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## Tell Rad Shaqrah (North Syria), Sector F

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## TELL RAD SHAQRAH (NORTH SYRIA), SECTOR F

Tell Rad Shaqrah is situated in the valley of the Khabour River about 15 km southeast of Al-Hasake in southeastern Syria. It is a small mound measuring 140 x 120 x 8 m (see fig. 1). Explorations of the tell in 1991-1995 were carried out by a team from the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University. The expedition headed by Prof. Piotr Bieliński was part of an international rescue excavation program necessitated by a dam construction project on the river.

Investigations revealed the main period of settlement at the site to be Early Dynastic III, that is, the beginning of the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. Remains of Akkadian-period settlement were also discovered, followed by a long period of abandonment until Neo-Assyrian times<sup>1</sup>. In the Early Dynastic III period there was on Tell Rad Shaqrah a small settlement, perhaps even a small town, encircled by a massive brick-and-stone wall with an abutting external earth-and-stone escarpment. The architectural remains in the excavated sectors were all habitations. It is, therefore, unclear, especially in the view of the site's small extent, what the fortifications, which reached 10 m at the base in places, were raised to protect<sup>2</sup>. They were built probably in the first stage of the Early Dynastic III period and went out of use by the end of the period, when houses were erected on the remains of the wall. Once the wall was found to have encircled the tell as evidenced in sectors A, B and D, the expedition opened a new sector, F, in search of the settlement gate. The area chosen was an obvious depression in the topography on the riverside of the tell. It was explored in 1994 and in the fall of 1995, which was the last season at Tell Rad Shaqrah. As it turned out, unfortunately, the area had been partly destroyed by a modern irrigation canal and a pit dug in the north-western part of the sector.

Architectural remains are concentrated on three levels which are clearly separated by layer of debris. The most recent level I (fig. 2) revealed a fine alley (loc. 6) about 1 m wide with houses (loc. 9, 7 and 5) abutting it on either side. The remains were preserved only in foundations. A *tannur* (bread oven) discovered in the south-western corner is later and was presumably introduced into a ruined room. The better preserved loc. 1 in the north-eastern corner of the explored area was pre-

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<sup>1</sup>Preliminary reports on excavations at Tell Rad Shaqrah prepared by Prof. Piotr Bieliński have appeared in consecutive volumes (1991-1996) of *PAM*, published by the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology, Warsaw University.

<sup>2</sup>Contemporary settlement on the tell precluded investigations in its central part where the answer to this mystery is probably to be found.

sumably built prior to the loc. 7. Traces of plastered floor were discovered inside the room; a clay jug was found inserted into it and at least one plastered buttress was recorded. To judge by the outline of the foundations, loc. 7 also had buttresses on the inside. The inside courses of stones delimiting the street should be considered as low walls protecting the building's brick walls from humidity. The occupational level, which beside pottery yielded the metal chisel shown in **fig. 4:2**, was very close to the mound's surface and was largely eroded. However, a cross-section through the middle of the street along its length (E-W axis) showed that it was practically horizontal with a slight incline to the west.

An earlier street from level II was found about 2.5 m below the first one. It was of a similar orientation (both led towards the river some 100 m away). The fill under the later street appears to be of homogeneous nature: a single levelling layer consisting of obliquely arranged bricks, clay and stones. Also the space above loc. 10 (level II) and under loc. 7 (level I) was filled in a similar way (with clay almost devoid of any potsherds). Level I should be connected with a time when the fortifications were already out of use; evidence for this is provided primarily by the stone foundations of the buildings here, stone being used in other parts of the tell only in constructions from the later phases of the Early Dynastic III period.

The level II alley (**fig. 3**, loc. 13) is of fine construction and delimited on either side by low walls of stone (at the southern end a small 20 cm-wide plastered platform was discovered), but unlike the level I street it sloped strongly to the west, in the direction outside the settlement. The slope is understandable if, as believed, the alley operated while the fortifications were still in use; its function then would have been to drain off rainwater from the area enclosed by walls.

Traces in the south-western part of the area, which is unfortunately largely destroyed by the trench dug for the irrigation canal, can be identified as a brick defensive wall. Remains of a brick wall were uncovered in the southern part of the trench, above test pit 1 (S1), above the foundations of loc. 14 and to the south of this room; they can be traced for a stretch of at least 4 m in the south wall of the trench. Since the excavated section measures about 2 m along N-S axis and doubtless extended further to the south, the wall could not have belonged to a habitation, but was rather part of a defensive structure. The hearth shown on the plan was discovered under the last course of bricks and no floor level was found to be connected with it; thus, the hearth may have been used during the construction of the wall. It is impossible to be sure as to whether the strong stone foundation of loc. 14 were, as seems probable, a reinforcement for this defence wall or whether they belonged to an earlier structure. The interior of loc. 14 was filled with obliquely arranged bricks. Traces of the last layer of bricks with a similar orientation to those discovered above S1 and loc. 14 were also found on the other side of the street, immediately on top of a wall belonging to a building of level III (bricks marked on the plan to the south-west of G2).

