building {2147}

As has already been mentioned, parts of the walls of room 1 in this building had collapsed at some point, putting the room out of use. To compensate for this, a new room was added; this was room 2, which was fitted into the space left between the courtyard and building {2715} to the south of room 1 (Fig. 14). The new unit measured 4.35 × 4.15 m. Its entrance was in the southern part of the east wall and was 0.75 m wide. Two floor levels were recorded. The first floor (2583) consisted of a series of thin whitish-grey laminas. Small finds from the floor comprised nine loom weights – six made of mud (Fig. 15) (for interpretation see below, 2.6.2) and three made of limestone (for interpretation see above), four grinding tools, one whetstone (Fig. 16), and four beads – one made of mother-of-pearl and three of faience. Faience beads are generally fairly numerous in Third Intermediate Period deposits – a total of 44 specimens were found in the 2017 season. Three types can be distinguished (Fig. 17):

- Disc-shaped beads (the most common);
- beads of cylindrical shape – short and long; and
- segmented beads.

Although in smaller quantities, beads made of other materials – such as mother of pearl, carnelian (Fig. 18) or gneiss (Fig. 19), have been unearthed as well.

An unusual structure was built on the surface of the floor (2583) in room 2 mentioned above: A square platform [2739] made of mud-bricks, measuring 1.20 m to the side (Fig. 20). It was situated about 0.25 m from the north wall of the room. Later, the second floor (2575) accumulated around this platform. The floor surface near the platform featured several shallow, round cuts, three of which were found east of the platform. The southern one <2743> was filled with ashes, while two other cuts <2736, 2738> were filled with sand. Similar platforms with shallow cuts and fireplaces can be found in central rooms in Tell el-Amarna houses.²² This kind of installation is connected with the head of the household,²³ as a place of honor reserved for him. Some of the shallow cuts could have served as emplacements for pottery

²⁰ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 57–62.

²¹ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 123–125.

²² BOMANN 1995, 8–14.

²³ SPENCE 2015, 86–89.

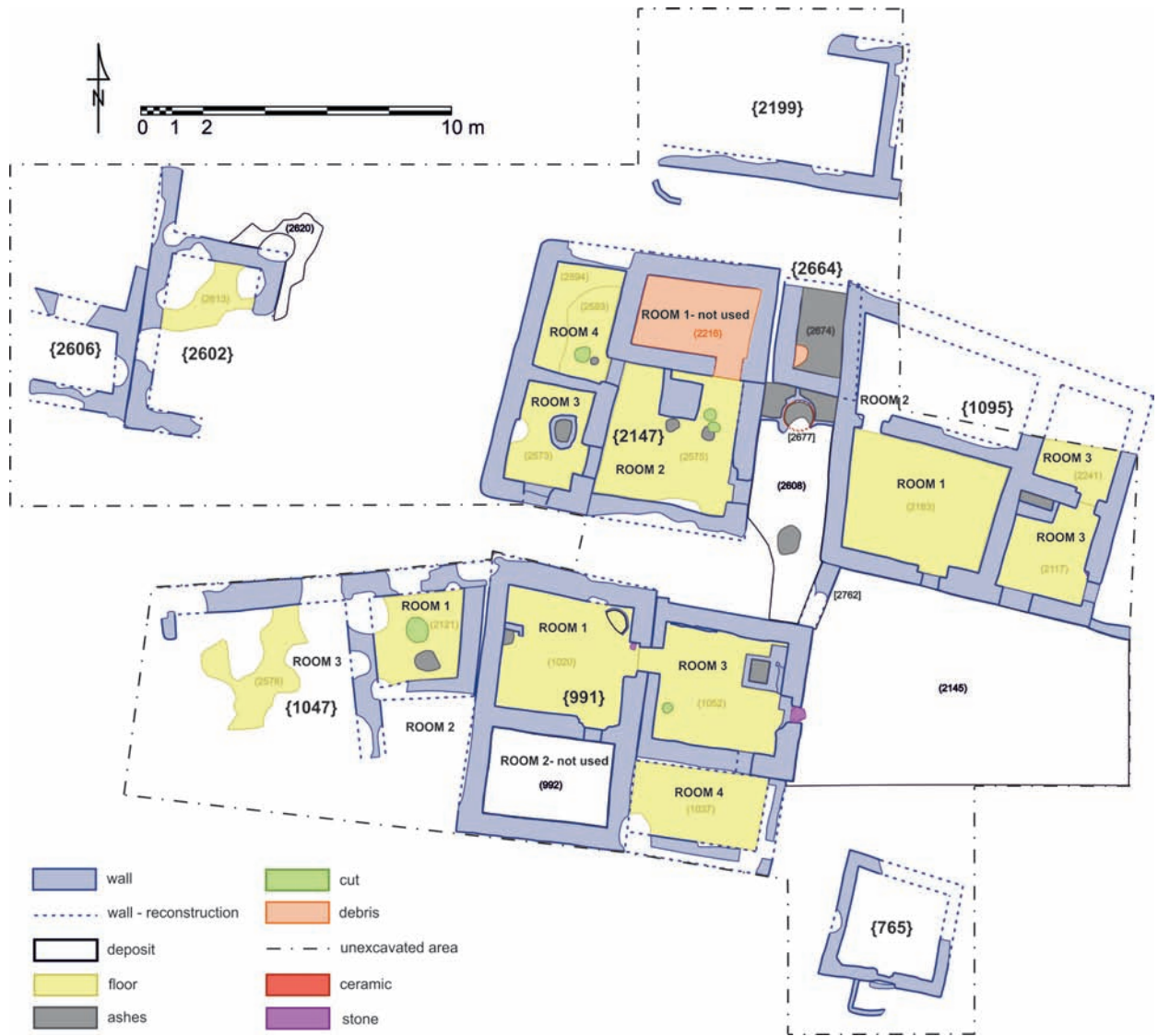


Fig. 14. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phase C2b (drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

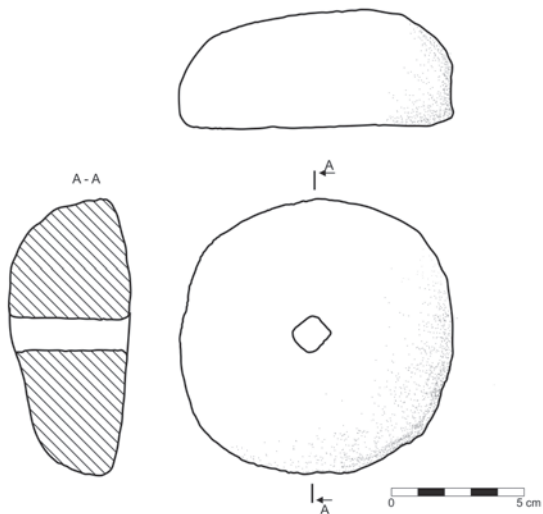


Fig. 15. Mud loom weight S3348 (drawing D. Sulecki/A. Ryś)



Fig. 16. Sandstone whetstone S3614 (photos O. Bagi)

vessels. The floor (2575) contained a large number of limestone vessel fragments (rims and body parts). Objects of this type were frequently found in previous seasons in Third Intermediate Period layers. Based on the material gathered so far, three vessel types can be distinguished (Fig. 21):

