

# Piotr Bieliński

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## Tell Rad Shaqrah 1994

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Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 6, 109-117

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1995

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## TELL RAD SHAQRAH 1994

**Piotr Bieliński**

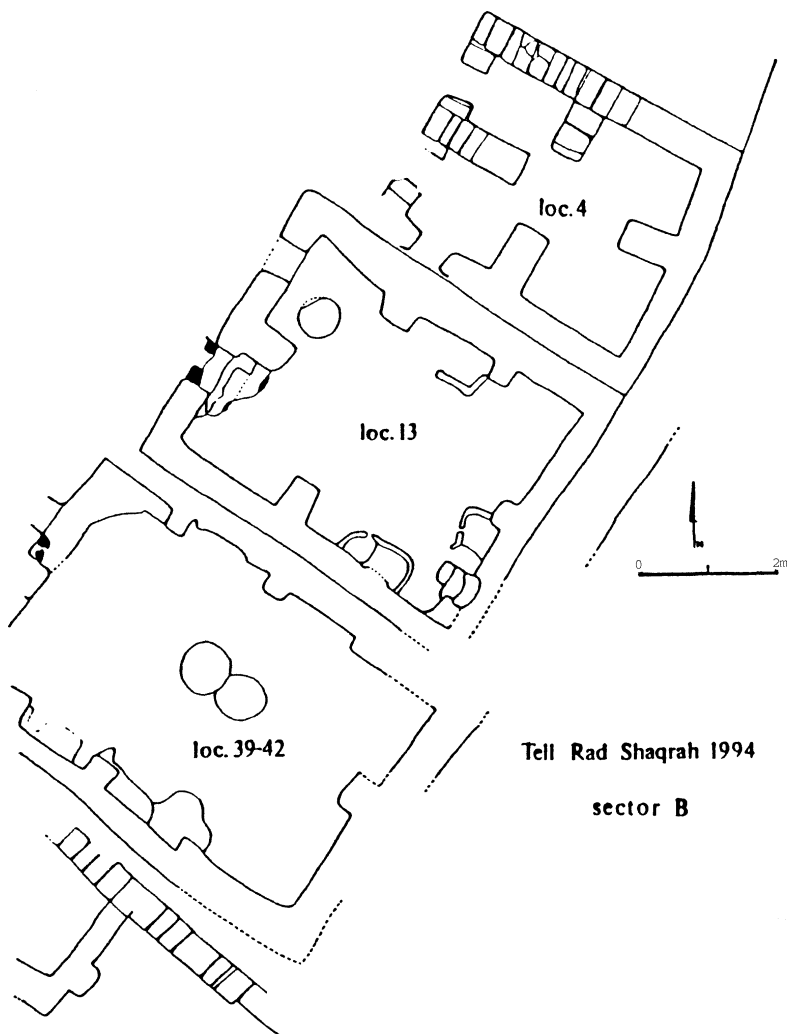
The 1994 season was our fourth on Tell Rad Shaqrah and the seventh in the Hassake Dams Area.<sup>1</sup> The season was rather short, lasting from September 3 until October 9. The main effort was concentrated on excavating a larger part of the settlement itself in order to investigate the organization of space within the settlement as well as the domestic architecture. It was also desired to establish the true nature of the Early Dynastic settlement on Tell Rad Shaqrah.

Exploration concentrated in areas where living quarters had already been exposed: "B" (in the southern part of the mound), "C" (western part of the tell) and "D" (northern slope). The old

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<sup>1</sup> The staff led by the author included: Mrs. Dorota Bielińska (Polish Academy of Sciences), Miss Dorota Ławecka, Miss Anna Smogorzewska and Mr. Rafał Koliński (all from the Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University), Mr. Andrzej Reiche (National Museum of Warsaw) and Mr. Mirosław Olbryś (Ateliers for Conservation of Cultural Property).

