

Preliminary Report On The Excavation at Tell Schech Hamad/Dur-Katlimmu in 1986

Hartmut Kühne

The eight season of the excavation at Tell Schech Hamad was again sponsored by the Free University of Berlin and financed by the German Research Foundation. It was carried out between August 3rd and November 15th. The representative of the Syrian Antiquities Department was again our friend and colleague, Mr. As'ad Mahmoud, Director of the National Museum of Der az-Zor. To him and to the General Director of the Department of Antiquities, Dr. Afif Bahnassi, who has supported the project again very generously, we want to express our deeply felt thanks.

This year's staff-members have been: Stefan Aubertin, Reinhold Berger, Reinhard Bernbeck, Norbert Boer, Matina Dieterle, Eva Maria Engel, Jutta Häser, Ingeborg Kader, Jürgen Kahler, Susanne Kerner, Doris Köther, M.A., Prof. Dr. Hartmut Kühne, Roger Leenders, M.A., Prof. Dr. Eckhart Otto, Franz Josef Reidel, Ulrich Schede, Bernhard Strackenbrock, Thomas Urban, Arne Weiser.

As in the years 1984 and 1985 (cf. H. Kühne, Preliminary Report on the Excavation in Tell Schech Hamad/Dur-Katlimmu in 1985, AAAS, in press) our efforts were concentrated on the Lower City II, in the areas in the north-east corner and in the middle part of this site. Our aims and methods have been described in the preliminary report of 1985, and therefore it may be sufficient to note that we continued our work with these methods.

1. The Northeast Corner of the Lower City II (Plan Fig. 1)

The aims of this season were to clear the southern limits of building F and its relationship to the vaulted rooms G and K in the west. In the north of building F it was planned to unearth the further ground plan of the building. Some rooms were excavated down the floor of phase 2. Major effort was taken in excavating the townwall between bastion No. 5 and No. 6.

As expected the southern limitation wall of building F (wall No. 15) continued in area 8975 I and IV. The trench in area 8977 III apparently proved, too, that wall 15 was continuing on. Only after the area had been excavated to a larger extent, it was found that the continuation of wall No. 15 here was a later addition under which the original southwestern corner of building F had been hidden (Fig. 2).

The discovery of the southwestern corner of building F is one of the major results of this year's season. There is no doubt now that the vaulted rooms G and K belong to a different building extending to the west. Wall No. 16 represents the southern limitation wall of this building which is now called building W according to its elsewhere suggested function of a cistern and of water distribution to the Lower City. The latter function was amply demonstrated by excavating the southern facade of the vaulted room G which proved to be a water outlet, used in at least five stages. The water flew via a small channel which

continued underneath wall 15a (Fig. 2) into the middle part of the Lower City II. The area in front of the water outlet, court GG, had apparently a public purpose for the people living in the neighbourhood to draw water from this outlet or small channel.

West of this public court GG the remains of a normal house were discovered (Fig. 3 and 4), the first indication of living quarters for ordinary people in Lower City II. This house 1 consists of five rooms so far, arranged around a courtyard in the middle, the architecture completely differs from the so far excavated type of architecture in the Lower City II. The walls are only half the size, they are founded on a pebbel base and the walls consist of two mud bricks of rather inferior quality for each layer. In the rooms, installations like hearths, mortars, pithois, and benches were discovered as well as a number of broken, but restorable ceramic jars.

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While the northern extension of building F cannot yet be characterized, building F itself now

offers a solution for its function. The arrangement of rooms is the following: Room S in the north-east may have been a terrace which was to be entered via room Q, but is still unexcavated. The entrance to the whole building must have been situated between rooms S and H. This is the only possibility, remaining after excavation of the three other external walls without any sign of an entrance.

Room H, also as yet unexcavated, must have been a hall. Via this hall the visitor was directly led into the main room of the building, room C, which has an extension of 19.6 to 6 metres (Fig. 6). Two rows of rooms are bordering room C, the one in the south consisting of room A and B, and the other one in the west consisting of room B, G, and L. The row in the west was only accessible via room O. Since room E and G are not yet excavated, the function of these rooms is still uncertain.

