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Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, Costanza Coppini, Katia Gavagnin, Hasan Ahmed Qasim

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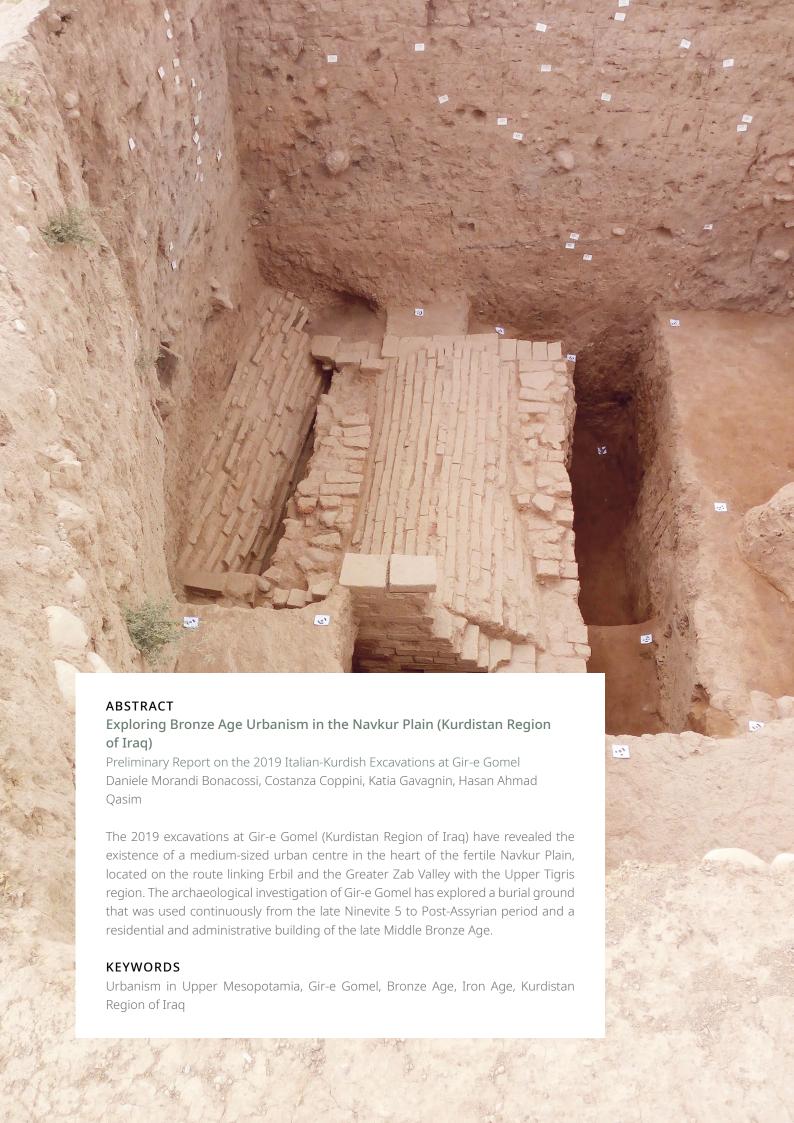
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Exploring Bronze Age Urbanism in the Navkur Plain (Kurdistan Region of Iraq)

Preliminary Report on the 2019 Italian-Kurdish Excavations at Gir-e Gomel

Introduction

The excavation of <u>Gir-e Gomel</u>,¹ located in the heart of the Navkur Plain 4 km west of the modern town of Kelekchi, in the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan (Fig. 1), is an Italian-Kurdish cooperative undertaking called "The Kurdish-Italian Gir-e Gomel Archaeological Project" (KIGAP). The project is co-directed by Daniele Morandi Bonacossi of Udine University and Hasan Ahmad Qasim of the Duhok Directorate of Antiquities, and serves to fill our knowledge gap of the region's archaeological landscape and material culture. The site, which today's Kurdish inhabitants of the village call Tell Jomel and in 20th century cartography is recorded as Tell Gomel or Tell Jomel,² has been excavated in three field seasons from 2017 to 2019 by KIGAP with the aim of establishing a stratigraphic reference sequence, plus well-stratified and relatively and absolutely dated seriations of pottery and other archaeological artefacts. The accomplishment of these objectives will provide the first reference series for the material culture of the Navkur Plain and enable comparisons to be made with neighbouring areas, thus shed-

Archaeological investigation at Gir-e Gomel has been supported and enabled by many individuals and organizations. The authors are most grateful to the General Director of Antiquities of the Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil, Kak Kaify Mustafa Ali, for granting the permit to excavate the site of Gir-e Gomel and for his unceasing support to the project. The staff of the Duhok Directorate of Antiquities, the mayor of Gir-e Gomel and the workers from the site deserve our special thanks for their cooperation and hospitality. The excavation work at Gomel was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Authority, the Friuli Banking Foundation, and the University of Udine. In the 2019 field season, Katia Gavagnin supervised the excavation in Operation 1 together with Khaled Abdelkarim Zein Al Amadi (Duhok Directorate of Antiquities). They were assisted in the field by Margherita Dallai, Giancarlo Garna, and Heresh Ahmed Abdelrahman (Duhok team). Costanza Coppini acted as supervisor in Operation 2 together with Kovan Hussein Hassan (Duhok team). They were assisted by Lisa Doro, Massimiliano Ghiro, Riccardo Menis, and Zerevan Abdelhamid Ali (Duhok team). Katia Gavagnin, Costanza Coppini, and Laura Zanazzo carried out the pottery study, Alberto Savioli acted as GIS and remote sensing expert, drone pilot and surveyor, Isabella Finzi Contini as conservator, Giampaolo Ceccarini, Elisa Girotto, and Luigi Turri as draughtspersons, and Riccardo Menis as database specialist, small-find recorder and photographer. Their support and expertise have been highly appreciated. The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for improvements and comments to an earlier draft of this article.

² Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, fn. 3.

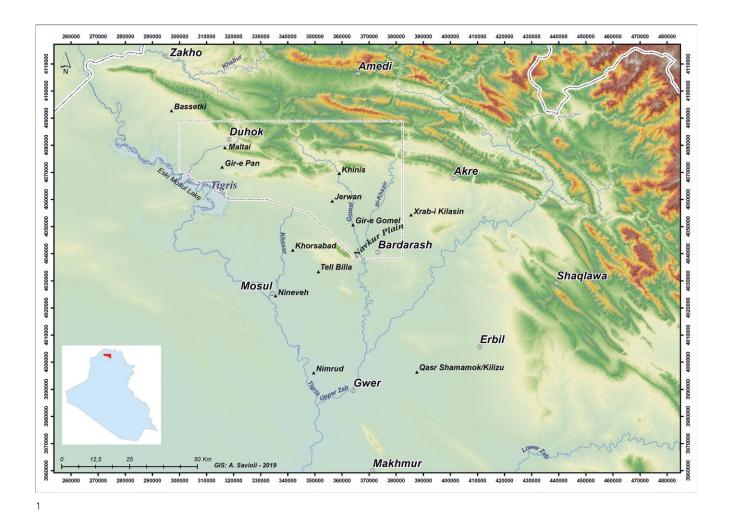


Fig. 1: Location of Gir-e Gomel and the Udine University survey area in the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan

الشكل ۱: موقع گري گومل (تل جومل) ومنطقة المسح التي أجرته جامعة أودينه في شمال كردستان العراق ding light on cross-cultural relationships and exchange patterns in Upper Mesopotamia. At the same time, the excavation in Gomel explores the character and function of this important site through the millennia on a local and regional scale, investigating the role it has played in the region's production dynamics and socio-economic processes.

- The ecology and topography of Gir-e Gomel, which is located on the left bank of the River Gomel in the central-western part of the fertile Navkur Plain, and its occupation history have been extensively discussed elsewhere (Fig. 2).³ The 2019 field season had two main goals. On the one hand we aimed to extend the excavation of the Middle Bronze Age elite cemetery in Operation 1 to achieve a more thorough comprehension of the burial typologies, rituals, functioning and chronology of this graveyard. On the other hand, our goal was to complete the excavation of Building 1 a large MBA II mansion in Operation 2 and better understand its stratigraphy, function and history.
- Below, we present the results of the third excavation season in this prominent Bronze and Iron Age site (henceforth BA and IA), which constituted the main urban centre of the entire Navkur Plain on the route linking Erbil and the Greater Zab Valley with the Upper Tigris region to the north of Nineveh. In the phase of its main urban expansion during the mid-late 3rd millennium and the Middle Bronze Age, the ancient site of Gomel reached an overall area of about 35 ha. Gir-e Gomel was thus the most extensive site in the region to the west of the Greater Zab and east of the Tigris before Bassetki, a 50 ha mid-late 3rd millennium and Middle Bronze Age site in the Selevani Plain north-west of the city of Duhok.⁴

³ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 69–74.

⁴ Pfälzner – Qasim 2018, 76.

Gir-e Gomel periodisation	Operation	Relative chronology	Absolute chronology
1	1-3	Recent/modern	1922–today
2	1	Late Islamic	c. 1500–1922 AD
3	So far attested only from the ceramic surface record	Middle Islamic	c. 1000–1500 AD
4	1	Early Islamic	636-c. 1000 AD
5	So far attested only from the ceramic surface record	Sasanian	224-636 AD
6	1-2	Parthian	c. 100 BC-224 AD
7	1	Hellenistic	331-c. 100 BC
8	1	Post-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Achaemenid	612-331 BC
9	1-2	Neo-Assyrian, Iron Age	c. 1000-612 BC
10	1	Middle Assyrian, Late Bronze Age II	c. 1350–1000 BC
11	1	Mitanni, Late Bronze Age I	c. 1550-1350 BC
12	1-3	Middle Bronze Age	c. 2000-1550 BC
13	1, 3	Mid-late Early Bronze Age, EMT 2–5	c. 2750–2000 BC
14	So far attested only from the ceramic surface record	Earlier Early Bronze Age, Early Ninevite 5, EMT 0–1	c. 3100–2750 BC
15	3	Late Chalcolithic 3–5	c. 3850-3100 BC
16	3	Late Chalcolithic 1–2	c. 4500-3850 BC

Fig. 2: Archaeological periods recorded in Gir-e Gomel during the excavation

الشكل ٢: الفترات الأثرية التي تمّ توثيقها في گري گومل (تل جومل) خلال أعمال التنقيب

Operation 1

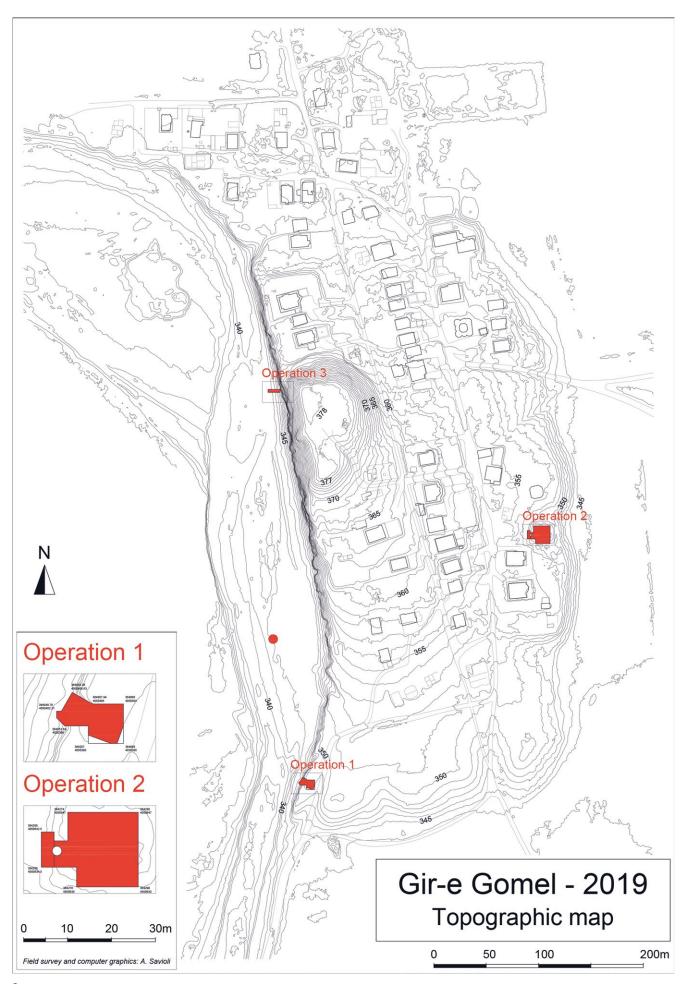
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- Operation 1 is located along the south-western edge of Gir-e Gomel's southern lower town, in an area where the site was heavily eroded by the River Gomel (Fig. 3). Excavations in Operation 1 were started during the 2012–2013 field seasons and continued from 2017 to 2019. The area has a long history as a burial ground: it was used as a graveyard in modern times, the Neo-Assyrian epoch and the Middle and Early Bronze Ages (henceforth MBA and EBA), while it was an inhabited area in the Parthian and Hellenistic periods. The Post-Assyrian and Late Bronze Age levels (henceforth LBA) show traces of both living and funerary use of this area.
- This section of the article focuses on the new data collected during the 2019 season, when the excavation area was enlarged to the south and west (4 m on the S side and 2 m on the W side) reaching dimensions of 9 m \times 12 m. The aim of the 2019 campaign was to further investigate the MBA necropolis and better understand the nature of the vaulted baked-brick structure 44 found during the 2018 season.
- Concerning the latest levels of occupation the sub-recent (Phases 1–2), Islamic (Phase 3), Parthian (Phases 4–6) and Hellenistic periods (Phases 7–10), the 2019 excavation campaign confirmed the results of the previous years⁷ and no noteworthy new discoveries were made. On the other hand, the data brought to light from the earlier phases (Post Assyrian to 3rd millennium BC) are of great interest.

⁵ For more details on the 2012–2018 excavation results, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 75–111.

⁶ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88–96.

⁷ For a detailed description of the latest levels of Operation 1, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 76–81 and, for the Early Islamic period, Tonghini 2022.



Post-Assyrian period (Phases 11–13): stratigraphy, architecture, pottery and small finds

- While during the excavation of the Post-Assyrian levels in the previous years no burial was found further N,8 in the last excavation campaign the Post-Assyrian levels are represented by trodden floors (SU 595, 800) with burials (G 54 and G 55) and pits (SU 598, 802, 804).9
- In the latest Phase 11, a trodden floor (SU 595) cut by an incineration grave (G 54) has been found (Fig. 4 a). The cremation burial was located in the central-western part of the excavated area and did not contain grave goods. It consisted of a sub-circular pit measuring $1.15~\text{m}\times0.82~\text{m}$, oriented NE–SW with two small lobate openings on the shorter sides. The limits of the pit cut were rubified and compact and the fill contained vitrified earthy material mixed with ash, burnt human bones (belonging to an unsexed sub-adult¹0), plus a few potsherds and animal bones. These elements indicate that the burial was an *in situ* cremation and that the dead person's body was burnt in the pit. This makes G 54 very similar to the underlying Neo-Assyrian cremation burials found in the past.¹¹ The presence of cremation burials of this type in Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian levels is also attested at Tell Sheikh Hamad.¹² At Gomel the continuity of this rather uncommon funerary custom after the fall of the Assyrian Empire is likewise recorded.
- The previous Phase 12 is represented by two adjoining pits (SU 802 and 804) cut in the trodden floor SU 800 and a jar burial (G 55) next to them. Pit SU 802 (Fig. 4 b), located in the central part of the excavated area, had a circular shape (1.30 m in diameter) and its sides and bottom were rubified by exposure to heat. Its soft sandy and silty dark brown fill contained many potsherds, animal bones, eight terracotta spindle whorls and one large rounded stone (located in the centre of the pit together with seven of the spindle whorls). Their location next to the jar cremation burial Grave 55 suggests that the spindle whorls might have been related to it. The presence of spindle whorls in funerary contexts is widespread in the BA and IA in the Levant, for example in Hama, in the necropolis dated to the IA I–III, 13 and Megiddo. 14
- Grave 55, located in the E part of the excavated area, was a cremation burial in a jar (SU 599) laid in a pit 598 (Fig. 4 b), which had an irregular oval shape, oriented E–W, and was filled with an ashy dark brown deposit containing fragmented and charred human bones, a few potsherds and charcoal. The channel base jar containing the cremation burial was located in the NW part of the pit. It is a common ware vessel of greenish-buff colour and is preserved for a height of ca. 30 cm; unfortunately, the rim is missing (Figs. 5. 6 x, z). The maximum diameter must have been around 25 cm, but only half of the vessel is preserved. Since the jar showed no traces of fire or burning, we assume that it was not in direct contact with the fire of the funeral pyre and that the human remains were placed in the jar after the cremation ritual. The jar was covered with a large stone weight (Fig. 5 y); its fill consisted of a greyish compact deposit with tiny fragments of burnt bones and teeth (belonging to an unsexed sub-adult).

⁸ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 82.

⁹ These floors are equal to trodden floors SU 289 and SU 305 excavated during the 2017 campaign, from which numerous potsherds dated to the Post-Assyrian period have been recovered (see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 82). The continuation of trodden floor 333 of Phase 13 (Phase 12 of 2017–2018) was not preserved in the area excavated in 2019. Thus, no new information on this phase was obtained.

¹⁰ The anthropological remains were studied by Dr Alessandro Canci to whom we extend our warmest thanks.

¹¹ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 82–86.

¹² Kreppner 2014, Fig. 12, Tab. 1. The Neo-Assyrian *in situ* cremation burials belong to Phase 2 of the Tell Sheikh Hamad Lower Town II (late 8th–7th century BC), while the Post-Assyrian ones pertain to Phase 3 (Graves 03/03, 03/04, 03/26, 3/19, 6/15, 87/70, 92/89).

¹³ Spinazzi-Lucchesi 2018, 44.

¹⁴ Spinazzi-Lucchesi 2018, 46; Sauvage 2014, 187–188.



