

LES ANNALES ARCHEOLOGIQUES ARABES SYRIENNES

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REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION AT TALL ŠĒH ḤAMAD / DŪR-KATLIMMU 1988

HARTMUT KÖHNE, BERLIN

The tenth campagne in Tall Šēḥ Ḥamad / Dūr-katlimmu was carried out between August 1 st and October 15 th. Under the direction of the present writer and sponsored by the Free University of Berlin the staff consisted of the following persons: Thomas Blie, Sabine Böhme, Franz von Cieslik, Christine Dürr, Jan Fischer, Hartmut Kühne, Sabina Kulemann, Roger Leenders, As'ad Mahmoud, Rosemarie Martin, Dieter Martin, Joachim Müller, Petra Müller, Barbara Niemeyer,, Gernot Nürnberger, Angela Pfotenhauer, Beate Schröder, Monika Schuol, Burkhard Wollenweber. In connection with the interdisciplinary research program Peter J. Ergenzinger as geomorphologist, Ursula Smettan as Pedologist, Friedhelm Krupp, Dieter Kock and Gerhardt Eppler as zoologists joined the mission. I thank all of them for their engagement.

Mr. As'ad Mahmoud again acted as representative of the Syrian Antiquities Department and as vice director. To him and to the Syrian Antiquities Department, especially to the new Director Général Dr. Ali Abou Assaf, to Dr. Adnan Bounni, and to Kassem Touer, we want to express our deeply felt gratitude for their support. The tenth anniversary was not the least made possible by their lasting help and friendship.

The work was concentrated on two areas: In the Lower City II excavation was restricted to the northeast corner. On the citadel work continued in the 1987 reopened trenches on the western slope. With the help of the excavator-machine we worked in 21 areas (each area equals 400 sqm) and registered 1446 finds and collections. Up to sixty local workman were employed.

1. Lower City II, Northeast Corner (Fig. 1 - 11)

The excavation in the northeastern corner of the Lower City II now covers an area of 10.000 sqm. Excavation was carried out in 18 areas. Out of these about 1700 cbm debris were removed by the machine (and more by manual work).

The architecture within the angle now consists of the following buildings (Fig. 1) : The "bit hilani" in the southeast (Building F), its northeastern extension within the angle of the city wall, and Building W in the west. These three form a unit, as it appears now, which might be called a palace. Outside of this unit there is a public square in the south of Building F and a private house (Haus 1) south of Building W. A larger street in the west separates a second house (Haus 2). A third house may have existed in the south, again separated by a lane. In Haus 1 workshops and industrial devices were installed.

Our efforts were concentrated on three points:

1.1 The area within the angle of the city wall which was still unexcavated

1.2 The southern rooms of Building W and the access to Building F

1.3 The final excavation of Building F

1.1 Area within the angle of the city wall

Within the areas 9381, 9581 and 9781 the northern city wall was excavated on a length of about 25 meters. The corner (Fig. 2) between

the northern and the eastern wall was prepared and mapped, but not completely excavated. A first bastion was discovered on the northern wall, observing the same courtine as the bastions of the eastern wall.

A passage (F and OZ) is separating the city wall and the buildings within its angle. Of the rooms south of passage OZ only rooms FZ and JZ (south of FZ) were excavated to the floor (Fig. 3). In room FZ were found a cupboard-like installation and a hearth. Next to the hearth a number of broken pottery flasks were discovered, among which one vase was inscribed with an aramaic text in ink (Fig. 4). Generally these rooms of the Building F-extension seem to function as a domestic region.

To the south this domestic region is limited by yard O, the large room W, and - connected with it - room AZ. Room W is the largest of the whole unit, measuring about 21 x 6.50 m. In a trench the youngest floor was touched, lying about one meter above the older one which can be reconstructed from the neighboring room AZ in its northwestern corner.

This room AZ turned out to be a staircase, as had been anticipated. But it has a number of interesting features, rarely to be found elsewhere. The state of preservation is very good, the walls standing up to a height of almost four meters. The staircase itself is resting on a vault of progressively increasing height. Entering the staircase from the east, from room W, one had to climb up the stairs first in the eastern passage (Fig. 5), then turn to the northern, western and finally southern passage. Here, at the highest point, a part of the vault is preserved, upon which the platform must have rested. This then was the niveau of the first storey above room W! - The space under the vault had been used, too. We excavated the southwestern corner of the staircase because the stair and the vault were destroyed here. Unfortunately the floor was partly disturbed, but what was left, was paved with brick (Fig. 6). In the section opposite, a well preserved

floor was visible, situated higher than the pavement. Therefore the impression is at the moment, that perhaps another staircase leading down had existed.

1.2 Building W

In 1987 indications had been discovered that the large space between room W and the western rooms X and XX could have been a large courtyard. Excavation mainly in the area 8979 this year proved that this anticipation had been correct. One third of the courtyard EZ was unearthed. The floor was plastered showing traces of a heavy destruction fire on larger spots with accumulations of black ashes.

