

REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS OF A HYKSOS PALACE AT TELL EL-DAB^CA/AVARIS

(23rd August-15th November 2011)

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With a contribution by Claus Jurman*

GENERAL

by Manfred Bietak

The excavation and research was made possible by a framework agreement between the Austrian Archaeological Institute and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Both institutions contributed financially to the season. The Austrian Science Fund made an important contribution (Grant P13627, project director Manfred Bietak) and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory financed to a large extent the continued research on the Minoan frescoes from a previously excavated palace of Tuthmosis III at Ezbet Helmy. All the mentioned institutions I would like to thank very much indeed. Special thanks we owe to the Supreme Council of Antiquities and its representatives who facilitated the season and to those who joined the excavations. I would also like to thank the Austrian Archaeological Institute for putting its infrastructure including the dig house at our disposal.

This season was devoted to the continuation of excavations of the Palace of the Hyksos Period, most likely belonging at least in its later phase to the important Hyksos Khayan (Fig. 1). The palace was discovered by geophysical surveying and excavated since then in three seasons in 2006, 2008 and 2009 to about half.¹ It measures about 10,500 sqm and is oriented with its principal façade to north-east. With its additive construction, its juxtaposition of courtyards and magazines and its lacking symmetry it shows similarities with palaces in Syria. It was constructed entirely of mud brick except specific architectural elements such as thresholds and remains of door posts and plinths of columns.

This season's work concentrated on the north-eastern part of the building complex, especially on the entrance gate and its adjoining elements. An-

other clarification was sought concerning the position of the representation room. Another aim of the season was to study the stratigraphic setting of the palace.

Besides the fieldwork, the restoration and study of the Minoan frescoes from the Tuthmosid palace at 'Ezbet Helmy² and the study of the Late Period remains at the area A/I continued throughout the season. This part of the activity at Tell el-Dab^a will be published by Manuela Lehmann in a separate preliminary report.³

Participants of the season:

Prof. Bietak, Manfred – project- and field director
Dr. Aston, David – ceramic analysis
Becker, Johannes M.A. – Minoan frescoes
Dubcova, Veronika M.A. – archaeologist
Hulcova, Lucia M.A. – archaeologist
Jungfleisch, Johannes M.A. – Minoan frescoes
Dr. Kopetzky, Karin – archaeologist and ceramic analysis
Krause, Axel – photographer
Lehmann, Manuela M.A. – archaeologist
Math, Nicola B.A. – archaeologist and site supervisor
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Reali, Chiara M.A. – archaeologist
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¹ BIETAK 2007, 2010a, 2010b; BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006; 2007; 2009; BIETAK, FORSTNER-MÜLLER and HERBICH 2007.

² Last: BIETAK, MARINATOS and PALLYVOU 2007; MARINATOS 2010; MORGAN 2010a, 2010b.

³ LEHMANN 2011; COLLON and LEHMANN 2011; LEHMANN, this volume.

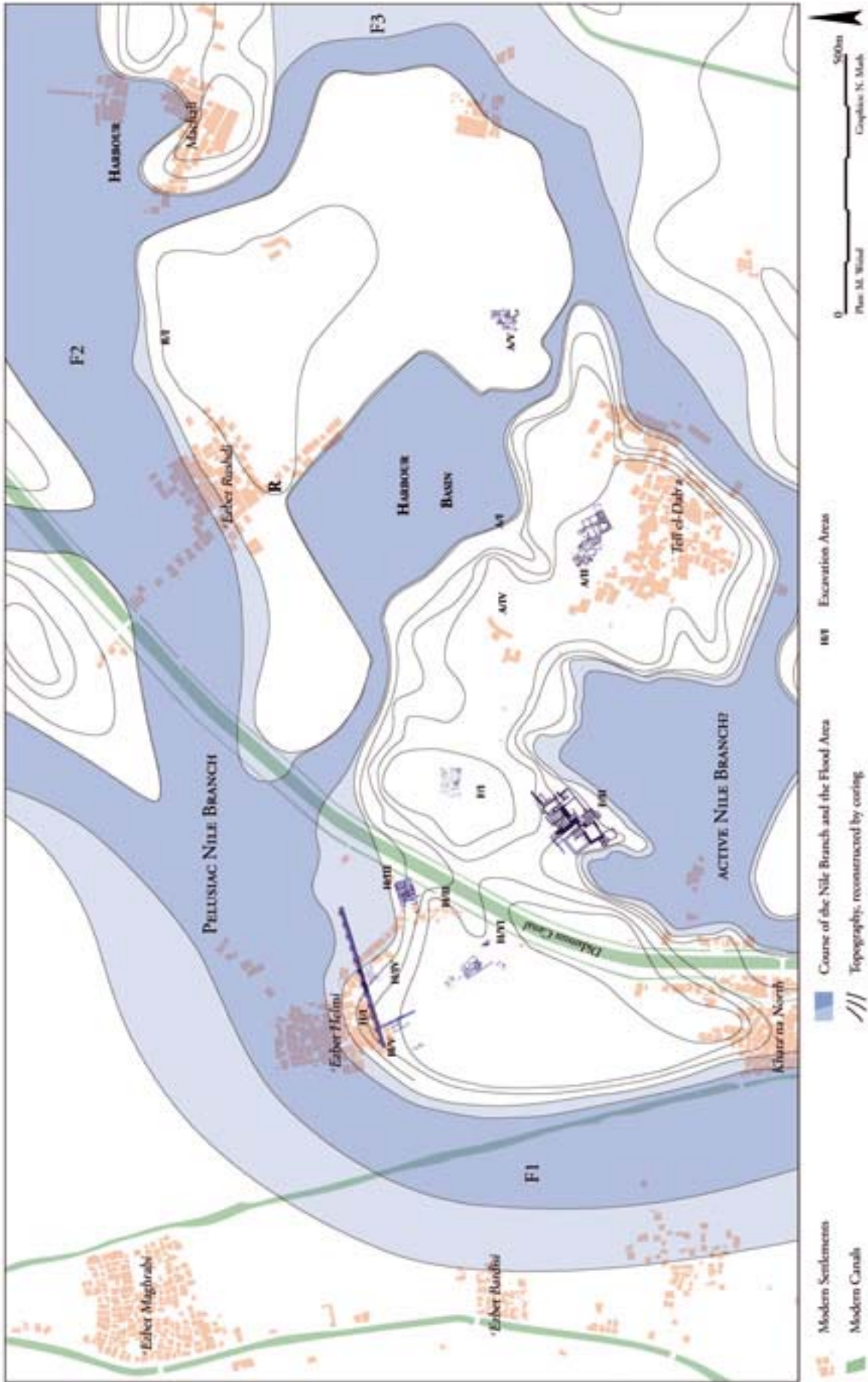


Fig. 1 Ancient topography of Tell el-Dab'a

Stiefel, Sebastian – student
 Wolfer, Verena – student

Representatives of the
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THE RESULTS OF THE EXCAVATIONS

I. THE STRATIGRAPHY

by Manfred Bietak

The stratigraphy was assessed by a series of sections in the northern quarter of the palace as follows (Fig. 2):

II. THE HYKSOS PALACE

(STR. c/2-1)

by Manfred Bietak

The palace has a squat plan and was oriented northeast/southwest, with its four corners aligned with the four cardinal points. Excluding towers, the complex measured according to the geomagnetic map c. 112 m x 95 m (c. 10,600 sqm). Only the ground floor was preserved. Agricultural levelling even took away large parts of the original floors. Many parts were preserved only with their wall foundations. The building material was mud brick, pavements being built with sand-brick.

The symmetrical plan of typical Egyptian palaces is missing. The complex was built in additive fashion and, as far as exposed, seems to have been constructed in three rows of building sections with about three units of different sizes each. Buildings interchange with courtyards. Striking is the high percentage of storage within the whole precinct.

Central importance had unit A (Fig. 3) in the north with two rows of magazines with paved floors on which a large number of fragmented Levantine amphorae and their stoppers were found.⁴ The southern magazines have very solid walls which most likely had supported barrel vaults. The northern row of magazines was separated

STRATIGRAPHY OF F/II		
PHASES	STR.	FEATURES
	a	Recent and subrecent pits, among them sounding pits, most of them north-south or east-west. It is nearly certain that they should be attributed to the activity of Edouard Naville 1885 in this area
	b / 1	Storage pits of the Late Period
	b / 2	Ramesside tombs and animal burials of the NK
C / 1	b / 3	Large enclosure walls, and a well, probably attributable to the fortress of Horemheb
D / 2-3	c / 1	Late phase of the Hyksos Palace, reign of Khayan and afterwards
E / 1	c / 2	Early phase of the palace, enclosure wall, entrance gate, magazine blocks
E / 3 to E / 2	d	Burnt storage and workshop quarter and metallurgical installations and possibly offering pits in a courtyard north of the district, dating most likely to a palace of the Pre-Hyksos or early Hyksos Period
	e / 1	Pre-Hyksos Settlement, probably belonging to Phase F at Tell el-Dab'a, overlapping with the below listed building
	e / 2-1	Large building complex, probably a palace, substantial walls but empty space in between, Late Middle Kingdom, late 13th or 14th Dynasty

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Fig. 2 Chronologietabelle F/II

⁴ BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009, 97–98.



Fig. 3 Palace F/II Str.c/2-1

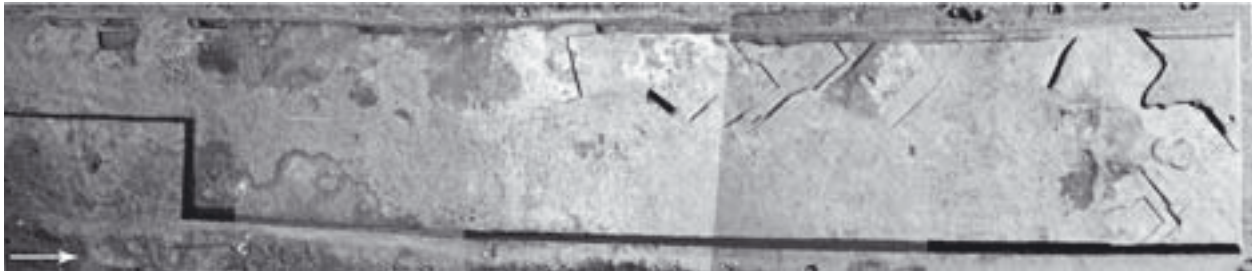


Fig. 4 Courtyard C (m/27-q/27)

by thinner walls which were covered most likely by a flat roof. An upper floor can be anticipated because on three sides double-walls looking like ramps or staircases lead straight up to this building and, we believe, to its upper level. Two sides of this magazine unit A were encased by very massive casemate filling walls, the southern wall even with a double row of filled compartments. It seems that finally parts of the northern entrance corridor of this unit were filled up too, giving the impression of a highly protected building block. Its north-western face continues as an enclosure wall which joins also the north-eastern enclosure wall of the palace precinct. It also encloses the supposed throne room north-east of unit A (s. below).

The southern corner of unit A was fortified by a solid, near-square tower which had been enlarged in its late phase to finally 20 m in diameter. It was developed from a staircase tower of a more modest diameter. It had a central position within the palace and served as an interface between unit A and the southern part of the complex, the magazine unit G and the courtyard B, especially a kitchen yard has to be mentioned which has several ovens and a staircase leading to this tower. Another kitchen, accessible from courtyard C was included within the tower just beside another staircase or ramp leading from this courtyard along the north-eastern face of the tower to the upper storey of unit A.

The large courtyard C south-east of the magazine unit A is to a large extent destroyed by deep ploughing (Fig. 4). It gave access to storage facilities along at least three sides. Along its north-western side a series of magazines had been constructed against

unit A. A series of magazines had also been constructed along its north-eastern edge along the inner side of the enclosure wall (s. below). Southwest of the courtyard C we find a large array of 6 long magazines (G), subdivided into 3 units each. They date to the early phase of the palace (str. c/2). During its late phase a part of those magazines and of courtyard C were cut off by a new enclosure wall. At the same time, and consonant with its new south-eastern front which has been set further back, a large courtyard (B) was added to the palace.⁵ It was enclosed on two sides by thick casemate filling walls. At its south-eastern side there was not enough space for a casemate wall. There the courtyard was protected by a double wall without any filling in-between.

Also this part of the palace looks like a highly protected structure, especially as a tower nearly 20 m long jutted out of its south-western façade. In the courtyard measuring c. 17 x 27 m benches were found along its south-eastern and north-eastern sides and its centre. In the midst of the south-eastern side there is in addition to the bench a kind of podium attached to the wall which could have been an altar or a base for a cult installation. This courtyard with its double walls, the tower with the staircase attached to the western outer wall and the pillar-like protrusion at the middle of the inner side of the court has a close parallel in the nearly contemporary Palace Q at Ebla (Fig. 5)⁶ There are also older palaces in Mesopotamia which show a podium-like construction (Fig. 6) at the south-eastern wall of the central courtyard.⁷ This evidence shows the origins of some of the architectural concepts of this palace reasonably well.