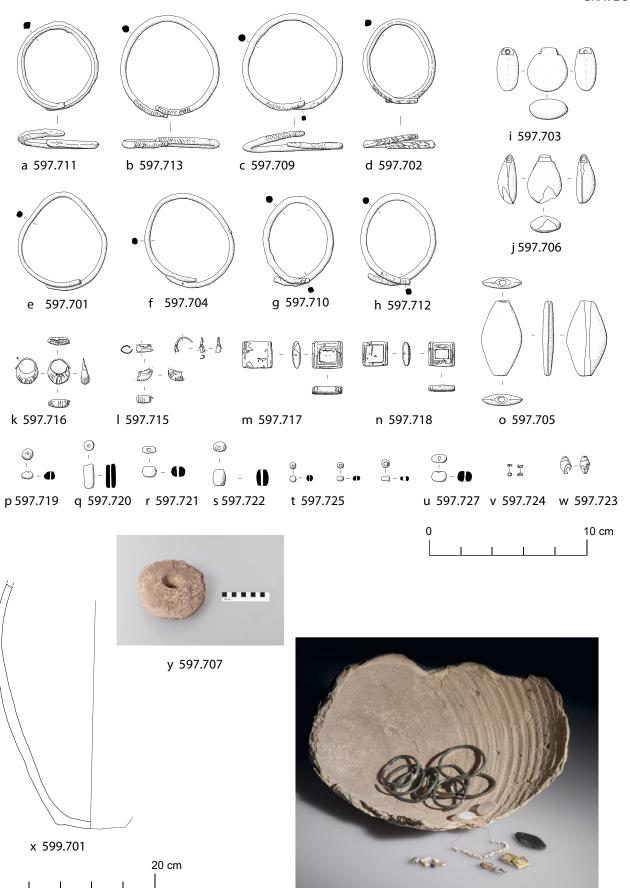
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Fig. 4: Operation 1, a) cremation burial G 54, Phase 11 and b) pits 598, 802 and 804 with jar burial G 55, Phase 12

الشكل ٤: العملية ا، a) دفن عن طريق حرق الجثث G 54، المرحلة db ، 11) الحُفّر 802، 802 و804 مع جرة دفنG 55، المرحلة 12

In the jar a rich funerary assemblage was found. Eight bronze bracelets (Fig. 5 a–h) were each made of a simple metal wire, round or square in section, bent into a circular shape. Six of them (Fig. 5 a–d, g–h) have an incised herringbone pattern on the two crossed ends. Two leech-shaped gold foil earrings, one complete and one fragmentary, have a crescent shaped body decorated with incised vertical lines (Fig. 5 k–l). Similar specimens, manufactured with greater accuracy, have been recovered from Grave 45 at <u>Ashur</u>¹⁵ and were dated to the Neo-Assyrian period. This tradition seems to have continued also in the Post-Assyrian period. Two drop-shaped rock crystal pendants (Fig. 5 i–j), one rhomboid black onyx pendant (Fig. 5 o), two square terracotta pendants with triple moulding covered



J

FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
X	599.701	12	М	sand, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	10 YR 8/2 VPB	10 YR 8/2 VPB	W		

z

with gold leaf (Fig. 5 m–n), and numerous beads of different shapes and materials – grey stone, carnelian, vitreous material (Fig. 5 p–w) – were also found in the jar.

- As in the north-western side of pit 598, the pit cut is scorched and compact, a clear sign of exposure to fire; it seems probable that the body of the deceased was burnt on a funerary pyre inside pit 598. After the complete *in situ* combustion of the body, the charred remains were collected and placed in the jar, which was then buried in the same pit together with a rather rich inventory of grave goods.
- Phases 11 and 12 are thus represented by trodden floors in what was probably an open area used as a burial ground. The pottery found in the previous campaigns dated these layers to the Post-Assyrian period. The presence of two different types of cremation burials in the same period, performed *in situ* in a pit and *in situ* in a jar, is remarkable. This demonstrates the presence of different coexisting ways of performing cremation burials in Post-Assyrian Gomel. The abundance of personal ornaments in G 55 is also noteworthy; even though this phase is poorly known and the settlement data of LoNAP and other surveys in the Assyrian core zone suggest a general crisis in occupation during the Post-Assyrian period, ¹⁶ the recovery of a rich funerary assemblage at Gir-e Gomel is extremely interesting and further stresses how much we still have to learn about this period. The presence of the leech-shaped gold foil earrings in G 55 and the occurrence of the *in situ* pit cremation burial G 54, a type which is quite uncommon in the preceding Neo-Assyrian period, emphasises the strong cultural continuity linking the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian phases at Gomel.

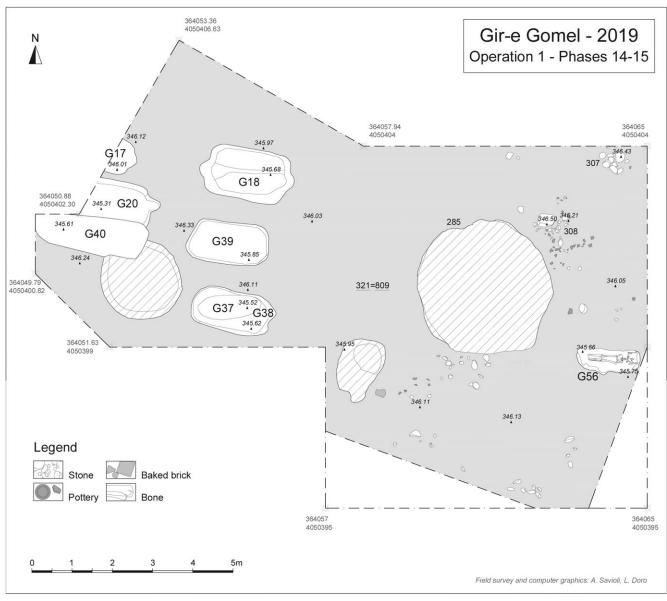
Neo-Assyrian period (Phases 14–15): stratigraphy, architecture, pottery and small finds

- In the Neo-Assyrian period, Operation 1 was used as a burial ground, as already noticed in the previous campaigns during which seven *in situ* cremation burials were uncovered (Fig. 7).¹⁷ In 2019, enlarging the excavation area to the south-west, two poorly preserved platforms (808 and 811), possibly related to funerary activities, and an inhumation grave (G 56) were brought to light. All these features are related to the Phase 14 trodden floor (809=321), corresponding to the Neo-Assyrian surface from which the cremation burials were cut.
- On one of the two installation surfaces, a bronze bracelet and a bead were found (Fig. 8 a–b). On the western side of this floor (809=321) two bronze rings (Fig. 8 f–g), a bronze earring (Fig. 8 e) and one shell bead and one stone bead (Fig. 8 c–d) have also been uncovered.
- The unexpected presence of scattered objects on the trodden floor and on the installation-surface could be related to the funerary use of the area.
- Grave 56 is located in the eastern part of the excavated area next to the border; its eastern end was located beyond the eastern limit of excavation (Fig. 7). The burial was an oblong-shaped pit grave, measuring $1.40~\text{m} \times 1.60~\text{m}$, oriented west-east. The grave was covered by a collapsed mud-brick vault with radial arrangement (Fig. 9), i.e. a series of courses of bricks radially arranged parallel to the axis of the vault, 18 and contained an adult male, lying on his back with the right arm bent, the left one on the chest and the legs stretched out. The skull was located beyond the eastern excavation limit and the feet were missing. No grave goods were found in the grave. Mud-brick vaulted graves of the same type dated to the Neo-Assyrian period are known from

¹⁶ Morandi Bonacossi in print; Palermo et al. 2022.

¹⁷ A detailed description of the cremation burials (G 17, 18, 20, 37, 38, 39, 40 in Fig. 7) is provided in Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 82–86 and Morandi Bonacossi 2018, 68–72.

¹⁸ For more details about vaulted structures and building techniques, see Dallai 2020.



7

Ashur¹⁹ and the same vault-building technique, but using fired bricks, is known from Tell Sheikh Hamad²⁰ and the Erbil Citadel.²¹

 14 C dates obtained from two bone samples from the skeleton give calibrated dates between 828 and 757 BC (Figs. 10. 11) that match well the pottery assemblage recovered from the cremation graves in the same phase uncovered during previous campaigns.

The discovery of G 56 in Phase 14 is of some importance, since it shows that in the Neo-Assyrian period two different funerary customs were used in the same area: inhumation and *in situ* cremation. Inhumation was characteristic of the Neo-Assyrian period,²³ while *in situ* cremation burials are very rare in the Neo-Assyrian epoch and

Fig. 7: Operation 1, general plan of Neo-Assyrian burials, Phases 14–15

الشكل ٧: العملية ١، مخطط عام لقبور العصر الآشوري الحديث، المرحلتان 15–14

¹⁹ Haller 1954, 97-98, Abb. 131-132.

²⁰ Kreppner – Hornig 2010, 108.

²¹ van Ess et al. 2012, 109–110.

²² LTL22029 828–778 BC (95 % probability) and LTL22030 817–757 BC (95 % probability). For more details on the Neo-Assyrian pottery found in the burials, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 82–86.

²³ Strommenger 1971, 592; Mofidi-Nasrabadi 1999; Morandi Bonacossi 2018, 71.

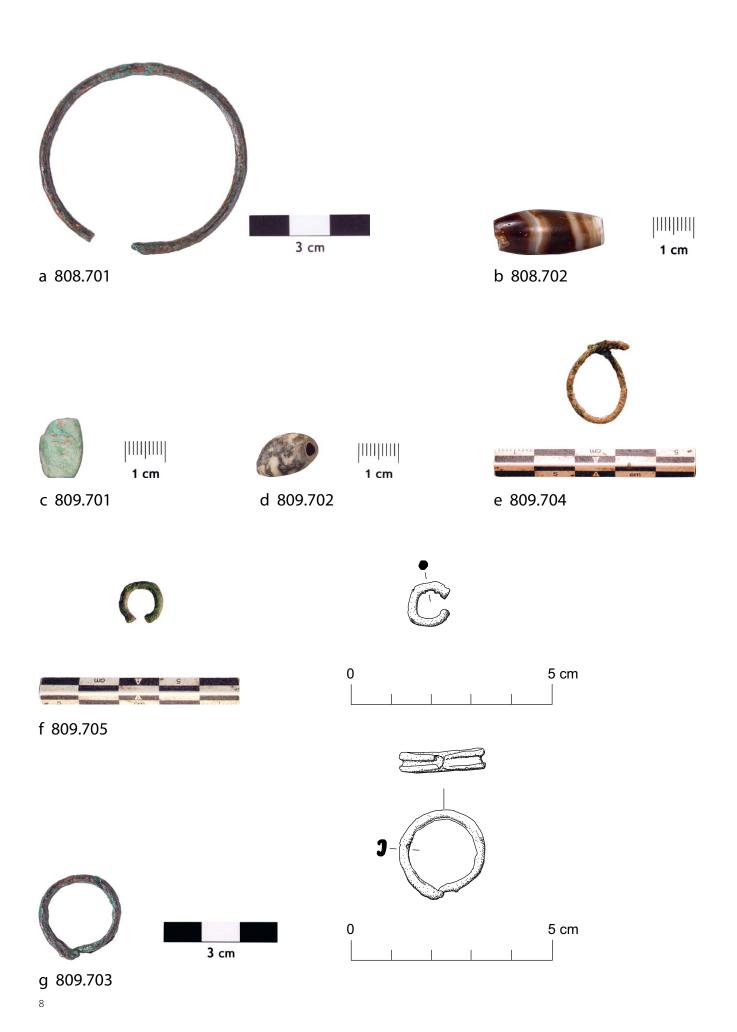


Fig. 8: Operation 1, small finds from installation 808 (a–b) and floor 809 (c–g), Phase 15

الشكل ٨: العملية 1، اللَّقى الصغيرة التي تمّ العثور عليها في المنشأة 808 (b–a) والأرضية 909 (g–c)، المرحلة 15



9

Fig. 9: Operation 1, detail of the G 56 section with collapsed vault made of radially arranged mudbricks, Phase 15

الشكل ٩: العملية 1، تفصيل من المقطع الجانبي G 56 يظهر أنقاض عقد مبني من اللبن المصفوف بشكل شعاعي، المرحلة 15

GG periodisation	Phase Op. 1	Phase Op. 2	Lab no.	Stratigraphic unit and sample excavation no.	Material	Context	¹⁴ C yrs. bp	BC range (95.4 %)	BC range (68.2 %)	¹⁴ C age determination system
9	14		LTL22029	824.701	Human bone (tibia)	Inhumation grave	2635±25	828-778	811–792	AMS
9	14		LTL22030	824.702	Human bone (tibia)	Inhumation grave	2598±30	817–757	802–779	AMS
12		12	LTL22028	655.701	Human bone (petrosal bone)	Inhumation grave	3374±35	1745– 1539	1736– 1716 (11.8 %) 1692- 1616 (56.4 %)	AMS
12	26		LTL22021	359.701	Human bone (femur)	Inhumation grave	3375±25	1743– 1608 (92.0 %) 1576– 1560 (2.3 %) 1554– 1545 (1.1 %)	1729– 1723 (4.1 %) 1688– 1621 (64.1 %)	AMS
12	26b		LTL22031	865.705	Human bone (radius)	Inhumation grave	3375±40	1750- 1534	1739– 1712 (14.2 %) 1696– 1613 (54.0 %)	AMS

GG periodisation		Phase Op. 2	Lab no.	Stratigraphic unit and sample excavation no.	Material	Context	¹⁴ C yrs. bp	BC range (95.4 %)	BC range (68.2 %)	¹⁴ C age determination system
12		12	LTL22033	649.701	Human bone (petrosal bone)	Inhumation grave	3379±40	1750– 1536	1738– 1712 (14.7 %) 1750– 1536 (53.5 %)	AMS
12	26b		LTL22032	865.706	Human bone (humerus)	Inhumation grave	3402±45	1875- 1842 (6.4 %) 1820- 1797 (2.8 %) 1777- 1599 (80.7 %) 1589- 1542 (5.5 %)	1745– 1622	AMS
13	24a		LTL22023	386.701	Human bone (femur)	Inhumation grave	4015±35	2623- 2464 (95.4 %)	2571- 2515 (48.6 %) 2501- 2475 (19.6 %)	AMS
13	24b		LTL22026	395.701	Human bone (femur)	Inhumation grave	4037±45	2847- 2811 (5.2 %) 2743- 2729 (1.2 %) 2676- 2463 (89.0 %)	2621- 2603 (8.2 %) 2583- 2474 (60.0 %)	AMS
13	24b		LTL22027	395.702	Human bone (fibula)	Inhumation grave	4051±30	2837- 2817 (3.2 %) 2667- 2471 (92.2 %)	2623- 2564 (38.8 %) 2532- 2494 (29.4 %)	AMS
13	24		LTL22025	161.712	Human bone (femur)	Inhumation grave	4142±45	2877- 2617 (89.7 %) 2609- 2580 (5.7 %)	2866- 2802 (22.4 %) 2771- 2714 (21.5 %) 2651- 2631 (6.8 %)	AMS

10

Fig. 10: Radiocarbon datings for the Iron, Middle and Early Bronze Age periods from Operation 1 and Operation 2 (calibration: OxCal v3.10 Bronk Ramsay 2005; r:5 sd:12 Atmospheric data from Reimer et al. 2020) الشكل ١: بيانات تأريخ الكربون المشع لفترات عصور الحديد والبرونز الوسيط والمبكر من العمليتين 1 و 2 (تمّت المعايرة بالاستعانة بكل من: OXCal v3.10 Bronk Ramsay 2005, وبيانات الغلاف الجوي r:5 sd:12 من (Reimer et al. 2020) are so far attested only in Tell Sheikh Hamad, 24 Ziyaret Tepe 25 and Gir-e Gomel, and can be considered alien to the Assyrian tradition. 26

If the coexistence of two different funerary rituals in the Neo-Assyrian period is rarely attested, the case of Gir-e Gomel is even more noteworthy as the site is

²⁴ Kreppner 2014.

²⁵ Matney et al. 2002; Wicke 2013.

²⁶ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 85–86; Morandi Bonacossi 2018, 71–72.

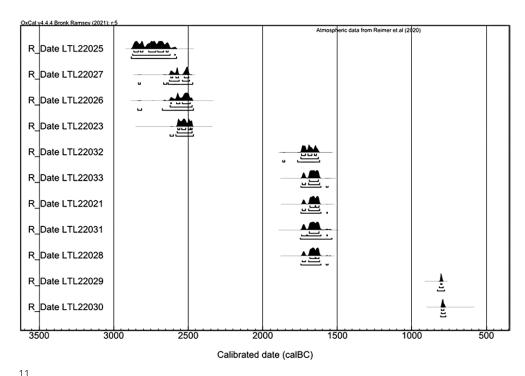


Fig. 11: Plot of the calibrated ¹⁴C dates from Gir-e Gomel, Operations 1 and 2 (based on OxCal v.4.4. Probability ranges 99.7 %, 95.4 % and 68.3 % are marked with bars below each result)

الشكل ۱۱: رسم بياني لتأريخ الكربون المشع ¹¹عفي گري گومل (تل جومل)، العمليات 1 و2 (وذلك استنادًا إلى OxCal v.4.4. وضمن نطاقات من الاحتمالات تراوحت بين 99.7% و95.4% و68.3% مُعلّمة بخطوط تحت كل نتيجة)

1 1

located in the core of Assyrian Empire, where it would be reasonable to expect the exclusive diffusion of the "Assyrian" inhumation burial custom. The limited burial goods found in the graves do not consist of prestige objects, but rather of a few items – mainly pottery vessels (and two cylinder seals) – belonging to the typical late Neo-Assyrian ceramic assemblage of the 8^{th} – 7^{th} centuries BC.²⁷

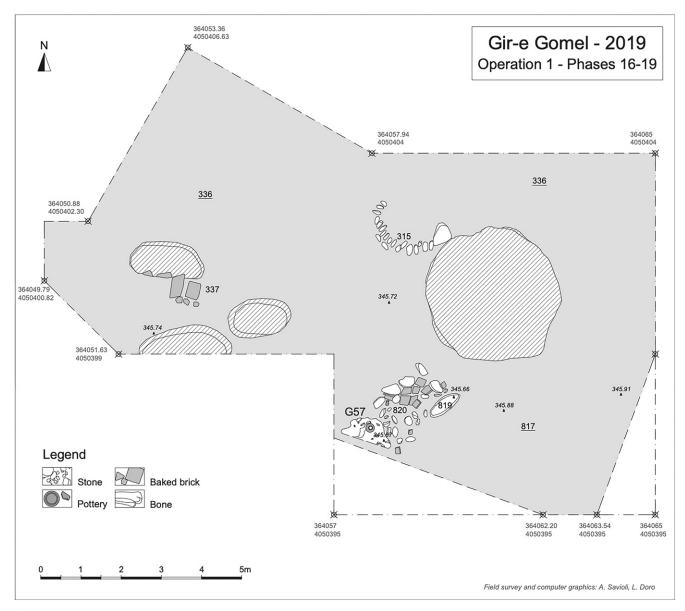
- Sex determination was possible only for three of the burials: two women and one unsexed sub-adult have been identified, suggesting that the *in situ* cremation burials might belong to deported foreign women and their children who had married Assyrians and wanted to be buried according to their traditional custom.²⁸
- The only Neo-Assyrian style inhumation burial found so far is of an adult male. This might further corroborate our hypothesis, although the limited number of burials excavated imposes caution until more data derived from the enlargement of the excavation area become available.
- The peculiarity of the Gir-e Gomel burials, that seemed to be placed in an open area, was confirmed by the 2019 field season, since no structures were uncovered on the trodden surface from which the graves were dug.