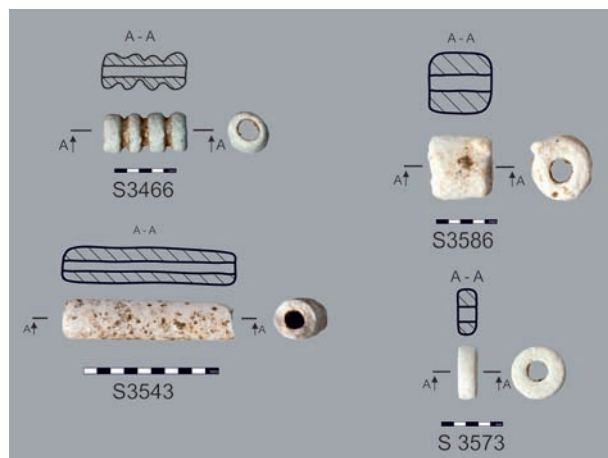


Fig. 17. Examples of three bead types: Disc-shaped (S3573), cylindrical short (S3586) and long (S3543), and segmented (S3466) (photos O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A.Ryś)

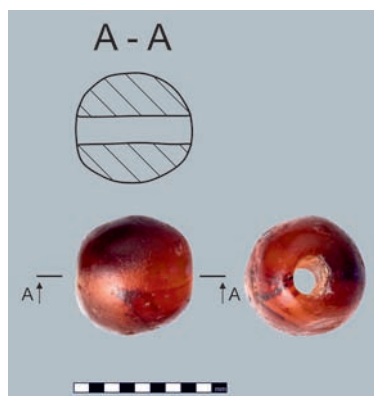


Fig. 18. Carnelian bead S3411 (photos O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A.Ryś)

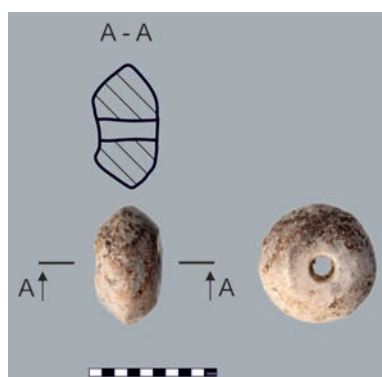


Fig. 19. Gneiss bead S3504 (photos O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A.Ryś)

- deep bowls;
 - shallow bowls; and
 - thick-walled vessels frequently used as mortars.
- All three types feature rough outer surfaces, often bearing chisel marks, and smoothed inner surfaces.

A faience amulet (S3607) was found in the fill of cut <2738>. It is a pendant in the form of a standing figure of a leonine or feline goddess, with a uraeus and a sun disc – it represents either Bastet or Sakhmet (Fig. 22).

At the same time as room 2 was added to the building {2147}, a narrow passage between the northern wall of room 3 of building {991} and building {1095} was blocked up by a wall [2762]. The space between the wall, room 2 and the western wall of building {1095} was soon covered with a yellowish-brown sandy layer (2608). An oven {2677} was built on the surface of this unit (cf. Figs 4, 14). Its manner of construction, with a ceramic body lined with baked silt, was rather typical. The external diameter of the oven measured about 1.10 m. Three low walls next to the oven abutted the nearby buildings to form a kind of bin filled with grey ashes (2678). The fill of the oven consisted of grey ashes (2691) on top and white ashes (2693) on the bottom. A fragment of a fish-shaped pottery vessel was found inside the layer of grey ashes (2691). An oval cut <2626> was found about 3 m south of the oven. It was filled with sand and ashes (2625) and contained a large amount of small pottery sherds and one completely preserved pottery cup.

The doorway to room 4 remained unchanged. An ashy layer (2593), which covered only the eastern part of the room, constitutes the only floor level attributable to this phase. Two round cuts in this layer were found next to the entrance to the room. The bigger cut <2592> was filled with sand (2591) containing a lot of fish bones and three mud-weights. The smaller cut <2630> was filled with an ashy layer (2629) containing some fish bones.

The old entrance to room 3 was blocked and a new doorway had been made in the south wall of the room. Thus, the room was separated from rooms 2 and 4. Inside it there were five floor levels (2582, 2577, 2573, 2564, 2546), all very uniform in nature. They consisted of a series of thin laminas: Whitish grey and yellowish brown. Three floor levels (2577, 2573, 2564) were connected with fireplaces surrounded by low mud walls [2648, 2572, 2628]. The floor levels contained ground stone tools (two grinders, a fragment of a quern



Fig. 20. Platform [2739] in room 2 of the building {2147} (photo S. Rzepka)

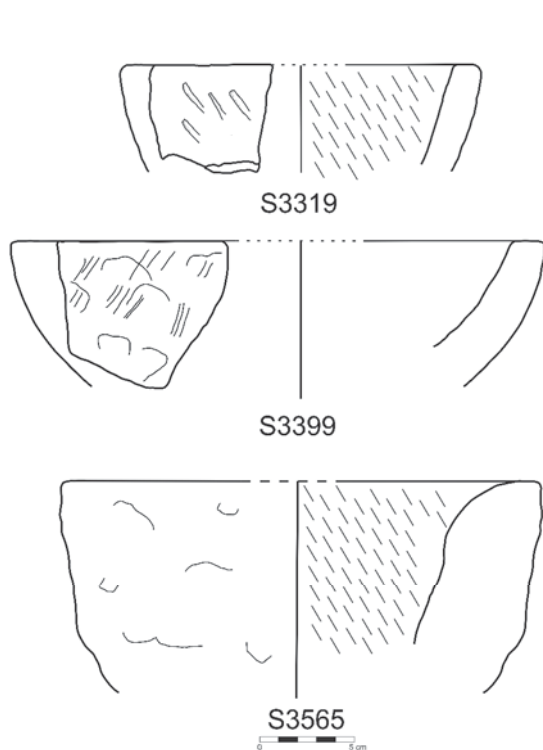


Fig. 21. Examples of three vessel types: Deep bowl (S3319), shallow bowl (S3399) and mortar (S3565) (drawing D. Sulecki/A. Ryś)



Fig. 22a-b. Faience amulet S3607 (photo O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A. Ryś)

(Fig. 23), a whetstone), fragments of stone vessels and objects of personal adornment (faience beads and a fragment of a ring).

2.3.2 Building {1095} (Fig. 14)

Building {1095} was excavated in season 2016.²⁴ The building had undergone significant alterations during its use, permitting one to distinguish three sub-phases. Conclusions from season 2017 allow

²⁴ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 59–64.



Fig. 23. Quartzite quern S3343 (photos O. Bagi)

these phases to be correlated with structures to the west. The first phase of the building {1095} was placed in sub-phase C2b2.

2.3.3 Building {991} (Fig. 14)

It was thought that layer (2145), which covered the open space between buildings {991}, {1095} and {765}, spread beneath wall [2155].²⁵ A closer examination of the wall revealed that it was, in fact two walls built one after the other. Unit (2145) abutted the lower wall [2762] (see above, 2.3.1), and the upper wall [2155] was placed in the next sub-phase (see below, 2.4.1). Unit (2145) also serves as evidence that building {991} was still in use during this phase. The layer accumulated over time until it reached the level of the threshold in the entrance to building {991}. The inhabitants of the building were forced to raise the level of the threshold by placing a large limestone block in the doorway. The new threshold protruded from the face of the wall and was laid partly on the surface

²⁵ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 58.

