

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA CULTURE CIVILTÀ

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EXCAVATIONS AT KARKEMISH
IV
THE NEO-ASSYRIAN WELL IN AREA C

Edited by
NICOLÒ MARCHETTI

with contributions by
Barbara Bolognani, Vittoria Cardini, Marialetizia Carra, Marzia Cavriani, Claudia D'Orazio, Elena Maini,
Gianni Marchesi, Nicolò Marchetti,
Hasan Peker, Sara Pizzimenti, Rula Shafiq and Carlo Zaccagnini

Ante
Quem

In memory of
Refik Duru (1932-2024)
and of
John David Hawkins (1940-2023)

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This is the final report on a particular context excavated during the 2015 campaign by the Turco-Italian Archaeological Expedition at Karkemish by the universities of Bologna, Istanbul and Gaziantep. All credit for the results achieved goes to the very professional team that we were fortunate to have on the excavation (Pls. LV-LVI). In 2015, area C South was supervised by Sara Pizzimenti with the assistance of Marzia Cavriani and then of Rosa Rivoltella. Well P.5347 was mostly excavated, due to its reduced space and breathable air (which had to be pumped in through a pipe), only by our worker Bahtiyar Güzel, besides myself, with Ali Kelek and Ömer Faruk Karaçalı at the pulley above. Giampaolo Luglio was our topographer (who found ingenious ways to survey the well), Laura Benucci the conservator, Francesco Prezioso the photographer, Luisa Guerri the registrar, Hasan Peker (also serving as deputy director) and Gianni Marchesi the epigraphists, Mustafa Özakça the consultant for the archaeological park, and Elena Maini the zooarchaeologist (Miriam Giannantoni and Marco Benatti processed the paleobotanical samples in subsequent years). Pottery sherds were drawn by Valentina Gallarani and Halil al-Hamid; the latter also drew all the small finds. The archaeological material published here is now stored at the Museum of Gaziantep or in the main storeroom of our Expedition house.

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our stay there a memorable one, as every year. Our workers from the villages of the Karkamış province deserve much praise for their commitment and good humour.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of two great friends of our Expedition, the masters, respectively, of Anatolian archaeology, Refik Duru, and of Luwian studies, John David Hawkins.

The Editor

CHAPTER 2

THE STRATIGRAPHY OF WELL P.5347

The excavations established a complex stratigraphic history for well P.5347 (Pl. X): it was newly realized during the Neo-Assyrian phase and it actually functioned for some time as a water well, before being turned into a dumping ground at the time in which the palace went out of use.

2.1. THE STRATIGRAPHIC PHASING OF AREA C SOUTH

Well P.5347 is located in the south-western sector of the palace compound in Area C (Fig. 1.1, Pls. II, III.1, VII), where the excavations by the Turco-Italian Archaeological Expedition revealed a complex stratigraphic sequence consisting of 12 structural phases ranging from LB I (15th-early 14th century BCE) to the Early Islamic period (9th-10th century CE) (Marchetti 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2019-2020; Pizzimenti and Zaina 2016). The well is attributed to phase 9(a-b), which belongs to Iron III or the Neo-Assyrian period (717-605 BCE at the site). At the end of the 8th century BCE, in fact, the inner plan of the Neo Hittite palace (phase 10)¹ was deeply transformed and adapted to become part of the “Palace of Sargon, king of the world, king of Assyria” (Marchetti 2015b: 368).² This new palace consisted of at least three main blocks enclosed within the same perimeter of the previous one (phase 10) and arranged

1 Phase 10 corresponds to the first massive architectural and urban re-organization of the area which probably took place in the late 10th century BCE, under the ruler Katuwa, marking the beginning of Iron II at the site.

2 For the discovery *in situ* of a complete baked brick with that inscription of Sargon II, cf. Pizzimenti and Zaina 2016: 365.

around a large pebbled courtyard (L.4649).³ The previous structures were only partially reused, as indicated by a different architectural layout and the floors refurbished over the previous ones (Pls. III.2, IV.1-2). The large Iron II courtyard L.5085 was in fact obliterated, and in its place, three smaller rooms have been built. Well P.5347 (Pls. V, VI.1) is located in the southernmost room that obliterates the courtyard, cutting its beaten earth floor L.5085. It was used during both the Neo-Assyrian subphases (9a and 9b), as shown by the two superimposed floors associated (one for each subphase: L.5099 for 9a [Pl. VI.2] and L.5060 for 9b [Pl. VI.3]), both made with small pebbles and small eroded pottery sherds, indicating the room as an open space.

The well is no longer in use in the following subphase 9c, dated to Iron IIIB (i.e., the Neo-Babylonian period), during which the palace compound sees more changes in the architectural layout together with floors refurbishing. At the beginning of the latter phase, in fact, the well was filled (cf. § 2.2) and then obliterated by a floor made with small pebbles and small, eroded pottery sherds (L.5896). The recovery of one fragment of a terracotta prism, bearing a royal inscription of king Sargon II (see Marchesi 2019: figs. 3, 12-18), reused into the above-mentioned L.5896, indirectly supports the dating of subphase 9c to the end of the 7th-beginning of the 6th century BCE, following the conquest of Karkemish by the Babylonians in 605 BCE (see Chapter 1). Two more inscribed terracotta prisms, the inscriptions of which overlap in part with that of KH.15.O.300, have been recovered into the filling of well P.5347 (cf. § 6.1).

2.2 THE CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE, THE INNER STRATIGRAPHY AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS IN THE WELL

It took us a full season to reach the bottom of well P.5347 (in 2015, the well having been first identified in the 2014 campaign): its depth is about 13.62 m, from the well's capstone to the bottom (Fig. 1.1). The upper part of the well (cutting through earlier archaeological levels) is characterized by a liner made of medium-sized stones (with an inert fill between them and the pit's cut), while the lower part was hewn into the bedrock (Pl. VIII.1-3). The stone liner is 7 meters high from the well-head or the base of the well's capstone (from 345.70 to 338.00 m asl), while the lower portion hewn into the bedrock is 6 meters deep (from 338.00

3 This court was paved with a black and white mosaic of pebbles forming a checkerboard pattern, which finds contemporary parallels at sites such as Arslan Tash (Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931), Tell Ahmar (Bunnens 1998) and Ziyaret Tepe (Matney and Rainville 2005), as well as in more distant areas like the recently discovered Phoenician *Santuario de Cástulo* in Spain (Blásquez Martínez 2006).