

This pdf is a digital offprint of your contribution in J. Eidem (ed.), *Zagros Studies*, ISBN 978-90-429-4055-0

https://www.peeters-leuven.be/detail.php?search_key=9789042940550&series_number_str=130&lang=en

The copyright on this publication belongs to Peeters Publishers.

As author you are licensed to make printed copies of the pdf or to send the unaltered pdf file to up to 50 relations. You may not publish this pdf on the World Wide Web – including websites such as academia.edu and open-access repositories – until three years after publication. Please ensure that anyone receiving an offprint from you observes these rules as well.

If you wish to publish your article immediately on open-access sites, please contact the publisher with regard to the payment of the article processing fee.

For queries about offprints, copyright and republication of your article, please contact the publisher via peeters@peeters-leuven.be

ZAGROS STUDIES

Proceedings of the NINO Jubilee Conference and Other Research on the Zagros Region

edited by

J. Eidem



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN
LEIDEN

PEETERS
LEUVEN

2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Jesper EIDEM	
Long-Term Human-Environment Interactions in the Neolithic of the Central Zagros of Iran and Iraq, 10,000-6000 BC	5
Roger MATTHEWS, Wendy MATTHEWS, Kamal RASHEED RAHEEM, Yaghoub MOHAMMADIFAR, Kamal RAOUF AZIZ, Abbass MOTARJEM, Robin BENDREY, Amy RICHARDSON, Sarah ELLIOTT, Jade WHITLAM, Ingrid IVERSEN, Mike CHARLES, Amy BOGAARD, David MUDD and Sam WALSH	
Shimshara Revisited. Hassuna-Samarra Interactions on the Rania Plain, Iraqi Kurdistan.....	19
Olivier NIEUWENHUYSE and Beatrice ROBERT	
Interaction and Culture Contacts in the Late Chalcolithic Period. New Evidence for the Uruk Culture in the Zagros Foothills.....	35
Tim Boaz Bruun SKULDBØL and Carlo COLANTONI	
Permeability and Resilience between the Zagros Foothills and Mesopotamia. The Case of Kunara in the Upper Tanjaro at the End of the Third Millennium BC	55
Christine KEPINSKI	
Cultural Encounters and Local Traditions. A Discussion of the Middle Bronze Age Evidence at Bakr Awa	67
Ulrike BÜRGER	
A Lion-Throned Tower from Tell Basmusian	93
DLshad MARF and Jesper EIDEM	
Before and After the Flood. Archaeology on the Rania Plain Then and Now	99
Jesper EIDEM	
On the Edge. The Destruction of Archaeological Heritage in the Flood Zone of Lake Dūkan, Kurdistan	131
Martin UILDRIKS	
Back to Shemshara. NINO Excavations 2012-2015	157
Jesper EIDEM	

BACK TO SHEMSHARA. NINO EXCAVATIONS 2012-2015

Jesper Eidem (NINO, Leiden)

I. INTRODUCTION

Prologue

“It was like one’s dream come true”, wrote Jørgen Læssøe (1963: 139), about his first visit to Shemshara¹ in May 1957, arriving there over still muddy tracks and after long preparations and many delays. During the following weeks the Danish expedition excavated a large trench on the high summit of the site and made a smaller trial on its lower extension, finding there the famous early second millennium BC “archive of Kuwari” (Fig. 2). Political unrest prevented the Danes from returning in 1958, and instead an Iraqi team continued work at Shemshara that same year and the following. Simultaneously the Dokan Lake was formed, and since then the site has been intermittently or partially inundated. Scant publication of both Danish and Iraqi results left many open questions, and more political unrest in any case precluded access to this part of Iraq until quite recently. In 2012 The Netherlands Institute for the Near East initiated new investigations at Shemshara and in its hinterland on the Rania Plain.² The new project has investigated for the first time the entire Shemshara site and its constituent hills, and conducted major new excavations on the Shemshara Main Hill. In 2014-15 efforts were extended to “second phase” surveys and soundings at other sites on the Rania Plain, within the Dokan Dam flood zone, and presented elsewhere in this volume (articles by Eidem and Uildriks). Here we summarise results of the new work at Shemshara, particularly as they pertain to the

Middle Bronze Age settlements. The epigraphic finds from the old excavations, as well as the Neolithic levels exposed in 1957, have been fully published, but many other aspects remain opaque, and any coherent assessment must await release or retrieval of further data. As support for the evidence discussed here, however, we provide in an appendix what information can be gleaned from various sources concerning the 1957-59 excavation results.

The Remains of Shemshara

A main reason for returning to Shemshara was the hope of obtaining archaeological evidence to supplement the very rich information from the archives found there in the 1950s, archives which uniquely provide a window to an otherwise lost world in the ancient Western Zagros. The new investigations, however, reveal that the site today unfortunately offers only limited potential for this objective, for several reasons. The structural history of the site apparently preserved little of the relevant level (V) into modern times, beyond what was exposed in the 1950s, and extensive excavation and subsequent damage from flooding has removed or erased further evidence. Our efforts therefore have largely been rewarded by the opportunity to resurrect what was previously explored, but poorly reported, and to investigate further other aspects of the site, better preserved.

The general perception of Shemshara has no doubt been that of its Main Hill, where the Danish expedition worked in 1957, and of which a topographic map was presented in the first final report (Mortensen 1970: Pl. 1). But as noted by Læssøe the site of Shemshara extended over several adjacent mounds or hills: “The Shemshara tablets have revealed that the ancient name of the city buried in *numerous mounds* around Tell Shemshara, covering *a very considerable area*, was Shusharra;” (Læssøe 1959b: 17 [*emphases added*]). Although this statement prejudged the chronological and toponymical contemporaneity of

¹ The transcription ‘Shemshara’ (or strictly Shemshāra – with long penultimate vowel – and clearly an echo of the early 2nd mill. BC name Šušarrā) was used consistently by Læssøe, while Ingholt used the form ‘Shimshara’. Since the first vowel is short the difference rests solely on perceived accoustic appreciation, which in our recent experience is something like ‘Sh^{ei}mshára’, which shows that either form is ‘correct’, and that Læssøe and Ingholt simply failed to coordinate this issue!

² For general acknowledgements see introduction to this volume. Photos not otherwise credited were recorded by the author.



Fig. 1. The Shemshara Hills, viewed from northwest (October 2013).



Fig. 2. View (from SW) of “Tablet Room” (= Room 2) of the Level V palace after excavation 1957 (photo by M. Friis, courtesy of National Museum of Denmark).



Fig. 3. The Shemshara Hills. WV2 image 28/11, 2010 (Lake Dokan ca. 478 m a.m.s.l.).

the mounds it indicated a basic reality of the topographic situation. The site incorporates 4 adjacent, natural hills, all shown in Fig. 3.

1. The elongated Main Hill (SH 1), excavated by Danish and Iraqi teams in the 1950s. Although not mentioned anywhere, the western part of this hill had some pre-modern occupation, visible as shadows of structures/(foundations) in aerial photographs from the early 1950s. For this feature, see below Appendix 2.
2. Camp Hill (SH 2). A large oval hill northwest of SH 1, where the Danes camped in 1957. In 1958 it was investigated by the Iraqi expedition, which found remains of the Mitanni (Late Bronze Age) period (Læssøe 1963: 139f.). On its high western point is a small Islamic cemetery.
3. North Hill A (SH 3). This elongated hill is located immediately north of Main Hill and opposite Camp Hill. It has an extensive Islamic cemetery on its southern slope. There is no record of any work done here in the 1950s.
4. North Hill B (SH 4). An oval hill immediately north of SH 3. It is today heavily eroded, and disturbed by numerous pits. According to local informants these pits are robbed graves, and reports of coins would indicate an early

first millennium AD date. The hill and its slopes are completely devoid of any surface sherds, and *may not* have had any ancient occupation.

These 3(-4) hills³ form a coherent base for settlement in an angle between the Zab to the east and the small wadi Boskin to the west, with Main Hill clearly the most protected portion, and in any case the hill which now preserves the densest archaeological deposits. Although the entire site thus has a considerable size (ca. 7 ha) it hardly experienced complete occupation in any of the periods identified.

³ A further hill, Gird Bardastee, lies beyond the small Wadi Boskin to the west of the other hills.

Just northwest of Bardastee is yet another site, which we briefly examined in spring 2013. It is a low, oval hill which measures ca. 200 × 70 m. Two small test excavations (both 2 × 3 m) recovered sherds in wash or natural soil, but no structures, and were discontinued at depths of ca. 1 m. It seems likely that erosion and recent heavy plowing has entirely removed what was probably a rather flimsy and brief occupation. The concentrations of sherds must be due to erosion/wash. The repertoire of diagnostic shapes retrieved would indicate a date somewhere in the early 1st mill. BC, thus in the Neo Assyrian period.

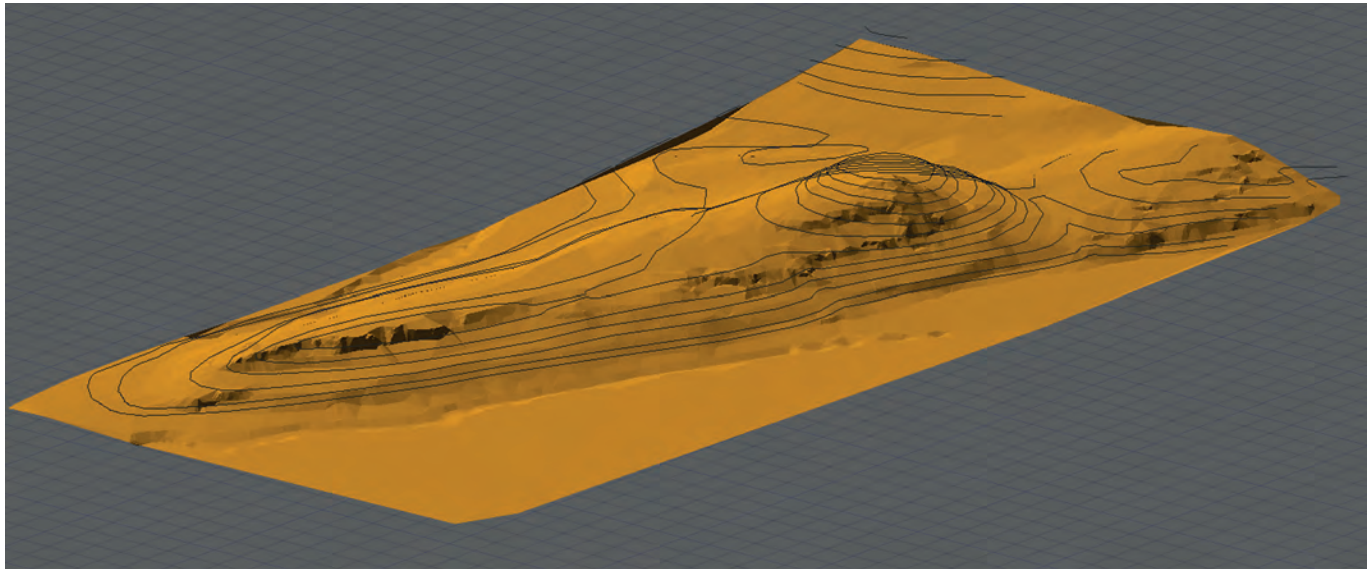


Fig. 4. Erosion model of Shemshara Main Hill (and adjacent terrain). Topography mapped 2012-13 overlaid by transparent contours of 1957 (after map in Mortensen 1970, Pl. 1, model prepared by M. Uildriks).

The earliest occupation dates to the Neolithic (Hassuna-Samarra) period, which the Danes explored in a small, deep exposure on the northeast flank of Main Hill (levels 9-16; published in Mortensen 1970).⁴ In 2012-13 our colleagues from the University of Reading, Roger and Wendy Matthews, investigated the eroded section of this exposure, and discovered that these levels were accommodated on a terrace cut into the natural hillock (Matthews *et al.* 2016, and this vol.). Since then two further Neolithic terraces have been identified. One is visible in the east section at the south end of Main Hill, and another at the north end of North Hill A, also in the east section. Quite likely more similar terraces existed and may still be identified if not lost to subsequent terracing or recent erosion. On Camp Hill soundings 2012-13 have also retrieved Neolithic sherds, although with no associated structures, indicating some contemporary use of this hill.⁵

After an apparent long interval Shemshara was occupied again, but terracing and erosion may have largely obscured some activity, and we have to consider the possibility of some “lost periods” (see Appendix 2 below). Firmer evidence, however, exists for the late third and early second millennium BC when the site was clearly used as a fortress and administrative stronghold for extended periods of time, “culminating” with the Old Babylonian Palace

and the archives of cuneiform tablets excavated in level V on the lower extension of Main Hill. It is during this period that the site maybe was most extensively occupied, but a comparison of the states of the hills pre-flood (1957) and in 2012-3 (Fig. 4) shows how much has been lost to Lake Dokan since 1959. As explained in detail elsewhere the quantitative loss can be fairly accurately estimated (Uildriks, this vol.), but the loss also has to be evaluated in qualitative perspective. The natural hillocks of the Shemshara site supported successive ancient occupations mainly terraced into the hills, and now only modestly preserved or entirely washed away by the lake.

During our first season in 2012 we observed with surprise how high east sections of Main and North Hill (A), sharply eroded, revealed almost only virgin soil (Fig. 6). After sustained field work in 2013-14 we realised that the ‘Palace area’ on Main Hill, focus for the old as well as our own excavation, was terraced into the natural hill, and that this terrace in the earlier MB levels was delimited by two large retaining walls. Beyond the southern retaining wall the now eroded east section is all natural except remains of an earlier Neolithic terrace. Thus the huge erosion scars into natural soil on the eastern slopes may well represent further terrace occupations entirely washed out by the lake. As if this was not enough, it is also clear that much of the western part of Main Hill was badly disturbed by Ottoman terracing, and that only its lower slope may preserve earlier remains (cf. Appendix 1). At the southern end of Main Hill may likewise be some Bronze Age occupation preserved (cf. Uildriks, this volume, Fig. 7).

⁴ For some recent comments on the ceramics see Nieuwenhuys 2007: 99 ff. and Nieuwenhuys and Robert, this vol.

⁵ For a Neolithic site a few kms southwest of Shemshara (Toba Koran) see Eidem, this vol., p. 115).

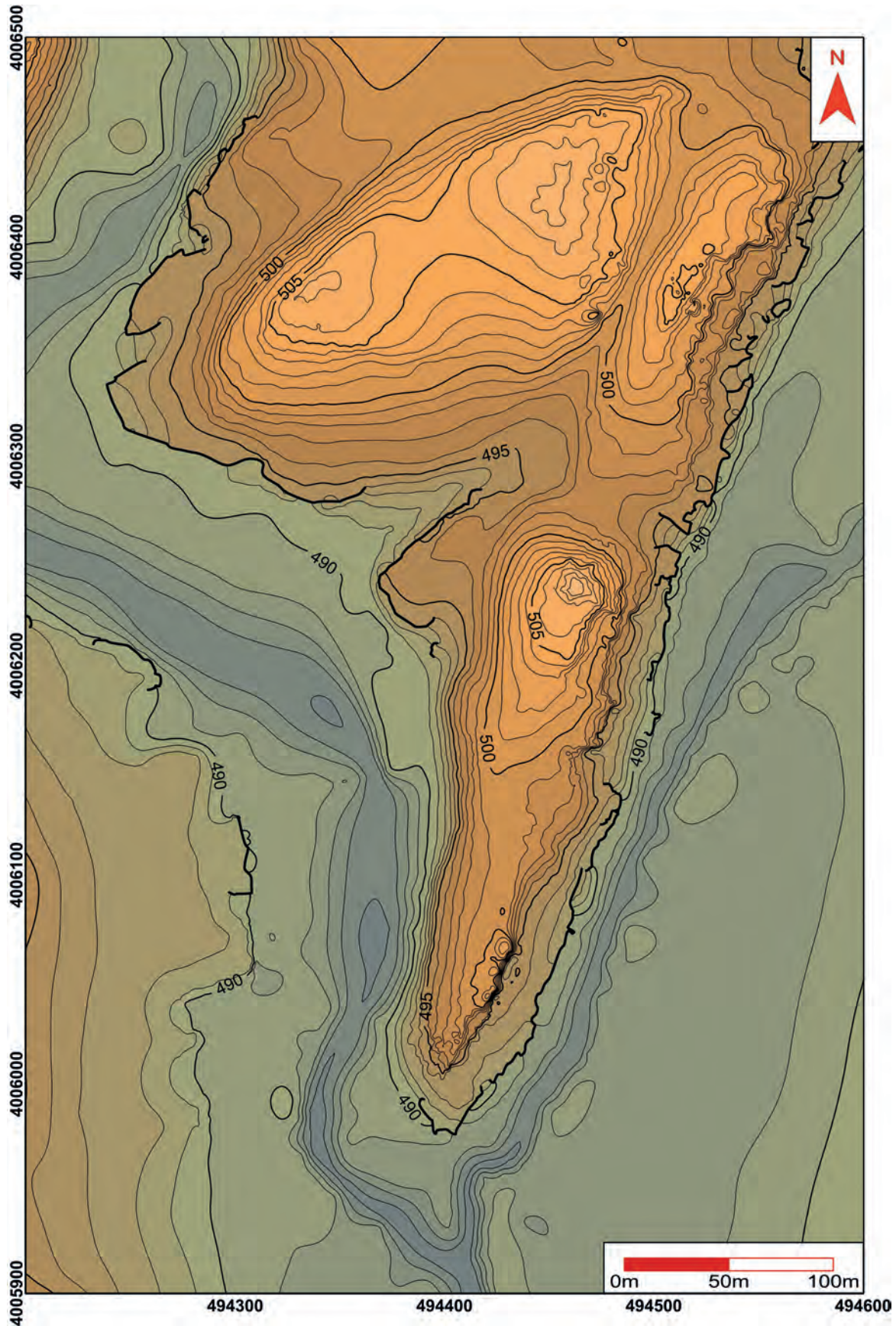


Fig. 5. The Shemshara Hills (North Hill B not included) as mapped autumn 2012 (map by G. van Veen and M. Uildriks).