The effective operation of our mission was possible thanks to the encouragement and help offered by the Direction General of Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic. In first place, I would like to express my warmest gratitude to Dr. Sultan Muheissen, Director General, and to Dr. Adnan Bounni, Director of Excavations, for constant support and friendly advice. The mission is much in debt to Mr. Jean-Simon Lazar, Director of Regional Department of Antiquities in Hassake, who helped us in solving many practical problems. We acknowledge also the help of Mr. Ibrahim Mrad and Mr. Ahmad Serriye who worked with us as representatives of the Direction General. Mr. Serriye's help in the field was especially important during the last days of the excavations. Finally we should mention here with gratitude ELEKTROMONTAŻ Co. from Warsaw and its President Mr. Jerzy Lewandowski for the financial support which has been essential to the success of this campaign.



*Fig. 1. Plan of dwellings from area "B"-layer IV.  
Drawings D. Ławecka, A. Reiche and P. Bieliński.  
Inking D. Ławecka*

trenches were considerably enlarged, the total excavated surface reaching over 400 sq.m.

In area "B" in the southeastern corner of the tell, the exploration of structures partly uncovered last year was continued in trenches B1 and B3; some new structures were uncovered (Fig. 1), erected against the inner face of the "city wall", and belonging to the fourth occupational layer of the Early Dynastic period known from this area. An interesting and well preserved small structure (locus 3/B3) was cleared completely; it had two intersecting arched buttresses situated in the middle of the walls.<sup>2</sup> Adjoining this structure on the south was a much larger single-roomed house, locus 13/B1, which was relatively well preserved with mud-brick walls standing as high as 1.50 m. This new structure measuring 4.60 x 3.70 m had six internal buttresses paired regularly along the longer walls and single buttresses located in the middle of the shorter walls. Two doorways in the western wall led from the room to an open space used most probably as a sort of a courtyard. At one point one of the entrances was blocked with mud brick and plaster on the inside. It is evident that the floor level inside the house was much lower than the walking level outside, as some well preserved steps leading up to one of the entrances were found. The four steps were constructed of mud brick and finely plastered. Remains of other stairs, much narrower than the others, were discovered in the southern corner of the room. It seems that they led to the roof or to a "superstructure". Inside locus 13/B1, beside several fireplaces, two finely plastered basin installations were found to be situated along the walls, near the southern corner of the room. Both of them were composed of two roughly circular basins, of which one was always placed slightly higher than the other. The bottoms of the lower ones were on floor level. In the mass of clay used for construction of one of the basins, a life-sized model of a human foot made of gypsum was

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Bieliński, *PAM V*, 1993 (1994), p. 161.

discovered. It is evident that it is not part of a broken statue but a complete piece. In the northwestern corner of the room there was a child burial in a mud-brick box. It contained a very poorly preserved skeleton of an infant and grave goods, including shell pendants, numerous beads and one badly corroded, unidentifiable bronze object.

On the south, house 13/B1 was bordered by another slightly larger one (5 x 4 m). This southern house (labeled locus 39-42/B1) was originally also single-roomed, also had six internal buttresses and adjoined the defense wall of the settlement on the east. The entrance was similarly located in the western wall of the house. The domestic installations found inside locus 39-42/B1 included fireplaces, banquettes and *tannurs*. Traces of several internal reconstructions suggest that the house was inhabited over a relatively long period and was finally divided by a partition wall into two oblong narrow rooms (each about 1.60 m wide). Subsequently some internal divisions took place inside these rooms. Further to the south of locus 39-42/B1, in the enlarged B1 trench, some fragments of another multi-roomed structure were discovered. It seems evident that they are of the same date as both houses described above.

Investigation of the walls of the above mentioned locus 13/B1 revealed that the building was erected directly on top of the walls of an earlier one belonging to the fifth Early Dynastic stratum in area "B". This lower house, with walls preserved over 1.80 m high, was also single-roomed and had the same dimensions, i.e., 4.60 x 3.70 m, as its successor. Also the disposition of the internal buttresses was similar. In the lower building (locus 45/B1) the buttresses were larger, however, taking on the form of false arches resembling those exposed in locus 13/B1 in the upper layer. The six regularly disposed buttresses stood at floor level and were accompanied by four smaller ones, which should rather be called consoles. These consoles