²⁶ RZEPKA et al. 2014, 87–91.

²⁷ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 67–68.

of layer (2145). A round hole, probably a door socket, was made in the new stone threshold.

Room 4, discovered in season 2012,²⁶ was previously assigned to phase C1.²⁷ On the grounds of new data obtained in the last season it was reassigned to phase C2b2.

2.3.4 Building {1047} (Fig. 14)

Building {1047} was first identified in season 2012²⁸ and partly excavated in season 2016.²⁹ The building was tentatively dated to phase C2 or C1. Recent discoveries allowed the origins of the structure to be placed in phase C2b2. Works conducted during the last season in the area to the west of rooms 1 and 2 resulted in the discovery of room 3. The room was 5.5 m long and at least 5.1 m wide. An entrance to the room was not found, but the southern and western limits of the room were completely destroyed by later cuts. Only one floor was found inside the room, also badly preserved. The unit (2578) had a layer rich in ash containing numerous animal bones, two grinders and a fragment of a stone vessel. The data collected over the course of three seasons allow a brief reconstruction of the building. The structure was at least 11 m long and 6 m wide; it consisted of at least three rooms. Despite the poor state of preservation of the floor in room 3, we can safely assume that there was no dividing wall on the axis of the wall separating rooms 1 and 2. Thus, room 3 was much bigger than the other two rooms. The area to the north of the building was not excavated, but for obscure reasons, the northern wall does not follow the orientation of the walls of building {991}.

2.3.5 Buildings {2606} and {2602} (Figs 14, 24)

Buildings {2606} and {2602} were found about 5 m to the north of building {1047} and 7.7 m to the west of building {2147}. Unfortunately, the stratigraphic relationships between these structures have not been established. The area between buildings {1047} and {2602} has yet to be excavated; the area between buildings {2602} and {2147} was severely damaged by large modern cuts. Thus, both structures were tentatively dated to phase C2b2.

²⁸ RZEPKA et al. 2014, 87.

²⁹ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 66–68.

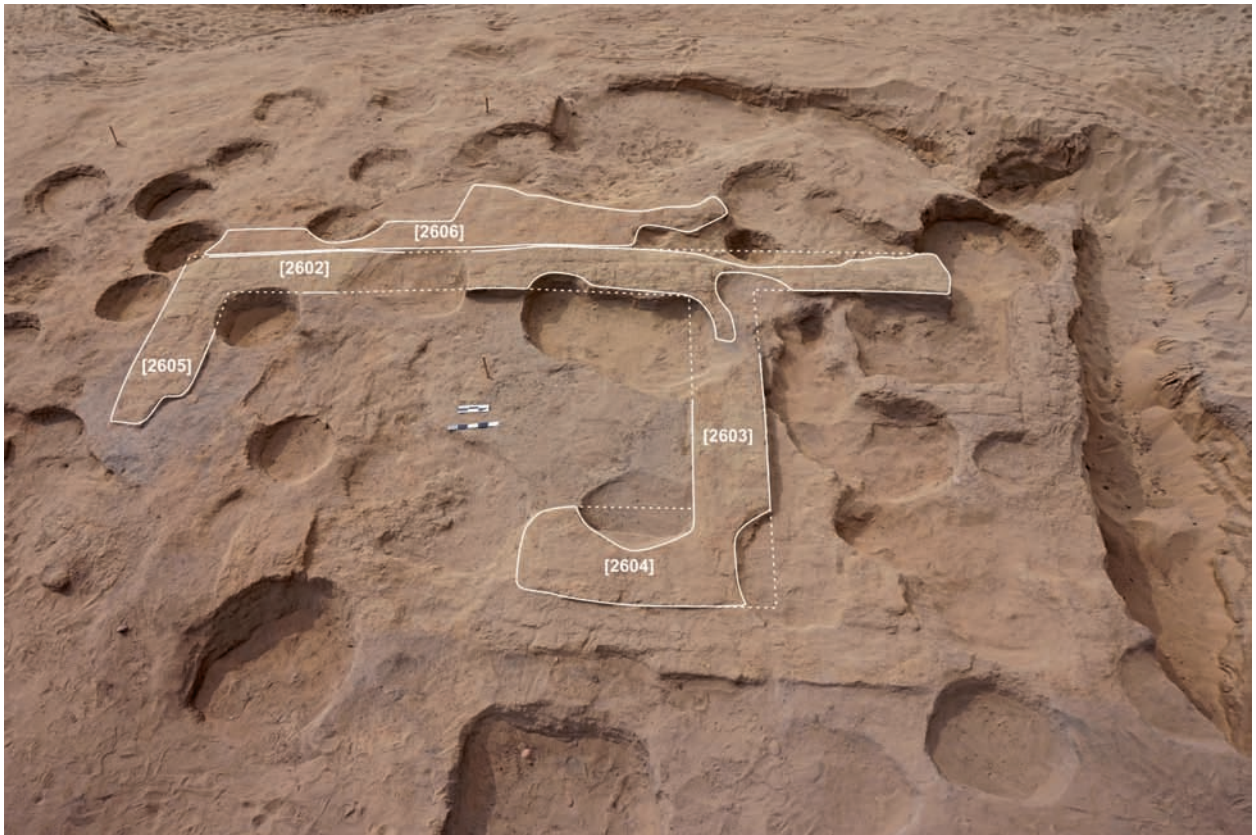


Fig. 24. Building {2602} (walls [2602–2605]) and building {2606} (wall [2606]) (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

Building {2606} was slightly older than building {2602}. The structure was only briefly examined; only the southeastern part of the building was found. It was at least 5 m long and 3.60 m wide, consisting of at least two rooms.

Building {2602} abutted the eastern wall of building {2606}. The structure was poorly preserved and its eastern and northern parts were destroyed by later cuts. It was at least 8.5 m long and 4.20 m wide. The building consisted of at least two rooms. Room 1 measured 5 × 3.50 m. The fragmentarily preserved floor (2613) found inside the room was a relatively thin layer containing a substantial amount of ashes, some animal bones, pottery and a scraper made of pottery sherds. The end of use of the room is marked by debris layer (2607). The only remains of room 2 are the northern part of the west wall of the building and layer (2620). The unit abutted the north and east walls of room 1, proving that the original width of room 2 and of the entire building was greater than the width of room 1.

The orientation of both buildings is the same as buildings {2147} and {1095}. Moreover, the south-

ern wall of building {2602}, which is presumably its outer wall, is aligned with the southern walls of two other buildings in the eastern part of the trench.

