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Tell Qaramel: Excavations 2009

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TELL QARAMEL EXCAVATIONS 2009

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Abstract: The deepest levels of Protoneolithic occupation were explored in Squares J-7b,d and K-7 during the 11th season of excavations on the site of Tell Qaramel. The oldest structure (Loc. 71), possibly of Epipaleolithic date, discovered so far proved to be a kind of oval hut with a round central hearth and a foundation deposit concealed nearby. Further exploration of squares L-5 and L-4/M-4 concentrated on layers from the Late and Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic A. Finds represented different material categories, including a clay sun-dried human figure.

Keywords: Tell Qaramel, Protoneolithic, tower/shrine, building techniques

The eleventh season of excavations at Tell Qaramel, which was conducted in 2009, continued the exploration of the deepest levels of Protoneolithic occupation in

squares J-7b,d and K-7 [Fig. 1], where the oldest (fifth in the sequence) tower/shrine was explored in the previous two seasons. The internal part of the above mentioned

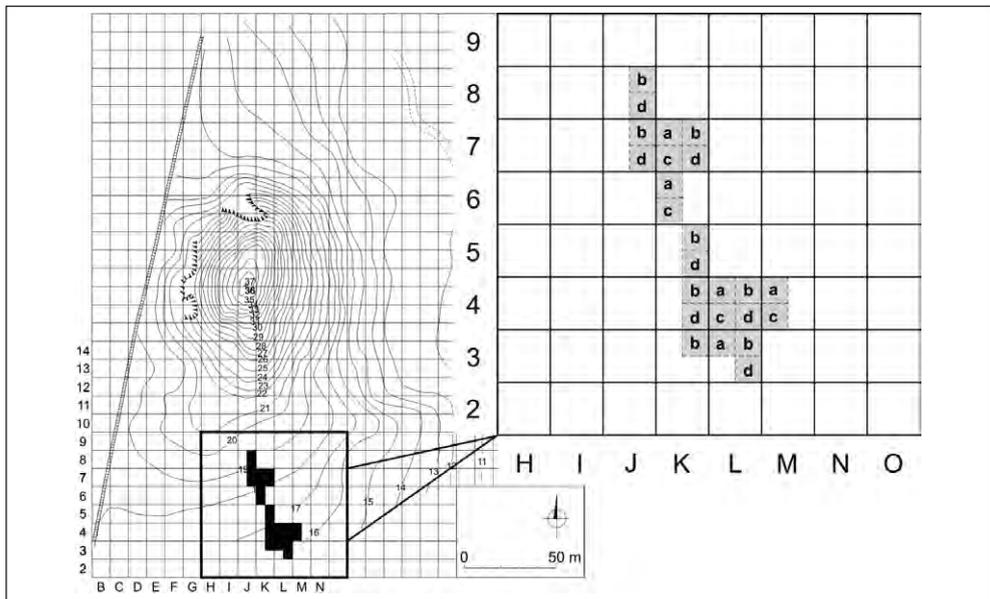


Fig. 1. Tell Qaramel. Squares excavated in 2009

tower and its walls were examined to ascertain the building technique. Remains of the presumed oldest occupation of the site, the still poorly recognized Middle Epipaleolithic culture, are expected in this area.

Further exploration of squares L-5 and L-4/M-4 concentrated on layers from the Late and Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic A, severely disturbed by later occupation from the Early and Middle Bronze Age as well as Iron Age.

SQUARES J-7B,D/K-7A,C

Trench supervisor: Marcin Białowarczuk

Culturally sterile soil was reached in the explored part of the two trenches (K-7b,d was not excavated), uncovering two features belonging to two successive occupational levels.

STRATUM V, LEVEL 15

Completed exploration of the western part of Loc. 65 (tower/shrine) indicated that the locus was partly sunk into culturally sterile

red mud. Two features on the top of this mud confluence encompassed a posthole, approximately 0.30 m in diameter and about 0.60 m deep, and a round hearth, approximately 0.60 m in diameter and about 0.10 m deep, containing a thin layer of charcoal covered by small pebbles. The structures were located in the northern end of square J-7b,d and were connected with the older stage of level 15 (Facies B).

Team

Dates of work: 29 March–12 May 2009

Directors: Associate professor Ryszard F. Mazurowski (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Dr. Youssef Kanyou, anthropologist (DGAM Damascus, National Museum Aleppo)

Archaeologists: Qaies Abbout George (DGAM Damascus, National Museum Aleppo), Marcin Białowarczuk (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Joanna Gawrońska (freelance), Artur Grabarek (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw)

Student trainees: Ewa Cygan, Aneta Czubińska, Bartłomiej Paprocki, Julita Rękawek (all from the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Hamza Salim Ibrahim Mohammad (Aleppo University)

Photographer: Piotr Piwowski (freelance)

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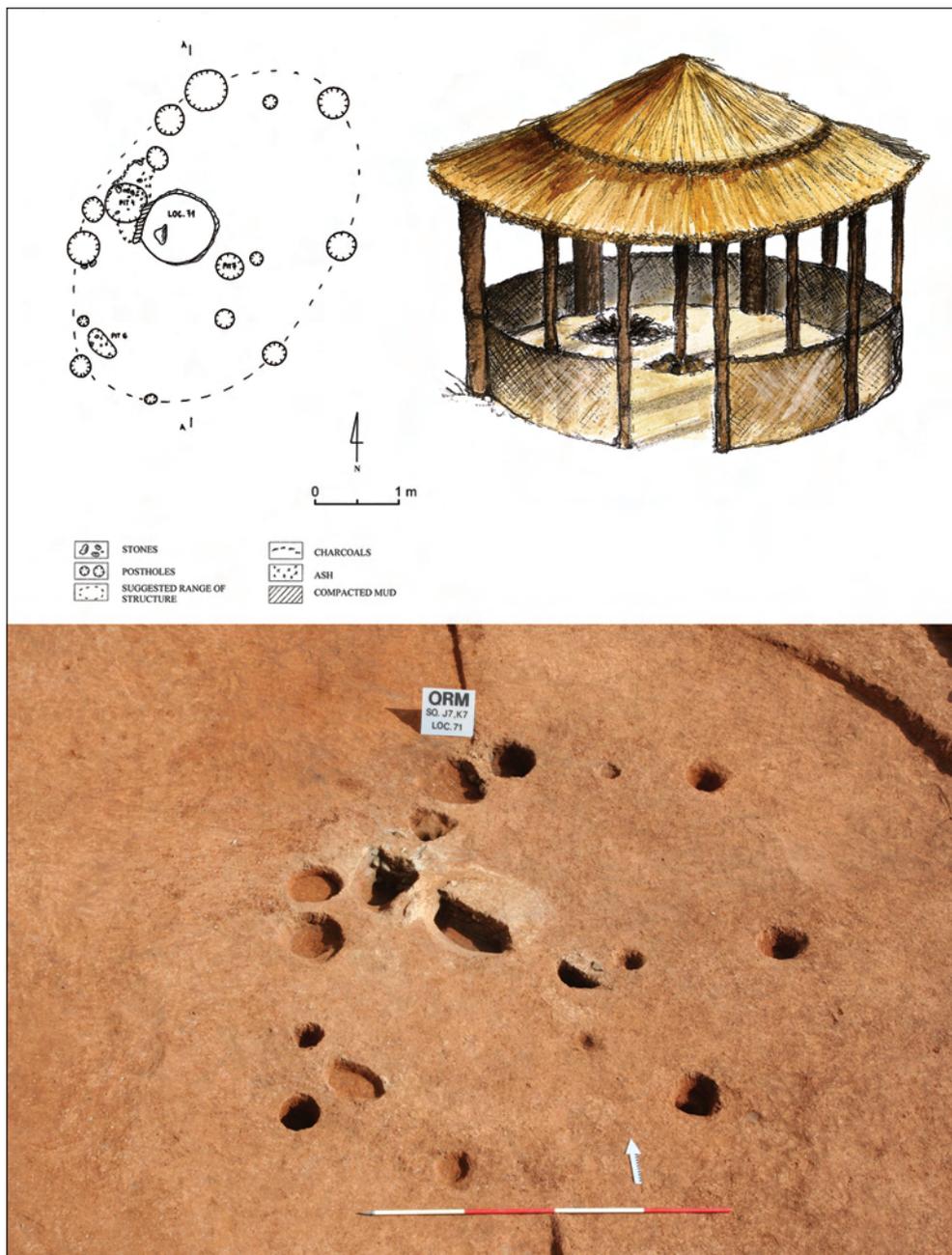


Fig. 2. Square J-7/K-7. Plan of the oldest structure Loc. 71 (top) and view after exploration; top right, provisional reconstruction drawing (Drawing M. Białowarczuk, photo R.F. Mazurowski)

Sieving of the fill produced no artifacts suggestive of a connection with the oldest Qaramelian occupation, that is, Natufian culture. No microliths were found among the flint materials from the described levels.