A direct access to Building F was encountered in the east leading to room Q through a door with an intact arch.

The southern limitation of the courtyard had been indicated so far by rooms J and K, both of which had been vaulted in the pitched brick technique. For several reasons these rooms had been interpreted as water storage (room K) and water distribution (room J) devices so far. Now it turned out that north of room K another row of rooms, MZ and LZ, were situated, themselves being the southern limitation of the court EZ. A door between room LZ and room K3 made it absolutely clear that the function of the K-rooms must have been a different one as had been proposed. Also the excavation of room K3 proved that there had been no access between room K3 and room J (Fig. 7). For room J the above mentioned function cannot be ruled out, yet. A completely preserved arched entrance gives access to the room from the north, from court EZ. A deep pit in front of the entrance has destroyed much of the floor. What remains, seems to indicate a sort of cascade for water running down from the area west of room Q into room J. But it is too early for any definite conclusions.

Within room K3 eight using stages were differentiated. Most of this years cuneiform tablets were discovered here, and a fragment of a

clay bulla with old aramaean inscription was also found. Two of them provided limu-dates, one of them the year 638, the other the year 676 B.C. (Fig. 8 a-b), according to W. Röllig. These dates confirm very well the main using stage of the whole unit during the late assyrian period in the seventh century B.C. which had been suggested by the small archive of assyrian cuneiform tablets and aramaeic inscribed clay bullae in room B of Building F in 1986 (1).

1.3 Building F

In 1987 it became clear that Building F was a "bit hilani"-type structure (Fig. 9). It remained questionable though whether the rooms east of court R/S, rooms T and V, were a conceptual part of it or not. Furthermore, the court itself was possibly divided into a terrace R in the south and a court S in the north.

The excavation of rooms P, T and V proved that they belonged to the original concept of the building. Corridor T connected the rooms V and P and had a direct access from courtyard R/S. The corridor and the rooms had been paved with bricks, some of which had been removed in later operations (Fig. 10). The eastern wall of the rooms incorporated airvents (Fig. 11); the lower part of the wall was reinforced with wooden posts and bearings which were destroyed by fire (Fig. 11).

The courtyard proved to be homogeneous and not consisting of two parts. It had been originally paved with bricks as well, traces of which remained all around the edges while the rest had been removed in antiquity.

The main entrance to the courtyard was situated in the north, opposite of the entrance to room H. One reveal was formed by the walls of room V, the other by the walls of room Z, but both were not in a row. This and other hints indicated a chronological sequence between Building F and Building F-extension, to which room Z belongs already. But the remains of the above

mentioned paved floor of courtyard R/S proved the contemporaneity - and there was no older floor underneath.

The groundplan of Building F and its extension is now fairly similar to the "Upper Palace G" in Sendschirli, Fig. 12 (2). Another detail confirming this impression are the rills in the oldest floor of room C (Fig. 13). Obviously there are differences, on the other hand. The most important one is the large room W which resembles rather an assyrian throne room, especially with the obligatory staircase at its one end, than the groundplan of Sendschirli.

Comprehending the three parts, Building F, Building F-extension, and Building W, as a unit, opens further understanding. This unit combines typical assyrian elements, a "babanu"-type groundplan in the west with its large court EZ and the "throne room" W with the "bitanu" which - in its main part, in Building F - consists of a completely unassyrian groundplan, namely an aramaean "bit hilani". This combination of assyrian and aramaean elements of architecture may be interpreted as further evidence of the assyrian-aramaeen coexistence in late-assyrian Dürkatlimmu of the seventh century B.C. (3).

2. The excavation on the citadel

The excavation on the citadel had been taken up again in 1987 in the old step trench with the aim to improve the stratigraphy. Work was continued in the areas 1927 and 1727 (Fig. 14).

The upper levels remained almost untouched this year. An addition was made in Haus 1, room B, where the true floor had not been found the year before. The architecture of level 2 remains domestic in character and rather unelaborate in technique.

In level 4 (Fig. 14 - 15) a larger complex around a central courtyard was excavated. The walls consist of mudbrick and are well built. Four

using stages have been differentiated including some minor changes in the architecture.

In levels 5 - 16 a major building was in use which seems to be divided in two parts by a corridor (Fig. 16). The rooms to the north and to the south of it have at least six using stages (levels 11 - 16) with minor architectural changes. As was observed earlier, it seems that the original building dates back to the late- or post-assyrian times and had been reused ever since. While the levels 4 - 10 have to be dated to roman times, the pottery of the levels 11 - 16 is different and therefore earlier but it cannot be matched and chronologically fixed yet. It seems possible that it is of hellenistic (seleucid) age.

On the southern slope of the citadel an important chance find was discovered. Due to erosion, the surface of two stone fragments had become visible, one lying in the former canal-bed, the other about 1.5 m above in the surface debris. Both pieces were fitting together forming the central part of an assyrian orthostate (Fig. 17). The height of the united pieces is 63 cm, the width 65 cm and the thickness is 12 cm. The relief is fairly flat, standing at the most 2 cm above the ground.