Late Bronze Age (Phases 16–19): stratigraphy, architecture, pottery and small finds

- As already observed in the previous field seasons, the occupation of this area in the Middle Assyrian and Mitanni periods is sporadic and represented only by trodden floors with few installations and accumulation layers (Fig. 12). Phases 16, 18 and 19 are characterised by trodden floors (SU 812, 830, 842) with some badly preserved installations (813, 814, 828, 829, 840) and a poorly preserved *tannur* (SU 838) used for bread production.
- In Phase 17 Operation 1 was an open area with a trodden surface featuring an installation and a jar burial. A Middle Assyrian cremation jar burial (G 57, Fig. 13 a) was found in the southern part of the excavated area. It had been laid in a pit (SU 826),

²⁷ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 83–86.

²⁸ For a more thorough discussion, see Morandi Bonacossi 2018, 72; Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 86.



12

Fig. 12: Operation 1, general plan of Late Bronze Age Phases 16–19

الشكل ١٢: العملية 1، مخطط عام لمراحل عصر البرونز المتأخر 16–19 surrounded by stones and baked bricks. The jar, in orange-buff colour common ware (SU 827), has a rounded body and base, short neck and slightly everted and rounded rim (Figs. 13 b. f, 14 f). The jar type is not particularly characteristic of the Middle Assyrian period, but a similar specimen was recovered from <u>Tell Mohammed Diyab.</u>²⁹ It contained the burnt remains of an unsexed sub-adult. On the top of the fill, a nipple beaker was found (Figs. 13 b. g, 14 g). The presence of this beaker type in Middle Assyrian graves is well attested for instance at Ashur (Grab 11020,³⁰ Gruft 12612,³¹ Grab 14354³²). In the jar also two bronze bracelets (Fig. 13 b. d–e) with parallels in Ashur (Grab 15071,³³ Gruft 12612,³⁴ 14688³⁵) and <u>Tell Sabi Abyad</u>³⁶ were also found together with a pomegranate

²⁹ Operation 3, Niveau 6, Tomb 1498 (Sauvage 2005, Figs. 2–3).

³⁰ Pedde 2015, Taf. 83 Kat-Nr. 106. 1.

³¹ Pedde 2015, Taf. 68. 12.

³² Pedde 2015, Taf. 78. 1 Kat-Nr. 95.

³³ Pedde 2015, Taf. 42, 6-7.

³⁴ Pedde 2015, Taf. 69. 17–18.

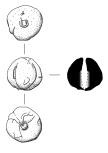
³⁵ Pedde 2015, Taf. 82 Kat-Nr. 105. 7.

³⁶ Akkermans - Smits 2008, Fig. 3. 21.





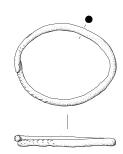
a b





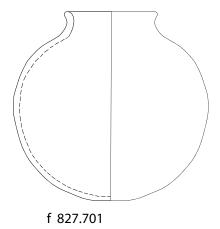


d 841.703



e 841.702







g 841.701



13

FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH DEC	PARALLELS
f	827.701	17	М	sand, chaff	SS/SS	NT/SM	7.5 YR 7/4 P	7.5 YR 7/4 P - 2.5YR 6/6	W	Sauvage 2005, Figs. 2–3
g	841.701	17	М	calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5 YR 7/6 RY	5 YR 7/6 RY	W	Pedde 2015, Taf. 83 Kat-Nr. 106. 1; Taf. 68. 12; Taf. 78. 1 Kat-Nr. 95

shaped bead/pendant in a poor state of preservation made of vitreous material (Fig. 13 b–c; parallels in Ashur, Gruft 14630³⁷), which might have been burnt with the body.

Installation 820 was located north-east of G 57, consisting of several large stones (approximately 0.5 m across), set in a roughly rectangular layout measuring 2.15 m (north-south) by 1.25 m (east-west) with smaller pebbles and five fired bricks. Nearby – immediately NE of this paved area – an oval pit (SU 819) filled with ash, probably connected to installation 820, was found. These two features are associated with trodden floor 817.

To sum up, the LBA period is poorly attested in Operation 1, but the presence of a cremation jar burial in this phase too is remarkable and confirms the use of this part of the site as a burial ground also in the Middle Assyrian period.

Middle Bronze Age (Phases 20–26): stratigraphy, architecture, pottery and small finds

- As in the aforementioned phases, also in the MBA the area of Operation 1 was used as a burial ground, as indicated by the excavations of the previous years.³⁸ The work carried out during the 2019 excavation campaign has shown that the MBA funerary activity developed in seven phases, consisting of a series of superimposed trodden floors (SU 340, 352, 347, 348=842, 362=844/846, 850, 862) from which the tombs were cut.
- Several burials have been excavated in the previous campaigns, three simple pit burials (G 41, G 43 and G 52, respectively belonging to Phases 21, 23, 24), four baked-brick vaulted chamber graves (G 21, G 53, G 54, G 55) and baked-brick vaulted chamber G 44 (all belonging to Phase 26a), together with some installations that were possibly connected to funerary/ritual activities (Fig. 15).
- After the 2019 season, the interpretation of G 44 has changed. G 44 is a structure 4.15 m long and 2.26 m wide, covered by a barrel vault, built with a fine construction technique based on radially arranged bricks.³⁹ A baked-brick enclosure wall surrounded the vaulted chamber, guaranteeing the stability of the whole structure. At approximately the centre of the long eastern and western walls, the chamber grave was equipped with two triangular openings, built at about 1 m above the chamber's floor.
- The absolute lack of human remains, the presence of seventeen closed-form vessels of various dimensions concentrated along the western chamber side, 40 and the presence of a possible second doorway in the south-western wall of the chamber are all elements that in 2018 suggested that this vaulted space was only the antechamber of a multi-roomed hypogeum. Since no skeletal remains were found in the chamber, it seemed very likely that the dead were buried in a second adjoining and probably vaulted room made accessible by what seemed to have been a passageway in the structure's south-western corner. Following this hypothesis, one aim of the 2019 excavation campaign was the comprehension of G 44: for this purpose, the excavation area was extended to the east, west and south. As briefly mentioned above, Phases 20–23 are represented by trodden floors and accumulation layers, with the presence in Phases 21 and 23 of two simple pit burials (G 41 and G 43). 41
- A burial was found in Phase 24, in addition to G 52 uncovered in 2018. Simple pit burial G 61, belonging to a 1–2-year-old child, was found close to G 44 in the southern side of the excavated area. The pit cut was poorly preserved and the bones and grave

ZOrA 16, 2023, § 1-105

³⁷ Pedde 2015, Taf. 60. 64, 91.

³⁸ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88–99.

³⁹ For a more detailed description of G 44, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88–92.

⁴⁰ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 92–94.

⁴¹ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88.

goods were uncovered scattered on the surface (Fig. 16 j). The grave goods consisted of four small bronze bracelets (Fig. 16 a–c. h), a bronze pendant in the shape of a pine cone (Fig. 16 d. h), eighteen small pierced shells (Fig. 16 g–h), a barrel-shaped white stone bead (Fig. 16 f. h) and a carnelian bead (Fig. 16 e. h). A medium-sized Khabur Ware jar (Figs. 16 h. i, 17 i) dated to the MBA II, with short neck, everted rim and channel base, was also recovered. It has five brown-black coloured stripes painted on the neck and shoulder.

- The presence of another simple pit burial underlines the coexistence of two types of burial in the MBA necropolis at Gir-e Gomel: baked-brick funerary hypogea and simple pit burials.
- A trodden floor (SU 850) abutting a badly preserved installation (SU 849) and the lower part of the fill of the foundation trench of G 44 (SU 851) are the only features characterising Phase 25.
- Phase 26, which is divided into two sub-phases b—a (b is the earlier and a the later) is the most remarkable, as it contains the vaulted structure G 44 (Sub-phase 26 a) and Grave G 60 (Sub-phase 26 b).
- A large foundation trench was dug to build the fired-brick vaulted structure 44 of Sub-phase 26 b; the wall supporting the barrel vault abutted the cut. The construction trench was filled with a compact and homogeneous reddish coloured clayey silt, many potsherds and charcoal fragments. The large quantity of $3^{\rm rd}$ millennium pottery in this fill shows that the foundation trench cut earlier strata, as confirmed by the discovery of G 63, dated to the late $3^{\rm rd}$ millennium BC, immediately south of G 44. The excavation of the G 44 foundation trench cut the lower part of the legs of the skeleton in G 63 (see below).
- During the 2019 campaign, the area close to the possible doorway in the southwest corner of G 44 was thoroughly investigated and it became clear that the opening in the wall was not a passageway, but rather a robber's breach dug through the G 44 western wall in antiquity. Several fallen baked bricks were found in the chamber near the opening in the wall and its irregular edges clearly showed that the breach in the wall was opened from the outside of the structure, breaking the bricks inwards (Fig. 18). Our previous interpretation that a door gave access to a second adjoining room, which was the actual burial chamber, 42 can no longer be taken into consideration. G 44 is a single-room building.
- The presence of a rich assemblage of seventeen vessels in the structure, probably used to contain food offerings to the deceased,⁴³ and the absolute absence of human bones⁴⁴ suggest that the chamber was not used as a grave. It is therefore proposed that G 44 was a funerary shrine built within an elite necropolis at the site's southern edge, and was used for ritual activity connected to the burial of the deceased and the gathering of food offerings for ancestor worship. It is also possible that the structure was used to prepare the bodies for burial before they were moved to the graves located around it, such as G 60. In this case, the vessels might have contained perfumed oils and ointments for the funerary treatment of the corpses. However, the large number of vessels placed in the chamber, originally aligned along its western wall,⁴⁵ advises caution in this respect. At this stage of the excavation, the hypothesis of a funerary

⁴² Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 94-96.

⁴³ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 92–94, Figs. 23–24.

⁴⁴ Baked-brick vaulted subterranean chambers like G 44 normally host multiple burials (see below G 60, which could not be entirely excavated and hosted at least fifteen individuals). If G 44 was used as a funerary hypogeum like G 60, thousands of human bones would probably have been present in the chamber. It is difficult to imagine that all of them were removed or entirely destroyed by decay processes, especially because the bones of the deceased individuals buried in the nearby G 60 vaulted chamber were well preserved. Although bone manipulation practices and the partial removal of human bones from a grave to re-bury them elsewhere are well known from MBA contexts (e.g. Kharobi – Buccellati 2017, 170), to our knowledge no case of total removal of thousands of bones from a multiple burial has so far been recorded for the period.

⁴⁵ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 92-94, Figs. 23-24.

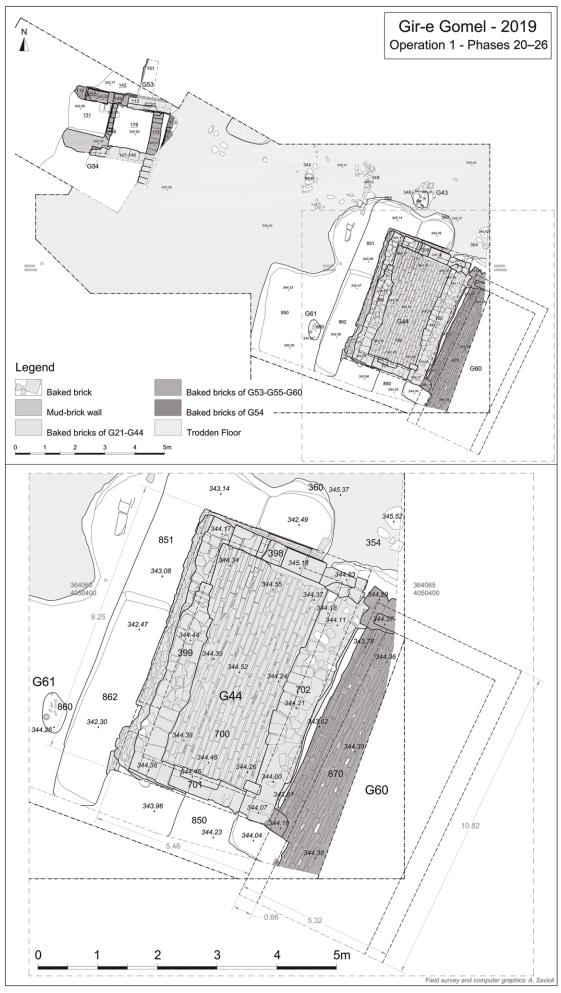


Fig. 15: Operation 1, general plan of Middle Bronze Age Phases 20–26

الشكل ١٥: العملية 1، مخطط عام لمراحل عصر البرونز الوسيط 20–26

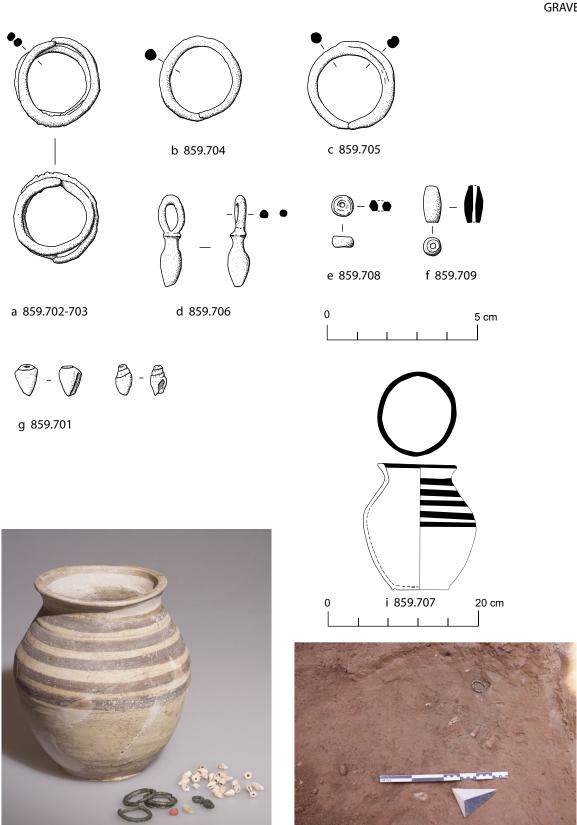


FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
i	859.707	24	Н	limestone	SS/SS	SM/SM	10 YR 8/3 VPB	10 YR 8/3 VPB	W	painted	

j

h 16



Fig. 18: Operation 1, detail of the robber's trench in the wall of G 44

الشكل ۱۸: العملية 1، تفاصيل حفرة السرقة في الجدار G 44

18

chapel used to perform ritual activities and collect food offerings for the deceased seems more plausible. The shrine was buried close to other burials and was marked at the surface by a corbelled entrance façade, the top of which was originally visible and thus functioned as a marker, and accessed by means of an entrance shaft.⁴⁶ These features show that structure 44 played a particular role within the MBA II graveyard and was repeatedly entered until its shaft entrance was closed.

- During the 2019 field season, a new earlier baked-brick chamber grave (G 60) was discovered immediately to the east of G 44. G 60 was constructed with the same building technique as G 44, though without the presence of a surrounding wall, and contained numerous burials and a rich funerary assemblage.
- Grave 60 was abutted by G 44, which is nearly but not perfectly parallel to it (Figs. 15. 19 a). Unfortunately, a large part of the G 60 vaulted structure remains beyond the eastern limit of excavation, including the entrance. However, it was possible to estimate that the chamber was at least 4 m long and 2 m wide. A robber's breach in the brick structure discovered during the excavation close to Operation 1's southern limit gave access to the tomb. To prevent the possible collapse of the funerary chamber's barrel vault under the weight of the archaeological stratification still covering a large part of it, only the southern part of the grave was excavated.
- The structure is similar to G 44, although the building technique is coarser. The vault was built using a radial technique and is composed of about 20 courses of baked bricks (Fig. 19 a–b. d). This technique consisted of a series of rows of bricks, radially arranged, parallel to the axis of the vault. The first line of bricks was made to slope inwards towards the arch span (the distance between the piers) by the insertion of small stones or potsherds on their external sides. Starting with both springers at the same time, the process was repeated on both sides until the arch was closed at the top by bricks in a vertical position. ⁴⁷ Large oval stones were stacked in the wall at the beginning

⁴⁶ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88-90.

⁴⁷ Besenval 1984, 48–49; van Beek 1987, 84.