Fig. 6. The eroded natural east section of Main Hill, view towards north with excavation proceeding in area of “palace terrace” in back of picture (autumn 2013).



Fig. 7. Overview of Main Hill showing main components of the situation in 2013 (photo I. Kisjes).

The high northern part of Main Hill is severely abraded. The Bronze Age levels on the summit once investigated by the Danish expedition seem virtually gone (cf. Uildriks, this vol.), and we have not yet attempted to approach the higher slopes, but investigated some structures on the lower north slope, as described below.

The many erosion scars on the east slope of North Hill (A) probably represent yet more vanished Bronze Age terraces, of which only small traces remain. A test trench on the crest of the hill has exposed only sub-floor evidence for second millennium occupation above virgin soil. The fairly steep west slope has not yet been tested.

The situation on Camp Hill appears different. Several test trenches 2012-13 reached a depth of nearly 2 m without exposing any structural remains, but Bronze Age and Neolithic sherds in a thick package of apparent natural soil. One trench, near the high west part, produced several reconstructable vessels and an early second millennium seal impression⁶ in what appeared a trash deposit. Possibly only the high western part of this hill had structures in the second millennium BC, while the rest was part of a “hollow city”.⁷

Two sets of geophysical prospection data have been acquired in 2013-14, but mainly fail, for a number of reasons, to identify any clear traces of structures on the Shemshara hills.

In this report we focus on two main aspects of our results: re-investigation of the Level V palace on Main Hill, and the earlier Bronze Age levels below it.

II. THE PALACE OF KUWARI ‘RESURRECTED’

The Shadow of a Palace

For those studying the history of Upper Mesopotamia in the early second millennium BC the “Palace of Kuwari” at Shemshara may seem to have almost mythical status. It was presumably within the walls of this building that Kuwari, the governor of ancient Shusharra, briefly resided, and played an important role in both local, regional, and international politics, exchanging envoys and letters with kings

⁶ The seal impression is a label. It shows a presentation scene and has faint traces of a legend where the signs *dub-sar* “scribe” are just discernable.

⁷ The cemetery on the high western part may hide the only ancient structures on this hill. We have no precise information as to where the Iraqi excavation in 1958 retrieved “Mitanni” occupation.

and officials in the Turukkean realm in the Zagros and the mighty Shamshi-Adad in the west. His own archives, or parts of them in any case, were excavated in the building by Danish and Iraqi archaeologists 1957-58 (Eidem 1992; Eidem and Læssøe 2001). The Danes published a plan of the small section they explored (Læssøe 1959a: Pl. 1), while the Iraqis only reported to have “uncovered a massive edifice with numerous annexes” (al-Alusi 1959: 50), and so for decades available archaeological information on the building remained tantalisingly scant. Results of the recent NINO project on the Rania Plain and the appearance of photos from the Iraqi excavations now converge to provide at least a sketch overview of the building as it can be reconstructed at present.

The NINO Investigations 2012-15

When starting work at Shemshara in autumn 2012 we noticed remains of limestone foundations visible on surface in the approximate area of the old Danish excavation, and during the first season we cleaned and mapped most of these, strongly suspecting that they belonged to the Level V Palace. Noticing further a distinct ‘hump’ in the terrain west of the most coherent foundations, where a central courtyard should be located, we suspected that this might represent an unexcavated portion. This suspicion was confirmed by a limited excavation in autumn 2013, which reached a partly undisturbed pavement of baked bricks and very denuded walls of a room south with bases of storage jars still *in situ*, some indeed visible on surface (cf. Fig. 8). These results led us to open several trenches in spring 2014 to trace further remains of the Level V palace, but with varying degrees of success due to poor preservation and many post-excavation robber pits. The results of all this



Fig. 8. Room 32 of the Level V palace as preserved in autumn 2013 – cf. Fig. 14.

work is presented here in Fig. 9, and include most of the circumference of the Central Court, and some rooms on its North, East, and South flanks. Most of the structures recovered are only preserved in foundation, marked with orange in Fig. 9, while the few segments with superstructure remaining are marked with red colour.

Photos of the Iraqi Excavations 1958-9

In spring of 2015 we were alerted by K. Ahmad (Sulaymanya University) to the unpublished paper by Muna Hassan Abbas and Rafida Abdullah, *Shemshara from Pre-historic Times to the Islamic Periods* (Baghdad, 1986-1987), and kindly provided with a scanned version of this. Unfortunately it does not provide any plans of the Iraqi excavations, but a number of important photos, some also presented here. Thus Fig. 11 (Abbas and Abdullah, p. 162) shows what appears to be a complete overview of the 1958 excavation of the palace, probably made close to the end of the season, while other photos (Figs. 14-17) show sections or individual rooms of the building. In the following we briefly describe a reconstruction of the building based on a combination of our investigations on location and information gleaned from the Iraqi photo set. It must be noted that parts of the building reconstructed from the photos are only approximately to scale and necessarily tentative, and that many uncertainties remain. Notes by Abbas and Abdullah and tags on walls visible in the photos allow partial identification of the room numbers assigned by the Iraqi team – and also used in the description here.

A fundamental observation from the Iraqi record is that probably only ruins in the central portion of the building, the main Courtyard and immediately adjacent suites, survived into modern times. Fig. 11 shows how outlying walls end fairly abruptly in an apparent void both to the south and east, where smaller soundings visible probably represent frustrated efforts. This situation is no doubt due to erosion and not least later terracing operations. To the north the entrance sector was better preserved, while to the west of the courtyard probably substantial remains were lost already before the 1950s. This means that what was excavated nearly 60 years ago, and hence what can now be reconstructed, is but a “torso” of the original complex.

The Iraqi photos clearly bear out the observation by the Danes in 1957 and Læssøe’s information from the 1958 investigation (see Appendix 1) that the palace had been subject to a “big fire”. Presumably this happened as a

result of the rebellion led by Lidaja in 1781 BC.⁸ It is uncertain how long Kuwari would have been in residence prior to this event, but perhaps rather briefly (Eidem and Læssøe 2001: 36f.). A new discovery, however, is that “his” palace must have stood for some time, since the pavement of baked bricks in the central courtyard was supplied with a new layer of bricks before the building burned.

The reconstruction of the building made possible so far leaves many open questions, and we can only hope for some partial answers to some of them. The main result of our investigations is clearly that it allows to anchor much of what was excavated in the 1950s firmly in space. The palace of Kuwari featured elements known from other contemporary sites, but also elements of local flavour. Planning and execution of the complex was carried out when Shemshara was part of a local Zagros kingdom, but still display close connections with Mesopotamian traditions. Sadly the palace “torso” may represent virtually all that remains of Level V at Shemshara, but judging by the documentary evidence we may safely assume that much of at least Main Hill would have featured structures of this period. In the following sections we look at the different parts of the building in more detail.

The Central Courtyard

Fig. 11 shows that the Central Court (13) was mainly outlined by wall-tracing or even tunneling around its interior trace. The purpose was of course to plot the walls and doors around the central court, but avoid digging the complete court, where few finds could be expected. In the SW corner we exposed one of these narrow trenches in 2013, the same as is visible on Fig. 14 beyond the doorway to the left. The only larger segment visible as excavated is the NE corner, where indeed we found none of the two phases of baked brick pavement preserved. Since the pavements are also not preserved in the SE part it may be that also here a larger segment was excavated in the 1950s, but hidden from view in Fig. 11. Other disturbances to the pavements are due to modern robber pits. A deep pit cleaned out completely is seen in the SW part of the Court, and to the west of the original excavation in the NE corner another large pit showed clear traces of a backhoe and extended into T/13. Interestingly the upper phase paving in the NW part of the courtyard, which seems undisturbed by modern activity, was in several places torn up, and loose bricks lay in small

⁸ Eidem and Læssøe 2001: 52-55, Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 106-108.



Fig. 9. The Level V palace showing excavated foundations/walls and additional plan reconstructed from the photo record in Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87 (plan M. Uildriks and I. Kisjes).

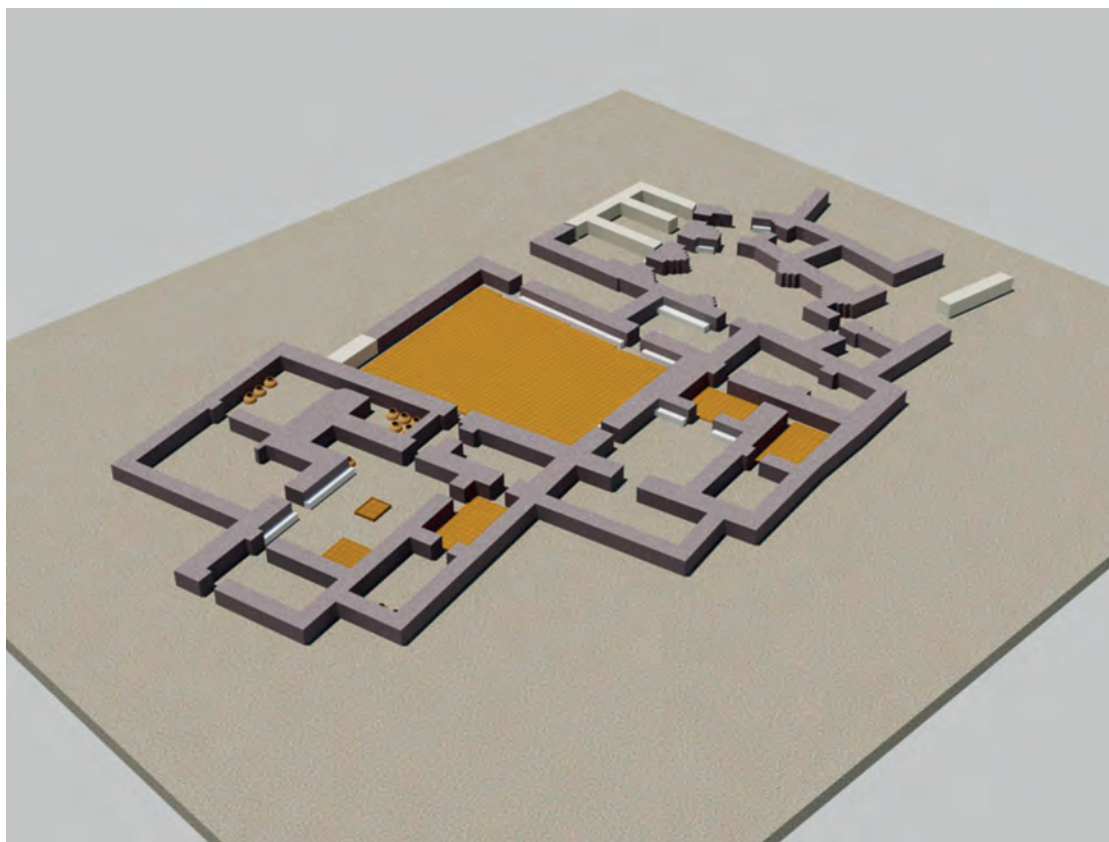


Fig. 10. 3D model of Level V palace (model by M. Uildriks).



Fig. 11. Shemshara 1958: general overview from north (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 162).



Fig. 13. Fragment of terracotta “tower” SH.0410-1, from fill in SW corner of Courtyard 13.



Fig. 12. Central Court (13) in the Level V palace, excavated 2014, view east (top) and UAV view (note the extension of the pavement into the trench north – at bottom of picture; recorded by I. Kisjes).

piles (Fig. 12). This must have happened shortly after the Level V building was burned down in the early 18th century BC, but otherwise fill in this area seems to have remained intact and untouched by the old excavations. The only significant finds are two fragments of terracotta “towers” (SH.0409-1 and SH.0410-1), clearly similar to complete specimens known from the Iraqi excavation (Fig. 13).⁹ A nice feature is a basin of baked bricks, plastered with bitumen, found in U/12, near the east edge of the court (Fig. 12a). It belonged to the original phase B, and was subsequently filled with mud bricks and covered in phase A.¹⁰

The South Wing

The photo of Room 32 (Fig. 14) provides a link to our recent investigations, since just south of the Central Court we have relocated this room with its 9 storage jars, much less preserved, but still *in situ* (Fig. 8). Fig. 14 then is a view east, and the ‘corridor’ seen beyond the north wall of Room 32 a wall-tracing trench in the Central Court. A tag on the north wall in Fig. 14 can be read as ‘30’, and this allows a connection to the description offered by Læssøe who mentions that Room 30 gave access, from the Court, to the Rooms 27 and 34, located to the east of Room 30.

⁹ For these quite impressive stands of terracotta, shaped like towers carried by animals see Eidem 2011, and Marf and Eidem, this vol. A third fragment, of apparently somewhat different model, was found on a Level VIIIa floor in V/11 (see below).

¹⁰ According to Abbas and Abdullah 1986-7 the door in the NW corner of the court led to rooms numbered 33 and 23, but this area is not visible/clear in the photos and has not yet been investigated by us.

It was in Rooms 27 and 34 that the so-called “Second Shemshara Archive” was found in 1958, and it is worth recalling Læssøe’s description: “The tablets of Group II were all found in loose earth above the paved floor of Level V, and a few were found right on the clay benches in Rooms 27 and 37(sic!) of that level. There is thus, a clear evidence permitting us to associate the tablets of Group II with level V. The Tablets of Group II seems to have been originally stored in jars placed over clay benches of Rooms 27 and 34, since the sherds of such jars were found scattered over the benches and nearby on the floor of the two rooms. The storing of these tablets most probably took place blocking the doorway in between the two rooms.” (Læssøe 1960: 13f.).

Fig. 15 shows the main room of the wing seen from north and with the caption “Courtyard no. 35 of Level V. In the middle the bench on which the incense burners were found”. A door in the west corner of the south wall allows entrance to a room to the south, curiously built of stone blocks rather than bricks, and is flanked by a high podium or niche placed on a base of baked bricks (possibly the podium/niche is a refitting of phase B). The layout and size of this space, which we suspect may have been a room rather than a court, although not its approach, is quite similar to the central ‘Hall’ (105) in the Middle Bronze Age residence at Bakr Awa, which featured a “Family” altar in one short end next to a back door – and a rectangular fireplace in the center (Miglus *et al.* 2013: 53ff. w. Fig. 16). In the Shemshara ‘Hall’, however, the podium in the south-east corner, unfortunately poorly preserved, seems too large to be an altar. In any case this space was probably that used for official receptions and meetings.

Clearly there is some confusion here since the Iraqi records claim the North sector, with its decorated walls, to be a temple, while also the terracotta towers from Room 35 are said to come from a “temple”. Many problems persist, like the walls of Room 40 and partly 37 built with stone blocks – perhaps high foundations (on higher ground?). As is clear from the plan Fig. 9 much of this wing of the building has eroded below foundation due to the repeated flooding of the site, and is no longer retrievable. Our plan omits the apparent “stunted” walls of a suite east of Rooms 34 and 37, and reconstruction of the westernmost part of the wing is based only on sorry remains of stone foundations and sub-floor impressions of three storage jars exposed by us (in Room west of 32).¹¹

¹¹ According to Abbas and Abdullah 1986-7 the two rooms west of Room 32 were numbered 36 and 39.



Fig. 14. Shemshara 1958: Room 32 (from W) Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 168).



Fig. 15. Shemshara 1958: view from S of “Courtyard No. 35 of level V. In the middle the bench on which the incense-burners were found” (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 166).



Fig. 16. Shemshara 1958: view (from S) over NW sector of palace (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 163).