2.4. Phase C2b1 (Fig. 25)

2.4.1 Building {2147}

Sub-phase C2b1 is marked by changes in the area between buildings {2147} and {1095} (Fig. 25). In the southern part of the area, wall [2762] (see above) was rebuilt. A new, very similar wall [2155] was raised on top of it. A small layer of ashes (2763), most probably from oven {2677}, accumulated next to the western face of the wall. The oven was used for some time but was abandoned during this phase. The latter is proven by four cuts <2670, 2698, 2690, 2700> found in the area, two of them destroying the walls of the oven. The ground level in the space between buildings {2147} and {1095} grew higher with time. Layer (2599), made up of thin grey laminas, gradually covered the oven {2677} and building {2644}. It was previously thought that a passage between



Fig. 25. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phase C2b1 (drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

buildings {2147} and {1095} remained open in this phase,³⁰ but current fieldwork revealed that this was not the case. Layer (2599) abutted the southern face of wall [2230], proving that the wall was already standing when the layer started to accumulate. The higher level of the ground forced the inhabitants of building {2147} to modify the entrance to room 2. Firstly, the threshold had to be raised. In order to do so, two steps were constructed of fragments of large stone vessels, the first vessel being put on the surface of floor (2575) and the second directly on the mud-brick threshold (Fig. 26). A two-step limestone door socket was found in place next to this new threshold. However, since the ground level outside was already higher, a shallow semicircular cut <2765> was

made in layer (2599) just outside the entrance to lower the ground to accommodate the lower-lying threshold. Four bricks were laid at the bottom of the cut, attached to the wall but projecting from its face, to serve as the third step. They also prevented sand from accumulating near the threshold. One of the two fragments of stone vessels (S3580, S3579) reused in the threshold, possibly a fragment of a manger or basin (Fig. 27), is the largest specimen discovered so far in the layers dated to the Third Intermediate Period in Tell el-Retaba. As in the case of other vessels from this site, its inner surface is smooth while the outside is rough, bearing some chisel marks. The second fragment is probably also a fragment of an unfinished limestone manger (Fig. 28).

³⁰ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 125.



Fig. 26. Threshold made of fragments of large stone vessels at the entrance to room 2 in building {2147} (photo S. Rzepka)

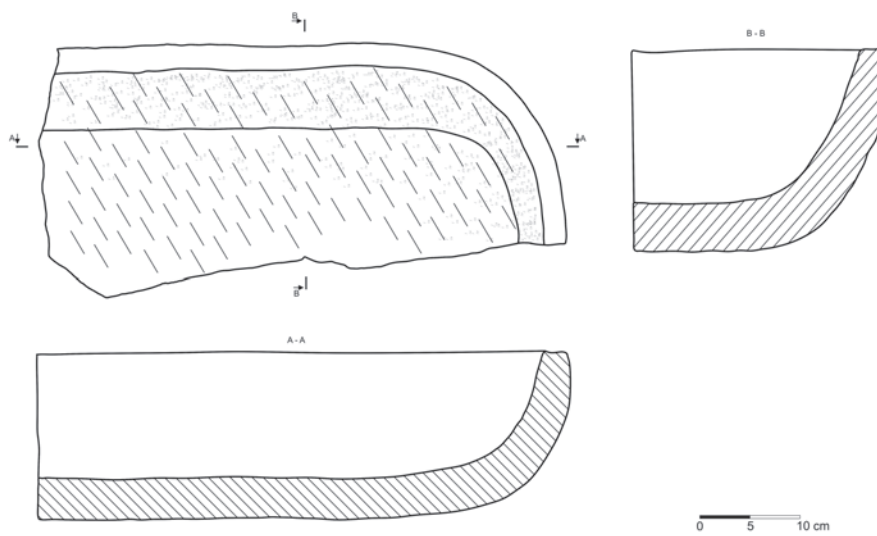


Fig. 27. Limestone manger S3579 (drawing K. Szymańska/A. Ryś)

After some time, the level of the floor inside room 2 was raised. The new floor (2723) covered platform [2739] and the stone steps in the entrance. It was the last floor in room 2, while this space was part of building {2147}. The floor contained a few small finds – two grinders, a mud

loom weight and two corroded fragments of lead. One of them is particularly noteworthy: It is a perforated, folded-in sheet of lead (Fig. 29). It was probably a strainer forming a part of a wine/beer drinking tube. Parallels (though of a different date) are known from various sites in Egypt.³¹

³¹ KEMP 2012, 210; THOMAS 2017, 12.

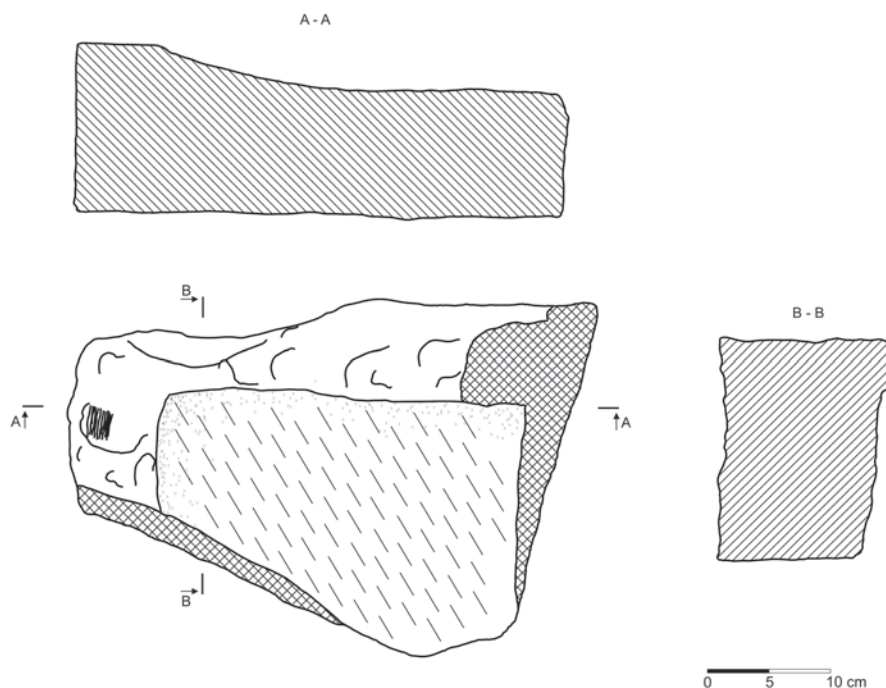


Fig. 28. Unfinished manger S3580 (drawing A. Ryś)

Subsequently, the building was abandoned and partly destroyed, especially in its western part, in the area of rooms 3 and 4. Inside these rooms, a relatively thick layer of debris (2586) formed. In the case of room 2, some of the walls were reused in building {2196}, which was built on the spot in the next phase (see below, 2.5.2).

2.4.2 Building {1095} (Fig. 25)

The second phase of the building³² was placed in phase C2b2. The features inside the building were connected with a vast layer (993) to the south, which abutted the eastern face of wall [2155] (see above, 2.4.1).

2.4.3 Building {991} (Fig. 25)

The building was probably still in use during this phase. The new stone threshold placed at the end of the previous phase (see above, 2.3.3) allowed one to enter the building despite the fact that the ground level to the east grew higher by about 0.30 m. Thus, the difference between the level of the floor (1052) inside room 3 and that of layer (993) outside the building was about 0.55 m.

