

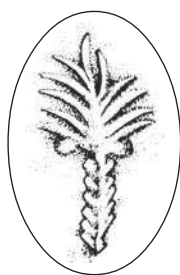
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THE “EASTERN PALACE” AND THE RESIDENTIAL  
ARCHITECTURE OF AREA T AT MISHRIFEH/QATNA

Preliminary Report on the 2006-2008 Excavation Campaigns of the Italian Component  
of the Syro-Italian Archaeological Project\*

## 1. Introduction

The discovery and excavation of the Royal Palace (Fig. 1, Areas G, H and R) and the public buildings located to the north (the ‘Lower City Palace’, Area K) and south of it (the ‘Southern Palace’, Area C) have shown that during the Late Bronze Age Qatna’s royal citadel was composed of a complex system of auxiliary official buildings with palatial function surrounding the Royal Palace<sup>1</sup>. However, even though almost two decades of archaeological research at Mishrifeh had allowed archaeologists to cast light on the topographic and architectural organization of power and its administration during the LBA, MBA public architecture was still unknown<sup>2</sup>.

A new excavation area (Area T) was opened in collaboration with the Syrian team headed by Dr Michel Al-Maqdissi and Miss Yasmine Kanhouh immediately to the east of the Royal Palace with the aim of gathering more information on the MBA and LBA occupation of the site. This enterprise was crowned with great success, since a new MBA palace (the ‘Eastern Palace’) was brought to light in the eastern part of the excavation (Areas T2-T4) together with well-preserved LBA and Iron Age domestic architecture in the western part of Area T (T1 and T4).

In this paper a preliminary comprehensive overview of the second-millennium occupation of this part of Qatna’s upper town and its related ceramic assemblages is presented in chronological order, starting with the MBA Eastern Palace (Areas T2-4) and finishing with the LBA residential architecture brought to light in Area T1.

The Iron Age evidence from Area T will be the subject of a future publication.

## 2. Areas T2-T3: the Eastern Palace

### 2.1. Introduction

From the 2006 season onwards, the remains of a mud-brick building were excavated in two operations (T2 and T3; Fig. 1). During the 2007 season it became clear that these belonged to a large public building which, on the basis of its architectural character-

istics, could be interpreted as a palace. This monumental building, which was dubbed the ‘Eastern Palace’ due to its location east of the Royal Palace, covered an extensive area. Part of this palace (the western sector) was excavated by the Italian component of the joint Syro-Italian Mission in Operations T2 and T3, whilst the eastern portion was investigated by the Syrian Mission.

This report presents an outline of the stratigraphy and architecture of this area, together with a discussion of the ceramic assemblages which have been recovered from the palace rooms and the relative chronology of the building. Since the building extends beyond excavation limits, this paper is only a preliminary account of the excavation results and focuses on the main phases of occupation. In particular, any attempt at correlating the occupation sequence of Area T2-T3 with that of the adjacent Area T4 (located immediately to the west) has been avoided for now, since several detailed questions regarding the stratigraphic sequence need to be resolved through further field work during the next excavation campaign. Future publications will present more definitive and conclusive results.

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<sup>1</sup> For the urban layout of Qatna’s upper town during the MBA and LBA, see Morandi Bonacossi 2007a, 222-229 and 2007b, 72-82.

<sup>2</sup> With the sole exceptions of the poorly preserved monumental building discovered on top of the central mound of the acropolis (Fig. 1, Area J; cf. MORANDI BONACOSSÌ 2007a-b and 2008) and the fortification system with its city gates.

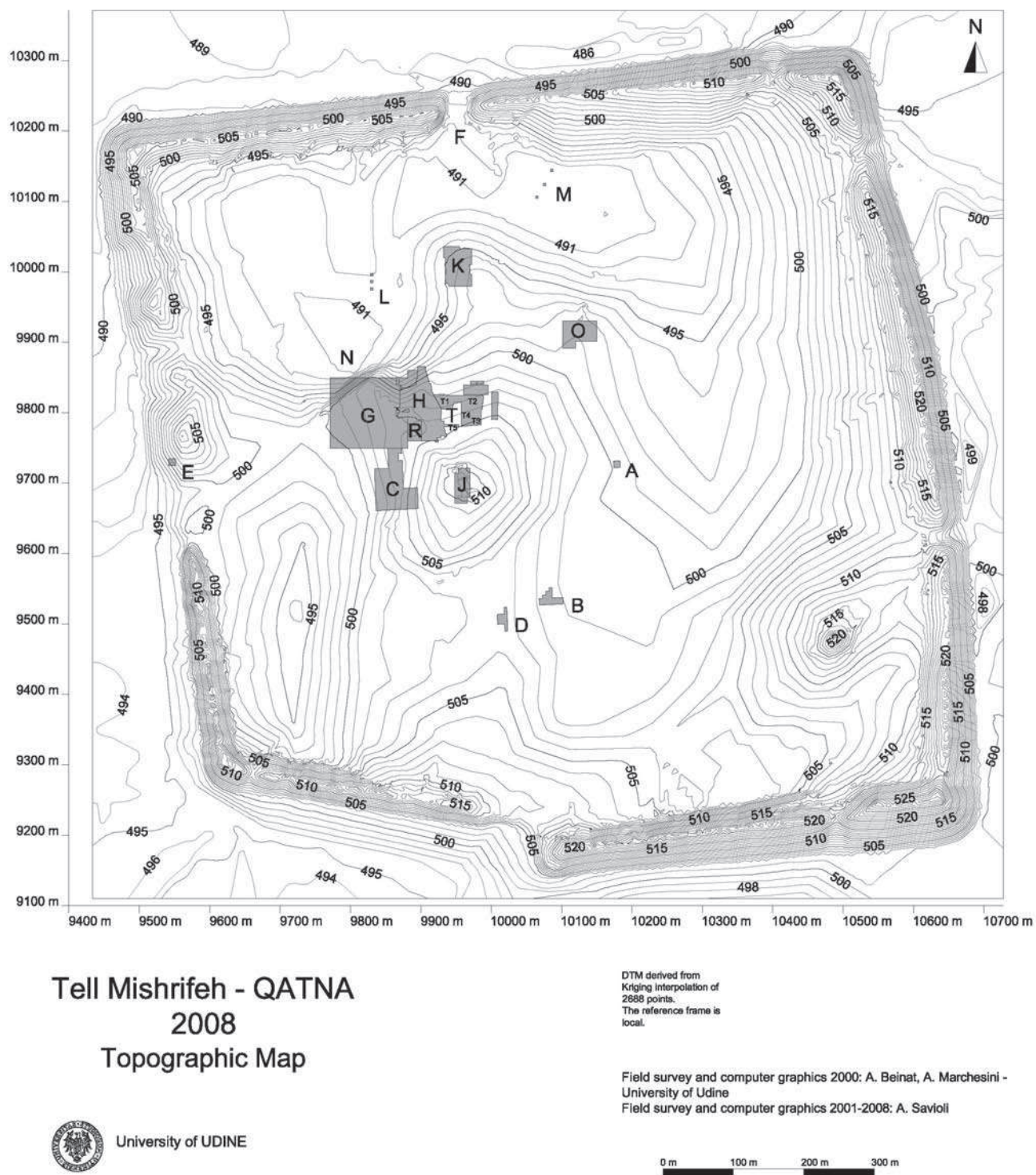


Fig. 1 - Topographic plan of Mishrifeh.

| New 2009 phases | Description                                             | 2008 phases (Iamoni in press) |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Phase I         | Abandonment of the Eastern Palace and LBA re-occupation | T9-T10-T12                    |
| Phase II        | Eastern Palace                                          | T13-T14                       |
| Phase III       | North-Western Extension                                 |                               |
| Phase IV        | Northern Building (late phase) and Southern Building    | T16                           |
| Phase V         | Northern Building (early phase) and Southern Building   | T16                           |
| Phase VI        | Wall 9066 cutting tannur 9053 underneath Room E         |                               |
| Phase VII       | Tannurs underneath Rooms E and D                        |                               |

Tab. 1 - Schematic sequence of the stratigraphy of Areas T2-T3 and preliminary correlations with the phases proposed in Iamoni in press.

A brief introductory comment is necessary concerning the Eastern Palace stratigraphic sequence proposed below (Tab. 1), since it has been modified slightly with respect to that adopted in a previous preliminary publication devoted to the ceramic materials from the Eastern Palace<sup>3</sup>. New data collected during the 2008 season have permitted the identification of one main occupation phase of the Eastern Palace, whereas the phases preceding this concern two distinct earlier buildings, named the ‘Northern Building’ and the ‘Southern Building’. This change does not, however, greatly affect this pottery study, since the earliest phase proposed therein (Phase 16) corresponds to the two buildings underlying the Eastern Palace, whereas the later phases (Phases 14-13) correspond to the Eastern Palace proper<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2. The levels underlying the Eastern Palace (Phases VII-VI)

To date, excavation has exposed two occupation levels on which the Northern and Southern Buildings and later the Eastern Palace were built. It was possible to investigate these only beneath three rooms situated in the northern sector of the Eastern Palace, in particular Rooms D and E (Pl. IV). Further information comes from the excavation below the floor of Room F; although the excavated evidence is substantial (an entire new room, S, has been identified), the relationship between this and what emerged below Rooms E and D has yet to be clarified, because of the massive later constructions that have interrupted the stratigraphic continuity.

Due to the limited area available for investigation, it is quite difficult to interpret these structures; on the basis of the evidence at hand, however, it seems that during Phase VII the zone was occupied by domestic structures with installations for cooking activities. The

area between Room D and E contained several *tannurs* that were used together with other domestic installations. The levels below Room D are at present those most clearly understood: a very large tannur, together with a smaller one, was in use in what might have been an open area (Fig. 2). The scant remains of a wall running E-W (SU 9688) indicate the presence of a building perhaps extending northwards, the plan of which is impossible to reconstruct. Later, a small mud-brick wall (SU 9713) was added to the wall; it is unclear whether this partially delimited a room<sup>5</sup>. However, the presence of the two *tannurs* would suggest an open area suitable for extensive cooking activities: mud-brick wall 9713 might thus be a simple partition wall.

In Room E the archaeological evidence is more complex: the cooking activity seems to have been more intense, as indicated by the great number of *tannurs* and distinct floors. The earliest level reached so far (Phase VII<sup>6</sup>) features two *tannurs* (9053 and 9000) together with a mud-brick bench (8991) on the western side of the excavated area.

Two main floors were associated with evidence of domestic/cooking activities: the large *tannur* 9053 was originally built in this phase, as was the mud-brick bench. Both remained in use in the western part of the excavated area during the formation of all these occupation levels.

Room S had *pisé* walls with a *tannur* embedded in a small platform. Unlike what could be observed for

<sup>3</sup> IAMONI in press.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> In this level an infant jar burial (G 44) devoid of grave goods was cut into the floor (see Fig. 2).

<sup>6</sup> The correlation of the archaeological evidence below Rooms D and E is of course hypothetical, since the stratigraphic continuity is interrupted by the walls of the later Southern Building.



Fig. 2 - The two tannurs with partition wall of red mud-bricks SU 9713 and wall SU 9688 running E-W. At the top of the photograph, the jar of Grave 44 is visible below the stone foundations of a later Southern Building/Eastern Palace wall.

Rooms D and E, Room S had at last three clear limits (on the E, W and N sides). However, as mentioned above, the massive cuts resulting from the construction of the Eastern Palace deeply damaged the pre-existing structures: whether Room S was part of a single functional unit together with the *tannurs* below Rooms E and D is thus a question that cannot be answered.

During Phase VII, *tannur* 9053 (excavated below Room E) was cut by the foundation trench of a new wall running approximately N-S (9066) in the eastern part of the explored area. These foundations represent the latest level (Phase VI) preceding the Southern and Northern Buildings and the Eastern Palace; unfortunately, no more can be said since the upstanding wall was completely missing, probably because of the later construction of the Southern and Northern Buildings.

A plausible interpretation of the excavated structures might be that there were at this time open spaces devoted to food preparation associated with one or more buildings. This would also be compatible with the Syrian mission's discovery of an Old Babylonian cuneiform tablet on the floor of a house in the area located to the east of Area T3. The tablet contains a contract dealing with the purchase of a wall separating the property of a woman and that of her neighbour<sup>7</sup>. In other words, the new evidence might concern a residential quarter which occupied this area before the construction of more substantial buildings in subsequent phases.

### 2.3. The Northern and Southern Buildings and the Eastern Palace (Phases V-II)

Although detailed comprehension of all of the excavated structures has not yet been attained, the last two seasons' work has yielded some clear results; some of these constructions (in particular those pertaining

to the phases preceding the Eastern Palace) require further elucidation, whilst our understanding of others (i.e. those concerning the main palace phase) is more definite.

The first important conclusion of our work is that the building known as the Eastern Palace and represented in Pl. IV is the result of many modification/restoration phases, which have incorporated and changed the plans of two mud-brick buildings that existed previously in this area. Thus, the Eastern Palace is not the result of a single architectural process and must not be conceived of as a public building constructed *ex novo*; it is rather the consequence of substantial modifications of pre-existing structures, the nature and function of which cannot be investigated in detail without removing the Eastern Palace structures. During the series of events that led to the formation of the palace, we have at present identified at least four main phases; additional sub-phases may be present (some of these have been already identified). However, a deeper and more accurate stratigraphic and architectural study is necessary before this analysis is finalized. As a consequence, in the present article we shall focus only on the main building phases recorded in this area.

During the earliest phase (Phase V, Fig. 4), the area of Operations T2 and T3 was occupied by two buildings that have been termed the Northern and Southern Buildings (Pl. I). These were probably built approximately at the same time; this conclusion is based on the fact that the foundation trenches of their (respectively) southern and northern walls are cut from the same surface. The construction of these two perimeter walls (and, consequently, of the two buildings) is therefore stratigraphically contemporaneous. It is unclear whether Courtyard I, as it occurs during the later Eastern Palace phase (Phase II, see below), was present already at this stage; important indicators, however, suggest its posteriority with regard to the Southern Building<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, it is impossible at present to examine in detail the stratigraphic position of Courtyard I without removing a considerable part of it<sup>9</sup>. This

<sup>7</sup> AL-MAQDISSI, KANHOUGH, CREMASCHI, MORANDI BONACOSSÌ 2009, 7.

<sup>8</sup> The level of the courtyard is higher than those of the floors in Rooms A and C, and its northern wall is not aligned with the northern wall of Rooms C and D.

<sup>9</sup> A small test trench was dug in the northern part of the court. This allowed us to show the existence of underlying structures. The occurrence of structures below Courtyard I of the later Eastern Palace seems also to be confirmed by the eastern section of the large LBA II pit 9108 excavated in Area T4 (see below). Taken together these data indicate the existence underneath Courtyard I of earlier mud-brick structures which might be part of the Southern Building. This evidence points to the possible existence of an earlier court lying below Courtyard I, and pertaining to the Southern Building.



Fig. 3 - A view of the Southern Building with rooms A-D and J. On the left side of the picture the stone foundations of the western wall of Room A are visible.

problem, therefore, is in need of further study and will be addressed in future publications. For clarity's sake, in the following discussion concerning Phases V-II 'Courtyard I' will be maintained as a definition of the area in front of Rooms C, A, and J.

The excavated part of the Southern Building was composed of Rooms A-D, J and N and extended for about 30 m, with a NNW-SSE orientation. The Southern Building's northern façade was quite distinct and characterised by the presence of two buttresses. In most cases walls were made of mud-bricks on a footing of medium- to large-sized stones, which lay directly on a layer of fine white mortar. The latter covered the stone foundations of the palace, which were deeply dug into the surface; the technique was clearly visible in the north-western corner of Room C. Here a large Iron Age installation cut the underlying palace structures, thus exposing a section of accurate and regularly arranged layers of stones and white mortar that constituted a base for the standing mud-brick wall (Fig. 3)<sup>10</sup>.

The only exception to this technique regards walls 7619 and 8702, that seem to have been built from a mix of broken mud-bricks and simple clay used as a kind of *pisé*. The low quality of the building material used for these walls is a direct cause of their bad state of preservation. The reasons for the use of a different

building technique in both walls are at present unclear; however, it is possible that they were part of repairs to the Southern Building, which were conducted in this area during a later phase, possibly during the creation of the Eastern Palace (Phase II, see below)<sup>11</sup>.

Most of the Southern Building rooms had simple mud floors, with traces of plastering clearly present in a few rooms (J and possibly A). A periodic remaking of the floors is seen in all of these rooms, which also explains the scarcity of materials and installations still *in situ*. The Southern Building was used and later incorporated into the Eastern Palace, until its final abandonment at the end of the MBA II B/early LB I. Its rooms had been emptied and cleaned before each rebuilding; in only a couple of cases (Rooms C and J, see below), thanks to the occurrence of pyrotechnological installations, it has been possible to understand the rooms' function.

<sup>10</sup> The stone and white mortar foundations were in this point particularly deep, probably as a consequence of the steep northwards slope of the marl bedrock on which the building's foundation lay. It is thus likely that all of the foundations of the northern walls were significantly deeper than in the rest of the Southern Building.

<sup>11</sup> The absence of stone bases below the mud-bricks might suggest this; the issue requires a more detailed examination.

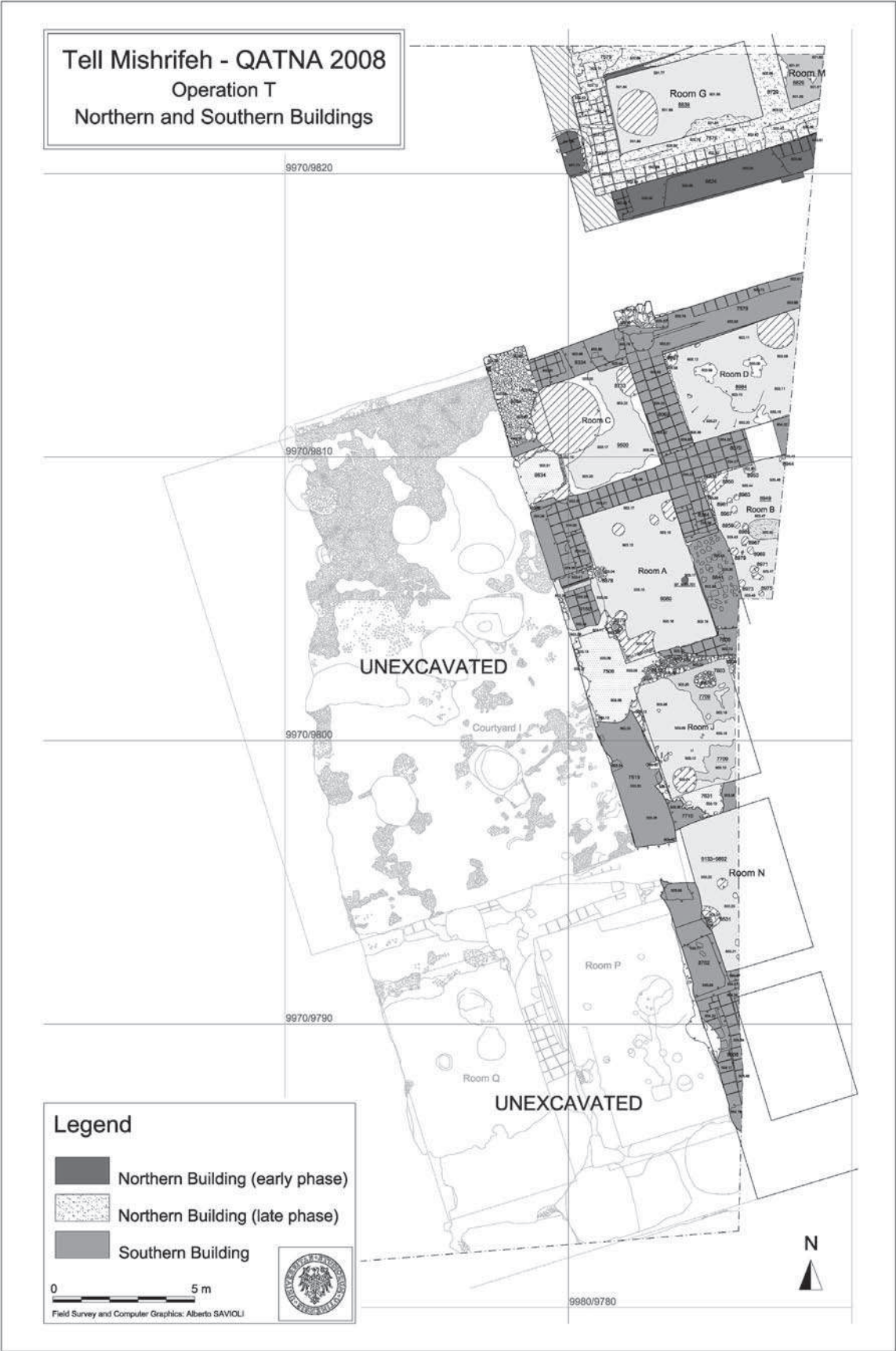


Fig. 4 - Plan of the Northern and Southern Buildings.