Both the rooms in the south are now completely excavated, room A having been excavated already in 1984, and room B having completed only in 1986. In all three rooms, C, B, and A, the floor of using stage 2 is reached while in room C, in a test trench (Fig. 6), on a still deeper level the still older floor of using stage 3 has been discovered. The latter seems to be the original floor connected with the erection of the building.

In room A two mortars are found integrated in the floor, and connected with them a number of ceramic pots has been discovered.

In the eastern part of room B a rich collection of pottery was excavated already in 1984, which is published in 'Archiv für Orientforschung' 31, 1984, Abb. 67. The western part of room B was excavated in 1986, and in its northern corner a well preserved tannur was discovered (Fig. 7). South of this tannur a small

archive was found, consisting of seven cuneiform tablets and nineteen clay bullae with aramaic inscription. In addition one aramaic inscribed clay tablet was found. One of the cuneiform tablets holds an aramaic postscriptum and another one furnishes a date by mentioning an eponym, the name of which is Adad Milki, according to Wolfgang Röllig.

This eponym belongs to the reign of Assur-etil-elani, the successor of Assurbanipal, and therefore is post-canonic. The date can be limited very closely to the years between 625 and 630 B.C., because of the very short reign of Assur-etil-elani. This of course provides us with a most welcome date for our using stage 2 of building F.

The aramaic inscribed clay bullae (Fig. 8 a&b) belong to a very rare kind of document of which only 44 pieces are known so far in the whole world. 24 of them are based in the Museum in Brussels, and their origin is unknown. The remaining 20 have been found in Assur, Ninive, and Tell Halaf, and only the one's from Assur are providing another date which is 645 B.C. and therefore fits very well to our results. Since the tablets and the heart-shaped bullae are not yet studied, their contents can be only suspected: one of the tablets is clearly a letter, while most of the clay bullae seem to contain in accordance with the parallels from Assur some administrative and economic information.

The entrance to room B was flanked by two wooden posts indicating two-winged door. In room C another mortar was found integrated in the floor of using stage II, otherwise no noteworthy small finds were discovered.

The plan of the whole building (Fig. 1) resembles-despite of the not yet excavated entrance between room S and H- very much a well-known type of architecture in the first millennium, the so-called bit hilani. The best compari

son to the overall dimensions and to the arrangement of rooms is given by Hilani III from Sendschirli (Fig. 9). Like our building F, this is an almost square building with a side length of almost 30 metres.

The function of this well-known architecture type is still disputed. Our results provide an indication for a secular and public function rather than a cultic function. But we have to be careful because our interpretation is based on the second using stage which is not the original one.

The three using stages of the building F can be tentatively dated to the following periods: the youngest using stage is dated by an aramaic ostrakon which was discovered in 1985 on the floor of this first using stage in room C. This ostrakon is dated to the time of 550 to 500 B.C.

The second using stage is dated by the just described tablets and aramaic inscribed clay bullae to 630 B.C., and the third using stage maybe tentatively dated to the end of the 8th century, to the time of about 720 B.C. Building F therefore has been existing for a period of about 200 years.

The cultural meaning of our discovery in 1986 concerning building F is far reaching. The architectural type of the hilani is clearly associated with the culture of the Aramaeans, and although the Assyrians have taken over and developed on this type of architecture in a few known examples, it never became an integrated factor of assyrian culture. The association of assyrian cuneiform tablets and aramaic inscribed economic documents allows a more general interpretation of this situation. The assyrian city of Dur-Katlimmu was probably inhabited to a large extent by Aramaeans, and their cultural influence was so prevailing that the Assyrians were building an aramaic type architecture. Apparently there existed a fertile 'co-habitation' between Aramaeans and Assyrians. This has been

tentatively expressed already on the occasion of the publication of a fragment of a relief in 1984 (*Archiv für Orientforschung* 31, 1984, page 173), and it has been confirmed in a most outstanding way by the results of the excavation campaign in 1986.

2. The Eastern City Wall (Fig. 10&11)

In last year's report (AAAS, in press) it was described that the city wall had been followed over a length of 240 metres, starting from the north-eastern corner to the south. This was done mechanically by a machine sweeping the surface. Starting from the north-eastern corner eleven bastions have been counted (Fig. 11&15).