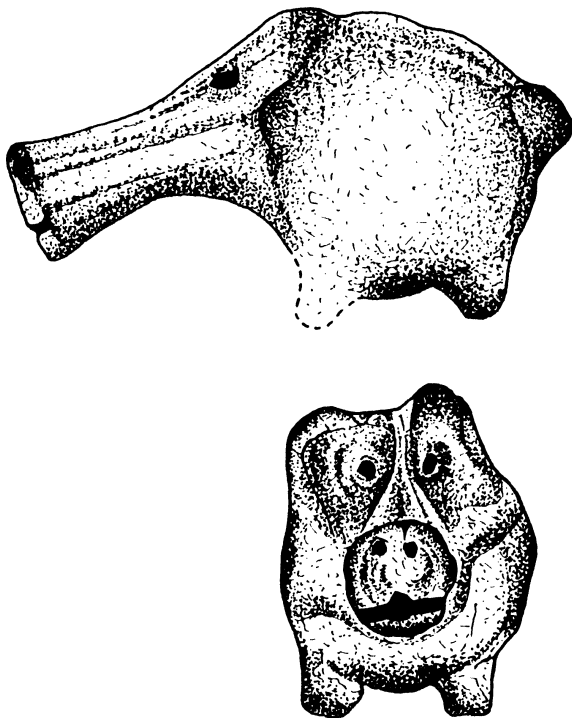
projected from the walls c. 1 m above floor level and were narrower than the buttresses. Two such consoles were situated on the northern (longer) wall and the two remaining ones were set on the shorter walls. In the middle of the northern wall, there was an entrance about 1.50 m high and in the western wall near the northwestern corner of the room there was a small, nearly square window-like opening. Not many small finds were found on the floor of locus 45/B1, as it seems that it was at least partly cleaned before it was abandoned, and then it was intentionally filled with broken mud bricks, clay, potsherds and ashes.

A much more complex image of the Early Dynastic period habitations on Tell Rad Shaqrah was obtained in area "C", now measuring 13 x 10 m. This area was first explored during our 1991 campaign. Architectural remains belonging to two consecutive occupational strata of the 3rd millennium BC were uncovered then.<sup>3</sup> Both of them were badly disturbed by erosion of the slope and partly destroyed by some scattered remains of a much later occupation in the Neo-Assyrian period. A large Assyrian pit and a kiln or a furnace were dug deeply into the Early Dynastic period layers.

In the 1994 season, fragments of three narrow streets or lanes which existed there in both the 3rd millennium layers were uncovered in trench "C". Two of them were found to run along an approximately NNE-SSW axis and were roughly parallel, at a distance of about 9 m from one another. The third street ran on a roughly E-W axis and in the northwestern part of the trench it formed a sort of corner with one of the parallel ones. The space limited by the lanes was 9 m wide and at least 11 m long. The width of the streets varied from 0.80 to 1.20 m. They were paved with large stones laid on a layer of potsherds.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Bieliński, *PAM* III, 1991 (1992), pp. 83-85.



*Fig. 2. Terracotta figurine found in area "C". Drawing D. Bielińska.*

It seems that all the streets followed the mound's slope and descended westwards. In the middle of one of the streets, between the stones, there was a small channel about 0.15 m wide and 0.10 m deep. It was bordered by a layer of clay mixed with small fragments of limestone. This channel served to dispose waste water. Usually there were some plastered steps leading up to the streets, the level of which evidently rose much faster than the floor levels inside the buildings. One such entrance was found in locus 4/C.