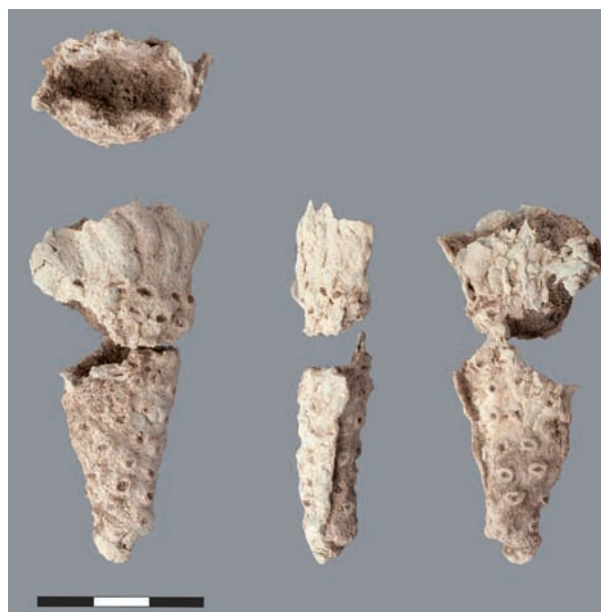


Fig. 29. Fragment of a lead strainer S3595 (photos O. Bagi)

2.5 Settlement: phase C2a (Fig. 30)

Building {1095} was still in use in this phase, but the area west of this building underwent a major change. In the place of building {2147}, which had fallen out of use, two new buildings {2227} and {2196} were erected. Building {2227} was built slightly before {2196}.

³² RZEPKA et al. 2017, 59–64.



Fig. 30. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phase C2a (drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

2.5.1 Building {2227} (Fig. 30)

Building {2227} was discovered in season 2016, but at that time, only the tops of its walls were cleared. Since the orientation of the walls of the building suggested that it could be contemporary to building {2147}, it was dated to phase C3.³³ When the building {2227} was completely excavated during season 2017, new data showed that it was erected on the ruins of building {2147}. Thus, the building {2227} had to be assigned to phase C2a. Only the eastern part of the building was preserved, while the western part was destroyed by modern cuts. The building was about 8.5 m long and at least 2 m wide, the thickness of the walls

being 0.60 m. Remains of any kind of activity inside the building were rather scarce. The space between the walls of the building was filled with a layer of debris (2531). There was no floor level, which may suggest that the building was used for a relatively short time. On the surface of layer (2531), two round cuts have been found. The first cut <2538>, 0.90 m in diameter, was placed in the northeastern corner of the building. It was filled with a layer of white (2537) and black (2539) ashes, which suggests that the cut was the lowermost part of an oven/kiln. However, no traces of a superstructure have been found. The second cut <2545> was placed in the middle of the preserved part of the building. It was slightly smaller than

³³ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 55–58.

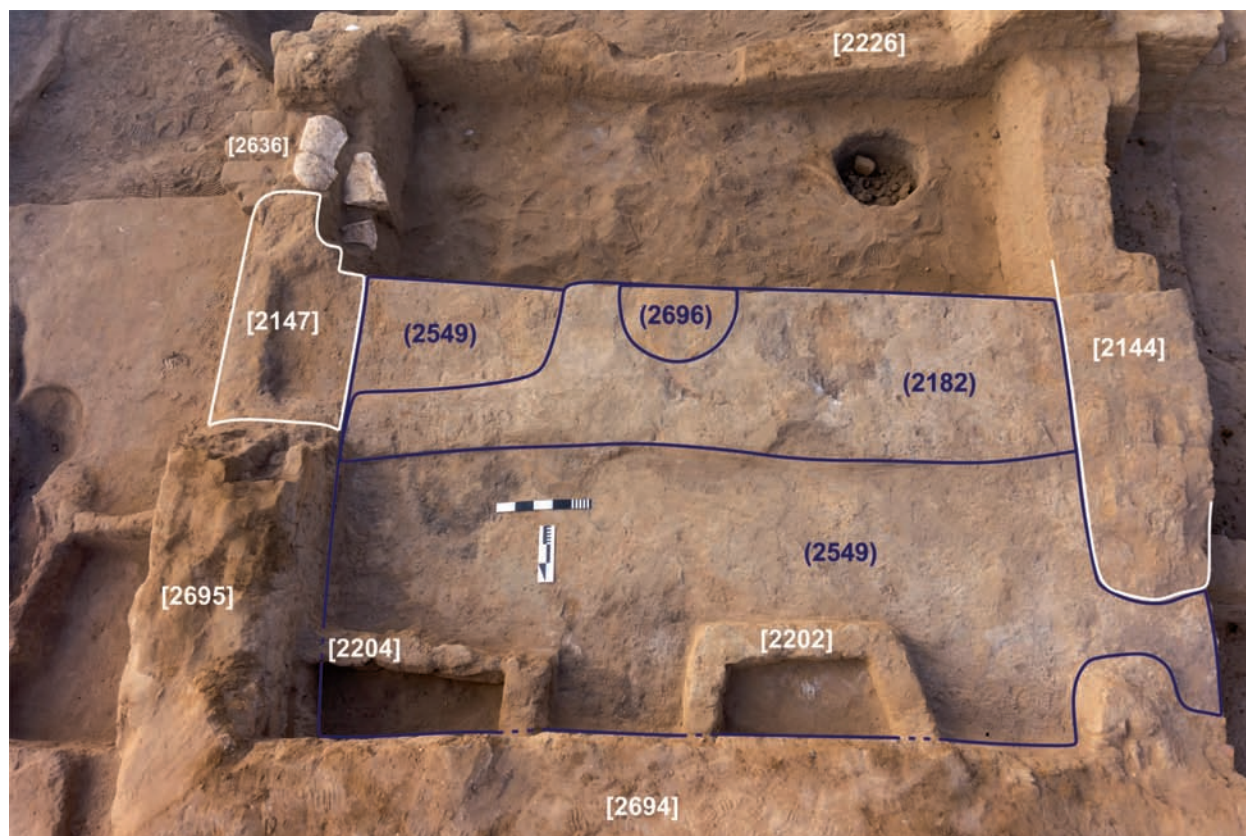


Fig. 31. Room 2 in building {2196} (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

the previous one, measuring 0.7 m in diameter. Layer (2544) filling this cut was different than in the previous case, as it was a mixture of sand and ashes. Some fish bones were also found inside the unit. The smaller size and different character of the fill suggest that this cut may have been a simple fireplace. Considering all the data, it seems probable that when the oven/kiln and the fireplace were used, the wall of building [2227] had already been ruined and the area was an open space. All the features mentioned above were covered with a layer of grey ashes (2530). The layer was poorly preserved, but it seems to have also covered the walls of the building. Therefore, when this layer was formed the building was surely out of use and probably served as a dump. The layer contained a few small finds – three sandstone whetstones (S3454, S3418, S3398), a fragment of a stone vessel and an object made of jasper (S3316) – probably a drilling core.

Remains of three layers (2579, 2580, 2581) were found just 1 m to the west of the remains of the building. There was no direct stratigraphic

relationship between these units and the building, but the area was disturbed by numerous cuts, and the proximity and similar elevation of all the features suggest that they belonged to the same phase. Units (2580) and (2581) were very sandy layers with few objects, which is characteristic of features found outside buildings. If this is the case, then building {2227} is very narrow and elongated in shape.

2.5.2 Building {2196} (Figs 30, 31)

The greater part of building {2196} was excavated in 2016³⁴ and current work did little to change the overall picture of its layout. The only new data concerned the building's walls. Building {2196} consisted of three rooms. The standing north and west walls of room 1 from building {2147} were reused without changes, but the south wall was rebuilt. The new wall was founded on the remains of the older wall, which was preserved to a height of about 0.80 m. The east wall of the room was also reconstructed but as a much thinner version,

³⁴ RZEPKA et al. 2017, 64–66.

only 0.30 m thick. It may have held an entrance to the room, but most of it has been lost. The north-eastern part of the room was destroyed by a later cut. Other remains inside the room suggest the presence of an oven: The room was filled with a 0.20–0.30-m thick layer of ashes (2194) (mostly grey, but also black and white) containing fragments of fired mud-bricks and ceramic oven body walls. Moreover, a fragmentarily preserved rounded cut <2211> in the middle of the room may be the lowermost section of an almost completely destroyed oven.