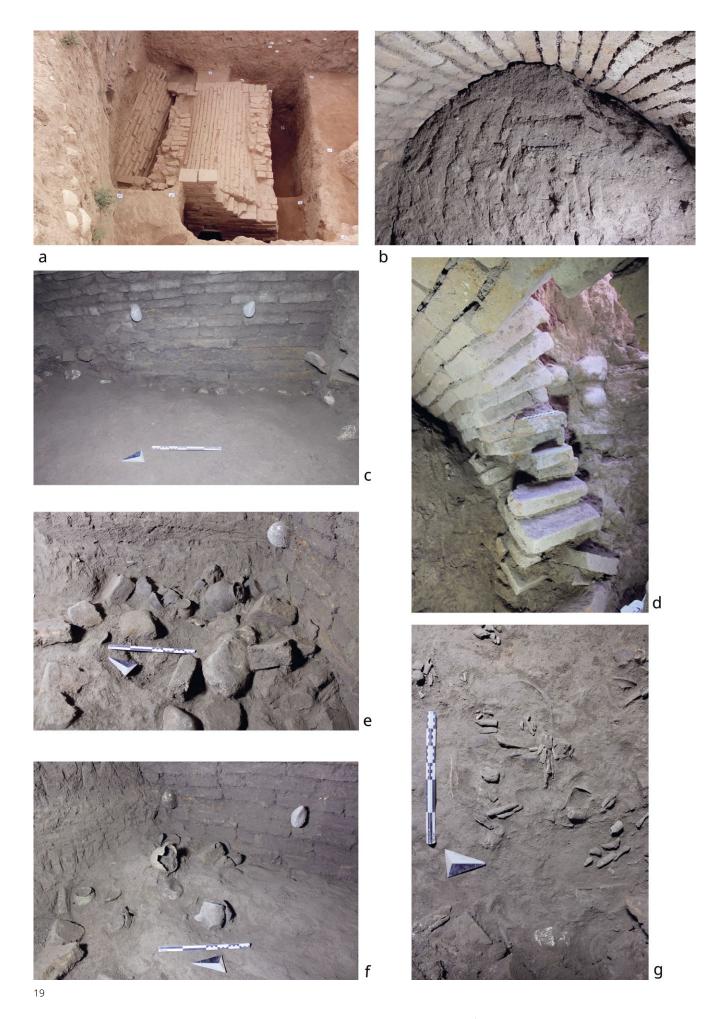


Fig. 19: Operation 1, a) general view of G 44 and G 60; b. d) vault of G 60; c) foundation stones and large oval stones on the wall of G 60; e–f) vessels inside G 60; g) human bones inside G 60, Phase 26

الشكل a:۱۹) منظر عام لـ G 44 و G 60 (d.b) عقد c G 60) أحجار الأساس وحجارة بيضاويّة كبيرة على الجدار f-e ،G 60) أوعية موجودة داخل g ،G 60) عظام بشريّة موجودة داخل G 60 ،المرحلة 26

of the vault as in G 44 (Fig. 19 c. f). An enclosing wall is not present in G 60 and the oval stones were found only in the eastern structure's wall. Small pebbles were used to fill the gaps between brick courses; in G 44 potsherds were used.

- Soil-like material filled the chamber up to the vault (Fig. 19 b). The upper part of the fill (SU 861), about 50 cm thick, was soft and dark grey and contained some intrusive Hellenistic potsherds, the presence of which is certainly related to the robber's shaft that was dug through the south-western wall of the chamber, thus giving an indication on the period in which the tomb was (at least partially) looted.
- Underneath it, a more reddish and compact layer filled the grave for 60 cm (SU 863). From this layer numerous baked bricks were recovered, some complete and others broken. Their presence is certainly associated with the breach opened by the robbers to loot the chamber. 48
- The third fill layer in G 60 is SU 864, a hard silty brown deposit with many pottery sherds (Fig. 19 e–f). Over thirty vessels were distributed in at least two levels; some of them were complete and others broken. The majority of the vases have closed forms (small and medium jars, Figs. 20. 21 f–g; 22 o. 23) and were concentrated mainly in the eastern side of the grave. Some beakers were also found; one of these, with a corrugated side wall, is dated to the late MBA I–MBA IIA (Figs. 22 e. o; 23 e). The dating of the pottery from G 60 confirms its earlier chronology with respect to G 44. Two shallow bowls were found in the western part of the grave (Figs. 22 i. 23 i).⁴⁹ Some of the broken vessels are still undergoing conservation treatment, so it is possible that the number of complete vessels will increase in the future.
- In addition to the pottery vessels, two rounded carnelian beads (Fig. 22 k–l. o), a shell disc-shaped bead (Fig. 22 m), a fragmentary earring composed of a bronze ring with a rounded carnelian bead (Fig. 22 j) and a poorly preserved half of a haematite cylinder seal (Fig. 22 n–o) were found in the grave. 50
- The majority of the rather poorly preserved human bones brought to light in G 60 were present in the lower fill layer (SU 865); these human remains were not articulated and were distributed in several clusters (Fig. 19 g). They belonged to at least 15 individuals: 4 adult males, 2 adult females, 3 undetermined adults and 6 sub-adults. When the robbers entered the burial, they did not scatter the human remains. The presence of bone clusters might indicate that they were originally deposited in bags/containers made of perishable material. It is thus possible that the G 60 chamber was used as a secondary deposition grave. The continuation of the excavation will provide us with a better comprehension of the burial and the funerary ritual performed in G 60.
- From the lower layer two long-bone fragments were collected for 14 C dating: they have yielded calibrated dates of 1750 to 1534 BC 51 and 1777 to 1599 BC 52 (both 95.4% probability; Figs. 10. 11). The radiocarbon determinations confirm the MBA II dating of G 60 indicated by the pottery analysis.
- The bottom of Grave 60 was composed of a reddish and compact deposit (SU 867), very similar to the floor of G 44. Underneath the eastern wall of G 60, a stone foundation (SU 868) consisting of twelve rounded stones measuring 10-12 cm was uncovered (Fig. 19 c).
- The discovery of a new vaulted chamber grave containing multiple burials and pottery vessels highlights the importance of the Operation 1 MBA elite necropolis.

⁴⁸ Although an abundant pottery assemblage was found in G 60, no metal objects have been retrieved so far.

⁴⁹ For descriptions and parallels of the G 60 vessels, see Figs. 20. 21. 22. 23.

⁵⁰ On the seal a standing figure with a long robe and raised arms is represented. This figure faces what might have been a second standing person or some kind of lengthy object, e.g. a standard.

⁵¹ CeDaD n. LTL22031.

⁵² CeDaD n. LTL22032

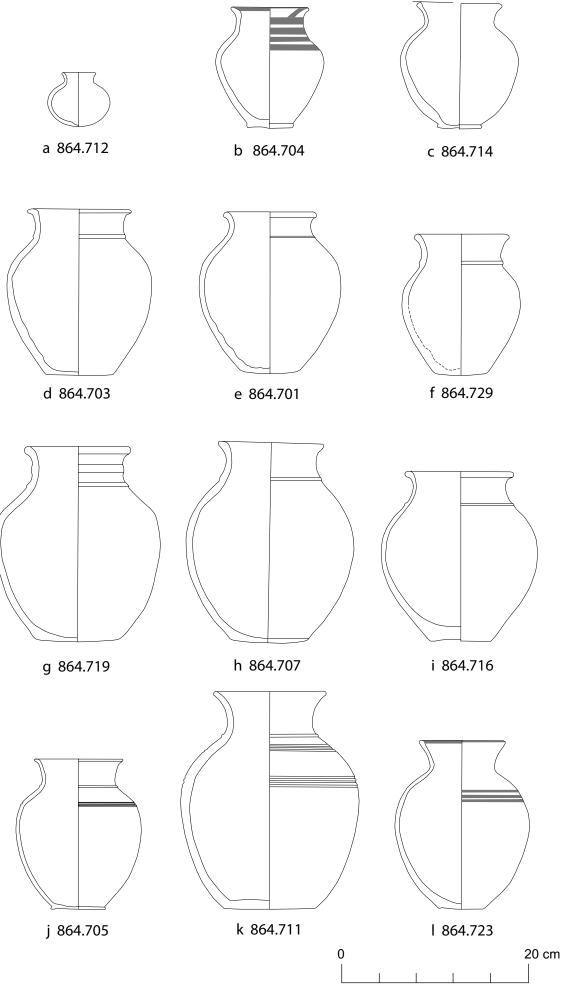
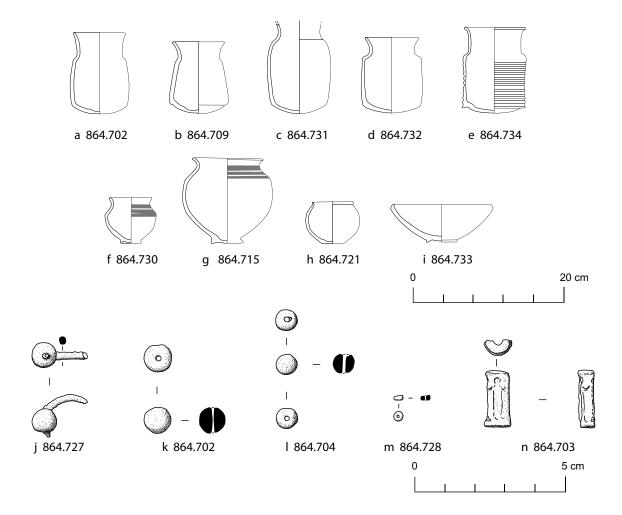


FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/ EXT SURF	INT/ EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
а	864.712	26 a	Н	calcite	SS/SS	NT/B	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	W		
b	864.704	26 a	M	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	NT/SM	7.5 YR 8/4 P	5 YR 7/6 RY	W	painted band on rim, neck and shoulder	
С	864.714	26 a	Н	limestone	SS/S	NT/B	10 YR 5/2 GB	10 YR 6/2 LBG	W		
d	864.703	26 a	Н	mica	SS/SS	NT/B	10 YR 7/2 LG	10 YR 5/2 GB	W	rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 32.D; McMahon 2009, Pl. 53.3–4
e	864.701	26 a	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	В/В	10 YR 5/2 GB	10 YR 5/2 GB	W	rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 32.D; McMahon 2009, Pl. 53.3–4
f	864.729	26 a	Н	mica	SS/SS	В/В	7.5 YR 4/1 DG	7.5 YR 5/1 G	W	rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 32.D; McMahon 2009, Pl. 53.3–4
g	864.719	26 a	Н	calcite	SS/SS	SM/B	2.5 Y 7/2 LG	2.5 Y 7/2 LG	W	rib	
h	864.707	26 a	Н	calcite	SS/SS	NT/B	10 YR 5/1 G	10 YR 7/2 LG	W	rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 32.D; McMahon 2009, Pl. 53.3–4
i	864.716	26 a	Н	calcite	SS/S	NT/B	10 YR 7/3 VPB	10 YR 7/2 LG	W	rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 32.D; McMahon 2009, Pl. 53.3–4
j	864.705	26 a	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/B	10 YR 8/3 VPB	10 YR 8/4 VPB	W	grooved + rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 26.B; Haller 1954, Taf. 1.al; Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 3.1; Orsi 2011, Tav. 198.553; McMahon 2009, Pl. 54.11; Hamlin 1974, Fig. 1.11
k	864.711	26 a	Н	calcite, sand	SS/SS	SM/B	10 YR 7/2 LG	10 YR 7/2 LG	W	grooved + rib	Koliński 2000, Pl. 26.B; Haller 1954, Taf. 1.al; Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 3.1; Orsi 2011, Tav. 198.553; McMahon 2009, Pl. 54.11; Hamlin 1974, Fig. 1.11
I	864.723	26 a	М	limestone	SS/SS	SM/SM	2.5 YR 6/8 LR	5 YR 6/8 RY	W	painted bands on the shoulder	Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 4.13; McMahon 2009, Pl. 50; Frane 1996, Fig. 97.1; Schmidt 2013, Taf. 262, K2514, K2517

21

Fig. 21: Pottery descriptions of Fig. 20

الشكل ۲۱: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ۲۰





o 22

Fig. 22: Operation 1, a–i. o) beakers, other vessels and j–n) additional grave goods from G 60 الشكل ۲۲: العملية 1، o.i–a) أكواب، وأوعية متنوعة وز–n) بعض اللقى الجنائزية من G 60

FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/ EXT SURF	INT/ EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
a	864.702	26 a	М	calcite	SS/SS	SM/B	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	W		Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 2.5; Mallowan 1947, Pl. LXXXII.12; Hamlin 1974, Pl. I.5a–b; Eidem 2020, Pl. 3.1, 3
b	864.709	26 a	M	calcite, mica	SS/SS	SM/B		10 YR 7/6 Y	W		Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 2.5; Mallowan 1947, Pl. LXXXII.12; Hamlin 1974, Pl. I.5a–b; Eidem 2020, Pl. 3.1, 3
C	864.731	26 a	М	mica	SS/SS	SM/ SM	10 YR 8/4 VPB	2.5 Y 8/4 PY	W		Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 2.5; Mallowan 1947, Pl. LXXXII.12; Hamlin 1974, Pl. I.5a–b; Eidem 2020, Pl. 3.1, 3
d	864.732	26 a	M	limestone	SS/SS	NT/SM	10 YR 8/4 VPB	10 YR 8/3 VPB	W		Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Fig. 2.5; Mallowan 1947, Pl. LXXXII.12; Hamlin 1974, Pl. I.5a–b; Eidem 2020, Pl. 3.1, 3
е	864.734	26 a	Н	sand	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5 Y 8/2 PY	5 Y 8/2 PY	W	grooved	
f	864.730	26 a	M	calcite	SS/SS	SM/ SM	10 YR 8/2 VPB	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W	painted bands on the shoulder	McMahon 2009, Pl. 45.11; Koliński 2013, Fig. 4; Schmidt 2013, Taf. 402, K4011
g	864.715	26 a	М	limestone	SS/SS	SM/ SM	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	W	painted bands on the shoulder	McMahon 2009, Pl. 31.20; Schmidt 2013, Taf. 402, K4012–4014
h	864.721	26 a	M		SS/SS	SM/ SM	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	2.5 Y 8/3 PY	W		Koliński 2000, Pl. 13.C; Orsi 2011, Tav. 195.509; McMahon 2009, Pl. 45.15, 18, 20; Frane 1996, Fig. 68.1; Schmidt 2013, Taf. 172, K1531
i	864.733	26 a	М	limestone	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5 YR 7/6 RY	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W		Frane 1996, Fig. 8.2

23

Fig. 23: Pottery descriptions of Fig. 22

الشكل ٢٣: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ٢٢

Early Bronze Age (Phase 27): stratigraphy, architecture, pottery and small finds

- The importance of Gir-e Gomel in the mid-late 3rd millennium BC has already been stressed by the results of the extensive⁵³ and intensive⁵⁴ surveys and the unearthing in the previous excavation campaigns of several graves beneath the monumental MBA necropolis, one of which contained prestige burial goods.⁵⁵ Excavation had already shown that the Operation 1 burial ground (Fig. 24) had been intensively used from the Late Ninevite 5 period to the Akkadian period (2700/2600–2150 BC).⁵⁶
- ¹⁴C dates obtained from human bones taken from three different graves excavated in previous campaigns (G 48, G 51 and G 24)⁵⁷ confirmed the dating obtained through pottery analysis (Figs. 10. 11).
- G 48 is dated to between 2623 and 2464 BC⁵⁸ and the two dates obtained for G 51 are 2676–2463 BC⁵⁹ and 2667–2461 BC.⁶⁰ It is interesting that the dates obtained from G 48 and G 51, which belong to two different sub-phases, since they were located one above the other, are roughly contemporaneous, indicating an intense use of the burial ground in this period.
- The third date obtained from G 24, 2877–2617 BC, is slightly earlier than we expected on the basis of the pottery parallels, that date to the end of the Ninevite 5 period. The position of G 24, at least one metre deeper than the Phase 29 burials, also indicates that it could be earlier than the others.
- During the 2019 campaign, a large amount of $3^{\rm rd}$ millennium BC potsherds (about 1,200 specimens) was recovered from the foundation trench of the MBA shrine G 44, but the only *in situ* find that can be dated to the $3^{\rm rd}$ millennium BC is Grave 63 (Figs. 24. 25 a–c). This burial was uncovered immediately south of shrine G 44, where the foundation trench of the latter has cut and entirely removed the lower part of the body of G 63. It is the burial of an over 50 years old male. The skeleton was covered by eight rounded stones and a baked brick and a half, which were irregularly arranged and covered the lower part of the body (legs and pelvis; Fig. 25 a).
- The body was lying on its back with the right arm bent and its hand on the right shoulder, the left arm folded on the chest, and the skull laying on its right side, facing south-east. The lower limbs were bent, with an acute angle between lower leg and thigh, but only the upper parts of the former were preserved.
- The burial contained two vessels, placed west of the skull, a beaker and a small jar. The beaker (Figs. 25 d. l; 26 d) has a cylindrical shape, rounded base and beaded rim. Similar specimens have been found in Kuyunjik-Nineveh (Level VIA, Area KG)⁶¹ and in Tell Brak (phase M/N)⁶² in Akkadian-Post Akkadian levels. The small jar (Figs. 25 e. l; 26 e) has a rounded body, short and straight neck with thickened rim and rounded base and has parallels in Tell Brak (Phase M).⁶³ The grave goods consisted of a bronze dagger, two gold earrings, and two gold hair-rings. A small obsidian arrowhead might not have been part of the funerary assemblage (see below).

⁵³ For a preliminary overview on the survey results, see Morandi Bonacossi – Iamoni 2015.

⁵⁴ On the Tell Gomel Archaeological Survey, see Simi 2019; Simi 2020.

⁵⁵ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, Graves 24, 45 and 47. For the complete description of the 3rd millennium BC graves, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 99–111.

⁵⁶ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 111.

⁵⁷ For a description of the three graves, see Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 99–111.

⁵⁸ CeDaD n. LTL22023.

