

**Title: Tell Arbid 2008–2009. Preliminary report on the results of the thirteenth and fourteenth seasons of Polish–Syrian excavations**

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Journal: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 21 (Research 2009)

Year: 2012

Pages: 511-536

ISSN 1234-5415 (Print), ISSN 2083-537X (Online)

ISBN 978-83-235-1144-1

Publisher: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW),  
Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (WUW)

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**TELL ARBID 2008–2009  
PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE THIRTEENTH  
AND FOURTEENTH SEASONS OF POLISH-SYRIAN EXCAVATIONS**

**Piotr Bieliński**

Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

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**Keywords:** temple, Ninevite 5, Early Dynastic III, Akkadian, stepped terrace, citadel, Jezirah

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**Keywords:** temple, Ninevite 5, Early Dynastic III, Akkadian, stepped terrace, citadel, Jezirah

Except for investigations carried out on the top of the mound during the 2008 season, all efforts throughout the two seasons were focused on the exploration of the eastern part of Sector W in Tell Arbid [*Fig. 1*]. The main objective was to continue exploration of the Ninevite 5-period city quarter situated on the southern slope of the tell, where in 2007 a large Ninevite 5-period temple (so-called Southern Temple) had been discovered. The goal was to explore the near surroundings of the shrine and to investigate its foundations along with a presumed courtyard in front of the edifice.

A second objective was the exploration of strata of the Ninevite 5 period in Area SS, located previously under some 3rd millennium BC structures east of the so-called Public Building from the Early Dynastic III period on the top of the tell. Investigation of these layers, it was hoped, would give insight into the character of the central part of the Ninevite 5-period town. The necessity to concentrate all efforts in a single location in the 2009 season caused further exploration of this area to be interrupted again despite very promising results achieved in 2008.

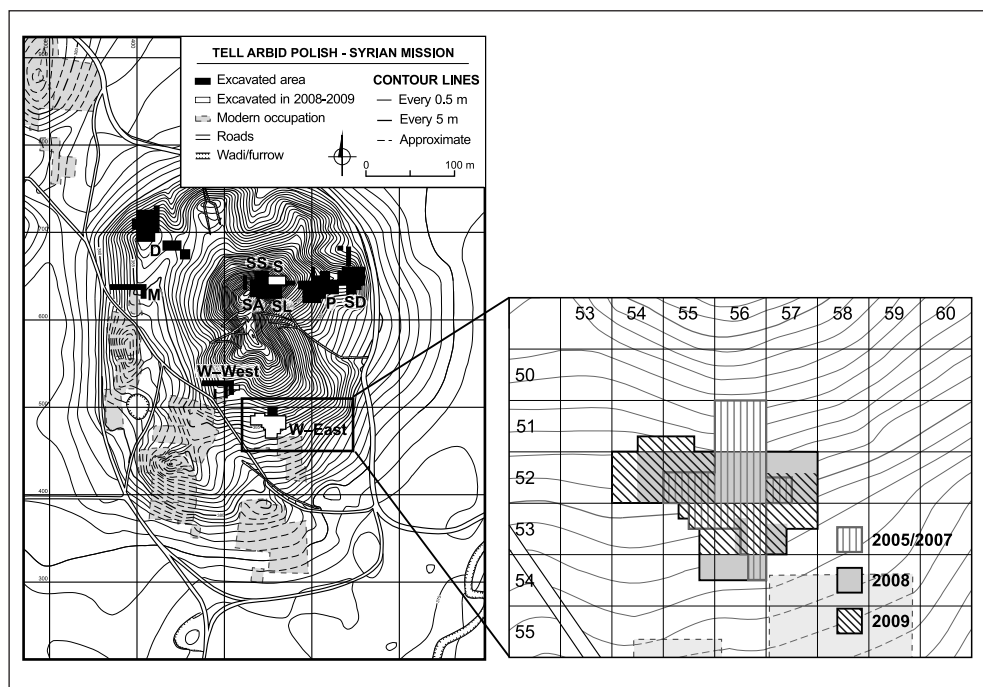


Fig. 1. General plan of Tell Arbid after the 2009 season; position of trenches dug in 2008–2009 marked in white (Drawing D. Pęgowski, M. Wagner, M. Momot)

### Team

#### Seasons 2008–2009

*Dates of work:* 22 August–7 October 2008, 22 August–7 October 2009

*Co-Directors:* Assoc. Prof. Piotr Bieliński, archaeologist (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Jowan Qassem, archaeologist (Regional Direction of Antiquities and Museums, Qamishli)

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*Archaeologist, ceramologist:* Dr. Anna Smogorzewska (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw; 2008-2009)

*Archaeologist, photographer:* Andrzej Reiche (National Museum in Warsaw; 2008-2009)

*Seal specialist:* Dorota Bielińska (Research Center for Mediterranean Archaeology, Polish Academy of Sciences; 2008)

*Anthropologist:* Dr. Arkadiusz Sołtysiak (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw; 2008)

## SECTOR S: AREA SS

This area (part of Sector S) is situated in the eastern part of the summit of Tell Arbid and on the adjacent eastern slope. Excavations were carried out here from the start of the project in 1996 through 2002 (Bieliński 2003: 312–314). A return to this sector was dictated by a desire to explore a strip of the eastern slope of the tell, alongside the old SS trench, to the east of the so-called Public Building from the Early Dynastic III (ED III) period. Investigations were conducted in two neighboring squares: 36/56 and 36/57, to the west of it. A stretch of a north–south street was cleared. It bordered the Public Building on the east, separating it from a group of small irregular cubicles, some of which had already been unearthed

in 1997 (Bieliński 1998: 220–222). The northern part of this complex, comprising five complete cubicles (loci 35, 38, 40, 42 and 43–36/56) and a fragment of a sixth, were excavated in 2008 [Fig. 2]. The cubicles measured on average from about 1.00 m to approximately 1.50 m square. The floors were usually made of tamped gray clay. Most of them (including the ones investigated in 1997) had no installations of any kind. Loci 34 and 43–36/56 constituted an exception, having some large vessels dug into the floor in a corner. The complex, which has an oblong outline over 10 m long and nearly 7 m wide, was sandwiched between two more or less parallel streets running their course to the west and to the east of it.

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## Acknowledgments

Our tasks could not have been carried out successfully without the constant support of our Syrian colleagues and collaborators from the Direction General of Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic. Of great value for our mission was the considerable financial contribution of the DGAM. We are very grateful to all of them for their friendly interest and help. We also have to express here our gratitude to Dr. Bassam Jammous, Director General of the DGAM, for his friendly assistance and unceasing encouragement, and to Dr. Michel Al-Maqdissi, Director of the DGAM Excavations Department, for his personal involvement in the project and cordial advice. Last but not least, our thanks go to Mr. Abdel Messihi Bagdo, Regional Director of Antiquities and Museums in Hassake, for his friendly and ever efficient help in solving everyday problems.

[Haled Matrud], our friend and colleague who had worked with the Polish–Syrian mission at Tell Arbid since 1996, passed away in 2012. His association with Polish teams working in Syria started even further back, in 1988, on projects carried out at Tell Abu Hafur, Tell Jassa el-Gharbi and Tell Rad Shaqra. All these years we could always rely on Haled's energy, optimism and skills to solve the innumerable everyday problems that are part of any archaeological endeavor. He will be greatly missed.