STRATUM VI, LEVEL 16

Level 16 is connected with the oldest, most probably Middle Epipaleolithic occupation. It contained only one structure (Loc. 71), a kind of oval hut approximately 4.60 m by 3.00 m, covered by the 0.70 m thick confluence of red mud described above [Fig. 2]. It consists of a round central hearth, about 0.90 m in diameter, additionally enclosed by a low mud wall. Ten postholes, about 0.3–0.5 m in diameter and about 0.25–0.3 m deep, were spread symmetrically around this hearth. A set of

six short tubular (XVIA2a) beads made of chlorite was discovered in one of the postholes, possibly a kind of foundation deposit [Fig. 3]. The absence of lumps of clay and other building materials suggests that the walls and roof of the described structure were made of wooden posts and animal skins or other organic materials. A posthole in the center of hut, just beside the hearth, can be identified as the place of a central roof support. Six small postholes inside the structure, about 0.15–0.20 m in diameter and not deeper than 0.05–0.10 m, could have formed some kind of internal division, like the ones known from modern Bedouin tents.

Locus 71 was situated directly under the center of the oldest tower (Loc. 65). Its remains were covered by confluence



Fig. 3. Square J-7/K-7. Pit 5/09 in the upper part of Loc. 71; inset, necklace made of chlorite short cylindrical beads found in one of the postholes (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

mud during the occupational hiatus between the Middle Epipaleolithic and early Protoneolithic. The later location of a “special” building as well as other tower/shrines in the vicinity may reflect deep memory of a special house or proto-shrine located on culturally sterile ground at the beginning of village occupation. The observed hiatus between Middle Epipaleolithic and early Protoneolithic occupation could also be connected with

a shift of the settlement to the west. The flint material has so far not been sufficient for the cultural identification of this oldest level of the Qaramelian settlement. Four radiocarbon dates provide a cautious date in the period of 15,000–12,000 BP conv.

Testing under Loc. 71 in square J-7b,d confirmed the total absence of any earlier structures or artifacts. Exploration of square K-7b,d will be continued in the upcoming season.

SQUARE L-5

Trench supervisor: Artur Grabarek (temporarily Marcin Białowarczuk)

Two levels of occupation, 2 and 3, belonging to the PPNA stratum III were excavated. The remains were best preserved in the eastern and southern part of the trench. The other parts of the square (about 70%) were destroyed by pits and stony debris connected with the Early Bronze Age 4. Among them were the remains of a stone structure (Loc. 25) situated in the western part of the square, about 3.50 m from the southern trench wall [*Fig. 4*]. The feature proved to be a grave containing the remains of four female and six male skeletons, all of adult age. All of the skulls were placed in the northern part of the grave, some inside a storage jar and some outside. The earthenware grave goods included bowls, vessels and mugs. There were also three bronze pins. The burials were laid on loose brown soil mixed with pebbles and fragments of pottery. The grave appears to have been fitted into an earlier storage pit. The grave was covered with stones and red mud forming a kind of dome; collapsing, this vault partly destroyed the skeletons and the pottery.

STRATUM III, LEVEL 2

Loci 18 and 24 from level 2 represented early PPNA occupation [*Fig. 5a,b*]. Locus 18 was located in the northeastern corner of the square; a small part of it disappeared into the eastern trench wall. The western part was explored. It was a round structure, about 4 m in diameter with a wall approximately 0.30–0.40 m thick, made of pebbles plastered with beige mud. The floor was made of a layer of mud with lime on a bedding of pebbles. A hearth with walls of red mud was found, the fill inside it containing gray ash and charcoal mixed with animal bones of different species, very similar to the fill of the structure itself. Two querns were recovered from the dismantling of the west wall.

The partly sunken Locus 24 was located in the southeastern corner of square L-5. Its southern part was destroyed by a pit from the Early Bronze Age. The locus was approximately 2.50–2.60 m in diameter, preserved to a height of 0.40 m, and had a hearth situated more or less in the middle. The fill contained pebbles, loose animal bones belonging to different species, soil

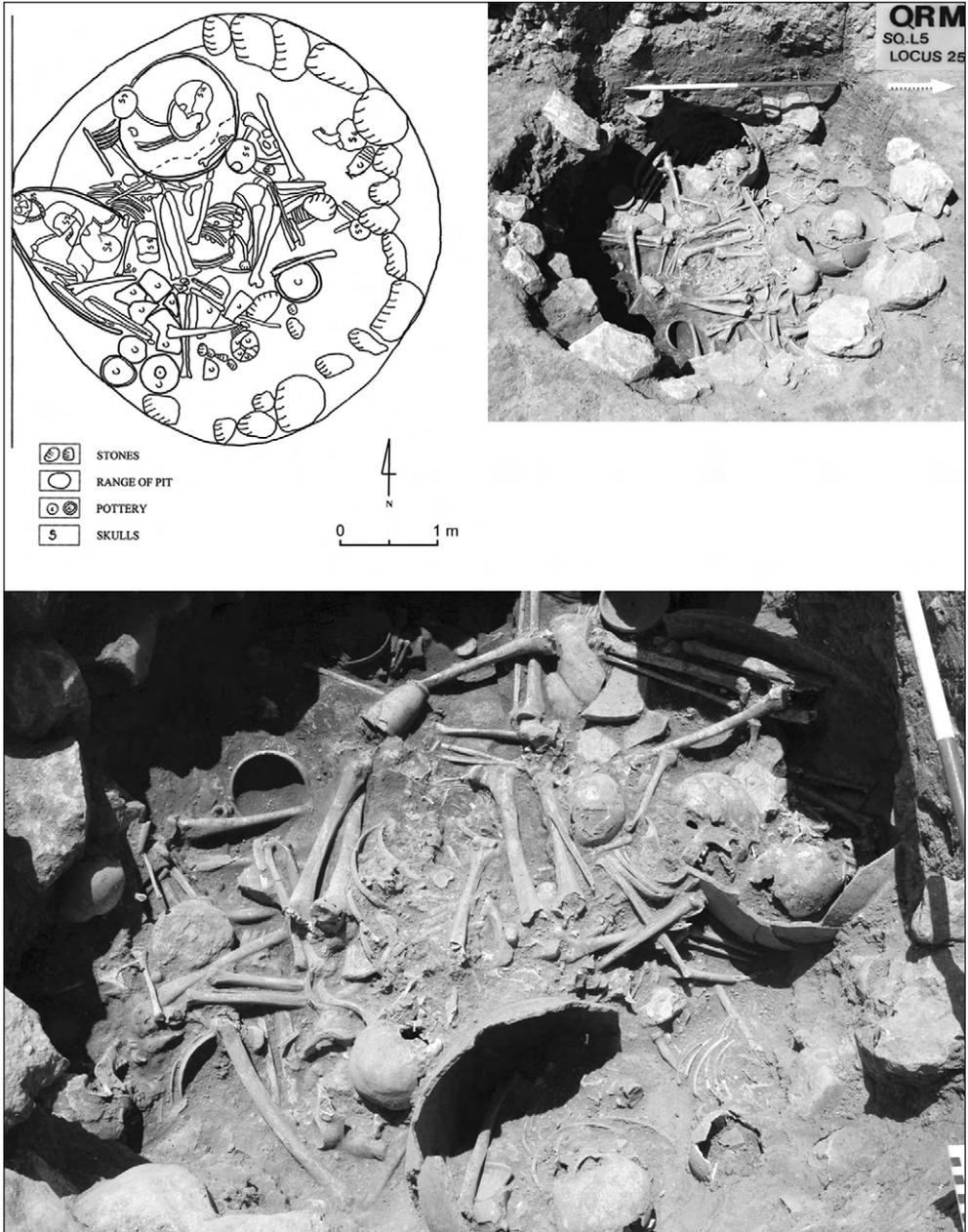


Fig. 4. Square L-5, stratum III, level 1. Plan of the Early Bronze Age collective grave (Loc. 25) and view from the east; bottom, close-up of the human skeletons and pots found in the grave chamber (Drawing B. Paprocki, J. Rękawek; photos R.F. Mazurowski)