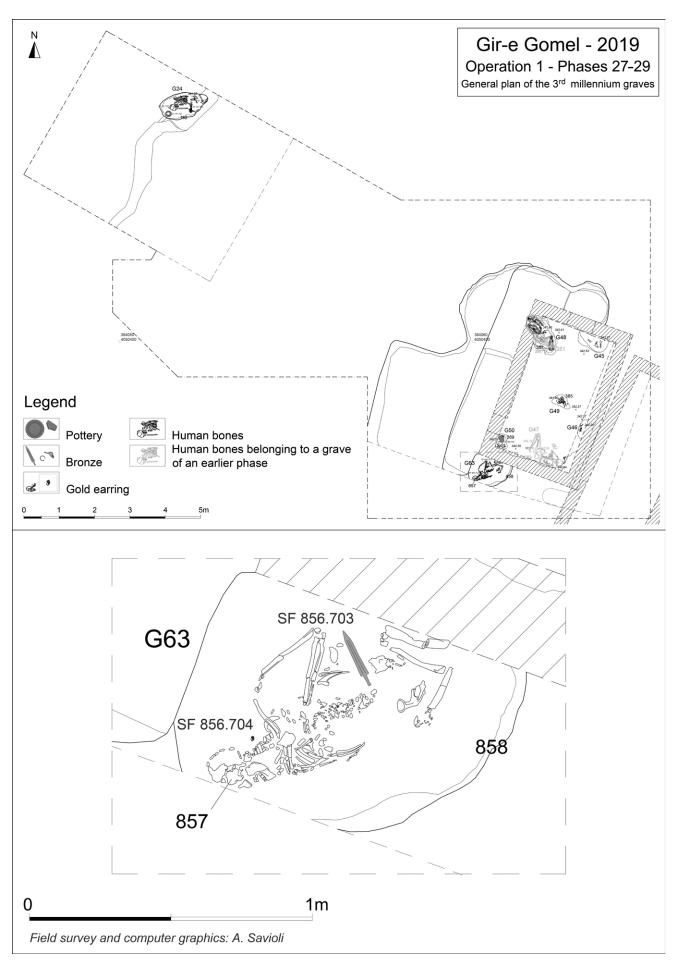
⁵⁹ CeDaD n. LTL22026.

⁶⁰ CeDaD n. LTL22027.

⁶¹ McMahon 1998, Fig.7. 2; Orsi 2011, Tav. 100. 2.

⁶² Oates et al. 2001, Fig. 421. 687.

⁶³ Oates et al. 2001, Fig. 450. 1373.









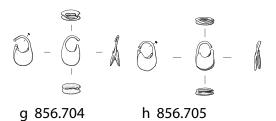


k 856.708

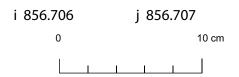
b

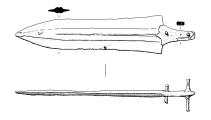












f 856.703

0 20 cm

FIG.	SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH DEC	PARALLELS
d	856.702	27	М	sand, chaff	SS/SS	NT/SM	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W	McMahon 1998, Fig. 7. 2; Orsi 2011, Tav. 100. 2; Oates et al. 2001, Fig. 421. 687
е	856.701	27	М	calcite	SS/SS	SM/B	2.5 Y 7/2 LG	2.5 Y 7/2 LG	W	Oates et al. 2001, Fig. 450. 1373

26

25

- The bronze dagger (Fig. 25 f. l), which was found on the left side of the pelvis (Fig. 25 b), measures $24 \text{ cm} \times 3.85 \text{ cm}$, has a leaf-shaped pointed blade with double longitudinal ribbing and is almost rhomboidal in section. The tang has an elongated trapezoidal shape, rectangular in section and the rivets used to fix the bronze dagger to the wooden handle were well preserved. This dagger belongs to Maxwell-Hyslop's Type $10,^{64}$ Bianchi and Franke's Type $D2^{65}$ and Guernez's Type P6.A.⁶⁶ Parallels can be found at Tell Brak (Phase M)⁶⁷ and Mari (Grave $1023)^{68}$ in Late Akkadian contexts.
- The gold earrings (Fig. 25 g–h. l), measuring ca. $2.2 \text{ cm} \times 1.4 \text{ cm}$, were placed on each side of the skull where the ears were located. They were made of two crescent shaped elements welded together on the lower part, while the upper part is a semi-circular loop. Similar gold earrings have been found also at <u>Yorgan Tepe</u> (Grave 5A, test pit L4),⁶⁹ and Mari (Graves 1082 and 1066)⁷⁰ in contexts dated to the Akkadian-Ur III period. The two hair-rings (Fig. 25 i–j. l) were found under the right side of the skull, close to one of the above-described earrings. They have a spiral shape with thickened edges and measure ca. $1.1 \text{ cm} \times 0.8 \text{ cm}$. Similar objects are attested also from <u>Nippur</u> (Burial 14, skeleton 2, Level XIIIA–C, dated to the Late Akkadian Period)⁷¹ and Mari (Grave 1082, dated from 2350 to the 2000 BC, "époque des Shakkanakku").⁷²
- The tiny obsidian arrowhead (Fig. 25 k. l) was found near the left side of the pelvis, at the height of the kidneys. It measures $2.5 \text{ cm} \times 1 \text{ cm}$ and is a bifacial retouched projectile point with a broad tang. Arrowheads of this type (called "Nineveh type") are common in Southern Anatolia and Northern Syria, but seemed to be less attested in Northern Iraq. The specimens published from Nineveh are dated to the end of the 3rd millennium BC. The presence of a dagger in the grave suggests that the buried individual was a warrior belonging to the local urban elite.
- Putting together the data furnished by the grave goods and personal ornaments found in G 63, a dating to the very end of the Akkadian or the Post-Akkadian period can be proposed. This allows us to extend the period of use of the EBA burial ground from the late Ninevite V period (EMT 2)⁷⁹ to the end of the 3rd millennium (EMT 4/5) and to emphasise that it was continuously used for at least 600–700 years.
- The richness of the Grave 63 funerary assemblage illustrates once again that the $3^{\rm rd}$ millennium BC cemetery found in Operation 1 includes elite burials, which were mingled with simple graves devoid of grave goods, thus mirroring the existence of a stratified EBA social fabric.⁸⁰

⁶⁴ Maxwell-Hyslop 1946, 13–14, Pl. 1. 10.

⁶⁵ Bianchi - Franke 2011, 216.

⁶⁶ Guernez 2008, 489-490, Pl. 637-643.

⁶⁷ Oates et al. 2001, Fig. 476. 3; McDonald et al. 2001, Fig. 259.

⁶⁸ Jean-Marie 1999, Pl. 209. 2.

⁶⁹ Starr 1939, Pl. 55. I.

⁷⁰ Jean-Marie 1999, Pls. 242. 6 and 229.13.

⁷¹ McMahon 2006, Pl. 146. 2.

⁷² Jean-Marie 1999, Pl. 242. 16-19.

⁷³ Our anthropologist, Alessandro Canci, suggested that this arrowhead might have been the actual cause of the man's death.

⁷⁴ Thomalsky 2019, 254.

⁷⁵ Schmidt 1996, Taf. 33. 446, Taf. II. 446.

⁷⁶ Mallowan 1947, Pl. LIII. 12.

⁷⁷ Thomalsky 2019, 254. This is probably a consequence of the dearth of systematic archaeological research in this region.

⁷⁸ Thomalsky 2019, 254; Gut et al. 2001, 87, Fig. 161–163.

⁷⁹ See Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 103–111. For the Early Middle-Tigris regional periodisation adopted here, see Pfälzner – Qasim 2018, 69–70.

⁸⁰ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 99–111.

Operation 2

- During the 2019 KIGAP field season, excavations were continued also in Operation 2, located on the eastern fringe of the lower town of Gir-e Gomel at the location of an intended fish pond (Fig. 3) 81 , where, in the 2018 season, the MBA Building 1 was partly brought to light. 82 The excavation was continued with the twofold aim of obtaining a more complete plan of the building and understanding its history and function within the MBA settlement. To reach these goals, the excavation area was extended by 8 m to the N and 16 m on the E–W axis, thus covering the whole area of the planned fishpond.
- Below, we describe the stratigraphy and architecture of the fourteen phases investigated, spanning from the Parthian and Neo-Assyrian periods to the MBA, and discuss the pottery assemblages and the small finds recovered.

The Parthian and Neo-Assyrian periods (Phases 4–10): stratigraphy and architecture

- The Parthian levels (Phases 4–7, 83 Period 6, Fig. 2) were uncovered during the 2018 campaign in two sectors of Operation 2, namely in the main area measuring 11.5 m \times 27 m, and in Area West (2.5 m \times 7.5 m), located at the trench's western edge on a surface where excavations were not carried out in 2019. However, here we will correlate the phases brought to light in the main area and Area West to provide a complete picture of the Parthian period settlement.
- Excavation in the main area showed a weak occupation, hinting at its use as an open area for craft and domestic activities. Such use is suggested by the organization of the settled surface, characterised by the absence of buildings and the presence of working benches with stone foundations, mainly located in the western part of the main area in Phases 4 and 5. In Phase 5, Area West was occupied by two structures with stone foundations abutted by a trodden floor. Due to its shape and size, the northern structure built of medium-sized stones and fired bricks and covered by mud-brick debris was interpreted as a foundation platform that could have held a large building, no longer preserved.
- While Phase 6 does not present changes in the layout and function of the main area, in Area West, only disconnected architectural remains were found. A new arrangement and use of the space are attested in Phase 7. In the main area, the presence of *tannurs* in the north-west indicates activities related to food preparation, as also suggested by dumping pits in the north-eastern and south-western sectors containing animal bones and pottery sherds. The architectural layout of Area West was centred on two partially uncovered houses Buildings 2 and 3 and an open-air water drainage channel between them.⁸⁴ These buildings and the drainage channel suggest use as dwelling area, which would well fit into the picture of the Parthian set-

⁸¹ In 2013 the village inhabitants dug a fishpond into the site's archaeological deposits, forming a square pit measuring about 40 m × 40 m. This dig produced a large quantity of 3rd and 2rd millennium BC pottery, which was collected during the intensive survey carried out at the site (Simi 2020). The abundance of EBA and MBA ceramics made it the right spot to start investigations of the site's eastern lower town (Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 114).

⁸² The building extended over the trench's entire area and beyond the excavation limits (Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018. 111).

⁸³ Phases 1 to 3 correspond to the topsoil (Phase 1), followed by two phases of modern occupation of the area.

⁸⁴ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 114–117, Fig. 37.

tlements in Northern Mesopotamia known from excavations at Tell Sheikh Hamad⁸⁵ and Ashur.⁸⁶

In the Neo-Assyrian period/IA II (Phases 8–10, Period 9, Fig. 2), this part of the settlement was used as an open area. As the 2018 field season results show,⁸⁷ the discovery of a "bowl-type kiln", a pottery basin and dumps containing two pieces of iron slag point to the practice of metallurgy. Thanks to the Neo-Assyrian levels uncovered in the northern extension of Operation 2 in 2019, we can now establish that the area also hosted domestic activities. The two *tannurs* recovered in the central-western and south-western sectors of the 2019 extension were associated with dumping pits filled with ashy deposits and pottery with animal bones hinting at food preparation. The *tannurs* were in use from the earliest Neo-Assyrian phase 10 and were associated with poorly preserved working benches located in the western half of the northern extension of the area. The installations consisted of stone foundations with baked brick fragments, probably reused from the MBA levels, and were in use as working platforms together with the *tannurs*.

Pottery and small finds

- The ceramic repertoire from the Parthian phases consists mainly of closed forms and few open ones. The diagnostics indicate the general homogeneity of pottery types, with the presence of plates (Figs. 27 a. 28 a)⁸⁸ and jars with double rims (Figs. 27 c–d. 28 c–d)⁸⁹, characterised by a mineral-tempered fabric.
- Pottery from the Neo-Assyrian levels consists mainly of rim sherds belonging to closed forms and bases. The occurrence of shallow convex-wall bowls and flaring-wall bowls is an addition to the usual storage jar repertoire already recorded from the phases excavated in the 2018 campaign. Parallels with Mesopotamian sites confirm dating to the 8th and 7th centuries BC, which is indicated by the hammer-head rim bowls (Figs. 29 a. 30 a) and short neck jars (Figs. 29 d. 30 d), 1 with parallels from Ashur to the Syrian Upper Euphrates Valley. Other forms, such as flaring-wall bowls (Figs. 29 b. 30 b) and convex bowls with simple rim (Figs. 29 c. 30 c), find parallels in the eastern Mesopotamian regions of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and in the Assyrian heartland.
- To sum up, in the Parthian period, the northern extension of the excavated area shows the occurrence of installations related to domestic activities, integrating and confirming the data from the 2018 fieldwork season. In the same period, the western sector of the eastern fringes of the lower town was occupied by Buildings 2 and 3, characterised by 1 m wide mud-brick walls on stone foundations. ⁹⁴ The size of the buildings' walls attests to the presence at the periphery of the site's lower town of residential buildings, to which an open-air domestic area was linked. The interpretation of the

⁸⁵ Novák 2005, 66

⁸⁶ Hauser 1994, Taf. 15; Andrae – Lenzen 1967, Taf. 12.

⁸⁷ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 117–119.

⁸⁸ Parallels are attested in Seleucia on the Tigris (Debevoise 1934, 83, Fig. 207), Ashur (Hauser 1994, Taf. 51 a) and Tell Sheikh Hamad (Kühne 2005, Abb. 138).

⁸⁹ For parallels, see Tell Sheikh Hamad (Kühne 2005, Abb. 281; Abb. 205) and Ashur (Hauser 1994, Taf. 100 b–c).

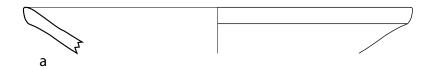
⁹⁰ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 119-120.

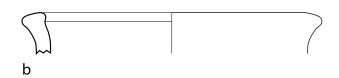
⁹¹ Kreppner 2006, Taf. 21. 4; Matney et al. 2007, Fig. 19 a. d; Pappi 2022, Fig. 3, 5; Fig. 4, 6.

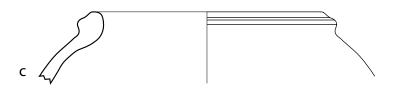
⁹² Beuger 2007, Taf. 41. 9. a-b; Taf. 48. 3; Kreppner 2006, Taf. 53. 3; Hausleiter 2010, Taf. 53. SF8R1; Matney et al. 2007, Fig. 18 h; Jamieson 1999, Fig. 5, 5.

⁹³ Herr 2019, 102, Fig. G1. 2. (4); Beuger 2007, Taf. 57. 1. B; Hausleiter 2010, Taf. 97. FM 2.6; Pappi 2022, Fig. 4, 8; Oates 1959, Pl. XXXV. 4.

⁹⁴ These data match the layout and function of the Parthian settlement levels brought to light in Operation 1- in the southern lower town – where well-built houses were also found.







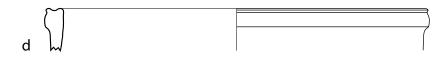


Fig. 27: Operation 2, Parthian levels pottery, Phases 4–7

الشكل ٢٧: العملية 2، قطع فخارية متنوعة من عدة سويّات من العصر الفرثي، المراحل 4–7

Fig. 28: Pottery description of Fig. 27

الشكل ۲۸: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ۲۷

	0		5					10 cm
		ــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــ	 _1		ш	1		
27								

FIG.	SHERD NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
а	721.43	7	M	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W		Debevoise 1934, 83, Fig. 207; Hauser 1994, Taf. 51 A; Kühne 2005, Abb. 138
b	719.2	7	М	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W		Kühne 2005, Abb. 281; Abb. 205
С	705.12	7	М	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W		Kühne 2005, Abb. 205
d	721.44	7	М	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W		Hauser 1994, Taf. 100 b-c

28

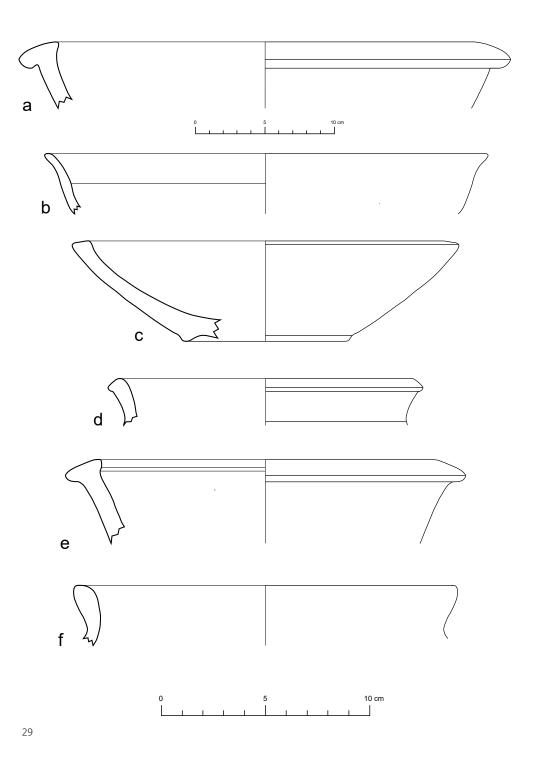


Fig. 29: Operation 2, Neo-Assyrian / Iron Age II levels pottery, Phases 8–10

الشكل ٢٩: العملية 2، قطع فخارية متنوعة من عدة سويات من العصر الآشوري الحديث/ عصر الحديد الثاني، المراحل 8–10 buildings as dwellings is supported by parallels from Ashur, 95 Tell Sheikh Hamad, 96 Tell Sheikh Qubba, 97 and the Erbil plain. 98

In the IA II phases, the area was used both for domestic and metalworking activities, as suggested by installations linked to iron smelting. The increase of metalworking activities in the IA II is attested at several contemporary sites spread across Upper Mesopotamia and the Levant, such as Gird-i Bazar (Peshdar Plain, Iraqi Kur-

⁹⁵ Hauser 1994, Taf. 15; Andrae – Lenzen 1967, Taf. 12.

⁹⁶ Novák 2005, 66.

⁹⁷ Ball 1989, 9, Fig. 15.

⁹⁸ At Qasr Shemamok in trench A the remains of domestic units were brought to light, thus providing a very infrequently published parallel for domestic quarters dated to the Parthian period (Masetti-Rouault – Calini 2016, 211).