Fig. 2. General view of a group of cubicles in area SS of Sector S near the tell summit (Photo A. Reiche)

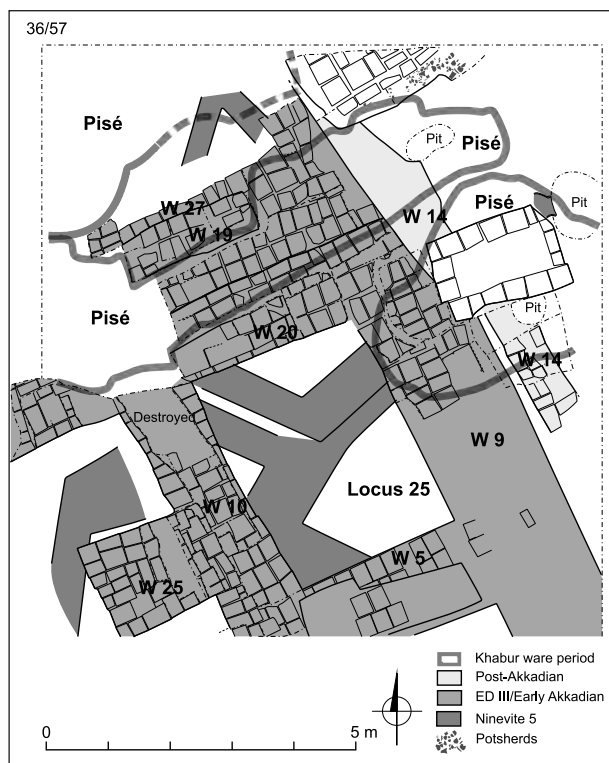


Fig. 3. General plan of structures in square 36/57 (Drawing M. Makowski, M. Momot)



There were at least 15 cubicles, of which the southern ones were arranged in three rows and the northern ones in two. Neither the southern nor the northern limits of the complex have been reached, but it is already clear that the northeastern corner no longer exists, having been destroyed by erosion and *pisé* walls from a later phase.

Despite apparent regularity, the layout is incoherent enough to suggest an accidental cluster of rooms rather than a planned building. The idea is further supported by the chaotic bonding of walls and no less chaotic internal communications, not to mention extremely narrow walls that seem too thin to support any sort of permanent roofing. Matting would be a viable solution in this case. The complex undoubtedly served some storage purposes and, from a stratigraphic point of view, it was a homogenous structure, contemporaneous with a later phase of the Public Building. It cannot be excluded that it was purpose-built and used for a relatively short period of time, perhaps in connection with the function of the Public Building. Ceramic material found on the floors and in the fill of the cubicles clearly indicates a date in the Terminal ED III period (Early Jezireh [EJ] IIIB).

A separate issue is the area where the cubicles were constructed. As mentioned above, it was bordered from the west by a street running along a buttressed wall of the Public Building. The street bordering the cubicles from the east ran along a substantial wall, which was interrupted by a baked-brick threshold, discovered in 1997 (Bieleński 1998: 220–222), leading to a building that has been eroded away completely. Assuming a provisional character of the cubicles, one is entitled to wonder whether they were constructed in an area left open intentionally next to the

Public Building or on the site of a derelict building which was subsequently removed. Further excavations in this trench may clarify the matter.

The steep and badly eroded slope in square 36/57 could not be excavated otherwise than by arbitrary horizontal levels, leading to a situation in which at one point there were four superimposed layers exposed at the same time [Fig. 3]. The uppermost layer, which should be dated to the Khabour Ware period, contained some remains of five huge *pisé* walls concentrated in the northern part of the square. Most followed a SW–NE axis with one wall being roughly perpendicular to the others. The walls were constructed in specially dug trenches, seriously damaging earlier remains. A provisional analysis of these *pisé* walls from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC indicates that they were meant to retain an eroding slope on this part of the mound summit. This layer overlay some meager remains of a wall, also of retaining nature, and an adjacent floor with some potsherds and ashes, dated to the post-Akkadian period.

Underneath these layers was a stratum from the very end of the ED III (EJ IIIB) or the beginning of the Akkadian period. It contained huge foundations (averaging 1.50 m in thickness, although approaching 1.80 m in places), built of mud bricks and dug deeply into older strata, more precisely into Ninevite 5-period layers, damaging many older structures. They supported at least two separate structures, of which it can be said only that the walls were narrower than the foundations. One of these structures encompassed a roughly square room (locus 25-36/57) measuring approximately 6.50 m by 5.50 m, and a kind of a tower, also square in plan, but much smaller and



*Fig. 4. Remains of ED III/Akkadian foundations in square 36/57, seen from the east (Photo A. Reiche)*



*Fig. 5. View of square 36/57 from the west; on the right, remains of Ninevite structures damaged by later architecture (Photo A. Reiche)*

projecting westwards. These must have been fairly massive buildings judging from the bulk of the foundations [Fig. 4] and not of a retaining purpose in view of the apparent division into foundations and superstructure. The author is inclined to see here some form of fortifications from the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC. Another fragment of a massive structure dating from the same period joins the described foundations from the north. It is too early to determine the nature of the relation between these two sets of remains.

The lowest stratum reached in square 36/57 in 2008 produced architectural vestiges from the ED III period along with some Late Ninevite 5 remains in the form of sections of rooms with meager mud-brick walls and patches of floors [Fig. 5]. Floor levels were reached in some units, but, overall, later construction had seriously damaged these remains. The walls exhibited a clearly different orientation than the later structures. Most of them date from the Ninevite 5 period.

## SECTOR W-EAST

This part of the sector, in the central part of the southern slope of Tell Arbid, was first investigated in 2003 and then annually since 2006. Work in 2008 and 2009 continued

on the fringes of the previously excavated zone (to the northwest, northeast and south) around the so-called Southern Temple [Fig. 6]. Excavations covered a total of 800 m<sup>2</sup>.

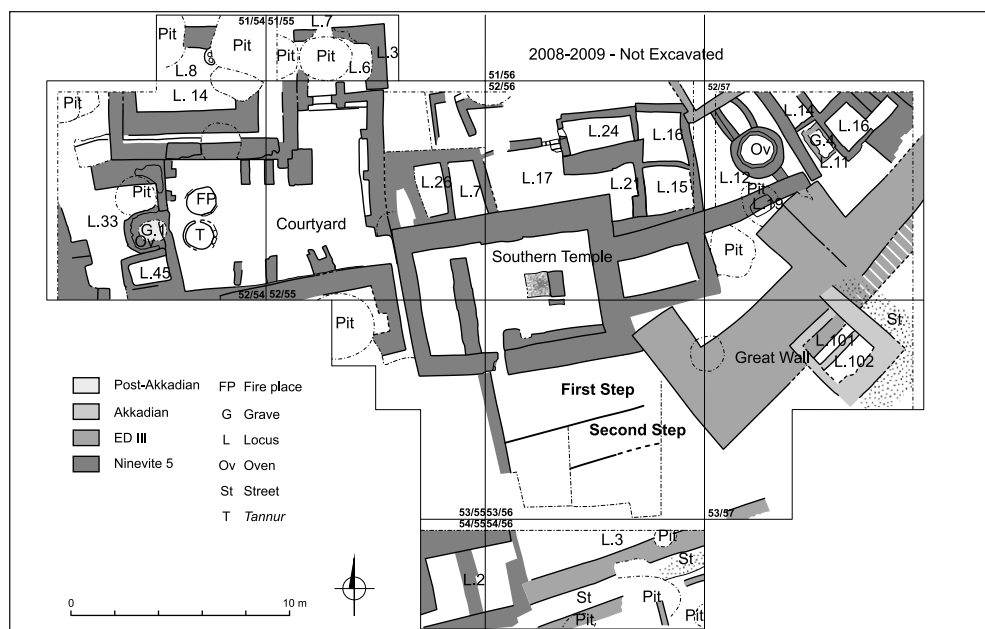


Fig. 6. General plan of sector W-East  
(Drawing M. Momot)



### NORTHWESTERN PART OF THE SECTOR

Remains of a large Late Ninevite 5-period structure adjoining the Southern Temple from the north continued to be explored at the northwestern limits of the sector [Fig. 7 in red]. This structure was built when the Southern Temple was already

abandoned, on the stumps of earlier walls [Fig. 7 in green, Fig. 8], probably contemporaneous with the Temple itself (Bieliński 2010: 553), and was destroyed by numerous later pits (Khabur ware period) and other activities in the area after it had gone out of use. Parts of it, occupying the western part of square 52/55, eastern