Fig. 17. Shemshara 1958: view (from SW) over NE sector of palace (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 116).

The East Wing

East of the central court is the wing (Fig. 17) partly excavated by the old Danish expedition, which here found the famous archive in Room 2 (the small room with paved floor adjacent to the central court). All of this wing is now eroded below floor level, and only shallow limestone foundations remain. Given the location of Kuwari's archive here, and the layout of the suite it may have been the 'apartment' of Kuwari, the lord of the palace. According to the information given by Læssøe the space to the south of Room 2 was a small courtyard, and we must assume that no charred wood was found in the fill here.¹²

The West Wing

In order to trace the limit of the court to the west two trenches were opened here in 2014, in S/12 and later in S/11. Unfortunately these operations did not produce clear results. In both trenches a modern trench had plowed through the edge of the court parallel to its presumed limit. This cut, filled with compacted water-laid soil, was quite likely made by the Iraqi excavation in 1958, as part of the same wall-tracing operation we found in 2013 near the SW corner of the court. What conclusion the former excavators drew remains unknown, but cleaning the floor of the court we reached in both trenches, not a wall, but an

¹² According to Abbas and Abdullah (1986-87) the 6 other rooms in this wing had the numbers 1, 3-5, 11, and 14. Since the 1957 excavation exposed small sections of rooms north and east of Room 2 these might well be 1 and 3. Abbas and Abdullah mention that no. 14 was probably a later addition, which makes it likely that it is the southernmost room of the suite.

extensive fill of bricky material, full of medium-sized stones, pebbles, and ceramic sherds. This could be followed in S/11 all the way to the west baulk. Further investigation is required to solve this problem. Regarding the westernmost exposure in the 1958 image (Fig. 11) apparent "walls" here seem tentative, and rather recall the situation we have found in several trenches on the west part of the hill, where early levels seem cut away by later terrace operations (see Appendix 1). Quite likely the western sector of the palace was stepped up in relation to the Courtyard, and if also disturbed by later cuts the old excavation might well have failed to identify any coherent remains.

The North Wing

The best recent results have been obtained in the trenches opened north of the central court. In T/13 the east part was destroyed by the backhoe cut described above, but the rest of the trench proved fairly intact, and we could excavate, close to surface, a large part of a room (immediately west of Room 12) with installations which indicate a service-sector. Against the north wall was a small plastered bin, and next to this broken remains of an embedded medium-sized jar. Against the south wall were two large embedded jars, one intact (Fig. 18). No other finds were made here, and we assume the 1958 excavations exposed all of this room and only left the embedded jars *in situ*. The walls, built in the peculiar mix of pisé and brick typical for the MB levels at Shemshara, were preserved ca. 70 cm high.

To trace the northern extension of the palace an exploratory trench was opened in T/14, later extended to the whole west half of the square. In the south part a pebbled surface, exposed at the north end of T/13, could be followed to an entrance north. This entrance sector is constructed somewhat differently, with quite heavy stone foundations and yellow bricks. The door sill of the entrance is paved with flat stones. It leads through a kind of ante-room (Room 15) with a clay floor to another door north (into "Room" 20). The excavated portion of Room 15 was heavily burnt (Fig. 19). This whole area of the site has unfortunately been severely disturbed by large modern robber pits. Thus a huge pit has cut away a large part of the east end of the trench, and when to explore this sector further the trench was extended north into T/15, we found the whole south part of this cut away by a huge recent pit. A floor of Level V(?) could be seen in the cut section, but the generally poor situation led us to close the trench.

This northern sector was interpreted as a 'temple' by the Iraqi excavators, presumably due to the decorated half-columns which would be typical of temple architecture,



Fig. 18. Partially re-excavated room in T/13 (east corner of room west of Room 12). Note embedded jars. The small sondage below the Level V floor (right) exposed no older structures.



Fig. 19. Re-excavated entrance room 15 (Level V). The stone block in center of room is placed as excavated in 2014, and certainly not *in situ*, but must derive from a structure or installation nearby.

but in other respects the arrangement seems very unusual. According to Abbas and Abdullah the western doorway in Court 9 leads into another court (16) and this to a “double room” (22), which was thought to be the “cella”. Unfortunately this whole sector is very unclear on the available photos, and cannot be reconstructed. Ideally the entrance sector or “temple” should be further explored. A 1958 image (Fig. 16) shows that a large central part of the fill in court 9 was left unexcavated (like in court 13)¹³, and if still intact structures may allow a better comprehension of this sector than that achieved in 1958.

III. SHEMSHARA BEFORE KUWARI

Introduction

The 1957 Danish excavation at Shemshara exposed a sequence of 5 Middle Bronze Age levels in the large trench on the summit of Main Hill (levels or layers 4-8). Very little is known about the structures found in these levels (see Appendix 1), but our new excavations on the lower part of main hill have revealed a sequence of 6 different levels (V-X). We provide here a summary description of the earlier levels VI-X, principally investigated on the eroded north and east slopes of Main Hill.

Level X

This level is a mere shadow, and defined only by a few features sealed by Level IX. As described below a Level IX enceinte exposed on the lower north slope of Main Hill was founded on a shallow layer of river pebbles and sherds inserted between the natural terrace surface and the first course of bricks. Foundation level of the Level IX “tower” of the river gate (on the east slope) contains some sherds, some possible foundations stones, and the last remains of a *tannur* oven (Fig. 20). The sherds found in these contexts, mostly non-diagnostic and too few to evaluate at present, although not Neolithic, must derive from other earlier contexts at or near the site.

Level IX

This level is represented only by brick walls once encircling Main Hill and presumably North Hill, and two retaining walls framing the “palace” terrace (Fig. 21).

A main defensive wall encircling Main Hill, but preserved/exposed only on the north and east slopes of the Hill has been identified. On our arrival in September 2013 we noticed that the lake had washed free a substantial structure of mud bricks at the base of the slope near the northeast corner of Main Hill. Clearing away a number of large boulders and debris overlying this structure it became apparent that it forms an at least 2 meter wide wall extending from the eroded slope. On surface this wall was traced and cleaned some 20 meters westward, following the curve of the high northern part of the hill. To the east the wall unfortunately fades and is entirely eroded away for a long stretch of the east slope. The wall was built directly on the natural hill with the first brick course of large red bricks (ca. 45 × 45 cm) with grey mortar resting on a thin layer of pebbles and ceramic sherds. It was terraced up in several shallow steps towards the west, following the natural surface. Cutting back the slope behind this wall it was possible to follow its internal trace, and also to outline three cross-walls, forming internal rooms or spaces. In the easternmost room was the remains of a large storage jar still *in situ*, but badly disturbed by recent visitors. The section of the slope behind it shows that it had originally been cut down and overlaid with a later terrace structure of *pisé*. A small sondage into the north slope made in spring 2014 revealed that the inner edge of the wall was not matched by any preserved floor surface.

Flood erosion had also exposed a similar wall further south along the east slope of Main Hill, and we could define the northern part of what seems a “river gate”, with small flanking “towers” (Fig. 21 and 22), but the interior (west side) of the wall had no floor preserved. In spite of the rather long gap it seems a reasonable assumption that the remains of walls exposed on the north and east slopes belong to the same system.

A similar system presumably existed on North Hill, where the eastern slope is much eroded, presenting prominent semi-circular “scars”. On the NE corner of the hill, however, erosion in early 2013 had exposed the torso of an embedded storage jar, disturbed by visitors, but overlaid with the remains of a *pisé* terrace (Fig. 23), no doubt a parallel to the situation at the north slope of Main Hill described above (Eidem 2017).

Retaining walls for a wide terrace cut into the eastern slope of the natural (Main) hill, both exposed by the erosion due to flooding, were probably built with Level IX. The southern wall, nearly 12 meters wide, was visible from the onset of our project, as a mass of brick and *pisé* extending from the slope and marking the border of the sharply eroded natural section to its south. Provisional cleaning in 2013, followed by more intense investigation 2014, has

¹³ According to Abbas and Abdullah (1986-87) an eastern doorway in Court 9 led to rooms numbered 10, 6, 8, 7, and 21, but the sector is not visible/clear in the available photos.

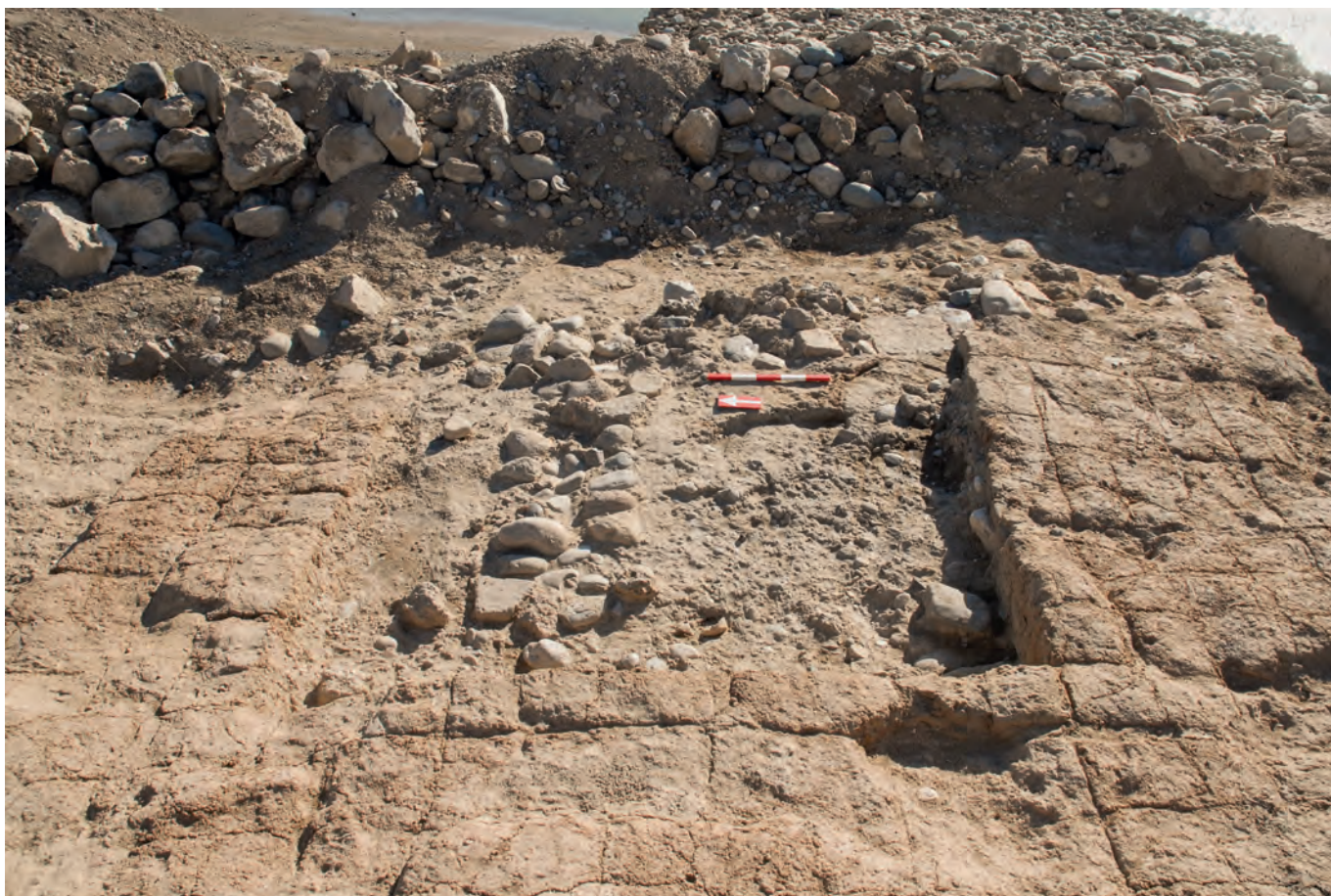


Fig. 20. Level X remains under Level IX north tower of “River Gate”. Note the outline of a *tannur* oven upper right.

shown that the “wall” is constructed with a fairly regular “core” of light reddish-brown mud bricks (ca. 40 × 40 cm) with grey mortar encased in a pisé structure (Fig. 24). On the eroded eastern and northern edges of the brick core two burials, embedded in the wall, were found. The eastern one (SH.0815) was fully delineated and excavated. The other, on higher ground, and covered by overlying bricks, was identified by a complete jar exposed in a small corner of a presumed burial pit (SH.0814, Pl. 4). Burial SH.0815 contained the skeleton of an adult in flexed position and with the very modest offerings of a small rough and hand-made jar and a bronze pin near the chin (Fig. 25, Pl. 4). The individuals in both(?) burials presumably died during the construction process, and were – for reasons not clear to us – buried within the wall.

The northern retaining wall has only been cleaned. It is poorly preserved, and seems to have been thinner than the southern wall, but constructed in similar manner, with a brick core in pisé. Level IX walls were subsequently cut down in preparation for Level VIII, and this level has not yet been reached on higher ground.

Level VIII

In spring 2014 we pursued investigation at the north edge of Main Hill. An eroded section near the northeast corner was cut back and cleaned, and a small sondage dug into the north slope of the hill behind the Level IX wall at its foot. Both operations revealed a huge ‘terrace’ fill of rammed earth with pockets of mud bricks in horizontal position (Fig. 26), on the north slope clearly covering Level IX walls.

In the small sondage into the north slope, near its inner corner, we retrieved two complete vessels in compact fill, a small jar (SH.0616/2) and a carinated bowl (SH.0616/1) (Pl. 2: 5-6), and close to these vessels a small bronze finger ring (SH.0616-1) appeared. Significantly no cut of a burial pit could be identified, and no human bones were found associated with these items. Possibly they were part of a deposit placed inside the Level VIII terrace during construction.

The plan Fig. 27 provides an overview of the Level VIII structures identified. These cluster within the original

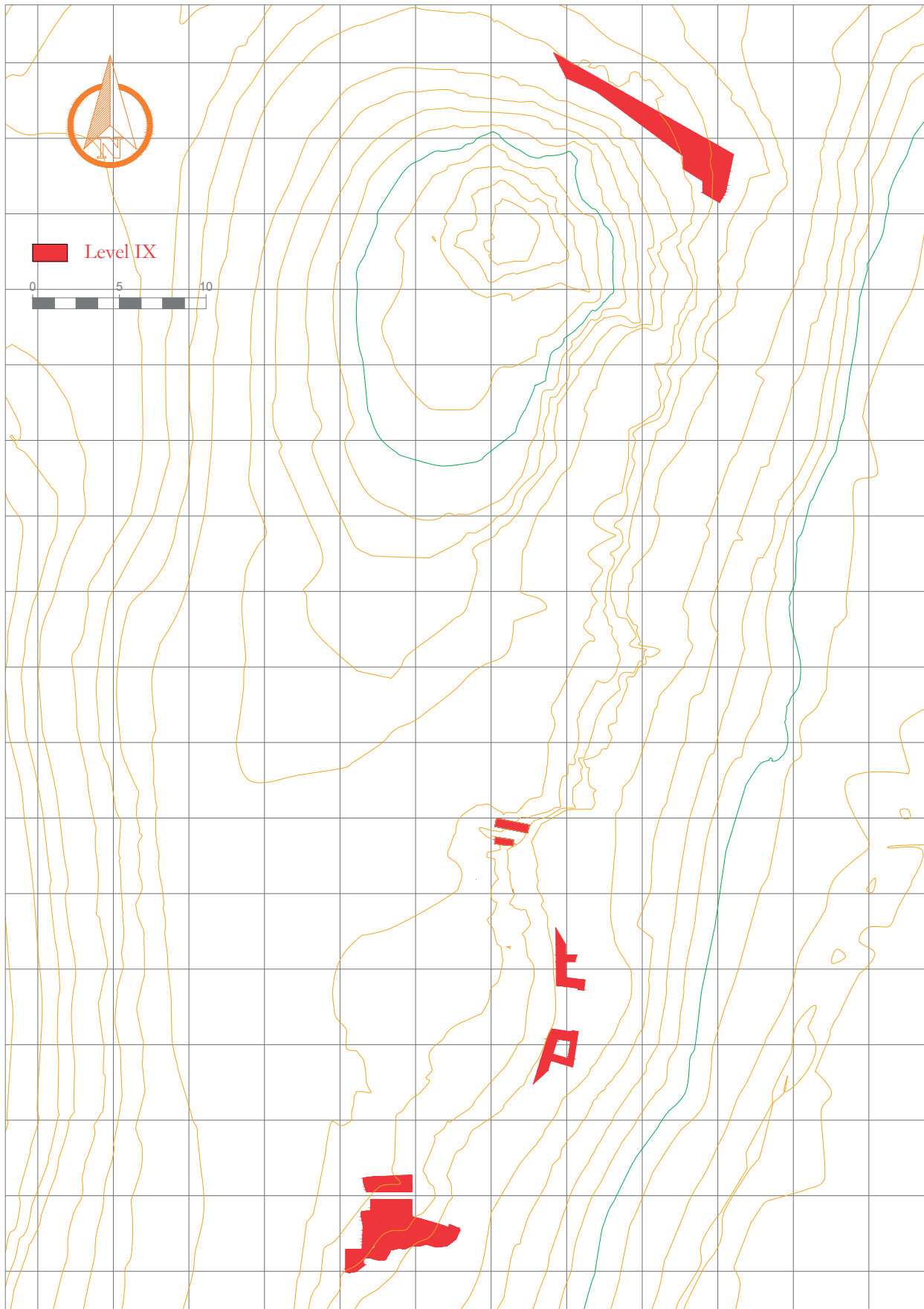


Fig. 21. Overview plan of Level IX structures (plan by M. Uildriks w. updates by I. Kisjes).