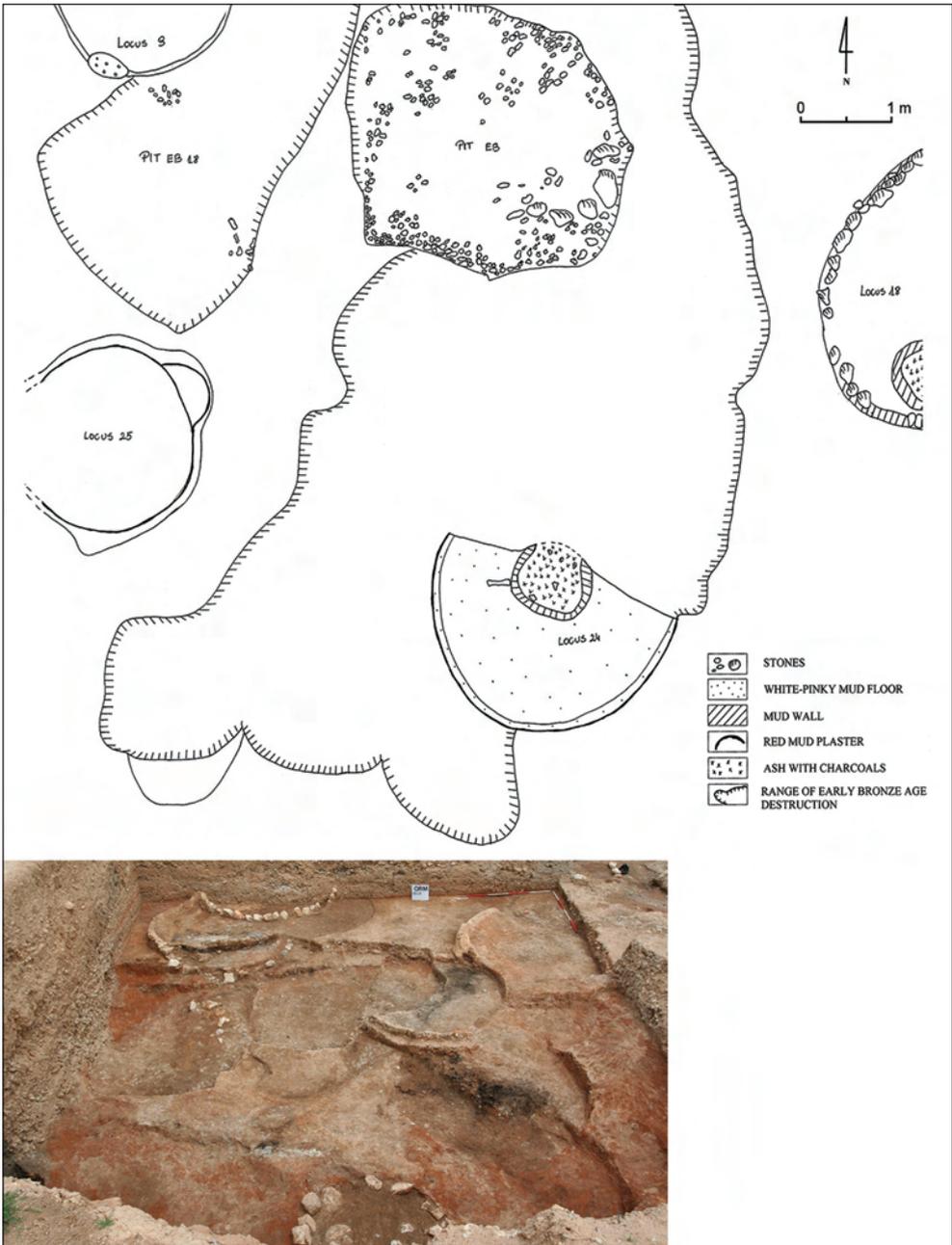


Fig. 5. Square L-5. Stratum III, level 2, plan and structures from levels 2 and 3, view from the west (Plan A. Grabarek, M. Białowarczuk, B. Paprocki, E. Cygan, J. Rękawek; photo R.F. Mazurowski)

mixed with gray ash and charcoal. The wall and floor of the house were plastered with a layer of mud about 2 cm and 0.5 cm thick respectively, and painted with a kind of lime wash. The feature had damaged the north wall of Loc. 22 from level 3 and its courtyard (see below).

STRATUM III, LEVEL 3

Two houses from an early stage of the PPNA, Loci 22 and 23, were recorded [Fig. 6]. Locus 22 was located in the southeastern part of the square, directly under Loc. 21. It was damaged severely, preserving only a small part of the wall

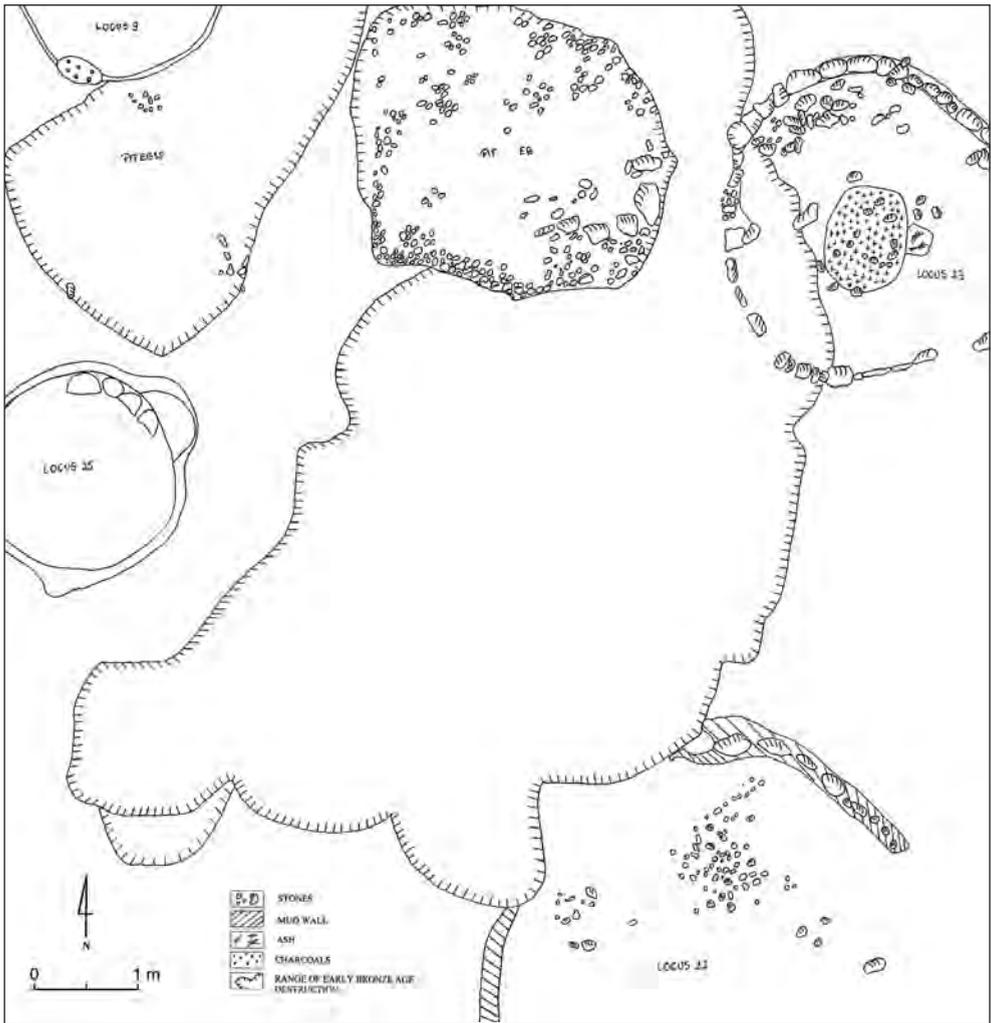


Fig. 6. Square L-5. Stratum III, level 3

(Drawing A. Grabarek, M. Białowarczuk, B. Paprocki, E. Cygan, J. Rękaewek)