FIG.	SHERD/SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/EXT SURF	INT/EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
a	760.42	9	M	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 7/6 RY	5Y 7/6 RY	W		Beuger 2007, Taf. 41. 9. a-b; Taf. 48. 3; Kreppner 2006, Taf. 53. 3; Hausleiter 2010, Taf. 53. SF8R1; Matney et al. 2007, Fig. 18 h; Jamieson 1999, Fig. 5. 5
b	735.18	8	М	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/SM	5Y 6/6 YR	5Y 6/6 YR	W		Herr 2019, 102, Fig. G1. 2. (4)
С	735.21	8	М	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	10 YR 8/4	10 YR 8/4	W		Oates 1959, Pl. XXXV. 4
d	745w.701	9	М	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	5YR 6/6 RY	5YR 6/6 RY	W		Kreppner 2006, Taf. 21. 4; Matney et al. 2007, Fig. 19 a. d; Pappi 2022, Fig. 3. 5; Fig. 4. 6
е	740.1	9	М	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	10 YR 8/4	10 YR 8/4	W		Beuger 2007, Taf. 57. 1. B
f	740.13	9	М	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	10 YR 8/4	10 YR 8/4	W		Hausleiter 2010, Taf. 97. FM 2.6; Pappi 2022, Fig. 4. 8

30

distan), 99 Tell Shiukh Fawqani (Upper Syrian Euphrates), 100 Tell es-Safi, 101 and Tel Dor (Israel). 102 This evidence suggests the diffusion of the same technological skills – which were implemented using a shared knowledge of tools and *chaîne opératoire* – over a broad geographical area corresponding to the maximum extension of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. 103

Fig. 30: Pottery description of Fig. 29

الشكل ٢٠: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ٢٩

Middle Bronze Age (Phases 11–14): stratigraphy and architecture

- Phases 11 to 14 of the MBA settlement sequence (Period 12, Fig. 2) were excavated in the 2018 and 2019 campaigns. The extension of the excavation area in 2019 permitted the fine-tuning of the stratigraphic sequence and showed that the building's limits lay beyond the excavated area, which amounts to 240 m².
- Phase 11 marks the abandonment of Building 1 and the area's use for occasional domestic activities, as showed by the presence in Court A of a very well-preserved trodden floor in which three *tannurs* with fire traces on the walls were set.¹⁰⁵ Their use was connected to three baked-brick fireplaces in the central part of the area, hinting at domestic activities linked to food preparation, as also suggested by disposal pit 798, located very close to the *tannurs*, whose fill consisted of an ashy deposit with potsherds.

⁹⁹ MacGinnis – Kreppner 2016, 53–54; Stone 2016, 66–67.

¹⁰⁰ Luciani 2005, 728.

¹⁰¹ Workman et al. 2020, 212.

¹⁰² The site of Tel Dor (Israel) reveals a similar context to Gomel Operation 2, as shown by the discovery of a pit which was used to discard iron-working waste, besides pottery and bones (Eliyahu-Behar et al. 2008, 2906).

¹⁰³ The recurrence of this pattern of activities over a vast geographical area – from Iraqi Kurdistan to the southern Levant – highlights the impact of Neo-Assyrian imperial practices on the entire territory of the empire, including the southern Levant. In this area the presence of metalworking facilities has been interpreted as a fundamental mechanism of the imperial economy linked to the demand of metal for the Assyrian war machine (Pleiner – Bjorkman 1974, 287; Eliyahu-Behar et al. 2008, 2907). This hypothesis is supported by the integration of the archaeological evidence with textual data from the Assyrian capitals, reporting that smiths belonged to the royal administration (Gross 2020, 433–434. 437–438). The assumption is that the same pattern was repeated in Levantine provincial centres (Eliyahu-Behar et al. 2008, 2907). Moreover, the increasing demand for iron in the late 9th–early 8th century BC led to an increase in iron working that is matched by archaeological evidence (Eliyahu-Behar et al. 2008, 2907; Erb-Satullo 2019, 568).

¹⁰⁴ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 120.

¹⁰⁵ The original opening of the *tannurs* was blocked with small stones leaning on the external walls of the installations. This suggests that they were not functional during the very last phase of use of the domestic area.

In this phase, the abandoned building was also used as burial ground for the inhumation of infants, as attested by two graves (G 58 and G 59) containing jar burials in Court C, in the eastern sector of the building. According to the anthropological analysis, the skeletal remains belonged to foetal/perinatal subjects, which were not found in anatomical connection.

The remains of Phase 12 marked the very last phase of use of Building 1, with wall 1000 (its western outer wall), Room I, Room E and Court A surviving from the previous phase, while Court C was an open area devoid of installations. Room I (2 m × 2 m), delimited to the west by wall 1000, where the only doorway to the outside of the building was located, was equipped with a water installation in its southwestern corner. On its southern side it had a doorway, consisting of a fired-brick threshold and a limestone door socket, leading to Court A, which was paved with baked bricks and a pebble floor. In this phase the area was devoted to domestic activities, as attested by the installation of *tannurs* in the place of pre-existing walls in Court A. This evidence denotes a weak squatting occupation taking place during the decay and abandonment phase of the building. From Court A, a doorway led to Room E, equipped with a baked-brick fireplace and two working benches. Of Sa grave (G 53) was cut in the room's floor and contained a jar burial that contained three skeletons of foetal or perinatal individuals.

In Phase 13, the layout of the building shows a rearrangement of movement between its outside and inside (Fig. 31 door blocking 969) as well as a reorientation of the building's internal circulation system (Fig. 31 door blockings 988, 998, 1048). Blocking 969, located in the western outer wall (1000),¹¹¹ which was abutted by an external floor with potsherds embedded in it (966; Figs. 32 a. 33 a) and partially covered pebble floor 625 of the large Court A, controlled the external access to and exit from the building, isolating Court A. The only access to Building 1 in Phase 13 was through the 1-metre-wide doorway of Room I,¹¹² equipped with a circular pit in its central-southern part, which might have contained a large water jar that was robbed during the following squatting phase.

In its southern wall 999, which was abutted by a fired-brick threshold (917) provided with a door socket, the room was accessible from Court A via a stone step (973)¹¹³ abutted by a pebble floor 625. From the southwestern portion of Court A,

¹⁰⁶ A similar situation is attested at Tell Leilan, where an infant skeleton was found associated with ovens (Pulhan 2000, 53) in one of the courtyards in the Northern Lower Town Palace (Weiss et al. 1990) of Level II, which is considered by the excavators to be the last use phase of the palace and dated to the third quarter of the 18th century BC.

¹⁰⁷ The water installation, consisting of a fragmentary jar embedded in a small pit, served as a distribution point of drinkable water supplies, a device very often seen in MBA residences. A very well-known example is attested in the Zimri-Lim palace in Mari, where such installations were located at the entrance of sectors of the palace (Margueron 2004, 499).

¹⁰⁸ The re-use of pre-existing monumental buildings (for the definition of "squatting", see Burke 2018) is attested in the MBA levels of other northern-Mesopotamian sites: it occurred at Tell Leilan, Eastern Lower Town Palace (Ristvet – Weiss 2011, XXX) and at Mari, *Petit Palais* (Margueron 2004, 526). This squatting pattern in the MBA is linked to political and economic implications that will be dealt with in the conclusions of the paper.

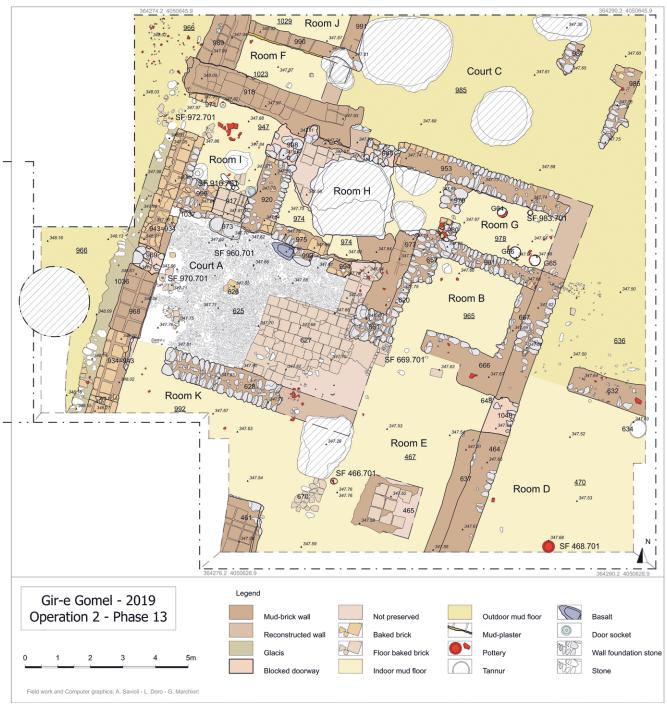
¹⁰⁹ The two rectangular-shaped working benches, consisting of three parallel rows of undressed stones, re-used the foundation of the building's demolished walls constructed in Phase 13.

¹¹⁰ The petrosal bones of two of the skeletons were analysed for 14 C dating. The resulting dates with 95.4 % probability give a span of almost 200 years (1745–1539 BC; Figs. 10. 11). This does not allow refinement of the chronological determination of Phase 12 and consequently neither of the other phases. The 68.2 % probability result reduces the time-frame to the 17th century BC (1692–1616 BC).

¹¹¹ It was preserved at the foundation level (934, 968, 943) consisting of baked bricks and three courses of medium-sized stones and was reinforced by a small outer *glacis*, which allowed the diversion of rain water from the wall foundation.

¹¹² The doorway was marked by the presence of a limestone door socket, embedded in the room's floor (947; Fig. 31).

¹¹³ This indicates that the building's northern part was slightly raised with respect to its southern sector, probably due to the natural sloping of the terrain on which Building 1 was erected.

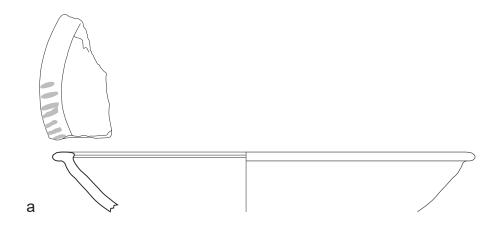


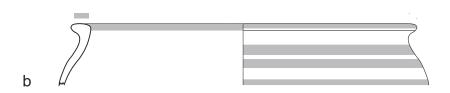
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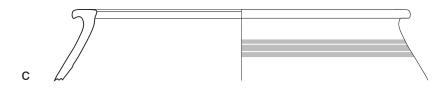
which represented the first section of the reception suite of Building 1 and whose pebble floor was damaged by one of the Phase 12 tannurs, a passage led to Room K, delimited by walls 461 and 628 and not fully excavated since its southern portion lies beyond the excavation limit. To its east, Room K was flanked by Room E, whose access was marked by a baked brick threshold, partly damaged by a later pit. The room, which was part of the reception suite, was delimited to the east by wall 464, 1.24 m wide and ca. 11 m long, the building's longest excavated wall. Rooms B and G, to the north of Room E, were also delimited to the east by wall 464: the small Room B (2 m \times 3 m), with its southern wall (666) recessed on the outside, was not equipped with installations and its floor was swept clean. This could have been used as a storage room for activities connected to Room E, the function of which is discussed below.

Fig. 31: Operation 2, plan of Building 1, Phase 13

الشكل ٣١: العملية 2، مخطط المبنى 1، المرحلة 13







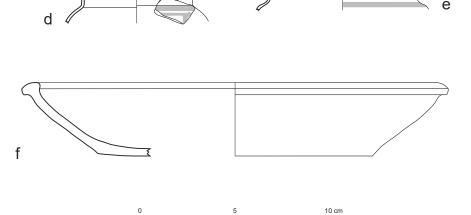


Fig. 32: Operation 2, MBA pottery from Building 1: Khabur Ware and Grey Ware

الشكل ٣٢: العملية 2، فخّار عصر البرونز الوسيط من المبنى 1: فخّار الخابور والفخّار الرمادي

32

FIG.	SHERD/ SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/ EXT SURF	INT/ EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
а	766.1	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W	painted strokes on the rim	McMahon 2009, Pl. 13. 16; Frane 1996, Fig. 39; Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 43. 252
b	766c.9	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W	painted bands on the rim and on the body	Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 27. 6; Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 193. 309
С	766c.40	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W	painted bands on the body	McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 60. 8–9; Schmidt 2013, Taf. 432. K 4254
d	766w.28	11	Н	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/ SM	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W	painted Undetermined motif on the body	Spanos 1990, Fig. 16. Pl. 1. 5; Pulhan 2000, Fig. 3:3; Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Pl. 4. 16; Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 195. 350; McMahon 2009, Pl. 46. 14–15
е	766e.26	11	Н	sand, calcite	SS/SS	SM/ SM	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W	painted bands on the rim and on the body	Spanos 1990, Fig. 16. Pl. 1. 5; Pulhan 2000, Fig. 3:3; Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Pl. 4. 16; Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 195. 350; McMahon 2009, Pl. 46. 14–15
f	900.701	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	10 YR 4/1 DG	10 YR 6/2 LBG	W		

33

A second change in the internal circulation of the building occurred in Room E: here, door blocking 1048 impeded direct movement between the reception suite and the adjacent service wing, probably determining the loss of Room E's original function. The service wing included Room D, Court C, Rooms F and J. These spaces communicated through the Room D northern doorway leading to Court C, from which the north-western sector of the building – Rooms F and J – was accessible. Only Room D, adjacent to Room E and delimited to the west by wall 464 and to the north by wall 632 (Fig. 31), featured installations that resulted in its interpretation as the building's kitchen: it was equipped with *tannur* 634 in the north-east corner, and a large and a smaller storage jar set in the room's floor at its southern end. The sulternal circulation of the building of the

The service wing was also isolated from the reception suite by blocking 988, impeding movement between Court C and Room H in the northern part of the building. Moreover, the direct access between Room H^{117} and Room I was blocked (998), thus isolating the former from direct access to the building's entrance. The only direct passages from Room H were to Court A to the south and eastwards to Room G, whose doorway was narrowed by constructing a new wall segment (980) facing the already existing segment 979. In the room's mud floor (978), three graves were embedded (G 64, G 65, G 66)

Fig. 33: Pottery description of Fig. 32

الشكل ٣٣: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ٣٢

¹¹⁴ Since in this phase the access to the kitchen, Room D, became more difficult, it seems possible that Room E with its large fireplace was used to prepare and cook food.

¹¹⁵ Court C and Rooms F and J were not provided with installations: Court C was an open area for circulation inside the building, while the floors of the two rooms were cleaned out. However, based on their narrow, elongated shapes they might be interpreted as storage rooms for conserving goods used in the residence.

¹¹⁶ The two jars were used to store cereals, as indicated by the grains found in their fills. These features, plus the significant quantity of Cooking Ware found in the room, mirror the situation recorded in the Late Old Babylonian "kitchen" of Tell al-Rimah (Postgate et al. 1997, 34–35).

¹¹⁷ The floor of Room H consisted of baked bricks bordered by beaten mud and was heavily disturbed by an intrusive pit.

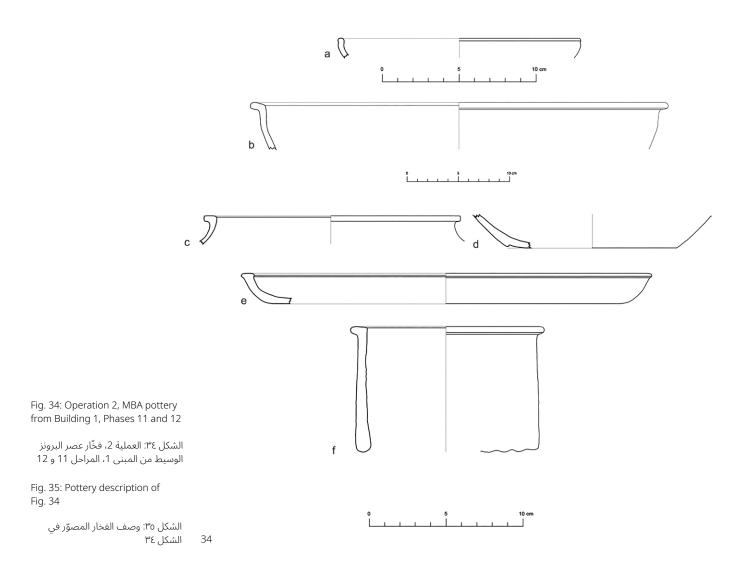


FIG.	SHERD/ SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/ EXT SURF	INT/ EXT TREAT	INT COLOUR	EXT COLOUR	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
а	766.1	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	10 YR 7/1 LG	10 YR 7/1 LG	W		
b	766c.7	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	10YR 7/4 VPB	10YR 7/4 VPB	W		
С	766w.33	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	10YR 7/4 VPB	10YR 7/4 VPB	W		Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 88. 1022, 1025; Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 26. 7
d	766c.14	11	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	5Y 8/2 PY	5Y 8/2 PY	W		
е	783.702	12	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	10YR 7/4 VPB	10YR 7/4 VPB	W		Parrot 1959, Pl. XXXV. 890, 1328; Lebeau 1983, Fig. 1. 5; Margueron 2004, 458, Fig. 1; Einwag 1998, 92, Abb. 52, Typ 33 and 34; Frane 1996, Fig. 3. 3; Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 47, 48; Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 25. 4
f	983.701	13	М	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/ SM	7.5 YR 8/3 P	7.5 YR 8/3 P	W		Kolińksi 2000, Pl. 20. B; Schwartz et al. 2017, Fig. 26

along the southern and northern walls, while a pie-crust pot-stand (Fig. 31, SF 983.701; Figs. 34 f. 35 f) was located to the east of G 64. These graves consisted of poorly preserved burials in jars containing scattered, disarticulated human bones, ¹¹⁸ which – according

35

¹¹⁸ The only grave goods were found in G 64 and consisted of two small fragmentary Grey Ware bowls, which are discussed in the following section on pottery and small finds.

to the anthropological analysis – came from the bodies of infants, probably dead newborns. 119

Evidence from Phase 13 shows that the end of Building 1 was not the result of a dramatic event, but consisted of progressive rearrangement and abandonment, which is paralleled by similar profound reorganisations carried out in other Northern Mesopotamian monumental buildings, e.g. at Rimah and Leilan. ¹²⁰ These parallel trajectories in contemporary urban centres of the region suggest that at the end of the MBA a gradual need emerged for a tighter control of official buildings, which was effected by reducing their entrances and closing rooms. Such measures could have been the consequence of the progressive crisis resulting from the major disruptions in the political order of the region determined by the fall of the central Mesopotamian states (Samsi-Addu's Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia and Old Babylonian Kingdom).