Although topographically indicated, no gates proper have been discovered so far. One entrance is situated between bastion 5 and bastion 6. Between bastion 8 and 9 a gate or at least another entrance is suggested because of the topographical situation. Both the points were the subjects of investigation in 1986.

The entrance between bastion 5 and 6 was thoroughly investigated (Fig. 12-13). It was found that it has been a small passage of 1.40 metres width having been used in 9 stages. The oldest and lowest stages 7 to 9 were connected to a small channel leading waste water out of the town (Fig. 13). The upper stages 6 to 2 showed that the original passage had been blocked.

Similar to these results a small passage was found between bastion 8 and 9. It is only 75 cm wide. Since the investigations in this area could not be completed, the present evidence maybe interpreted as a blocked former gate.

The aims of the excavation in front of the city wall between bastion 5 and 6 (Fig. 12) were to clear the facade of the wall and to gather information on its construction methods. The city wall in this area is preserved up to 11 layers of mud

brick. They have a thickness of 13 to 15cm, i.e. the actual height of the remaining city wall is 1.65 metres. In a test trench behind the wall we had discovered the fallen down city wall consisting of 19 layers of mud brick still in bond. The height to be reconstructed therefore is at least 4.5 meters but it was probably much higher since the wall had been out of use and already deteriorated at the time when it broke down. The width of the wall is 3 metres. Its foot is wider since on the outside there is a small glacis, which was built up by fragments of mud brick and a very hard surface made of clay, lime, and gravel.

In area 8971 a test trench was dug against the inner facade of the wall to find out whether this stage of the wall is the only one existing. As was indicated in area 9175 already in the year 1983, it was confirmed that an older wall had existed before this one was constructed. The new wall was built on top of the old one. Since the old one had been smaller the outer facade of the new one was built down to the original floor level of the old one, while the inner facade was constructed upon than existing floor level which had been risen by accumulation to a higher level (Fig. 14). The new city wall was apparently built in sections. This could be demonstrated by transverse joints running through.

The bastions are projecting over 2.2 metres (Fig. 12&15). Their width is exactly 5 metres. The distance between the bastions, the courtine, averages 18 metres. The lowest three layers of the bastions and the wall are constructed of especially hard mud bricks which apparently contain a mixture of lime. Between the layers some horizontal joints are especially thick apparently for the purpose of smoothing and leveling the wall.

3. Building G in the Middle Part of Lower City II (Fig. 16)

The aim of this year's work was to elucidate the ground plan of this building further. A special effort was taken in completing the excavation of the wall paintings, removing and restoring them.

The western half of room B where the wall paintings had been discovered was completely excavated to the floor (Fig. 17). This floor marks the first using stage of this room, and it seems that it is already the original using stage. The surrounding walls, wall No. 1, No. 16, No. 18, are preserved to an average height of 2.30 metres.

The wall paintings on wall 1 and on wall 16, discovered in 1985, consist of a frieze containing a figurative scene of several trees and most probably some animals which had been destroyed deliberately. On wall 16, almost in the corner to wall 1, a painted inscription had been discovered, reading 'the garden house'. It was expected that the wall painting on wall 16 was continuing to the south, and that perhaps on the opposite wall No. 18 and in the corner of wall 16 and 18 another frieze of paintings was to be found. Our hopes were disappointed. The frieze on the northern part of wall 16 ends in about the middle of the room. The rest of the wall to south is unpainted. Wall 18 is also unpainted.

Integrated in wall no. 16 are two niches (Fig. 18) the northern one of which is 'underlined' by the above mentioned frieze (Fig. 19). Above the figurative scene a second frieze of lotus flowers exists which is best preserved in the part between the two niches in wall 16. Our disappointment was compensated by large fragments of wall paintings found in the fill above the floor of the room (Fig. 20) of which we were able to recover a great deal. These fragments, together with the in

situ-paintings, are tentatively reconstructed in Fig. 19. They must have been situated on the upper part of wall 16 of which they broke down.

To summarize the evidence (Fig. 19) it seems that the original decoration of room B consisted of a bottom frieze of dark brown paint reaching up from the floor to about 60 cm. In the corners this frieze was augmented by a pinnacel pattern. 1.65 metres above the floor the lotus frieze was situated, itself being almost 50 cm wide. It is suggested that at a height of about 3 metres above the floor another frieze was located consisting of-as reconstructed from the fragments - two more lotus friezes which were arranged around a middle frieze of abstracted rosettes. This arrangement was crowned by another pinnacle pattern.