A beardless male person is holding something in his right upraised hand, most probably a fan. In his left he holds an arrow, and in his belt he wears a sword the clutch of which is decorated with two lion heads. Stilistically and ikonographically, as well as by the antiquaria, it can be best compared with the throne scene of Assurnasirpal II (4). According to this scene our fragment should be a part of the servant standing right behind the king and holding the fan. The end of its clutch is decorated with a ram's head and this detail is preserved on our fragment. The style of our fragment is surely not of provincial provenance, although the stone, gipsum, certainly is of local origin. This implies that an artist had come to Dūr-katlimmu to sculpture local stone in an assyrian "empire style".

This statement is contrasting the fragment of another relief which was found in 1984 in Building F. It was rendered in a local style and ikonographically an expression of the above mentioned assyrian-aramaeian coexistence (5). The piece was dated to the second half of the eighth century B.C. on stilistic grounds; it now appears to be dated possibly even later, to the end of the eighth or the beginning of the seventh century B.C. because the oldest using stage in Building F is hardly older. - Another piece of sculpture remains to be mentioned: the fragment of a stele of Adad-nīrārī III which was found by Hormuzd Rassam already in the last century in Tall Šēh Ḥamad (6). This piece dates to the beginning of the eighth century B.C. It probably is of local manufacture (basalt is found only ten kilometers north of Tall Šēh Ḥamad in the neighborhood of Tall Marqada), but it certainly expresses assyrian imperial ideology which left no room for coexistence thoughts. This changed only in the seventh century B.C.

The significance of the newly found relief-fragment lies in the fact that it is the first unquestionable evidence of assyrian occupation during the ninth cent. B.C. in Tall Šēh Ḥamad / Dūr-katlimmu, more closely of the reign of Aššurnasirpal II. As is known from his annals, he as the last of three assyrian kings finally succeeded in reerecting the assyrian supremacy over the Lower Ḥābūr (7). Moreover it is the second archaeological evidence of this specific time on the whole Lower Ḥābūr, the first being the rediscovered lamassu of Tall 'Aḡāḡa / Šadikanni (8). Contrasting these though is the "empire style" of our fragment, indicating a more direct connection to the assyrian court.

NOTES

1 H. Kühne, Preliminary report of the excavation at Tall Šēh Ḥamad / Dūr-katlimmu in 1986, in press in "Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes"

2 F. von Luschan, Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli II, 1898, Tf. XIII

3 H. Kühne, Gedanken zur historischen und städtebaulichen Entwicklung der assyrischen Stadt Dürkatlimmu, Festschrift für Adnan Bounni, in press

4 H. Orthmann, Der Alte Orient, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte Bd. 14, 1975, Abb. 199

5 H. Kühne, Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad / Dürkatlimmu 1984, Archiv für Orientforschung 31, 1984, 173

6 A.R. Millard and H. Tadmor, Adad-nīrārī III in Syria, Iraq 35, 1973, 57 ff

7 H. Kühne, Zur Rekonstruktion der Feldzüge Adad-nīrārī II, Tukulti-ninurta II und Aššurnasirpal II im Ḫābūr-Gebiet, Baghdader Mitteilungen 11, 1980, 62 ff; see also note 3

8 A. Mahmoud, R. Bernbeck, H. Kühne, P. Pfälzner, W. Röllig, Die Ausgrabung auf dem Tell 'Aḡāḡa/Šadikanni 1982, Damaszener Mitteilungen 3, 1988, 141-184

8 a-b Neo-assyrian cuneiform tablet (SH 88/8977I-IV/146) front and back side; date: limu Bamba. sukallu sanu, 676 B.C. (W. Röllig)

9 Schematic plan of Building F

10 Room P with fragments of paved floor, from east

11 Room V and corridor T, from north; east wall (7) with airvents and burned out wooden posts and bearings

12 Sendschirli, schematic plan of the "upper palace G"

13 Room C, from east, with the rills in the floor

14 Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad / Dürkatlimmu, citadel, areas 1927 and 1727, levels 2 and 4, from east