“palace” terrace, while those originally placed on top of the built-up pisé terraces are probably mostly lost.

The Level VIII walls (and terraces) are built basically of pisé, on usually very shallow stone footings, but with interspersed layers of bricks, in a technique which initially caused us great difficulties when the plaster of walls was not preserved. The use of a mixed technique of pisé interspersed with courses or patches of bricks is in fact characteristic of all the Bronze Age levels at Shemshara except the early Level IX (as far as investigated...) – and to some extent Level V.¹⁴ Typically we find in plan single courses of laid bricks, but embedded in pisé. The term pisé is strictly a misnomer here, since the constituent clayey earth was not shaped with frames, but apparently laid moist between the binding bricks. This technique has now been studied in some detail at the site of Kunara near Sulaymania (Perello 2016), and seems characteristic of the regional Bronze Age architecture.

¹⁴ The construction of Level V walls is not clear. In the few places where we have exposed remains of superstructure (cf. Fig. 18) this was made with bricks + pisé, but both the 1957 exposure (cf. Fig. 2), as well as details on one 1958 photo (Fig. 15) show regular brickwork. Either this reflects a genuine variation of building technique within the complex – or the trained foremen (sherqatis), more familiar with bricks, saw more of them than was really there!



Fig. 22. Overview of Level IX “River Gate” (north at bottom of picture; photo I. Kisjes).

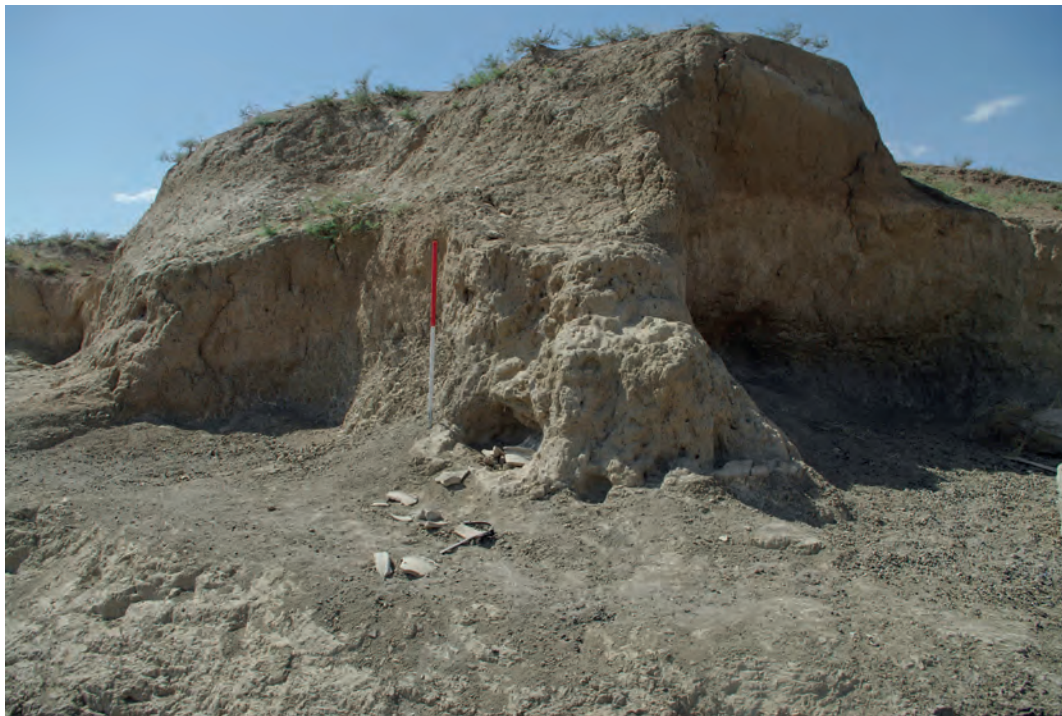


Fig. 23. NE corner of North Hill A: presumed Level IX embedded storage jar – overlaid by later terrace – exposed by erosion and scattered by modern pilfering (September 2013).

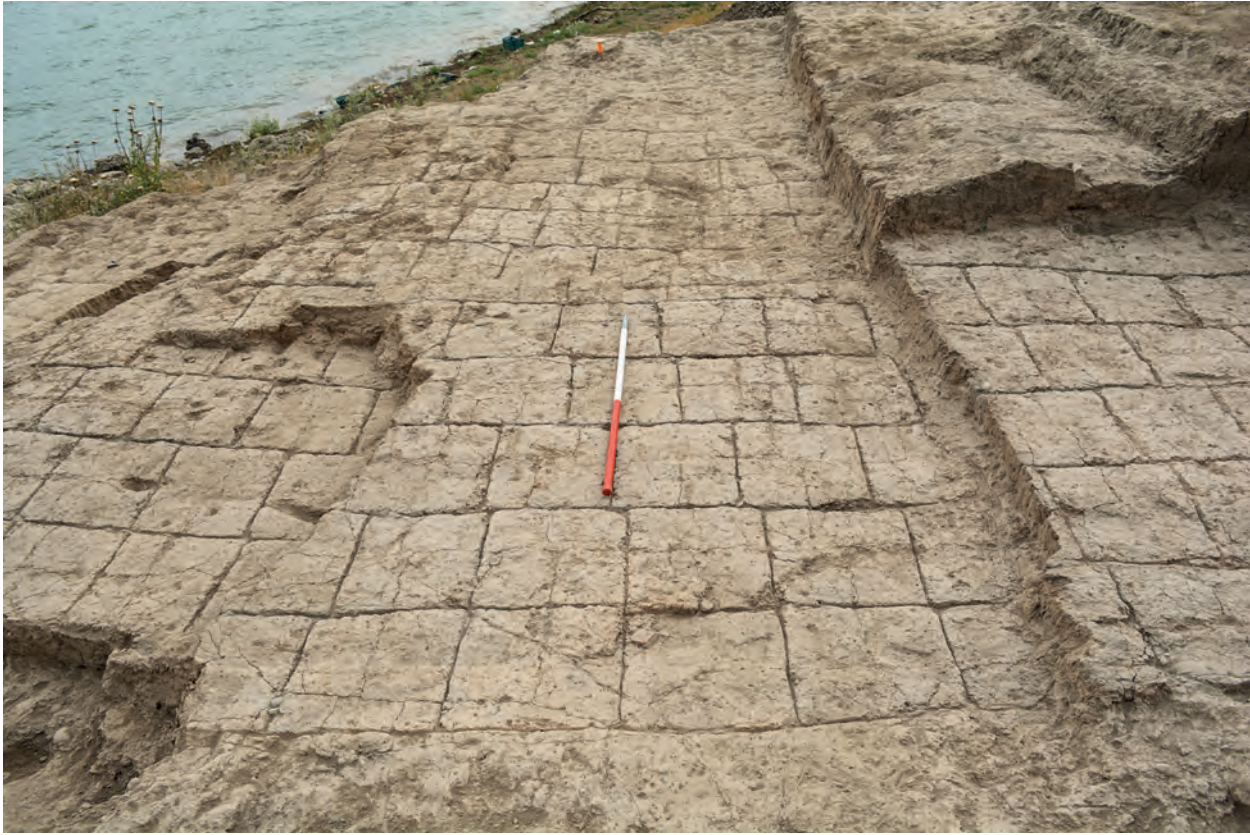


Fig. 24. Brick core in the Southern retaining wall (north at bottom of picture), spring 2014.



Fig. 25. Burial SH.0815, embedded in southern retaining wall (north at right of photo).

Several different rooms of Level VIII have been at least partially excavated, and all show the same pattern of heavy burning and two phases. Several rooms had scatters of broken baked bricks in the fill between the two phases, and features associated with the floors, like embedded storage jars (U/13, only dug to phase a, Fig. 28), a single jar in a corner (U-V/11-12, phase b, Fig. 29), a platform (V/11, phases a-b, Fig. 30), and a baked brick feature (T/11, phase a, Fig. 31). Almost no objects were found in the rooms, with the significant exception of two isolated cuneiform tablets, described below, and which generally fit a context of the outgoing third millennium – very early second millennium BC. No Level VIII walls have yet been exposed on higher ground.

Level VII

On higher ground several rooms of the overlying Level VII have been exposed, principally in U/12 and a sondage below the Level V central court (T/12, Fig. 32). This level is not burnt and the walls generally poorly preserved with little or no plaster remaining, which has made identification and

cleaning difficult. A salient feature of this level are burials placed under the floors of the rooms. The excavations in 2012 exposed several burials of infants, with small ceramic vessels or pieces of jewellery, under the floors of Level VII (Fig. 33). A single adult burial was excavated inside a small level VIII room in V/14, exposed by flood erosion and excavated as a salvage operation in October 2013. It contained two small jars (SH.0274/1 and 2, Pl. 3: 2-3) near the skull and two complete bronze pins (SH.0274-1 and 2, Fig. 34), very similar to examples retrieved at Bakr Awa (Bürger, this vol.), and Tell Yelkhi (Dietre 2007: 192-193).

Level VI

This level is represented only by fragmentary structural remains directly below the ruins of the Level V palace, and generally very poorly preserved, but marks an important structural change since it expands the space of the original terrace, and covers the southern retaining wall in use with the previous levels VII-VIII. The clearest evidence was found in 2015, where we could retrieve part of a Level VI room and floors directly above the Level VIII retaining

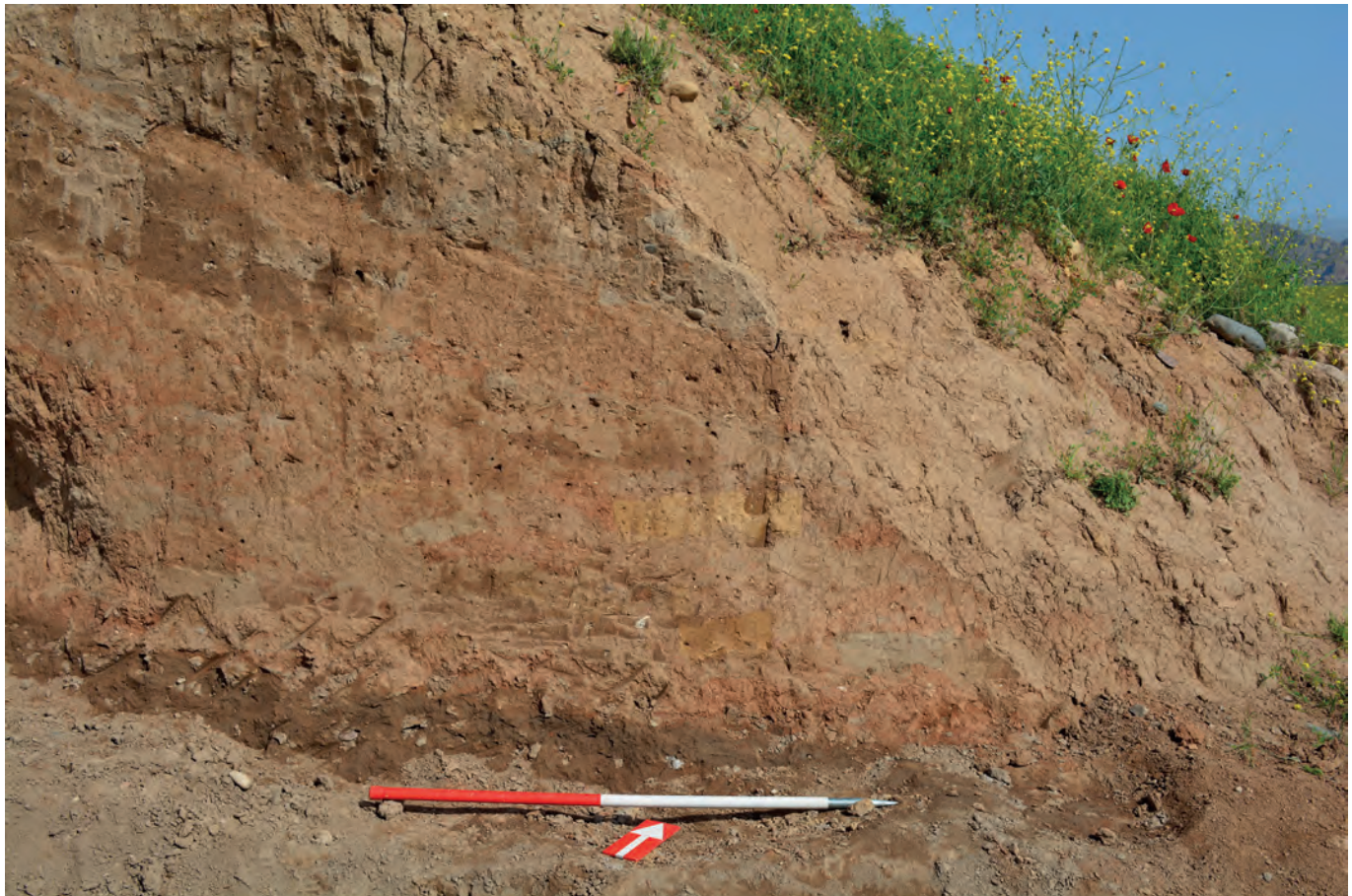


Fig. 26. Pisé terrace on NE slope of Main Hill, spring 2014.

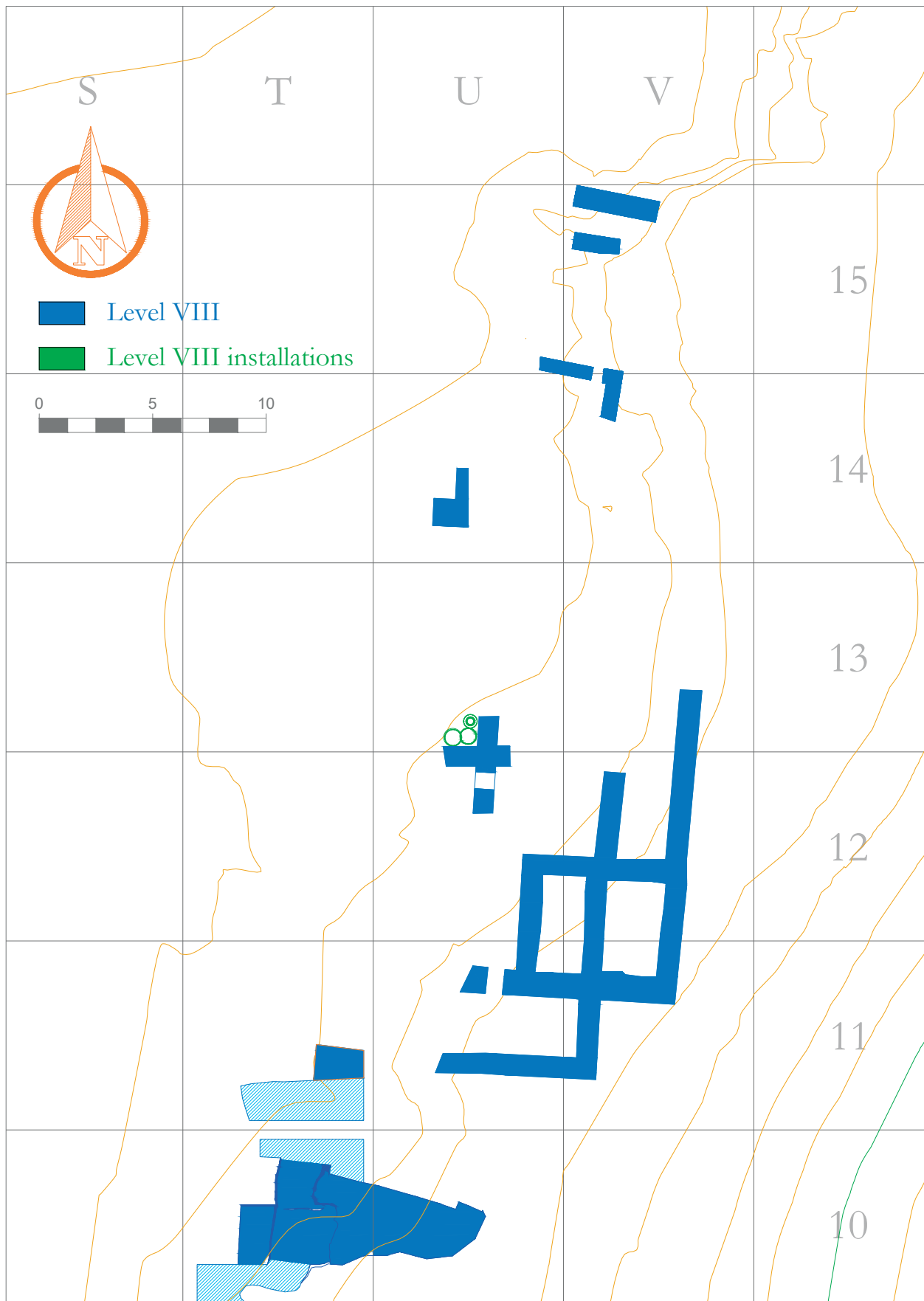


Fig. 27. Overview plan of Level VIII structures (plan by M. Uildriks w. updates by I. Kisjes).