⁵ BIETAK 2010b, 979.

⁶ MATTHIAE 2010, 257–265, 442–448, fig. 239.

⁷ IIIrd Dyn. of Ur palace at Eshnunna (HEINRICH 1984, 52) and the „Old Palace“ at Assur, which was never finished, but shows comparable features at the eastern and the western wall of its central courtyard (HEINRICH 1984, 37–43).

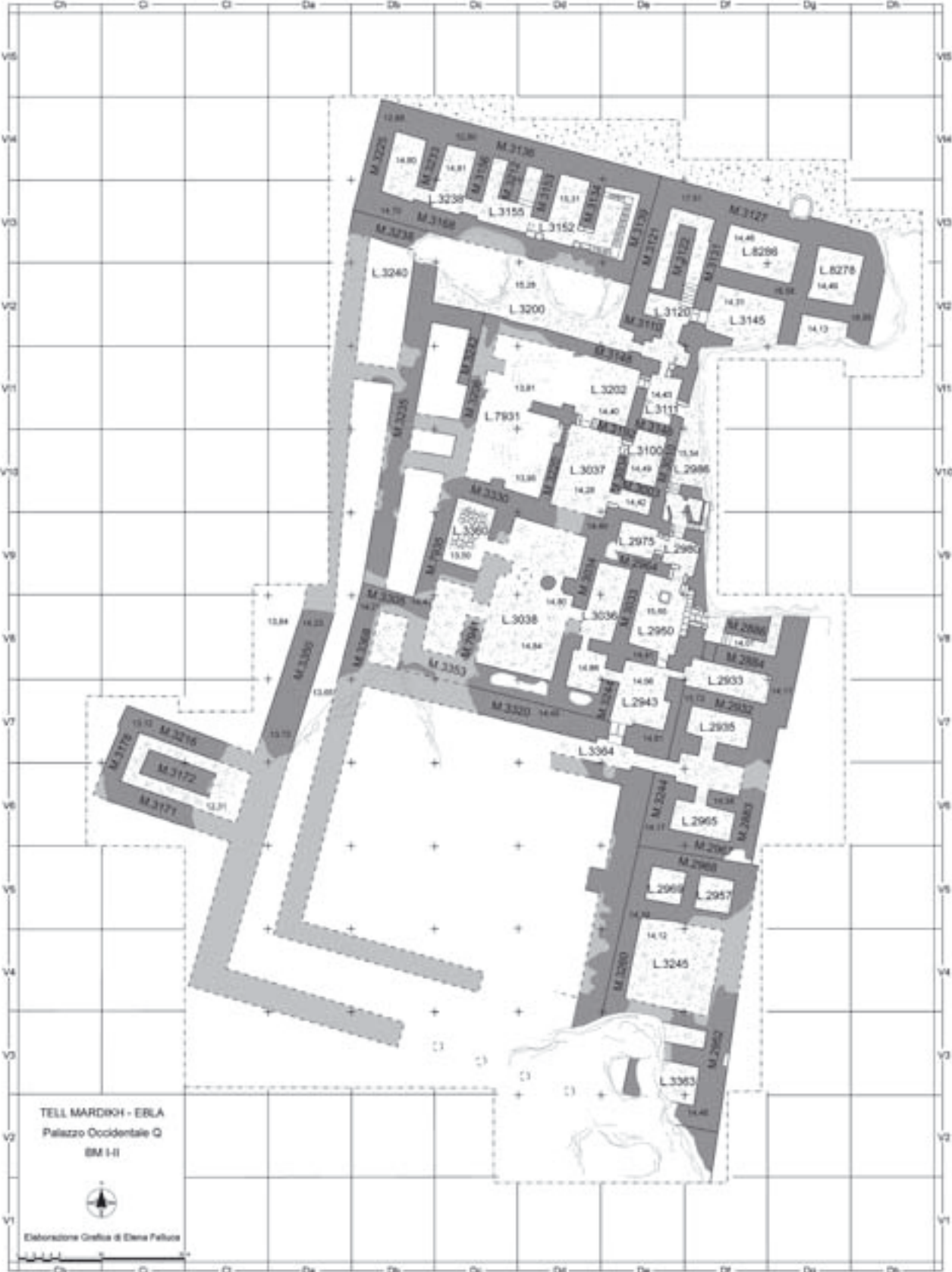


Fig. 5 Palace Q of Ebla



Fig. 6 Podium

Courtyard B seems to have been a place where ritual meals used to be celebrated with many participants.⁸ Intentionally broken pottery and animal bones, were interred in a series of big pits cut into the floor of the yard. There is a whole stratigraphy of pits, some of which had been built over by later facilities, some cut into the older benches. Their contents are without doubt remains of feasts which seem to have recurred again and again.

Probably the site of courtyard B with its installations and remains could be associated with an old,

traditional, ancient Near Eastern institution, the so-called *marzeah*.⁹ It was an institution with a building or a specific place for ritual feasts to be celebrated on the occasion of festivities such as birthdays of gods or kings. Other occasions of gatherings were funerary feasts. In our case, fertility connotations were found in a rhyton in the form of a plump nude female and rhyta in the shape of a hippopotamus with incised lotus flowers.¹⁰

In the meantime, over 6,000 vessels have been retrieved from those pits, most of them bowls and

⁸ ASTON, BADER and KUNST 2009; BIETAK 2009, 222–225; BIETAK 2010b, 979–980; BIETAK and BADER 2011; BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2007.

⁹ KING 1989; LEWIS 1989; BORDREUIL and PARDEE 1990; BOTTERO 1994; MCGEOUGH 2005; BIETAK 2003a; 2003b.

¹⁰ BIETAK 2010b, 982, fig. 8.

drinking vessels, besides beer bottles and Canaanite wine amphorae.¹¹ Of special interest are ritual vessels such as libation vessels, oval marl C bowls with incised fish at the bottom. Some of them had on their inner wall incised hunting scenery with a feline predator falling into a herd of antelopes.¹² In another scene, baboons mount a date palm.¹³ Quite unexpected was a great number of Nubian pottery fragments probably related to the Kerma culture, but beakers were missing. There is a likelihood that they originate from Nubian mercenaries who may have formed a kind of palace guards or special troops. The Nubian pottery does not contain closed forms which would have been suitable as containers of merchandise. They originate from open forms only which could have served as drinking cups or containers of food during consumption. They were only suitable for Nubians themselves who must have been present at this site.

The finds also include flat rounded terracotta pieces moulded by hand. They could be representations of types of meat. The animals consumed in those feasts as identified from the bones were mostly from cattle, but also from sheep/goats, pigs, a hippo, birds and fish.¹⁴ Bones of pigs were represented only in minor number which supports the previous observations of Joachim Boessneck and Angela von den Driesch in their examinations of offering deposits in front of the temples of area A/II.¹⁵

A special building was constructed on the north-eastern side of the yard for storing victuals for the feasts. It was built like a cellar, deep into the ground, supplanting an old sand-brick building on the south-western side of the yard. This cellar covered older benches along the original north-eastern face of the courtyard.

Northwest of this zone seems to have been a big central courtyard (D), sandwiched between courtyard B and another still unexcavated north-western wing of the compound of similar size as courtyard B. This central courtyard D was covered with deposits of broken pottery probably due to vandalism in a post palace phase. Bullae with seal impressions suggest that the pottery and organic containers which are not preserved anymore originated from nearby magazines. These deposits were, however,

disturbed by later activities, last but not least by agricultural levelling. Indeed an array of magazines with five small, narrow and five long compartments could be identified. These magazines were probably built secondarily into the courtyard D but they are older than the offering courtyard B.

The section northwest of courtyard D still remains unexplored. North of the suspected main building A is another cult place (court F) with numerous small offering pits of 2 m diameter each. They contained drinking cups, bowls and animal bones. According to Vera Müller, who is in charge of this material, these pits date like the big offering pits in courtyard B to the Phase late E/1 to D/3. Such pits were known previously at Tell el-Dab'a in front of temples in Area A/II (Phase D/2 until C/3) and of another temple in Area F/I (Phase E/1 until D/3).¹⁶ Most probably those pits are part of a tradition of Near Eastern origin. They also included one which contained a foreleg of a bull. This is probably the traditional Egyptian type of offering.

South of the palace are remains of a large square building (c. 21.6 x 18.66-19.07 m = 401 sqm) which seems to be contemporary with the early phase of the palace. Its northern corner would have overlapped with the south-eastern wall of the late phase of the palace. Unfortunately its interior is largely destroyed by agricultural levelling. By its size it seems to be the house of a dignitary closely related to the palace. It was cut into by a large rectangular well which also seems to be referable to the late phase of the palace. It measures about 12.5 m x



Fig. 7 Fragment of a cuneiform letter of southern Mesopotamian origin

¹¹ ASTON, BADER and KUNST 2009.

¹² BIETAK and BADER in press, fig. 10.

¹³ *ibidem*, 10.

¹⁴ ASTON, BADER and KUNST 2009.

¹⁵ BOESSNECK and VON DEN DRIESCH 1992, 10–11, 19–20.

¹⁶ MÜLLER 2008/I, 288–291.



Fig. 8 Offering pit L81

10 m and has sloping sides. It was accessible by a dromos south of the palace and had once stairs of stone steps, some of which were still preserved. It was from the filling of this well that a fragment of a letter in cuneiform (Fig. 7) was found which dates to the last decades of the Old Babylonian Kingdom (Middle Chronology: 1650 – 1595 BC, Short Chronology: 1580 – 1531 BC). As the pottery of the fill dates to the middle and late Hyksos Period the synchronisation between Egyptian and Babylonian Chronology would work out with both chronologies.

The early part of the later phase of the palace (c/1) seems to have belonged to the Hyksos Khayan. Eight seals of this king have been found in offering pit L81 (Fig. 8) inside the courtyard B.¹⁷

Another seal of Khayan was retrieved in a fire-pit south of the palace which still may belong to Stratum c/2 as it continues a series of fireplaces within the big southern Building S. Khayan was one of the most important of the Hyksos. Precious objects of him, most probably diplomatic gifts such as an alabaster lid, appeared in Knossos,¹⁸ a fragment of an obsidian vessel in Boghazköy¹⁹ and in the 19th century at the antiquities market of Baghdad a lion-sculpture of basalt (in the British Museum)²⁰ (Fig. 9). These finds make sense now when taken in conjunction with the above-mentioned cuneiform document. It is on this basis that far-reaching Hyksos connections could be extrapolated right back to the Old Babylonian Kingdom. He is most likely to have been the third King of the 15th Dy-

¹⁷ SARTORI 2009, 285–288.

¹⁸ PORTER and MOSS 1952, 405; VON BECKERATH 1964, 271.

¹⁹ VON BECKERATH, 1964, 272.

²⁰ PORTER and MOSS 1952, 396; VON BECKERATH 1964, 271; QUIRKE 1994.



Fig. 9 A basalt lion from Bagdad, an Alabaster lid from Knossos and an Obsidian vessel from Boghazköy with the name of the Hyksos Khayan (after catalogue *Pharaonen und Fremde*, Wien 1994, Cat.nos. 125, 124; H. Stock, MDOG 94, 1963)

nasty. If the text originates from his palace, this document is of particular importance for synchronising Egyptian with Mesopotamian chronology. Following the discovery of another cuneiform document in the form of a seal impression of a high official from the Old Babylonian Period c. 400 m west of the palace in a secondary context,²¹ the question then needs to be asked whether it were not the Hyksos who introduced into Egypt long-distance letter diplomacy in Akkadian 150 years before the Amarna Period.

The entrance gate and the north-eastern enclosure wall (str. c/2-1) (Fig. 10)

The palace was oriented towards the NNE where also its entrance gate was found. It was white-washed as also the enclosure wall. This gate gave access through the enclosure wall M522 and consisted of two gate towers which were secured at

their inner corners by two long deeply rooted cornerstones of limestone (Fig. 11A/B). One of them was found still *in situ*, the other one removed and in secondary position within a deep recent pit. The two towers were connected all along their length by a solid platform of the usual brickwork from which one ascended two steps to the entrance proper. This entrance was once equipped with a threshold of stone. Only the empty pit remained. The steps were not straight but had a rounded edge outwards what seems to be Near Eastern influence.²² According to stones supporting the socket stones, the entrance gate seems to have been secured by a two-winged door. It led to a small courtyard of c. 9 x 8.75 m to the south-west of which followed the second gate leading to the large court C. Directly behind the second gate, in keeping with the axis of the entrance, we found a small rectangular solid platform of mud bricks

²¹ Found 2009 in autumn, still unpublished.

²² Round steps can be found f.e. in the Old Babylonian Palace of Mari at the entrance to a broad-room which may have served as a throne room (MARGUERON 2004, 485, Fig. 468).