Two entrances to the Southern Building from the area to the west (Courtyard I area) have been identified; the main one was located in Room A. Two polished basalt door sockets embedded in the floor supported a large double door, ca. 1.7 m wide. The importance of this entrance was not only indicated by its dimensions but also by the presence of recesses in the door jambs<sup>12</sup>. The recess surfaces were lime-plastered, further emphasizing the significance of the entrance.

The other entrance was located in Room C; the absence of door sockets suggests that it was probably a secondary entrance.

Due to the limited size of the excavation area, it is difficult to reconstruct the communication network within the Southern Building. However, on the basis of the available evidence, it seems clear that the Southern Building contained parallel rows of rooms: thus C, A, J and N belonged to the western row, whereas D, B and other still unexcavated rooms belonged to an internal row.

Secondly, the Southern Building plan was organized on different levels, probably because of the irregular bedrock conformation; this regards both its N-S and E-W development. The two parallel rows of rooms mentioned above were built at different levels; the internal row was higher than the other. This entailed an appropriate pattern of internal connections, which could be reconstructed only partially.

At present the only access from Room A to the other rooms seems to have been through Room B: a wide gap in the wall between Rooms A and B might be what remains of a large passage between these two rooms. The difference in floor level (ca. 20 cm) was perhaps overcome by means of a step<sup>13</sup>. From Room B one could reach the adjacent Room D or, possibly, the inner part of the building further to the east (which lies beyond the current excavation limit). The single door between Rooms B and D was equipped with a door socket found still *in situ* next to the eastern Room B door jamb.

With regard to room function, as noted above, only in the case of a few rooms was sufficient evidence found for interpretation of use. Rooms A and B were probably simple entrance-halls, whereas Room J might have been dedicated to domestic activities, since its original floor was plastered with lime and in its north-eastern corner there was a fireplace. Unlike the situation in later Room P, Room J was equipped with only a fireplace in this earlier phase; one might suppose that either the room function changed in the following Eastern Palace phase or that the fireplace was not intended for cooking activities, but rather for heating<sup>14</sup>.

With regard to the Northern Building, only its south-western corner has been excavated, since the rest of the building extended northwards into the excavation area of the Syrian Mission. Only one room (G) and part of another one (M) were present in this corner; this limited evidence prevents us from propos-

ing significant conclusions. Furthermore, as will be explained below, the substantial plan modifications necessary for the construction of the Eastern Palace also involved the Northern Building; these eliminated or concealed pre-existing structures. On the basis of the evidence at hand, the earliest trace of Northern Building consists of its southern wall (8824, Pl. I)<sup>15</sup>, the foundation trench of which, as explained above, was cut from the same surface (7743) as that of the northern wall 7579 of the Southern Building. Possibly also a part of the Northern Building in this original phase (the "early phase" in Fig. 4) was wall 7337. Unfortunately its southern continuation (in particular the south-eastern corner) is covered by the red mud-bricks of later wall 7576 (see below) and by the new walls of the Eastern Palace. As a consequence, it cannot be definitely shown that walls 8824 and 7337 belonged to the same structure, although this seems very likely.

The current reconstruction plan therefore is based on a series of features (in particular, the foundation levels and the type of mud-bricks used), which, although they are consistent, do not constitute irrefutable evidence for the proposed reconstruction. The following must therefore be taken as a hypothesis that requires confirmation from future data regarding the northern sector of the building.

During Phase V, the Northern Building was thus probably composed of the two walls (8824 and 7337) that formed the original perimeter of Rooms G and M, described above. The internal size of these two rooms must, however, have been slightly different with respect to later phases: the excavation of the earliest Room G floor exposed traces of pre-existing foundations (8894; Pl. I), whose elevation was at the same level as the foundations of wall 8824. This suggests that, together with walls 8824 and 7337, they belonged to the same original building (Pl. I). In this phase, Room G had a simple earth floor; no other particular features have been found, except for the bottom of a jar em-

<sup>12</sup> Only the northernmost of these survived, since the southern part of the western wall of Room A was not preserved.

<sup>13</sup> This is a hypothesis; only a compact mass of broken mud-bricks was found in the doorway area.

<sup>14</sup> As support for the second interpretation it must be stressed that the Room J pottery horizon does not seem to include a significant amount of cooking ware.

<sup>15</sup> This is based on the hypothesis that wall 8824 pre-dated the adjoining wall 7576 built with different red mud-bricks; there are as yet no clear indications, although traces of red mud-bricks covering wall 8824 have been found, which would corroborate what seems the likeliest interpretation. Future enlargement of the excavation area towards the east should help to clarify this point.

bedded in the floor. It is impossible to say what kind of floor was present in the adjacent Room M, as the concrete floor of the following Phase IV overlies possible pre-existing floor levels; only its removal would enable an evaluation of the original Room M floor.

In a later phase (Phase IV) radical changes were made in the Northern Building, whereas the southern one probably remained untouched. Room G was modified and narrowed: new walls were built with a novel type of mud-brick distinguished by a striking red colour (Pl. II and Fig. 4)<sup>16</sup>. A further E-W oriented *pisé* wall (7579) was added to the N<sup>17</sup>. Both *pisé* and red mud-brick walls were rendered with a layer of white plaster that was preserved in the north western corner of Room G; this might be a further indication of the contemporaneous addition of both walls (no earlier traces of plaster covering both the *pisé* wall and the structures of the previous Phase V have been detected). These radical modifications implied the remaking of the floors: Room G, however, maintained a simple mud floor, whereas Room M was equipped with a new white concrete floor, very solid and regular.

After the transformations described above<sup>18</sup>, the Northern Building was modified by the addition of an entire new wing on its north-western side, the 'North-Western Extension' (Phase III, Pl. III). Massive *pisé* walls running ENE-WSW and NNW-SSE were built in order to create a series of small square and rectangular rooms of which three have been excavated by the Italian Mission (T, U and V). The massive *pisé* walls show an unusual technique consisting of alternating levels of mud and layers of pebbles that formed walls in some cases more than 2 m thick. Of the three rooms brought to light, only two have been excavated completely (V and T), whereas the third continues beyond the northern excavation limit. Rooms V and T are rectangular in shape. In all three rooms simple mud floors have been found, but unfortunately no materials or installations of interest were recovered from them. However, the wall dimensions, the small size and shape of the rooms, and, above all, the absence of doors between them suggest a storage function.

Room H, which connects Rooms T, U and V to Room G of the earlier Northern Building constitutes an exception: its considerable dimensions point to a completely different function. The room had a single simple mud floor and contained three plastered basins in its eastern half<sup>19</sup>, whereas the western part contained a sequence of three trampled clay accumulations with deep prints of bare feet preserved in the clay layers (Fig. 5). These surfaces were quite remarkable; each was very hard and compact not only as a result of the trampling activity, but also due to the purity of the clay which composed it.

There was a clear-cut limit between the two halves, although no concrete evidence of a dividing structure between the two parts of the room was found; the most likely explanation would seem to be the existence of a



Fig. 5 - Room H, looking southwards. Note the trampled surface on the right side (the dark area is the bottom of a later pit) and two basins on the left. At the centre of the southern margin the third white-plastered basin is clearly visible.

partition made of perishable materials (perhaps wood). As to the function of this room, the plastered basins suggest the possible use of water or some other liquid there, whereas the trampled surfaces of pure clay are more difficult to interpret. An identical surface was also discovered on the top of the central acropolis mound in Area J (Phase J11) which was part of a large pottery workshop and was interpreted as a working area where clay was sorted and kneaded<sup>20</sup>. This interpretation would fit well with the evidence from Room H, especially with regard to the basins which may have contained water that was used in the adjacent clay working area in the western part of Room H, where the clay might have been kneaded before the vessels were thrown. If this interpretation is correct, the Northern Building contained on its premises a produc-

<sup>16</sup> The different mud-brick colour is clearly visible and seems to characterize mostly the Northern Building. However, some wall portions of the Southern Building also contain red mud-bricks; these appear to have been later repairs – thus confirming their attribution to a later phase – rather than building modifications, as in the case of the Northern Building. A more accurate study is nonetheless necessary in order to verify whether a further building phase (preceding the construction of the Eastern Palace) also occurred in the Southern Building.

<sup>17</sup> The use of a different wall construction technique must presumably depend on the different function that this wall had (i.e. as a partition wall) compared to the others, which were perimeter walls of the Northern Building.

<sup>18</sup> The time span that occurred between the early and late phases of the Northern Building cannot be precisely ascertained. On the basis of a preliminary analysis of the pottery, however, a perceptible gap does not seem to exist, so the two phases seem not to have been separated by a long period of time.

<sup>19</sup> In particular, one of these was lined with lime, whereas the others had simple mud plasters.

<sup>20</sup> MORANDI BONACOSSO 2002; 2003; 2008, 105 and fig. 34. This practice is still observable today in a modern pottery workshop close to Mishrifeh (AL-BAHLOUL-KASSOUHA 2002, 200-201, in particular fig. 174).

tion area. However, the remaining northern part of Room H is still unexcavated and consequently this proposed interpretation must remain hypothetical until future data shed more light on the room's function.

The following Phase II concerns the monumental changes that characterised the entire area excavated in T2 and T3. Three modifications radically altered the architecture of the buildings.

First, the two buildings (i.e. the Northern and Southern Building) became part of a single architectural complex, known as the Eastern Palace (Pl. IV). Through the construction of two new NNW-SSE walls connected to the south-western and north-western corners of the Northern and Southern Buildings, the new Room E was created. Its purpose was to join together the Northern and Southern Buildings and link them in the new Eastern Palace. The earlier empty surface (probably an open area), into which the foundation trenches of the Northern and Southern Buildings were dug, was covered by a new beaten earth floor. The addition of the western wall of the new Room E to the already existing walls of the Northern and Southern Buildings is clearly visible: its foundation trenches cut the pre-existing walls of the Northern Building and, in particular, the *pisé* walls of the NW Extension<sup>21</sup>.

The new Room E showed features typical of a palace building. In particular, the doorway between Rooms F and E was quite well preserved: the door jambs were coated with a layer of black-painted plaster, possibly so as to imitate the basalt orthostats that usually distinguish the doorways of palatial buildings<sup>22</sup>. The earth floor was well preserved and compact.

In this phase the palace appeared as a very long NNW-SSE oriented building, measuring about 40 m in Areas T2-3<sup>23</sup>. The internal room layout and interconnections remained roughly unchanged. The addition of two new rooms (F and E), of which one in particular (Room E), had a different orientation<sup>24</sup>, did not affect the pattern of the pre-existing doorways (i.e. between Courtyard I and Room A and between Rooms B and D), which remained in use also during this phase. Room E possibly served as a connecting room between the new northern and southern sectors of the Eastern Palace<sup>25</sup>. The main entrance of the building, however, remained that in Room A.

This now opened onto the new Courtyard I, the addition of which represents the second radical modification of Phase II and played perhaps the most important role in the monumental transformation of the Northern and Southern Buildings into the Eastern Palace. Courtyard I measured ca. 17 x 10 m and was finely paved with a double layer of small cobbles, which allowed water to drain, covered by a thick layer of mud over the entire surface of the court. Its construction seems to have been motivated by the need to create a more monumental entrance to the new Eastern Palace (Fig. 6 and Pl. IV).

In a third step, two new wings were added to the northern and southern sides of Courtyard I. On the northern margin, Rooms F and R were added. It is impossible at present to determine their function; the heavy erosion that affects this area of the palace (which lay on a sloping surface), together with the occurrence of Iron Age intrusions, has almost completely eliminated the mud-brick walls and in part the floors. Room F had a very regular and compact mud floor, preserved only in half of the room, whereas only scant evidence has been found of Room R's floor (although excavation here has not yet been completed). Wall 7558 between Rooms R and F was built directly above one of the massive *pisé* walls of the NW Extension (9990). Its stone foundation lay directly on this, clear evidence of the pre-existence of the NW Extension. It is very likely that the northern part of Rooms R and F coincided with the *pisé* wall 7360: traces of stone foundations that might have supported a mud-brick wall have been found on its eastern end. Although this evidence is not decisive, it hints at such a reconstruction. Furthermore, this could explain the non-alignment of the northern wall of Courtyard I (i.e. the southern wall of Room R) with respect to the northern walls of Rooms D and C: the intention to use part of the already existing *pisé* wall as support for the stone foundations of the new Eastern Palace's rooms might have resulted in its being built slightly off-axis in respect to the corresponding northern wall 8334 of the adjoining Room C. The continuation of the excavation in T2 will hopefully provide more data regarding this hypothesis.

The southern side of Courtyard I was also flanked by two new rooms (P and Q), which were built as part

<sup>21</sup> The latter did not exist in Phase II and must have been covered by the floors of the Eastern Palace, which, however, have not been preserved here due to the heavy erosion affecting the north-western part of Area T2 (as well as the western part of the Syrian excavation area adjoining it to the north).

<sup>22</sup> At Qatna basalt orthostats have been found in the later Royal Palace and Lower City Palace.

<sup>23</sup> To this NNW-SSE measurement, the extension of the Eastern Palace in the adjoining Syrian excavation area must be added, bringing the overall recorded length to over 58 m (the Eastern Palace also continues beyond the northern limit of the Syrian excavation area).

<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the orientation of Room E and its internal plan, which develops along an E-W axis (in contrast to the N-S alignment of the Southern Building rooms), suggest that the room is a later addition.

<sup>25</sup> Our understanding of Room F is hampered by its poor state of preservation (which also regards this sector of the Eastern Palace): the northern half of Room F is almost completely missing, possibly due to heavy erosion caused by the increasing northwards slope of the hill. Room F's direct connection with E, however, might suggest a simple role of "ante-chamber".



Fig. 6 - View of the Eastern Palace (north to the left of the photograph). Note the large cobbled Courtyard I in the centre and the massive cut of pit 9108 with its ashy fills (the excavation of which was completed during the 2008 campaign) along the western side of the court.

of a single design together with the courtyard<sup>26</sup>. The first of these was a particularly important source of information, since its continued use as a possible metallurgy workshop<sup>27</sup> produced a sequence of accumulations and floors without parallel in the remaining rooms of the Eastern Palace<sup>28</sup>. Its earliest phases of use are less known. Only scant traces of benches running along the S, W and N walls have been found in the original floor level<sup>29</sup>, whereas conspicuous finds have been excavated from successive levels/sub-phases of the room. In particular, one of the latest floor levels was plastered with lime and contained several artefacts still *in situ*, such as pottery (fragments and complete vessels), nine bronze pins, ground stone tools (mostly pestles) and numerous clay sealings with cylinder seal impressions (some with cuneiform inscriptions)<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> The southern wall of these rooms had been already removed in antiquity by large pits, possibly the results of substantial robbing activity concerned with the re-use of mud-bricks once the Eastern Palace had been abandoned. However, traces of a very compact sloping surface have been found along the southern limit of excavation, which seem to belong to a sloping 'glacis' surface (Fig. 8) that bordered the southern edge of the

Eastern Palace, thus confirming the original location of the building's southern limit in this area.

<sup>27</sup> However, the occurrence of domestic activities such as cooking remains a possibility: a thorough re-examination of the finds together with other evidence regarding the different sub-phases identified in the room must be conducted before a definitive interpretation is proposed.

<sup>28</sup> Nineteen distinct floors and floor-repairs have been excavated in Room P: unlike in the other palace sectors, it seems that the intensive productive activity necessitated very frequent floor relaying.

<sup>29</sup> During its existence Room P was characterized by the presence of pyrotechnological installations located in varying positions. Each installation remained in use for a certain period of time and was then covered by a layer of cobbles. This probably happened whenever the floor of the room was to be remade. Pyrotechnological installations were usually simple oval depressions in the floor (the cobbles served to fill and level the depression for the new floor). In the south-eastern corner of the room, however, a kiln made of mud-bricks was found. It resembles that excavated in Room 167 of the Royal Palace of Mari (PARROT 1958, 24-25), which was interpreted by the excavator as an oven for food preparation, though a productive function seems more probable. Cf. also MARGUERON 1982, 222-223, who had already evidenced the occurrence of several aspects that undermine the kitchen interpretation.

<sup>30</sup> All these finds will be the subject of specific forthcoming publications.



Fig. 7 - The two platforms in Room P (north to the right side); in the upper left corner, two bronze pins together with some fragments of a large pottery jar still *in situ*. In the foreground, stone tools (mostly basalt grinding stones). Note the traces of fires on the platforms.

The room had two platforms belonging to this level (Figs. 7-8); the southernmost of these was the earliest, built on a lower floor level. It was rectangular in shape and made of mud-bricks covered by a thick layer of clay plaster. During one of the floor repairs, another smaller platform was added north of the first; it too was rectangular, though oriented perpendicularly (with an E-W long axis). This later platform abutted the northern short side of the earlier, thus forming a sort of T-shaped combined installation. These two platforms probably functioned as supports for pyrotechnological installations. The fired round prints of two small kilns or fireplaces were still visible at the moment of the excavation (Fig. 7).

In the NE corner of the earliest platform there was a round hole, roughly 30 cm deep and lined with a thick layer of white plaster. The function of this installation is unclear; its fill did not contain particular traces of organic materials. The thick lining suggests an interpretation as a container for liquids.

The large assemblage of pottery from this floor level was concentrated in the western half of the room. The high concentration of ceramics was not paralleled by any other floors of Room P: these were in most cases completely clean and bore only traces of the associated installations (mainly fireplaces), with no artefacts preserved *in situ*. To sum up, the presence of several metal objects *in situ* (toggle pins) together with the occurrence of kilns and other installations connected to firing activities strongly suggest the existence of a metallurgical workshop in Room P. In this respect, the recovery of a metal waste composed of several metal bar pieces (some of which were possibly silver) partially melted together, might be a further support for this hypothesis.

In a final stage, Room P was divided into two smaller rooms (K and L) by the addition of two partition walls (Fig. 11)<sup>31</sup>. The northern room (K) prob-

ably now functioned as a kitchen: a large *tannur* was present in the western part, with a few potsherds in the vicinity. The southern room did not show traces of any specific function.

The function of Room Q remains uncertain. Only three floors were found in this room, in contrast to the situation in Room P; all were simple earth floors and completely empty. The second floor bore signs of the presence of a long mud-brick bench along the eastern side of the room. It is currently impossible to understand Room Q's function; it may have been an access and/or passage room to this wing of the Palace.

Although the northern and southern sides of the courtyard are known, the nature and layout of the western side are unfortunately very problematic. In fact, the massive demolition works that took place during the LBA I/LBA II (see Area T4, below) completely removed the western wall delimiting Courtyard I and the possible Eastern Palace premises located immediately to the west of it, thus reducing the information available regarding the overall aspect of this monumental structure. Nothing definitive is known about the existence of rooms closing the western side of the courtyard, though their one-time presence is strongly suggested by the building's overall layout.

With regard to the remaining rooms of the Eastern Palace, all had been fitted with new, regularly laid earth floors, an indication that the structure was completely renovated. The room function (where identifiable) seems to have remained the same, with the only exception of Room J where, as outlined above, a fireplace was now sealed by a new plaster floor.

At the end of the MBA II (or possibly very early in the LBA I) the Eastern Palace was abandoned. The area was almost completely deserted: traces of LBA occupation have been found only in the central sector of the palace (see below). Most of the structures, though still standing, were therefore not occupied.

The reasons for its abandonment are unclear, though it may be relevant that the Eastern Palace fell into disuse roughly contemporarily with the building of the Royal Palace<sup>32</sup>, together with other palaces or monumental residences such as the Lower City Palace<sup>33</sup> and the Southern Residence of Area C<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The exact stratigraphic position of this final floor level has not yet been determined conclusively; a more accurate study is required, especially of the pottery assemblages. It might actually belong to a later squatting phase of the building, during which only some rooms of the Eastern Palace were reused (see below). However, for the time being (and whilst awaiting a more detailed study of the related pottery assemblages), we are inclined to consider Rooms K and L as part of the Eastern Palace.

<sup>32</sup> MORANDI BONACOSI 2007a; *contra* NOVÁK 2004 and PFÄLZNER 2007.

<sup>33</sup> LUCIANI 2003, 146-157 and 2004, 134-142.

<sup>34</sup> AL-MAQDISSI 2003, 235-238.