At a second stage and at some special event the figurative frieze was added. It seems awkward that this stylistically differing painting was added only in one corner of the room. Therefore we think that the planned decoration was not completed.

Room B belongs to the eastern most wing of building G (Fig. 16). The dimensions of room B were about 17 by 5 metres according to the outline of walls disengaged on the surface sweeping. To this eastern wing belong rooms A, B, and C as well as another large arrangement south of room C which seems to continue to the east to another top.

The eastern wing is divided from a middle wing of building G by a double wall, wall no. 16 (Fig. 18). This middle wing consists of the rooms D, H, W, Y, courtyard L, rooms K, V, R, S, F, and perhaps another courtyard Z. Our further efforts were concentrating on this middle wing of building G, where we excavated rooms S, R, G, part of F, and the northern part of room D we found a number of broken jars still in situ (Fig.

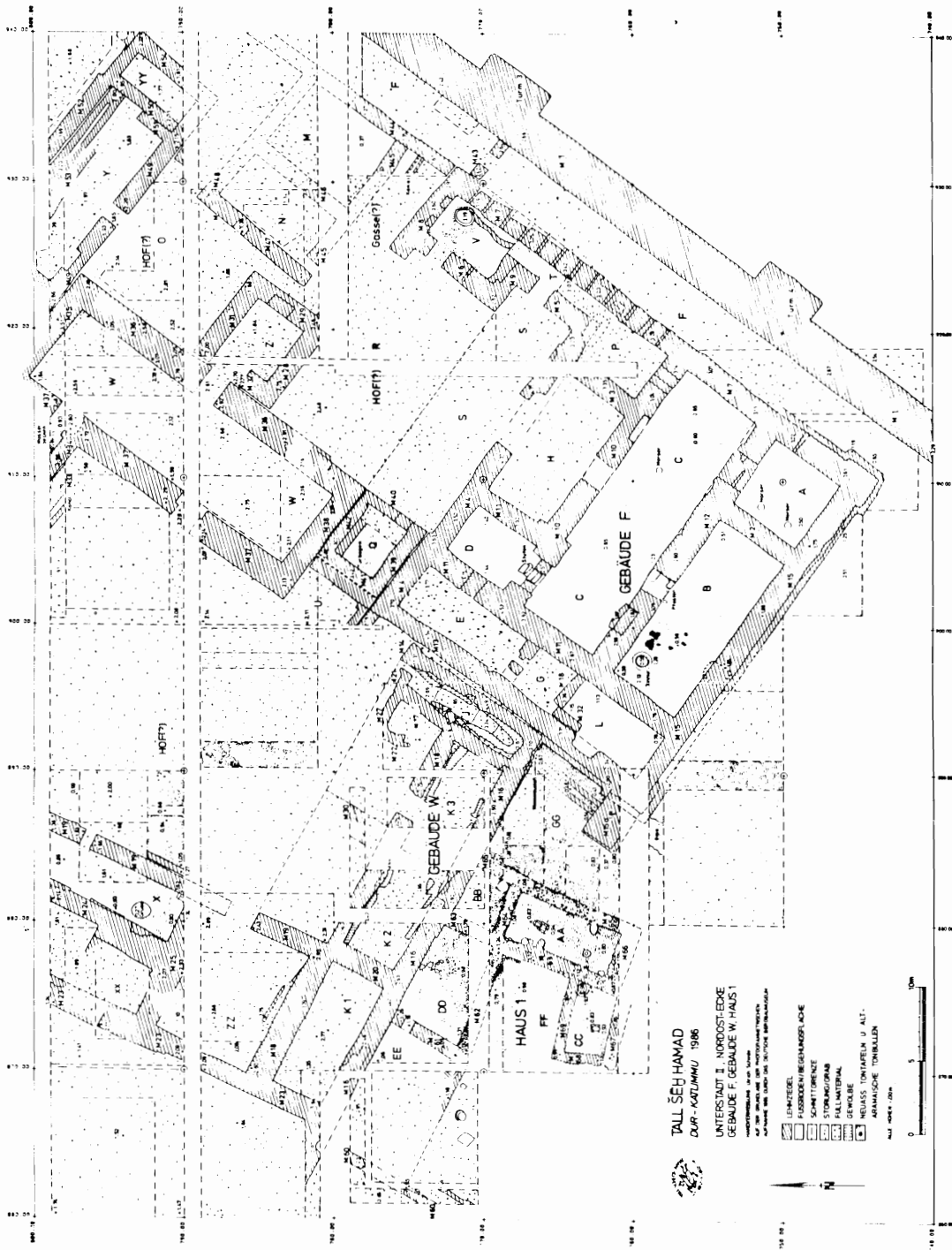
22), among other a large potstand, decorated with incized wavy lines (Fig. 23). In room R a large hearth was discovered, and in room S plastered basins on the eastside were found together with small cup-like sunken-in and plastered cavities. In room S a cylinder seal and a very worn clay tablet were found underneath large sherds belonging to pithoi which had been situated on the floor originally (Fig. 24). In room G a mortar was discovered, and leading through room G was a small channel, probably draining courtyard L (Fig. 25).