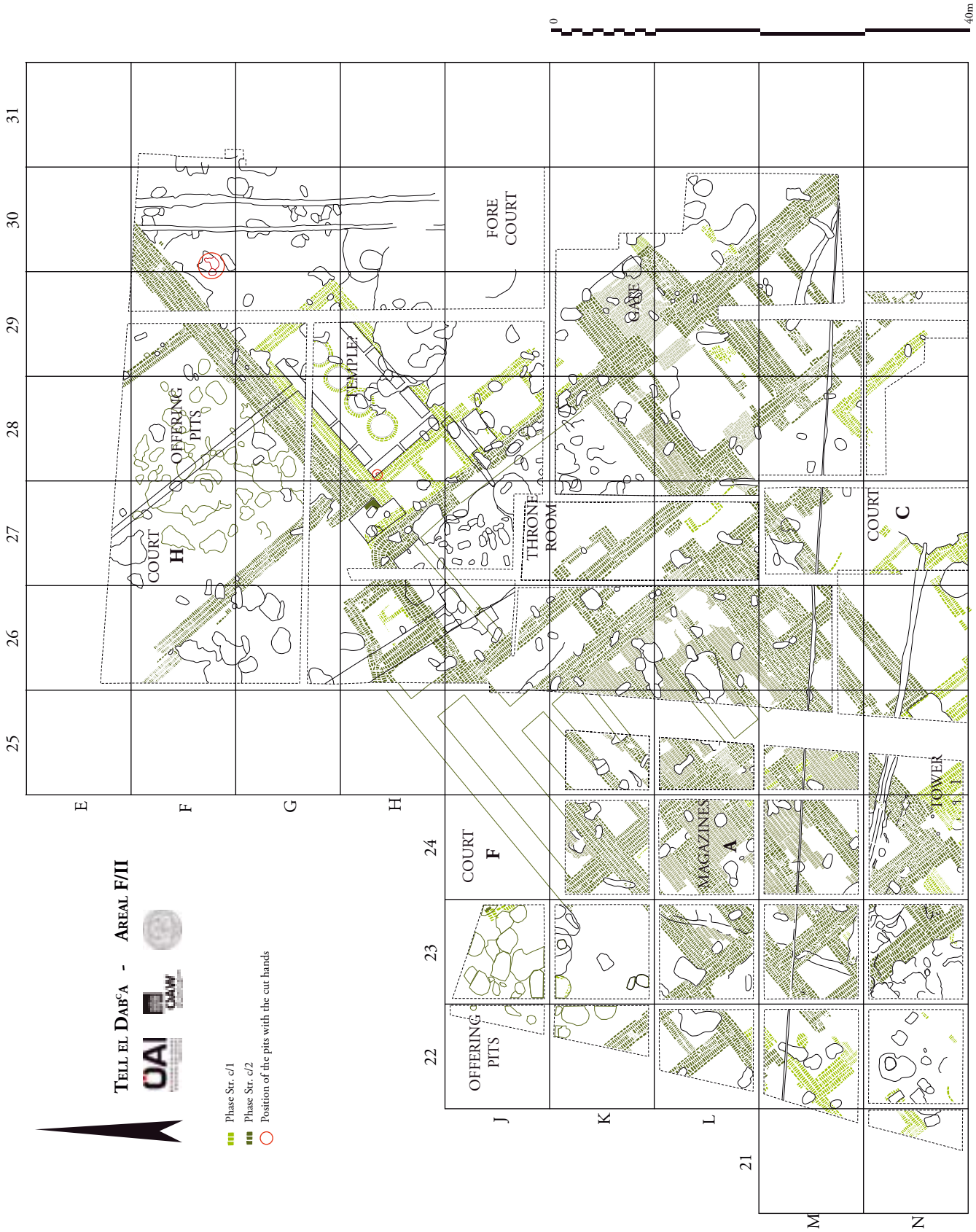


Fig. 10 Northern Part of the palace of Str. c/2-1

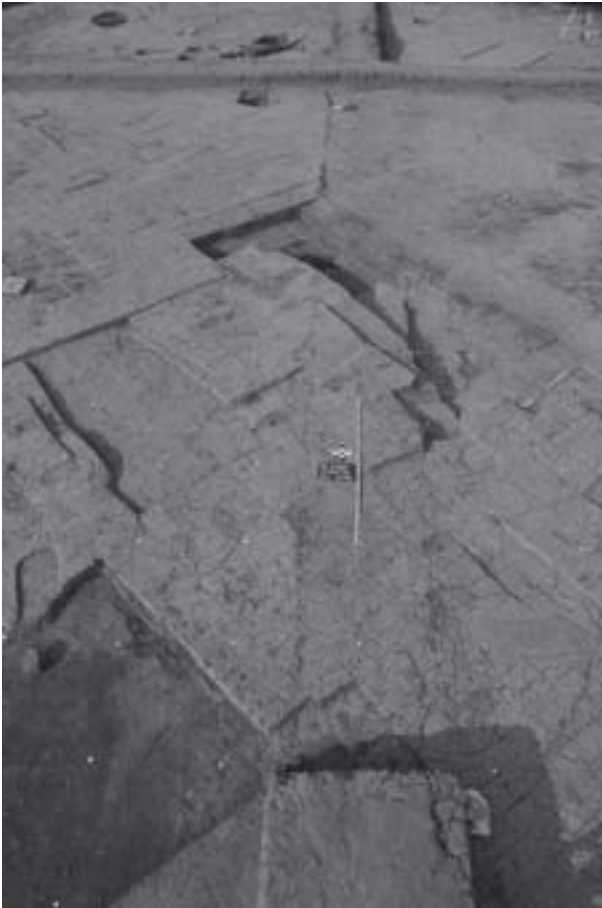


Fig. 11A Gate – Sit.1

with remains of stairs at its north-western side. Its function is not clear so far.

The palatial entrance consisting of two entrance gates containing a plaza in between has a good parallel in the entrance of the palace of the Middle Bronze Age at Mari which also has a double entrance gate with a courtyard in between (Fig. 12).²³ In Mari the entrance system is, however, more complicated leading after the second doorway to a bigger courtyard which after a “salle à chicane” leads to an even bigger courtyard.

The orientation of our Hyksos palace to the north is not necessarily an influence from Egyptian domestic buildings and palaces which usually open up to the north. The orientation may have been a matter of climate. It seems that the cold winters in northern Syria oblige an orientation of the palaces towards the south. As it is hot, however, in the Euphrates valley this would explain the opening of the Mari Palace towards the cool northerly winds. It is interesting in this connection that the palace of Bubastis is oriented towards the south.²⁴ If it is not for topographic reasons this could be because, contrary to the rest of Egypt, climate in the Delta is during winter particularly cool. The Hyksos palace was, however, open to the north-east.

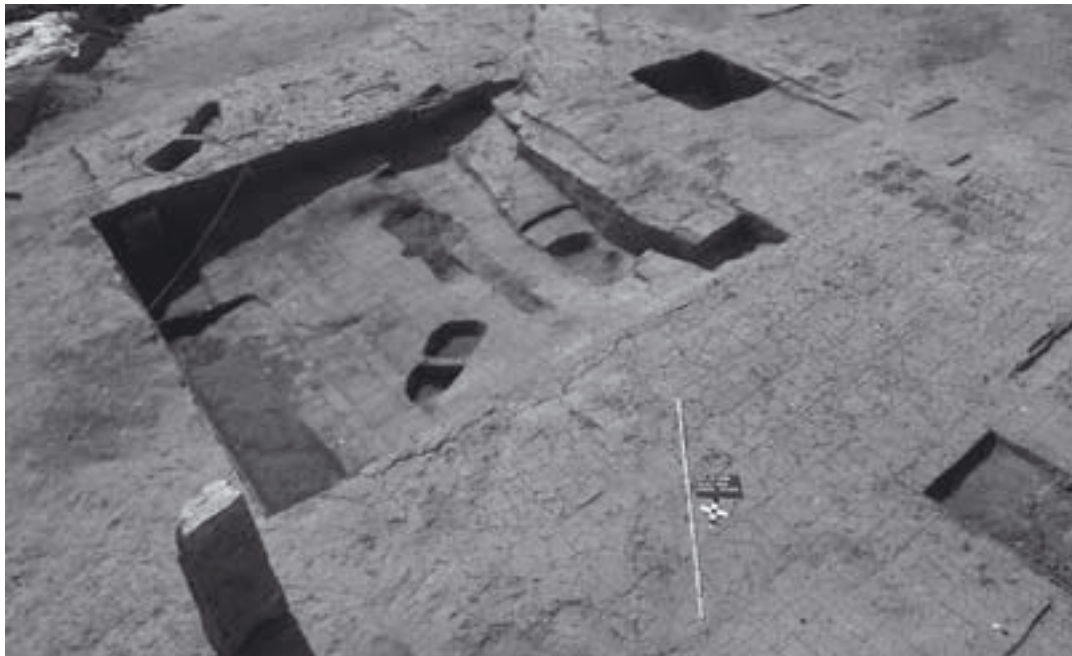


Fig. 11B Gate – Sit.2

²³ Last: MARGUERON 2004, 461, fig. 438.

²⁴ FARID 1964; EL SAWI 1979a, 155–159; 1979b, esp. 76–79, figs.173–175; BAKR 1979;1992, esp. 20; most recent: VAN SICLEN III 1996.

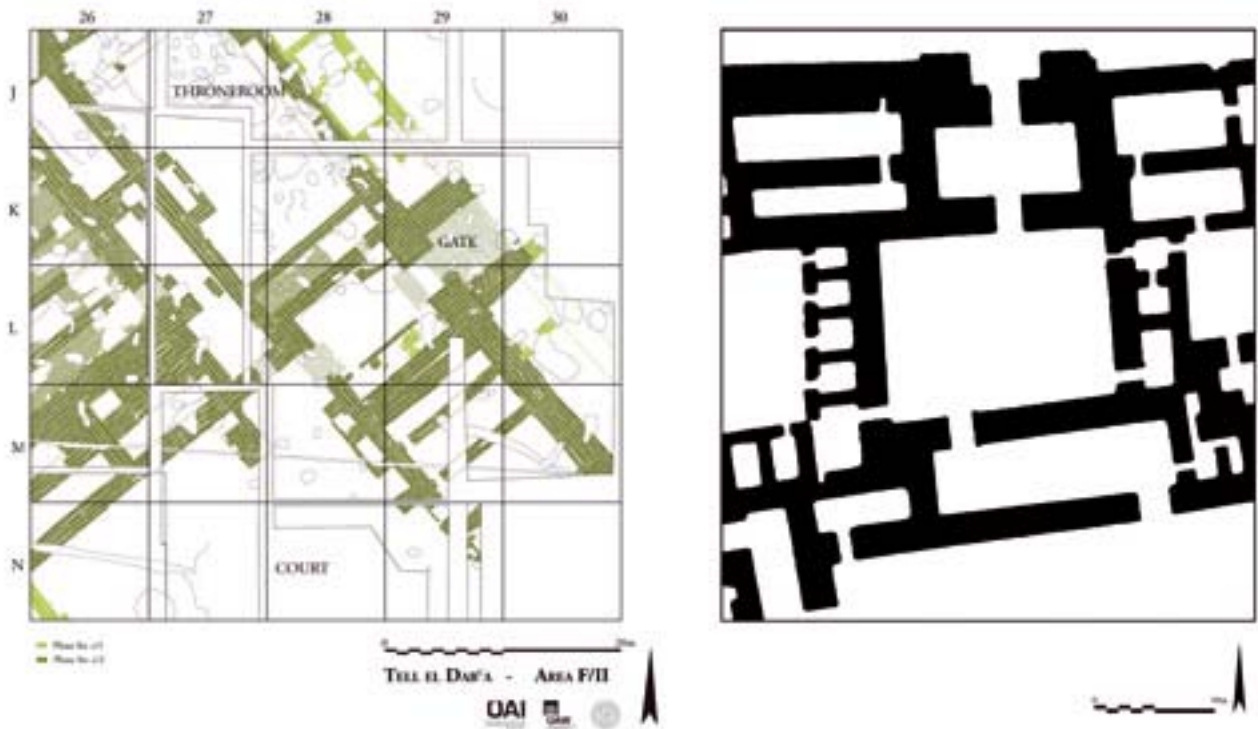


Fig. 12 Comparison of the gates at F/II and Mari

Against the outer side of the enclosure wall we have remains of attached buildings which in their north-easterly front did not exceed the frontal sides of the two gate towers. The attachment north-west of the gate belongs to an annex of the four-column-building. There seems to have been another series of rooms attached to the southeast of the gate which were largely destroyed by deep, probably recent pits.

A row of magazines along the northern enclosure wall (str. c/2-1) (Fig. 10)

Along the enclosure wall south of the gate is a series of five long magazines, which were constructed at the same time as the gate. The strong walls suggest a vault cover. The access to those magazines was through a central door into a wider storeroom from which the others were accessible like the magazines of the previously excavated unit A of magazines. In front of each magazine except the middle one were secondarily constructed smaller rectangular silos with strong side walls which also suggest vaulting. They seem to have been used as storage for grain while the magazines themselves must have served for a different storage. Unfortunately no original floor is preserved anymore. The series of magazines opened towards the court C into which additional storerooms were constructed when space was needed.