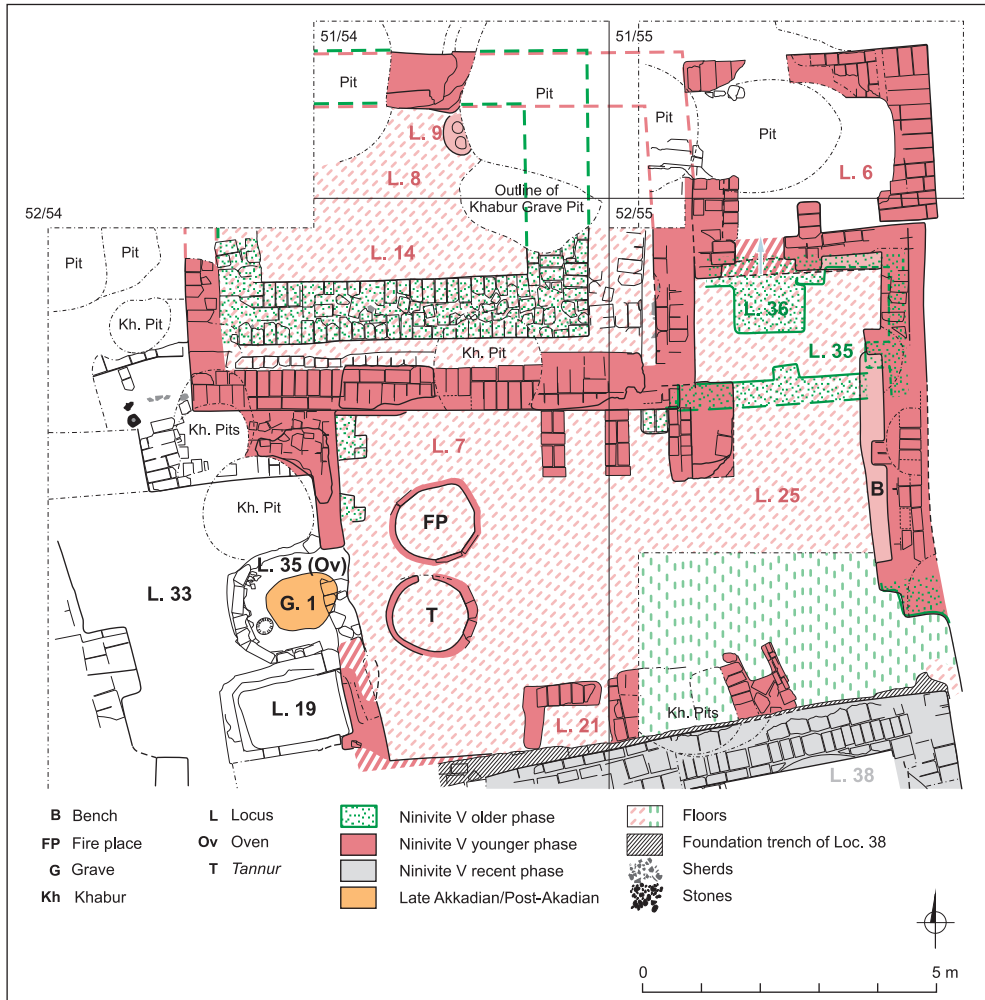


Fig. 7. Plan of the L-shaped courtyard in squares 52/54 and 52/55  
(Drawing M. Momot; edited by A. Reiche)

part of square 52/54 and southern part of squares 51/54 and 51/55, were uncovered in the reported seasons.

Judging by the exposed fragment of the structure, it may have been the southeastern corner of a larger building or architectural complex stretching north and presumably also west of it. So far, a single unit has been unearthed, now identified as an L-shaped courtyard (locus 25-52/55, 7-52/55) measuring approximately 9 m east to west (in the southern part) and about 7.20 m north to south (in the eastern part). The total known area is approximately 63 m<sup>2</sup>. The southeastern corner abutted the tops of the preserved walls of the Southern Temple. On the south, at least in the eastern part, it was limited by the wall of another Ninevite 5-period structure [Fig. 7

in green]. The courtyard appears to have been initially an open space, but judging from the evidence of some poorly defined stumps of mud-brick walls, it may have been given a roof, at least over part of it, at a later stage. Several floor levels (floors 5–8), usually separated by thick layers of ashes, attest to a long period of use, as do diverse installations (including *tannurs*) found on consecutive floors. A large kiln-like structure (locus 35-52/54), 2.00 m by 1.80 m, was found in the western part of this area. It was encircled from the west by an oval wall bearing evidence of overheating on the inside surface; there was an accumulation of white and black ashes in it. The inner part of this “kiln” was destroyed by a later burial (grave G1-52/54), dug precisely into the middle of the



Fig. 8. L-shaped courtyard in squares 52/54 and 52/55, view from the north after the 2008 season (Photo A. Reiche)

“kiln”. The burial measured 1.10 m by 0.60 m and contained the skeleton of a woman lying on her right side, legs bent, hands near the face, head pointing westwards and facing south [Fig. 9]. The poorly preserved skeleton was accompanied by four vessels: a jar, flask, bowl and pot) and a jewellery set, consisting of a leaf made of gold, a pair

of bronze earrings, two bronze pendants and some beads. Based on the golden leaf and the pottery, it can be dated to the post-Akkadian period.

The L-shaped courtyard was accessed through at least one doorway in the north wall, by the northeastern corner (another entrance, to be confirmed, could have been