15 Citadel, level 4 c, plan

16 Citadel, levels 9 - 16, plan

17 Citadel, southern slope, surface, two fragments of an assyrian orthostat, 9 th cent. B.C.



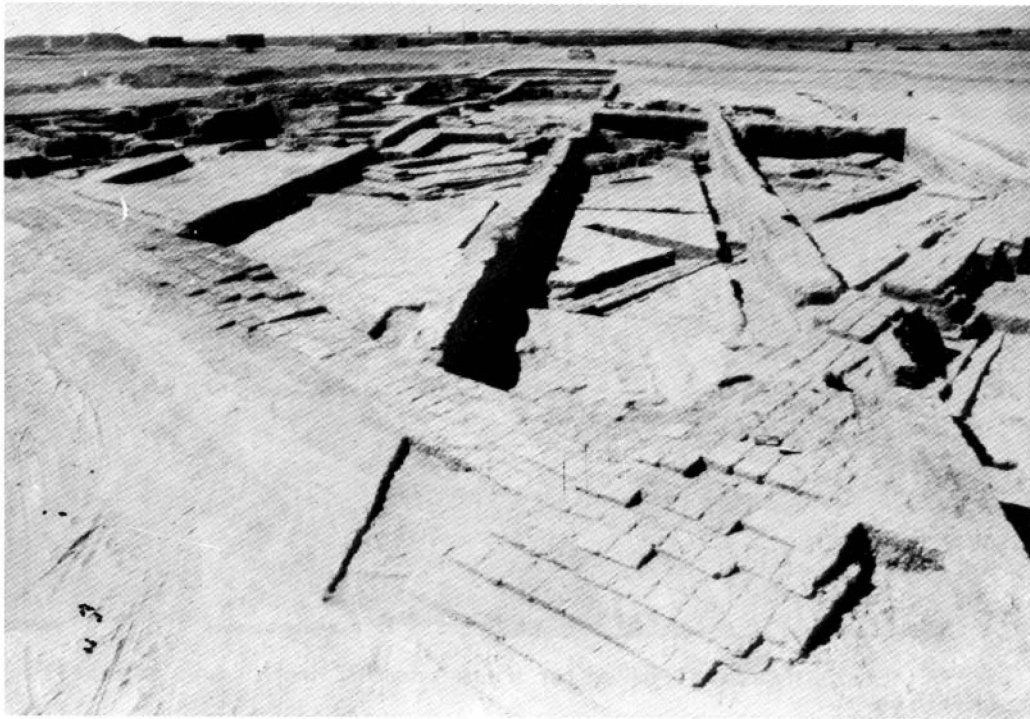


FIG. 2 Northeast corner of the city wall of Lower City II, from northeast



FIG. 3 Rooms FZ, GZ and HZ in area 9381, from west



FIG. 4 Large fragment of a jar from room FZ with an aramaic inscription

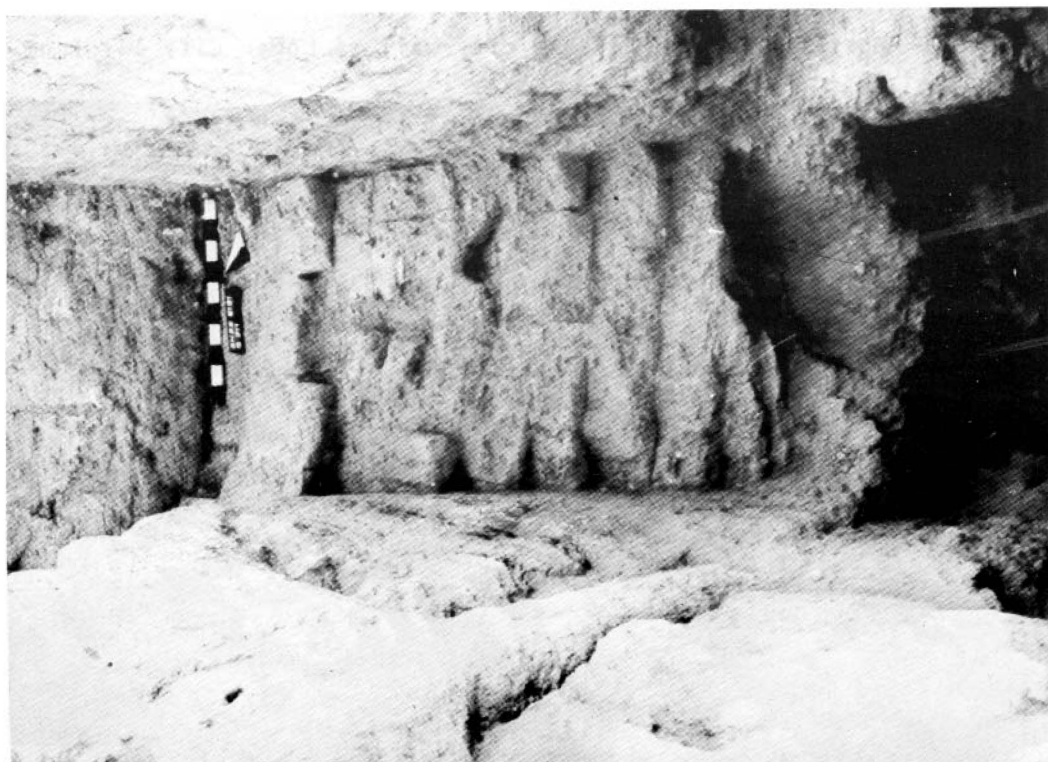


FIG. 5 Staircase AZ, eastern alley, from south



FIG. 6 Staircase AZ, southwestern corner, preserved vault and paved floor underneath it