The western wing of building G is separated from the middle wing by another double wall no. 11. While the middle wing and the eastern wing are well preserved the western wing is strongly eroded. A paved courtyard O most probably marks the entrance to either the whole building or at least to this western wing. From this courtyard one were able to enter rooms N and M.

Neither the southern nor the northern limits of the building have been discovered so far. One of the most interesting results is the extension of the building to the east to the next top.

The ground plan of building G can be compared to the Assyrian architecture. Some of the characteristics of the so-called 'Großes Haus' in Assur (Fig. 26) are similar to our building G. The 'Große Haus' is interpreted by the late Ernst Heinrich as a residence of a higher-ranked officer. The equipment of our building G certainly fits this interpretation.

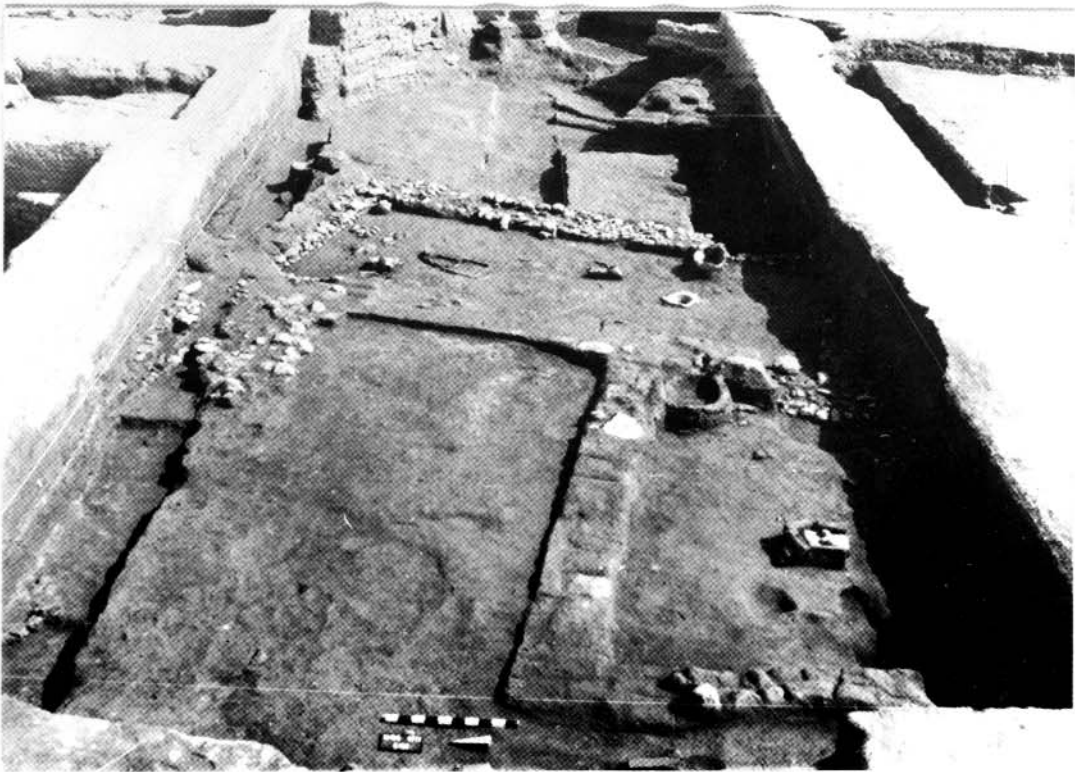
Summarizing the results we can point out two interesting aspects: in the northeastern corner a building pattern is beginning to emerge consisting of public as well as living buildings. A cultural, economical and practical symbiosis of Assyrians and Aramaeans seems to have existed in the last centuries of the Assyrian empire and in the post-Assyrian period.