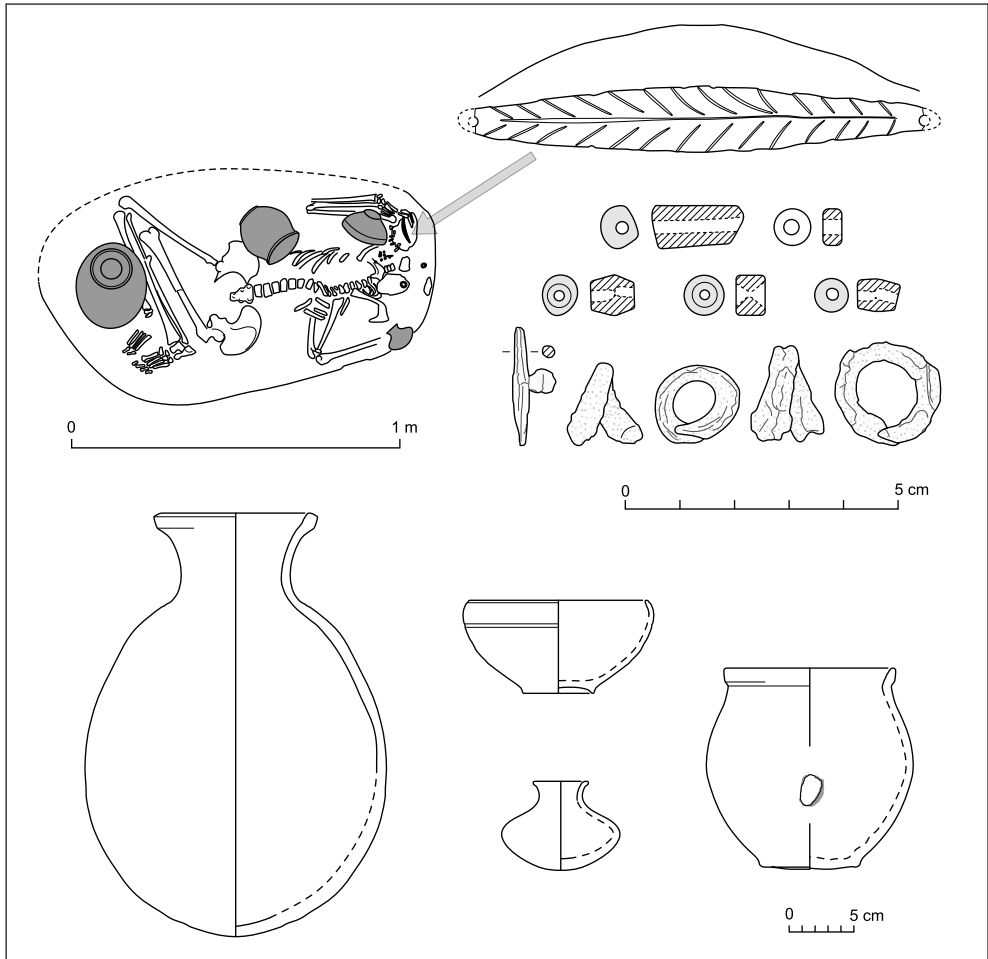
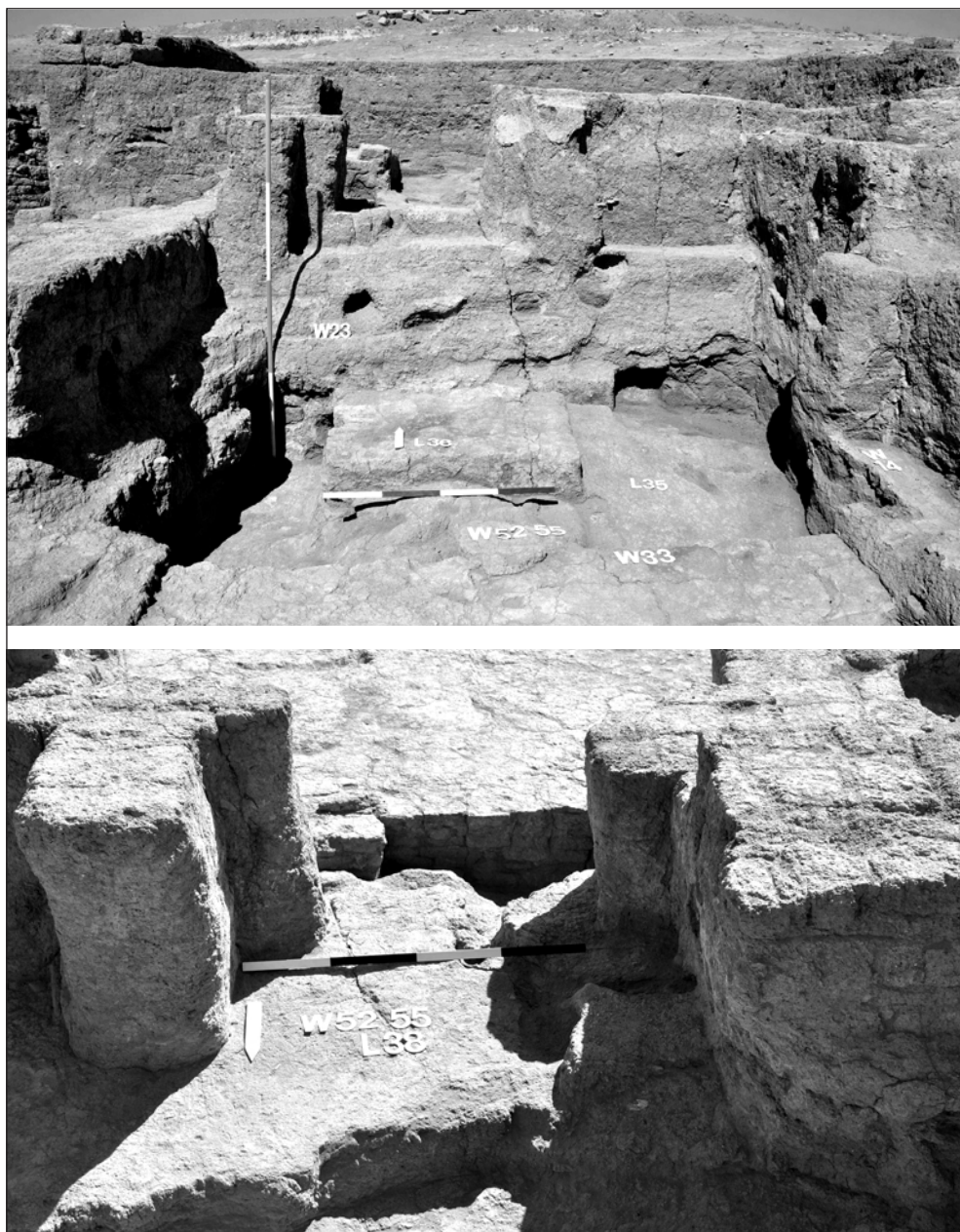


Fig. 9. Plan of grave G1-52/54, top left, and the furnishings, top right; from top: leaf of gold, different beads, bronze pendant, pair of bronze earrings; bottom, pottery vessels (Drawing M. Momot)



*Fig. 10. Doorway in the northern wall of the L-shaped courtyard, view from the south, from the courtyard (top) and from the north, from the antechamber of the complex; test pit with rectangular podium from an earlier phase visible in the bottom photo (Photos A. Reiche)*



located in the middle of the west wall). The passage was approximately 0.80 m wide and was flanked by two buttresses (on the courtyard side) [Fig. 10, top]. The entrance must have been used for quite a long time and through at least four usage levels (more than a meter in the height of superimposed layers) recorded underneath the uppermost threshold; the levels were separated by ashy deposits. Excavations to the north of the doorway revealed flanking buttresses against both wall faces of the wall and a room, most likely a kind of small anteroom (locus 6-51/55; about 2.50 m wide), unfortunately heavily damaged by later pits. This space was evidently sealed by walls on the east and north, there being probably an entrance in the north side, leading to other rooms. The ceramic material from this presumed anteroom was of Late Ninevite 5 date.

The east wall of the courtyard, near the northern doorway, was supported from the inside by three buttresses set at regular intervals (discovered in 2007), low clay benches introduced between them. A complete Ninevite 5 Piedmont-style cylinder seal was found in this area, as well as some clay sealings with cylinder

seal impressions, also of Ninevite 5 date. Testing in 2009 just in front of the entrance to the north produced remnants of an earlier phase, perhaps also a courtyard. Older walls [Fig. 7 in green] appear to have followed an almost identical layout, serving apparently to support the younger set of walls, but with an offset of up to 30 cm. Some of the buttresses of the older walls appeared in exactly the same spots as of the younger ones. In front of the entrance, just below the lowermost floor, a rectangular plastered podium (locus 36-52/55) was discovered [Fig. 7 in green; Fig. 10, bottom]. The podium, measuring 1.15 m by 0.80 m, is situated very close to the courtyard wall. Its function remains unclear and any interpretations should wait full exposure of the lower levels of this structure. We may be dealing with an open courtyard contemporary to the latest phase of the Southern Temple, but more research is needed to clarify the stratigraphic relation between the two structures.

A large, rectangular room (locus 8-51/54, 14-52/54) to the north of the L-shaped courtyard is believed to have been part of the same Ninevite 5-period complex, representing probably one of the latest phases of use. It is fairly well preserved and sizeable (7.30 m by 5.30 m) and seems to have been built on top of another similar room associated with an older phase of the structure. Because of the extent of damage caused by later pits, the entrance to the room could not be found.

A curious small basin (locus 9-51/54; approximately 0.60 m long) was discovered partly dug into the floor near the north wall of the courtyard. Plastered with gray clay, this basin had two rounded breast-like convexities in the middle, made of the same material as the whole basin [Fig. 11].



Fig. 11. Plastered installation of clay near the north wall of locus 14-51/54 (Photo A. Reiche)



### NORTHEASTERN PART OF THE SECTOR

Excavations were carried out also in the northeastern corner of sector W-East, continuing explorations in square 52/56 and enlarging an old trench in square 52/57. The floor levels were cleared in two westernmost units (loci 15 and 16-52/56) of a group of rooms adjoining the Southern Temple on the northeast (first uncovered in 2003). Both rooms are roughly square and measure approximately 2 x 2 m. Locus 15 borders on a “granary”, which virtually forms a single block with the Temple. A large number of clay *bullae* impressed with Piedmont seals had been found in the ash fill of the room in 2003 (Bieliński 2004: 351–352). Upon comparing the floor levels in the two rooms with the floor in the cella of the Southern Temple, it was found that the rooms were most likely contemporary with the shrine. A complete doorway leading from room 15-52/56 northward into room 16-52/56 proved important for understanding the communication system in the architectural complex bordering on the Temple from the north. The doorway was triangular in shape and only about 1.20 m high (at the highest point) and approximately 1 m wide (at floor level) [Fig. 12]. The original opening may have been higher, if it is kept in mind that the floors reached inside the two rooms could be the highest of a series of floors.

The main objective of work in square 52/57 was to trace a larger area of the Ninevite 5 and ED III (EJ II and III) residential structures discovered in 2003 and 2007 in square 51/56 (Bieliński 2004: 350; 2010: 546–548). A burial (G1-52/57) in a mud-brick box was discovered near the northern limit of the new trench, just

below the surface. It was covered with a row of vertically set bricks and, apart from some human bones, contained only one stone bead and some perforated shells, also used as beads. These grave goods are not enough to date the burial precisely, but elements of its construction suggest that it may be of Khabour Ware-period date. A similar dating should be attributed most probably to another burial (G4-52/57), found in the central part of the trench, also just beneath the present ground surface. This grave was badly damaged by erosion and, except for parts of a skeleton, not much else was found inside the burial pit. Both burials were dug into 3rd millennium BC strata.