FIG. 7 Room K3, lowest floor, from west

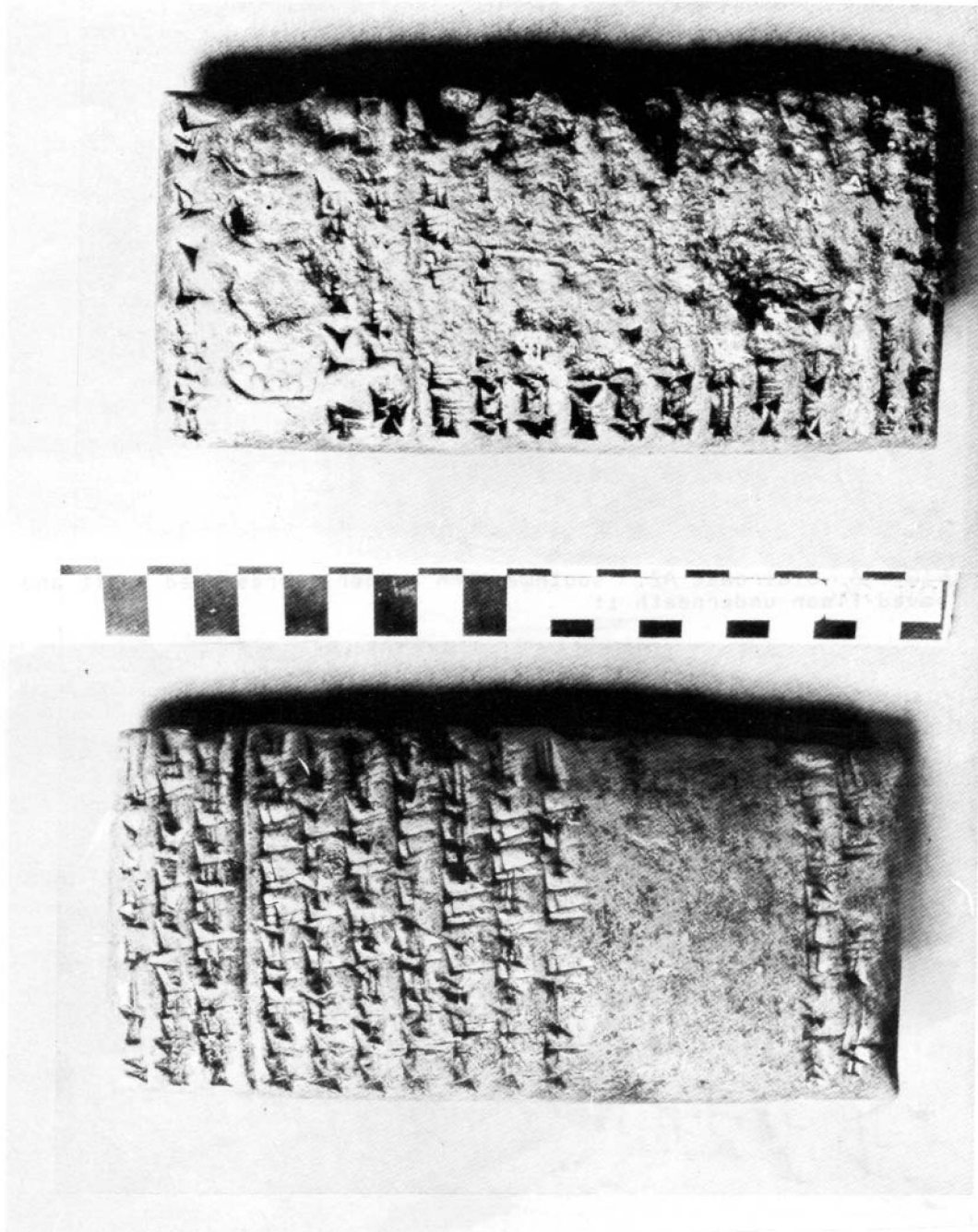


FIG. 8 a-b Neo-assyrian cuneiform tablet (SH 88/8977I-IV/146)
front and back side; date: limu Bambā, sukallu šanū, 676 B.C. (W.
Röllig)