Loc. 10 abuts the level II alley. It is a dwelling room with buttresses and traces of a hearth. The walls and floor were plastered. The southern wall of the house was destroyed by the wall delimiting the street. The room which had presumably existed

here before was partly destroyed by the construction of the fortifications and alley connected with it which had to be cut into earlier structures in order to achieve the required inclination.

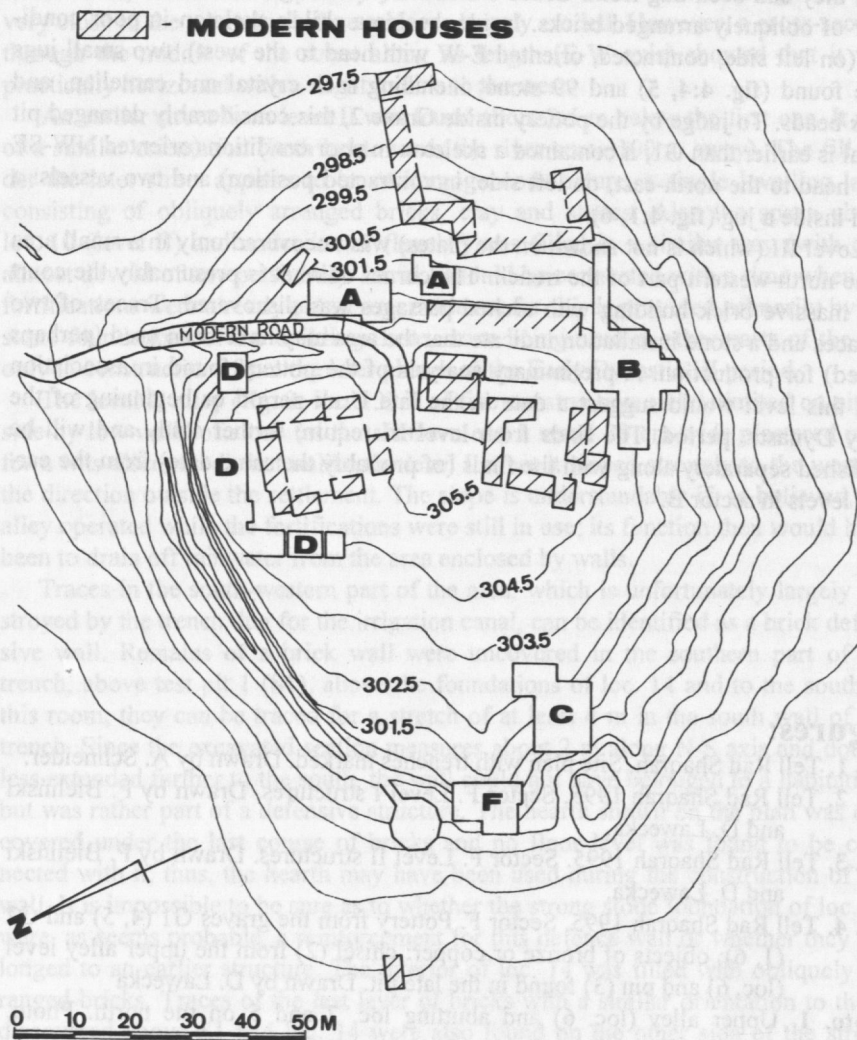
Inside sector F two children's burials were discovered (G1 and G2 on **fig. 3**). Stratigraphically, the position of the two graves is unclear; it is uncertain which level they had been dug from. Grave 1 had a brick casing and was covered with a layer of obliquely arranged bricks. Inside, beside a child's skeleton in poor condition (on left side, contracted, oriented E-W with head to the west), two small jugs were found (**fig. 4:4, 5**) and 99 stone, including rock crystal and carnelian, and *djuss* beads. To judge by the pottery inside Grave 2, this considerably damaged pit burial is earlier than G1; it contained a skeleton in poor condition (oriented NW-SE with head to the north-east, on left side, in contracted position) and two vessels: a bowl inside a jug (**fig. 4:1, 6**).

Level III (which is not shown on the plates) was uncovered only in a small area in the north-western part of the trench. The corner of what is presumably the court of a massive brick building with arched passages was discovered. Traces of two furnaces and a stone installation indicate that the area may have been used (perhaps reused) for production. A preliminary analysis of the pottery found in association with this level would suggest a date in the late Uruk period or beginning of the Early Dynastic period. The finds from level III require further study and will be published separately along with the finds (of probably the same date) from the earliest levels in sector B.