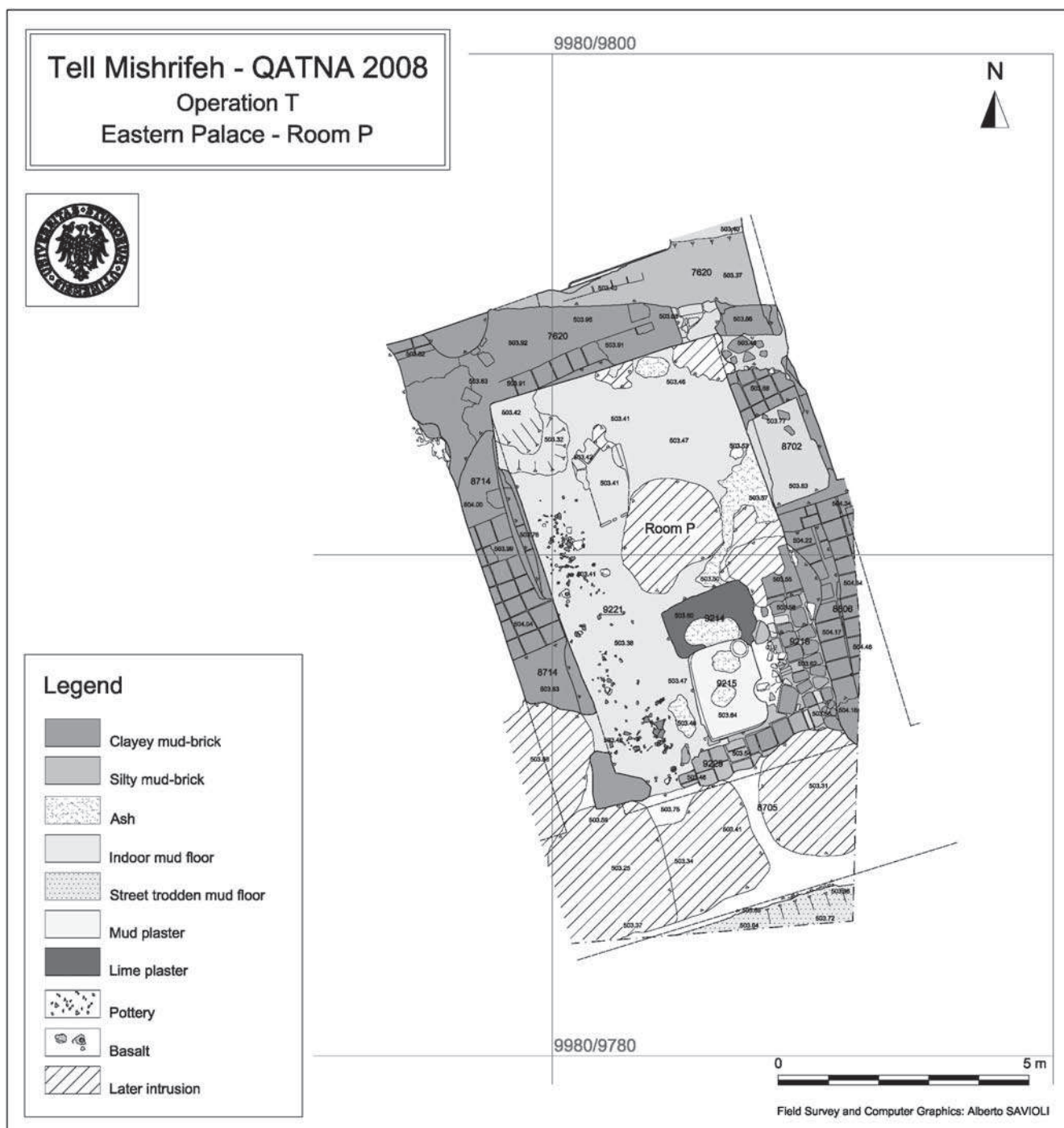


Fig. 8 - Room P; note the concentration of pottery and stone artefacts along the western wall.

A factor which could have led – alone or in combination with other motives – to the abandonment of the Eastern Palace might concern some structural fragility of the building, which is observable not only in the poor state of preservation of many of the mud-brick walls located northwards of Courtyard I, but also in the red mud-brick walls that characterise the modifications of Phase IV<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, the western margin of the palace might have been damaged and seriously weakened by erosion caused by the surface runoff of rainwater, which tended to collect in this area (that formed a north-south depression, fed by the higher central acropolis mound (Area J) further to the south).

On the other hand, the abandonment of the Eastern Palace at the end of the MBA II/beginning of the LBA I probably reflected a need to restructure profoundly the urban layout of the Qatna acropolis. The desertion of the Eastern Palace might therefore also be seen as a consequence of the necessity to provide the city with an imposing royal citadel, a new political, ceremonial and administrative hub consisting of three public buildings: the Royal Palace, the Lower City Palace and the Southern Residence. However, a more complete knowledge of Qatna’s MBA town planning is necessary in order to better evaluate this hypothesis.

#### 2.4. Phase I: the abandonment of the Eastern Palace and its re-occupation (graves and LBA squatting)

Under the label of ‘Phase I’ we have provisionally included both the abandonment and the squatter re-occupation of the palace during the LBA. As such, Phase I includes at least three distinct processes: the abandonment of the palace<sup>36</sup>, its use as a burial ground, and its localized re-occupation during the LBA I. Each has the potential to become a full-blown phase in the sequence of Areas T2 and T3. Since work is still under way, however, we have preferred to furnish here a synthetic description which compresses these various archaeological events into one phase. Future investigations will focus on a more precise identification of the distinctive character of these separate actions and the question of how best they may be classified into one or more phases.

##### 2.4.1. The Graves

During the 2007 and 2008 excavation 14 graves were excavated in Operations T2 and T3 (Fig. 11). Due to the interim nature of this article, the graves have merely been subdivided into two main groups, pre-Eastern Palace and post-Eastern Palace graves; future studies devoted to a full analysis of the burial evidence uncovered in the Eastern Palace area will provide a detailed grave description and a definitive interpretation.



Fig. 9 - Grave 39 in the NW corner of Room B.

Among the 14 graves excavated so far, six pertain to a period before the construction of the Eastern Palace, with one grave belonging to Phase VII (G. 44), two graves belonging to Phase III (G. 45-46), one grave (G. 47) pertaining to Phases V-III, and two graves (G. 39-40) that were dug between the use of the Southern Building and the construction of the Eastern Palace (see below). The remaining eight (G. 33-38, 41-42) belong to a period after the abandonment of the Eastern Palace (Phase I). This division into two groups (although preliminary), is based on stratigraphic observations<sup>37</sup> and corresponds to two coherent burial horizons: the former consists only of infant burials and the latter mostly of adult burials.

Among the earliest graves, G. 39 and 40 are particularly important, not only due to their position within the stratigraphic sequence of the area, but also to the presence in them of grave goods consisting mainly of ceramic vessels. As noted above, G. 39 (Fig. 9) and G. 40 are located in the Southern Building area and lie stratigraphically between the Southern Build-

<sup>35</sup> It must be stressed that the need to add new mud-brick walls is *per se* a hint that the Phase V Northern Building may have suffered from some internal weakness. It is interesting to note that the red mud-brick wall 7576 of the following Phase IV Northern Building also shows clear traces of structural weakness resulting in the curved shape of its northern face, possibly determined by the pressure of the pre-existing wall 8824 on its southern side.

<sup>36</sup> The desertion of the building may have been accompanied by the blocking of some of its doors with mud-bricks. However, it is impossible to ascertain whether the doorways between Courtyard I and Room A and between Rooms B and D were blocked at the moment of the abandonment of the Eastern Palace or when some of its rooms were reoccupied during the LBA I. The new floors of the reoccupied rooms abutted the door blockings, which were therefore already in place.

<sup>37</sup> For example the various floors into which the graves were dug, as well as the difference in the levels of the graves cut.



Fig. 10 - Grave 38. Note the ceramic bottle behind the body of the child and the small bronze pin on the left shoulder

ing occupation and the creation of the Eastern Palace, since they had been dug into floors pertaining to the Southern Building (Rooms B and A respectively) and were sealed by the new floors of the Eastern Palace. The infants were buried in the lower halves of jars; these were placed into larger pits that were partially filled with stones around the vessels, probably in order to stabilize their position<sup>38</sup>. The grave pits were then filled with loose earth.

The occurrence of Graves 39 and 40 poses a double question concerning their chronology and interpretation. With regard to the first issue, the ceramic grave goods fit well into an MBA II A horizon, possibly late MB II A (see below for a discussion of the pottery). This provides us with a *terminus post quem* for the Eastern Palace construction and, at the same time, a *terminus ante quem* for the disuse of the Southern Building, which agrees well with the preliminary dating of the Southern and Northern Buildings and the Eastern Palace based on the pottery study.

The interpretation of these two graves is, on the other hand, a bit more problematic: the floors into which they were dug did not show traces of repairs over the grave cuts; instead, they were covered by new floors belonging to the Eastern Palace. This suggests two possible explanations: either the graves represent the end of the occupation of the Southern Building structures<sup>39</sup> or they might be an example of the well-known MBA habit of burying infants in jars below house floors<sup>40</sup>. At present either interpretation is possible, though if there were a kinship relationship with the Southern Building or Eastern Palace occupants<sup>41</sup> these burials might be a sign of continuity rather than discontinuity<sup>42</sup>.

The second grave group is formed by eight burials which contained 5 adults, 2 infants and 1 child: all of these are dug either into the upper surfaces that cover the remains of the Eastern Palace (Graves 33-36 and

41-42) or directly into the last floors of the Eastern Palace (Graves 37 and 38).

Like the infant graves of the first group, all of the adult burials were very similar: simple inhumations without any grave goods. The adults lay supine or on their sides in pits which were generally oval shaped; only one case involved interment in a circular pit.

The case of Grave 38 (Fig. 10) is interesting since, together with Grave 37, it was one of the two tombs excavated directly into the last floors of the Eastern Palace. It contained a ca 7±2 year old child, probably male, buried in a simple pit that was sealed by a large fragment of a storage jar. The body lay on its left side in an oval pit, with face turned southwards. The skeleton, fairly well preserved, had the right arm extended and the left arm slightly flexed, whereas the lower limbs were flexed with knees facing south. This burial was the only one accompanied by ceramic as well as bronze grave goods: a small bottle was located behind the right shoulder of the child, while a small bronze pin or maybe needle (possibly what remained of the child's clothing or shroud) was located next to the left shoulder. The scattered bones of three other bodies<sup>43</sup> were collected from the fill of the grave above the jar. The position of these bones might be interpreted as an example of multiple deaths which occurred within a short time<sup>44</sup>: the impossibility of re-opening the grave, because the first body had not yet decayed, would have resulted in the subsequent bodies being interred above the jar.

As a whole, the second grave group marks the fall into disuse of the Eastern Palace and, with the excep-

<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere symbolism has been advocated in place of more practical explanations for the presence of circles of stones around the burial jars (ILAN 1995: 127); however, at least with reference to the two tombs discussed above, a simpler and more concrete explanation seems more appropriate.

<sup>39</sup> DORNEMANN 1979, 138; ILAN 1995, 126-127; THALMANN 2006, 58; SCONZO 2007, 298.

<sup>40</sup> ILAN 1995, 134.

<sup>41</sup> Possibly corresponding to the construction period of the Eastern Palace, during which the Southern Building might have been abandoned and used as burial ground.

<sup>42</sup> The burial of infants below floors has been generally explained with the partial (or even complete) lack of social status of infants (ILAN 1995, 133 and references within). Nevertheless, as has been already proposed (ILAN 1995, 133-134), the occurrence of grave goods, which is not a peculiarity of Qatna (see for example DORNEMANN 1979, 138 and ROOBAERT 1998, 98-99 – though there the jar burial of an adult has been supposed – for the Euphrates area or BAFFI GUARDATA 1998, 58-59 for Ebla, although there the burials do not seem to be associated with any building), suggests that the buried infants had some kind of social position. The occurrence of a kind of internal cult of the dead, as has been recently proposed for the graves in the Ur houses (BRUSASCO 1999-2000, 74-75), cannot be entirely excluded.

<sup>43</sup> Two newborns and one child about 1.5 years old.

<sup>44</sup> ILAN 1995, 134.



Fig. 11 - Distribution of graves in Areas T2-T3.



occupation have been found in Rooms A and J and in the great Courtyard I. In Room A, a quite regular earth floor occurred right above the last floor of the room before its definitive abandonment<sup>45</sup>. This was characterized by the addition of a small *pisé* partition wall that divided the room in two (Fig. 12)<sup>46</sup>.

Room B was apparently in use as well; in this phase, its floor was at the same level as that of Room A. It therefore seems likely that Rooms A and B formed a single unit of unknown function<sup>47</sup>. No further traces of a squatters' re-occupation have been found in the remaining sectors of the palace, though trodden surfaces are present in more or less all of the other rooms. These might simply represent the decay surfaces of the non re-used rooms of the building around the LBA re-occupation of the central sector of the Eastern Palace<sup>48</sup>.

Courtyard I was modified by the addition of an E-W *pisé* wall which created a room or separate open area in the northern half of the courtyard. However, the evidence in this case is weak: the wall was very badly preserved (only a few cm high) and even its associated floor hardly visible due to the Iron Age intrusions that characterised the area. No further installation occurred in the courtyard and consequently little more can be said about its function in this LBA I re-occupation phase<sup>49</sup>.

In a later phase, Room A was filled by a thick layer of earth and broken mud-bricks resulting from the collapse of the palace walls. A very compact but irregular earth surface occurred in Room A, whereas in the adjacent Room J a more regular trampled surface was found at more or less the same elevation; wall 7606 (which divided Room A from J) was re-used as foundation for a new wall. The latter, though it had more or less the same width and length, was clearly distinct from the former, since its mud-bricks had a slightly different orientation.

Room J was perhaps an open area in this phase: wall 7619 was no longer visible, so Room J might have opened onto Courtyard I. A domestic installation, made of the overturned upper portion of a *pithos* with some mud-bricks around it as support, clearly reflected the use of the area. Unfortunately the absence of further features in this area makes it impossible to propose specific interpretations. On the other hand, the scarcity of significant traces of occupation suggests rather occasional use; this seems again to suggest a squatter occupation of only some rooms of the otherwise abandoned Eastern Palace.

After this phase the area was completely deserted, with only sporadic traces of LBA II activity (mostly simple trodden surfaces).

The insubstantial archaeological evidence concerning the period following the abandonment of the Eastern Palace suggests the existence of two ephemeral squatting episodes. The earliest consisted of the re-use of Rooms A and B and Courtyard I, with evidence of structural modification, whilst the second involved the



Fig. 13 - The ceramic vessels from G. 39.

addition of few simple surfaces with installations. A more thorough examination of the pottery assemblages from both phases should yield a better understanding of the nature of these secondary occupation/living phases, which seem, however, to have concerned only the area of Courtyard I and Rooms A, B, and J of the old Eastern Palace. The remaining parts of the building seem to have been used as a burial ground.

## 2.5. The pottery

As noted above, a preliminary discussion of the ceramic assemblages excavated in the Eastern Palace with a general overview of the ceramic forms presented according to the preliminary stratigraphic sequence established during the 2007 season has already been presented elsewhere<sup>50</sup>. In view of the changes in the interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence proposed above, which mainly concern the identification of two macro-phases (*i.e.* the Northern and Southern Build-

<sup>45</sup> This must be considered as still rather speculative, since it is mostly based on a very preliminary analysis of the ceramic assemblages above this level.

<sup>46</sup> Possible traces of a further small E-W wall have been found (see dotted lines in Fig. 12); whether this corresponded to the existence of a smaller room in the SW corner of Room A is impossible to say due to the poor preservation state of the structures and the role of later intrusions that have almost completely removed the pre-existing structures.

<sup>47</sup> The extension of the excavation towards the east is necessary to provide a more solid interpretation.

<sup>48</sup> Traces of ash and burning occurred on a surface of Room D, which was at more or less the same level as the LBA floors of Rooms A and B discussed above: this might indicate some kind of domestic activity within the central sector of the Eastern Palace.

<sup>49</sup> For a preliminary discussion of the ceramic assemblages from the LBA re-occupation, see IAMONI in press.

<sup>50</sup> IAMONI in press.

| N. | SU       | FABRIC                                                                                         | FIRING | INT SUR | EXT SUR | INT TREAT | EXT TREAT | INT COLOURING                   | EXT COLOURING                   | TECH | DEC   |
|----|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1  | 9061.8   | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals.  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 8/4 light brown          | 7.5 YR 8/4 light brown          | w    |       |
| 2  | 9061.1   | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                         | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 6/6 reddish brown          | 5 YR 6/6 reddish brown          | w    |       |
| 3  | 9061.4   | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 7/4 pink                 | 7.5 YR 7/4 pink                 | w    |       |
| 4  | 9061.5   | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown       | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown       | w    |       |
| 5  | 9080.701 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown       | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown       | w    |       |
| 6  | 9080.18  | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals.  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5 YR 6/6 light red            | 2.5 YR 6/6 light red            | w    |       |
| 7  | 9061.2   | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                         | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow         | 5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow         | w    |       |
| 8  | 9061.12  | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 6/4 light brown          | 7.5 YR 6/4 light brown          | w    |       |
| 9  | 9061.16  | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 6/4 light yellowish brown | 10 YR 6/4 light yellowish brown | w    |       |
| 10 | 9061.11  | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 yr 8/3 very pale brown       | 10 yr 8/3 very pale brown       | w    |       |
| 11 | 9131.18  | foraminifer shells, foraminifer-rich limestone, micritic limestone, chert and quartz crystals. | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 7/3 very pale brown       | 10 YR 7/3 very pale brown       | w    |       |
| 12 | 9077.5   | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals.  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 yr 8/3 very pale brown       | 10 yr 8/3 very pale brown       | w    | ridge |
| 13 | 9131.4   | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                    | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow         | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow         | w    |       |
| 14 | 9061.7   | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                                          | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 4/2 brown                | 7.5 YR 4/2 brown                | w    |       |

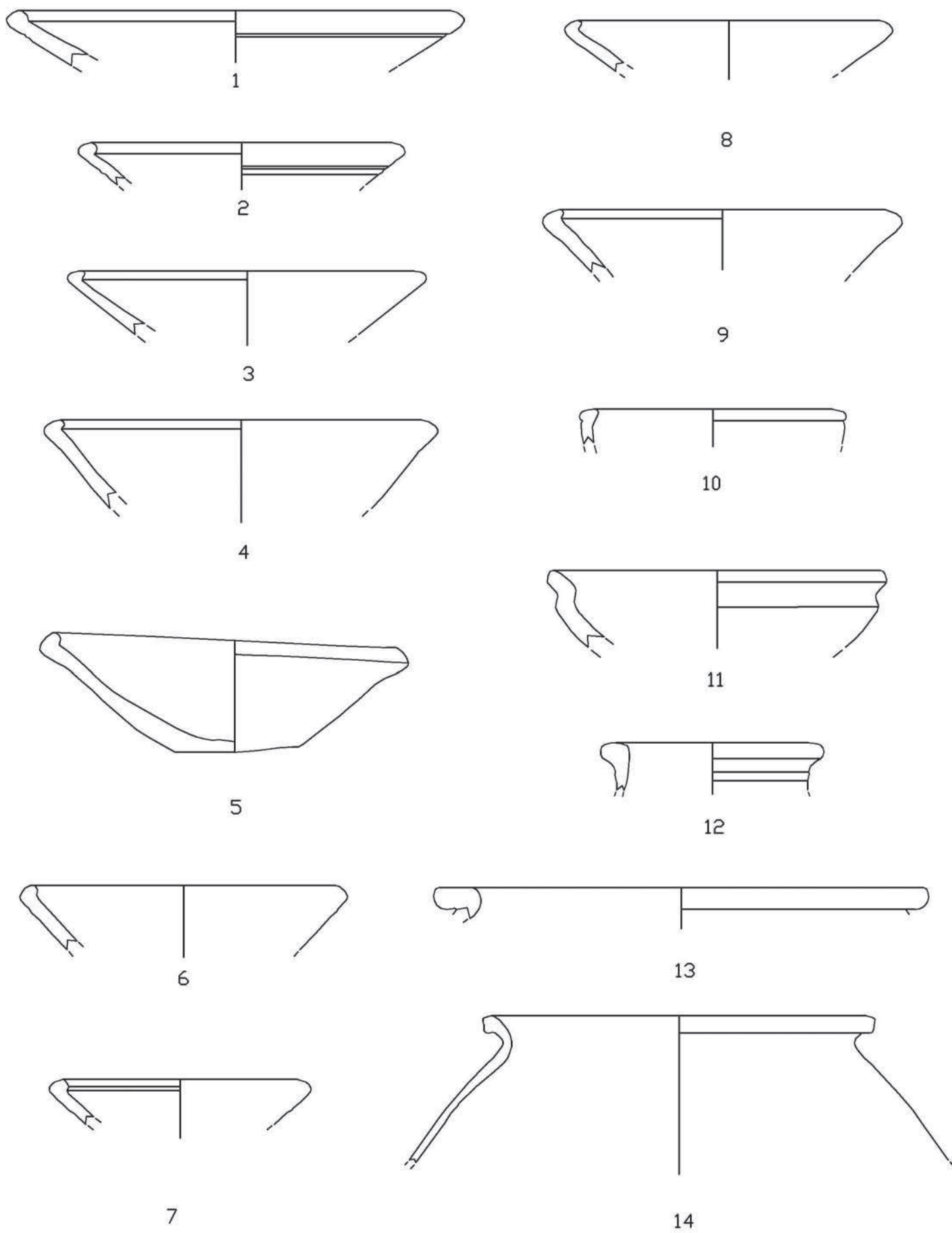


Fig. 14 - Pottery from the Southern Building.



ings followed by the Eastern Palace), it seems advisable to present a synthetic description of the pottery assemblages based on these two major episodes within the Areas T2-3 stratigraphic sequence. As a consequence, the following outline does not contain an exhaustive list of forms (a study which will be postponed for future reports), but rather describes the main features of the two pottery assemblages from the Southern Building and the later Eastern Palace.