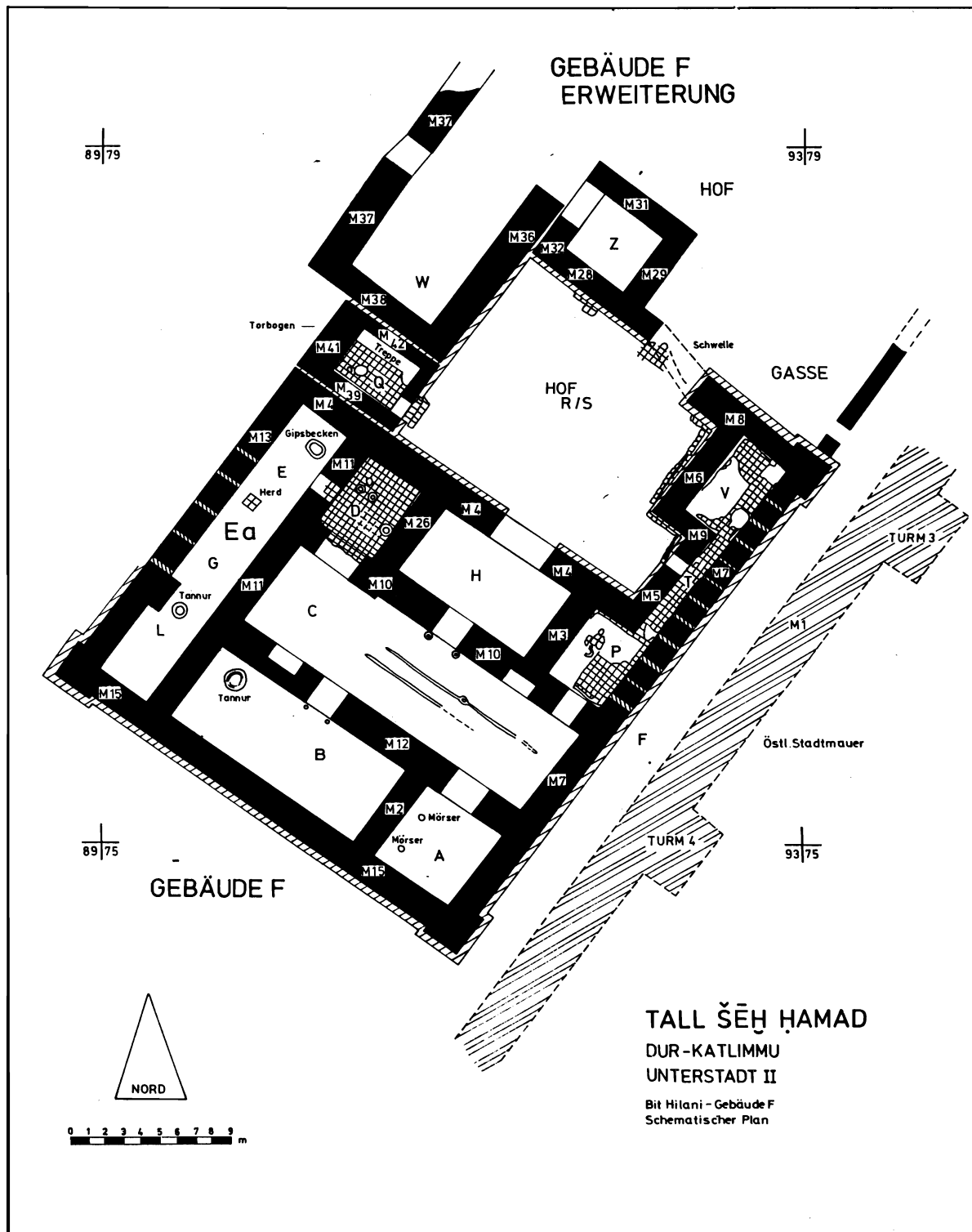


FIG. 9 Schematic plan of Building F



FIG. 10 Room P with fragments of paved floor, from east



FIG. 11 Room Y and corridor T, from north; east wall (7) with airvents and burned out wooden posts and bearings