The west and south walls of room 2 were originally part of building {2147}. It is noteworthy that the doorway in the west wall, which once led to room 4 of building {2147}, was not blocked up. It had already been closed by the east wall of building {2227}, which was erected slightly earlier than building {2196}. As a result, a niche was formed in the southwestern corner of the room. Along the eastern limit of the room, a completely new wall had been built on the remains of the old wall. The new wall [2695] was slightly thinner (0.60 m) than the older one. The entrance to room 2 used in building {2147}, placed in its east wall, was blocked by wall [2146] which was 0.30 m thick. The connection between walls [2146] and [2695] is rather puzzling, considering the difference in thickness of the two walls; the junction, however, was destroyed by later structures. At present, there is no clearly preserved entrance to room 2. It may have been placed in the south wall of the room, but again, this wall was almost completely destroyed by a later cut. Room 2 measured 4.35×4.15 m. Two floor levels were found inside it. The first floor (2549) featured five round and oval cuts, most of them in the central part of the room. Four of them were filled with black ashes, hence their probable use as fireplaces. The floor contained faience beads, a grinder, two loom weights made of mud, a fragment of a stone vessel and a bronze needle. The room changed function after some time when two or three roughly rectangular bins were built on its floor (Fig. 31). Bin [2204] was located in the northeastern corner of the room, while bin [2548] was built next to the east wall [2146]. A single brick found *in situ* in the southeastern corner of the room may be a relic of yet another bin, but this is highly uncertain. The sec-

ond floor (2182) abutted the walls of the bins, proving that the bins were still in use. Another bin [2202] was added next to the north wall of the room at a later date. These three bins seem to have been used simultaneously. A round, shallow cut <2697> was made in the middle of the room, in the surface of floor (2182). It was filled with sand, so it was most probably not a fireplace. The cut might have served as an emplacement for a storage jar.

Room 3 was created by adding wall [2224] between wall [2196] and the west wall of building {1095}. Wall [2224] probably abutted the older wall [2230] (see above, 2.4.1). Combined, the two walls measured 0.80 m in width. The south wall of the room was not preserved. The room was 2.40 m wide and at least 2.24 m long. A fragmentarily preserved whitish-grey layer formed the floor (2195); it yielded a small amount of pottery and animal bones but no small finds.

2.5.3 Building {1095} (Fig. 30)

The third, relatively short-lived phase of the building was placed in phase C2a. Its phase of abandonment can be tentatively assigned to this phase as well. Both phases were connected with a vast layer (993) to the south and with wall [2155]. The wall separated the passage between buildings {991} and {1095}.

2.6 Settlement: phases C2 and C1 (Fig. 32)

2.6.1. Stable {518}

The stable was excavated in 2010³⁵ during rescue excavations, which were made necessary by the construction of a second lane of the road running across the site. The building is now almost completely gone and only its northeast corner still exists. The final stage of usage of the stable most probably belongs to phase C1, but the original construction can rather be attributed to phase C2.

The stable is an extraordinary structure, very different from the other buildings of the Third Intermediate Period excavated so far in Tell el-Retaba, which, in most cases, had a domestic function. Assuming that the stable was used for keeping horses (which, however, is not certain), the closest parallels for this type of structure are

³⁵ The complete description of the stable can be found in RZEPKA et al. 2011, 129–135; JARMUZEK 2013.

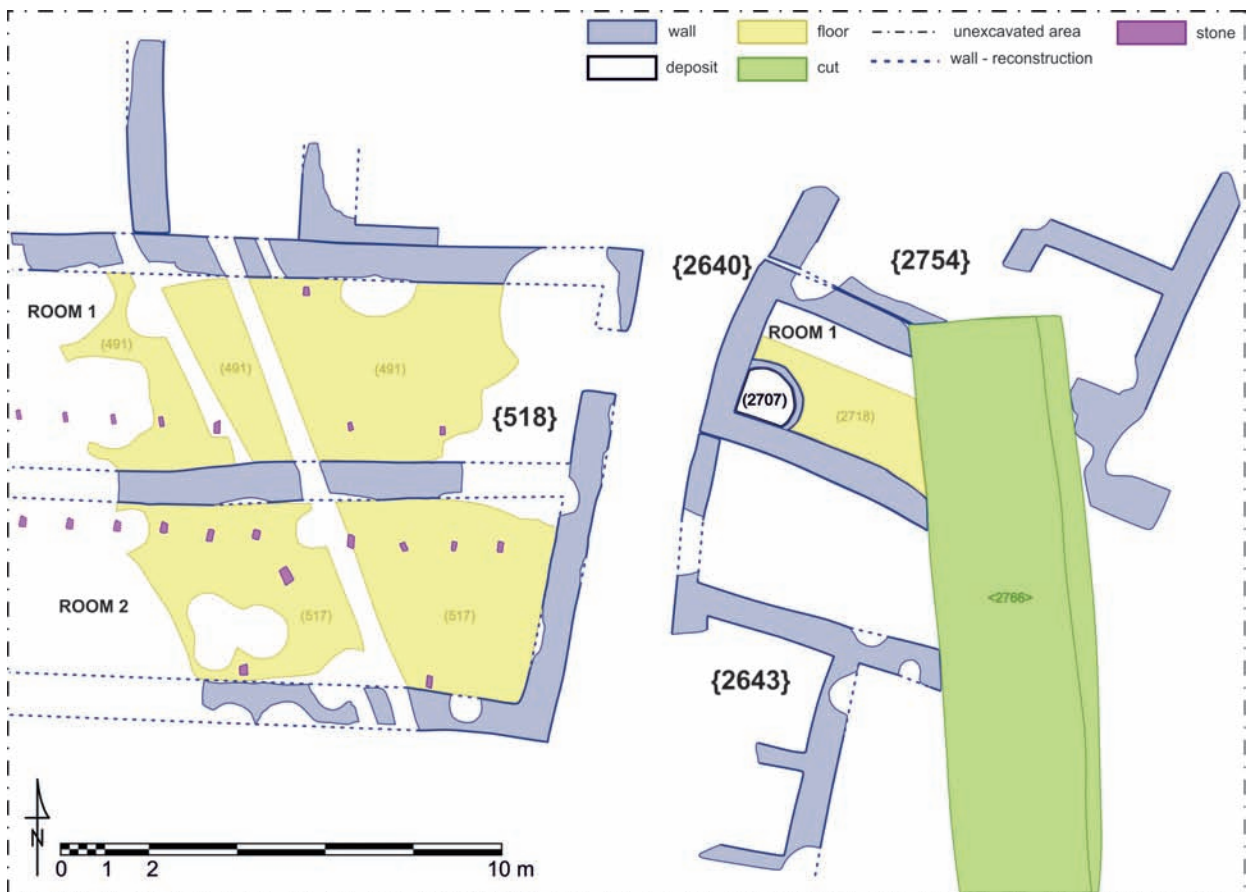


Fig. 32. Plan of structures belonging to the Third Intermediate Period settlement, phases C2-C1 (drawing L. Jarmużek)

the royal stables in Qantir and Amarna. As recent discoveries made by an Egyptian mission during rescue excavations confirmed for the first time state building activity in Tell el-Retaba during the Third Intermediate Period,³⁶ it is worth considering the hypothesis that the stable was a part of a state-owned estate. This hypothesis can be confirmed (or proven false) by exploration of the direct surroundings of the stable. Unfortunately, as stated above, the stable is now destroyed together with the areas to the north, west and south of it, now all occupied by the modern road. There are there still archaeological remains to be investigated to the east. This area was cleared in the 2017 season and one of the buildings discovered there, building {2640}, was partly excavated.