The state (“throne”) room north of the magazine unit A (str. c/2-1) (Fig. 10)

Accessible from the entrance court was a big rectangular hall of 20.76 x 12.08 m. It was a “broad-room” flanked at its two sides by narrow rooms along the breadth of the building. It seems to foot on the tradition of the plan of an older palace (str. e/2-1) which is situated two to three strata below and has a similar room configuration at the same site with the same orientation as the Hyksos palace of str. c/2-1 (s. below, str. e/2-1). The south-eastern room probably gave access from the gate-plaza and perhaps at the same time via the entrance to the magazine unit A from court C just south of the second gate. This room was bipartite and still rests of its pavement were preserved. Most probably it had security function.

The reception room was largely and intentionally destroyed by big deep reaching pits. Numerous fragments of stone blocks originating from column bases and door constructions show that this hall was once equipped with columns. A platform constructed by a retaining wall against the middle of the back wall is an indication that this hall had representational function. The destruction by deep pits shows that the looters knew what to find. It seems that they were particularly interested in the stonework of this hall. The robbers’ pits were not of recent date but



Fig. 13 The four-column-building

may date to the New Kingdom as the representation room was cut by a well of the advanced New Kingdom (Late 18th or 19th Dynasty). It is not clear how this room, apart from its access from the entrance court was connected to other parts of the palace, especially to the upper storey of building unit A, where the private quarters of the patron of this palace may be expected.

The forecourt and the four-column-building (str. c/1) (Fig. 10/ Fig. 13)

During the late phase (c/1) additional space was needed in front of the palace for ceremonial or

cultic purposes. A substantial enclosure wall seems to have replaced a more modest one. A building of 18.33 x 10.67 m (inside 15.67 x 8.18 m) was divided asymmetrically on the inside by a row of four columns. It was a “broad-room”, probably a temple of Near Eastern type. Given the position of the enclosure wall and an annex (s. below) it could have opened only to the south-east.²⁵ Unfortunately the position of doors was undercut by agricultural levelling and is therefore not securely identifiable. Also the original floor is not preserved anymore. Most likely it was paved with mud bricks. The position of the columns can be recognised by the

²⁵ Most „broad-room“-temples open eastwards.

foundation pits which were filled with sand and secured by circular mud brick retaining walls (D. 3.05-3.16 m). The distance from the centre of the column pits to the north-western wall measures 3.8 m, and to the south-eastern wall 4.35 m, which shows that the entrance aisle was wider than the back aisle.

The four-column-building had a long narrow annex, added in an L-shaped fashion. It was constructed at the same time as this hall along the outer face of the enclosure wall. This annex was accessible through a gateway in the north-west between the enclosure wall and the north-western enclosure wall of the forecourt while no connection

with the four-room-building is visible. This space in front of the palace wall was used in its early phase (c/2) as a court with round grain-silos. In the late phase the silo court was reduced in space more to the north-eastern part of the forecourt and separated by a more modest wall from the four-columned-hall.

Pits with cut off right hands – remains of the ceremony of awarding the “gold of valour”?

It was in this outer space of the palace that two pits with altogether 14 cut off right hands were found (Fig. 10/ Fig. 14 A-C). Two more pits with one hand each were found under the four-columned building



Fig. 14A Cut off hands L1543



Fig. 14C Cut off hands L1777

Fig. 14B Cut off hands L1542

just at the front enclosure wall of the palace. One may think of a “gold of valour” ceremony for successful soldiers in front of the palace.²⁶ It is known according to the tomb inscription of Ahmose, son of Ibana, from El-Qab from the late 17th/early 18th Dynasty onwards as a trophy for counting slain enemies and receiving the gold of valour from the crown as a distinction.²⁷ A pit with three right hands and three human skulls, dating to the beginning of the 18th Dynasty has been already found at Tell el-Dab^a /^eEzbet Helmy in a previous campaign.²⁸ The custom of cutting off the right hand as a trophy was not known to have been practised by the opponents of the Thebans, the Hyksos, and already c. 80 years earlier. It still remains unclear thus far, if it is an original Egyptian custom or if it was introduced from abroad.

II. REMAINS OF AN OLDER PALACE (STR. d)

Burnt storerooms

by Nicola Math

Already during the previous excavations of the palace of stratum c/2-1 in spring 2009 we encountered at the bottom of this building complex deposits of red-burnt debris. They could be traced southwards till the large courtyard C within the squares p/26-27. Also in square j/26S an older building with a room filled with red-burnt soil was revealed under the Hyksos palace.²⁹ The origin of these debris remained at that time still undisclosed. During the past campaign we reopened this area and enlarged it towards the north and the east. It was particularly under the state-room of the palace of str. c/2-1, which had been particularly destroyed by deep reaching pits, that we were able to recognise the preceding stratigraphy of the palace.

Directly below the northern part of the Hyksos palace (str. c/2-1) we encountered a completely burnt building complex (N) which could be identified as the northernmost part of a complex of storerooms. Due to the many pits of looters who were searching for stone blocks within the debris of the state-room of the Hyksos palace (str. c/2-1) and the palatial remains (str. e/2-1) below, some parts of the storerooms were completely destroyed (Fig. 15).

More damage was done by trial pits excavated under Edouard Naville 1895. Therefore the reconstruction of the building was not easy. The relatively well-preserved northernmost unit, built of 3 to 3.5 brick strong walls measures from outside 22.8 m by 6 m (inside 20.2 x 3.6 m). Two inner walls with openings in the midst divided this long narrow unit into three parts of 5.2 m, 5.4 m and 7.5 m. Nearly the same measurements and similar dispositions of space can be found in the six long tripartite storerooms of complex G of the Hyksos palace (str. c/2).³⁰ The few remains of walls of this burnt building N allow a reconstruction of at least two rows of similar magazines with long tripartite storerooms and it is quite interesting to note that the first row has the longest compartment in the north, whereas in the second compartment it is in the south. Therefore, the division into compartments differs from one row to the next. The scanty wall remains further south show that the plan does not fall anymore into the long room pattern. It seems that the room system changes and that the storerooms were accommodated into a bigger building. In the well-preserved part of the storerooms the walls still stand 8 courses high. They seem to have been 2 brick-courses wide as indicated by the lower edge of the wall plaster. No foundation ditches were recognized. Nearly all walls were burnt to an intense red, especially on the inner side. The upper parts have tumbled down or were levelled to the inside of the building. Looters have honeycombed most of this material with the pits – an indication that the storerooms once contained precious materials. In two rooms (Fig. 16A) (L1421 and L1795) the floor of compacted mud and the red burnt porous filling on top were still preserved. Room L1421 (Fig. 16B) was cut by the deep reaching foundations of wall M407 of str. c/2. On the remaining floor pottery, objects of stone, faience and ivory were found. That it was a storeroom is also indicated by different raw materials such as lumps of quartz, obsidian, ochre, flint and Egyptian blue besides seeds of fruits, remains of shells and fishbone.³¹ Worth mentioning is a collection of Egyptian imitations of 10 Middle Cypriot White Painted Pendant Line style jugs, 10 yellow polished

²⁶ BIETAK 2012.

²⁷ Recently BINDER 2008; BIETAK 2012.

²⁸ BIETAK/DORNER/JANOSI 2001, 60; fig. 21.

²⁹ BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009, 109.

³⁰ BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009, 100–101. Inner measurements 20.5 x 3.3 m, length 5.5 and 7.5 m.

³¹ Maybe used as inlays.