In Phase 14, which represents the original use phase of the edifice, the layout of Building 1 recalls that of a Northern Mesopotamian MBA mansion (Figs. 36. 37). The building's entrances were through its western outer mud-brick wall, leading directly to the reception suite via Court A and northwards to Room I.¹²¹ From this room, the access leading to Court A was structured with a baked brick threshold and a stone step, as already seen in the following Phase 13. The court measured 6.30 m west-east and 4 m north-south; its baked-brick paving led to Room E, which could be accessed through a 2.50 m wide doorway with a preserved *in situ* limestone door socket.¹²² The reception suite and the service wing communicated through a doorway between Room E and the adjacent Room D.

Room E, which had the same size as in Phase 13, was equipped with fireplace 465 in the centre of the room and bench 637 leaning on wall 464, parallel to the eastern side of the fireplace. These features and the direct access to the kitchen suggest that Room E played the role of a communal space used for feasting and shared meals.¹²³

Probably connected to this function of Room E, the adjacent Room B – accessible only from Room E – could have been a storeroom for goods or supplies to be used there or as a side room for activities linked Room E. Adjacent to Room B to the north was Room G, devoid of installations and whose floor was swept clean. The room had direct access to Room H to its west. Room H communicated to the north with Court C, to the south with Court A, and to the west with Room I. Under the floor of Room I, a channel covered by baked bricks passed, draining water from Room H to Street 966 abutting the western walls (989 and 943) that delimited Building 1. The southern side

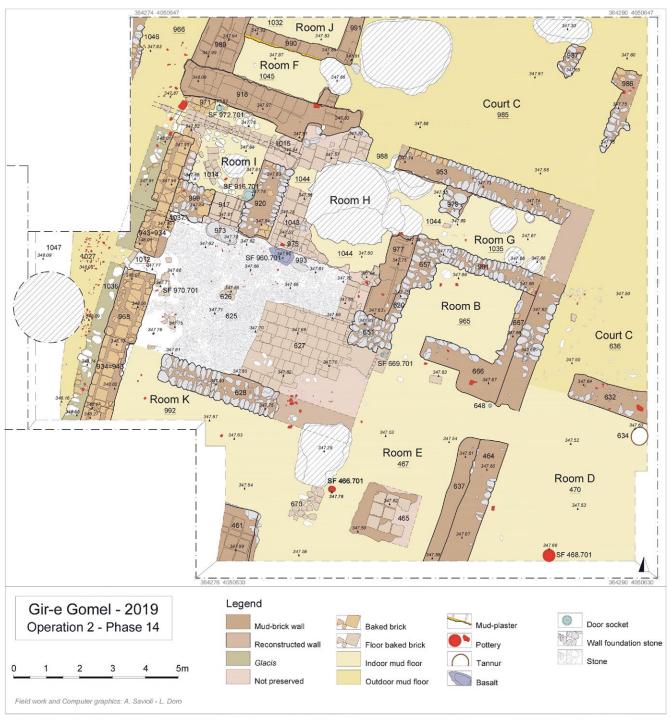
¹¹⁹ Infant and newborn burials in monumental buildings are well known in the Near East during the MBA and LBA. Examples are the Lower City Palace in Tell Mishrifeh/Qatna (Morandi Bonacossi 2015, 359), whose abandonment is dated to the Levantine MBA III; Nippur, area TA, where infant burials mark the end of the Old Babylonian occupation, i.e. in approximately 1720 BC (Stone 1987, 125); Bakr Awa, where pot burials containing infants and newborns were found in the poorly preserved remains in Area 1 dated to the MBA (Bürger 2020, 71); Chagar Bazar, the infant burial Tomb 26 in Phase III (McMahon – Colantoni 2009, 71; McMahon 2009b, 121).

¹²⁰ Oates 1970, 5; Oates 1972, 86; Ristvet - Weiss 2011, XXVIII.

¹²¹ A water channel (1037) drained rainwater from Court A to the outside of Building 1 and was located immediately to the south-west of wall 999, the south-western wall of Room I.

¹²² A similar court with pebbles framed by a baked-brick paving was found in Building III at Chagar Bazar (McMahon 2009a, 35, Fig. 12); it marked the entrance to the reception room of the building. In Bakr Awa, the so-called Old Babylonian house had a similar courtyard, paved only with pebbles, and leading to the reception room (Miglus et al. 2013, 54).

¹²³ The pattern of a fireplace and a wall bench in large rooms of large-sized Upper Mesopotamian buildings is attested in the Old Babylonian house in Bakr Awa (Miglus et al. 2013, 54–55, Fig. 17) and in Chagar Bazar's Building III (McMahon 2009a, 36). In particular, the latter is interpreted as a building with administrative function and its assembly room as a space devoted to "public-near interactions", which involved the use of natural facial expressions and gestures with a raised voice (McMahon 2009a, 48). Based on the measurements for a public-near interaction (Moore 1996, 793, Tab. 1), Room E, the preserved part of which measures ca. 3.40 m and more than 6 m in length, may have been devoted to communal gatherings of small groups of people, including visitors to this MBA building.



36

Fig. 36: Operation 2, plan of Building 1, Phase 14

الشكل ٣٦: العملية 2، مخطّط المبنى 1، المرحلة 14 of Room H, in communication with Court A, was not delimited by a wall – as indicated by the court's pebble floor abutting the room's baked-brick flooring (1043), which was extensively damaged by a later large IA II pit. The presence of the water drain and the baked-brick paving (1043) of the room's floor indicates that the function of this room was connected to the use of water or other kind of fluids. The channel's slope from Room H to the street provides evidence that fluids were drained to the outside of the building (Fig. 36). However, unfortunately the large IA II pit cutting and almost entirely destroying floor 1043 hinders a more precise interpretation of Room H's function.

In its original phase, Room I, the north-western entrance to the building, had the same access to Court A as in the following Phase 13. Only its mud floor was different,



37

as it abutted a row of baked bricks embedded in it located in the southern portion of the room, probably a repair of the original mud floor.

The northernmost portion of Building 1, located to the north of Room I, was represented by Rooms F and J, which were devoid of installations, as in Phase 13. Court C was the open area linked to the building's service wing and could be accessed from Rooms H and F and the kitchen Room D (Fig. 36). 124

Similarities with the layout of Building 1, including common architectural features – such as a pebble- and brick-paved court and an adjacent reception room – may be noted for a number of contemporary buildings in the region. Unfortunately, the lack of finds from the Gomel building makes further interpretation difficult. However, few administrative tools (a cylinder seal and two sealings; see below) – residual from Phase 11 – indicate the practice of administrative activities related to the building.

Pottery and small finds

The occupation sequence of Building 1 reflects its internal rearrangements (Phases 14–13), squatting occupation (Phase 12), and abandonment (Phase 11) and embraces the MBA II. Its internal chronology was achieved by means of pottery parallels and a ¹⁴C date for Phase 12. The constant reuse of its surface and cleaning of its internal spaces, also in the squatting phase (12), is mirrored by the dearth of finds brought to light during the excavation. However, a cylinder seal and two sealings without seal impression used to seal a jar from Phase 11 provide evidence of administrative activities. ¹²⁵ The cylinder seal, whose surface is heavily abraded, bears a typical presentation scene

الشكل ٣٧: صورة ملتقطة باستخدام طائرة مُسيّرة للمبنى 1، المرحلة 14

Fig. 37: Operation 2, drone photo of Building 1, Phase 14

¹²⁴ In Phase 14, Rooms D, F and J had the same characteristics and features as in the later Phase 13.
125 Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, Fig. 4, 147.

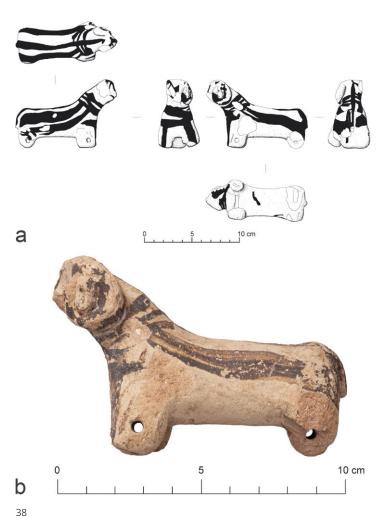


Fig. 38: Operation 2, painted animal figurine, SF 919.702

الشكل ۳۸: العملية 2، تمثال ملوّن لحيوان، SF 919.702

belonging to the Old Babylonian repertoire. 126 The two jar sealings cannot be dated precisely; however, together with the seal, they hint at control of the distribution of goods regulated (from) within the building. 127

The majority of the ceramic repertoire consists of painted Khabur Ware pottery. The ceramic assemblages from Phases 11 to 14 show changes in the types attested, while their technological characteristics and fabrics and surface treatments remain unaltered throughout the whole sequence. In Phase 11 the most attested form is the jar with squared ledge rim (Figs. 32 b–c. 33 b–c), Iolowed by bowls with ledge (Figs. 32 a.

¹²⁶ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 145.

¹²⁷ A similar situation can be observed in the Northern Lower Town of Tell Leilan, the Qarni-Lim Palace (Weiss et al. 1990, 542; Pulhan 2000; Ristvet – Weiss 2011, XXXIV). In the building, which – as noted above – shows architectural similarities with Building 1, a cuneiform archive dealing with the manufacture and distribution of beer, and sealings used mainly for jars or sacks were found (Pulhan 2000, Fig. 3, 60–64; van de Mieroop 1994). The importance of these finds lies in their chronological value, as they provide a determination for the NLTP and the reign of Qarni Lim, king of Andarig, who ruled between 1775 and 1760 BC (Pulhan 2000, 219). Moreover, the occurrence of a cuneiform archive and sealings in the NLTP indicates the existence of an administrative building at Leilan. Although the evidence from Gomel is much poorer, it may be hypothesized that Building 1 also served an official function within this urban centre.

¹²⁸ Of a total of 1583 sherds from the MBA, 662 are painted in the Khabur Ware tradition.

¹²⁹ Fabric inclusions were determined through macroscopic observation; we therefore refer to generic plant and mineral inclusions.

¹³⁰ Parallels are attested in Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 27. 6); Tell Brak level 5 (Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 193. 309); Tell Chagar Bazar, Area GIV, Phase III and II/1 (McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 60. 8–9); Tell Mozan, Area C, Phase 5 (Schmidt 2013, Taf. 432. K 4254).



Fig. 39: Operation 2, plaque with female figurine, SF 947.701

الشكل ٣٩: العملية 2، لوح يحمل تصويراً لشكل أنثوي، SF 947.701

 $33\,a)^{131}$ or rounded rim, thickened outside, together with shouldered beakers (Figs. $32\,d$ –e. $33\,d$ –e). 132 Among the unpainted specimens, there are Grey Ware bowls with rounded rim, thickened outside (Figs. $32\,f$. $33\,f$) and storage jars with squared rim (Figs. $34\,c$. $35\,c$). 133 Other small finds from the Phase 11 deposits include a group of chariot and wheel models, i.e. two fragmentary wheels and a chariot box, and two animal figurines (Fig. $38\,a$ –b). 134

39

In Phase 12 the pottery tradition is homogeneous with Phase 11. In this phase the increase of Cooking Ware recorded from the mud-brick debris above the remains of Building 1, the high percentage of jars – almost half of the ceramic assemblage – and the presence of *tannurs* and working benches hint at the use of the area for domestic activities and the storage of foodstuffs. It is noteworthy that in the assemblage from this phase – although not from primary contexts – convex-wall plates (Figs. 34 e. 35 e) and shallow bowls are attested, which are typical of MBA sites throughout Mesopotamia. On floor 947 of Room I, a plaque with a moulded female figurine was found (Fig. 39), recalling the iconography of Old Babylonian terracotta plaques. It depicts a naked

¹³¹ Similar specimens have been recorded from Tell Chagar Bazar (McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 13. 16); Tell Leilan Lower Town Palace, Building Level 2 (Frane 1996, Fig. 39. 3); Tell al-Rimah, Area C level 6a (Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 43, 252)

¹³² The same shouldered beaker types are attested in other sites of the Iraqi Tigris and Upper Khabur valleys (Spanos 1990, Fig. 16, Pl. 1. 5; Pulhan 2000, Fig. 3:3; Baccelli – Manuelli 2008, Pl. 4. 16; Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 195. 350; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 46. 14–15).

¹³³ From Tell al-Rimah (Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 88. 1022, 1025) and Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 26. 7).

¹³⁴ These are very common animal figurines, which have been found in other Northern Mesopotamian sites (Wissing 2009, Taf. 21. 221; Taf. 37. 377; Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 239. 20; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 70. 6), including Operation 1 at Gomel: a similar zoomorphic figurine was part of the grave goods from G 21, one of the vaulted-chamber hypogea (Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, Fig. 27. 2).

¹³⁵ Parallels for these plates and shallow bowls are attested in Mari, Couche 1 and 2 (Parrot 1959, Pl. XXXV. 890, 1328; Lebeau 1983, Fig. 1. 5; Margueron 2004, 458, Fig. 1); Tell Bi'a Palast A (Einwag 1998, 92, Abb. 52, Typ 33 and 34); Tell Leilan NLTP (Pulhan 2000, Fig. 20. 3) and ELTP (Frane 1996, Fig. 3. 3); Tell al-Rimah Palace (Postgate et al. 1997, Pl. 47, 48); Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz et al. 2017, Pl. 25. 4). Moreover, this type has been recorded from various central and southern Mesopotamian sites (Armstrong – Gasche 2014, Pl. 6, 7, Type 5C and 5D; Oselini 2020, Fig. 1. 1–3), thus emphasising the widespread distribution of this pottery vessel in the MBA II.

GG 2019 OP. 2 957.704

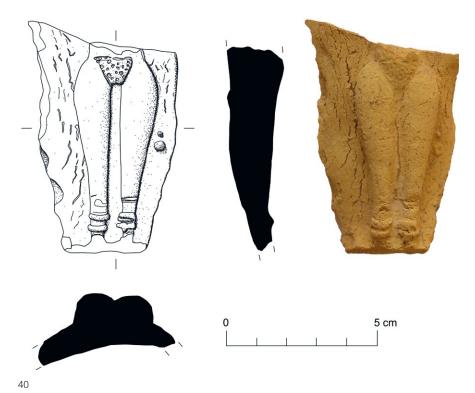


Fig. 40: Operation 2, plaque with female figurine, SF 957.704

الشكل ٤٠: العملية 2، لوح يحمل تصويراً لشكل أنثوى، SF 957.704

woman without a head holding her breasts, wearing a necklace from which a sun disc medallion hangs, two bracelets and anklets. 136

In the accumulation of mud-brick debris separating Phase 12 from Phase 13, two bone needles were found and a plaque with a moulded female figurine (Fig. 40), besides bowls with Khabur Ware painted rim (Figs. 41 a. 42 a).

The pottery assemblages of Phases 13 and 14 are very homogeneous: they are characterised by Grey Ware bowls with convex wall (Figs. 41 b–e. 42 b–e),¹³⁸ jars and deep bowls with ledge and long rim and sherds with painted bird motifs. The small complete-profile Grey Ware bowls were found together with a carnelian bead in the fill of the infant burial G 64 in Room G; they could have been used as grave goods. This would be the only case in which grave goods have been found in an infant burial in Gomel. The presence of the two small Grey Ware bowls is even more significant against the panorama of all of Gomel's funerary practices. Larger Grey Ware bowls were found in the pit shaft giving access to Operation 1's funerary shrine 44 during the 2018 excavation campaign in association with animal bones.¹³⁹ They contained

¹³⁶ This plaque resembles the "Astarte-relief"-type of Pruß (Pruß 2010, 111, Taf. 14–15) and Klengel-Brandt and Onasch (Klengel-Brandt – Onasch 2020, 69). Further comparisons come from Syria (Badre 1980, Pl. XX, Fig. 49; Barrelet 1968, Pl. LV, Fig. 580–585). In Northern Mesopotamian contexts, parallels are attested in Chagar Bazar, Area G, Phase III (McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 73. 17). However, the spread of this type of anthropomorphic representations on plaques recalls examples from central and Southern Mesopotamia, especially from Khafajeh, Mound B (Auerbach 1994, Pl. 5. D), Old-Babylonian levels at <u>Uruk</u> (Wrede 2003, Abb. 80. H) and <u>Larsa</u> (Calvet – Huot 2003, Fig. 18).

¹³⁷ The figurine is preserved only in its lower half and is similar to the specimen from Phase 12. A precise comparison is from Ashur, dated to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC (Klengel-Brandt – Onasch 2020, 68, Taf. 64, 464. 472).

¹³⁸ Comparisons are attested with Tell Brak, Level 7 (Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 181) and Chagar Bazar, Phase II/1 (McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 28. 4, 20).

¹³⁹ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 88.