Fig. 7. Square L-5. Loc. 23 in the younger phase (top) and in the older phase (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

and an internal bench. The wall, about 0.30 m thick, was made of beige mud with lime. The internal bench was formed of red mud with pebbles. After removing the fill of the house, which contained animal bones and flint artifacts, a small part of a floor of mud lime plaster on a bedding of small pebbles was unearthed. An older floor under the first one indicated two phases of occupation of the house.

The other house, Loc. 23 in the northeastern part of the square, was semi-subterranean, approximately 2.80 m in diameter; its wall was 0.30 m

thick [Figs 7, 8]. The wall on the eastern side of the feature disappeared into the trench wall, while on the western side it was destroyed by a pit from the Early Bronze Age 4 period. The northern side stood about 1 m high at the highest point. Two floors were recorded. The upper one, made of mud lime plaster, held a rectangular fireplace. The fill between the floors contained animal bones mixed with gray ash and charcoal, as well as a fragment of a human vertex. The lower floor, which was about 5 cm thick, had been whitewashed with lime.

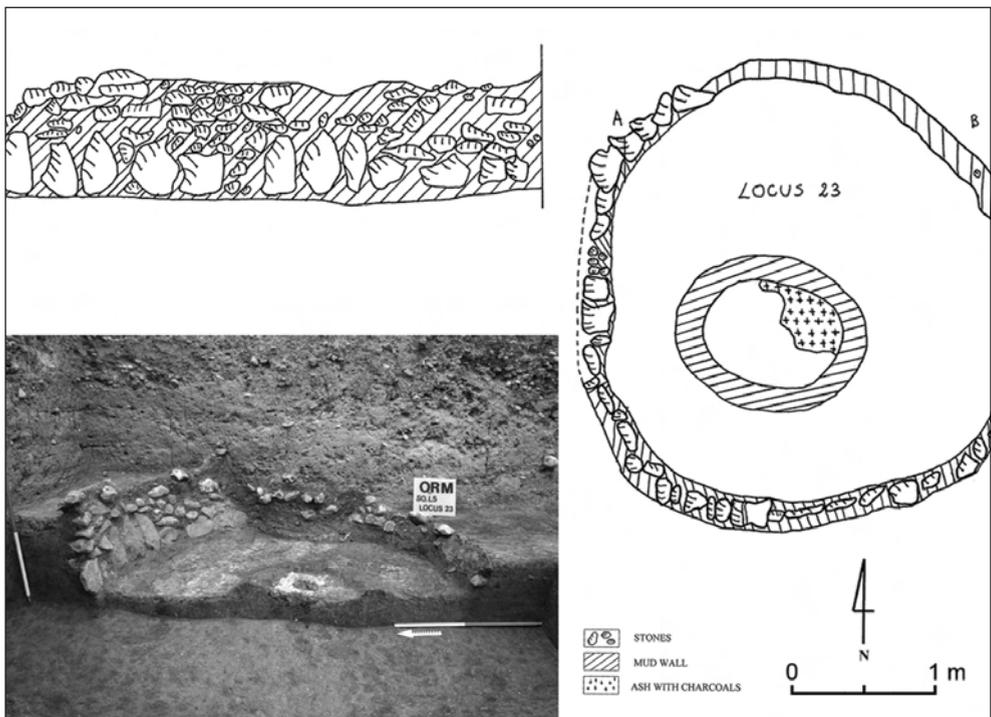


Fig. 8. Square L-5. Plan and section of Loc. 23 in the older phase, and section view looking east (Drawing E. Cygan, J. Rękałek; photo R.F. Mazurowski)

SQUARE L-4B,D/M-4A,C

Trench supervisor: Joanna Gawrońska (assisted by Qaies About George)

Square L-4/M-4 is situated in the lowest part of the southern slope of the tell. Four occupational strata (I–IV) were explored previously, the last one (IV, levels 1–2) apparently belonging to the Middle PPNA. Levels 3–5 of stratum IV, excavated this year, represent the middle and early phases of the PPNA.

STRATUM IV, LEVEL 3

Fragments of two houses (Loci 9a, 9b) together with three pits (14/08, 1/09, 2/09) and a hearth were unearthed in level 3 [Fig. 9]. Locus 9a was oval (round?) in plan, but its size could not be established precisely because the northern and western parts had been destroyed by structures from



Fig. 9. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Stratum IV, level 3
(Drawing J. Gawrońska)

younger strata and the eastern part entered the eastern trench wall. The wall was constructed in *pisé* technique, about 0.30–0.40 m thick, standing to 0.20 m. The floor was made of lime and mud plaster about 0.15 m thick, laid on a pebble bedding.

Another oval (round?) house (Loc. 9b), similar to the first one, was discovered to the east of Loc. 9a. The western and northern parts of the structure were destroyed by features from younger strata, precluding any determination of its size (possibly 5 m[?] in diameter). The wall was constructed in *pisé* technique, about 0.50 m thick, standing to 0.20 m. The fill contained stones, animal bones and flint artifacts. The floor was made of lime and mud plaster about 0.15 m thick on a pebble bedding.

A round hearth approximately 0.70 m thick and 0.20 m deep was located to the south of Loc. 9b. The fill contained light gray ash together with burned stones, animal bones and flints. Three round pits (0.90 m in diameter, about 20 cm deep) were found in the southern part of the square, their southern parts concealed in the southern trench wall. All of them had a mud base about 2 cm thick and were enclosed by a low mud wall about 0.10–0.15 m high. The fill of these pits contained red mud and small pebbles, together with animal bones and flint artifacts. These features were dated to the Middle PPNA.

STRATUM IV, LEVEL 4, FACIES A

A grave, a stand and two hearths were discovered in the next level [Fig. 11], under structures of level 3 in the eastern part of the trench. The level was dated to the early stage of the middle PPNA.

The grave in northeastern part of the trench contained a human burial [Fig. 10]. The body lay in a shallow pit, approximately

1.30 m by 0.80 m in plan, 0.50 m deep. It was in embryonic position, on the left side, oriented northeast to southwest, the head being to the west. The left hand was under the head and the right hand on the hip. A casing of stones surrounded the grave pit, which was filled with dark soil mixed with small amounts of flint artifacts including arrow points, and a decorated ball made of sun-dried mud. The upper part of a human skull was unearthed to the southwest to the grave; it was probably part of a destroyed grave. A quern and two grinders were found to the east of it.

Two hearths (2/09 and 4/09) and a stand were discovered in the northeastern part of the square, below features from the upper layers. Both were nearly round in shape, about 0.80–0.90 m in diameter and 0.80–0.20 m deep. The fill was composed of burned black soil, charcoal, small amounts of animal bones and flint artifacts. A stand 0.60 m in diameter, made of pebbles, was found to the east of the hearths.

STRATUM IV, LEVEL 4, FACIES B

A house, a pit and four hearths were discovered below features from the upper layers in the northeastern part of the trench [Fig. 12]. The house (Loc. 11) was a semi-subterranean house, probably oval (round?) in shape, measuring 5 m (6–7 m) in diameter (the northern and eastern sides run into the trench walls). The western part was destroyed by a pit from the Early Bronze Age, while the southern part was destroyed by grave 10 from a younger level. The wall, 0.30 m thick, was constructed of big- and medium-sized stones plastered with mud. It was preserved to a height of 0.30 m. A basalt quern was incorporated into the southeastern part of the house wall. In the southeastern part of the locus,

a bench made of lime mixed with mud lined the wall. The floor was made of mud-plastered small pebbles. A lime-mass pillar in the middle of the feature probably supported the roof.