For the purposes of this preliminary presentation of the pottery, the assemblages that have been selected are from Room A of the Southern Building and from Rooms E and P of the Eastern Palace.

With regard to the former assemblage, the pottery displays a limited range, including both open and closed forms<sup>51</sup>; the variety of forms seems to be especially narrow and standardized as far as the open forms are concerned.

With reference to the fabric types, this study confirms the data already presented<sup>52</sup>: fabric types are characterised mainly by mineral-only tempers and show a high degree of standardization in both phases<sup>53</sup>. Significant forms from the earliest floor of Room A (pertaining to the Southern Building) include bowls with in-turned square or round rim (Fig. 14: 1-9), a well known diagnostic type for the MB IIA, though its occurrence is also not uncommon in the MBA IIB<sup>54</sup>.

Other open forms occur with high carination and flaring or hammer-like rim. The first (Fig. 14: 11) are well known from Hama H3<sup>55</sup> and Mardikh III B1<sup>56</sup> and a general dating around the MBA II seems acceptable, though parallels from the Euphrates area suggest a restriction to the second part of the period<sup>57</sup>. The bowl with high gentle carination and hammer-like rim has parallels from Mardikh III A2<sup>58</sup>. A slightly different shape is found in the Northern Palace at Mardikh<sup>59</sup>.

Finally, cup types with a swollen rim are present (Fig. 14: 10); they can be dated to the final MBA I<sup>60</sup> and seem to be the precursors of forms which become widespread in the later phase.

Closed forms exhibit a slightly wider range of types. Jars and cooking pots are generally represented by medium-sized vessels with out-turned square or rounded rims (Fig. 14: 13-14). MBA parallels for this type are widespread in Central Western Syria at Hama H1 and Tell Mardikh III A and B<sup>61</sup>; as is the case for jars in general, they are not particularly diagnostic for any specific period of the MBA.

Necked jars occur with double, rounded or square rims that are frequently oblique (Fig. 14: 12); these form types are perhaps chronologically more relevant as they recur in more limited archaeological contexts. In particular, similar types occur at Mardikh III B1 and 2<sup>62</sup>. The bases are in general simple. Decorations occur on closed forms with the usual MBA combed motifs: parallel and wavy bands are the most common patterns. Ridges, usually simple but occasionally cordoned, are present as well.

As explained above, the G. 39 ceramic grave goods must be considered as belonging to a phase before the Eastern Palace. They consist of two vessels, a small cup with slightly flaring rim and low, softly carinated globular body and a small bottle with painted decorations (Fig. 13). The first is reminiscent of vessel types generally dated to the MBA II, with the best parallels from the Euphrates area<sup>63</sup>.

The second vessel is of special note since MBA painted ware is still scarce at Mishrifeh. It is a painted bottle from G. 39 belonging to the Inner Syrian Common Painted Ware, a local variant of the North Syro Cilician Painted Ware which is well documented at Ebla and in the Middle Orontes Valley between the MBA I B and II A<sup>64</sup>.

Ceramic assemblages from the Eastern Palace phase are considerably larger; in particular Rooms E and P

<sup>51</sup> This is due to the limited number of accumulations excavated between the floors of the Southern Building and the Eastern Palace, a factor that also affects the narrow range of forms.

<sup>52</sup> IAMONI in press.

<sup>53</sup> NIGRO 2002a, 318; 2002b, 109.

<sup>54</sup> For a more detailed description of the fabric types, see MARITAN *et alii* 2005.

<sup>55</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 120: 2C937.

<sup>56</sup> NIGRO 2002a, fig. 20: 10.

<sup>57</sup> DORNEMANN 2007, pl. V: 2, 11.

<sup>58</sup> NIGRO 2002b, pl. XLIX: 45.

<sup>59</sup> PINNOCK 2005, tav. LXXVIII: 6.

<sup>60</sup> The parallel proposed here comes from Hama H3 (FUGMANN 1958, fig. 120: 2c902) which has been dated by Nigro to the MBA IB (2002a, 306, tab. 1; see also NIGRO 1998); nevertheless we still consider the Hama ceramic sequence, although significant, to be very fragile and hence prefer to consider this parallel as a simple MBA indicator. More exhaustive studies focused on a complete re-examination of the ceramic evidence should yield a more precise chronology for Hama's stratigraphy.

<sup>61</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 127: 2D17; NIGRO 2002b, pl. LIII: 71.

<sup>62</sup> NIGRO 2002b, pl. LIII: 72; PINNOCK 2005, tav. XXXIX: 2, 6.

<sup>63</sup> MCCLELLAN 1986, 96, fig. 8: 5-6; DORNEMANN 1979, 131: fig. 20: 45, 47. To this material, the pottery from G. 40 must be added. It includes a fragmentary bottle of the Black-Burnished Ware type that might date to the MBA IB or IIA (NIGRO 2003, 351), an oil lamp and a stone with a non-passing hole with rotation marks, perhaps a linchpin. If our interpretation of this stone artifact as a linchpin is correct, its association with an oil lamp in a child or infant burial (only few bone fragments were conserved) is very suggestive from a symbolic perspective.

<sup>64</sup> NIGRO 2002b, 107-108; BAGH 2003, 223. The butterfly motif is also particularly recurrent in the North Syro Cilician Painted Ware tradition (see for example COURTOIS 1978, 209, fig. 4: 4). For parallels of the vessel form, see MBA II types from Tell Arqa (THALMANN 2006, pl. 101: 2, 6) and Ebla (NIGRO 2002b, 127, pl. LV: 88). We are deeply indebted to our colleague Tine Bagh for discussing the attribution of this vessel with us. Painted pottery and imported pottery (among which some noteworthy fragments of Red-on-Black and White Painted Cypriot pottery) will be considered in a forthcoming study.

have furnished significant collections of *in situ* potsherds that provide a reliable overview of the final phases of the Eastern Palace. They have consequently been chosen as a source that could be expected to give a fairly complete picture of the form types that characterize this phase.

Open forms show a coherent and homogeneous assemblage of types, very similar to that described previously. The horizon is now dominated by shallow bowls and plates (the latter were apparently absent before) with internal swollen rims (Fig. 15: 1-4), which are a very important hall-mark of the final MBA II and LBA I, as they occur in the destruction levels of the Northern Palace at Tell Mardikh as well as in early LBA levels at Hadidi and Qitar<sup>65</sup>. The swollen rims are usually rounded, though some specimens show a flattened variant. Most of these forms are frequently treated with burnishing that produces a brown surface colouring: they seem thus to belong to a "brown burnished" category which is possibly part of the cooking ware repertoire<sup>66</sup>.

These forms are accompanied by upright rim plates that also occurred before, but which are now present in greater numbers (Fig. 15: 5-8). They are dated to the very early LBA I at El Qitar and in general on the Upper Euphrates<sup>67</sup>, but occur also in possible final MBA II contexts like Hama H1<sup>68</sup>. Finally, cups are now present as globular types with corrugated or grooved decoration below the rim (Fig. 15: 9-10), a type that seems to be poorly known, since parallels are concentrated in North-Western Syria, in contexts dated at the end of the MBA II (Ebla) or the LBA I (Hama)<sup>69</sup>. On the other hand, small cups with flaring neck and simple rim (Fig. 15: 13) are more frequent; these are common in MBA II contexts on the Euphrates<sup>70</sup>.

Jars and closed shapes more generally now occur in globular, necked and short-necked forms. However, in the assemblages under examination they occur in lower percentages and consequently the available form types are fewer than those of the open forms. Globular jars show out-turned rounded rims and sometimes occur with flaring rims (Fig. 15: 11), a vessel type generally found in the MBA especially, in cooking ware<sup>71</sup>.

Necked forms occur with swollen or out turned oblique rims (Fig. 15: 12), two types that are well known in the MBA II and early LBA I ceramic horizon of Western Syria and the Euphrates<sup>72</sup>. The recovery of two storage jars with out-turned double rim and cordoned ridges on the body (Fig. 16) is important; they have clear parallels from MBA and LBA contexts at Arqa, though some similar specimens are also known from Mardikh III B2<sup>73</sup>.

Cooking pots occur as short necked forms, where rims are out-turned, rounded or sometimes double (Fig. 15: 16). These are particularly significant, as they seem to occur only at the end of the MBA II<sup>74</sup> and thus confirm the overall dating of this ceramic collection.

Decorations occur frequently with ridges that are often cordoned (Fig. 16); burnishing is also present with a vertical treatment that is common in MBA IIB contexts<sup>75</sup>.

Finally, bases show an interesting innovation, with the common occurrence of thickened bases (Fig. 15: 14-15) that were almost completely absent before<sup>76</sup>. Disc bases are more widespread as well, whereas ring bases are almost completely absent.

## 2.6. Final considerations: chronology and architecture

As a generalization, the Eastern Palace (together with its predecessors, the Northern and Southern Buildings) belongs to the MBA II horizon of Central Western Syria. Although it is still too early to establish a definitive chronology, some further refinements may perhaps be put forward. The new stratigraphic distinction (Northern/Southern Building followed by and incorporated into the Eastern Palace) is also re-

<sup>65</sup> PINNOCK 2005, tav. LXVIII: 1-14; DORNEMANN 1981, fig. 13: 30, 32; McCLELLAN 1984-85, fig. 5: 1-8.

<sup>66</sup> This is a very interesting ware typology, which, although known in Western Syria (see for example NIGRO 2002a, 318 who also interprets it as kitchen ware), has not received adequate discussion: the evidence from Mishrifeh and in particular from the Eastern Palace is significant and comes from well stratified contexts. Future investigations will be dedicated to this particular kind of ceramic production.

<sup>67</sup> McCLELLAN 1984-85, fig. 5: 12-14; 2007, 55.

<sup>68</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 127: 4C306.

<sup>69</sup> PINNOCK 2005, 33; MAZZONI 2002, 132; pl. LX: 38-39.

<sup>70</sup> McCLELLAN 2007, pl. III: 6-10.

<sup>71</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 124: R877; fig. 139: 5B82.

<sup>72</sup> PINNOCK 2005, tav. XLVIII: 1-11; DORNEMANN 1981, fig. 15: 20.

<sup>73</sup> THALMANN 2006, pl. 104: 6, 7; pl. 116: 6, 7; PINNOCK 2005, XCVII: 1. The occurrence of such a jar type, which clearly bears typical MBA features, in a LBA context at Arqa is in Thalmann's opinion not necessarily the result of continuous production, but rather due to the well known longevity of storage vessels. As a consequence, Thalmann considers this form as belonging to the MBA tradition and sees its LBA occurrence at Arqa as an heirloom from the MBA tradition (2006, 166-167).

<sup>74</sup> NIGRO 2002a, 324. The best parallels, however, seem to come from the south, from sites like Tell Nebi Mend and Tell El-Ghassil (BOURKE 1993, fig. 10: 4; DOUMET-SERHAL 1996, pl. 33: 25, 26; pl. 41: 11), where their presence is also well known in LBA layers, a feature that suggests a greater longevity for this type.

<sup>75</sup> NIGRO 2002a, 320.

<sup>76</sup> A typological study of the bases is usually lacking in most publications; in most cases it is reduced to a distinction between ring and simple bases. However, recent research (IAMONI in press) has shown the existence of a class of bases (the thickened simple bases) that seem to occur more consistently at the end of the MBA and in the LBA. Significant parallels from Mardikh III B2 appear to corroborate this interpretation (see for example PINNOCK 2005, tav. LX: 9, 12; LXII: 15).

| N. | SU      | FABRIC                                                                | FIRING | INT SUR | EXT SUR | INT TREAT | EXT TREAT | INT COLOURING                | EXT COLOURING                | TECH | DEC     |
|----|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------|---------|
| 1  | 7570.19 | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                 | r      | ss      | ss      | b         | b         | 2.5 YR 4/4 reddish brown     | 2.5 YR 4/4 reddish brown     | w    |         |
| 2  | 7570.11 | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                 | h      | ss      | ss      | b         | b         | 5 YR 3/2 dark reddish brown  | 5 YR 3/2 dark reddish brown  | w    |         |
| 3  | 7570.8  | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                 | h      | ss      | ss      | b         | b         | 10 R 4/6 red                 | 10 R 4/6 red                 | w    |         |
| 4  | 7570.6  | limestone rich, small basalt fragments                                | h      | s       | s       | sm        | sm        | 2.5 YR 6/6 light red         | 2.5 YR 6/6 light red         | w    |         |
| 5  | 7570.12 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | s       | s       | sm        | sm        | 10 R 5/6 red                 | 10 R 5/6 red                 | w    |         |
| 6  | 7570.34 | limestone rich, small basalt fragments                                | h      | s       | s       | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown | 5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown | w    |         |
| 7  | 7570.54 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown    | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown    | w    |         |
| 8  | 7570.30 | foraminifer shells; quartz; calcite                                   | h      | s       | s       | sm        | sm        | 10 R 4/6 red                 | 10 R 4/6 red                 | w    |         |
| 9  | 7570.35 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 7/2 light gray         | 10 YR 7/2 light gray         | w    | grooved |
| 10 | 9221.72 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/3 very pale brown    | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow      | w    | grooved |
| 11 | 9221.21 | basalt; quartz ; spathic calcite; micritic foraminifer-rich limestone | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5 Y 8/2 pale yellow        | 2.5 Y 8/2 pale yellow        | w    |         |
| 12 | 9221.55 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown    | 10 YR 8/2 very pale brown    | w    |         |
| 13 | 9221.51 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 7/4 very pale brown    | 10 YR 7/4 very pale brown    | w    |         |
| 14 | 7570.13 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | r      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 7/4 pink                | 5 YR 7/4 pink                | w    |         |
| 15 | 7570.23 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite           | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 7/4 pink              | 7.5 YR 7/4 pink              | w    |         |
| 16 | 9221.8  | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                 | r      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 4/3 reddish brown       | 5 YR 4/3 reddish brown       | w    |         |

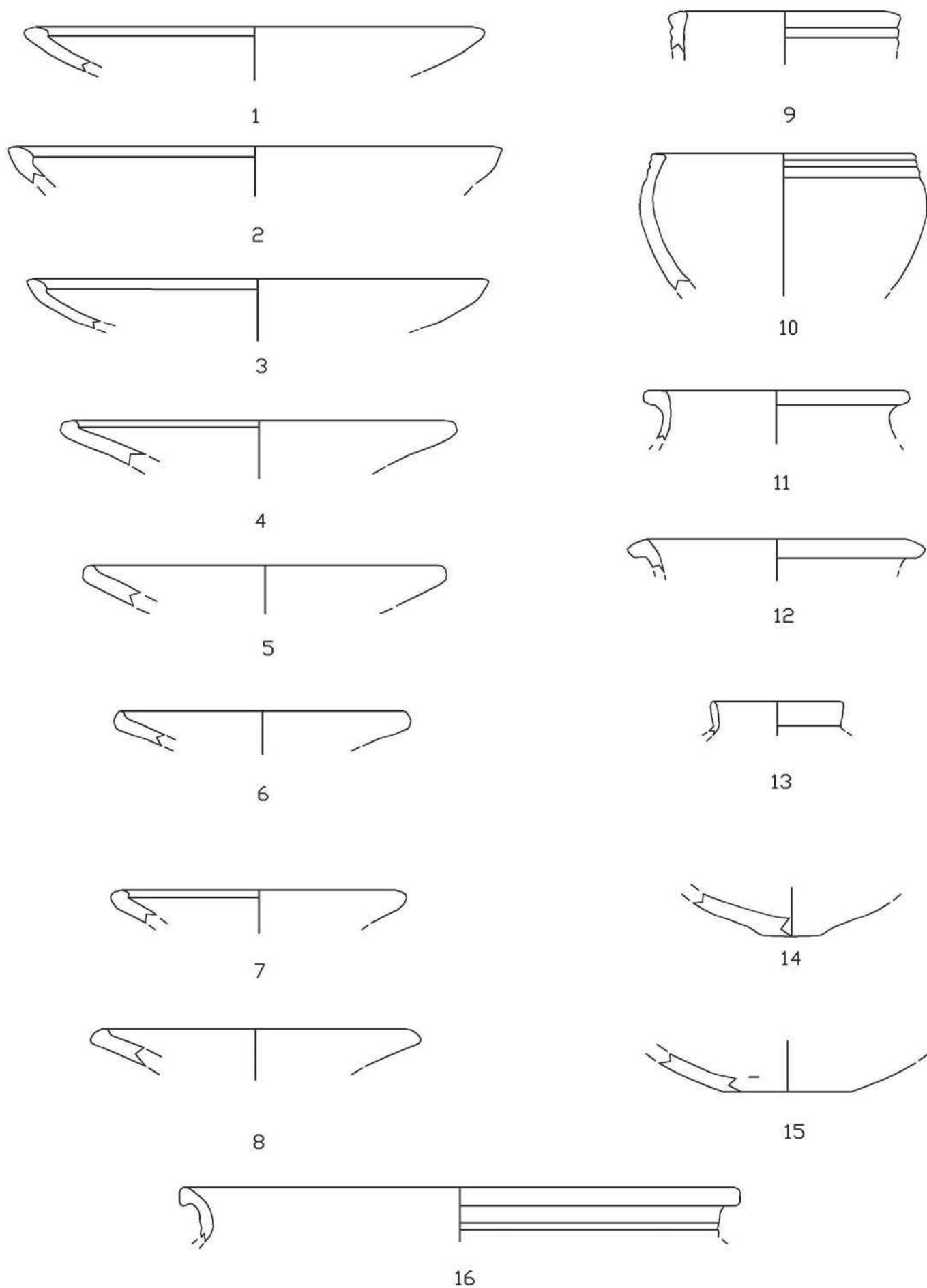
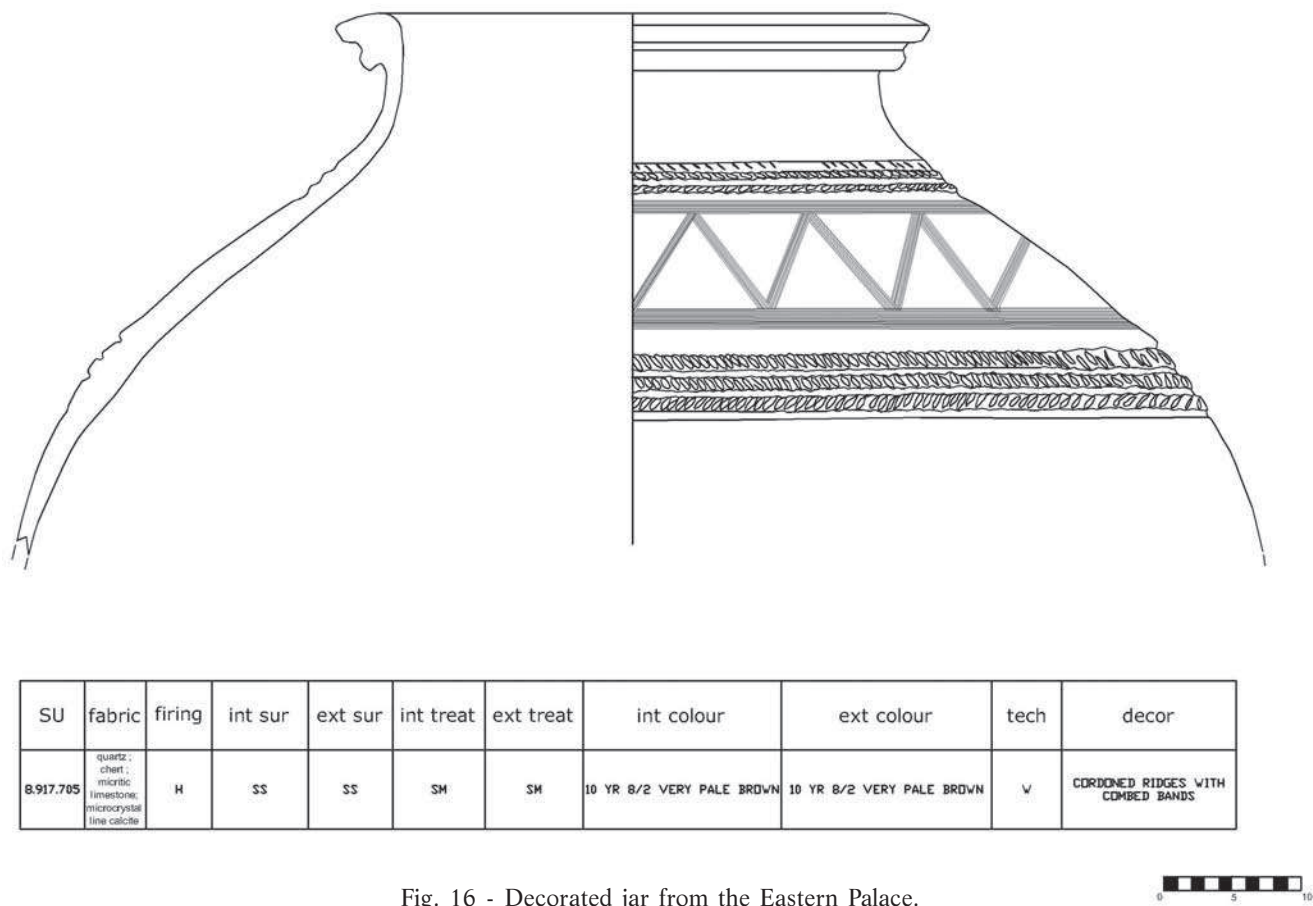


Fig. 15 - Pottery from the Eastern Palace.





flected in the ceramic assemblages. As seen above, these two major phases are distinguished by the occurrence of two distinct vessel types that dominate the ceramic horizons, the in-turned rim bowls and the internal swollen rim bowls/plates. These two form types are mostly typical of the MBA II, since the first is widespread throughout the entire MBA II, whereas the second is common at the end of the MBA II and beginning of the LBA<sup>77</sup>. On the basis of this ceramic evidence, the construction and use of the Northern and Southern Buildings can be placed in the MBA II A, with the building of the Eastern Palace dating to around the end of the MB II A, as suggested by the pottery from Graves 39 and 40. The abandonment of the Eastern Palace can be placed at around the very end of the MBA II; an early LBA I dating, though possible, seems at present less probable due to the absence in the latest pottery assemblages from Room P of more consistent LBA chronological indicators<sup>78</sup>. The imported pottery, though not discussed in this report, confirms this horizon: a fragment of Cypriot White Painted IV-VI Cross Line Style comes from the Eastern Palace fills and thus agrees with a dating around the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century BC. This would help to further corroborate the typological sequence which

has so far been proposed for the region<sup>79</sup> and seems to have parallels as far as Tell Arqa, Phase M<sup>80</sup>. With reference to the architecture of the Eastern Palace and its characteristics, we will restrict ourselves to several brief comments. Although only partially investigated – and this fact makes any comparison somewhat speculative – the building seems similar to other North-western Syrian MBA palatial constructions, among which the Western Palace of Ebla<sup>81</sup> seems per-

<sup>77</sup> See NIGRO 2002a (fig. 31: 10-12) although this study is largely based on the identification of the Mardikh phases III B 1 and 2 and thus does not consider the LBA continuation especially of the second vessel type, which is widespread for example in the LBA levels of Hadidi (DORNEMANN 1981, fig. 13: 30).  
<sup>78</sup> However, it must be stressed that the entire chrono-typological framework for the LBA (especially the beginning) is very fragile or occasionally absent (cf. also AKKERMANS-SCHWARTZ 2003, 331). In particular, the LBA I seems to be to some extent “artificially constructed” to fill the period between the end of the MBA and the Amarna Age (see also in this context McCLELLAN 2007, in particular 53-55 and 57).  
<sup>79</sup> NIGRO 2002a-b.  
<sup>80</sup> THALMANN 2006.  
<sup>81</sup> MATTHIAE 1997a, fig. 20.