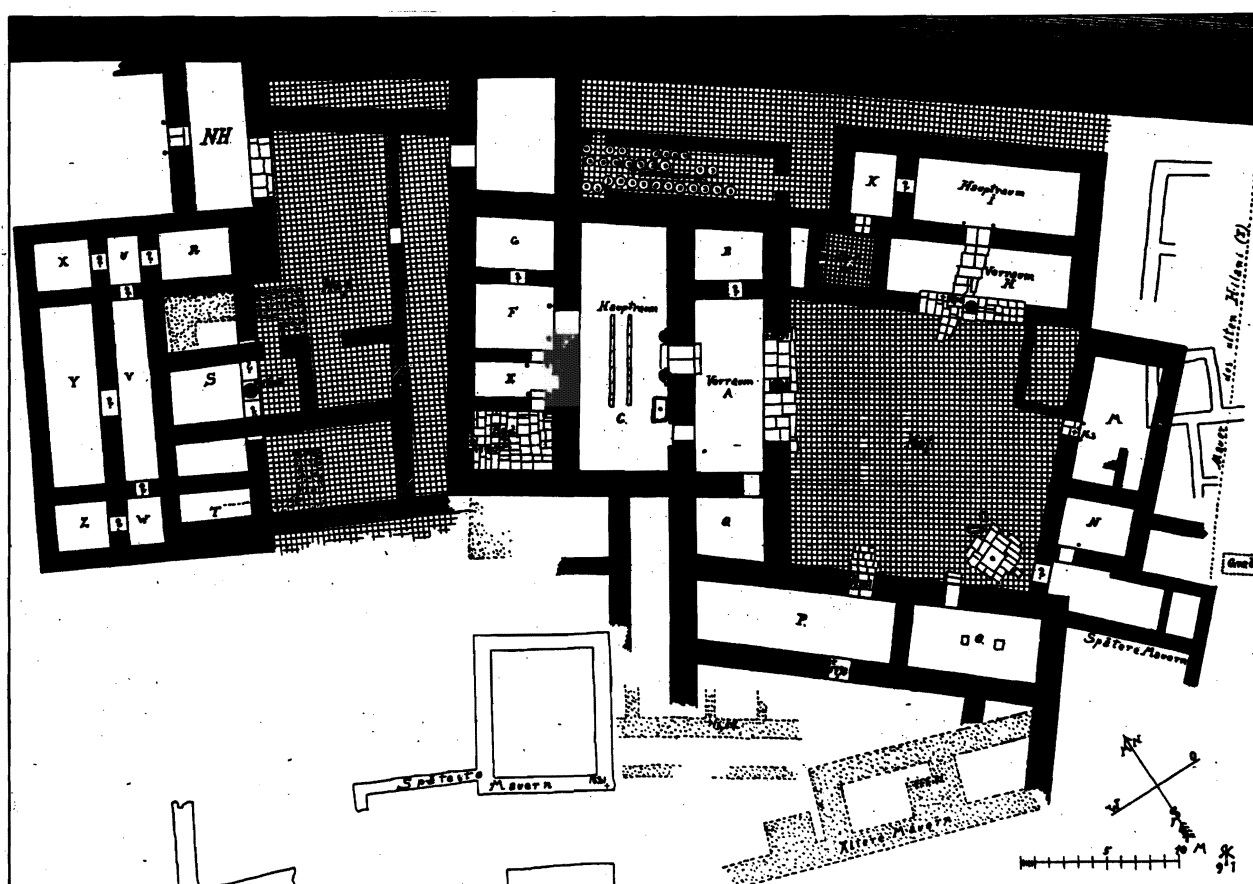


FIG. 12 Sendschirli, schematic plan of the "upper palace G"

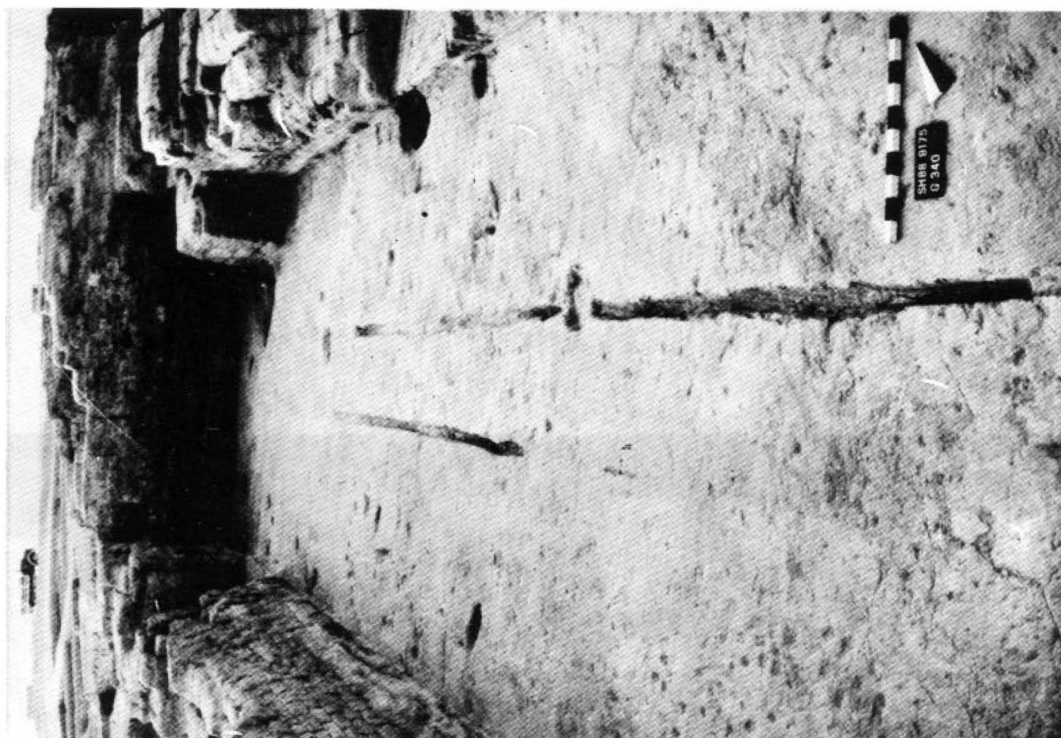


FIG. 13 Room C, from east, with the rills in the floor



FIG. 14 Tall Šēḥ Hamad / Dūr-katlimmu, citadel, areas 1927 and 1727, levels 2 and 4, from east