Fig. 28. Level VIII: embedded storage jars in 2012 sounding (U/13).



Fig. 29. Level VIII: room ES 2 (U-V/11-12), floor VIIIb with embedded jar in SE corner.



Fig. 30. Level VIII: room ES 3 (V/11-12), floor VIIIa with podium at north wall and basin south.

wall. We knew by then that much of the Level V southern ‘annex’ was lost to erosion. In fact the approximate area of the main room of this suite (35) had already been cleaned and partly excavated in spring 2014, preserving only Level VII-VIII remains. To find the southern limit of Level V we moved further west to higher ground, and opened a trench in S/10, which quickly exposed a stone foundation belonging to the Level V palace, namely for the west wall of the room west of the principal room of the suite (No. 35, cf. Fig. 11). The remaining foundations were shallow and built on the also shallow remains of Level VI pisé walls, with a similar orientation. Digging below the Level V foundation to the west of it, however, produced only fill above the natural soil, and another small trench – in the same line – to the south in S/9 exposed a similar situation. Here, close to the top of the natural soil, we found a small cup standing almost upright in the fill, and it is tempting to regard this as a ‘deposit’ made when the palace terrace was extended in Level VI.

The Ceramic Evidence

The recent excavations have retrieved large amounts of ceramics, but unfortunately mostly sherds in fills, or from the very disturbed contexts related to the Level V palace. From these latter come mostly fragments of large storage jars, including the preserved embedded examples. The situation is better for the older MBA levels, where a number of whole vessels have been found in graves, and a good deal of fragmentary vessels and sherds found in sealed contexts. There is overall very little painted material, and we have found no examples of Shamlu Ware.¹⁵

¹⁵ Cf. the short notes on the material from 1957 in Hamlin 1971: 150f. The reference to Shamlu Ware (examples in the Iraq Museum communicated by Mortensen) as well as frequent burnished red-slip ware is surprising to us, but may of course reflect a different situation in the levels excavated on the high part of the site in 1957 (cf. Appendices 1 and 2 below).



Fig. 31. Level VIII: room adjacent to southern retaining wall (T/11).



Fig. 32. Level VII: room delimited by wall west, in sondage under the Level V central courtyard (T/12).



Fig. 33. Level VII: funerary offerings from grave SH.0035.



Fig. 34. Level VII: bronze pins from grave SH.0274.

Habur Ware, although rare, does occur in the early levels VIII-VI. Two examples of a bowl and small jar with red or black stripes on the rim come from pre-Level VI fills. A small jar with a single painted band on the neck comes from a pre-Level VI deposit (Pl. 4: 4). A carinated beaker with red-painted geometric decoration, found in a Level VII grave (Pl. 4: 3), is similar to examples from Arbid and Mozan, now dated to ca. 2000-1850 BC (OJ I, see Pfälzner 2017: 180).¹⁶

A very common type of bowl, which occurs apparently in all levels, has high carination giving the rim and shoulder an S-shaped profile (Pl. 2). This type comes with some variations, and the pre-Level VII examples, e.g., are mostly of the rough red ware typical of the oldest ceramics, and have string-cut bases (Pl. 2: 4-5).¹⁷ Parallels to this general type of bowl are frequent, including Bakr Awa (Bürger, this vol., Bowl Type 3). Another very frequent type is a small cylindrical cup with slightly flaring rim (Pl. 1), which finds good parallels in Yelkhi V (Gabutti 2002-3: Pl. 61: 15-20) and of course at nearby Basmusian (as-Soof 1970: Pl. XXX: 2-4). Beakers or small bottles with sack-shaped body and cylindrical neck are attested in Levels VII and VI, and are also known from Yelkhi and Bakr Awa (cf. Bürger, this vol., Beaker Type 1), while another type (Bürger's Type 2) is attested in Level V, one found 1957 in Room 2 (Fig. 40), and a variant fine ware beaker from fill in the central courtyard (Pl. 3: 4). A fragmentary jar with incised decoration (Pl. 4: 5) is a rare type at Shemshara.¹⁸

Vessel fragments with applied decoration in the shape of snakes have been found at Shemshara and on the surface of Dugirdkan.¹⁹

¹⁶ For the eastern horizon of Habur Ware and its implications see previously the remarks in Eidem and Læssøe 2001: 28-30 with further lit., and cf. the forthcoming final publication of the Dinkha Tepe excavation announced by G. Pizzorno (Harvard University). New evidence from Tell Mozan documents small amounts of Habur Ware already in the 21st cent. BC (EJ V) Syrian Jezirah (Pfälzner 2017). This literally deepens the "problem" of Habur Ware, which will no doubt be subject of much future debate.

¹⁷ This "red ware" is very characteristic and sherds often have jet black (poorly oxidised) cores. So far clear parallels have been identified on the Rania Plain sites of Dugirdkan and Mulla Shall (for these sites see Eidem, this vol.).

¹⁸ It was found in fragments when cleaning Level VI foundations. A somewhat similar piece is known from Kunara (Verdellet 2016: 160, fig. 45).

¹⁹ These Rania Plain examples, including one from Basmusian (cf. here n. 20), and probably EM V or OM I in the ARCANE scheme, are not included in the recent overview by Quenet (2014).

New Tablets and More ...

Except tablets neither the Danish nor Iraqi excavations uncovered many significant objects. The most interesting items continue to appear in burials, and in spring of 2014 local villagers showed us two complete bronze pins said to derive from the site, presumably also originally in a burial.

An interesting find from the spring season 2014 derives from the surface close to the northeastern corner of Main Hill. It is a fragment from a large ceramic vessel with a male figure in high relief (Fig. 35). The figure is naked to the waist, where he wears a belted(?) skirt. He wears a fur(?) cap and brandishes a crooked stick in his left hand. This iconography tempts an identification with the god Martu/Amurru (cf. Colbow 1997). The sherd must stem from a very large, probably ritual vessel, and may well have eroded out of the high part of Main Hill, where the 1957 excavation uncovered remains of a "cultural installation" (see Appendix 1). Interestingly fragments of large vessels with relief decoration were found in Iraqi excavations at Tell Basmusian, and associated with the MBA temples there.²⁰ Although admittedly very indirectly this find serves to reinforce the idea that Shemshara, like Basmusian, had a presumably main temple on its high summit, and that consequently any "temple" section of its palace complex was a secondary "chapel".

Also of interest are several terracotta molds for metal objects, all from pre-level V fills, showing that weapons and other metal objects were produced at the site (Eidem n. d. a).

The most significant finds made in the early levels so far remain the two cuneiform tablets found in Level VIIIa (2012) and VIIIb (2013). These isolated tablets show that local scribal traditions were active at Shemshara well before the famous Level V archives, and that more tablets may be expected from the site. The tablets have been provisionally conserved and studied in the field, but a final edition is not yet available. Here we summarise briefly their most significant features.

The oldest tablet (SH.0523-1, Fig. 36) was found in autumn 2013 in the northwest corner of ES 4, Level VIIIb. It is a small administrative note (3.3 × 2.9 × 1.8 cm) of

²⁰ Two fragments from the floor of Temple 2 in Level IV (IM.60276 a-b) are decorated with leopard, goats and snakes in relief; a fragment (IM.60278), found outside Temple 2 (Level IV) has a leopard(?) in relief, and another piece (IM.60275), found outside Temple 1 in Level III a goat (as-Soof 1970: Pl. XV-XVI).



Fig. 35. Fragment from large ceramic vessel with relief decoration (SH.0099-20); surface find from north slope of Main Hill, spring 2014.



Fig. 36. Tablet SH.0523-1 (Level VIIIb), reverse.



Fig. 37. Tablet SH.0048-1 (Level VIIIa), obverse.

commodities issued in “month 11/(12) – year following the year when (the king) built(?) the town of”²¹ The formula cannot be matched with any of the known Ur III or early Isin-Larsa year names, and may well belong in a local system.

A second tablet comes from Level VIIIa (SH.0048-1, Fig. 37), and was found in autumn 2012 in a sondage in U/13, squeezed in between 2 embedded storage jars (Fig. 28). It is basically complete, and measures 9.5 × 4.3 × 1.9 cm. The obv. has 14 lines, l. e. 1 line, and the rev. 7 lines. The tablet is without any date formula. The text is a list of bread (*ninda*) issued to a number of individuals. Unfortunately several entries are damaged and cannot be fully reconstructed, but some entries are readable and provide interesting information. In the first two lines we find issues to “the man from Kakmum” (*lú kak-mi'-[i]m*), and “the man from Urbilum (*lú ur-bi'-lum*). The third line lists an issue to a priest (*gudu₄*), and 2 entries on the rev. mention issues to “soldiers” (*aga-ús*).²² The lower reverse is vacant, but has impressed lines in a grill pattern, and a “cancellation” cross (X). Similar crosses (X) were impressed over the writing of both obv. and rev. This feature has damaged/obscured some of the inscription, but is interesting since it shows that the tablet functioned in an administrative system regularly using account tablets, and perhaps transferring the information to other (summary) formats.

The “men” from Kakmum and Urbilum must have been envoys or messengers from these two places, both major polities in the region in the very early second millennium BC, and this is a fairly certain indication that Shemshara, like in the period of the Level V archives, played an important role in the Rania Plain.

Ur III kings claimed “destructions” of Šašrum (= Šušarra = Shemshara; cf. Frayne 1999, Lafont 2016) in Shulgi 42 and Amar-Sin 6, and from the inscriptions of Iddin-Sin of Shimurru we have some information about the history of northeastern Iraq shortly after the fall of the Ur III empire (20th cent. BC). These inscriptions, recently presented and discussed in the thesis by K. Ahmad (Ahmad 2012), show a situation where Kakmum was a decisive

²¹ (8) *iti ezem-Me-ki-gál* (9) [*mu*]-ús-sa uru-ki (u.e. 10) [*x-a*]b²-na² (11) [*m*]u²-dím². It is particularly unfortunate that the GN in l. 10 cannot be reconstructed.

²² The remaining preserved entries all seem to concern issues to named individuals. PNs fully preserved are: l. 4 *hu-ša-na-ru-um*, l. 5 *ga-ag-ga*, 10 *e-lu-ub-ša*, 11 *zu-zu*. The PN in l. 5, incidentally, is reminiscent of *ga-ga-a-a* in a recently discovered tablet from Kunara (M.240, Clancier 2016: 177f.).



Fig. 38. Shemshara 1957: view south from summit of Main Hill, to left channel of Lower Zab, and in center horizon the mound of Basmusian (photo J. Læssøe).

power in the region, but was defeated by Shimurrum,²³ which in the process conquered the country of Uttuwe (= 18th cent. BC Utûm, the country around Shemshara), from Kakmum, and later set up monumental inscriptions at Bitwate, northeast of Shemshara, to mark the subjugation of the rebellious Kulunnum.

All this evidence is excellently analysed by Ahmad (2012), but how does it relate to the most recent results from Shemshara and elsewhere? Any new discussion of the wider historical context must be deferred to a future occasion, but a few comments should be made on the concrete evidence now accumulating. The reported find of Old Akkadian tablets at Baiz Agha (see Eidem, this vol.) may well indicate that this place and part of the Rania Plain was held, probably briefly, by an Old Akkadian king. Later Ur III kings reached Šašrum (Shemshara), but may not have actually held the place, while the find of tablets dated to the reign of Ibbi-Sin at Dugirdkan (see Eidem, this vol.)

²³ Shimurrum was located *somewhere* on/near the Upper Diyala/Sirwan. See Kozad (2012: 297-302), and most recently Casana, Glatz 2017, 11 w. further lit.

may be a better indication for the extent of Ur III control of the plain.

Kakmum cannot be located with any precision, but if an envoy or similar is heading the list in the new tablet SH.0048-1²⁴ it seems possible that it dates to a period prior to the victories of Shimurrum, thus the very early second millennium BC, or slightly later when perhaps Kakmum had reasserted its power. This would place Shemshara Level VIII in the 20th century BC and Level IX-(X), as yet poorly known, in the Ur III period (21st cent. BC), while Levels VII-VI must belong in the 19th century BC. The ceramics from these levels, although only provisionally studied, largely support such a scheme, and at least do not seem to include material older than the outgoing third millennium BC.

²⁴ It must be stressed that the reading is not entirely certain (the two last signs in the name is written on the edge and somewhat damaged).

In a recent study N. Ziegler (2015) suggested that Kakmum in the early 2nd mill. was the capital of Gutium, but the arguments mustered in favour of this theory are not convincing, also in light of the evidence from the new Shimurrum inscriptions, which Ziegler does not mention (cf. Eidem n.d. b).

III. CONCLUSIONS

The early pre-Level V remains explored so far are mostly those on the (north and) east slope(s) of Main Hill, and exposed by lake erosion. They are largely within the ancient terrace here, and we may rather confidently assume the existence of other terraces on the south and west slopes of the hill. The structures exposed do not yet yield any coherent plans, but several features serve to demonstrate that they probably belonged to official administrative buildings, in parallel with Level V. The clearly large-scale construction projects of Levels IX and VIII, and the presence of administrative tablets in Level VIII testify to this assumption. The poorer remains of Levels VII-VI are difficult to evaluate at present, but the occupations may well have served similar purposes, and it seems a reasonable conjecture that the site for much of the early MBA period served as a fortified administrative stronghold.

What then have the new investigations at Shemshara revealed? Pending retrieval and release of new data from the 1950s and future work on location, we can summarise results as follows.

Occupation on the Shemshara Hills presumably always had some connection to their strategic location close to the Darband pass. For the Neolithic period this is a fascinating, but as yet opaque aspect, as is the possibility of a Late Chalcolithic occupation, perhaps limited to the high part of Main Hill (cf. Appendix 2). Later occupation at any rate seems organised by polities east of the Rania Plain, to defend their territory from western intruders, in parallel with evidence from the Level V archives

It seems that the Bronze Age occupation on the Shemshara Hills, probably with some intervals, spans the period ca. 2050-1750 BC. The natural hills were used as a base for structures supporting local control of the Darband passage and a probably looser control with the Rania Plain. Of the ca. 16 sites here known or supposed to have had "Hurrian" occupation half are today situated relatively near the Dokan Dam and difficult or impossible to access and check. Only two of these sites, Tell ed-Deim and Kamarian, were excavated in the 1950s, and although the published information confirms some early second millennium occupation its nature is difficult to evaluate.²⁵ Further north a similar situation obtains for Qorashina,

and this leaves only a handful of pertinent sites apart from Shemshara itself: al-Yawah near the western edge of the plain, Golak, where our new survey has identified only sparse early second millennium material, while evidence from Basmusian and Dugirdkan is much firmer, but still poorly understood. Finally the two apparently important, but as yet opaque sites of Haiz and Kundu. Setting aside the outlying al-Yawah and Qorashina, and the ephemeral Golak, this would leave us with four sites fairly evenly spaced in the plain south/southwest of Shemshara, and then possible candidates for the four major local centers known from the Shemshara archives as part of an administrative agricultural network (Eidem 1992: 27ff.). The land of Utûm, which Shemshara controlled, may have incorporated basically this sector of the plain and perhaps a western portion of the Pishdar Plain to the east. Hopefully new investigations at especially Durgirdkan, and the other three sites in very dry years, may supply further evidence. The small rural settlements mentioned in the texts will evidently be very difficult to identify on the ground in this eroded landscape, but we may still hope for isolated examples.