Fig. 17 - General view of pit 9108 from the south (Phase 15). To the north, Phase 16 and 17 trodden surfaces may be seen and, at the bottom of the cut, Phase 18 circular silos.

haps to offer the closest resemblance. The plan of the central and southern sector wing, organised in rows of rooms (Rooms C, A, J, N and D, B), recalls portions of the Western Palace of Ebla; in particular the central ceremonial sector of Ebla's Western Palace contains a single quarter which exhibits a very similar arrangement, with rows of rooms flanking what was presumably the throne room<sup>82</sup>. Further similarities can be seen in the entrance from the large southern courtyard of the Western Palace to the building, which is characterised by recessed door jambs exactly as in Room A. If this parallel holds true, then eastwards of Rooms A, J and N we should expect the ceremonial sector of the building<sup>83</sup>, whereas, northwards, one would expect the occurrence of auxiliary rooms including the very characteristic stairwell for a staircase leading to the upper storey, such as that found in the Western Palace of Ebla and in the Yarim-Lim Palace at Alalakh<sup>84</sup>.

The existence of a further palace displaying features that seem to be less “Mesopotamian” (i.e. with one or more large courtyards around which the various palace units are organized) and more typical of the West-

ern Syrian tradition, would thus provide us with an additional significant example of MBA “Syrian” palace architecture<sup>85</sup>, with specific and original traits that

<sup>82</sup> Another interesting parallel is (for example) the roughly contemporaneous so-called Yarim-Lim palace at Alalakh VII (WOOLLEY 1955, fig. 35), where, despite a different overall architectural layout, the northern sector exhibits a very similar plan.

<sup>83</sup> On the other hand it should be noted that, if the proposed reconstruction is correct, the orientation of the ceremonial portion of the building, which would be parallel to the large Courtyard I and not perpendicular to it as in the Western Palace of Ebla and the Alalakh VII palace, would be rather anomalous.

<sup>84</sup> In both palaces the stairwell is located close to the northern external wall. For a possible stairwell in the northern part of the Eastern Palace, see the room with central massive mud-brick structure in AL-MAQDISSI, KANHOUC, CREMASCHI, MORANDI BONACOSI 2009, fig. 3 (centre).

<sup>85</sup> MATTHIAE 1997a and b. See also Margueron 1982, 582-583, who had already identified, though at a very general level, the different palace traditions found in Syria, and Schwartz who emphasizes the absence of great central courts in Western Syrian palaces (AKKERMANS-SCHWARTZ 2003, 305).



Fig. 18 - Detail of pit 9911 with animal bone, seen from the west.

differ considerably from the Old Babylonian tradition (which in Syria is well documented in the Mari and Qatna royal palaces). However, only future excavations will allow verification of this point and yield a fuller understanding of the real nature of the Eastern Palace.

DMB - MI

### 3. Area T4: the western margin of the Eastern Palace and extensive Late Bronze Age II dumping activity

Area T4, investigated during the 2006-2008 excavation campaigns, is rectangular in shape<sup>86</sup>; it is located in the western part of Area T and bordered by its northern and southern boundaries (Fig. 1). During the oldest phases excavated to date (Middle Bronze Age I), the zone was occupied by installations associated with the storage of agricultural produce, probably cereals (Phase 18, Fig. 17; Pl. V)<sup>87</sup>.

The oldest occupation phases which have been extensively explored in the northern portion of the area date to the Late Bronze I and consist of trodden surfaces (Phase 17), open areas which sloped down slightly to the west, perhaps roads (Pl. V, SU 9588, 9952 and 9954). The subsequent layer was a trodden surface (SU 9951, Phase 16) which overlaid the Phase 17 surfaces (Pl. V). This was covered by a rectangular-shaped installation made of cobbles of uncertain function (SU 9956, 2.5 m x 1.2 m)<sup>88</sup>, located next to the western limit of excavation and dated, on the basis of pottery found on it, to the Late Bronze Age I.

The degree of preservation of these oldest layers was rather reduced by the presence of a large pit (SU 9108), which crossed the excavation area from north to south and occupied most of it (Phase 15, Fig. 17, Pl. V)<sup>89</sup>. This cut was filled with deposits of various materials, distinguished by the ubiquitous presence of significant

amounts of ash and deteriorated mud-brick fragments. It seems that after its original function had expired – it was possibly a pit for quarrying brick-making material – ditch 9108 was used for rubbish disposal.

The principal phase of dumping in the pit (Phase 14, Fig. 19) was marked by the presence of accumulations of various types. The fills found in the cut were composed of series of layers and overlapping deposits of ash, crumbled mud-brick and variously-sized mud-brick fragments. These also contained a considerable quantity of well preserved objects<sup>90</sup>. These finds, in particular the ceramic assemblages, indicate that all of the dumps may be dated to the LBA II.

The nature of the stratification of the pit fills revealed that, for a limited period during the progressive infilling of this large hole, the northern part of the area was used for purposes other than the dumping of debris and rubbish (Phase 13, Fig. 20). The archaeological evidence is not, however, sufficiently clear to allow the formulation of precise hypotheses regarding the character of this ephemeral activity.

Four distinct episodes of use were identified, distinguished by trodden surfaces that sloped down towards the west, and probably connected the ruins of the Eastern Palace, which during this period would certainly have been still visible and was perhaps par-

<sup>86</sup> The excavation involved quadrants 9950/9820, 9810, 9800, 9790, 9780; 9960/9820, 9810, 9800, 9790, 9780; 9970/9820, 9810, 9800, 9790, 9780 and covered a surface measuring circa 42 m long by circa 17 m wide.

<sup>87</sup> Several silos and associated hearths were found, but these have not yet been excavated. They will be investigated in a future excavation campaign.

<sup>88</sup> This installation continued southwards in section for a further 2.5 m.

<sup>89</sup> The area occupied by huge pit 9108 measured about 30 x 16 m. These dimensions diminished towards the base, where they became circa 26 x 10 m. Before the onset of the filling process, an oval-shaped hole (SU 9911, about 1.5 m in length), was dug into the southeast part of the base of cut 9108 (Fig. 18, Pl. V). This contained dumped material which included a high concentration of animal bone, perhaps meal and/or butchery leftovers; these finds have not yet been subjected to zooarchaeological study.

<sup>90</sup> These objects are at least 300 in number, in many cases archaeologically complete, including plates, bowls, jars, bottles and other pottery vessels, mostly for food consumption or preparation, a large quantity of lamps, several miniature vases and painted ware; dress pins, arrowheads, spear points and other indeterminate fragments in bronze; pestles and other basalt ground stone tools; high concentrations of animal bone, perhaps meal and butchery leftovers; worked or partly-worked hard materials of animal origin, such as horn, ivory inlay fragments and a turtle shell; and lastly, several clay sealings with cylinder seal impressions, a gold stone setting from a ring and a scarab manufactured in Palestine between the end of the MBA II B and the LBA I A. For the identification of the scarab we are greatly indebted to Vanessa Boschloo (Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles), who is also preparing its publication.

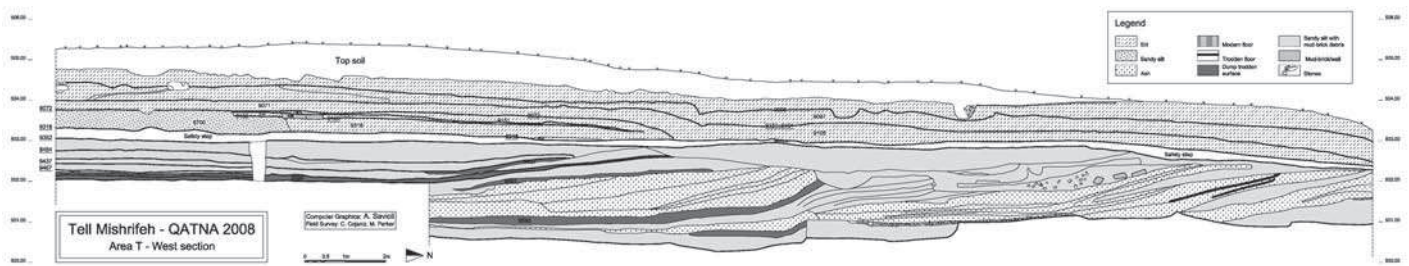


Fig. 19 - Western section of Operation T4; note the disposition of the various fills of pit 9108.

tially re-used, with the Royal Palace<sup>91</sup>. In the intermediate layers a building was found (Building 7, Figs. 20-21), which had been constructed from recycled building material from the Eastern Palace. This rather fragmentary structure was composed of at least three separate rooms, with standing walls in *pisé* resting on stone bases. The best-preserved room (Room A) was aligned parallel to an adjacent room in the Eastern Palace (Room Q) and its southern wall abutted the western wall of Room Q; furthermore the floors of both rooms were at the same level. This evidence would appear to indicate a late partial re-use of this portion of the Eastern Palace.

A long mud-brick wall (9906) may probably be assigned to the same phase; it was aligned NNW-SSE, and was built as a boundary between the cobbled courtyard of the Eastern Palace and pit 9108, now used for dumping, which was located immediately to the west of the courtyard.

It may thus be hypothesized that in Phase 13, activity in the area made use of the pre-existing constructions. The poor state of preservation of the buildings belonging to this phase does not permit greater precision with regard to the possible mode in which these structures were employed.

The last phase of dumping in large pit 9108 (Phase 12) was again dominated by the presence of deposits composed of the remains of disintegrated bricks, which took the form of overlapping layers sloping down from the north and west sides towards the centre of the cut (Fig. 19). In addition, several thin trample layers were detected.

Once the pit had been completely filled, the area was once more occupied. At this time (Phase 11), the entire zone was at the same level as the ruins of the Eastern Palace, so it is possible that episodes of squatting and partial re-use of what remained of the palace building occurred. At the centre of Area T4 a middle-sized construction was found (circa 5 x 12 m), denominated Building 6 (Figs. 22 and 23), which consisted of three rectangular rooms. The perimeter walls had standing stone footings, with brick-built upper portions. Two sub-phases were distinguished in the use of the building; most of the pottery finds recovered

from the rooms were cooking pot fragments. Building 6 was partly destroyed by several dumping pits.

Due to the poor state of preservation of the walls, the doorways giving access to the rooms, and hence the connections between them, could not be identified. The building plan which remained and the pottery vessel types recovered suggest, however, that Building 6 was probably a house.

A severely robbed-out square structure situated in the northern part of the excavation area may be attributed to the same phase; it consisted of a beaten earth surface containing several cuts, perhaps postholes. The function of this small and badly preserved construction is unknown. It was perhaps connected to a fragmentary wall built of medium-sized stones located to the south of it.

The following phase (Phase 10) was characterized by poor preservation due to the action of running water, which had eroded structures to foundation level. In the southern part of the area there were two large walls in *pisé* which enclosed a large and fragmentary rectangular structure of indeterminate function (Fig. 24).

A smaller construction, of which two walls in *pisé* and two postholes that may have held up a light roof survived, was brought to light in the centre of the excavated area. The beaten earth floor and installation foundations which may have been agricultural in purpose or associated with the transformation of foodstuffs would seem to indicate a rural occupation of this area.

The uppermost phase of LBA II date (Phase 9) is made up of two trodden surfaces which were prepared by levelling debris, probably building rubble. It seems that the area was not occupied by buildings at this time. These two layers could be interpreted as the levelling of the area with numerous accumulations of mud-brick fragments. Perhaps these deposits of dumped material served to prevent the surface runoff water from the nearby central acropolis mound (Area J) from forming channels here; this phenomenon had

<sup>91</sup> Similar surfaces were also found in Area T5.



Fig. 20 - Phase 13c, Building 7, view from the NNE.

already severely damaged buildings of previous phases.

The study of Area T4 led to an improved understanding of the stratigraphic sequence of the zone immediately to the west of the Eastern Palace, in particular with regard to the phases prior to its construction and those which post-date its abandonment.

In summary, then, during the MBA I the zone was occupied by installations used for the storage of agricultural produce (Phase 18). In the MBA II, Area T4 was marginally involved in the construction of a palace, the Eastern Palace, the western wing of which (later removed, in Phase 15), would have occupied the central portion of the area. After the palace was abandoned, probably at the end of the MBA II B or the beginning of the LBA I and after the erection of the Royal Palace further to the west in Areas G, H and R (which took place between the end of the MBA II and the beginning of the LBA I<sup>92</sup>), a strip was created between the two buildings that contained the city's main north-south road (which ran alongside the eastern façade of the Royal Palace) and some minor constructions<sup>93</sup>. This situation lasted throughout the LBA I.

The following period, the LBA II, saw a change in the use of the area. The west wing of the abandoned Eastern Palace was demolished when large pit 9108 was dug (Phase 15), probably for the purpose of quarrying raw materials for making bricks. This course of action was perhaps made necessary by the structural damage suffered by this part of the palace, which may

well have been eroded and seriously weakened by the surface runoff of rainwater, which tended to collect in this north-south depression, fed by the higher central acropolis mound (Area J) further to the south. Marked erosion due to the action of running water may be clearly seen in the same zone in more recent phases; given the local topography, which causes rainwater to be channelled here, it may be imagined that the process was already active in earlier times.

In a subsequent phase (Phase 14) large pit 9108 was converted into a huge rubbish dump and filled in by the deposition of notable quantities of material, largely ash and brick debris, together with many dumps of animal bones and innumerable pottery fragments (Fig. 25)<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. MORANDI BONACOSSÌ 2007a.

<sup>93</sup> See the structures found under the house belonging to the oldest phase brought to light in Area T1.

<sup>94</sup> The matrices of the fills from pit 9108 contained large quantities of ash and enclosed many archaeological finds (numerous archaeologically complete pottery vessels, fragments of wall paint of the same type of those found in the Royal Palace destruction deposits, together with many bronze arrowheads and spear points); the material would appear to have come from the destruction of one or more buildings, probably from the nearby Royal Palace itself, which was destroyed in about the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BC.

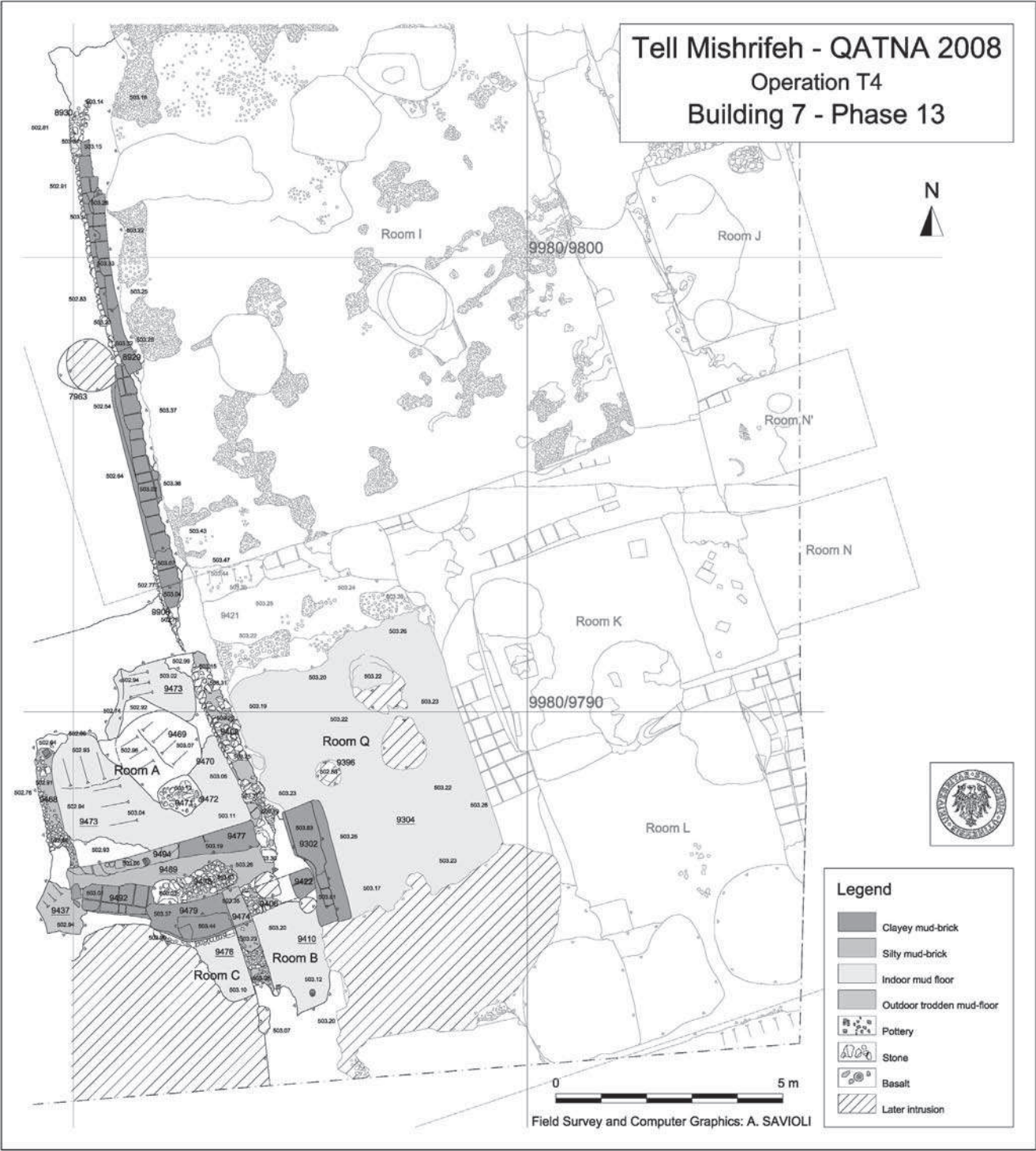


Fig. 21 - Building 7, Operation T4.