2.6.2. Building {2640} (Fig. 32)

The western wall of the building {2640} runs approximately parallel to the east wall of the stable

{518}. A street ca 1.8–2.0m wide ran between the buildings.

The building consisted of at least two rooms: Room 1 in the north and room 2 in the south. The building may have extended much further to the south, where three other rooms are visible after surface cleaning. However, it is not yet certain whether they really belonged to the building {2640}. The north wall of room 1 seems to be the outer wall of the building and is abutted by the walls of building {2754}. It is not yet possible to determine how far to the east the building {2640} extended; the eastern part of room 1 is destroyed by a huge modern trench <2766>. This trench was already visible on a magnetic map prepared in 2008³⁷ – its size and orientation corresponds to the archaeological trench on Naville's plan.³⁸

The only room excavated so far is room 1. It was 2.5 m wide (north to south), and probably 4 m long (east to west). As the east wall is not preserved, the length of the room remains uncertain,

³⁶ NOUR EL-DIN and RZEPKA forthcoming.

³⁷ RZEPKA et al. 2009, 276–277, Fig. 33, squares A4, B4, B5.

³⁸ NAVILLE 1887, pl. 11.



Fig. 33. Building {2640}, room 1: Bin [2708] (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

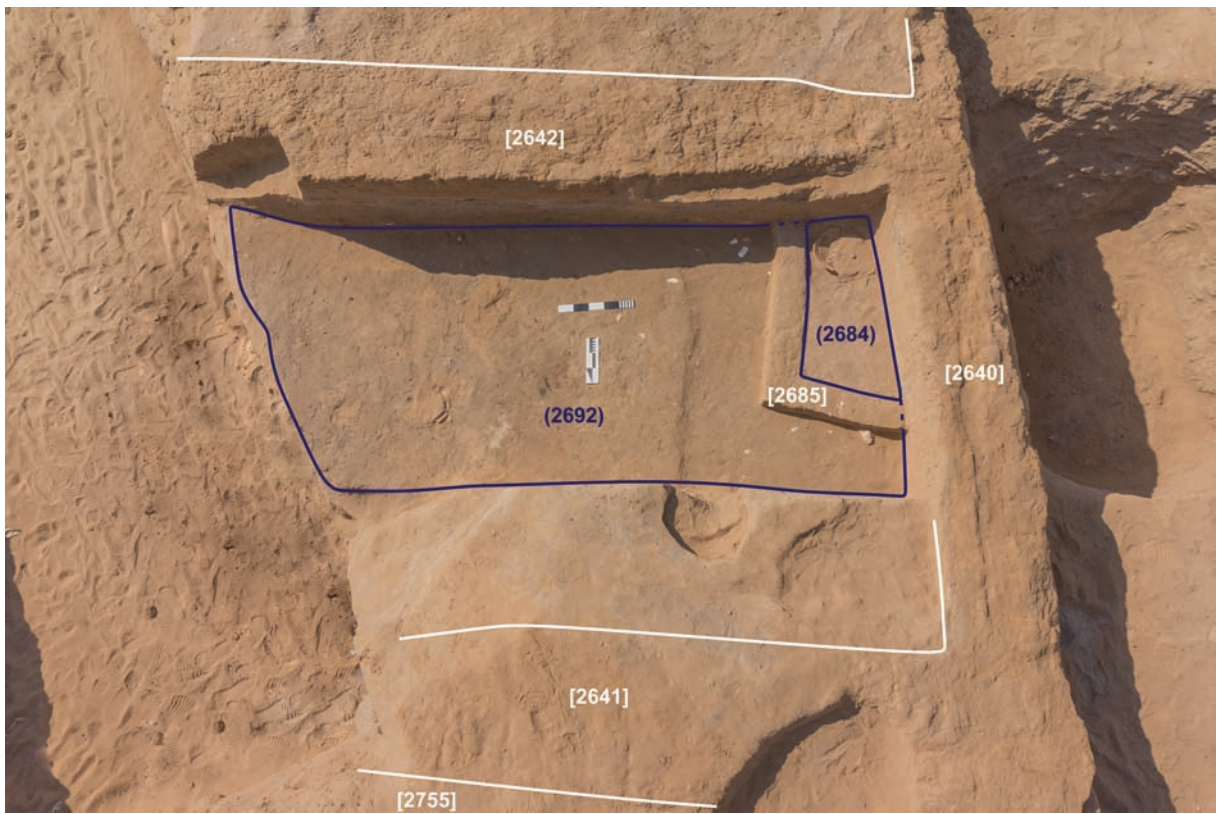


Fig. 34. Building {2640}, room 1: Bin [2685] (photo S. Rzepka, processing Ł. Jarmużek)

but some traces on the south wall show where the southeastern corner of the room may have been. The only door to this room must have been located in the east wall.

Since the beginning, the room has been equipped with a large, semicircular bin [2708] located in the southwestern corner, with max. inner dimensions ca 1.2×1.3 m (Figs. 32, 33). It was constructed of two layers of bricks: in the

lower layer, the bricks are laid flat, and in the upper layer, they stand on their edges. Around the bin, floor layers (2718) and (2710) accumulated, the latter containing large amounts of pottery sherds and animal bones. A fireplace (2709) made on the latter floor contained (besides ashes) some fish bones. The fill of the bin (deposit (2707)) was quite sandy and contained a small number of pottery fragments.

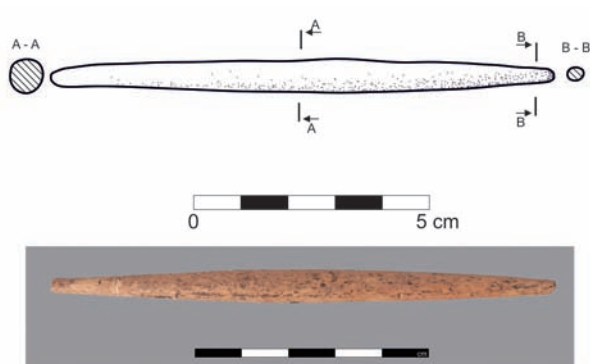


Fig. 35. Bone pin S3530
(photo O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A.Ryś)