Remnants of a Late Ninevite 5-period house were encountered in the northwestern part of square 52/57. The

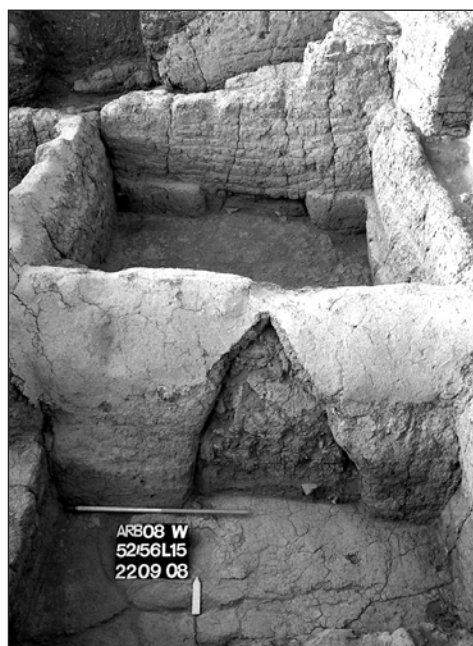


Fig. 12. Doorway connecting rooms 15 and 16 in square 52/56 (Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)

vestiges of ED III (EJ III) date in the southeastern part were dug presumably into Ninevite 5-period strata. Ninevite 5 remains comprised three complete and three fragmentary rooms (loci 11, 14, 16 and 18-52/57) [Fig. 13]. All six seem to

have belonged to a single dwelling. Some of the rooms were quite narrow and had thin walls, suggesting storage function. The best preserved and most interesting of the rooms was locus 12-52/57, measuring approximately 3.75 m by 2.25 m and



Fig. 13. Part of a Ninevite 5 dwelling in square 52/57  
(Photo A.M. Kotarba)



Fig. 14. Oval installation (L15) of Ninevite 5 date in locus 12-52/57 (left) and an oven found in a lower level of the locus (Photos Ł. Wojnarowicz)

containing a very large (nearly 3 m in diameter) oval installation made of bricks [*Fig. 14*]. This installation, which seems to have been an oven, had incurved walls, preserved approximately 0.60 m high. It was filled with ashes. Mud-brick benches lined three walls of the chamber, leaving little space for moving about. The entrance to this unit, which was rather a small courtyard, seems to have been located in the southwestern corner. Another oven, but slightly smaller, was discovered in a lower layer on the same spot (Szeląg 2011). In a neighboring room (Locus 11-52/57) there was a Ninevite 5-period burial below the floor (Szeląg 2012, in this volume). Testing under the floors in the other rooms uncovered an ash layer corresponding to that found in neighboring square 52/56 (Bieliński 2010: 546–548).

#### “GREAT WALL”

A new trench opened in square 53/57 was designed to test the area in the eastern part of the W-East sector and trace the course of a substantial wall beginning at the southeastern corner of the temple cella. Two excavation seasons later, the wall has proved to be much younger than even the youngest of the preserved phases of the Southern Temple. It must have been belonged to a massive structure (at least by 3rd millennium BC standards on Tell Arbid). Having unearthed a 17-m long stretch of this wall, running from the Temple corner to the northeast, the excavators can also be sure that it continues outside the currently excavated area [*Fig. 15*]. Its main part is approximately 3.90 m wide and it stands to a height of 1.50–2.00 m. It was built of light gray bricks of good quality, coming in two sizes: 34 x 25 x 9 cm and 34 x 17 x 9 cm. The

southwestern corner of the structure — the only place where the wall foundation level has been reached so far — rests on a layer of relatively tough clay resting upon a thick layer of ashes [*Fig. 16*]. At this stage it cannot be said whether other parts of the wall were built on a similar bedding. The scale and quality of this wall has prompted the excavators to dub it the Great Wall [*Fig. 15*, bottom].

Two massive buttress-like features project from the northwestern face of the Great Wall. One of these, which is 2.40 m long and almost as wide and fully bonded with the main stretch of the wall, is located at the very northwestern end of the Great Wall, its corner touching upon a corner of the Southern Temple. The next “buttress” is situated approximately 5 m further to the east. It was very badly damaged by a large and deep pit of Khabour ware period date. Near the northwestern face of this “buttress” a small subrectangular basin (approximately 1.20 m x 0.70 m and about 0.30 m deep) was discovered [*Fig. 17*]. Its borders, fashioned of clay, stood approximately 0.10 m over the surrounding ground. For the moment, the relationship between this basin and the large wall remains unclear.

Interestingly, despite being aligned and constructed differently than the Southern Temple, the Great Wall respects to some extent the presence of the shrine, touching its corner but not destroying any of the constituent elements of the complex. This suggests that the Great Wall was built when the Southern Temple, at least in its most recent phase, was still in use.

Both the stratigraphic position of the Great Wall and the ceramic material accompanying it, as well as numerous clay sealings, including ones bearing figural



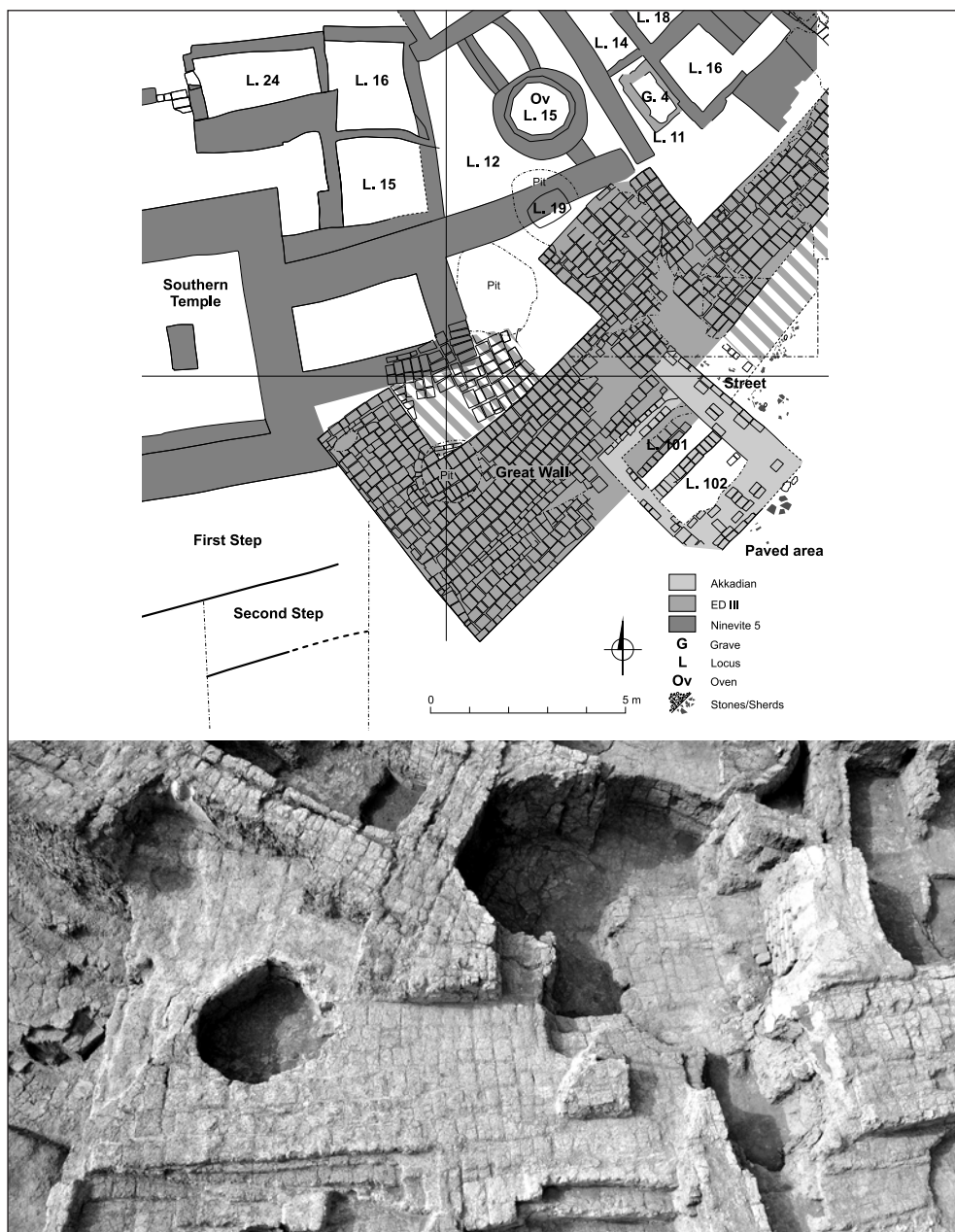


Fig. 15. Remains of the Great Wall after the 2008 and 2009 seasons (top) and top view (north is at top right; picture taken in 2010) (Drawing P. Bieliński, Ł. Rutkowski, A. M. Kotarba, D. Szeląg, A. Szymczak, Ł. Wojnarowicz; digitizing Ł. Rutkowski, M. Momot; photo A. Szymczak)