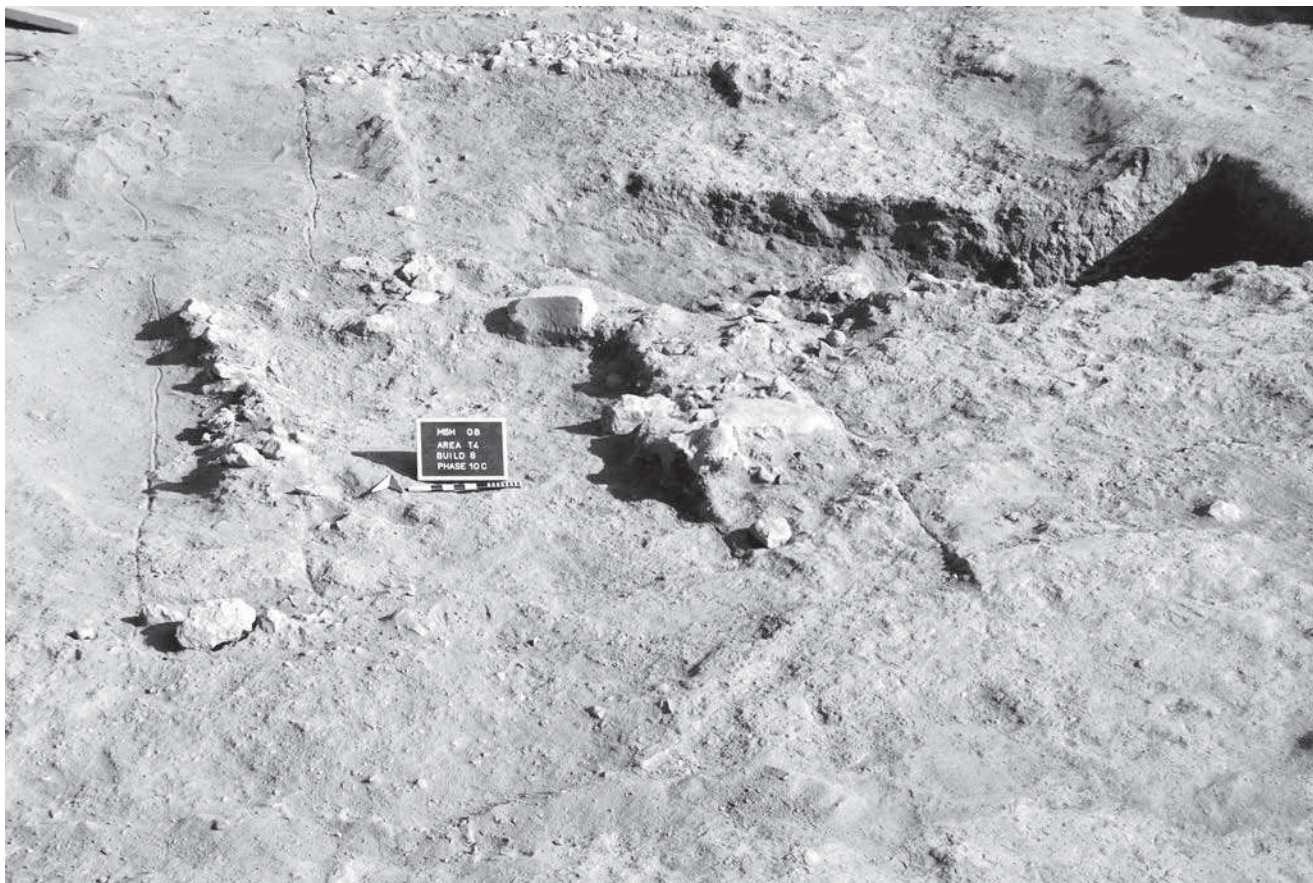


Fig. 22 - Phase 11, Building 6, general view from the south.

During the progressive infilling of this pit there was a brief episode when the southern part of the area was occupied, perhaps with re-use of the walls and floors of the Eastern Palace that were still visible above the surface (see Building 7, Phase 13). Following this short-lived period of settlement, the process of levelling the area continued with the deposition of further layers of waste material, now prevalently made up of broken mud-bricks and ash (Phase 12).

When the Eastern Palace fell into disuse, then, the T4 excavation area lost the political and administrative functions that it had exercised during the 17<sup>th</sup> century BC and saw firstly the digging of gigantic cut 9108, perhaps a quarry pit for building materials, which then became a dumping ground and was progressively filled in, and finally the construction of small, ephemeral buildings – residential (Building 6, Phase 11) and, perhaps, agricultural (Phase 10) – which re-used building materials from the ruins of the earlier palace.

The last phase investigated (Phase 9) pertained to a further levelling activity in the area, dated to the LBA II, which overlaid the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC deposits.

The stratigraphic sequence that followed the Iron I settlement hiatus, during which the T4 excavation area remained unoccupied, regards the Iron Age II and III settlements (Phases 8-1). These will be the subject of a future publication.

### 3.1. *The Pottery*

The excavation of the large dump fills of huge pit 9108 in T4 yielded a considerable amount of pottery. A number of sherds have already been drawn and classified; much work remains to be done, however, in order to complete the recording of the pottery assemblages. The following is thus a preliminary overview of the ceramics from the main accumulations that fill the pit.

Open and closed forms are present in fairly similar percentages, though a slight prevalence of open forms might turn out to be significant. The fabric horizon is characterised mostly by coarse types, containing mainly grit-temper and occasional vegetal inclusions that, in contrast to the MBA pottery from the Eastern Pal-

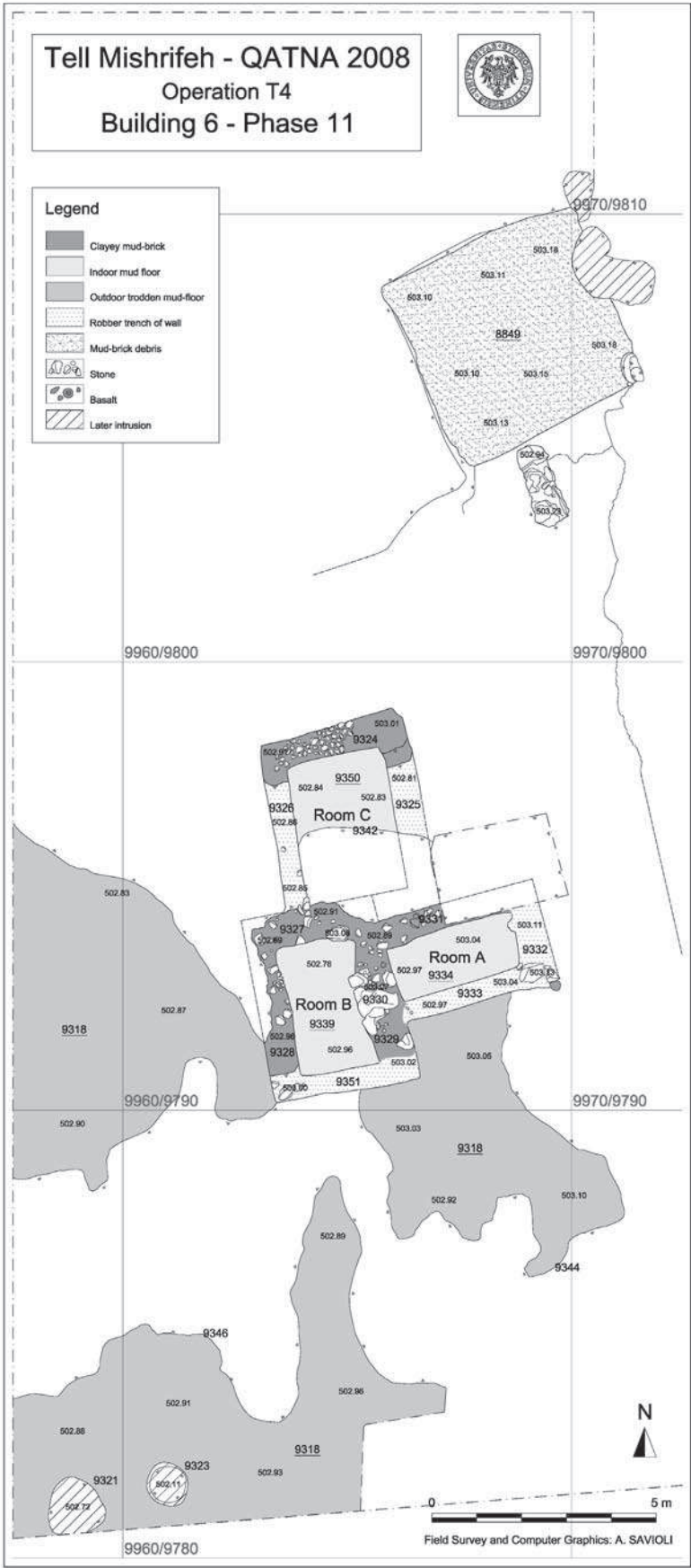


Fig. 23 - Building 6, Operation T4.

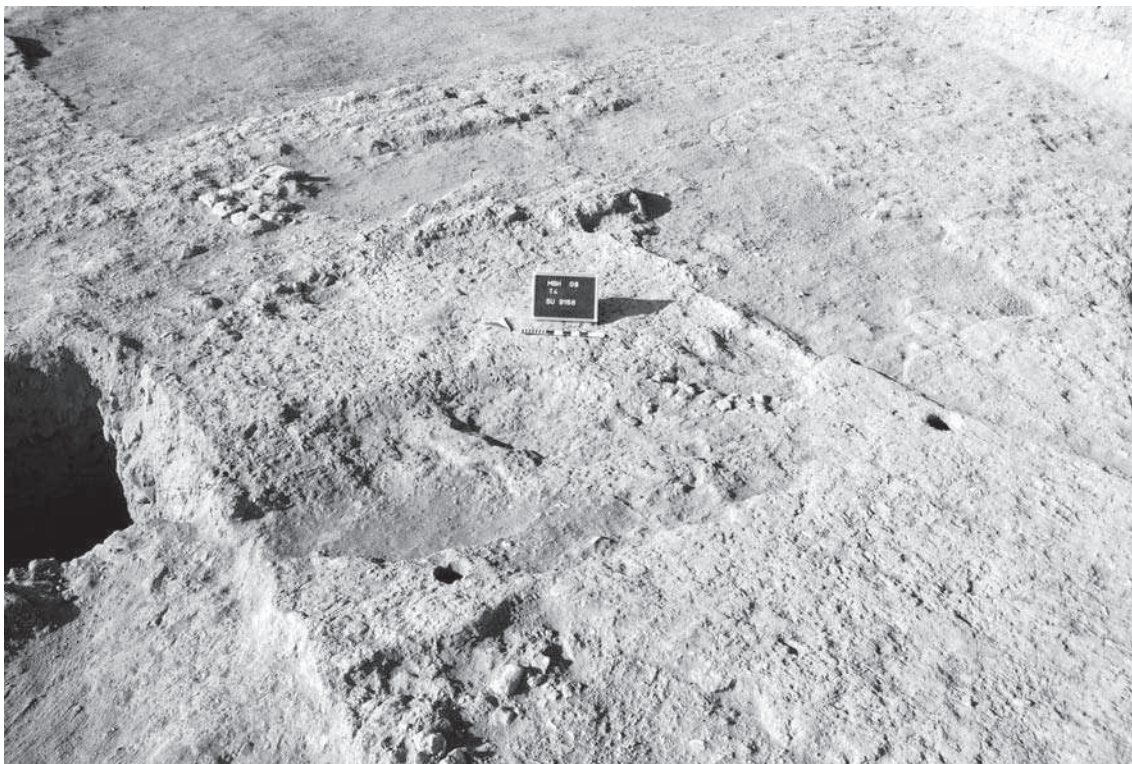


Fig. 24 - Phase 10, general view from the NNE of the small structure with postholes.

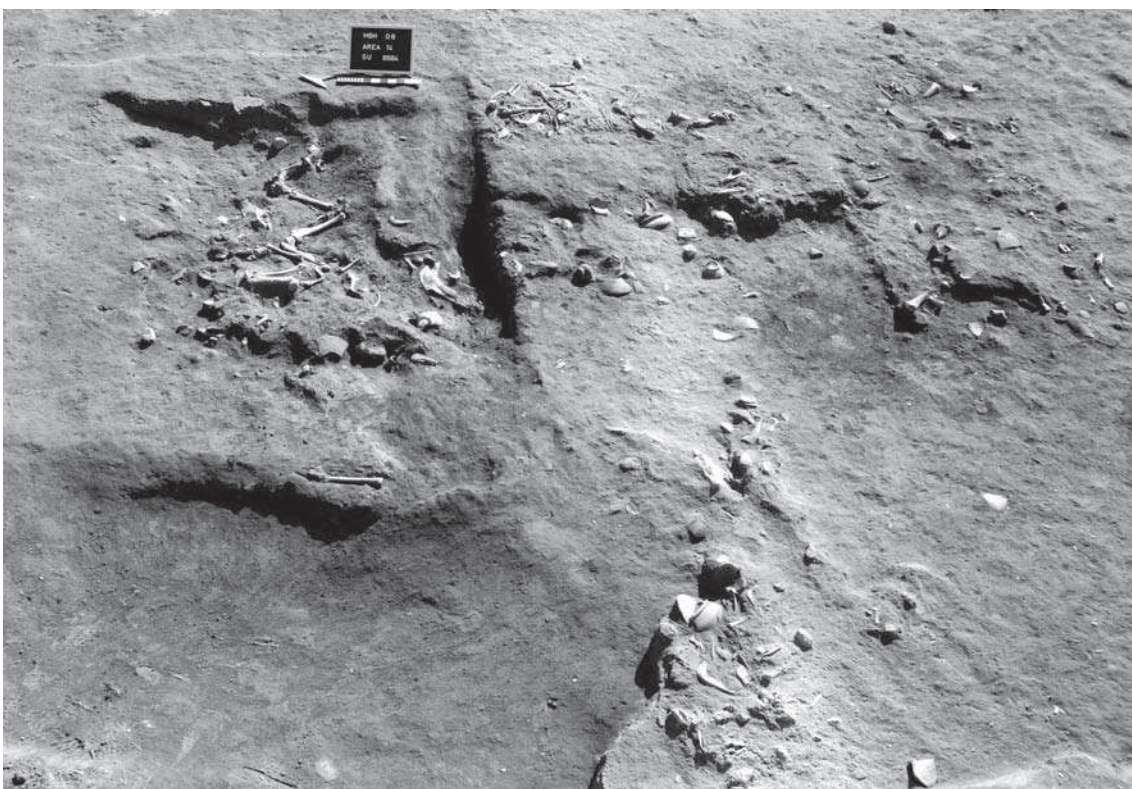


Fig. 25 - Detail from the west of the oldest dumping fills (Phase 14), with animal bone and pottery fragments.

ace (see the pottery from T2-T3), heavily temper the fabrics<sup>95</sup>. This phenomenon concerns most of the pottery that has been studied to date, which belongs largely to the common ware class<sup>96</sup>.

The open forms are dominated by the presence of plates and bowls, most of which have simple or flaring rims (Fig. 26: 1-5). These are types (especially the flaring rim bowls and plates) that are well known in the LBA II ceramic horizon of Western Syria. Significant parallels come from Tell Afis<sup>97</sup> and from the coast, for example at Ras Ibn Hani<sup>98</sup>. Bowls with round carination and beaded rims (Fig. 26: 6-7) are widely present as well; their occurrence is generally documented from the early LBA onwards, especially in the southern Levant<sup>99</sup>. They sometimes exhibit a flaring rim, a variant that might be diagnostic for the LBA II<sup>100</sup>; at Qatna these two rim types apparently occur together.

Cups, shallow in shape with simple upright rims, seem to be less widespread, though similar items come from Hama G and have been dated to the LBA I<sup>101</sup>.

Of closed vessels, necked forms with thickened externally flat rims are found (Fig. 26: 8-9); these are common from the end of the MBA II<sup>102</sup>, though they are also widespread throughout the LBA<sup>103</sup>. Globular forms also occur, such as jars with triangular or sometimes out-turned square/rounded rims (Fig. 26: 11); all are quite common in the LBA<sup>104</sup>, though none might really be considered fine chronological markers, as may be seen from the fact that they also occur in MBA levels at Hama<sup>105</sup>. More interesting are jars with flaring rims (Fig. 26: 10), which may be more typical of a final LBA II horizon<sup>106</sup>. Their greater frequency might be an indication of the validity of this dating.

Finally, bases show some significant traits: ring bases are widespread, mainly in open forms; other bases are mostly thickened and disc types, which appear to replace the simple bases that are found principally in the MBA.

DMB, GG, MI, MM

#### 4. Area T1: a Late Bronze Age II dwelling

Area T1, located immediately to the east of the Royal Palace, covers an area of about 600 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1). To date, LBA I and II and Iron Age II-III occupation levels have been investigated in this zone.

Excavations have revealed a large and well-structured LBA dwelling covering an area of approximately 200 m<sup>2</sup>, the full extent of which has not yet been determined (Pl. VI). The existence of other rooms to the north of the excavated area is suggested by the continuation of the house's western wall beyond the excavation limit and the presence in the north-east section of mud-brick debris possibly resulting from the collapse of wall structures pertaining to the house into the fill of an east-west oriented area, which could

have been part of a courtyard.

The discovery of a dwelling in the neighbourhood of Qatna's Royal Palace is of paramount importance because it bears witness to the reoccupation of this region of the city after the destruction of the palace in around 1340 BC and the levelling of its ruins. For the first time, therefore, we have direct evidence of the continuation of life in Qatna after the destruction of Idanda's palace.

The excavation of the western part of Area T1 located between the eastern palace wall and the LBA II house has shown clearly that the outer surface abutting the western façade of the house covered the fallen eastern wall of the Royal Palace. Excavation has therefore allowed us to assign on a stratigraphic basis the T1 dwelling to a “post-palace” horizon, for which a 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>-century BC date is indicated by the pottery assemblages recovered.

The house underwent substantial layout modifications during its span of life, marked by later additions and internal partitions of the rooms. Three major architectural sub-phases of occupation have been identified so far. The architectural technique and the building materials used in the construction of the house were quite coarse and of rather poor quality. The walls were thin and built with a single line of low-quality clay or silt mud-bricks<sup>107</sup>, which usually rested on a low foundation made of stones. Walls were plastered with a lime or mud rendering, which was often renewed. The alignment of the walls, which were frequently not exactly perpendicular to each other because of their limited thickness, gave an irregular aspect to the single rooms and the whole structure.

The rooms had rectangular shape and were of differing orientation and size; the long axes of the three

<sup>95</sup> The tempers of the ceramic fabrics have been analyzed as part of an on-going project of archaeometrical study of the pottery sequence from Mishrifeh (EBA III-IA III). The first results of this project have been published in Maritan *et al.* 2005.

<sup>96</sup> Painted and fine wares have been found, although they are, apparently, infrequent. This pottery will be studied in more detail, as will the ceramics from the Eastern Palace.

<sup>97</sup> MAZZONI *et alii* 2005, fig. 49: 3, 5.

<sup>98</sup> BOUNNI, LAGARCE, LAGARCE 1998, fig. 158: 3-5.

<sup>99</sup> THALMANN 2006, 161.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, 168.

<sup>101</sup> MAZZONI 2002, pl. LVII: 10.

<sup>102</sup> PINNOCK 2005, tav. LV: 5; tav. XLV: 7.

<sup>103</sup> At Arqa they occur, for example, in LBA I levels (THALMANN 2006, pl. 114: 3; pl. 109: 1); this might indicate a particular longevity for this vessel type, although mere residuality cannot be ruled out. Further work is necessary on this point before more definite conclusions may be proposed.

<sup>104</sup> MAZZONI 2002, pl. LIX: 25.

<sup>105</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 139: 5B82.

<sup>106</sup> MAZZONI 2002, pl. LXII: 51-52.