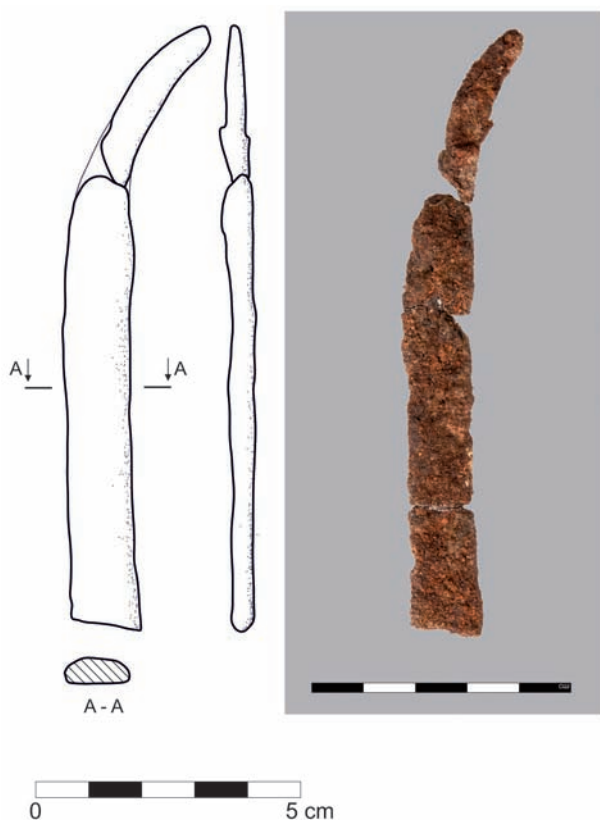


Fig. 36. Fragment of an iron knife S3569
(photo O. Bagi, drawing D. Sulecki/A.Ryś)

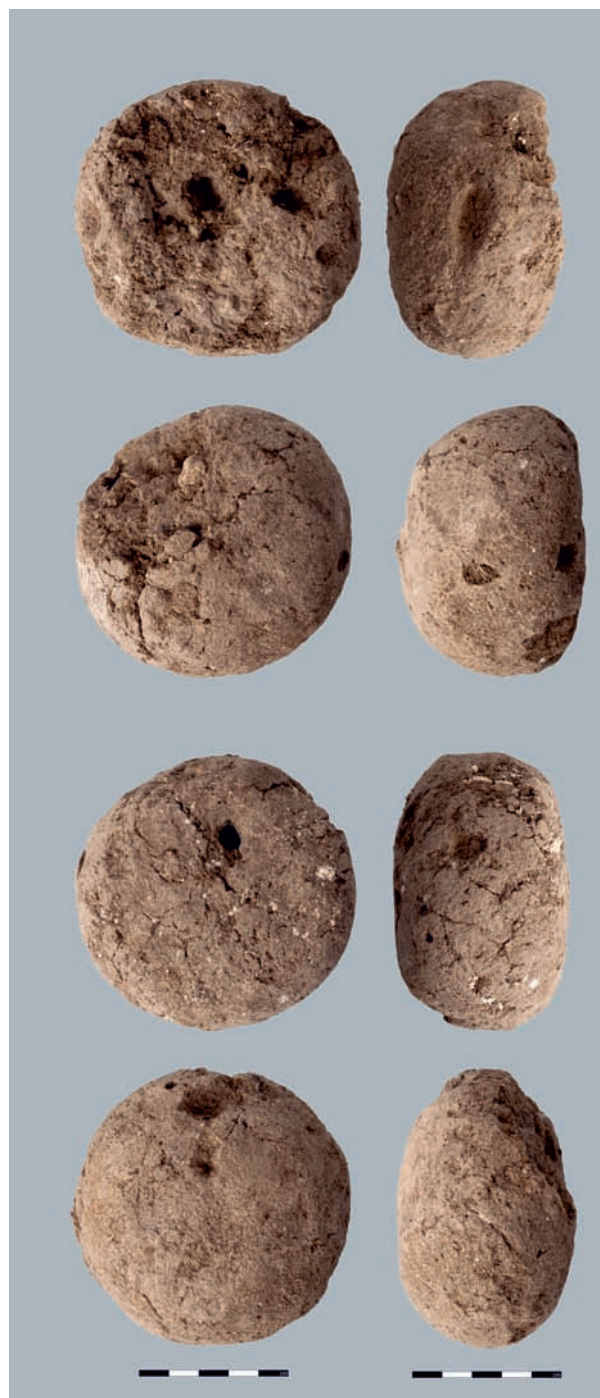


Fig. 37. Well-preserved mud weights (?) (S 3490, S3491, S3490, S3495) found in the building {2640} (photos O. Bagi)

The bin [2708] was finally covered by a new floor (2692), and on this floor a new bin (2685) was constructed (Fig. 34). It was located in the same place as the previous bin (southwestern corner of the room), but this time it was rectangular and much smaller than the previous one (inner dimensions: ca. 1 × 0.5 m). The bottom part of a large storage vessel was found *in situ* in the fill of this bin (deposit (2684)). An interesting feature of the floor (2692) are numerous clam shells. They are also frequent in the next floor (2687) accumulated in the room. Small finds from this floor comprised two limestone loom weights, two grinders, a bone pin (Fig. 35), an iron knife (Fig. 36) and three beads – two made of faience and one of glass.

A sequence of several floor layers (2686, 2679, 2673, 2663) accumulated subsequently in the room. Five oval, shallow cuts were observed in the floor (2663): <2656>, <2658>, <2660>, <2661> and <2672>, each 0.25–0.50 m in diameter and several centimeters in depth. One of them contained a rather puzzling set of objects. In the fill (2655) of cut <2556>, sixteen objects made of mud were discovered. They have the shape of flattened balls, each ca. 8 cm in diameter and ca 5 cm thick (Fig. 37). Some of them were damaged, but the better-preserved specimens permit their weight to be estimated in the range of 341–431 g. What remains obscure is their function. Mud weights have already been found in Tell el-Retaba in previous seasons. They were ovoid or oval in shape, with straight or rounded edges and a perforation executed either at their top or in their middle part (cf. Fig. 15). Their weight ranges from 200–400 g, with one exceptional specimen weighing as much as 518 g. Such mud weights could have been part of a so-called vertical loom. The objects found in (2655) are similar in material, weight and shape, but there is one important difference: There is no perforation. They may have been half-finished products which had yet to be perforated and used

as loom weights, or their function was completely different.

As only one room of the building {2640} has been partly excavated so far, it is difficult to determine its function and its relationship to the stable {518}. However, the size of room 1, the presence of bins, a fireplace and small finds, such as loom weights, bone pins and beads, all suggest a domestic function.

3. Conclusions

Excavations in Area 9 provided new data for understanding the Third Intermediate Period settlement. Building {2147}, which is now almost completely explored, yielded a set of small finds that is noticeably richer than the finds from previously excavated parts of the settlement. The bronze “ceremonial staff,” basalt pestle/vessel, lead strainer and large faience scarab all suggest that the dwellers of the house were fairly wealthy. The square platform found in room 2 of this house is also the only example of such an installation discovered in Tell el-Retaba so far. However, the size of the house and the quality of its construction are very similar to other houses from this period known from Tell el-Retaba. The richer-than-usual set of artifacts from this house may be explained in another way: Three of the objects listed above (“staff,” pestle and scarab) were found on the floor of room 1. There are reasons to believe that this room was not abandoned in a planned way but was destroyed in a catastrophic event which covered its floor with a thick layer of rubble.

Cleaning the areas near the stable {518} confirmed that this part of the site was also densely built up in the Third Intermediate Period. The very limited scale of excavations carried out in this area does not yet allow for the identification of the function of these structures and their relationship to the stable.

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