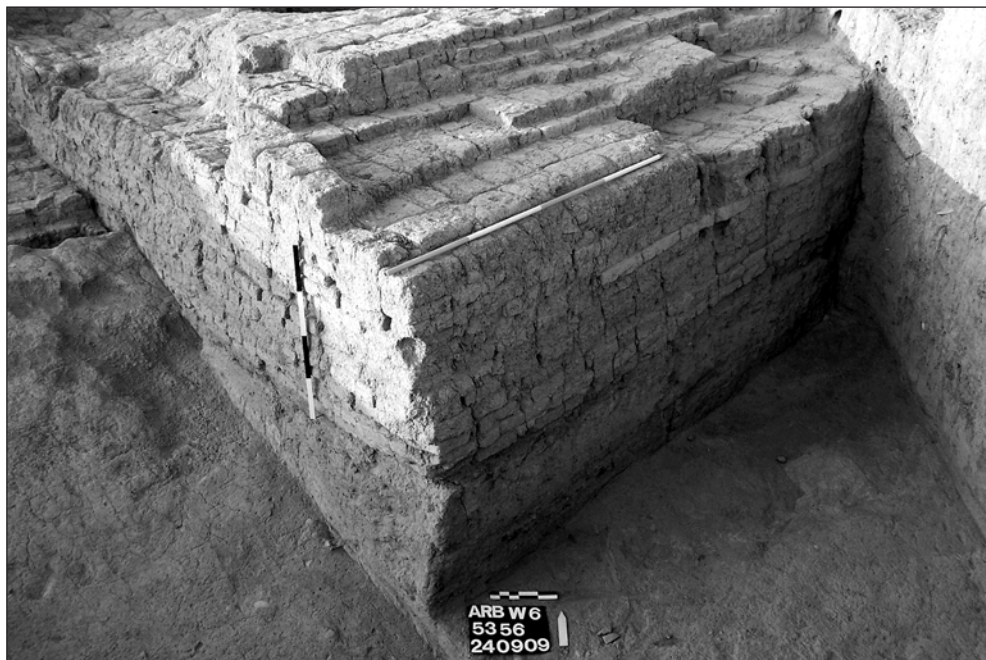


Fig. 16. Accumulation of clay and ashes under the southwestern corner of the Great Wall  
(Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)

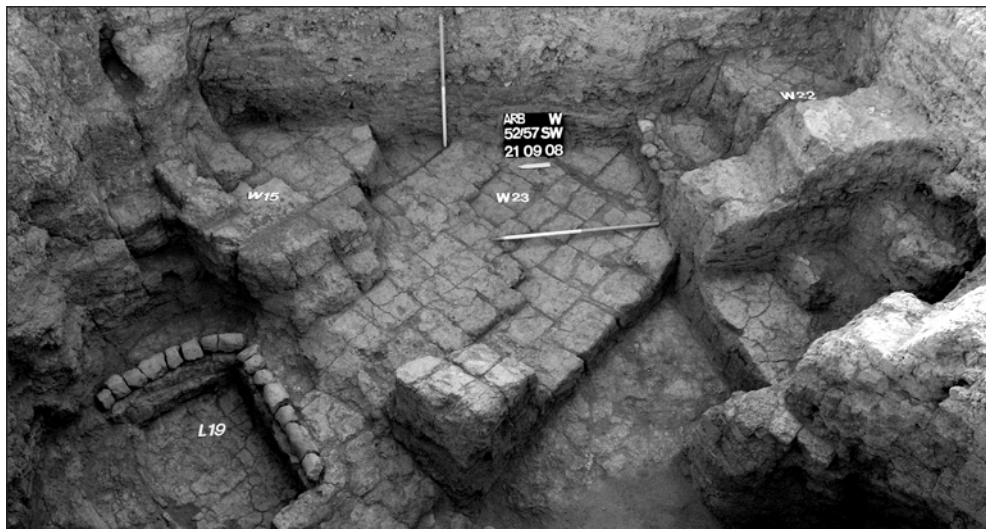


Fig. 17. One of the buttresses of the Great Wall, heavily damaged by a later pit, exposed in square 52/57; small plastered basin in front of it, to the left (Photo A. Reiche)



scenes, point to a terminal phase of the Ninevite 5 period or the earliest (of those registered on Tell Arbid) phase of the ED III period. The latter dating in particular seems to be corroborated by the fact that the bricks used in wall construction are quite different from those used in Ninevite 5 period structures. Even so, the ashy layer on which the foundations of the Great Wall were erected and a layer covering a sloping surface in the vicinity of the wall (see below) yielded a substantial collection of sealings, mostly impressions of Late Ninevite 5 cylinder seals, some decorated with figural compositions. Among the most interesting sealings there is one which bears on the reverse a negative impression of excised decoration from a Ninevite 5 jar to which it must have been attached. On the obverse there is a regular seal impression [Fig. 18].

Judging by the currently available data, the Great Wall must have been a part of a large architectural complex located east of the Southern Temple and existing

already by the end of the 3rd millennium BC. The exact character and function of this complex remain obscure. Were it to be a retaining wall for the southern slope of the town from the Ninevite 5 period, then it is not very well situated and should not have buttresses projecting from the northwestern face. A defensive function also seems to be excluded, as erecting a perimeter wall that leaves free access to a large temple is hardly conceivable.

The Great Wall, whatever its initial function in the 3rd millennium BC, was used later as a base or solid underpinning for younger houses. The scattered remains of these more recent structures, some of an ED III date and some from the Akkadian period, were found on the Great Wall. Of course, any building activity on the top of the Great Wall could have started only when the original structure to which this wall belonged had not only been abandoned but also partly destroyed, as suggested by the uneven surface of the wall.

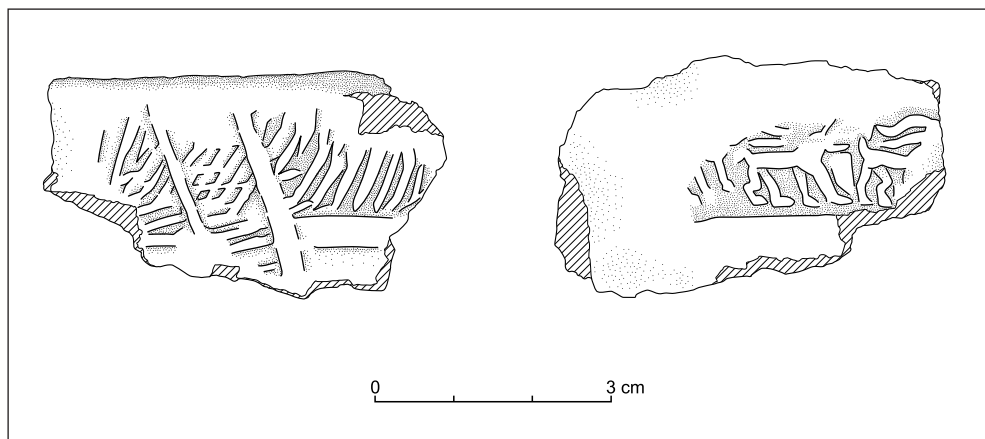


Fig. 18. Clay sealing (53/56-48) with impression of a cylinder seal on one side and of excised vessel decoration on the other (Drawing M. Momot)