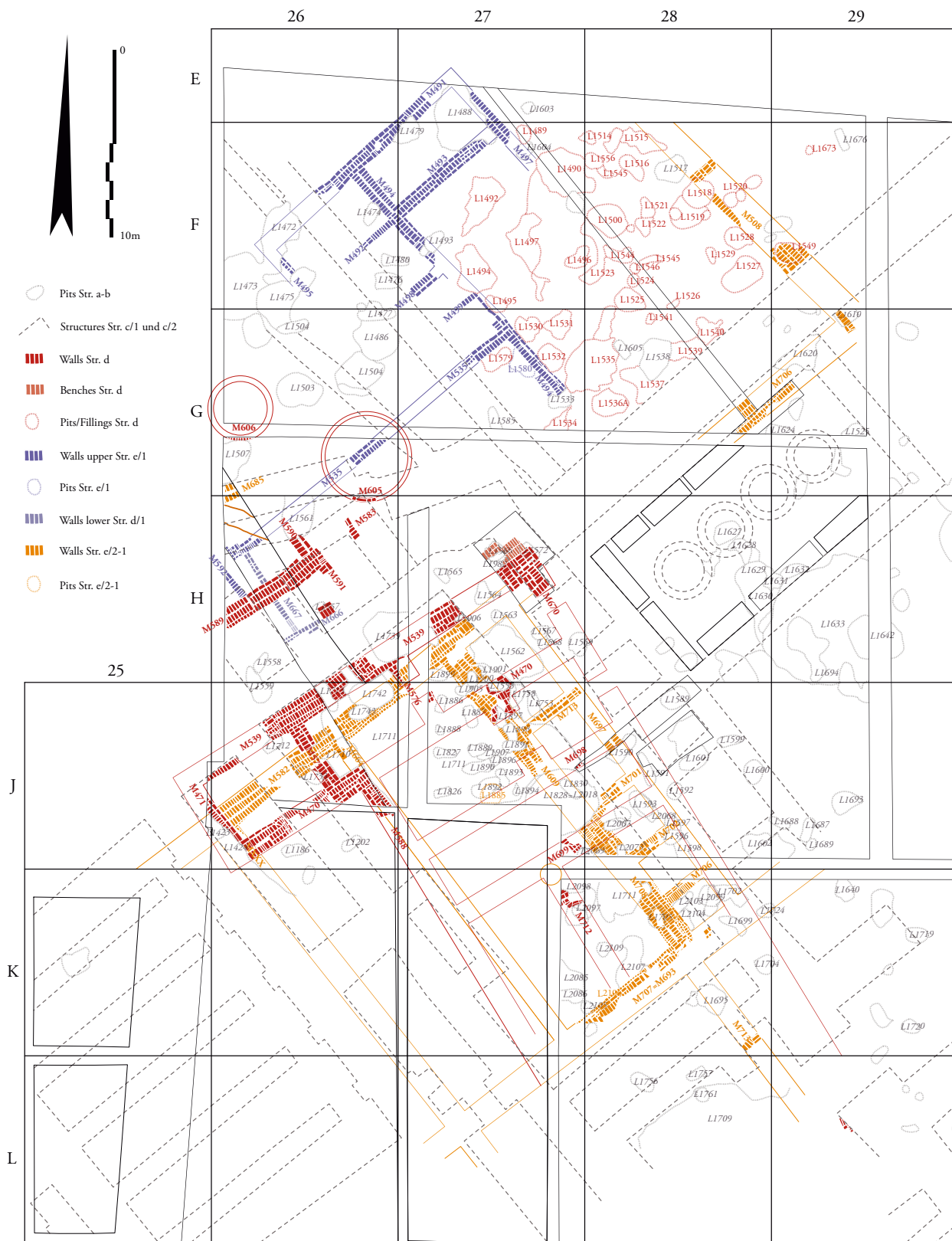


Fig. 15 The structures of Str. d, e/1 and e/2-1

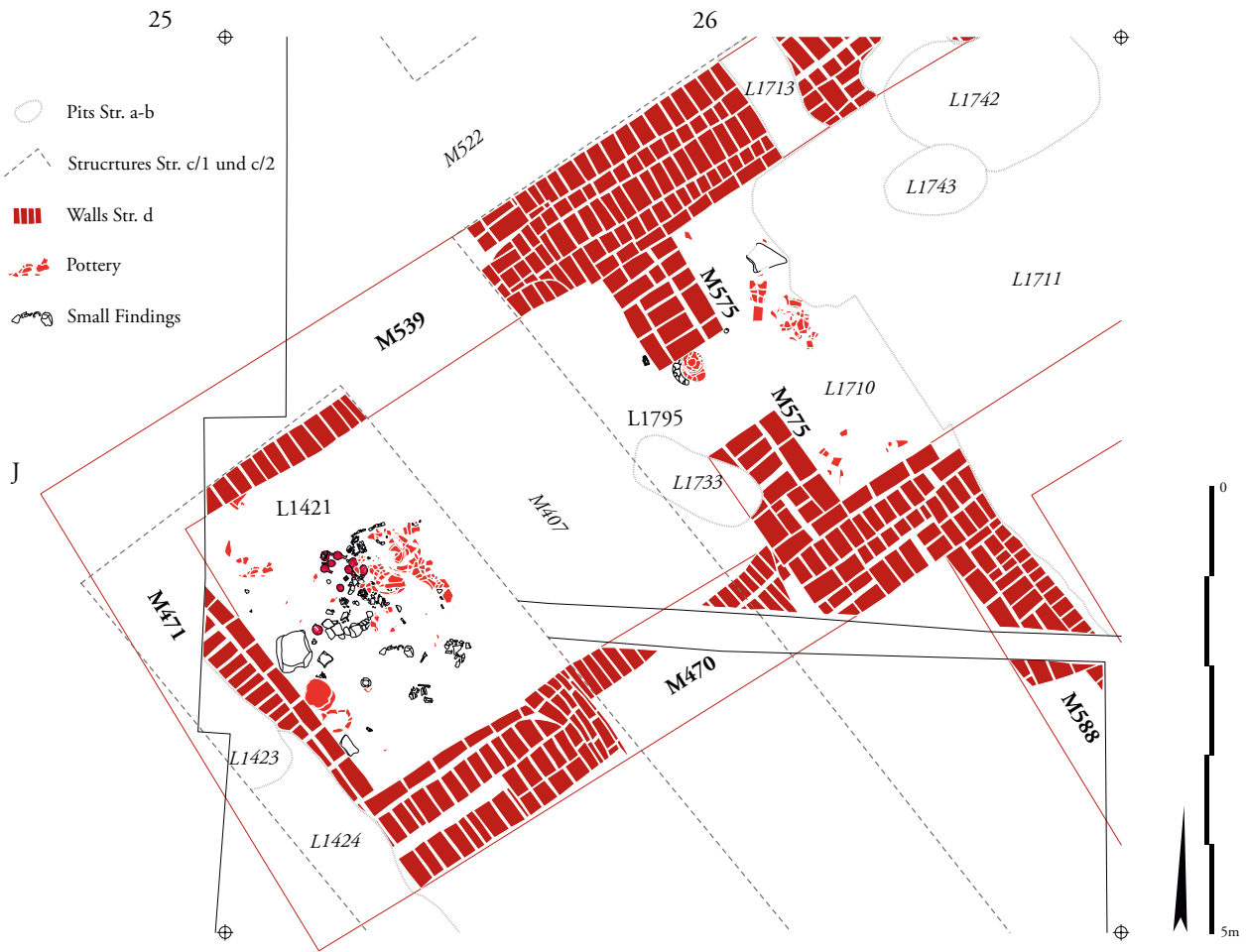


Fig. 16A Detail of the back area of magazine N – L1421/L1795 (str. d)



Fig. 16B Red-burnt filling L1421/Sit.3 (str. d)



Fig. 17 Upper part of a sistrum from L1421 (str. d)



Fig. 18 Ivory djet-pillar from L1421 (str. d)

dipper juglets with base rings, probably an import from the Levant, a yellow polished small pot of marl clay A and a sistrum with a Hathor-head of faience (Fig. 17). Probably it had a composite handle of ivory and faience found nearby. There was also a handle of ivory in the shape of a Djed-pillar covered with remains of thin gold sheet (Fig. 18). Of special interest is a magic knife of ivory with incised representations of phantastic animals. All ivory and faience objects suffered from the effect of fire. In the same room already 2009 several Levantine amphorae filled with Egyptian blue and numerous small plates of pottery were found in a position as if they had tumbled down from shelves. The middle compartment L1795 was disturbed by two pits (L1710 and L1711) (Fig. 19). The conflagration fill was only 10 to 15 cm high and contained pottery fragments, among them an amphora filled

probably with Egyptian blue, a pedestal and a ring-stand. Within the doorway through the separation wall of the compartment was found *in situ* the mouth of a “zir” of marl C which served as a base for a bowl. Around this assemblage were found a magic knife and an accumulation of fish-bone (Fig. 20A/B).

In the red-burnt filling material L1740 which was re-shifted within the big pit L1711 were found numerous potsherds and chips of various stone vessels, among them a copy of a dipper juglet of calcite.

North of the magazine building there was an enclosure wall with a door leading to a courtyard with remains of round silos. Further to the north we encountered deposits of pottery and pits – possibly kitchen-middens. Most of the deposits were ordinary household ware such as fragments of cups,



Fig. 19 Filling of magazin N - L1795 (str. d)

bowls, beer bottles, amphorae, ring stands, but also fragments of limestone and shells. The upper part of these deposits has been levelled by recent agricultural activity.

The doorway was not well preserved and seems to have had re-enforcements to the north and south. Between this enclosure wall and Building N was a 10 cubit (5 m) wide passage. Within this passage there was a bench added to the north-western wall of Building N.

An interesting evidence were remains which seem to have been caused by building activity for this stratum, a trench (L1941), probably to supply water for construction purposes, and pits for mixing mortar of loam (L1774/L2006/L2038). These features appeared under the walls M470, M539 and M588.

In the debris surrounding the burnt store-room were found two adjoining blocks with fine relief

(Fig. 33), originating most probably from a Middle Kingdom tomb belonging to “*the count, overseer of horned, hoofed, feathered and scaled animals, overseer of all things, and governor Khentikhetywosr, justified, possessor of honour*” (see the contribution of Claus Jurman). The blocks were used as spolia for re-use in the workshop adjoining the storeroom.

It is not yet known how long the building stayed as a ruin after the conflagration. It was finally levelled for the Hyksos palace and there is no evidence of squatter activity in between. The true extent and the precise nature of the building to which the magazines belonged remain still obscure. The red horizon from the levelling process of the building extends to the northeast and at least 60 m to the south, thus reaching well into the area of the Court C of the Hyksos Palace.³² The inventory of the magazines seems to belong to a palatial household with the quantity of Egyptian blue, the ivory carvings and the exquisite pottery. Workshops with metallurgical ovens were attached further in the south (F/II-o/24). It is even possible that the compound had a similar extension as the Hyksos Palace since south of its offering court (B) were found big offering pits filled with discarded pottery and animal bones belonging to stratum d.³³ The fact that they had a similar topographic position as the offering pits of Court B are an indication that there could have been a predecessor of this offering court during stratum d.

A preliminary examination of the pottery shows that stratum d belongs to phases E/3-early E/2 and dates most probably to the pre-Hyksos Period (before c. 1640 BC), the time of the late 13th/14th Dynasty.³⁴

A court with depositions of offerings

by Vera Müller

Northwest of the forecourt of the palace of st. c/2 numerous pits with typical offering pottery were unearthed (court H). Most pits measure about 1-2 m in diameter. Large offering pits of about 5 m diameter were discovered below. They were disturbed by the enclosure wall of str. c/1, encompassing the forecourt of the Hyksos palace in its north-western side. Ceramic seriation shows that those pits do not date to the time of the Hyksos

³² vgl. BIETAK AND FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009, 94–95, Abb.2.

³³ Ibidem, 108, fig. 23.

³⁴ Preliminary examination by M. BIETAK and K. KOPETZKY.



Fig. 20A Upper part of a zir covered with a dish and around the neck of the zir a magic-knife found on the floor of magazine N - L1796 (str. d)



Fig. 20B Fishbones inside the zir after the removal of the dish - L1796 (str. d)

palace which has offering pits by its own. They seem to date to str. d (Phase E/3) and should be contemporary with the burnt building (s. above) which suffered a severe conflagration (s. below). They can be considered as relics of ritual banqueting and seem to belong to an older palace precinct.

Alltogether in the area of the Hyksos palace of Str. c/1-2, thus far four large sectors with depositions of offerings have been encountered. Already during the first excavation season, in 2006, the complex of offering pits designated L81 in court B was discovered (Fig. 3) which is prepared for publication by D. A. Aston with the assistance of B. Bader.³⁵ In the same season, in square F/II-j/23, another cult zone was noticed in a test trench.³⁶ This area (F) was examined more closely in 2008.³⁷ Its western, northern and eastern boundaries have, however, not yet been revealed. This offering place is situated to the northwest of zone A considered to have belonged to the most important part of the palace.³⁸ In contrast to the depositions of L 81 which were spread in several large pits (Ø around 5 m)³⁹, the offerings in this area were dumped in several smaller pits (Ø ca. 2 m) – in both areas some pits

³⁵ ASTON & BADER 2009; BIETAK & BADER 2011 as well as BIETAK 2010b: 979–984; BIETAK 2010c; BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006: 73, 74–77; 2009: 101–105 with figs. 2, 13–16; BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER & HERBICH 2007.

³⁶ BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006: Abb. 3.

³⁷ BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009: 105 with figs. 2, 5, 17; BIETAK 2010b: fig. 3–4.

³⁸ BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009: 93–96 with fig. 2.

³⁹ BIETAK & BADER 2011.

were cutting one into the other.⁴⁰ This is an unusual feature in Tell el-Dab^a, as in other areas a lot of care has been taken to avoid the interference of different pits.⁴¹ Until now, only one pit in the court of temple III in area A/II intersected into an already existing offering pit – but in this case there had been a considerable time-lap between the two features.⁴² After a first survey of the material this seems not to apply to the cultic zone discovered next to the Hyksos palace: the deposited material seems to be chronologically relatively homogenous dating roughly to the same period, i.e. Ph. Late E/1 and D/3 of the Tell el-Dab^a sequence. The pits' inventories are very uniform in consisting mainly of cups, bowls, slender jars and ring-stands next to animal bones, mainly from cattle and in minor quantities from sheep/goat.⁴³ This restricted shape inventory is again different from the depositions found in L81 in which several special vessels had

been discovered, some clearly devised for ritualistic acts, and a lot of new vessel shapes so far not yet attested at the site.⁴⁴

Similar features with a rather standardised inventory seem to be exhibited in a large pit (L928) excavated at the southern fringe of the palace.⁴⁵ This pit is older from a stratigraphic point of view than the pits in the offering court B and date to str. d. It was also filled mainly with round-bottomed drinking cups, ring-stands, imported amphorae, beer jars and zirs. In contrast to L81 these pits correspond to those offering pits found previously in other areas of Tell el-Dab^a that were connected to temples, cemeteries or large houses.⁴⁶ It could be reconstructed that they contained the relics of cultic meals after parts of the vessels had been exposed to the burning of offerings and the deliberate breakage of vessels.

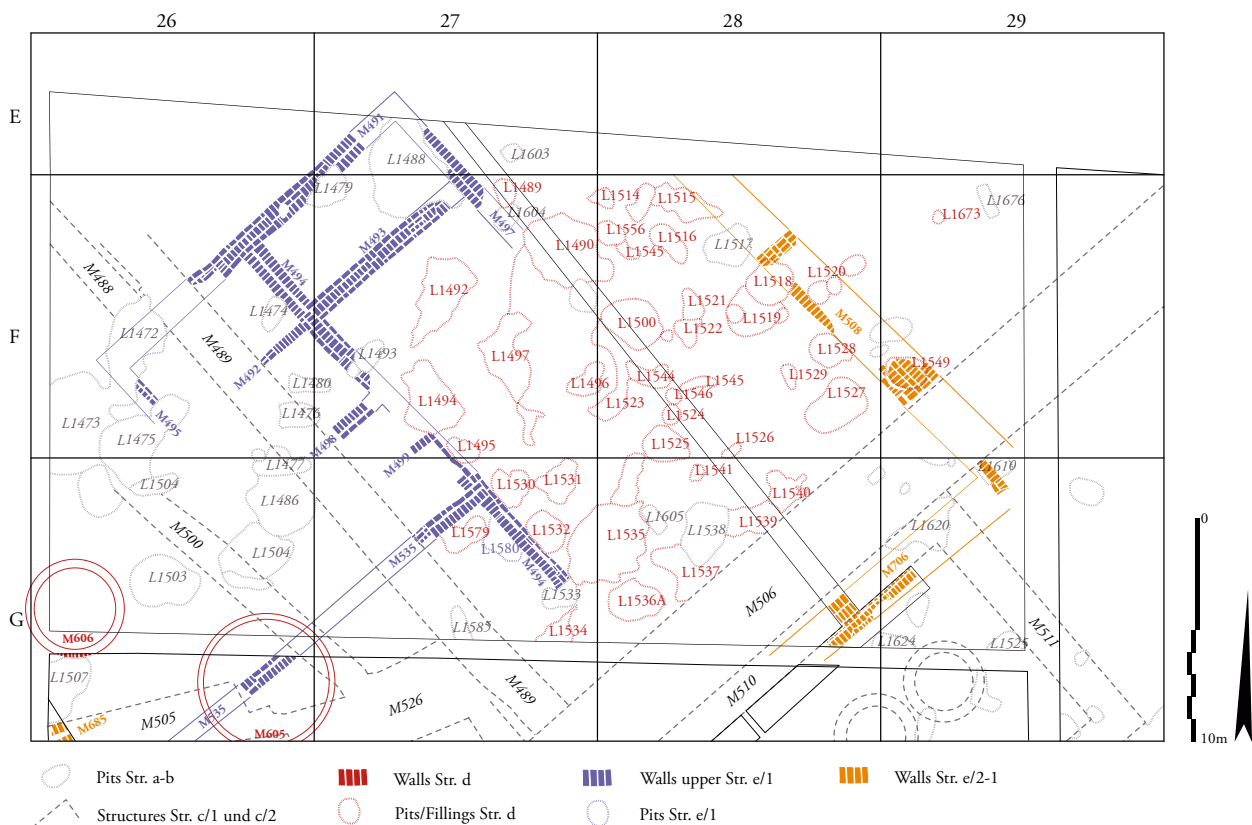


Fig. 21 Courtyard H north-west of the palace with numerous offering pits of Str. d

⁴⁰ BIETAK 2010b: 985 with figs. 3–4; BIETAK & BADER 2011.