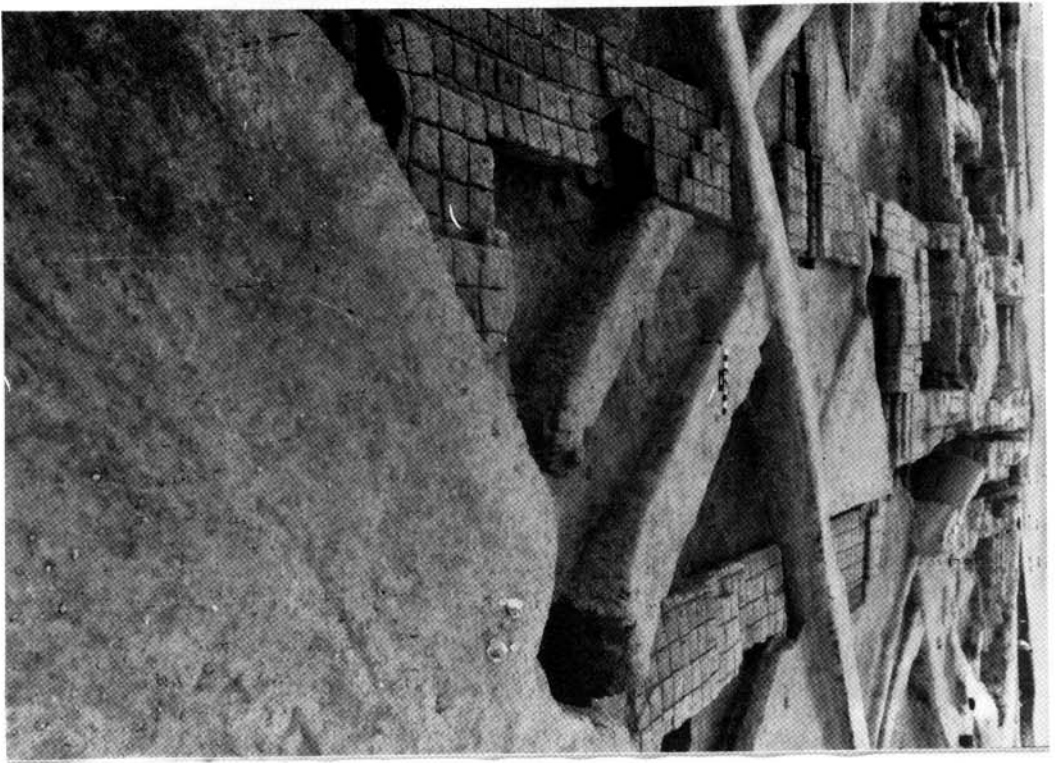
1 Schematic groundplan of the excavation area in the northeast corner of Lower City II, buildings F and W, and house 1