At Tell Shemshara itself we are of course disappointed by the severe and worse than anticipated damage done by over 50 years of intermittent flooding, but pleased to have arrived in time to document some last important evidence. The firmly dated Level V palace "torso" can now at least be placed correctly in space. The levels below it provide important *ante quem* ceramics and other data – and the promise of more written evidence. Although at best an educated guess the first Bronze Age occupation at Shemshara may have been organised by a Turukkean "dynasty" in the late Ur III period, and documented by three generations of rulers (Eidem, Læssøe 2001: 25-30), but in competition and intermittent conflict with Kakmum, a local rival also in the 18th century BC (Eidem n. d. b). The catastrophic events following the sack of Shemshara ca. 1781 BC, including mass-deportation of the local population by the kingdom of Shamshi-Adad, leaves open the question of what effect the consolidation of Turukkean power under Zazija would have had here (Eidem, Læssøe 2001: 55-58). Possibly the contemporary geo-political situation rendered the Darband passage and the Rania Plain less important in comparison with a more direct route through the Upper Zab Valley, connecting a Turukkean core area with northern Mesopotamia.

It is as yet uncertain if any occupation followed upon the sack of the Level V palace in the early 18th century BC, and the reported evidence of the "Mitanni" period on Camp Hill is not clear. Late Bronze Age material seems

²⁵ For Deim see specifically al-Qadir 1961, and for other sites cf. Eidem, this volume.

rare on the Rania Plain, and not a single Nuzi Ware sherd has apparently been reported.²⁶ At the moment evidence for occupation in the later second millennium is best represented by Middle Assyrian remains from Baiz Agha and Basmusian, when these sites probably marked easternmost reaches of the Assyrian realm (Eidem 2018). Some Neo Assyrian activity at and/or near Shemshara itself is demonstrated by the recent excavations (cf. above n. 3 and Appendix 2), and may eventually be correlated with relevant historical evidence, and the new investigations of Iron Age occupation in the Pishdar Plain (Radner *et al.* eds. 2016). Even later the mainly Parthian site at Darband (Qalatga Darband), now being investigated by a British Museum team, features a defensive wall curving into the Rania Plain (Uildriks, this vol.), and was thus organised as defence facing west. In spite of the agricultural and other potential of the Rania Plain its occupational fortunes through history would have been shaped very much by contemporary political configurations (Eidem and Læssøe 2001: 58-63).

Shemshara, not a regularly formed *tell*-site, but hills supporting consecutive terrace occupations, survived as a palimpsest into modern times, only to be disturbed by excavations in the 1950s, and later substantially destroyed by Lake Dokan. Much of the ancient occupations at Shemshara has been washed away by the lake, but on the other hand the structural formation of the site is now easier to comprehend. This is a fate Shemshara shares with many other sites in the “Flood Risk Zone” of Lake Dokan, as discussed elsewhere in this volume (see papers by Eidem and Uildriks). In retrospect one can only marvel at the near-prophetic intuition of Ingholt in July 1957: choosing the location for what was to be the last trench of his career, on the lower extension of Shemshara, he managed to pick not only an area where MBA remains were still preserved, but also the very spot where the perhaps most important find in the whole site was hidden. To his remarkable luck, and to the efforts of the energetic young Læssøe, without which none of this evidence would have emerged, this article is gratefully dedicated.

²⁶ Particularly Nuzi Ware sherds, however, are not frequent in surveys: the LONAP found just three examples during two years of survey in a much larger area! (Gavagnin *et al.* 2016: 140).

APPENDIX I: THE DANISH AND IRAQI EXCAVATIONS 1957-59

The Danish excavations 1957

The Danish excavation in the Dokan Dam Salvage Project was organised by Jørgen Læssøe (1924-1993). In spring 1956 Læssøe participated as epigrapher in the excavations at Nimrud, and while in Iraq he was asked by the Director General of Antiquities, Dr. Nadji Bey Al-Asil, if there would be interest in Denmark to organise excavations in the Dokan Project. Back in Copenhagen Læssøe solicited support for a Danish project from the Carlsberg Foundation, the Government Foundation for the Promotion of Research, and the Rask-Ørsted Foundation. Prof. Harald Ingholt (1899-1985), then at Yale University, was offered, and accepted the position as field director. Læssøe himself functioned as deputy director, photographer, and epigrapher. A married couple, Mogens and Anne-Tinne Friis, were engaged as architects and an archaeology student, Flemming Johansen (later Director of the New Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 1978-98) as general assistant. Læssøe also engaged an anthropologist, H. Harald Hansen, whose fieldwork resulted in a highly interesting book, *The Kurdish Woman's Life* (1961).²⁷ The team chose to excavate the site of Tell Shemshara, and as stated by Læssøe: “One of the reasons for the choice of Tell Shemshara, among numerous possibilities, as the objective of our operations, was an appreciation of the strategic position of the tell: the Sungasur Gorge, which constitutes the only obvious entrance to the Plain from the east, could easily have been guarded and defended from a fortified town at the site of Tell Shemshara” (Læssøe 1959a: 23).

The Danish team broke ground at Shemshara 19/5 (1957) and continued work through 10 weeks of mostly intense heat. The story of the project and life in the field was later described in a popular book published by Læssøe (1963; Danish edition: *Fra Assyriens Arkiver* 1960). Immediately after the fieldwork both Ingholt and Læssøe, indeed before leaving Iraq, produced short notes on the results which were published in the journal *Sumer* (1957). Subsequently Læssøe published a booklet on the epigraphic finds (1959a), and over the next years several more articles, including occasional notes on the archaeological context.

²⁷ Hansen did not stay with the rest of the team, but in various locations including the villages of Topzawa (near the Dokan Dam) and Mirza Rustam, and Sulaymania, with trips to a number of other places (Hansen 1961: 1-4). Her book presents the ethnographic collection she acquired for the Danish National museum in wider contexts of both material and social culture of the region.

Ingholt provided a new summary in his introduction to a first final report on the Neolithic materials published by Peder Mortensen (1970). Mortensen, who also studied all the finds from Shemshara in the Iraq Museum, later promoted a plan for publication of the remaining data from 1957, but the results of this are still forthcoming. The present writer has not been able to consult the records and finds now in Copenhagen, but holds the modest *Nachlass* of Læssøe, entrusted to him by his sons. This record includes various papers and notes, and not least a folder with diary notes, photo lists, accounts etc. from 1957, which illuminate some aspects of the work at Shemshara.

The Iraqi Excavations 1958-59

Due to the political unrest in Iraq in summer 1958 the Danish Dokan Expedition was obliged to cancel a planned second season (Ingholt 1970: 14). Instead the Iraqi archaeologists working in the salvage project continued investigations in the Shemshara region in 1958 (9/8-31/10) and 1959 (21/6-5/10) under the direction of Abd al-Qadir al-Tekriti. No report on this work has been published, and the only available information is the formal listing in al-Haik (1968: 67), some notes in the journal *Sumar*, and in publications by Læssøe.

The Iraqi work in 1958 principally exposed much of the Level V palace, as discussed above, and included some excavation on Camp Hill. Little is known about the work done by the Iraqi team(s) in 1959. In a diary note (23/5, 1959) Læssøe wrote: "Long talk ... with Fuad Safar and Abd al-Qadir ab. Shemshara. Fuad: discussion about where to continue dig this year; I suggest s.w. beyond wadi." By this Læssøe presumably meant Bardastee, and he may thus have inspired Abd al-Qadir al-Tekriti, who departed for Dokan just a month later, to investigate this site. According to al-Haik (1968: 67) the team(s) directed by Abd al-Qadir worked that year at Shemshara, Dugirdkan (see Eidem, this vol.), and Gird Bardastee.

Important data are now provided in the paper by Abbas and Abdullah (1986-87). The most important aspects of this work are the lists of registered finds and a series of excavation photographs from the 1958-59 seasons at Shemshara. Several photos show the extended exposure of the Level V palace made in 1958, and are discussed above in section II. Others show further exposures of 1959.

The Upper Levels

The upper levels of Tell Shemshara are somewhat enigmatic. In his first report Ingholt provided this summary:

"Most of the work was done on the tell proper. Three Islamic levels could be distinguished at the top, the most outstanding single feature being a great quantity of small terracotta pipes with spout on the bowl and a filter on the rather tall neck. More than 75 complete or restorable specimens have been brought to light, probably in the time used rather for narcotica than for tobacco. The datable pieces in the three levels point to a time between the 12th and 14th century A.D., a date too early for any imported tobacco. A few fragments of Chinese early Ming ware probably of the 14th century A.D., furnished still another example of contemporary commercial relations between the Far and the Near East." (Ingholt 1957: 214).

In his later summary Ingholt repeated the date to "a time between the 12th and 14th centuries A.D." for what was in this version one Islamic "level" with 3 "layers", but he also provided some new details: A coin found in the northern hill dated to 737/8 AD, "and may possibly indicate an earlier Islamic settlement". He also mentioned two fragments of Chinese porcelain, one "almost surely 16th century" (SH.151), and the other (SH.153) "probably ... the 16th or 17th century" (Ingholt 1970: 12 w. n. 5).²⁸

Later still, P. Mortensen provided a brief summary of the situation, adding some more details – and a dramatic touch:

"On the way from Samarkand through Azerbadjan and northern Iraq his [i.e. Tamerlane] soldiers passed through the little village which was sited on top of Tell Shemshara at the end of the 14th century: there, in 1957, archaeologists found traces of a few burnt-out clay houses with domestic pottery, a couple of glazed bowls with scratched [sic!] decoration, nails, knives, some equestrian equipment, and in one room some clay pipes which had been used for smoking Indian hemp (hashish), along with, in the open space between the houses, a hail of arrow-heads, which testify to the flying visit paid there by the Mongolians." (Mortensen 1996: 128).

Læssøe, curiously, elsewhere wrote that: "The two upper occupation levels at Tell Shemshara were both Islamic, probably of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries AD. Between the Islamic structures and the next earlier occupation a very long time seemed to have elapsed, so that with the third level we were immediately taken back to 1000 BC, or perhaps even earlier in the second millennium" (Læssøe 1963: 141).

²⁸ Læssøe also mentions (diary, 28/5) a "fragment of Chinese pot found ab. 1 m b. s. (J/8)" – so probably one of the pieces referred to by Ingholt, and if not from a pit, apparently not from the topmost level.

How to reconcile all this? It is now generally agreed that pipes were only introduced *with* tobacco in the 17th century AD (Simpson 2000), which does not fit the proposed date for the youngest level at Shemshara, especially if some of the pipes, as indicated by Mortensen, were found *in a room*. The new investigations have retrieved about a dozen pipes (many though from surface), several so-called “poppy-heads” and other types which can be dated to the 18th-19th centuries AD (Simpson 2013). Such a late date, however, hardly fits the “hail of arrow-heads” from the same level. This brings us back to square one – but not entirely so. Until more evidence is available it seems prudent to retain a Medieval date for the upper level(s) excavated in 1957, but then the pipes, porcelain fragments etc. must represent quite substantial Ottoman activity and/or pitting, which we may then dub Level “0”.

Another uncertainty pertains to Læssøe’s remark of only 2 Islamic levels, which clearly contradicts Ingholt’s comprehension. While it could be dismissed as a simple mistake, I think it may be deliberate. In his early summary Ingholt stated: “A big cistern built of burnt bricks, with plaster as mortar, also belongs in the Islamic period, although the bricks with their characteristic concave sides – as in Nuzi and Basmosian – go back to an earlier, probably Hurrian period.” (1957: 214). Læssøe’s diary provides a sketch showing the location of the cistern in the NE corner of K/8 (so just in front of the section published in Mortensen 1970: 19), and mentions it twice: (12/6) “Abu Ali excavating very large circular burnt-brick cistern? (bricks: [sketch]). I. [Ingholt] thinks Ass., but I think not.” (10/7) “Shirqatis remove cistern”. It seems Ingholt hesitated, but finally assigned an Islamic date to the cistern and its level, while Læssøe disagreed and therefore counted only 2 Islamic levels. Possibly the actual records can solve this problem.

Moving from the high northern part of the site to the lower southern extension “some Islamic levels, which seem to correspond to the upper levels on the high tell” were excavated above the room in Level V where the archive was found (Læssøe 1966: 56f.), but these levels are not further described anywhere.²⁹ In 1958 the Iraqi excavations cleared a large area to expose the Level V palace, but it is unclear what they found above it. Judging by the available photos (Figs. 11, 16-17) the caps of Level V walls are ca. 1-1,5 m below surface, but sections above do not seem to contain much in the way of structures. What is visible is mostly fairly mixed soil with many scattered medium-sized stones.

²⁹ Except a short note in Læssøe’s diary (13/7): “Open new trench across “Outer Town” (South town), southern extension of tell. Just below surface *tannur*, stone *asas*”

A feature not described previously, however, is the presence of a pre-modern settlement on Main Hill. An aerial view, captured by Hunting Aerosurveys in late 1951 (cf. articles by Eidem and Uildriks, this volume), shows the shadowy foundations of probably two rows of small structures extending ca. N-S (Fig. 39) along the western part of the hill. A few years later Shemshara was visited first by the Iraqi surveyors in September 1955, and in spring of 1957 by the Danish team, and quite likely these features were then sufficiently covered by vegetation to escape notice. At least they are not mentioned in any of the sources available to this author. The exact extension and date of this occupation cannot be ascertained, but a pre-modern village or other type of modest settlement would of course match well with the concentrations of Islamic burials on Camp and North Hills (cf. above Part I). Apparently the Iraqi excavations 1958-59 did not extend much onto the western flank of Main Hill (cf. Fig. 11), but any untouched surface remains visible in the 1951 image would subsequently have been washed away by Lake Dokan.

The general situation, however, corresponds to our recent experience from trial excavations on the western portion of Main Hill. Beyond the eroded east section a narrow trench westwards, excavated in autumn 2015, initiated in R/8 just behind the section of the natural hill, exposed shallow deposits of late (Ottoman?) activity above what is almost certainly the surface of the natural hill sloping west. A series of smaller trenches on the western part of the mound all produced a similar and disappointing situation: Fairly homogenous soil encapsulating scatters of stones, in some cases in line and potentially remains of foundations, a few poorly preserved *tannur* ovens, fragments of floor lines, concentrations of animal bones from larger animals, and a limited number of sherds and small objects. The finds include several pipe heads and iron objects, and indicate an Ottoman date for their contexts.

Thus it seems that BC occupation on the western part of the hill was largely cut away a few centuries ago, creating a terraced space for occupation, and especially the west slope would have provided some shelter from the often strong easterly winds (cf. the quote from Ingholt immediately below). This occupation was apparently beyond living memory already in the 1950s. Most likely it represents a series of small villages, but it is also tempting to think of a military presence, easily imaginable in view of the strategic position of the site close to the Iranian border, and the need to keep check on the large tribal movements (Ateş 2013: 238). In any case it accounts for the traces of Ottoman period activity also elsewhere on Shemshara.

At the bottom of the west slope of Main Hill are probably still remains of a Bronze Age terrace preserved, and also at the south end of the hill are possible Bronze Age remains.

The Middle Bronze Age

The Danish excavation on the high northern tell identified 5 levels (– or layers) from the early second millennium BC, and they were described thus by the excavator:

“On the southern half of the tell a number of inhumation burials were found, whereas the northern half seemed to be reserved for a cultural installation. The architects have been able to find clear traces of three successive building periods with walls and inside rooms. The tombs have yielded several spearheads of bronze and a magnificent axe of the same material A toggle-pin of bronze was found with a female skeleton, and that of a child came to light in a big vessel decorated with rope band in relief.

Anyone who has lived for any length of time at Shemshara can appreciate the apparent fact that the tell proper in the Hurrian period was reserved for the Gods and the Dead. The violent storms which so often sweep over the plateau from the Derbend Gap must have made life very difficult for anyone living on the top of the mound.” (Ingholt 1957: 214f.).