⁴¹ Cf. the pits in front of the temple in area F/I, MÜLLER 2008/part I: 281 fig. 191, 289.

⁴² MÜLLER 2008/part I: 280 fig. 190; 289.

⁴³ Also mentioned in BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009: 105.

⁴⁴ For an overview see ASTON & BADER 2009.

⁴⁵ BIETAK & FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009: 108.

⁴⁶ MÜLLER 2008.

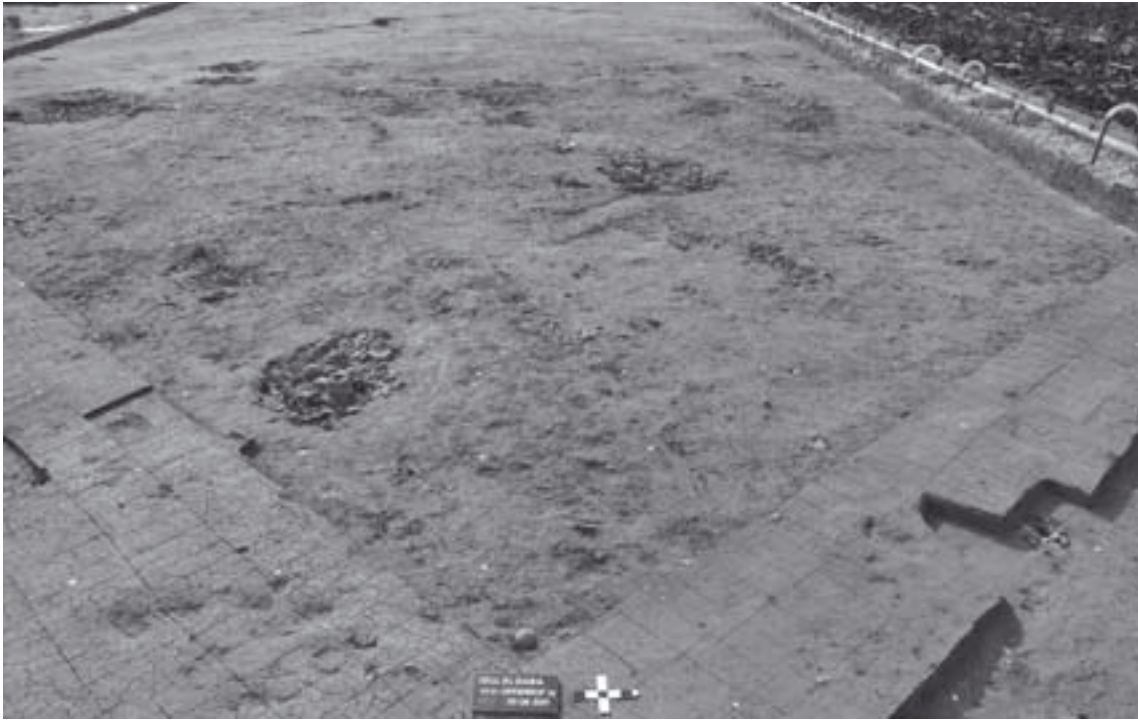


Fig. 22 Depositions in squares F/II-f/27-g/29 seen from east

Finally, in autumn 2011 a fourth cult area was discovered, situated on the north-western side of the palace (Figs. 3, 10, 21). It is again older than the Hyksos palace and should also be attributed to str. d. Once more relics of several offering pits dug closely to each other were discovered. They were found directly below the ploughing horizon in squares f/27–g/29. At present it seems that they extended on an area of ca. 20 m in northeast-southwest and ca. 16 m in northwest-southeast direction (Fig. 22). To our present knowledge this cult zone was delimited to the west by ruins of a settlement of str. e which in this district were reached immediately below the ploughing zone. In the southeast the field with the offering deposits was limited by a wall which seems to continue from the northwest-wall of the red burnt building N (M539) which runs in north-easterly direction. This wall was overbuilt by the substantial enclosure wall M506 of Str. c/1 which extended towards the north and damaged the offering deposits at the south-eastern margin of the offering field (Fig. 23). It is certain that the offerings continue in a north-western direction which remained unexplored. In all likelihood walls M507 and M489 built the boundaries on the north-eastern respectively south-western sides.

Accordingly, the offering deposits are definitely older than the palace but younger than the settlement of Str. e. Therefore, by exclusion of the upper and lower limit they should be attributed to str. d, contemporary with the red-burnt building N. The stratigraphic position is substantiated by the date of the ceramics which belong to phase E/3 (see below) and are thus conspicuously older than the palace.

This area is up till now the only zone in Tell el-Dab^a where two layers of deposits can be differentiated, one on top of the other (Fig. 23). The upper part of all the younger deposits has been destroyed to various degrees by modern agricultural activities. In several cases the pottery vessels have been broken to a mere scatter of fragments spread over large areas by the ploughshare (Fig. 23 on the left-hand side). Fortunately a number of offering pits had been cut fairly deep so that still a considerable amount of the contents was preserved. With the majority of vessels consisting of beer jars, imported amphorae and drinking-cups in combination with only a few other vessel types, the composition of inventories differs from that of offering pits discovered so far in other areas of Tell el-Dab^a.⁴⁷ Beer jars and imported amphorae were hith-

⁴⁷ MÜLLER 2008: *passim*. Further offering pits are analysed by colleagues: Next to the already mentioned pit L81 which is investigated by D.A. Aston & B. Bader (2009), offering

pits from the early New Kingdom discovered in area H/VI, at ^aEzbet Helmi, are published by B. Bader, see BADER & KUNST & THANHEISER 2008.



Fig. 23 Offering pits L1537 and L1536 with L1929-1930 in a lower layer damaged by wall M506

erto only represented in small quantities, while the bulk of vessels consisted of bowls and slender jars in different sizes and shapes together with large amounts of ring-stands. This discrepancy in composition suggests a variation in cultic habits or a divergence of rituals. The lack of bowls implies a minor importance of the presentation or consumption of food except for meat that is attested by the deposited animal bones. As far as a superficial look at the amount of deposited animal bones revealed, the proportion of relics from cattle and sheep/goat seems to be consistent with that of the known depositions.⁴⁸ In a different manner than beer jars and amphorae, which could be used for stock piling, liquids in slender jars had to be immediately consumed. It seems therefore that the relics from these other pits reflect a different habit not performed in this new area: the decanting of beer and wine into specific vessels!

Next to a few miniature vessels,⁴⁹ also some other extraordinary pottery vessels have been discovered, like a handle of an imported jar with the

application of a snake and a handle of an amphora with the impression of a scarab. More surprising was the discovery of a spinning bowl in pit L1549. Right now it is unclear, why such a specific, functional vessel was deposited in an offering pit.

Several peculiarities could be found in pit L1530 (Fig. 24): One of the first objects deposited in the pit was a large cattle rib leaning against wall M494 of str. e (Fig. 25) thus attesting to the later establishment of the pit in relation to the wall. Close to the bottom of the pit lay half of a Fish bowl. As the other half of the vessel could not be discovered, it either was never deposited in the pit or it was situated in the upper, now destroyed part of the pit. In either case, it proves that it definitely had been broken before deposition. Another example of deliberate destruction of a vessel is attested by an amphora which had been broken so that it could be fitted into a cooking pot. In another instance the lower part of a large round-bottomed jar, deposited upside down, covered the head and the upper thorax of a goat or sheep (Fig. 25 – with the jar removed).

⁴⁸ This point has naturally to be further investigated in a special study by our palaeozoologist Karl G. Kunst.

⁴⁹ In another type of offering pits most often found in connection to single tombs, miniature vessels are more common than vessels in normal size, see MÜLLER 2008: *passim*.

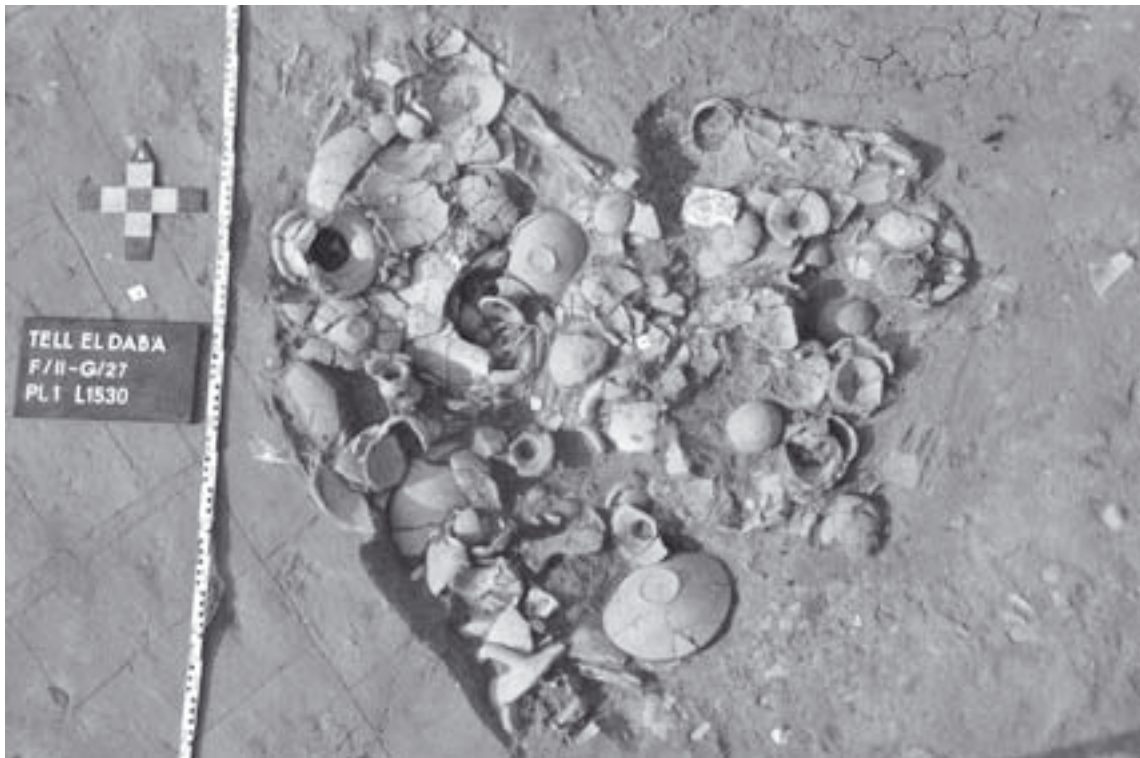


Fig. 24 Offering pit L1530, Situation 1



Fig. 25 Offering pit L1530, Situation 2

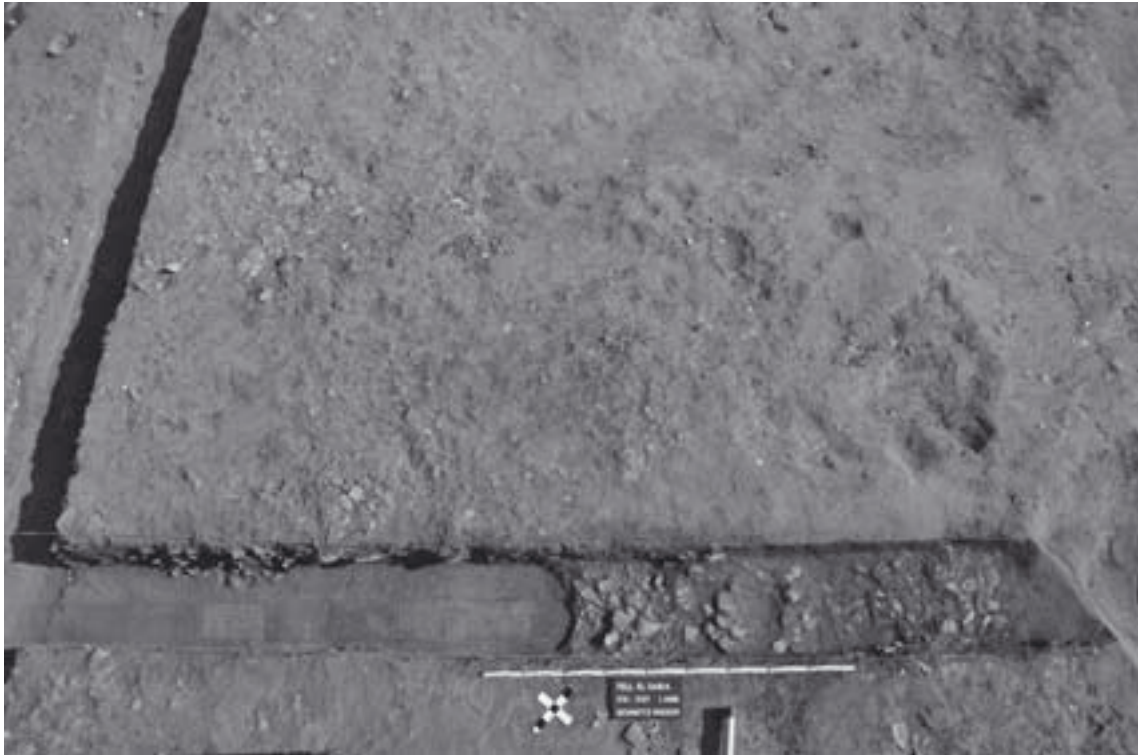


Fig. 26 Long crosswise trenches into the offering place



Fig. 27 Cellar L1977 (str. e/1)

We cannot say if the vessel's bottom had been deliberately deposited in this way or if this situation was produced by chance.