## Figures:

- Fig. 1.** Tell Rad Shaqrah. Site plan with trenches marked. Drawn by A. Schneider.
- Fig. 2.** Tell Rad Shaqrah 1995. Sector F. Level I structures. Drawn by P. Bieliński and D. Ławecka.
- Fig. 3.** Tell Rad Shaqrah 1995. Sector F. Level II structures. Drawn by P. Bieliński and D. Ławecka.
- Fig. 4.** Tell Rad Shaqrah 1995. Sector F. Pottery from the graves G1 (4, 5) and G2 (1, 6); objects of bronze or copper: chisel (2) from the upper alley level (loc. 6) and pin (3) found in the late pit. Drawn by D. Ławecka
- Photo. 1.** Upper alley (loc. 6) and abutting loc. 7 and 5 on the north. Photo. A. Reiche.
- Photo. 2.** Cross-section through upper alley (loc. 6) and the fill underneath it to the level of the lower alley (loc. 13). Photo. A. Reiche.
- Photo. 3.** View of lower alley (loc. 13), loc.7 and the structures of level III. Photo. A. Reiche.
- Photo. 4.** Grave G2. Photo. A. Reiche.

# TELL RAD SHAQRAH 1991-95



**Fig. 1**





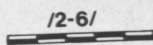
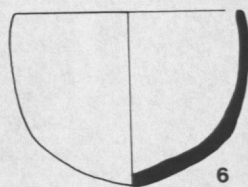
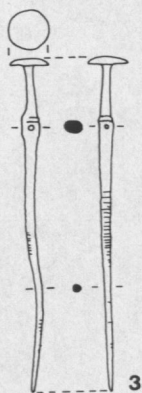
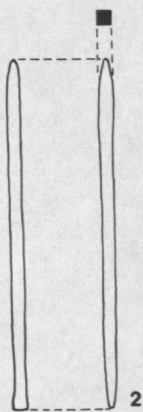
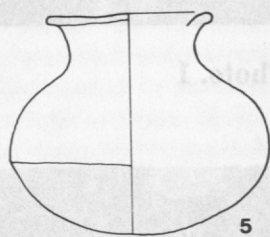
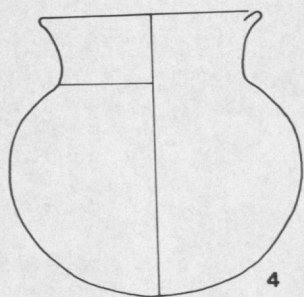
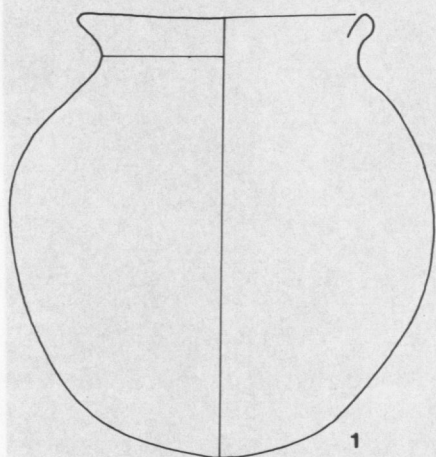


Fig. 4





Photo. 1



Photo. 2



Photo. 3

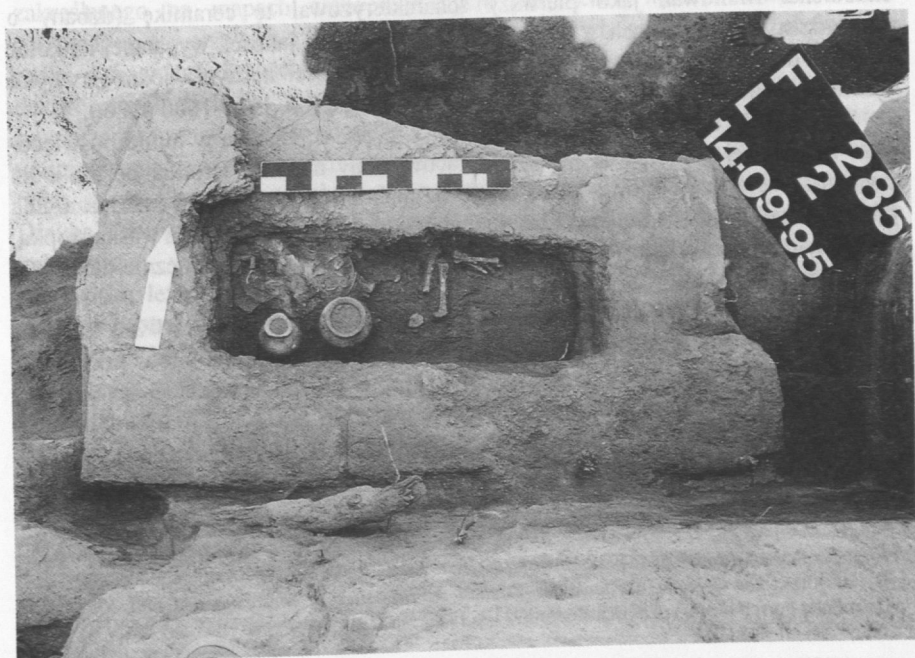


Photo. 4