A pit (No. 7/09) and four hearths (Nos 5–8/09) were recorded inside the house.

Fig. 10. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. A middle PPNA human grave (No. 10) from stratum IV, level 4, facies A (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

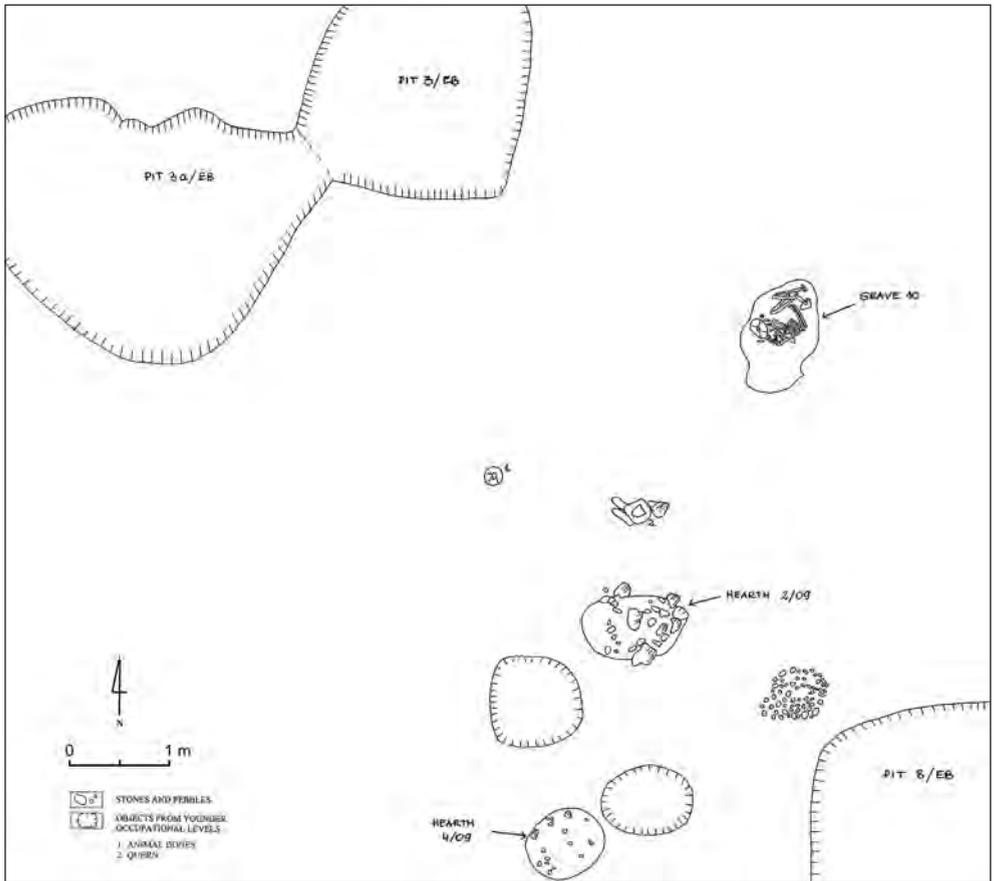


Fig. 11. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Stratum IV, level 4, facies A (Drawing J. Gawrońska)

The oval pit 7/09, 0.70 m in diameter and 0.10 m deep, was situated in the center northern part of the house. The floor and wall of the pit were covered with a 10 cm-thick coat of mud. The fill of the structure consisted of brown soil mixed with animal bones and flint artifacts. An oval hearth 5/09 (0.70 m by 0.50 m) was located in the center of Loc. 11, to the east of the pillar; it consisted of burned soil, charcoal,

pebbles and animal bones. A one-meter round hearth 6/09 was situated east of pit 7/09. Its wall and floor were covered by a layer of mud about 0.10 m thick. The fill of the structure contained burned soil and pebbles together with animal bones and flint artifacts. Hearth 7/09 was located south of the pillar; it was 0.60 m in diameter, 5 cm deep, and was filled with burned soil, charcoal, flint artifacts and

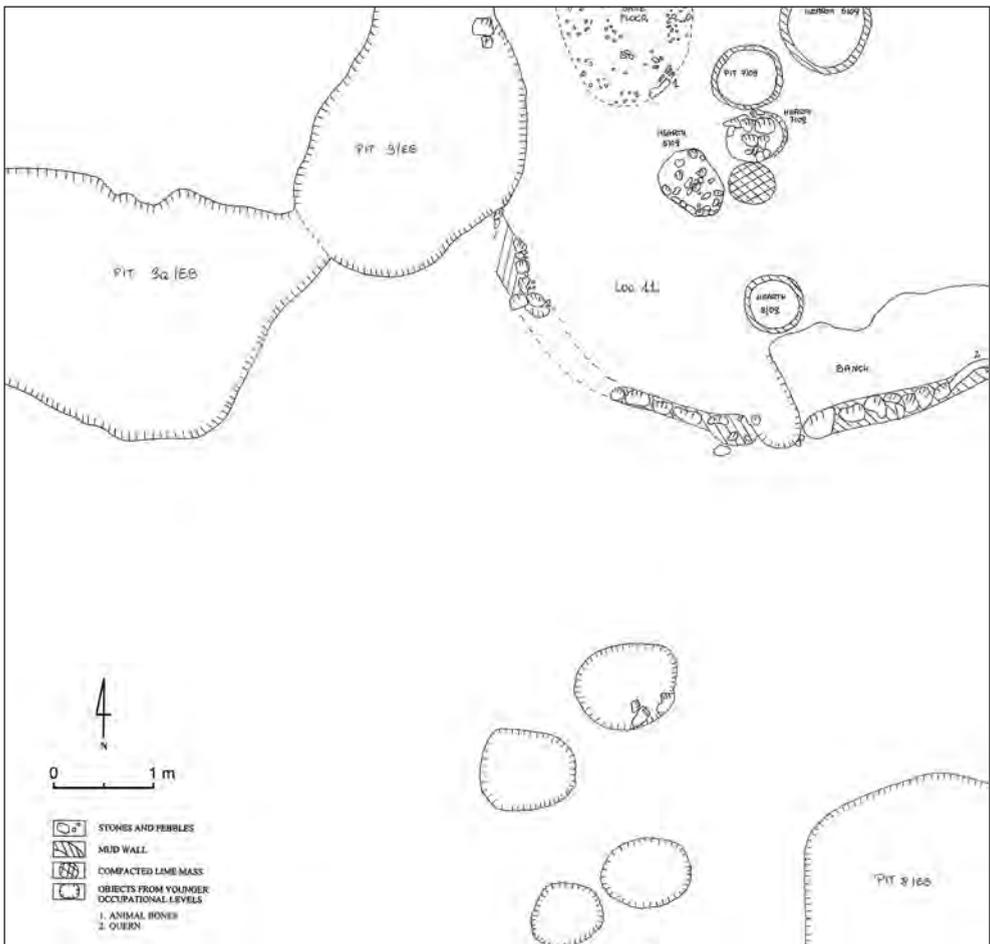


Fig. 12. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Plan of stratum IV, level 4, facies B (Drawing J. Gawrońska)

animal bones. Finally, hearth 8/09, a round feature 0.60 m in diameter and 7 cm deep, lay to the south of hearth 7/09. Its wall and floor were covered by a thin layer of mud (10 cm). The fill consisted of burned soil, charcoal and small amounts of flint artifacts and animal bones. The features were dated to an early stage of the middle PPNA.