According to the vessel indices taken from the cups all the pits from the upper layer date to phase E/3 of Tell el-Dab^a.⁵⁰ This means that they had been interred several decades before the construction of the palace which dates to the early to the middle of the Hyksos period.

The layer of deposits below the just mentioned offering pits was revealed thus far by long test-trenches laid out crosswise into the offering place (Fig. 26). From their sections it is obvious that also in the lower layer vast areas were covered by offering deposits. In a number of places erased walls of the str. e settlement could be disclosed directly below the deposited vessels. Some depositions seem rather to have been heaped up on the floors while



Fig. 28 Structures of str. e/2-1

⁵⁰ The indices range between 116,0 (L1530) and 111,7 (L1549). For the indices see BIETAK 1991: 50 fig. 14

others were laid or thrown into pits. In one section several patches of ashes and charcoal with charred animal bones have been found. These fireplaces show that inflammation offerings were performed during the depositions. Similar features were also discovered in the court of the Syro-palestinian type of Temple III in excavation area A/II.⁵¹ While the temple was already built in its first construction during phase F, the definitive temple was built together with the altar for inflammation offerings in phase E/3 replacing older open fireplaces.

The pre-Hyksos settlement (str. e/1) (Fig. 15)

by Nicola Math

North of the burnt storage quarter remains of a settlement of the late Middle Kingdom were found: houses of sandy bricks ($\frac{1}{2}$ -1 brick wide) with simple bath installations with pottery pavement, bread ovens and small brick-lined storage caves under the floor (Fig. 27). These settlement patterns could be connected with broader walls ($1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 bricks wide) of this stratum located a little further to the north; however they seem to belong to a slightly younger phase, because they show a much more generous plan. The settlement remains were disturbed by the above – mentioned offering pits.

A large building of the Late Middle Kingdom (str. e/2-1)

by Nicola Math

On the sand surface of the *gezira* we found remains of a large building complex with massive mud brick walls and thin lime-plastered floors (Fig. 28). These lime layers could also be remains of the building activities, having been applied as a preparation to consolidate the sandy soil for the later construction. The doors showed remains of limestone constructions. The excavated part of this building shows two rectangular rooms of nearly the same dimensions.⁵² To the north-west 5 small rooms of different sizes were added. No precise conclusion can be reached about the building itself, because it suffered from intensive destruction by pits which were dug most probably during the 18th Dynasty according to the stratigraphy of later installations cutting into these pits (Fig. 29). But it seems to be obvious that the general plan of this structure has been copied in the later Stratum c/2-1 (Fig. 30) although the dimensions and proportion differ (s. above). The dating is not accurate by now, because only a few highly fragmented pottery pieces have been found.



Fig. 29 Structures of str. e/2-1, cut by a circular well of the New Kingdom

⁵¹ MÜLLER 2008/part I: 287.

⁵² Southern Room: 19.41 x 6.4 m; Northern Room: 19.41 x 6.7 m.

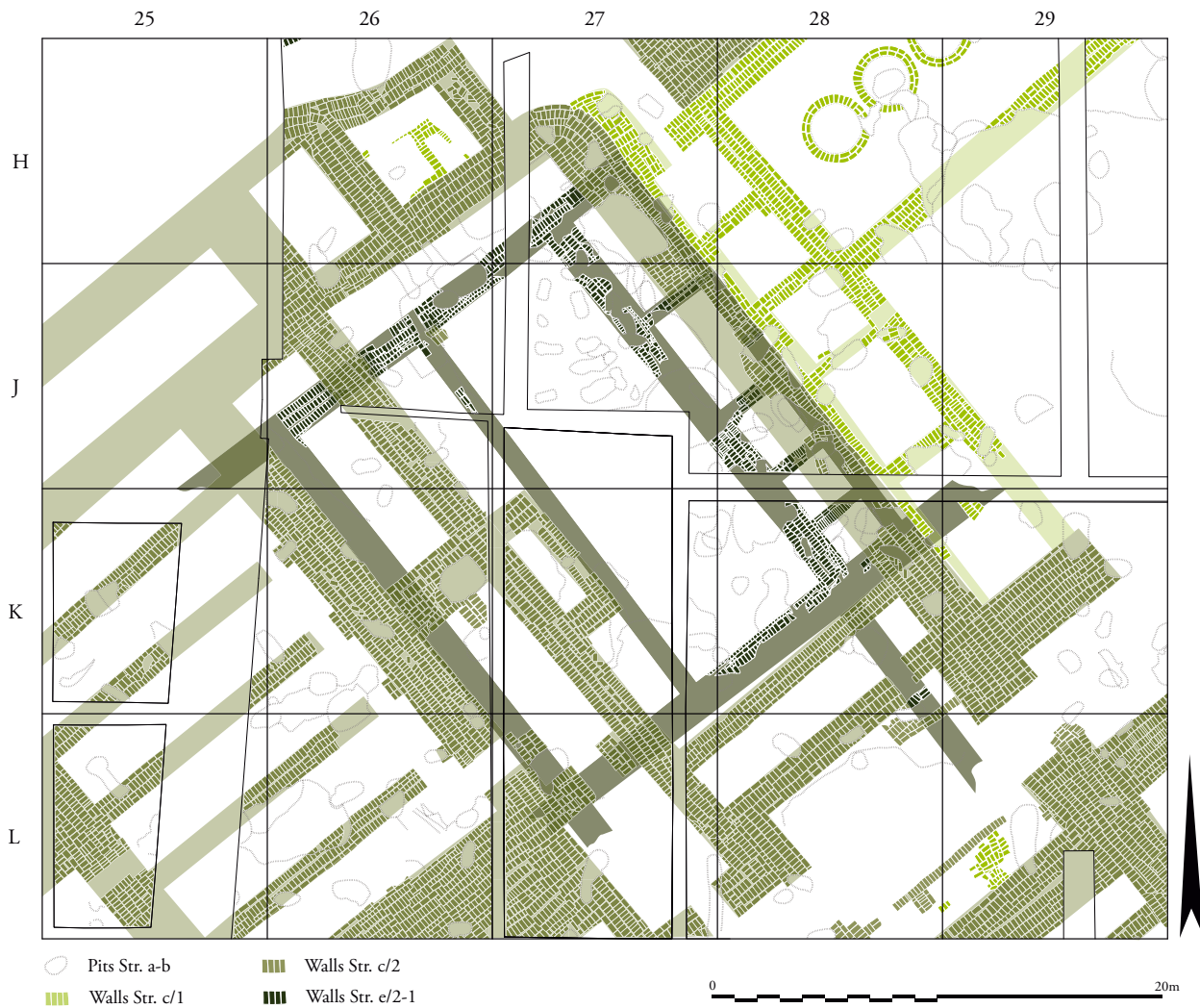


Fig. 30 Comparison of the ground plans str. e/2-1 and str. c/2-1

Later installations (str. b/3-2) by Manfred Bietak

Traces of big enclosure walls, abutting the northern entrance tower of the Hyksos palace, show that the activity at the site did not cease after the Hyksos Period (Fig. 31). These walls were only preserved in their very lowest brick courses due to agricultural activity. They may date to the end of the Hyksos Period or to the New Kingdom. The fortress walls from the time of king Horemheb found at 'Ezbet Helmy may be a hint that these walls could be part of this fortress. To this period may also belong a round well with a diameter of about 4 m (Fig. 29/ Fig. 32). It cuts into the remains of the Hyksos palace and produced from its

filling sherds of Marl D of the late 18th Dynasty/ Ramesside Period. From the time afterwards, when everything was in ruins we have evidence of scattered Ramesside burials and burials of domestic animals such as dogs, sheep and goats which may have been connected with pastoral activity in this region.

Two adjoining relief fragments from the re-used block of a tomb wall by Claus Jurman⁵³

Identification and measurements

Two adjoining fragments of carved limestone were found in close proximity of each other in the debris of the storeroom mentioned on page 36. They once

⁵³ I am indebted to Ernst Czerny for his helpful comments on the block and other re-used stone monuments found in the vicinity of Tell el-Dab^a.

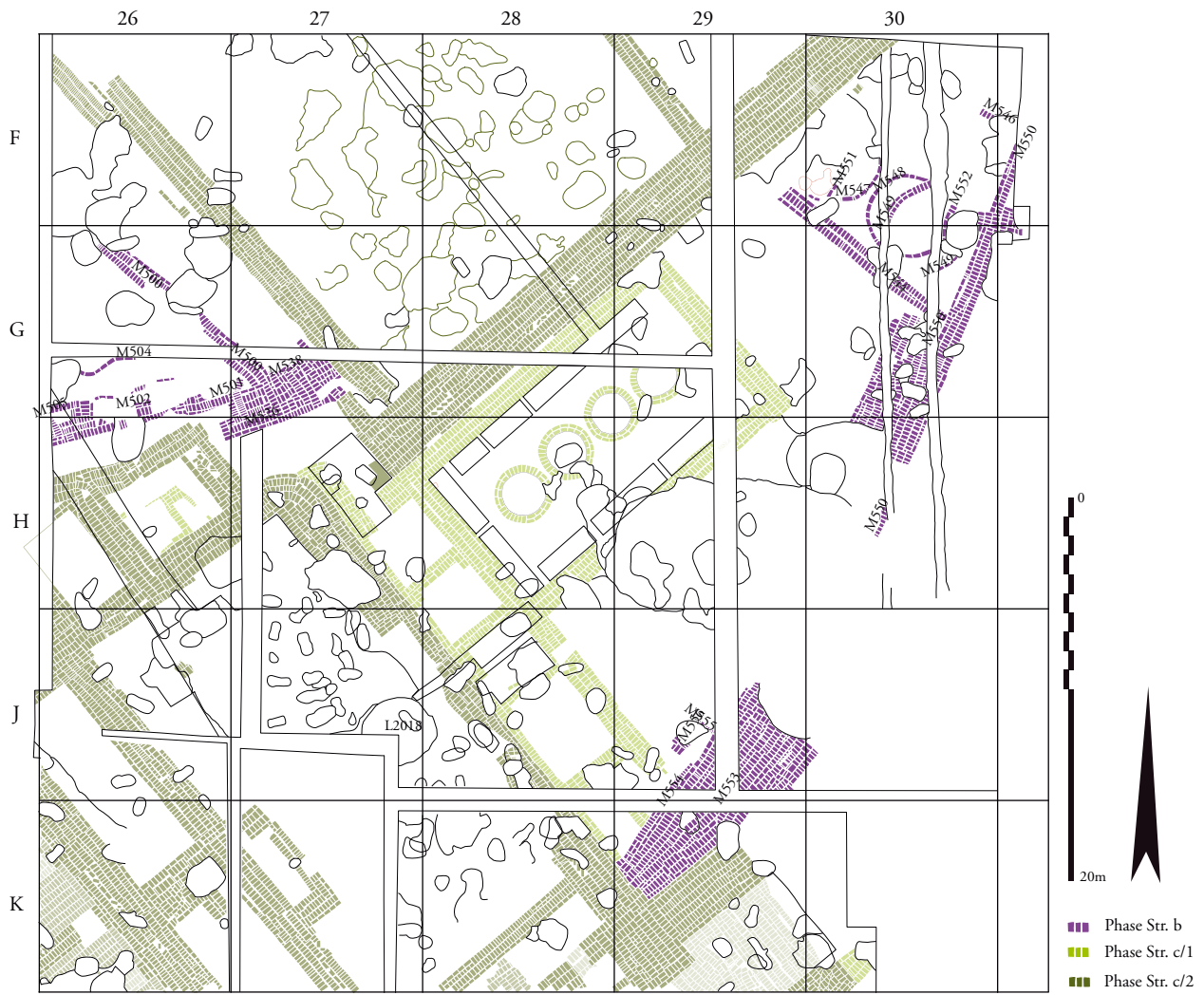


Fig. 31 Remains of massive walls of str. b in the area to the north-east of the palace



Fig. 32 Well L2018 of the New Kingdom



Fig. 33 Re-used block with relief found in storeroom area of str. d.

formed part of a single rectangular block and together measure approximately 99 cm in width. The maximum preserved height is 58 cm, the thickness 16.5 cm (Fig. 33).