<sup>107</sup> The mud-bricks measure about 30 cm in length, 35 cm in width and are 15 cm thick.

| N. | SU       | FABRIC                                                                                       | FIRING | INT SUR | EXT SUR | INT TREAT | EXT TREAT | INT COLOURING                | EXT COLOURING                | TECH | DEC |
|----|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------|-----|
| 1  | 9562.707 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow      | 7.5 R 7/4 pale red           | W    |     |
| 2  | 9116.731 | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 7/3 very pale brown    | 7.5 YR 6/4 light brown       | W    |     |
| 3  | 9116.735 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 7/4 very pale brown    | 10 YR 7/4 very pale brown    | W    |     |
| 4  | 9116.79  | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/4 very pale brown    | 10 YR 8/4 very pale brown    | W    |     |
| 5  | 9116.206 | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                       | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow      | 5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow      | W    |     |
| 6  | 9116.732 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                  | d      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5 YR 6/8 light red         | 2.5 YR 6/8 light red         | W    |     |
| 7  | 9116.129 | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                  | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 8/3 very pale brown    | 10 YR 8/3 very pale brown    | W    |     |
| 8  | 9116.65  | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow      | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow      | W    |     |
| 9  | 9116.64  | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray      | 7.5 YR 6/2 pinkish gray      | W    |     |
| 10 | 9116.126 | not identified                                                                               | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5 YR 5/4 reddish brown     | 2.5 YR 5/4 reddish brown     | W    |     |
| 11 | 9116.111 | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                       | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown | 5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown | W    |     |

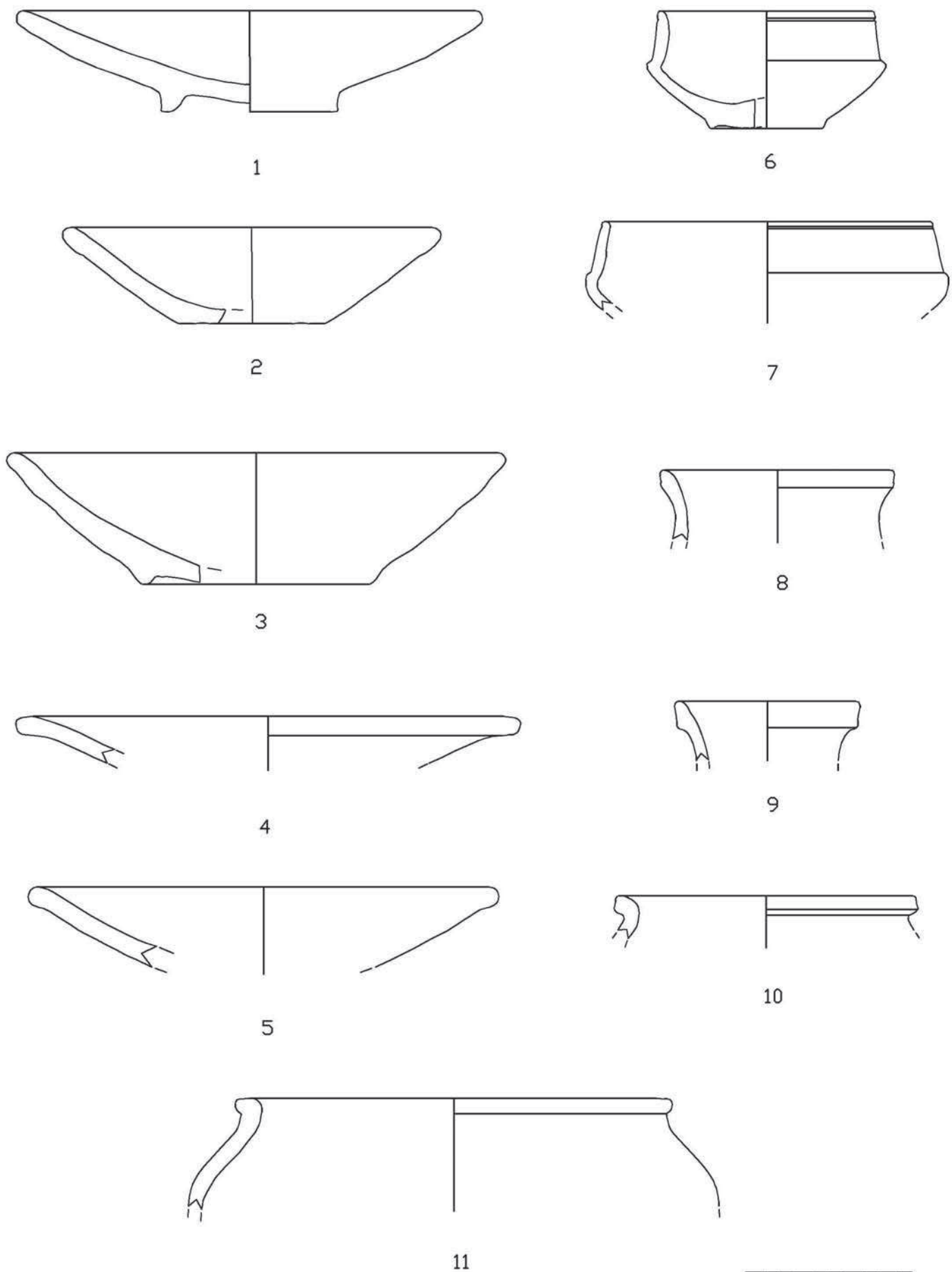


Fig. 26 - Pottery from pit 9108, Operation T4.



Fig. 27 - General view of the Sub-phase 14c from the north. Note the trial trenches in Rooms E, P, A, H and O.

northern sector rooms were orientated north-south, whereas the southern and eastern parts of the house had an east-west development.

A large quantity of pottery was recovered from the rooms and floor deposits, with some semi-complete and numerous fragmentary vessels. As stated above, the ceramic assemblages may be attributed to the final phase of the LBA (LBA II B). Also notable are bronze tools, as well as stone objects (ground stone tools) probably connected to activities which were carried out in the dwelling on a domestic scale.

Our (as yet incomplete) current understanding of this building makes it hard to compare the dwelling with other Late Bronze Age houses known from the Northern Levant. The complete plan of the house is still unknown; further excavation is necessary to explore it in its totality and determine its northern limits. Only the southern part of the dwelling was well preserved and has been entirely uncovered, whilst its eastern boundary was completely removed by a huge Iron Age pit. Notwithstanding the partial lack of information it is possible to draw some conclusions about the dwelling's plan and size.

The building's layout was probably determined by two factors: the existence underneath it of the walls of an earlier building (or buildings), the size and shape of the space left empty by other buildings and the main north-south road of the settlement, which ran along the Royal Palace eastern façade. The sectors of the house brought to light reached, in their final stage, an extension of about 200 m<sup>2</sup>. This area is quite similar to that of the Alalakh houses, which had an average size of 219 m<sup>2</sup>,<sup>108</sup> even though the layout seems to be slightly different<sup>109</sup>.

Little similarity is evident with the most common house types known from Northern Syria during the LBA, such as the typical Emar "front-room house" or the "central-room houses"<sup>110</sup> dominant in Munbaqa<sup>111</sup>. The same situation is evident in the Syrian coastal strip at Ras Shamra. Here houses discovered in the "*Ville Basse*" and the "*Centre de la Ville*" areas show different characteristics in their layout, and of course also in the building materials and techniques used<sup>112</sup>.

In spite of the still incomplete plan of our T1 dwelling, however, a preliminary reconstruction hypothesis may be cautiously proposed with regard to the building's northern sector. The doorways in the short walls of Rooms F, E, and P/D connected them with an elongated area, which may have been a courtyard, a passage or a large room<sup>113</sup>. A large room flanked by a row of rooms along one or both long sides constitutes an architectural scheme widely found in Tell Bazi's *West-stadt*<sup>114</sup> and el-Qitar<sup>115</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> McCLELLAN 1997, 34.

<sup>109</sup> In the large sized Alalakh houses, a row of small rooms runs perpendicular to several larger rooms on the long axis of the building (McCLELLAN 1997, 34).

<sup>110</sup> MARGUERON 1980, fig. 5.

<sup>111</sup> McCLELLAN 1997, 36.

<sup>112</sup> GACHET 1996, 153-184; YON, CALLOT 1997, 16-26; CASTEL 2001, 41-61.

<sup>113</sup> It was not completely excavated because it continues beyond the northern excavation limit.

<sup>114</sup> OTTO 2007, 14-15, 43, 149-232, 'Bazi type house'.

<sup>115</sup> McCLELLAN 1984-1985, 40, Buildings 11; McCLELLAN 1997, 41, fig. 16: e-f.

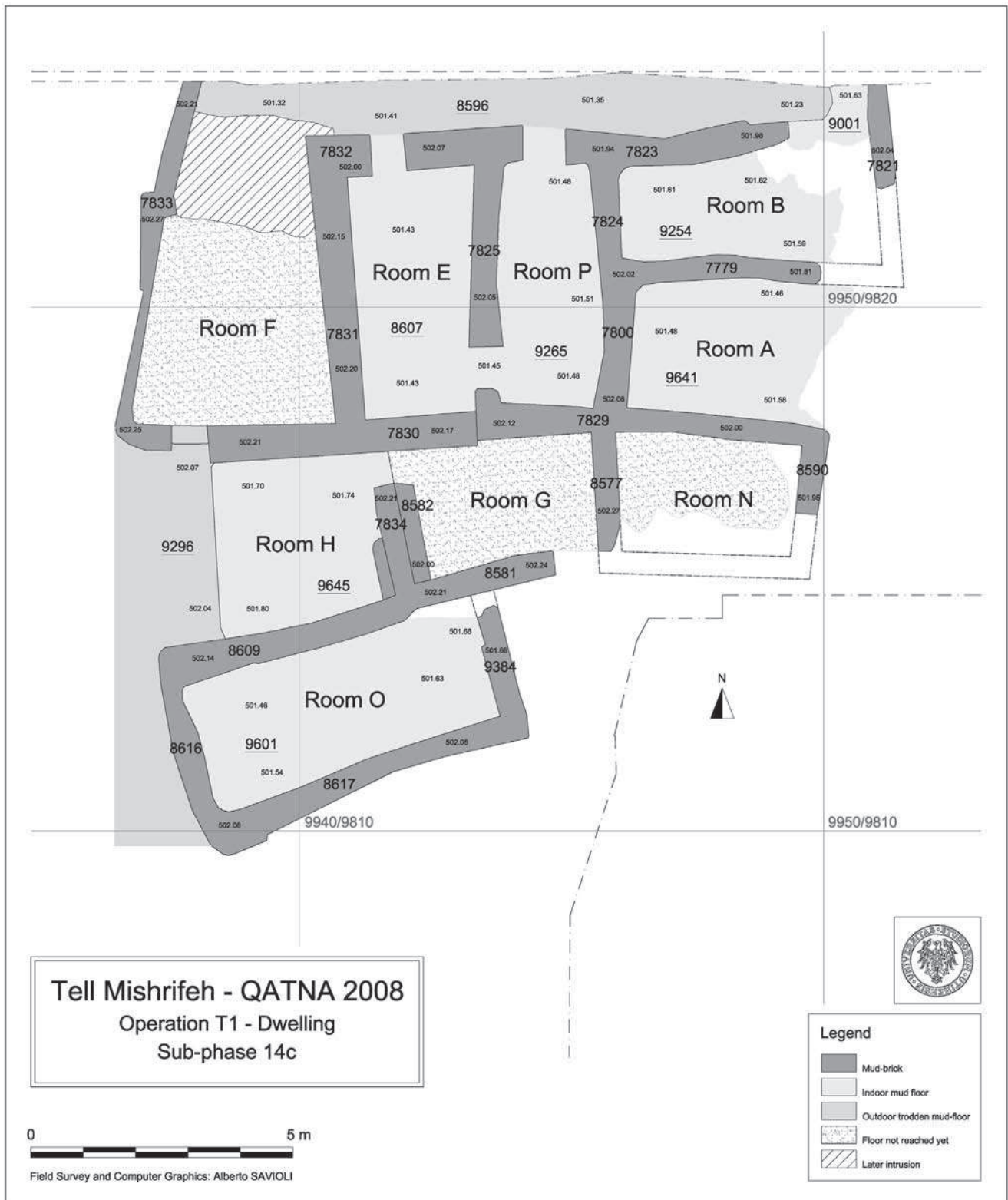




Fig. 29 - View of Rooms C-D and E from the north.

On the other hand, the enlargement of the house towards the south generated a sort of composite dwelling, resulting from the joining together of two houses or parts of two houses (see below).

However, more archaeological investigation is necessary for a fuller comprehension of this dwelling, its architectural characteristics, function and place within the framework of LBA Syrian domestic architecture.

#### 4.1. *The earliest sub-phase*

The oldest sub-phase of the T1 building (Sub-phase 14c, Fig. 27) was not explored in all of the rooms uncovered. Further investigations in this area may therefore improve our current understanding of this horizon.

The dwelling (Fig. 28) is composed of four sectors: a northern part, made up of three rooms (F, E, P), a central core with two rooms (H and G), a southern sector (Room O) and an eastern portion consisting of three rooms (N, A, B). The results of small trial trenches conducted in various parts of the building

suggest that the house had been built over previous structures. Two trenches excavated in Rooms E and P, located in the northern sector, revealed the presence of more ancient walls belonging to an earlier building underneath the LBA II structures. These walls were quite different from the later ones with respect to the dimensions of their mud-bricks<sup>116</sup> and their thickness. The excavations carried out underneath the Sub-phase 14c floors in the eastern and southern part of the dwelling<sup>117</sup> also yielded evidence concerning a former occupation of the area with structures which remained in use during later phases.

Excavation in the central part of our house revealed a different situation. Here, under the floor of Room H, thick ashy layers and a badly preserved external trodden earth floor were exposed. It therefore seems possible that two distinct earlier buildings separated by a lane or courtyard were unified during the LBA II B

<sup>116</sup> The mud-bricks measure 45-50 cm in width and 35-40 cm in length.

<sup>117</sup> Rooms A and O have been extensively excavated.



Fig. 30 - General view of latest Sub-phase 14a from the north. The doorways of Rooms E and D are not visible because they still contain the mud-brick blocking added after the abandonment of the Sub-phase 14a house.

through the construction of the central rooms. The wedge-like shape of Rooms H and G could derive from the fact that they were built in Sub-phase 14c above an irregular open space, which had originally separated two earlier buildings<sup>118</sup>.

During Sub-phase 14c the dwelling consisted of nine rooms with similar characteristics. The rooms were of elongated rectangular shape and had regular beaten earth floors, at times not very compacted and in some cases poorly preserved. Some of the rooms were connected by doorways (Rooms E and P, H and G).

The rooms were not equipped with installations and few pottery fragments were found in the accumulations on their floors. This makes it difficult to reconstruct the function of the single rooms. Analysis of the pottery retrieved shows a clear prevalence of common wares.

The internal communication network of the earliest stage of the T1 house is not entirely clear. The rooms of the northern sector were connected to the area (courtyard, room or passage?) located immediately to the north through doorways about 80 cm wide (Rooms E and P). The eastern part of the dwelling (Rooms A and B), though, was completely destroyed by a large Iron Age pit. It is possible that both rooms had doorways in their non-surviving eastern walls.

#### 4.2. *The intermediate sub-phase*

During the subsequent sub-phase (14b) some changes in the dwelling's plan were made. The two most significant modifications in the layout concerned Rooms O and P. Partition walls, which divided them in two, were built in both rooms. The oldest Room O was subdivided in two smaller rooms: Room L and Room I. The partition wall was constructed immediately above the previous Sub-phase 14c floor without any sort of foundation. The entrance to Room L at this stage could not be identified in the walls of the room.

A similar situation was uncovered in the building's northern sector. Here, a mud-brick wall with an east-west orientation divided Room P of Phase 14c into two smaller rooms, named D and C (Fig. 29). The face of this secondary wall in Room D was covered with lime plaster. Room C was subsequently reduced by the addition of a north-south wall abutting its eastern wall.

Only the foundation stones of the western wall of Room H were found. The mud-bricks of the upper

<sup>118</sup> The pottery retrieved from this earliest level underlying the Sub-phase 14c house, of which only a small area has been explored to date, may be attributed to a LBA I horizon.



Fig. 31 - Room H from the east, with cooking pots embedded in its floor.

part of the wall had been completely removed by the later Sub-phase 14a structure.

The floors of the rooms were horizontal surfaces of beaten earth, quite compact and well preserved. On three floors (Rooms B, D, and N), traces of white lime plaster were found.

The dwelling was surrounded by an open area with a trodden surface, which was extensively exposed immediately to the west of Room H and to the south of Rooms L and I.

As in the case of the preceding phase, it is difficult to establish the function of the single rooms of the dwelling. No evidence of workshop activities was found and installations were quite rare. A small mud-brick bench and some stones arranged in a circular pattern were found in Room H. A hypothesis may be proposed with respect to the function of Room B: a considerable amount of fragmentary storage jars lying on the floor might indicate that this room was used as a storage room.

Sporadic ground stone tools, such as basalt pestles and querns, were found in the building. The ceramic assemblages indicate domestic contexts: common wares prevail (except in Room B) over cooking and storage vessels. The pottery inventory (see below) contained bottles, jars and cooking pots. A remarkably high percentage of open forms was recovered from the room deposits, such as deep bowls, carenated cups and, above all, outflared plates. This shape assemblage indicates a LBA II B date for this phase. A fragment of 'milk bowl' decorated in the Cypriot White Slip II tradition fits well with the occupation of the dwelling during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.

#### 4.3. The latest sub-phase

Although in its original phase the dwelling consisted of nine rooms and had a narrow and elongated

layout, during its most recent stage (Sub-phase 14a) the house was progressively enlarged to thirteen rooms, re-using the walls of previous sub-phases (Pl. VI, Fig. 30).

An external trodden floor of beaten earth was associated with the building. The southern and western parts of the house were surrounded by an extensive trodden floor forming a large open area. The archaeological evidence indicates that the building also continued beyond the east-west strip located along the northern limit of the excavation at this time.

The northern sector remained nearly unchanged. The Room F doorway, located along the south wall, was blocked with mud-bricks. Notable modifications occurred in the dwelling's central core. Immediately to the south of Room F, over the outer trodden floor a new small room was built (Room M) and in Room H a further wall was added, abutting the pre-existing southern wall. A similar situation was visible in the eastern part of the house, where in Rooms A and N new walls were built.

As for the house's southern wing, Room L was further subdivided into two parts by means of a narrow *pisé* partition wall. Close to the southern limit of this wall, a doorway permitting passage from Room L to Room J was located.

During this phase, Room I was enlarged. It is not possible to determine the exact dimensions of the room, since two Iron Age pits badly damaged its eastern part. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that the eastern wall of the room was aligned with the eastern wall of the adjacent Room G.

The nature of the finds from rooms situated in the eastern part of the building (A, B and N), in prevalence storage pottery, suggests that these rooms were used for storage. The rooms located in the northern (F, E, D, C) and southern sections (G, L, J), on the contrary, seem to have been of a more domestic character, as indicated by the pottery and tools of daily use found on their floors.

A probable kitchen was situated in the centre of the house (Room H, Fig. 31)<sup>119</sup>. In Room I several superimposed lime-plastered and sloping floors bearing traces left by flowing water were found. In addition, these layers were associated with installations lined with lime.

A similar situation was also found in Room M, where, in the centre of a lime-plastered floor, a circular basin-like depression was uncovered. The recurring presence of lime coatings and the existence in Room M of a probable drain, which made possible the draining of liquids to the exterior towards the south, suggest that some activities involving the use of liquids were carried out in these rooms.

<sup>119</sup> Two cooking pots were embedded in the floor.

After Sub-phase 14a, the doorways of the northern rooms opening onto the east-west oriented area were blocked with mud-bricks and stones and the building was abandoned.

#### 4.4. The pottery

The majority of pottery sherds discovered in the room deposits of our dwelling may be attributed to a LBA chronological horizon. In particular, most of the vessel shapes can be dated to the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The pottery inventory consists, above all, of Common Ware and Cooking Ware types, whereas the Storage Ware, more frequent in Rooms A and B, is less represented.

The pottery, characterized by grit-tempered fabrics, is entirely wheel-made<sup>120</sup>. Surface finishing is limited to a self-slip and the colour varies from pale brown to light red. A trend towards a marked standardization of types is evident in the ceramic assemblage, which is characterized by variability in the profiles, but a narrow range of forms. The limited presence in the house and on the associated outer surfaces of western imports, for example Cypriot White Slip II and Base Ring I, which are quite common in the coastal region and are well-known from other contexts in Qatna, is probably due to the domestic character of the building, where an assemblage of types of pottery in everyday use prevailed.

The ceramic inventory consists above all of open forms, with a high percentage of plates and cups. The most common are plates with simple rim and sharp flared walls (Fig. 32: 1-3), well known from Ras Shamra<sup>121</sup> and Tell Arqa<sup>122</sup>. Bevelled rims are quite common in Area T1 (Fig. 32: 4-6) and are also known from Tell Afis, Phases 10-9c<sup>123</sup>, Tell Arqa, Phase K<sup>124</sup> and Hama, Phases G3-1<sup>125</sup>. Deep carenated bowls, with a high upright or gently outflared rim (Fig. 32: 7-10) occur in the pottery assemblages of coastal region sites too, such as Tell Arqa<sup>126</sup>, Beirut<sup>127</sup>, and Ras Shamra<sup>128</sup>.

Among the closed forms, narrow necked jars seem to be the most distinctive types (Fig. 33: 1-3). The range of cooking vessels is quite homogeneous during this period. Globular pots with a characteristic triangular rim are very common (Fig. 33: 4-8). This typology is frequent at Tell Afis<sup>129</sup>. The limited diagnostic fragments concerning Storage Ware production discovered up to now exhibit swollen rims and walls that are often decorated with registers of deep horizontal and parallel grooves (Fig. 33: 9, 10).

As a whole, then, the pottery assemblage recovered from the T1 house can be attributed to the LBA II ceramic horizon of the Northern Levant. The most typical diagnostics of this period, such as flared wall plates, narrow necked jars and triangular rim cooking pots, are numerous in Area T1.

#### 4.5. The eastern wall of the Royal Palace and its monumental glacis system

The excavations conducted during the 2001, 2005 and 2007 seasons have shown the existence of a massive glacis system consisting of a series of superimposed mud-brick platforms abutting the eastern façade of the Royal Palace. This stepped system of overlying glacises, which was built against the plastered eastern palace wall and sloped off towards the east, had the double function of protecting the wall base from water erosion and – with its substantial structure – giving a more monumental aspect to the eastern palace façade (Fig. 34).