STRATUM IV, LEVEL 5

A house with surrounding courtyard and five pits (Nos 3–6/09 and 8/09), as well as two hearths (Nos 1/09 and 9/09) constituted this level [Fig. 13]. The house (Loc. 10) was a round semi-subterranean structure 5 m in diameter [Fig. 14]. The wall, 0.30 m thick, was preserved to a height of 0.70 m; it was constructed of mud-plastered big and

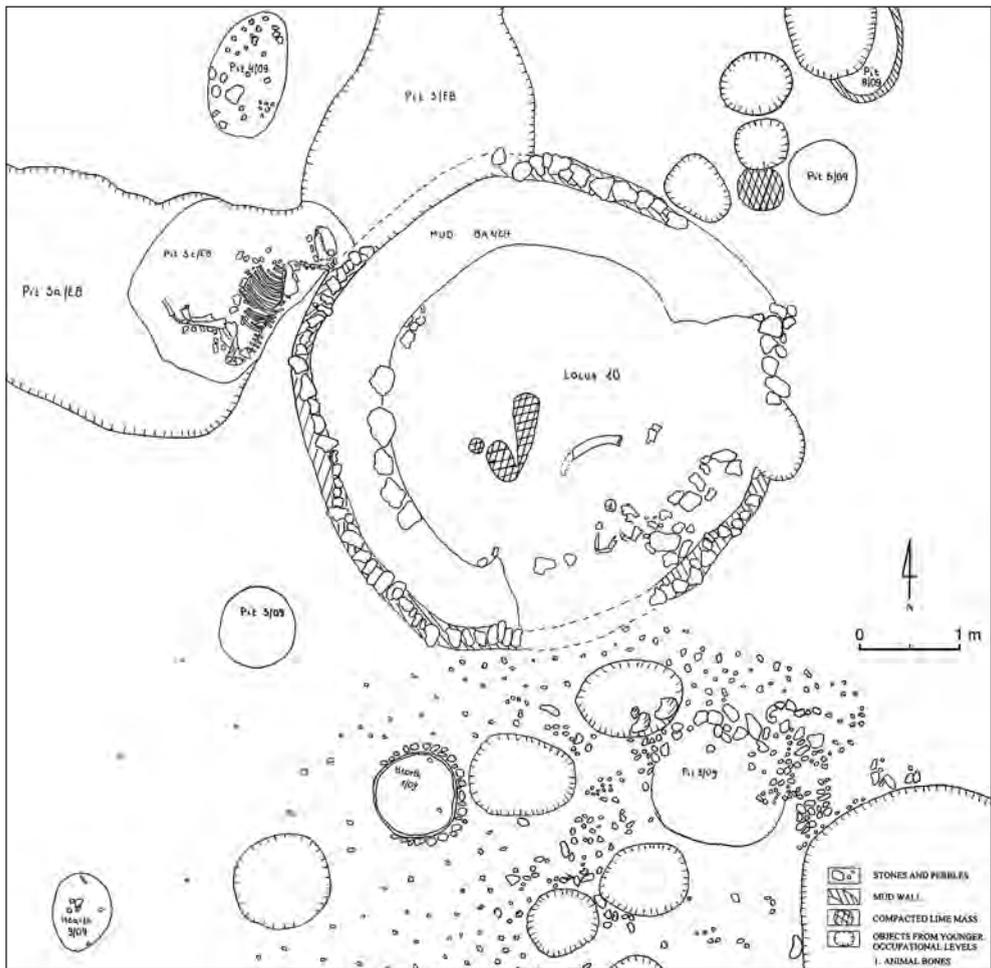


Fig. 13. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Stratum IV, level 5
(Drawing J. Gawronska, J. Rękawek)

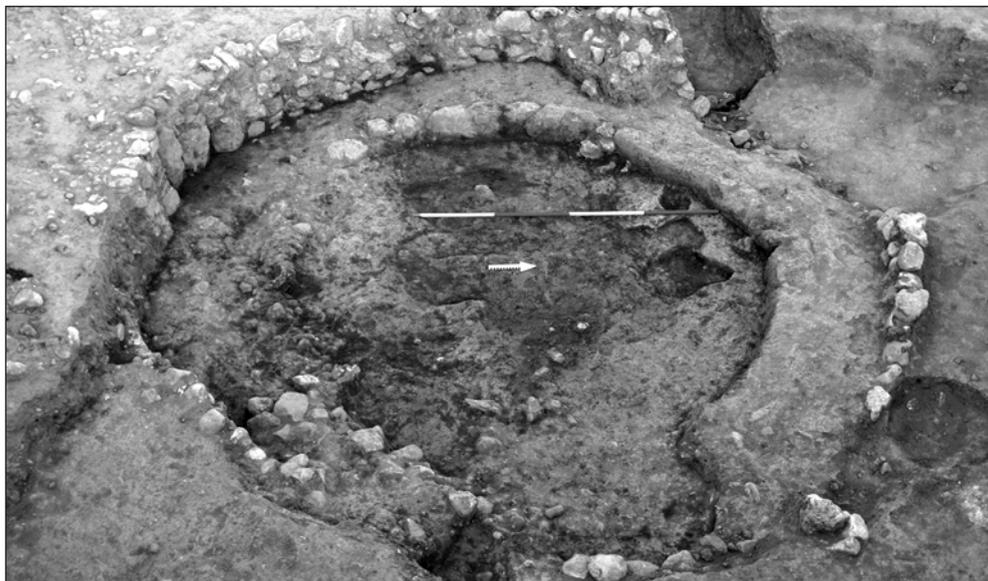


Fig. 14. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Loc. 10 in stratum IV, level 5, view from the east (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)



Fig. 15. Square L-4b,d/M-4a,c. Early Bronze Age 4 pit with grave of onager dug into Early PPNA layer beside western part of the wall of locus 10 (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

medium-sized stones. A bench about 0.15–0.20 m high, made of pebbles and soil covered with mud, was cleared along the inside wall of the structure. The fill of the house contained large quantities of animal bones and an average amount of flint artifacts, among them Qaramelian, Jordan Valley and El-Khiam points, and a single long point with retouched base and niches. On the other hand, no Helwan points were observed. The building had at least two (or more) floors. The first one was made of a thin layer of white lime-mud mass (1 cm thick). The second floor had a round hearth (1.20 m in diameter) in the center, the walls and base covered with red mud. A few yokes together with postholes for posts supporting the roof were located around it, lining the bench. The walls must have been a wattle-and-daub construction. A unique human figurine and a fragment of a vessel made of sun-dried mud were found under the older floor.

A courtyard with two hearths (Nos 1/09 and 9/09) and two pits (Nos 3 and 5/09) extended to the south of the house. It was composed of stones and pebbles covered with mud.

An Early Bronze Age 4 pit (Loc. 3c/EB) with a complete skeleton of an onager was found beside the western part of Loc. 10, partly dug into its wall [Fig. 15]. The body was oriented northeast–southwest with the head to the northeast.

Hearth 1/09 was located to the south of Loc. 10. It was round, 1 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep, encased with stones. The fill contained light gray ash with small quantities of animal bones. To the southwest of this hearth was another

hearth 9/09, oval in shape, measuring 0.80 m and 0.60 m along the axes, 0.15 m deep. The fill was composed of black burned soil with pebbles and animal bones.

A round pit 3/09, about 1 m in diameter and 10 cm deep, lay to the northwest of hearth 1/09 and southwest of Loc. 10. The fill contained dark soil with small quantities of animal bones and flint artifacts. Another three pits (4/09, 6/09 and 8/09) connected with Loc. 10 were situated to the northeast and northwest of the house. Pit 4/09 was oval, 1.30 m long and 0.70 m wide, 15 cm deep, filled with dark soil, pebbles and small quantities of animal bones and flint artifacts. Pit 6/09 to the south of 8/09 was round, 0.70 m in diameter with a similar fill except for the pebbles. Its bottom was not reached due to its considerable depth.

A round stone-lined pit 5/09, about 1.20 m in diameter, was situated to the southeast of the house. A human grave (No. 11) had been excavated into the feature, the grave pit being about 0.90 m long and 0.60 m wide. The male skeleton was in contracted position, on the knees, oriented northeast–southwest, hands resting on the ground and elbows up, the skull between his legs oriented to the northwest. The fill of the grave contained a small number of flint artifacts.