Preservation

While the left side of the left-hand fragment (inv. no. 9585) still preserves part of the smoothed original outer edge, the right edge of the right-hand fragment (inv. no. 9586) and the upper and lower edges are completely broken away. Especially the lower part of the block has suffered severe damage, resulting in a jagged break line. A considerable part of the relief surface on the left-hand fragment, which originally showed the head of the presumptive tomb owner, is now chipped. Slight to medium weathering is noticeable on the relief surfaces, the impact being greater on the right fragment, where many of the incised details have been obliterated.

Decoration

The block was carefully smoothed and adorned with pictorial scenes and hieroglyphic text in shallow raised relief. The outermost section on the left is occupied by a 7.5 cm wide border frieze. It is defined by two thin vertical bands of raised relief which are connected at regular intervals by horizontal double stripes. The presence of this border indicates that the block was originally placed at the

left corner of a wall. Immediately to the right the block is divided into two zones of decoration. The one at the top is formed by a line of hieroglyphic inscription running from left to right. Although its upper third has been lost, it can easily be identified as the beginning of an offering formula (text 1). The original height of the text must have been around 15 cm, thus taking up more than twice the height of text 2 immediately below, which is separated from text 1 by a border line 1.7 cm thick.

Text 2 represents an identifying caption attached to the partly destroyed figure of the tomb owner in the scene below. In accordance with the viewing direction of this figure the horizontal text runs from right to left. It is set apart from the image plain by a thin border line of 0.8 cm thickness.

The left end of the scene once showed a standing or sitting figure of the tomb owner whose now completely destroyed head must have reached up to the lower border line of text 2. The only parts of the figure spared by the circular chipping on fragment 9585 are the left forearm and the left hand holding a long staff. To the right are the remnants of a sub-register comprising figures of subordinates at less than half the size of the tomb owner. The first figure depicts a man with short hair oriented towards the tomb owner on the left. He is bent forward and presents with his right hand an opened scroll of papyrus (rather than a writing board).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ For this type of motif see DER MANUELIAN 1996.

Another papyrus scroll is clamped under his left arm. While his right (“back”) shoulder is depicted in frontal view, the left (“front”) shoulder is folded sideways as to present a profile view. This specific combination of views within a single figure is well-known from tomb reliefs dating to the Old and Middle Kingdoms but relatively rare afterwards.⁵⁵

Immediately to the right follows a slaughtering motif. A man oriented to the right is shown bending over an ox lying on its back, which is now largely lost. The man is holding one of the forelegs with his left hand while his right is guiding a butcher’s knife. Whether he is about to sever one of the animal’s legs or to cut open its throat is unclear to me. The hooves of the two hind legs, which have been bound together or are held by a now lost bystander, are just visible left of the fragment’s edge.⁵⁶


The two texts read as follows:


Text 1:



← *h*tp^r *dj* *nswt* *Jnpw*, [*tpj* *d*w=*f*^a *jmj*-w[*t*]
[*nb* *t3*-]^b *d*sr [...]

A boon which the king has given (and) Anubis, [who is upon] his [mountain], who is in the place of embalming, [the lord of the] sacred [land ...].

a) There are no traces of the group  discernible on the preserved parts of the block. This means that the signs were quite tiny and placed at the top of the line.

b) The remnants of Gardiner N33 (o) at the left corner of the sign group indicate that the word *t3* was written with three grains of sand taking up the entire width of the group, i.e. .

Text 2:



→ [...] (?)^a *h3tj*-^c (*j*)*m*(*j*)-*r3* ^c*b*(.w) *w*h*m*(.t) *š*w(.t)
*nš*m(.wt) (*j*)*m*(*j*)-*r3* *n*(*j*) (*j*)*h*.*t* *nb*(.t) *h3tj*-^c (or: <*n.t*>
h3tj-^c ?)^b *Hntj*-*hty*-*w*sr(.w) ^r*m3*^c *h*rw *nb* *jm3h*

[...](?) count, overseer of the horned, hoofed, feathered and scaled animals, overseer of all things and governor (or: <of the> governor?) Khentikhetywosr, justified, possessor of honour.

a) At the current right edge of the block the title sequence starts with *h3tj*-^c, but it may originally have been preceded by *jrj*-*p*^c.*t*.

b) For a discussion of the alternative reading see the commentary below.

Text and scene layout

As their different orientations and dimensions indicate, the two lines of inscription do not form part of a single, continuous text. The offering formula of text 1 most likely constituted a framing inscription at the top of the wall of a funerary chapel and could have been positioned immediately below a kheker frieze.⁵⁸ Text 2, on the other hand, is directly related to the depiction of the tomb owner on the left side of the block and serves as identifying caption. The tomb owner’s position within the scene and the opposed direction of the offering formula suggest that the reused block comes from the right-hand wall of a tomb chapel. A partial parallel for this arrangement can be found, e.g., on the left lateral wall of the tomb chapel B 2 at Meir (Ukh-hotep I, early 12th Dynasty),⁵⁹ but there the tomb owner is depicted sitting in front of an offering table and not holding a staff.

The presence of the offering formula over the scene would suggest that the depicted slaughtering and presentation of the document is connected with an offering ritual. However, the man with the scrolls (scribe, official or relative of the tomb owner?) does not appear to be a lecture priest, but rather resembles an official relating affairs connected with the tomb owner’s (funerary) estate.⁶⁰ The pose of the tomb owner holding a long staff is also in line with this interpretation.⁶¹

⁵⁵ SCHÄFER 1974, 303–304, pl. 16; 23–24.

⁵⁶ For the iconography see EGGBRECHT 1973, 31–46.

⁵⁷ For a similar arrangement dating to the 6th Dynasty cf. BLACKMAN and APTED 1953, pl. X (offering formula on false door of Niankhpepy-kem).

⁵⁸ Cp. NEWBERRY 1893, pls. XIX–XX; XXXVI–XXXVII.

⁵⁹ See BLACKMAN and APTED 1915, pl. VI.

⁶⁰ Cf. DER MANUELIAN 1996, 588.

⁶¹ The tomb owner sitting at the offering table is generally not holding a long staff during the late Old and Middle Kingdom.

Name and titles of the tomb owner – dating of the block

The name *Khentikhety-wosr* is found only once more in the ancient Egyptian onomastic record.⁶² Vernus pointed to the occurrence of the name in a graffito from the Shatt er-Rigala area in Lower Nubia, which had been documented by Petrie at the end of the 19th century.⁶³ Unfortunately, the precise date and context of the graffito cannot be ascertained with any confidence. It is clear, however, that the personal name conforms to a theophoric pattern well-attested in the Middle Kingdom, combining the name of the rather obscure god Khentikhety with a predicative stative or adverbial phrase.⁶⁴ Although Khentikhety was considered the principle god of the Lower Egyptian Athribis, personal names paying tribute to the god are attested throughout the Nile Valley and the oases⁶⁵ and cannot be used to identify the place of origin of the individual bearing such a name.⁶⁶

Turning to Khentikhety-wosr's title sequence, the most conspicuous element is *jmj-r3 ʿb.w whm.t šw.t nšm.wt* "overseer of horned, hooped, feathered and scaled animals" or translated more freely "overseer of livestock".⁶⁷ Quirke counts it among the titles which describe an official's portfolio in the "phrasing of the formalized autobiography" and are not directly linked to income generating offices.⁶⁸ Variants of the title occur already in the First Intermediate Period (probably associated with the reign of Merikara),⁶⁹ but only during the 12th Dynasty does it become more widespread. The securely dated attestations range chronologically from the

reign of Nebhepetra Mentuhotep to the reign of Amenemhat III, with a peak in the early 12th Dynasty.⁷⁰

Khentikhety-wosr's other titles (disregarding the courtly *h3tj-ʿ* at the beginning of the preserved sequence) are slightly more problematic. The string *jmj-r3 nj jh.t nb.t h3tj-ʿ* could be understood as two separate titles, reading "overseer of all things (i.e. possessions)" and "governor". In such a case the latter title would be lacking a geographic specification and exactly resembling the honorific title at the beginning of the sequence. The use of *h3tj-ʿ* as a "self-sufficient" administrative (or military) title before the personal name is attested elsewhere during in the Middle Kingdom and may be seen as an abbreviation for *h3tj-ʿ* + toponym.⁷¹ *Jmj-r3 jh.t nb.t* without further qualification seems to be known only from the Old Kingdom mastaba of Ankh-haf at Giza (G7510),⁷² but more elaborate variants such as *jmj-r3 nj jh.t nb.t n.t nswt* "overseer of all things (i.e. possessions) of the king" occur both in the Old and in the Middle Kingdoms.⁷³ In case that Khentikhety-wosr held a similar title one would have to insert an indirect genitive *n.t* between *jmj-r3 nj jh.t nb.t* and *h3tj-ʿ* in order to arrive at a reading compatible with standard grammar.⁷⁴ Emending to *jmj-r3 nj jh.t nb.t <n.t> h3tj-ʿ* "overseer of all possessions <of> the governor" would mean, however, that Khentikhety-wosr was subordinated to an unspecified *h3tj-ʿ*. Given the fact that Khentikhety-wosr's tomb chapel must have been of impressive dimensions (judging by the proportions of text 1) this does not seem to be a convincing solution.

⁶² The name is absent from RANKE 1935–1952 and does not feature in Thirion's additions to Ranke either Cf. THIRION 1979–2005.

⁶³ VERNUS 1970, 157, n. 3, [49]; PETRIE 1888, pl. XVII, no. 536.

⁶⁴ See VERNUS 1970, 155–157.

⁶⁵ See BAUD, COLIN and TALLET 1999, 6, doc. 6, no. 1.

⁶⁶ VERNUS 1970, 169. A name incorporating *Khentikhety* is even attested on a votive statue from the second half of the 12th Dynasty coming from the temple of 'Ezbet Rushdi. It was dedicated by the overseer of the temple Imeny, born of *Z3.t-Hntj-hty*. Cf. VERBOVSEK 2004, 352, doc. Ez 2. I owe this reference to Ernst Czerny.

⁶⁷ For the reading see LORET 1916/1917, 61–68.

⁶⁸ QUIRKE 1996, 668; 670.

⁶⁹ Cf. ABD EL-GELIL, SAADANI and RAUE 1996, 146, fig. 2b; 150–151 w. n. 45.

⁷⁰ QUIRKE 1996, 668–669; WARD 1982, 13–14, nos. 63 and 64; FISCHER 1981, 241; LORET 1916/17, 66–68.

⁷¹ Cf. HELCK 1958, 208–209; FISCHER 1968, 71; BAUD, COLIN and TALLET 1999, 1–6. In the rock inscription of Baud's doc. 6 it is even found before a personal name starting with the theonym *Khentikhety*.

⁷² Cf. STRUDWICK 1985, 77, no. 34; JONES 2000, 193, no. 724.

⁷³ Cf. JONES 2000, 193, no. 726; 194, no. 728; FISCHER 1997, 7, no. 289a–d. In the Middle Kingdom *jmj-r3 nj jh.t nb.t n.t nswt* is attested on an Abydene stela of the 12th Dynasty, where it is attributed to the overseer of the treasury Iykhernofret. See LANGE and SCHÄFER 1908, 310, CG 20683, l. 6; SIMPSON 1974, pl. 2, ANOC 1:5; DARNELL 1989, 219, n. 1. Another example is found on a statue base from Serabit el-Khadim which is dated to the reign of Amenemhat III. See GARDINER and PEET 1917, pl. XXIX, no. 98.

⁷⁴ Cf. GARDINER 1957, 66, § 86.

The concluding phrase *nb jm3h* is a common private epithet during the Middle Kingdom and usually follows the personal name and the *m3c hrw* designation.⁷⁵ First attested in the 4th Dynasty, it is still rare in the 11th Dynasty, but becomes increasingly common during the 12th Dynasty. In the 13th Dynasty its popularity decreases again.⁷⁶

Neither iconography, nor epigraphy, personal name or titles provide a firm anchor for dating the block and the tomb it had originally been taken from. Judging from the occurrences of the individual features commented upon above the possible date of production ranges from the late Old Kingdom to the 13th Dynasty. It has to be noted, howev-

er, that many of the monuments showing partial similarities are associated with the early 12th Dynasty. With all due caution it is therefore suggested here that the re-used limestone fragments found in the storeroom were carved sometime during the first half of the 12th Dynasty.

Whether the block was procured from a similar source as some of the re-used relief blocks found during the 1960s in a drainage channel created for the 12th Dynasty temple at nearby 'Ezbet Rushdi is another open question.⁷⁷ Certain parallels in relief style and palaeography cannot be denied, but they are hardly significant in terms of a common origin.

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⁷⁵ DOXEY 1998, 100. While Doxey states that the phrase “almost always occurs at the end of the offering formula”, there are several noticeable examples where it concludes a “normal” caption. See, e.g., NEWBERRY 1893, pl. XXXIII (top); XXXV (top right).

⁷⁶ DOXEY 1998, 100–102.

⁷⁷ See JÁNOSI 1998.

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