Excavations in the northeastern quarter of square 53/57 in 2009 revealed a section of a lane, approximately one meter wide, running roughly along the southeastern face of the Great Wall. In its southeastern part the street opened onto an area paved with potsherds. The latest ceramic material collected from the street's surface was Akkadian and/or post-Akkadian. Southwest of this street, the remains of a small house (approximately 4.50 m square) were discovered. The northwestern parts of its walls were erected on the Great Wall, while the remaining part was built southeast of it, approximately flush with the top of the

preserved remains of the Great Wall. For the moment, it seems that it was a single-roomed structure, which was later divided into two tiny cubicles by a meager partition wall (loci 101 and 102-53/57), both about 1 m wide and just over 2 m long [Fig. 19]. After they had gone out of use, a burial — also from the Akkadian period — was dug into one of these rooms. The southeastern side of the house adjoins a fragment of the potsherd pavement. The corner of the house is reinforced at this point with some sizeable stones. Some typical Akkadian and post-Akkadian forms were evident among the potsherds in the pavement.



Fig. 19. One of the units from the Akkadian period (locus 101-53/57), built on top of the “Great Wall” (Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)

#### TERRACE IN FRONT OF THE SOUTHERN TEMPLE

A small test pit was dug in 2008 (and subsequently enlarged in 2009) by the south wall of the cella of the Southern Temple in order to investigate the foundations of the shrine and the area in front of it, where no architectural remains contemporary with the shrine had been traced during previous excavations. A kind of a mud-brick terrace was encountered just 0.30 m beneath the entrance to the cella. The trench was enlarged to the south and east in order to clear more of this structure. This part of the square had not been excavated previously, which meant that a 2-m thick deposit of overlying strata (including some remains of a modern village house) had to be investigated first before the top of the terrace could be reached.

The nature of the terrace was clarified definitely in 2009 when a probe was dug alongside the east wall of the temple cella. Two older floors of the sanctuary were recorded in the test pit, as well as the top of a plaster layer coinciding with a slight change in the wall bonding. It is evident that the Southern Temple had a predecessor and that it was not erected on top of the feature discovered in front of the temple. Therefore, this massive structure must be a separately built stepped terrace. Further excavations should answer questions about the full height of this feature and the number of steps and their sizes. It also needs to be clarified how people entering the shrine reached the uppermost step and how the area in front of the terrace was arranged. It may have been a courtyard or an open space, because it seems unlikely that such a massive structure would have bordered upon a narrow street without affording the opportunity to appreciate the terrace and the temple towering over it from a distance.

The feature appeared to be approximately 2 m wide (as measured from the face of the temple wall) and 1 m high, and its top was slightly inclined towards the south, which could be the result both of the state of preservation and the uneven settling of the ground under the heavy structure. On the east it disappeared under the Great Wall; indeed the latter seems to have been erected either on the remains of the terrace or just next to it. The topmost part of a hard, ashy surface sloping down to the south was encountered next to the Great Wall and roughly level with the entrance to the Southern Temple [Fig. 20]. This surface, covered by a thin layer of hard clay, seems to belong to the terminal phase of the Ninevite 5 period or to the very beginning of the ED III period, as suggested by its stratigraphic position as well as by the ceramic material and numerous clay sealings found in it. It overlay remains of a Ninevite 5 period temple terrace (at least in its eastern part) and partly covered an open space, which is presumed to have existed in front of the terrace when the temple was still in use. The inclination of the slope, the structure of this surface and the height to which it was preserved (approximately 1.50 m in its eastern part) suggest that the “sloping surface”, as it has been called for lack of a better term, may have been an intentionally built escarpment protecting or rather replacing at some later phase the original terrace in front of the temple. The impression of a kind of glacis rather than natural slope resulting from the decay of older structures is strengthened by the fact that in its upper part the “sloping surface” covers an approximately one-meter-thick layer of rubble, irregular bricks or lumps of hard clay, and not the terrace directly



*Fig. 20. Eastern part of the sloping surface  
(Photo A. Reiche)*



*Fig. 21. Section through layers covering the Southern Temple  
(Photo A. Pieńkowska)*



[Fig. 21]. The escarpment flattened out noticeably towards the top, as attested by parts unearthed in 2005 in the eastern part of square 53/56. Poorly preserved, these remains were not interpreted correctly at the time of discovery. Traces of a layer that might be the top of the escarpment were discovered in the western part of the square on a much higher level than those more to the east. The whole escarpment, along with the superimposed layer of rubble, slopes to the southeast, apparently because of the ground relief or uneven settling of the ground rather than intentional design. At this point it is also uncertain whether the escarpment was connected directly with the Southern Temple or perhaps with some later structure erected on the stumps of the temple walls and hence repeating its

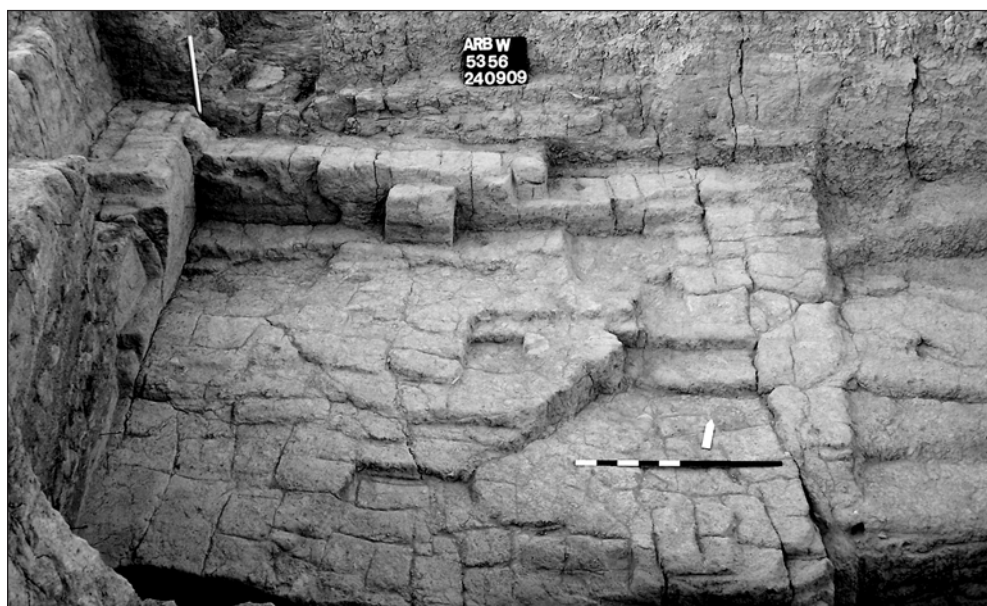


Fig. 22. Terrace steps in front of the Southern Temple: (top) topmost step viewed to the north with the entrance to the temple at top left and (bottom) general view of the steps seen from the west (the temple is just out of the picture to the left), state for the end of the 2009 season (Photos A. Pieńkowska, Ł. Wojnarowicz)



plan. Badly damaged remains of walls and a patch of floor were explored in 2005 just under the tell surface, but nothing at the time suggested a religious character of this structure. Its interpretation should now be reconsidered following the discovery of the Southern Temple in the underlying layer.

Despite intensive efforts the original temple terrace, which lay below the “sloping surface” and layer of rubble, could not be cleared to any larger extent despite enlarging and deepening of the trench in front of the Southern Temple. The fragment that was cleared was approximately 7 m long in the upper part (near the front wall of the shrine) and nearly 4 m long in the lower part [Fig. 22, bottom]. The total height of this structure, as recorded after the 2009 season, is 2.20 m. The exposed part comprised two steps, each approximately 2 m wide and 1 m high [Fig. 22, top].

The difference in the quality of bricks used for the upper parts of each step (whitish and hard) and those used for the construction of the core (red and gritty) suggests that higher-quality bricks were used as facing for a lower-quality core. It is not clear whether the foundations of the steps has been reached. It is noteworthy that some fragments of Late Ninevite 5 pottery were found in the western part of the upper step, whereas sherds of vessels representing earlier incised Ninevite 5 pottery rested on the lower step.