TALL ŠĚH HAMAD 1988

AREAL 1727 / 1927 SCHICHT 4 c 1 & 2 HAUS 3
0

AUFNAHME: BERNBECK, NURNBERGER
UNZEICHNUNG: FISCHER, LEENDERS

1 2 m

NORD

AREAL 1727 / 1927 SCHICHT 4c 1&2 HAUS 3

AUFNAHME: BERNBECK, NÜRNBERGER

UMZEICHNUNG: FISCHER, LEENDERS

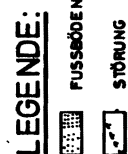


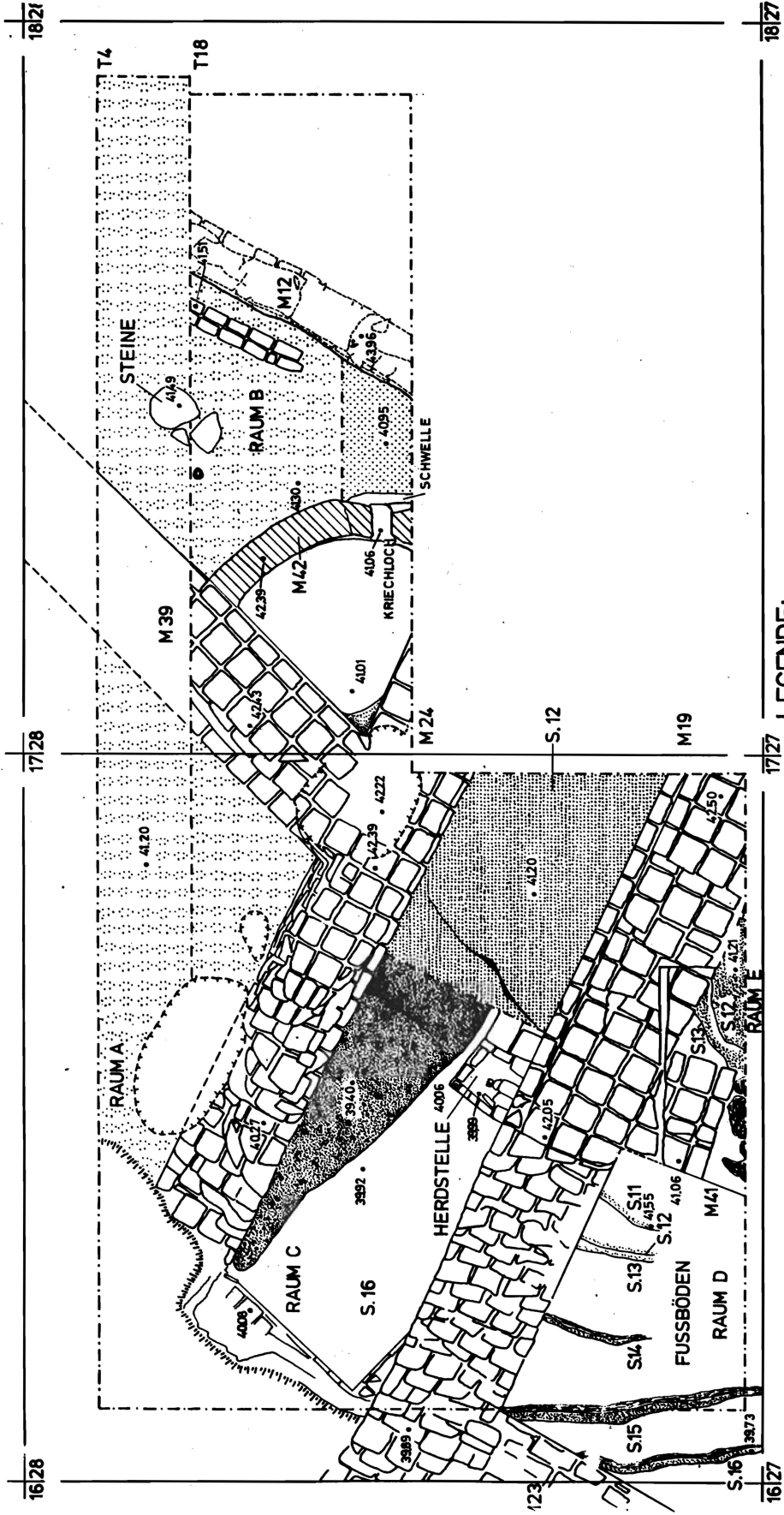
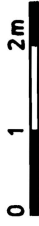
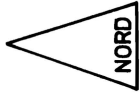
FIG. 15 Citadel, level 4 c, plan

TALL ŠEĤĤ HAMAD 1988

AREAL 1727 SCHICHT 9 - 16

AUFNAHME: PFÄLZNER, NÜRNBERGER

UNZEICHNUNG: BACHEM, LEEENDERS



LEGENDE:

- FÜLLMATERIAL
- FUSSBÖDEN
- STÖRUNG
- ASCHE
- STAMPFLEHM

16 Citadel, levels 9 - 16, plan



FIG. 17 Citadel, southern slope, surface, two fragments of an
assyrian orthostat, 9 th cent. B.C.