The term “cultural installation” seems deliberately vague, and clearly Ingholt was somewhat baffled by the ‘Hurrian’ levels on the high part of Main Hill. In his introduction to the first final report (Ingholt 1970) he makes no mention of the structures uncovered, while Læssøe, in his various publications, completely avoids the subject. Without any clear understanding of the situation it was conveniently put aside. When Ingholt referred to a “cultural installation”, however, he was no doubt aware of – and inspired by the early second millennium BC temples excavated in 1956 at Tell Basmusian (Levels III-IV), ca. 5 kms south of Shemshara (as-Soof 1970), of which the older Temple 2 (Level IV) was placed on a thick brick platform. The published plan of this temple shows a one-room shrine ca. 18 × 15 m large and with walls ca. 2.8 m thick (see Eidem, this vol., also Uildriks, this vol.). A similar structure could well have been situated on the high summit of Shemshara, but today all of this is lost to erosion and the evidence gone. Hopefully publication of the Danish records from 1957 will eventually aid comprehension.³⁰

³⁰ The diary of Læssøe contains some scattered notes about the “cultural installation”:

The Southern Extension

13th July a small trench was opened on the southern, lower extension of the site. This trench, some 10 × 15 m (W-Y/8-9), was, like the trenches on the high mound, laid out and measured in a local grid-system. The operation reached a depth of 1.65 m and exposed 6 levels (I-VI) (M. and A. Friis *apud* Mortensen 1970: 2). In level V the excavation exposed walls, preserved to a height of ca. 90 cm, of three rooms (plan in Læssøe 1959a: Plate I), adjoining each other. One room was excavated completely and contained the archive of cuneiform tablets described below (Fig. 2). When the excavation was extended in 1958 this room was given the no. 2. Its internal measure was 3.55 × 4.70 m, and the floor consisted of reddish baked bricks (39 × 39 cm). A main doorway was in the center of the south wall, while other doorways led into partially excavated rooms to the east and north. Besides the tablets the room contained a ceramic jar stand (SH.712), a fine ware beaker (SH.713, Fig. 40), and the torso of an animal figurine (SH.714) (Læssøe 1959a: 27; photos in Læssøe 1966: 6f.), but the remaining archaeological evidence from this trench has not yet been published.

In 1958 further excavation of the building where the Danish expedition had uncovered the archive the previous year was clearly a major objective for the Iraqi excavations, which uncovered another group of tablets. Læssøe was entrusted with publication of the smaller “second” archive found in the building, and given contextual information by Abd al-Qadir Tekriti and Khaled al-Azami:

“This room [excavated by the Danish expedition in 1957] has been numbered 2. Entrance to this room was from a small courtyard to the south of it, from which a gateway led west into a very large open court in the central part of the building. The tablets of Group II were found in two rooms, 27 and 34, immediately south of this large court. Access to room 27 was gained from room 30 which is located to the west of the former and linked with the large

June 6 (Thu). ... Libn in K/10, cleared in mastaba by Abu Saleh – not Islamic.

A sketch (June 22) shows the ‘mastaba’ as a thick ‘wall’ extending from K/10 NE to J/8 and with notes ‘outside?’ for the space to the south and ‘inner courtyard or room?’ for the space north.

June 24 room or mastaba? *latush* missing / multicoloured libn, not homogenous red, but grey and green. Why one large mastaba? To and including floor 7.

July 2 (Tue) “Mastaba” remains a mystery.

July 28 (Sun) Læssøe photographs “what used to be called mastaba”.

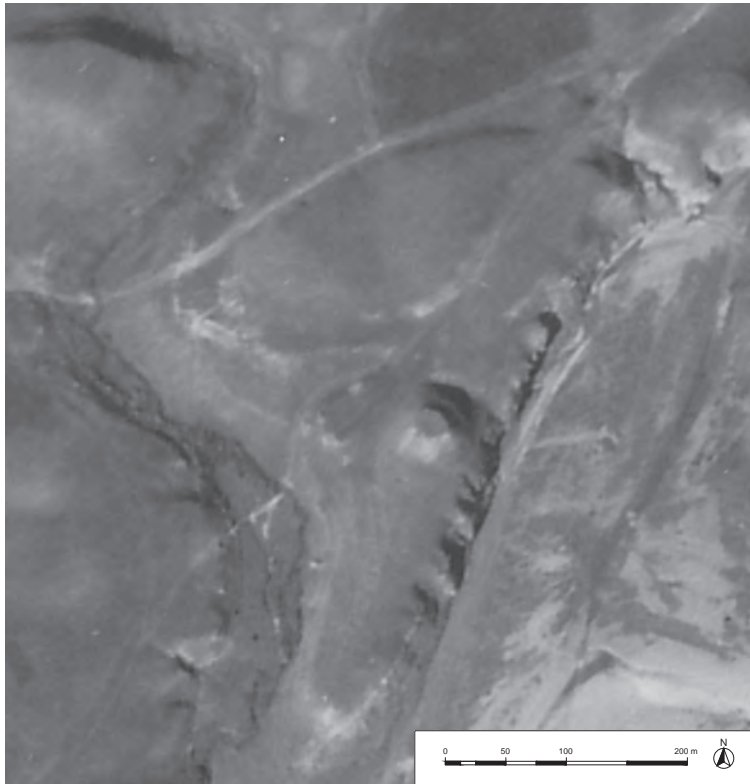


Fig. 39. Shemshara Hills 1951. Note traces of Ottoman(?) foundations on west part of Main Hill (source: Hunting image 06526, 7/12, 1951).

courtyard by a doorway. Room 34 extends south of room 27; on Level V, these two rooms were linked by a doorway which was, however, blocked by subsequent occupants. It is likely, that the paved floors of rooms 27 and 34 are in fact contemporaneous with the paved floor of room 2, all of which represent the fifth level of occupation in this part of Tell Shemshara, and all shows the remains and traces of a big fire which took place in several suites of this building.” (Læssøe 1960: 13).

The Iraqi excavation of the Level V palace is discussed above, but we may briefly review the few photos which show other features. The 1958 overview image (Fig. 11) shows, in the foreground, a step trench made into the high northern part. Further images show views from the north during the 1959 season. Fig. 41 shows that the lower portion at least of the step trench was extended west a couple of meters, and the later Fig. 42 shows a further extension west. The latter image is said to show rooms in “building T of Level VI”. The situation is unfortunately not too clear, but it can be noted that this area of the site, north of the later Level V palace, had what appears to be rather small structures with thin walls – hence perhaps a residential quarter. Judging from the recent excavations, where Level VI remains are very poorly preserved, it seems likely that the main structures in these images represent our Level VII (cf. above, section III).

The Middle Bronze Age Archives³¹

The archive found by the Danish expedition in 1957 was registered with 146 field-nos. These nos. represent ca. 140 individual tablets or fragments of tablets, and a handful of sealed envelope fragments. Ca. 100 tablets and fragments carry the texts of letters, and the rest are administrative lists and notes. The entire material was found in Room 2 of the Level V palace. At least 66 individual letters were addressed to Kuwari, who can safely be identified as the owner of the archive.³² The administrative texts mostly concern distribution of items of metal, weapons, garments, shoes etc. Especially the tablets found in 1958 (registered with 103 field-nos.) provide some information on the region of Shemshara itself and its administration.³³ Apparently Shemshara controlled a fairly large rural hinterland with a

³¹ All the tablets are published in Eidem 1992 and Eidem and Læssøe 2001.

³² The name is written: *ku-wa-ri*, and is Hurrian according to Richter 2016: 178f.

³³ At the division of finds ca. half of the tablets were allotted to the Danish expedition, and are now in the National Museum of Denmark (Copenhagen). 64 tablets and fragments were kept in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad (IM.62084-62147). Some of these are now in the Sulaymania Museum, where at least 4 are on display: 3 letters (Eidem, Læssøe 2001: nos. 16, 29, 72), and an administrative text (Eidem 1992: no. 137).



Fig. 40. Fine Ware beaker SH.713 (TSH.3394, National Museum of Denmark, H. 10.5 cm), found in “Tablet Room” 1957 (after Læssøe 1966: Fig. 11, p. 60).



Fig. 41. Shemshara 1959: general overview from north (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 171).



Fig. 42. Shemshara 1959: “Level VI and some rooms belonging to building T. View from the north” (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 162).

number of named sites (villages/estates?) in the “land of Utûm”, which can be identified at least partially with the Rania Plain, although its exact contours are unknown.

APPENDIX 2. “LOST” PERIODS?

One pertinent problem concerns some late fourth-early third millennium materials not as yet represented by stratified remains. In a review of these periods B. Abu as-Soof wrote: “Al-Tikriti did mention (in the field notebook) ... that a few Jamdat Nasr sherds were found at the adjacent mound of Brustî mingled with ED I pottery. No note was made as to whether these sherds were painted or plain. In the Store-rooms of the Iraq Museum the writer was able to discern a number of orange-slipped sherds among the Shemshara material. A description and sections of these sherds is given below and on plate V. The writer is inclined to the opinion that these sherds are the ones described as Jamdat Nasr” (as-Soof 1985: 87f. + 188).

Since the sherds published by as-Soof derived from Levels IX to II, and we now know that “Brustî” = Gird Bardastee is a one-period site, apparently only occupied in the early Ninivite V period, the sherds cannot have come from that site, and then probably from Shemshara itself. Ingholt concluded that there was a gap in occupation between the Neolithic levels and the Middle Bronze Age (Ingholt 1970: 12), but this is not entirely certain. In his diary Læssøe notes (22/5): “Several fragments of red burnished ware”.³⁴ Indeed the sherds from the Danish excavation now in the National Museum in Copenhagen *may* include some Chalcolithic specimens (T.B.B. Skuldbøl, pers. comm.), and Mallowan (1964: 148) mentions a “fragment of a pedestal vase apparently of Ninevite 5 type” (communicated to him by Læssøe and P. Mortensen). A few examples of early painted Ninevite 5 sherds have turned up in the new excavations at Shemshara, but out of context.

Another problem concerns the “Assyrian” period claimed by the original Iraqi survey in 1955 (Eidem, this vol.), and which no doubt was an attractive perspective to

The tablets found in 1958 by the Iraqi expedition were in Rooms 27 (SH2.100-123 + SH2.168-178) and 34 (SH2.124-167 + SH2.179-203). They are virtually all administrative lists and notes concerned with agricultural products, mostly grains and pulses. In 1980 these tablets were all in the Iraq Museum, except two specimens (Eidem 1992, nos. 124 and 144) then in the Erbil Museum.

³⁴ This description recalls the note by Hamlin, referred to above n. 15, but the recent excavations have not retrieved similar material.



Fig. 43. Shemshara 1958: “The northern part of the temple, level v. To the extreme right a column-base from the Assyrian period.” (Abbas and Abdullah 1986-87, p. 167). This feature can be viewed in context in Fig. 17 (at north end of excavation, ca. in center of photo).

Læssøe. No certain “Assyrian” remains, however, appeared in excavation. A duck weight (Læssøe diary (2/6): “Duck weight in trab from J 6, rescued from loss in dump by Ahmad Aziz”), could also be earlier, and an alleged “Assyrian” column base found in 1958, isolated, but seemingly *in situ*, in a level above Kuwari’s palace (Fig. 43) is also doubtful evidence. More to the point are clear first millennium BC sherds found recently on the lower west slope of Main Hill. This seems to vindicate the Iraqi survey, and it should be recalled that the Shemshara Hills, before excavation and later inundations, were fairly “closed”, covered with vegetation, and probably presented scarce surface material for the Iraqi survey.

These “lost” periods for now remain a work in progress. While it cannot be excluded that extraneous sherds were brought to the site with earth for construction purposes, this does not seem to account for the evidence presented above, and considering the clear terracing activity at the site we think it more likely that perhaps flimsy or transient occupations of the late fourth-early third millennium BC, and later the early first millennium BC, were terraced into the slopes, but later largely removed by subsequent terracing.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Abbas, M.H. and Abdullah, R., 1986-87 — *Shemshara from Prehistoric Times to the Islamic Periods*. Baghdad (in Arabic).
- Ahmed, K.M., 2012 — *The Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*. PhD-thesis, Leiden University.
- Altaweel, M.R., Marsh, A., Mühl, S., Nieuwenhuys, O., Radner, K., Rashid, K. and Saber, S.A., 2012 — New Investigations in the Environment, History, and Archaeology of the Iraqi Hilly Flanks: Shahrizor Survey Project 2009-2011. *Iraq* 74: 1-35.
- Al-Alusi, S., 1959 — News and Correspondence. *Sumer* XV: 43-57.
- Ateş, S., 2013 — *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary 1843-1914*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Casana, J. and Glatz, C., 2017 — The Land Behind the Land Behind Baghdad: Archaeological Landscapes of the Upper Diyala (Sirwan) River Valley. *Iraq* 78: 47-69.
- Charpin, D. and Ziegler, N., 2003 — *Mari et le Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite. Essai d'histoire politique*. Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 6. Paris, SEPOA.
- Clancier, P., 2016 — L'archive du bureau de la farine. Présentation préliminaire. In: A. Tenu *et al.*, Kunara, une ville du III^e millénaire dans les piémonts du Zagros. Rapport préliminaire sur la troisième campagne de fouilles. *Akkadica* 137, No.2: 174-180.
- Colbow, G., 1997 — Eine Abbildung der Gottes Amurru in einem Mari-Brief. In: *Florilegium marianum* III (Fs. Barrelet): 85-90.
- Dietre, C., 2007 — L'area di Tell Yelkhi: i piccoli oggetti. *Mesopotamia* XLII: 167-209.
- Eidem, J., 1992 — *The Shemshara Archives 2. The Administrative Texts*. Copenhagen, Royal Danish Academy.
- Eidem, J., 2011 — The Towers of Shemshara. In: G. Barjamovic *et al.* (eds.), *Akkade is King. A Collection of Papers by Friends and Colleagues Presented to Aage Westenholz on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday 15th of May 2009*. PIHANS 118. Leiden, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten: 79-91.
- Eidem, J., 2017 — Dams and Danage: Heritage loss and second phase salvage on the Rania Plain (Kurdish Region of Iraq). *NINO/NIT Annual Report 2015-2016*: 2-13.
- Eidem, J., 2018 — Pakute: an Assyrian “Ghost Castle” on the Rania Plain. *As-Sharq* 2/2: 30-42.
- Eidem, J., (n. d. a) — Broken Moulds: Evidence for Metallurgy at Tell Shemshara. In: J. Eidem (ed.), *Zagros Studies 2*. Leiden, PIHANS (in preparation).
- Eidem, J., (n. d. b) — Pots and Peoples in the Ancient Zagros. In: J. Eidem (ed.), *Zagros Studies 2*. Leiden, PIHANS (in preparation).
- Eidem, J. and Læssøe, J., 2001 — *The Shemshara Archives 1. The Letters*. Copenhagen, Royal Danish Academy.
- Frayne, D., 1999 — The Zagros Campaigns of Shulgi and Amar-Suena. *SCCNH* 10: 141-201.
- Gabutti, A., 2002-3 — La ceramica dei Livelli VIIb-III. *Mesopotamia* XXXVII-XXXVIII: 87-264.
- Gavagnin, K., Iamoni, M. and Palermo, R., 2016 — The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project: the Ceramic Repertoire from the Early Pottery Neolithic to the Sasanian period. *BASOR* 375: 119-169.