In the 2008 excavation campaign a trial trench which had been started in 2007 in square 9920/9820 was enlarged (Fig. 35). The aim of the work conducted in this trench, which measured 8 m x 5.50 m and by the end of the campaign reached a depth of 4 m, was to understand the internal structure of this system of repeatedly renewed, superimposed glacises and date them.

After the removal of several trodden floors which alternated with ashy layers, the very compact surface of the mud-plaster covering of the most recent glacis was exposed (Fig. 34). The base of this glacis was directly connected to the trodden surface of the latest phase of the north-south oriented street that flanked the eastern palace façade (and ran between it and the buildings over which the LBA II B dwelling described above was constructed).

The compactness, colour and inclination were shared by all the coverings of the underlying earlier glacises and street surfaces brought to light in the trench. After the removal of the sixth glacis down, a structure built with mud-bricks and *pisé* was uncovered (Fig. 36), which abutted the mud-brick structure of the glacis platform and was probably added to improve the adhesion between the thick mud layers and the glacis itself.

The eighth glacis surface from the top covered a second mud-brick platform. The discovery of this earlier glacis stage demonstrates that the overall sys-

<sup>120</sup> The tempers of the ceramic fabrics have been described thanks to an on-going project of archaeometrical study of the Mishrifeh pottery sequence (EBA III-IA III). The first results of this project have been published in MARITAN *et alii* 2005.

<sup>121</sup> GACHET 1996, fig. 19: 84-85.

<sup>122</sup> THALMANN 2006, planche 117, fig. 9.

<sup>123</sup> VENTURI 2000, fig. 5: 3, 4, 6, 7; MAZZONI 2002, plate LXI: 41-45.

<sup>124</sup> THALMANN 2006, planche 117, fig. 13.

<sup>125</sup> FUGMANN 1958, fig. 153: 5A 539.

<sup>126</sup> THALMANN 2006, planche 117, fig. 24.

<sup>127</sup> BADRE 1997, fig. 26: 12-15.

<sup>128</sup> GACHET 1996, fig. 19: 86.

<sup>129</sup> VENTURI 2000, fig. 5: 19-22.

| N. | SU      | FORM      | FABRIC                                                                                        | FIRING | INT SUR | EXT SUR | INT TREAT | EXT TREAT | INT COLOURING            | EXT COLOURING            | PROD TECH |
|----|---------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1  | 7790.4  | Plate     | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow   | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow  | W         |
| 2  | 7791.8  | Plate     | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10YR 7/3 Very Pale Brown | 10YR 7/3 Very Pale Brown | W         |
| 3  | 7789.24 | Cup       | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10YR 8/3 Very Pale Brown | 10YR 8/2 Very Pale Brown | W         |
| 4  | 9177.7  | Cup       | foraminifer shells, foraminifer-rich limestone, micritic limestone, chert and quartz crystals | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5Y 8/2 Pale Yellow     | 2.5Y 8/2 Pale Yellow     | W         |
| 5  | 7791.21 | Cup       | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5YR 7/4 Pink           | 7.5YR 7/4 Pink           | W         |
| 6  | 8573.3  | Cup       | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5YR 7/3 Pink           | 7.5YR 7/3 Pink           | W         |
| 7  | 9187.1  | Deep bowl | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | sm      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 6/6 Reddish yellow   | 5YR 6/6 Reddish yellow   | W         |
| 8  | 8593.19 | Deep bowl | basalt; quartz ; spathic calcite; micritic foraminifer-rich limestone                         | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 7.5YR 6/4 Light Brown    | 10R 5/8 Red              | W         |
| 9  | 9300.8  | Deep bowl | basalt; quartz ; spathic calcite; micritic foraminifer-rich limestone                         | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 7/6 Reddish yellow   | 5YR 7/6 Reddish yellow   | W         |
| 10 | 9177.9  | Deep bowl | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow   | 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow  | W         |

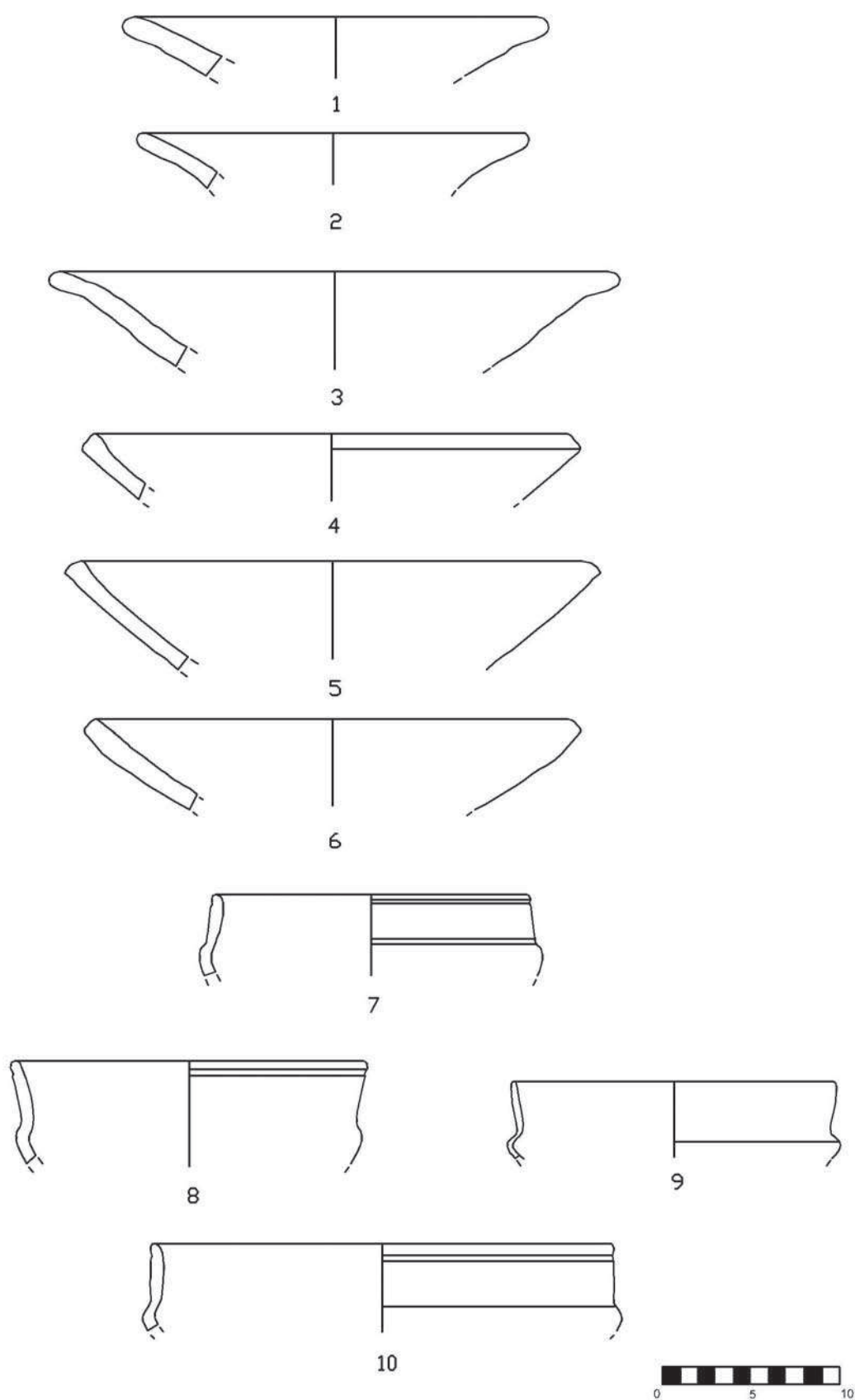


Fig. 32 - LBA II open forms from the dwelling, Operation T1.

| N. | SU      | FORM        | FABRIC                                                                                        | FIRING | INT SUR | EXT SUR | INT TREAT | EXT TREAT | INT COLOURING               | EXT COLOURING               | PROD TECH |
|----|---------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1  | 7575-3  | Jar         | volcanic glass, micritic limestones, chert, quartz, plagioclase, calcite and opaque minerals. | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 5/4 reddish brown       | 5YR 5/4 reddish brown       | W         |
| 2  | 7789-18 | Jar         | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10YR 8/3 Very Pale Brown    | 10YR 8/3 Very Pale Brown    | W         |
| 3  | 9187-6  | Jar         | Limestone rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR6/6 Reddish yellow       | 5YR6/6 Reddish yellow       | W         |
| 4  | 7789-14 | Cooking pot | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite; micritic foraminifer-rich limestone                          | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5 YR 7/6 light red        | 2.5 YR 7/6 light red        | W         |
| 5  | 7575-12 | Cooking pot | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite; micritic foraminifer-rich limestone                          | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 10 YR 5/2 grayish brown     | 10 YR 5/2 grayish brown     | W         |
| 6  | 7790-8  | Cooking pot | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5YR 5/4 Reddish Brown     | 2.5YR 5/4 Reddish Brown     | W         |
| 7  | 7790-3  | Cooking pot | Limestone-rich, small basalt fragments                                                        | h      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 2.5YR 5/4 Reddish Brown     | 2.5YR 5/4 Reddish Brown     | W         |
| 8  | 9177-15 | Cooking pot | basalt; quartz; spathic calcite and abundant porosity                                         | r      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR6/4 Light Reddish yellow | 5YR6/4 Light Reddish yellow | W         |
| 9  | 7791-26 | Storage jar | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | r      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 7/4 Pink                | 5YR 7/4 Pink                | W         |
| 10 | 7791-27 | Storage jar | quartz; chert; micritic limestone; microcrystalline calcite                                   | r      | ss      | ss      | sm        | sm        | 5YR 7/4 Pink                | 5YR 7/4 Pink                | W         |

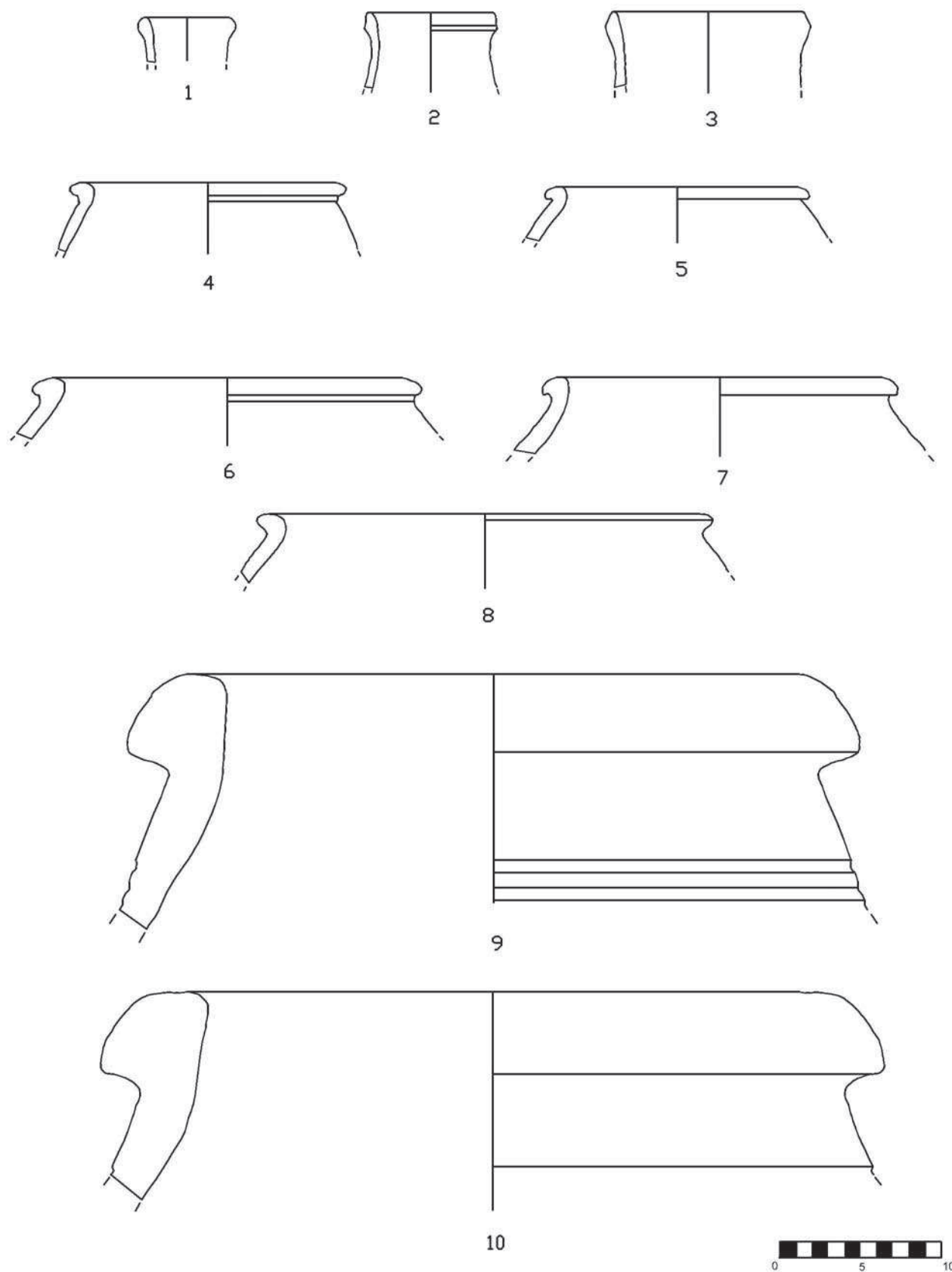


Fig. 33 - LBA II closed forms from the dwelling, Operation T1.



Fig. 34 - General view of the glacis system from the north. Note the mud-brick platform to the right and the sloping mud surface of the glacis and the street in the centre.

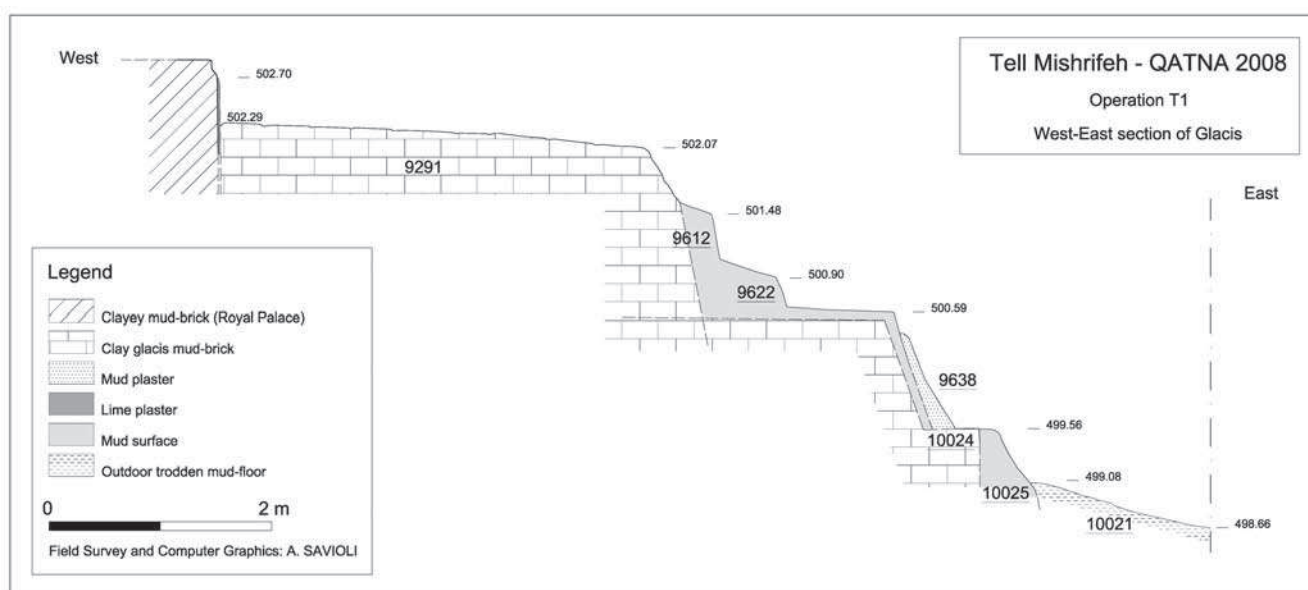


Fig. 35 - West-East Section of the glacis system.



Fig. 36 - View from the north of the upper mud-brick platform and the *pisé* structure abutting it after the removal of the overlying glacis mud surface.

tem of protection of the base of the eastern palace wall consisted of a stepped structure of at least two superimposed mud-brick platforms topped by successive sloping glacis surfaces. This system took shape with time as a consequence of the progressive raising of the level of the street and the open area which flanked the palace to the east.

So far, fourteen thick and very compact glacis mud surfaces have been exposed<sup>130</sup>. It has not yet been possible to reach the original trodden floor of the outer surface surrounding the Royal Palace on which this glacis system was founded; this will be investigated in a future excavation campaign. The slope of the lowest glacis uncovered so far (Fig. 37), however, gives reason to suspect the existence of a further mud-brick platform underneath the older of the two found so far.

The pottery recovered from the most recent trodden street surface and the accumulations between the nine most recent mud glacis surfaces can be dated to the LBA II, whilst the ceramics from above the most ancient surfaces reached to date, and the deposits

between them, are related to an earlier late MBA II/LBA I horizon.

DMB, MDR

## 5. Conclusions

The excavations conducted in Area T have added significant new information concerning the urban layout of the city of the second and first millennia BC. Of exceptional importance is the discovery for the first time at Qatna of an MBA monumental palace of “Syrian” type with clear links to other contemporary western Syrian palaces, such as the Western Palace at Ebla and the “Yarim-Lim” palace of Alalakh VII. The Eastern Palace, which extends beyond the northern and eastern limits of investigation in the adjacent Syrian

<sup>130</sup> Their thicknesses vary from 20 to 50 cm.



Fig. 37 - View from the north of the lowest sloping glacis surface (centre) and street surface (left) discovered so far. Note the two mud-brick platforms, one overlying the other, which form the glacis system.

excavation area, exceeding the presently recorded length of 58 m, was built at the end of the MBA II A and abandoned at the end of the MBA II B (possibly early LBA I). It is worthy of note that this palace was created by the joining together of two previous MBA II A structures, the Northern and Southern Buildings, which became part of a single architectural complex. Thus, the Eastern Palace was not constructed *ex novo*, but was the result of modification of pre-existing monumental buildings, the nature and function of which cannot be investigated in detail without removing the Eastern Palace structures and extending the excavation area.

This sector of Qatna's upper town, therefore, was already occupied by official architecture in the MBA II A. Unfortunately, the presence of the Eastern Palace and the Northern and Southern Buildings precludes the investigation of the underlying MBA I stratigraphy, although the presence of silos at the bottom of large pit 9108 in the adjacent Area T4 gives some clues regarding the use of this area during the first part of the MBA.

Remarkably, at approximately the same time that the Eastern Palace was abandoned<sup>131</sup>, some 40 m westwards the new imposing Royal Palace was erected. It is of course impossible to ascertain whether these

episodes were functionally related, but it is a striking fact that when the MBA II Eastern Palace (and the pre-existing buildings which had been incorporated into it) fell into disuse, a new and more magnificent royal palace was built in the same part of the upper town, which had already been devoted to the administration of power in the preceding MBA.

A further point which is not clear yet is whether the Eastern Palace was Qatna's MBA II B royal palace or one of several palaces that existed on the site during this period, following a pattern which is well known from MBA Ebla<sup>132</sup>.

The large trial trench opened along the eastern façade of the Royal Palace in Area T1 has given some important indications with regard to the city's road system during the following LBA, and revealed the existence of a main north-south street, which probably connected Qatna's northern city gate with the Lower City Palace, the Royal Palace and the summit of the upper town central mound (Area J), where a

<sup>131</sup> The Area J MBA public building was also abandoned and partly demolished during roughly the same period (cf. MORANDI BONACOSSÌ 2008).

<sup>132</sup> MATTHIAE 1997a.

large intensive pottery production area had existed since the MBA<sup>133</sup>. Here the street divided: one branch turned westwards, whilst the other continued southwards, probably reaching the city's southern gate.

A second 21 m long east-west oriented trial trench (T5) and the excavation in T4 have shown that the area located between the Royal Palace and the Eastern Palace, which in the LBA was no longer in use, was an (at least partly) empty open area, where large quantities of mud-brick debris and ash, probably derived from the destruction of the Royal Palace, were dumped in the large pit dug in Area T4 after the demise of the Eastern Palace.

Finally, the destruction of the Royal Palace in around the mid-fourteenth century BC did not entail the end of the occupation of this part of Qatna's up-

per town. A large LBA II B dwelling was brought to light in Area T1, immediately to the east of the above-mentioned street flanking the palace.

All in all, the excavations conducted by the Italian component of the joint Syro-Italian project in Area T have furnished important new information regarding not only the settlement sequence of this part of the Mishrifeh upper town from the MBA to the Iron Age, but especially the nature of public and domestic architecture and the urban layout of the city during the second millennium BC.

DMB

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<sup>133</sup> MORANDI BONACOSI 2008.

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