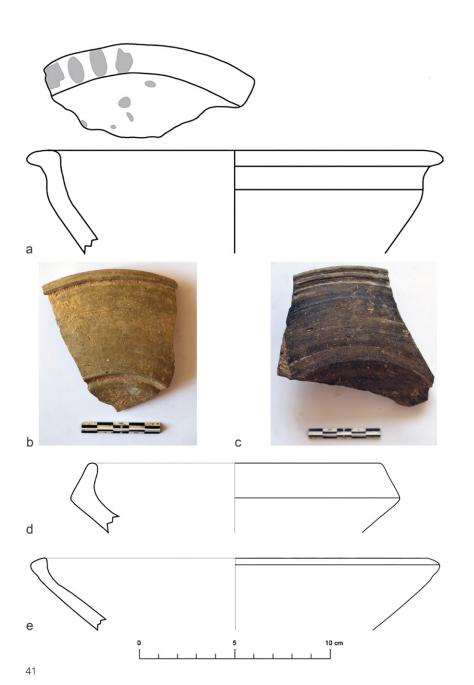


Fig. 41: Operation 2, MBA pottery from Building 1, Phases 13 and 14

الشكل ٤١: العملية 2، فخّارعصر البرونز الوسيط من المبنى 1، المراحل 13 و14

Fig. 42: Pottery description of Fig. 41

الشكل ٤٢: وصف الفخار المصوّر في الشكل ٤١

FIG.	SHERD/SF NUMBER	PHASE	FIRING	FABRIC	INT/ EXT SURF	INT/ EXT TREAT	INT COLOURING	EXT COLOURING	TECH	DEC	PARALLELS
а	796.3	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	SM/SM	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	2.5 Y 8/2 PY	W		
b	1020.701	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	2.5 GY 7/1 LOG	2.5 GY 7/1 LOG	W		Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 181; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 28. 4, 20
С	1020.702	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	2.5 Y 5/1 G	2.5 Y 5/1 G	W	grooves	Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 181; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 28. 4, 20
d	796.1	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	2.5 Y 5/1 G	2.5 Y 5/1 G	W		Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 181; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 28. 4, 20
е	796.2	13	Н	calcite, chaff	SS/SS	B/B	2.5 Y 5/1 G	2.5 Y 5/1 G	W		Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 181; McMahon et al. 2009, Pl. 28. 4, 20

161

42

GG 2019 OP.2 1027.701

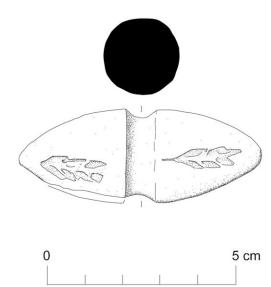




Fig. 43: Operation 2, torpedoshaped object, SF 1027.701

الشكل ٤٣: العملية 2، قطعة ذات شكل شبيه بالطوربيد،SF 1027.701 meat offerings during the closing ritual of the shrine's access shaft. It is also possible that the specimens found in association with infant burial G 64 were used in a similar context. In the same room, to the east of the northern grave pits, a pie-crust pot-stand was embedded in the floor (Figs. $34 \, \mathrm{f}$. $35 \, \mathrm{f}$). $140 \, \mathrm{f}$

The only remarkable find from Phase 14 was uncovered on floor 966 of the street flanking Building 1, to the west of Room I. It is a torpedo-shaped terracotta object, which presents a shallow groove around the central part, and an impression made by an ear of wheat or barley (Fig. 43). The object is rather unusual; a similar specimen was found in early MBA contexts at Tepe Gawra (levels II and III), where it was interpreted as a spindle-whorl or bobbin.¹⁴¹

The relative chronology of the pottery sequence of Building 1 places the assemblages from Phases 14 to 11 in the MBA II (1800–1595 BC) and the assemblage of the last MBA phase (11) in the 17th century BC. A more fine-tuned chronology makes it possible to date Phases 14 and 13 to the early MBA II (18th century BC), the historical period corresponding to the supremacy of Mari and Hammurabi of Babylon. This ceramic chronology is indicated by parallels from the Old Babylonian levels of Tell Brak and the post-Samsi-Addu occupation at Chagar Bazar, dated after the king's death (1776 BC).

The Phase 12 and 11 assemblages show the introduction of types recurring in late MBA II levels, as indicated by the presence of bowls with painted strokes on the rim and Grey Ware bowls: parallels from Level 6a at Tell al-Rimah (late Old Babylonian),¹⁴² and Level 7 of Tell Brak¹⁴³ hint at a date in the 17th century BC. Moreover, ¹⁴C dates from G 53 (Phase 12) give ranges of 1745–1539 (95.4 %) or 1692–1616 BC (68.2 %), thus

placing Building 1's post-Phase 13 occupation at a time in which the local powers of Northern Mesopotamia – such as the kingdom of Andarig and that of Qatara/Karana¹⁴⁴ – were overcome by Samsu-iluna's army in the 22^{nd} year of his reign (1728 BC).

- 140 Similar specimens dated to the MBA II are attested in <u>Tell Rijim</u> (Koliński 2000, Pl. 20. B) and Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz et al. 2017, Fig. 26). Even though pie-crust pot-stands were used to support vessels in different functional contexts, the interment of a pie-crust stand in connection with three graves might have been linked to its use also in funerary rituals in connection to the interment of newborns.
- 141 Speiser 1929, 28. 30. According to the excavator's interpretation, a thread would have been wound around the shallow groove on the object's central part (Speiser 1935, 80, Pl. LXXIX. 1–3. 9. 11. 12). The occurrence of these artefacts is not widely attested besides at Tepe Gawra, an example from Nuzi (Starr 1939, 464, Pl. 124. A) and one from late MBA levels of Trench D1 at Tell Brak (Oates et al. 1997, Fig. 239. 30). Another issue concerns the impression on the object, consisting of one vertical line with three oblique lines on either side. The impressed ears closely resemble the cuneiform sign for barley (Labat 1995, 168–169). It seems more likely that the object was used in relation to cereals, rather than being a bobbin or spindle whorl. Considering its shape and in particular its central groove, which, as noticed by Speiser, could have housed a wound thread, we suggest that this torpedo-shaped terracotta object could have been used to close a sack or a container used for the storage of cereals and to mark its content.
- 142 Postgate et al. 1997, 36.
- 143 Oates et al. 1997, 21.
- 144 These two kingdoms emerged, together with other local political powers in Northern Mesopotamia, after Samsi-Addu's death, which led to the break-up of his empire, the Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia (Eidem 2011, 2). The presence of cuneiform archives in two crucial centres of these kingdoms (Tell Leilan in the kingdom of Andarig and Tell al-Rimah in the kingdom of Qatara/Karana: Eidem 2011; Dalley et al. 1976) sheds light on the political and economic setting of Northern Mesopotamia in the time after the end of Samsi-Addu's kingdom, when Mari controlled most of Upper Mesopotamia, but was then replaced by Babylon led by its king Hammurabi (Charpin Ziegler 2003, 242). The terminus ante quem for the archives is provided by

Conclusions

The 2019 field season in Operation 1 has added important information to our understanding of the funerary practices in use at the site from the EBA to the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian periods. Of remarkable importance is the coexistence in the Neo-Assyrian settlement of two different rituals, inhumation and *in situ* cremation. The discovery of a burial covered by a vault made of radially arranged mud-bricks built from the same trodden floor as the *in situ* cremations excavated in previous seasons and the fact that – where sex determination of the deceased was possible – the cremation graves contained the remains of women and children but the inhumation tomb a male, may strengthen the (already presented) hypothesis that cremations on funeral pyres in pit graves (which in Assyria are very unusual) were reserved for foreign women who had married Assyrians and wanted to be buried according to their traditional customs. Needless to say, the hypothesis can only be confirmed or refuted by excavating more graves and deceased individuals in the IA necropolis.

Interestingly enough, this Neo-Assyrian cremation tradition lingered in the Post-Assyrian period, when burials represented by *in situ* pit cremations and a jar cremation are attested, thus further emphasising the cultural continuity characterising the region after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire. ¹⁴⁶

The continuation of the excavation in Operation 1 has also made it possible to better understand the organisation and history of the underlying MBA graveyard. For the first time in the funerary archaeology of Upper Mesopotamia of the first half of the 2nd millennium, a subterranean vaulted baked-brick funerary chapel or shrine (G 44) with numerous closed-form vessels probably containing food offerings for the dead was uncovered among similar multiple burials related to an urban elite who chose to be buried in the southwestern fringes of the settlement.

The discovery of an inhumation burial of a warrior with prestige grave goods cut by funerary chapel 44 and dating to the late 3rd millennium (EMT 4/5) stresses the continuity in the use of this region of the site as an EBA burial ground for at least 600–700 years, from the late Ninevite 5 (EMT 2) until the end of the 3rd millennium. ¹⁴⁷ From a *longue durée* perspective, the southern edge of Gomel's lower town was – basically continuously – devoted to funerary use for more than two thousand years, until the Post-Assyrian period. This makes the Gomel burial area in Operation 1 a unique and extraordinary case study for analysing the development of grave typologies, material culture, funerary rituals and social differentiation and complexity in the wider cultural context of Upper Mesopotamia. Furthermore, continued exploration of this funerary area will offer an exceptional opportunity to gather a vast record of bioarchaeological data. This data can be used to study health conditions, subsistence strategies and human-environment interactions in this urban site of the Transtigridian region. These will be the main goals of future excavation in Operation 1.

Excavation in Operation 2 has allowed us to continue the investigation of Building 1, a large mansion built in the MBA IIA and abandoned during the MBA IIB. In Phase 14, this residential building at the fringes of the settlement was a large construction with parallels in a number of contemporary Northern Mesopotamian sites, such as Tell Leilan (Northern 148 and Eastern Lower Town Palaces 149), Tell Chagar Bazar

the aforementioned Samsu-iluna's raids, which annihilated the local political powers, causing an economic and political crisis in the area of Northern Mesopotamia (Charpin 1987, 133; Horsnell 1999, 212).

¹⁴⁵ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 152.

¹⁴⁶ Morandi Bonacossi in print.

¹⁴⁷ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 99–111.

¹⁴⁸ Pulhan 2000.

¹⁴⁹ Weiss et al. 1990, 543.

(Building III, Area A), 150 Tell al-Rimah (Palace), 151 Bakr Awa (Old Babylonian House). 152 The pattern of circulation from the service wing (Room D – Court C – Rooms F and J) to the reception suite (Court A – Room E – Room K) and the presence in Room E of a baked-brick fireplace and a mud-brick bench support its interpretation as a space for communal meetings, as also attested in Chagar Bazar's Building III. Based on the measures of "public-near interaction", 153 it seems likely that the room was devoted to the gathering of small groups of people and food consumption in the context of communal feasting, having meals prepared in the adjacent kitchen (Room D), which was directly linked to Room E.

The size of the reception room and the entire mansion suggest that during the main phase of use of Building 1 in the early MBA II this space was used for meetings on a local basis which could have taken place in the wider political context of early MBA II Northern Mesopotamia, which was organised into spheres of influence of strong territorial polities and smaller political entities.¹⁵⁴ The existence of Building 1 and its characteristics, together with the size of the site (35 ha) and the presence of an elite cemetery, suggest that MBA IIA Gomel could have been the seat of one of these small local entities. Yet another element must be added to this picture. Despite the dearth of finds indicating that the mansion was cleaned before its abandonment, the presence of administrative tools, even if very scanty, suggests that economic transactions were carried out in the building. This evidence might indicate that the Gomel lower town mansion, with its position at the eastern fringes of the settlement and perhaps close to one of the city gates, 155 could have played an administrative function in controlling goods entering or leaving the city and the close agricultural estates of the Gomel urban elite, which – as indicated by excavations in Operation 1 – was buried in monumental vaulted hypogea on Gomel's southern fringes. 156

In Phase 13 the building shows the first signs of internal reorganization. The blocking of important doorways (entrance from the building's outside to Court A, communication doorway between Room E and Room D) indicates modification of circulation within the building to ensure greater control of the spaces, plus a change in the rooms' functions, as shown by the separation between reception Room E and kitchen Room D that probably led to the loss of the reception room's original function.

Based on textual and archaeological evidence,¹⁵⁷ the destruction and abandonment of these buildings took place in the 18th century, when Hammurabi and, after him, Samsu-iluna overturned the political order in the northern Tigris plains and the Syrian Khabur basin by sacking and destroying Mari and plundering Tell al-Rimah and Tell Leilan. Besides the importance of Mari in the political sphere of the early MBA II, Rimah and Leilan also played significant political and economic roles. The fall of such

¹⁵⁰ McMahon 2009a, 29.

¹⁵¹ Postgate et al. 1997, 30.

¹⁵² Miglus et al. 2013, 53.

¹⁵³ See footnote 122 for the discussion of "public-near interaction".

¹⁵⁴ The MBA II territory of Northern Mesopotamia was under the economic and political influence of the Mari Kingdom, which also controlled local and smaller reigns. The interaction of Mari and these small reigns was very complex and has been reconstructed on the basis of cuneiform sources from Mari itself (Charpin – Ziegler 2003) and smaller polities such as Tell al-Rimah (Dalley et al. 1976), Tell Leilan (van de Mieroop 1994; Eidem 2011) and Tell Shemshara (Eidem – Læssøe 2001).

¹⁵⁵ In satellite and aerial images, a deep gully can be observed in the area of Operation 2 along the steep eastern slope of the lower town: this might mark the location of a gate in a city wall. These features are clearly visible in the U2 aerial pictures (Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 114; on the use of declassified U2 imagery, see Ur – Hammer 2018, B1554_flight_path).

¹⁵⁶ Ristvet – Weiss 2011, XXXV. This interpretation of the function of Building 1 is also supported by its similarities – administrative tools, location and building layout – with the Northern Lower Town Palace at Leilan, which has been interpreted as an administrative building for the management of properties and belongings of Qarni-Lim, king of Andarig, who had a residence in Tell Leilan (van de Mieroop 1994, 343).

¹⁵⁷ Eidem 2011; Dalley et al. 1976.

power centres must have also destabilised other minor urban centres in Northern Mesopotamia, even if they were not directly affected by sacking and destruction, as in the case of the urban sites located in the eastern Tigris plains, such as Gir-e Gomel. The general regional economic and political crisis might have been the force driving the residents of Building 1 to modify this mansion and adapt it to the new needs of a time of crisis, strife and instability.

In Phase 12, Building 1 was dismantled and its remains were settled to some extent by squatters, a pattern that has been recorded also in the MBA levels of other contemporary Northern Mesopotamian sites, such as Tell Leilan and Mari. Although the evidence is still limited, the recurrence of such a squatting occupation pattern might have been the consequence of the above-mentioned crisis in regional settlement, possibly following the fall of the large MBA urban centres of Northern Mesopotamia, such as Mari, which was conquered by Hammurabi of Babylon, and then Tell Leilan, which fell about fifty years later at the hand of Samsu-iluna.

In the 17th century, after Building 1 went out of use, in Phase 11 the squatters continued to reuse the cooking facilities already established in Phase 12 and equipped the open area with baked-brick fireplaces, built with recycled building material from Building 1.

The archaeological investigation of Building 1 has made it possible to set this elite mansion in the wider historical context of Upper Mesopotamia. But do we have any evidence about the identification of MBA Gomel? A new reassessment of the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC textual documentation regarding the historical geography of the plains located east of the Tigris Valley between Erbil, Mosul and Zakho by A. J. Edmonds suggests a connection between three late 3rd and early 2nd millennium toponyms located in the Transtigris region: the Old Akkadian toponym Gigini, the Ur III toponym Gigibinium/Gigibni/Gigimni and Old Babylonian Kigamnum/Kigamlum. Edmonds proposes a continuity between these toponyms and Hellenistic Gaugamela, Syriac Gogamel and modern Gomel. Should this enticing hypothesis be confirmed by additional epigraphical information, the earlier proposal of identifying Gir-e Gomel with MBA Nurrugum would have to be dropped and the capital of the polity of the same name searched for in a different mound in the Transtigris plains closer to the Tigris Valley, since Gomel with its 35 ha is the only large MBA site in the Navkur Plain.

ZOrA 16, 2023, § 1-105

¹⁵⁸ Ristvet – Weiss 2011, XXX; Margueron 2004, 526.

¹⁵⁹ Edmonds in print.

¹⁶⁰ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 74–75. 151.

Abbrevations

SHERD/SF NUMBER Sherd/Small find number

INT/EXT SURF Internal/External surface

INT/EXT TREAT Internal/External surface treatment

INT COLOUR Internal colourEXT COLOUR External colour

TECH Technology

DEC Decoration

M Medium

H High

SS Self-slip

SM Smoothed

NT No treatment

B Burnished

S Slip

W Wheel-thrown

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bronzezeitliche Urbanisierungsprozesse in der Navkur-Ebene (Region Kurdistan, Irak)

Vorläufiger Bericht der Italienisch-Kurdischen Ausgrabung des Jahres 2019 am Gir-e Gomel Daniele Morandi Bonacossi, Costanza Coppini, Katia Gavagnin, Hasan Ahmad Qasim

Die 2019 in Gir-e Gomel (Kurdistan-Irak) durchgeführten Ausgrabungen haben die Existenz eines mittelgroßen städtischen Zentrums im Herzen der fruchtbaren Navkur-Ebene ans Licht gebracht, welches an der Route lag, die Erbil und das Große Zab-Tal mit der oberen Tigris-Region verband. Die archäologischen Untersuchungen von Gir-e Gomel haben u. a. einen Friedhof, der von der späten Ninive 5-Periode bis zur postassyrischen Zeit kontinuierlich genutzt wurde, sowie ein Wohnund Verwaltungsgebäude aus der späten Mittelbronzezeit erkundet.

SCHLAGWORTE

Urbanisierung Nordmesopotamiens, Gir-e Gomel, Bronzezeit, Eisenzeit, Kurdistan – Irak

ا لخلا صة

استكشاف التحضّر في سهل نافكور (إقليم كردستان العراق)

تقرير أولي عن أعمال التّنقيب الإيطاليّة-الكردية لعام ٢٠١٩ في موقع گرى گومل (تل جومل)

دانييلَّه موراندي بوناكوسي ـ كوستانزا كوبيني ـ كاتيا غاڤانين ـ حسن أحمد قاسم

كشفت التنقيبات التي أجريت في عام ٢٠١٩ في گري گومل (تل جومل) في إقليم كردستان العراق عن وجود مركز حضريّ متوسط الحجم في قلب سهل نافكور الخصيب، والذي يربط أربيل بوادي الزاب الكبير ومنطقة أعالي نهر دجلة. وقد كشفت أعمال التنقيب الأثرية في گري گومل عن مقبرة كانت قيد الاستخدام بشكل مستمر منذ أواخر فترة نينوى الخامسة وصولاً إلى فترة ما بعد العصر الآشوري، بالإضافة إلى مبنى سكنى وإدارى يعود إلى أواخر عصر البرونز الوسيط.

الكلمات المفتاحية

التحضّر في شمال بلاد الرافدين . گري گومل (تل جومل) . عصر البرونز . عصر الحديد . إقليم كردستان العراق

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CONTACT

Prof. Dr. Daniele Morandi Bonacossi
Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage,
University of Udine
Vicolo Florio 2B
33100 Udine
Italy
daniele.morandi@uniud.it

Dr. Costanza Coppini
Einstein Center Chronoi, Freie Universität Berlin
Otto-von-Simson-Straße 7
14195 Berlin
Germany
Costanza.Coppini@fu-berlin.de

Dr. Katia Gavagnin
Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage,
University of Udine
Vicolo Florio 2B
33100 Udine
Italy
katia_gavagnin@hotmail.com

Dr. Hasan Ahmed Qasim Directorate General of Antiquities Erbil Kurdistan Region of Iraq dr.hasan.berwary@gmail.com

METADATA

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