- Al-Haik, A.R., 1968 — *Key Lists of Archaeological Excavations in Iraq I. 1842-1965*. Field Research Projects, Study No. 9. Coconut Grove, Florida.
- Hamlin, C., 1971 — *The Habur Ware Ceramic Assemblage of Northern Mesopotamia*. Univ. of Penn. Ph.D. Diss. Ann Arbor, Univ. Microfilms.
- Hansen, H.H., 1961 — *The Kurdish Woman's Life*. Publications of the National Museum, Ethnographic Series VII. Copenhagen, The National Museum.
- Ingholt, H., 1957 — The Danish Dokan Expedition. *Sumer* XIII: 214-215.
- Ingholt, H., 1970 — Introduction. In: P. Mortensen (ed.), *Tell Shimshara. The Hassuna Period*. Copenhagen, Royal Danish Academy: 5-16.
- Kopanias, K., MacGinnis, J. and Ur, J. (eds.), 2015 — *Archaeological Projects in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq*. The Directorate of Antiquities of Kurdistan. Retrieved at: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:14022526>.
- Kopanias, K. and MacGinnis, J. (eds.), 2016 — *The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Adjacent Regions*. Oxford, Archaeopress.
- Lafont, B., 2016 — Que se passait-il à Kunara il y a quatre mille ans ...? In: B. Perello and A. Tenu (eds.), *Parcours d'Orient. Recueil de textes offert à Christine Kepinski*. Oxford, Archaeopress: 147-153.
- Læssøe, J., 1959a — *The Shemshara Archives. A Preliminary Report*. Copenhagen.
- Læssøe, J., 1959b — The Bazmusian Tablets. *Sumer* XV: 15-18.
- Læssøe, J., 1960 — The Second Shemshara Archive. *Sumer* XVI: 12-19.
- Læssøe, J., 1963 — *People of Ancient Assyria: Their Inscriptions and Correspondence*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Læssøe, J., 1966 — *Det Første Assyriske Imperium. Et Aspekt*. Copenhagen, University of Copenhagen.
- Matthews, R., Matthews, W. and Rasheed Raheem, K., 2016 — Current Investigations into the Early Neolithic of the Zagros Foothills of Iraqi Kurdistan. In: K. Kopanias and J. MacGinnis (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Adjacent Regions*. Oxford, Archaeopress: 219-228.
- Miglus, P.A. et al. 2013 — Excavation at Bakr Awa 2010 and 2012. *Iraq* 75: 43-88.
- Mortensen, P., 1970 — *Tell Shimshara. The Hassuna Period*. Copenhagen, Royal Danish Academy.
- Mortensen, P., 1996 — The Danish Archaeological Expeditions to the Middle East. In: K. von Folsach, T. Lundbæk, P. Mortensen, and L. Funder (eds.), *The Arabian Journey. Danish connections with the Islamic world over a Thousand Years*. Århus, Moesgård Museum: 121-129.
- Mühl, S., 2013 — *Siedlungsgeschichte im Mittlere Osttigrisgebiet*. ADOG 28.
- Nieuwenshuysse, O., 2007 — *Plain and Painted Pottery. The Rise of Neolithic Ceramic Styles on the Syrian and Northern Mesopotamian Plains*. PALMA 3. Turnhout, Brepols.
- Perello, B., 2016 — Étude des vestiges d'architecture en terre. In: A. Tenu et al., Kunara, une ville du III^e millénaire dans les piémonts du Zagros. Rapport préliminaire sur la troisième campagne de fouilles. *Akkadica* 137, No. 2: 139-148.
- Pfälzner, P., 2017 — Habur Ware and Social Continuity: The Chronology of the Early to Middle Bronze Age Transition in the Syrian Jezireh. In: F. Höflmayer (ed.), *The Late Third Millennium in the Ancient Near East, Chronology, C14, and Climate Change*. OIS 11. Chicago, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: 163-203.
- Al-Qadir, A., 1960 — The Excavations at Tell ed-Daim (Dokan). *Sumer* XVI (Arabic section): 93-109.
- Quenet, P., 2014 — Snake Applied Decorations. In: M. Lebeau (ed.), *ARCANE Interregional Vol. I. Ceramics*. Turnhout, Brepols: 253-270.
- Radner, K., Kreppner, F.J. and Squitieri, A. (eds.), 2016 — *Exploring the Neo Assyrian Frontier with Western Iran. The 2015 Season at Gird-i Bazar and Qalat-i Dinka*. Gladbeck, PeWe Verlag.
- Richter, T., 2016 — *Vorarbeiten zu einem Hurritischen Namenbuch. Erster Teil: Personennamen Altbabylonischer Überlieferung vom Mittleren Euphrat und aus dem Nördlichen Mesopotamien*. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz.
- Simpson, St.J., 2013 — Smoking across Iraq. In: A. Invernizzi (ed.), *Mnemeion. Scritti in Memoria di Paolo Fiorina*. Alessandria, Edizione dell'Orso: 251-278.
- As-Soof, B.A., 1970 — Mounds in the Rania Plain and Excavations at Tell Bazmusian. *Sumer* XXVI: 65-104.
- As-Soof, B.A., 1985 — *Uruk Pottery. Origin and Distribution*. Baghdad, Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.
- Tenu, A., 2016 — Kunara, une ville du III^e millénaire dans les piémonts du Zagros. Rapport préliminaire sur la troisième campagne de fouilles. *Akkadica* 137, No. 2: 109-182.
- Ur, J., De Jong, L., Giraud, J., Osborne, J.F. and MacGinnis, J., 2013 — Ancient Cities and Landscapes in the Kurdish Region of Iraq: The Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey 2012 Season. *Iraq* 75: 89-118.
- Verdellet, C., 2016 — Étude sur la céramique. In: A. Tenu et al., Kunara, une ville du III^e millénaire dans les piémonts du Zagros. Rapport préliminaire sur la troisième campagne de fouilles. *Akkadica* 137, No. 2: 148-169.
- Ziegler, N., 2015 — Kakmum et le Gutium. In: L. Marti, C. Nicolle, and K. Shawaly (eds.), *Recherches en Haute-Mésopotamie II. Mission archéologique de Bash Tapa (campagnes 2012-2013) et les enjeux de la recherche dans la région d'Erbil*. Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 17. Paris, SEPOA: 23-35.

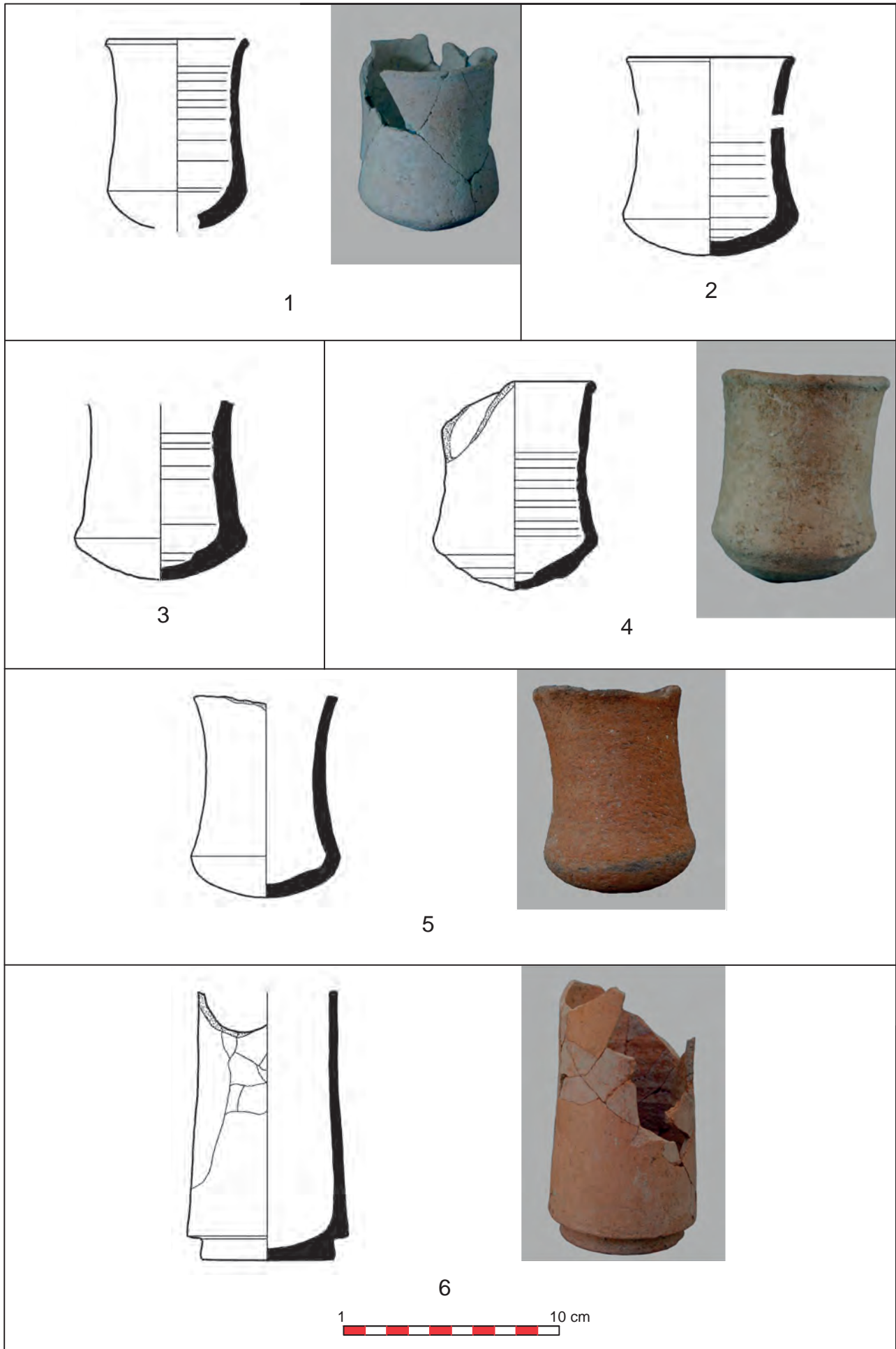


PLATE 1

1: SH.0038/3 and **2.:** SH.0038/4 (Level VII, infant burial); **3:** SH.0072/2 and **4:** SH.0072/1 (Level VIII);
5: SH.0332/1 (Level VIII); **6:** SH.0240/62 (Level VII?).

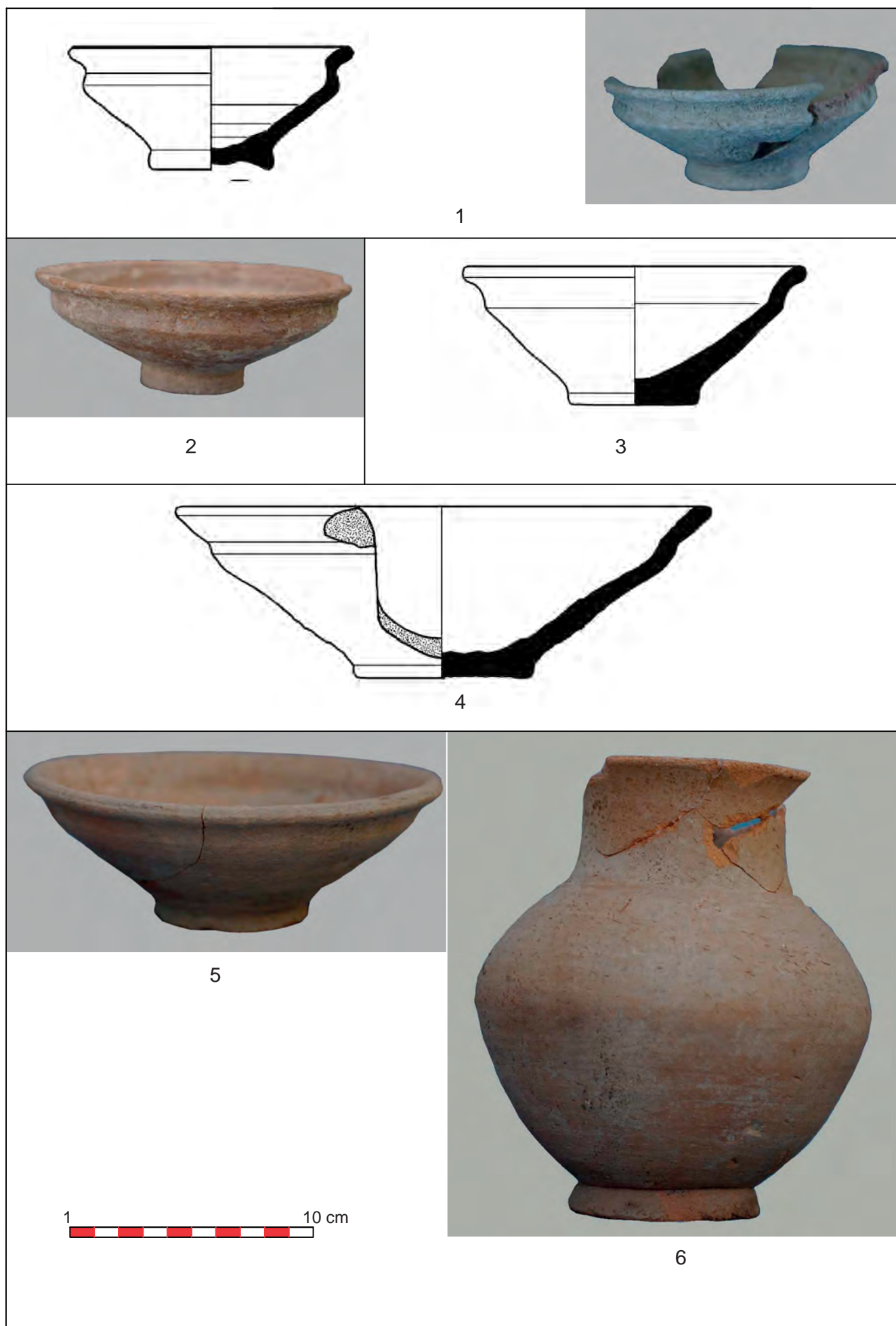


PLATE 2

1: SH.0038/1 (Level VII, infant burial), **2:** SH.0527/1 (Level VII, infant burial); **3:** SH.0515/2 (Level VIII);
4: SH.0314/1 (Level VIII); **5:** SH.0616/1 and **6:** SH.0616/2 (Level VIII 'deposit').

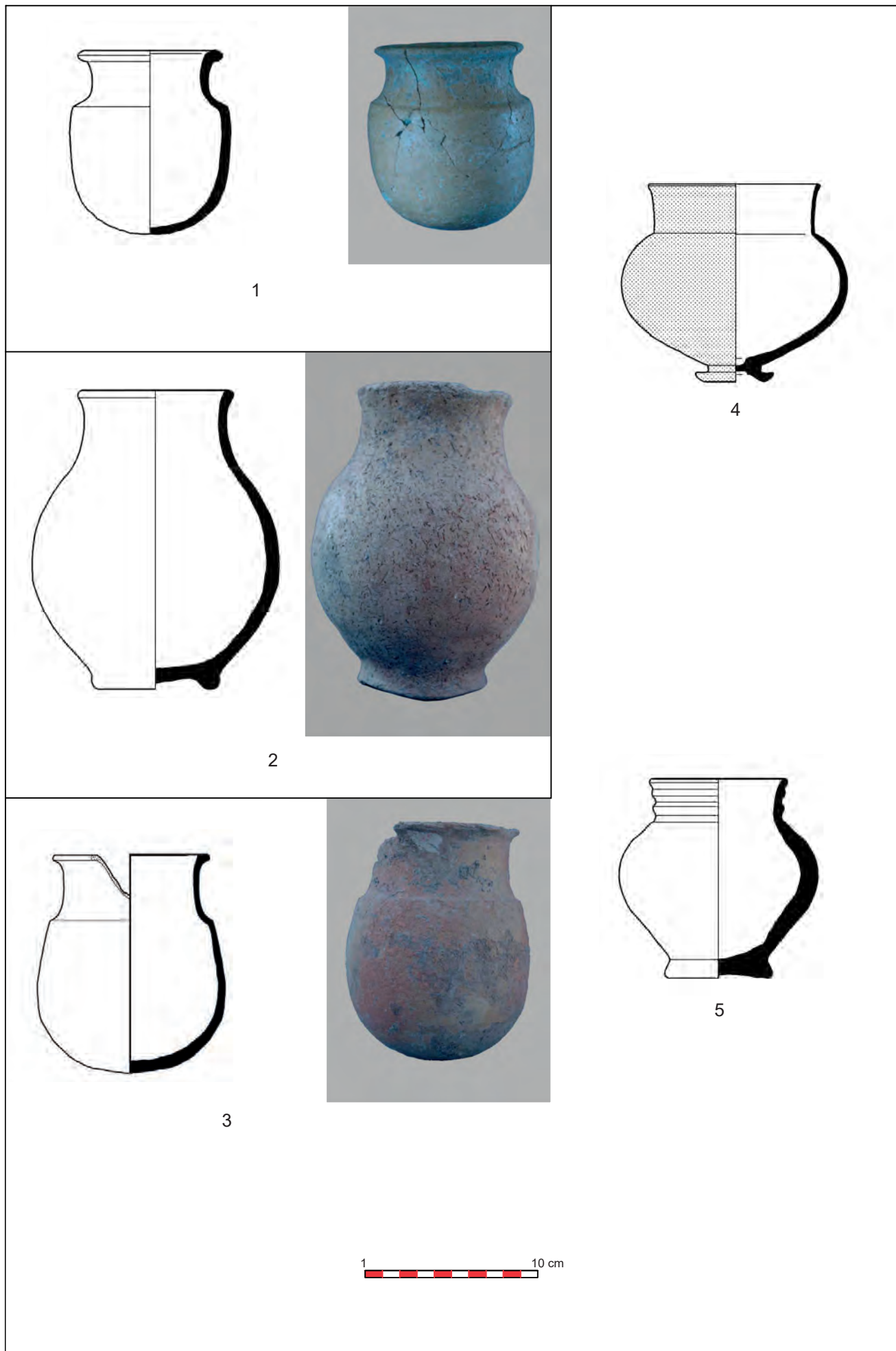


PLATE 3

1: SH.0041/1 (Level VII, infant burial); **2:** SH.0274/1 and **3:** SH.0274/2 (Level VII, adult burial);
4: SH.0405/2 (Level V, palace, central court); **5:** SH.0070/1 (Level VII, infant burial).



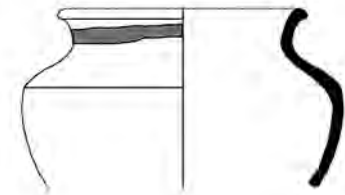
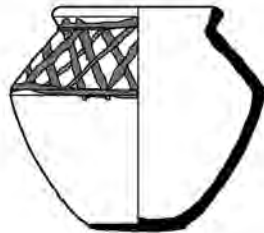
1



2



3



4



5



6



PLATE 4

1: SH.0815/1 and 2: SH.0814/1 (Level IX, burials); 3: SH.0037/1 (Level VII, infant burial);
4: SH.0227/18 (Level VII); 5: SH.0014/1 (Level VI); 6: SH.1109/1 (SH2, operation 5).