Taking to consideration the lack of Helwan points and the presence of medium-sized flint artifacts, included among them El-Khiam, Jordan Valley and Qaramelian points, the structures unearthed in this level can be attributed to the early stage of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA).

GROUND AND PECKED STONE INDUSTRY

The ground and pecked stone industry of the Protoneolithic (Proto-Qaramelian) and the Early and Middle Pre-pottery Neolithic A (PPNA Qaramelian) was represented in the 2009 season by 143 objects, which have been classified according to R.F. Mazurowski's classification system (Mazurowski 1997). This relatively large collection (compared to finds from last year) contained:

- spherical bolas ball (IA1), made of stone;
- 10 fragments of circular quern-like forms with trough-shaped cross section (IIA1); some bear traces of searing as grinding/polishing plates or "kitchen" plates;
- 22 complete or fragments of oval querns with trough-shaped cross section (IIB1a) made of basalt and occasionally limestone;
- 24 complete or fragmentary single- (IIIA1) or double-pole (IIIA2) pestles made of chlorite; two specimens with grooved decoration;
- three unilateral (IIIE1b) and 24 bilateral (IIIE2b) fragmentary oval basalt grinders with usage marks on the lateral edges;
- complete conical single-pole grinder (IIIB1) made of basalt;
- two fragmentary cylindrical mortar pounders (VB1/2);
- two complete double-pole pounders (VD2) made of natural basalt pebbles;
- two fragmentary single- or double-pole pounders (VD1/2) made of natural basalt pebbles;
- three trapezoid two-sided celts with oval transverse section (VIIA1a) [Fig. 16:3] and two ovoid forms with oval transverse section (VIIA3b), made of chlorite or sporadically from green dolerite (greenstone);
- two fragmentary two-sided celts (VIIA) made of chlorite;
- complete semi-finished spherical macehead (XA1) made of calcareous mudstone;
- fragment of polishing plate (IXB1) made of a flat calcareous mudstone pebble;
- fragment of a "kitchen" plate (IXB2) with cut marks left by a sharp flint tool;
- two fragments of pointed tools (XIB) [Fig. 16:6] made of a slender pebble, one end pointed, the opposite end used as a pestle; long and deep groove on the lateral surface of one of these;
- chisel (XID) made of chlorite;
- fragment of an awl made of a chlorite pebble;
- miniature vessel made of limestone [Fig. 17:1];
- six fragments of hemispherical bowls with incurved rims (XIVA2); two decorated in the Jerf El-Ahmar style [Fig. 17:2,3]
- oval (XVA) and four rectangular (XVC) shaft straighteners made of chlorite; two decorated with geometric motifs [Fig. 16:1,2];
- 17 beads made of chlorite, white or grey marble and green calcite, including two long cylindrical beads (XVIA1a) [Fig. 18:2], 13 small circular beads (XVIA2a) with rectangular transverse section, proportions of height to diameter from 1:3 to 1:1 [Fig. 18:4-8]; barrel-shaped beads with ovoid (XVIA3a-1) or elliptical (XVIA3b-1) transversal section;

- ovoid pendant of green dolerite, two frontal holes in transversal position to the longer axis [Fig. 18:3];
- three pendants made of natural pebbles (XVIB1) [Fig. 18:1];
- decorated plaque (XVIK) made of chlorite;
- natural elongated pebble with negatives of blows at one end (XIIA1), made of chlorite;

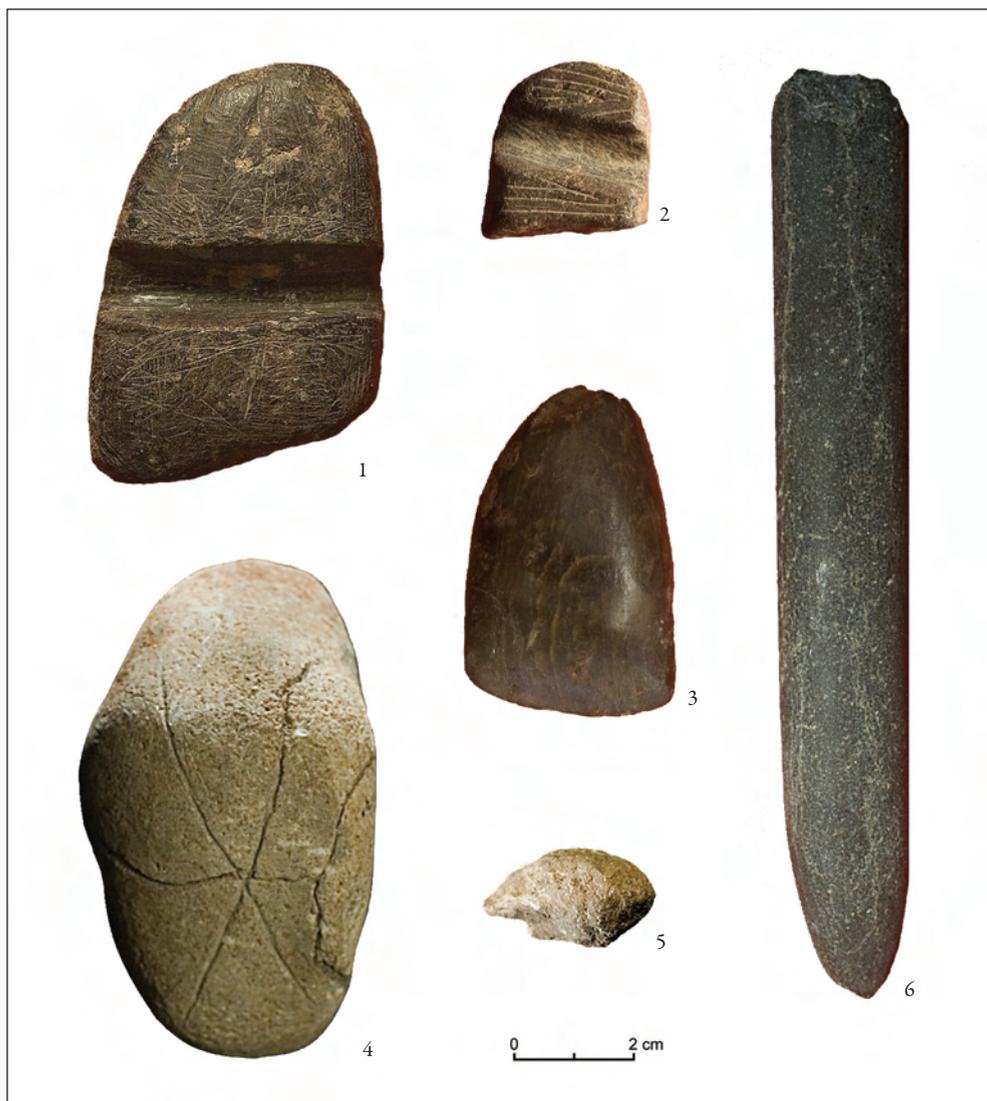


Fig. 16. Objects of chlorite: decorated shaft straighteners (1, 2); celt (3); decorated pebble (4); fragment of bird's head made of sun-dried mud (5); pointed tool (6) (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

- massive pebble of chlorite with decoration in the form of two crossing grooves [*Fig. 16:4*].

Basalt, limestone and calcareous mudstone were the most common raw materials for heavy duty tools. Chlorite remained popular for the production of smaller tools (shaft straighteners, pestles, bowls, etc.) as well as for ornaments. Many of the utilitarian tools were decorated.

Few stone artifacts were discovered in position, most objects being found in occupational layers, wall structures, below floors and in the fill of pits and houses. A set of six beads (XVIA2) was found in the fill of a posthole from the site of a building of Middle Epipaleolithic date in square J-7b,d (see above, 556 and *Fig. 3*); it may have been a foundation gift.

CHIPPED STONE (FLINT) INDUSTRY

The bountiful flint assemblage consisted of more than 2000 pieces. Almost 97% of the material represented so-called “chocolate flint”, the chief raw material from the PPNA settlement. The rest was made up of burned and indeterminate flints with thin and feebly formed cortex. Five pieces of gray obsidian imported from Anatolia were recorded. Obsidian was present in the early stadium of the Middle PPNA.