Of the topmost Early Dynastic period layers explored during the present campaign in area "C" not much has been preserved, whereas in the second layer fragments of at least four separate houses were uncovered. One of them was situated near the western limit of the trench and was seriously damaged by erosion. It was composed of at least two rooms. In one of them several large tannurs were found. Near the southern wall of this structure, a small terracotta figurine representing a boar was discovered (Fig. 2). Three other houses exposed in this layer were located within the space limited by the streets. There were also two small rooms measuring c. 1.60 x 1.40 m with entrances opening onto one of the streets. It seems that they may have been used as a kind of shop. The best preserved of the houses unearthed there consisted of three rooms (loci 33/C, 35/C and 8/C) and measured c. 4 x 5 m. The largest of the rooms contained a fireplace with a chimney, while one of the smaller rooms contained a number of *tannurs*. Another of the buildings found there comprised two rooms, of which the larger (locus 40a/C) was later divided into two by a partition wall. This room was approached from the neighboring street by a narrow gangway with plastered stone stairs. This gangway (locus 39/C) was inserted between other structures. In the other room of this house, a child burial below floor level was discovered; the small chamber was made of stones and was covered with a large slab of limestone, similar to a burial found in this house in 1991. The chamber measured about 1.40 x 0.70 m and contained bones belonging to at least two skeletons. The grave goods consisted of three jars, over 20 beads and seven amulets, including two representations of birds made of shell, four quadrupeds and an amulet with a solar emblem.

The third Early Dynastic stratum was reached in area "C" during this season. It was in the northeastern corner of the trench that a fragment of a larger structure belonging to this lower layer was uncovered below the remains of a later house. This new



building, which was partly destroyed by an Assyrian pit, was 3.60 m wide and at least 5 m long. Along the well plastered longer walls of this single-roomed structure (locus 40/C), there was at least one pair of buttresses, while another buttress was set in the middle of the exposed shorter wall. The finely plastered internal installations found inside this room comprised a basin composed of two circular parts, one higher than the other, as well as an installation of unclear purpose, most probably also a sort of a basin, with well modeled external walls. This installation resembled the one found some years ago in locus 1/A on the eastern slope of the tell, where it was wrongly interpreted as a fragment of decorated wall plaster. On the other hand, the pair of circular basins is of the same type as those discovered this year in houses in area "B". There is in fact a strong resemblance between the just described locus 40/C house and the dwellings unearthed this year in the fourth layer of area "B" as well as locus 1/A excavated during the first two seasons. All these structures are mostly single-roomed, they have similar dimensions and similar sets of internal installations. The form and disposition of buttresses are also similar.

Another fragment of a 3rd millennium BC living quarter with stone-paved streets was excavated during the present season in area "D". This area, occupying the northern slope of the tell, is situated at a slightly higher level than the other investigated sectors of the site. Three former test pits (D1, D2 and D3) set along the edge of the mound were now linked together forming one long trench about 25 m long. The remains discovered in the new "D" trench were found to belong to five occupational strata from the Early Dynastic period, of which the two lowest were certainly contemporaneous with the defense wall. There were two streets in this area, both running on an approximately north-south axis, i.e., perpendicularly to the "city-wall". They were roughly parallel and they ran at a distance of about 15 m from one another.

Houses of a type similar to the structures unearthed in the lower strata of areas "B" and "C" were also found here. The latter had internal buttresses, many installations of a domestic nature and finely plastered walls. Fragments of such a single-roomed house (locus 65/D), which was at least 4.50 m long and at least 3.30 m wide, were discovered in the fifth stratum in the eastern part of area "D". The only complete structure to be exposed this year in this trench was found in its southwestern part, in the third layer. A large-single roomed house, labeled as locus 37/D, it measured 4.70 x 3.60 m, and was roughly rectangular. It had six internal buttresses (pairs were set on the longer walls and single buttresses on the shorter ones) and a doorway with a stone threshold led to the adjacent street. Clay banquettes ran along some of the walls of this house. At a certain point the walls of the house collapsed, burying all the installations. The debris yielded a bronze knife, a flint arrowhead, six vessels and several stone grinders, pestles and querns.

In area "D" some further 12 m of the "city-wall" were cleared, although only on the inside, the exterior face having been almost completely destroyed by modern channels bringing water from the Khabour river. It is clear, nevertheless, that the defenses protected the northern part of the 3rd millennium BC settlement.

The results of the fourth season of excavations have helped to resolve many stratigraphical problems and have cleared up the issue of the rural or urban character of the Early Dynastic settlement on Rad Shaqrah. It would seem that at this time Rad Shaqrah was a small town rather than a village despite most of the population being engaged in agriculture.