#### SOUTHERN PART OF THE SECTOR

Instead of finding the temple temenos expected there after the 2007 season, the trench opened in square 54/56 revealed a short stretch of an ED III street [Fig. 23], about one meter wide, and some structures from the same period. Despite being

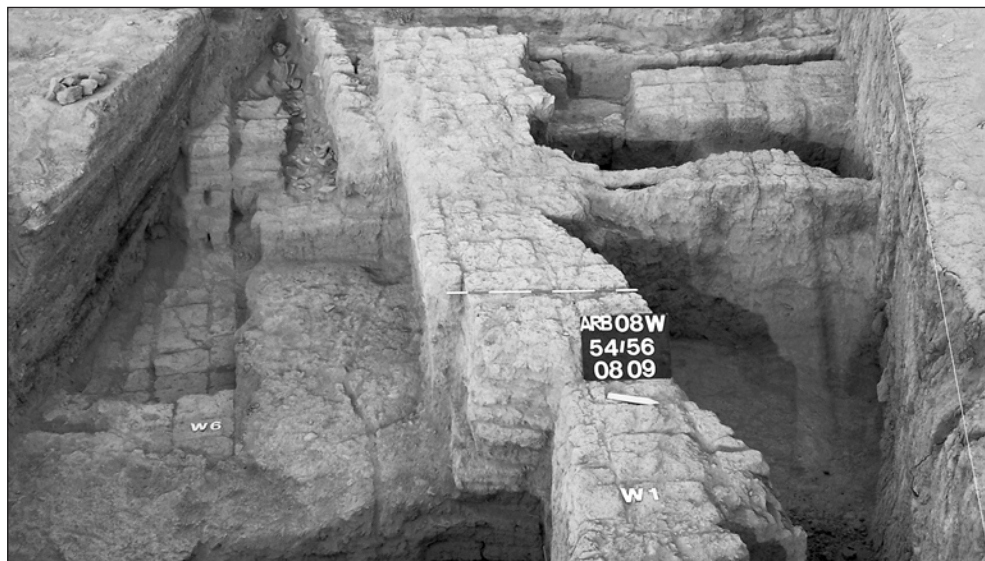


Fig. 23. Fragment of an ED III street found in square 54/56 in the southern part of sector W-East, view from the east (Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)

undoubtedly younger than the Southern Temple, these remains were founded on a lower level than the shrine (Bieliński 2010: 551). The lane was traced in an extension of the trench to the west and in a new trench in square 54/55. Approximately 9 m of this street were recorded; it proved to turn slightly to the southwest by the western confines of the trench. A small channel lined with bricks set upright and filled with potsherds [Fig. 24] was found in the western part. On the south the street was bordered by a regularly built, mud-brick wall with bonding typical of the ED III period. Regular ED III period dwellings can be assumed to have existed south of this wall. In the eastern part of the trench,



Fig. 24. Channel on the ED III street in square 54/56 (Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)



Fig. 25. Fragment of a Ninevite 5-period structure from square 54/56, view from the west (Photo Ł. Wojnarowicz)

the street and the wall were found to be partly destroyed by a large late pit. The wall lining the north side of the street (also dated to the ED III period) was preserved much better. At the western end this wall was adjoined by a perpendicular one of the same date. Remains of ED III period structures covered ruins from the Ninevite 5 period, which could not be investigated for the moment because of the overlying structures.

A larger part of a Ninevite 5 period structure was cleared in the western part of the trench. The walls were much thicker and they encompassed one room (Locus 2-54/55) measuring 3.50 m by 3.00 m, with an entrance in the southwestern corner [Fig. 25]. The room produced a potsherd with a cylinder seal impression

of an animal contest scene and a clay sealing with an impression showing a hero fighting an animal. Locus 2-54/55 appears to have been divided in two by a partition wall nearly as thick as the outer walls of the room. It is not clear whether the partition wall was constructed together with the whole structure or was added later. The trenches in this area of sector W-East yielded also two pottery fragments with seal impressions of ED III date, as well as some small fragments of clay *bullae* with seal impressions.

A bronze dirham of the Ayyubid sultan Salah ad-Din of AD 1190 [Fig. 26] came from a pit in the southern part of square 54/56; the pit, traced right below the remnants of a ruined modern house, had destroyed the ED III street.

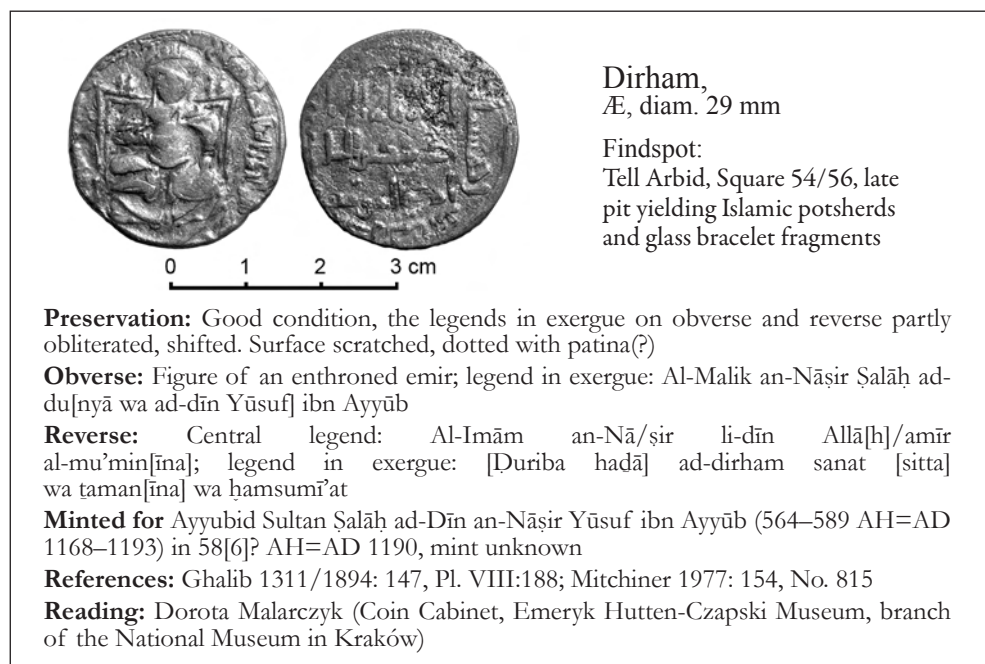


Fig. 26. Ayyubid dirham of Salah ad-Din, discovered in the fill of a late pit  
(Photo A. Reiche)

## SUMMARY

The thirteenth and fourteenth seasons of excavations on Tell Arbid contributed new evidence of the 3rd millennium BC city. Remains of huge ED III period foundations discovered on the eastern slope of the “citadel”, near the Public Building (sector S), have further confirmed the importance of the site in the second half of this millennium and in the Akkadian period. Excavations in sector W-East, on the other hand, have given an entirely different picture of the Ninevite 5 town than that known already from sectors

D and SD. The presence of a monumental religious complex and surrounding atypical architecture in this area has demonstrated that important buildings from this period were not clustered only on the citadel. Massive foundations from the transition phase from Ninevite 5 to ED III, found in sector W-East, have additionally strengthened the impression of the different character of this southern district as compared to the northeastern and eastern parts of the 3rd-millennium town.

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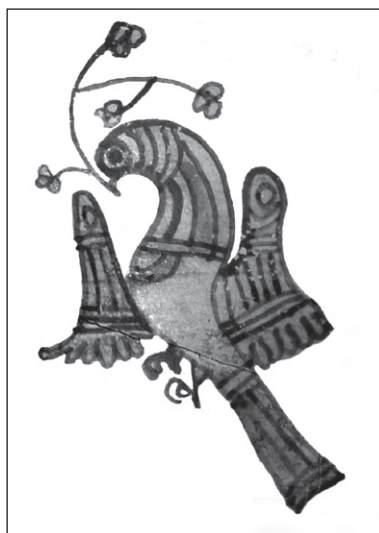
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POLISH CENTRE OF MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

# POLISH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

## XXI

RESEARCH 2009





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