The oldest, Protoneolithic (Proto-Qaramelian) material came from square J-7/K-7. Sieving of the fill of Tower V (for the first time in the course of the excavations) produced very small flakes and blades, but no segments. The levels were characterized by the use of small unipolar cores. Small points of the El-Khiam type with straight or lightly concave base and with one pair of recesses were present as were some Qaramelian points. Shapes

included sickle blades, slender borers and perforators, burins, endscrapers, retouched blades and flakes and two fragments of Netiv Hagdud truncations. One slender blade, 10.7 cm long, from a unipolar blade made of an unidentified kind of flint does not recall anything already known among the blade debitage from this period in Qaramel.

Levels explored in L-4/M-4 and L-5 squares represented the Early PPNA and an early stage of the Middle PPNA. All chipped stone industry objects from these squares are connected with exploitation of bipolar cores with one striking platform with preparation on both sides of the cores. El-Khiam, Qaramelian and Jordan Valley points are typical of these levels. El-Khiam points have lightly concave or straight bases and one or two pairs of recesses. A diversification of point size from 2.5 cm to 6 cm long was also noted. The first points of Helwan type, found in early Middle PPNA units, have a short straight handle and one or two pairs of recesses. Their numbers increase over time, the points becoming more common in Middle PPNA levels. A point of the Nemrik type was collected for the first time in Qaramel from the surface of square L-4b. Other categories of tools included burins of many types (e.g. corner, wedge, endscrapers made of blades and flakes, irregular scrapers, sickle blades). Borers and perforators with long, slender and almost always straight and retouched blades and flakes remained numerous among the tools.

BONE AND SHELL OBJECTS

The 32 complete or fragmentary bone tools and ornaments were discovered mostly in the same units as stone objects; frequently, processed artifacts were identified in

the course of analyzing the individual assemblages of animal bones. Their primary classification after R.F. Mazurowski is as follows:

- 25 complete or fragmentary awls made of medium-size mammal bones, including one decorated piece [Fig. 17: 6, 7];
- fragment of a dagger made from a massive rib of a large mammal;
- miniature vessel [Fig. 17: 5];
- needle from a bird's bone;
- two long tubular beads made from bird bones;
- partly preserved dagger made from a mammal's rib;
- fragment of a rod (handle) made from a massive mammal's long bone decorated with a deep groove;
- natural *Spondylus* shell.

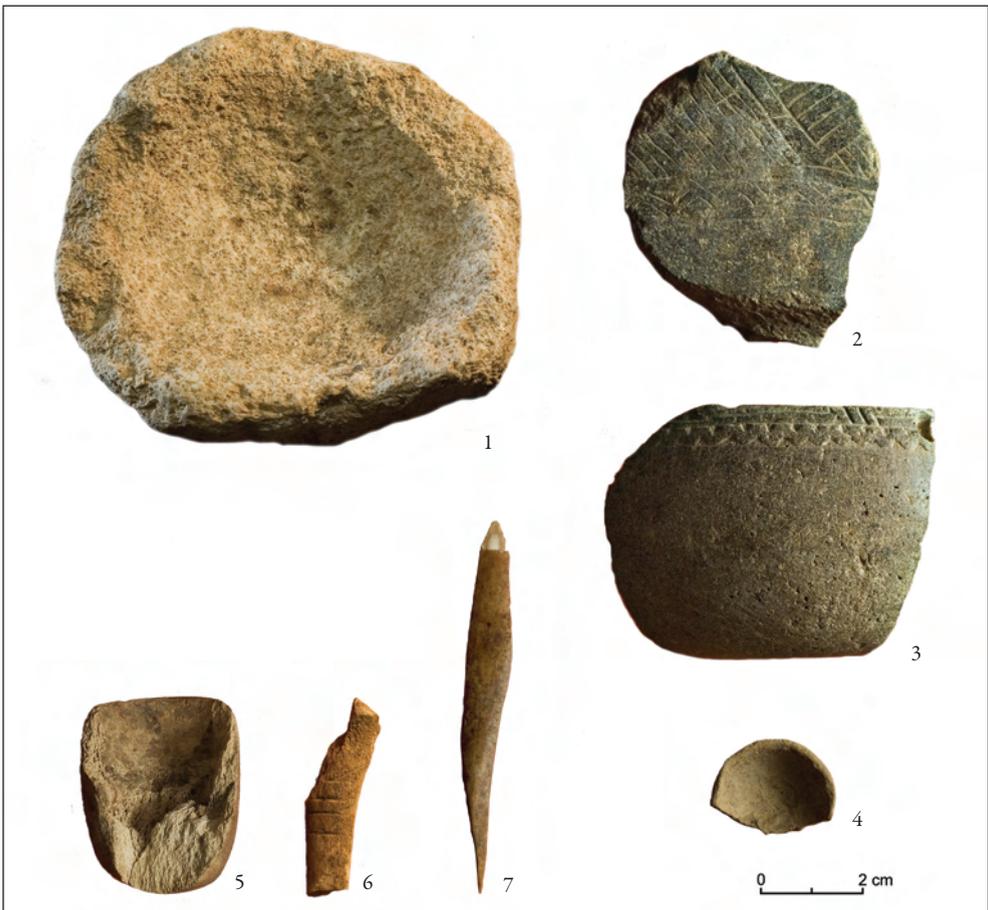


Fig. 17. Objects from PPNA layers: miniature vessels, of limestone (1), sun-dried mud with nail impressions on the outside (4) and bone (5); fragments of decorated bowls made of chlorite (2, 3); bone awls, decorated and plain (6, 7) (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

ANIMAL BONES

Faunal remains were collected from occupational layers of everyday activity and fills of pits and buildings. Registration has been provisional pending archaeozoological examination in the coming season. The animal bones could be identified as representing most probably large and small ruminants, such as wild cattle, sheep, goat and gazelle. Wild pigs, donkeys, onagers, rabbits, and different kinds of birds were also recorded. Remains

of dogs, turtles and rodents are unique. Shells have also been noted. Cut marks attesting to processing of animal bones have also been observed.

SUN-DRIED MUD OBJECTS

A schematic human figurine of sun-dried mud was discovered in the floor of a house from Early PPNA (Loc. 10, square L-4/M-4). An eye and a nose can be discerned and one side is decorated with nail impressions on the surface



Fig. 18. Elongated pebble pendant (1); long cylindrical bead (2); ovoid pendant (3); cylindrical beads (4–8) (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)



Fig. 19. Human figurine made of sun-dried mud; L. 6.3 cm, W. 2.6 cm, Th. 1.4 cm (Photo R.F. Mazurowski)

[Fig. 19]. It recalls a much larger form of soft limestone discovered in Mureybet, on display at the Aleppo Museum. Three other sun-dried objects from the same house included a miniature vessel decorated with nail impressions on the outside surface including the bottom (Dia. rim 2.5 cm, H. 1.4 cm), from the fill [Fig. 17:4]; a massive disc with traces of polishing on one flat surface (Dia. 4.5 cm, Th. 2.4 cm), from a bench; a fragment of undecorated small bowl rim and a circular disc 4.5 cm in diameter.

A finger-pinched bird's head, the figurine broken at the neck, came from Middle PPNA layers in square M-4c [Fig. 16:5].

Two small balls of sun-dried mud were also collected, one from the fill of Grave 10 in square M-4a and the other from an Early Bronze Age 4 pit 8/EB (secondary position). The former is perforated, the latter marked with crossing grooves.

CONCLUSIONS

The season's results have contributed further data confirming the author's theory about Qaramel being a center of primary importance during the Neolithisation of the Near East, but with many significant differences compared to other regions. Excavations in stratum VI, level 16, of square J-7b have added to previous findings from trenches located further to the south,

indicating that the settlement evolved from a local Epipaleolithic tradition, which exhibited many key differences from Natufian culture prevalent in the region. The results have also aided in a general reconstruction of the evolution of occupation on Qaramel from the Epipaleolithic, through the Protoneolithic and Pre-pottery Neolithic A periods.

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