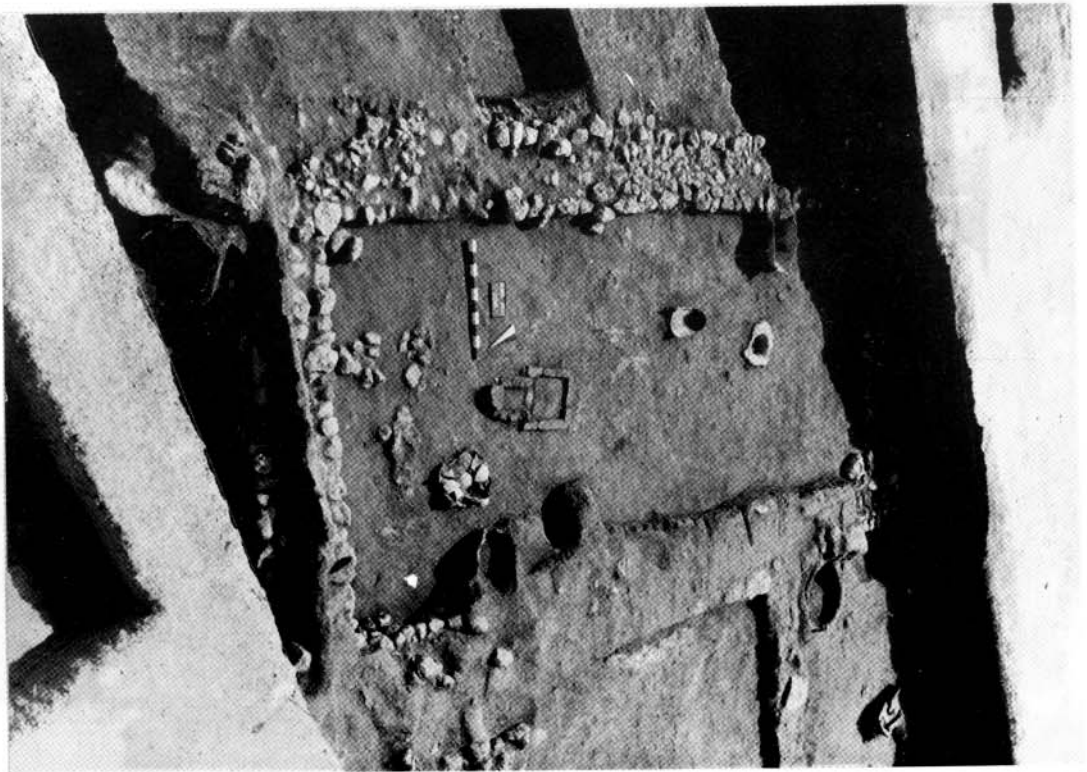
2 Wall 15 a built against the southwestern corner of building F and a small water channel from the north



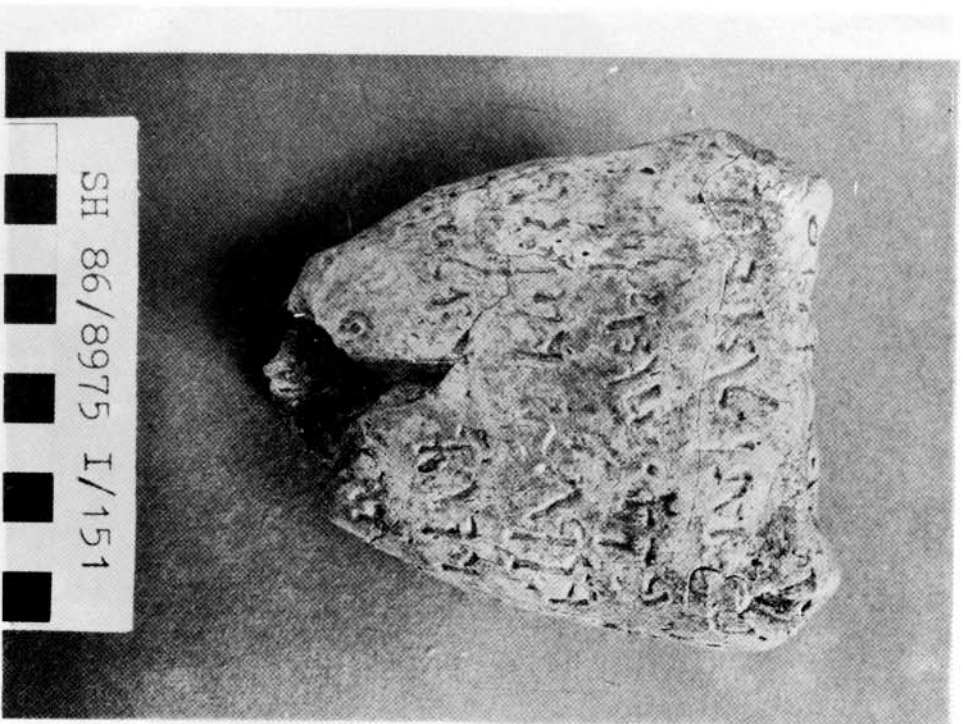
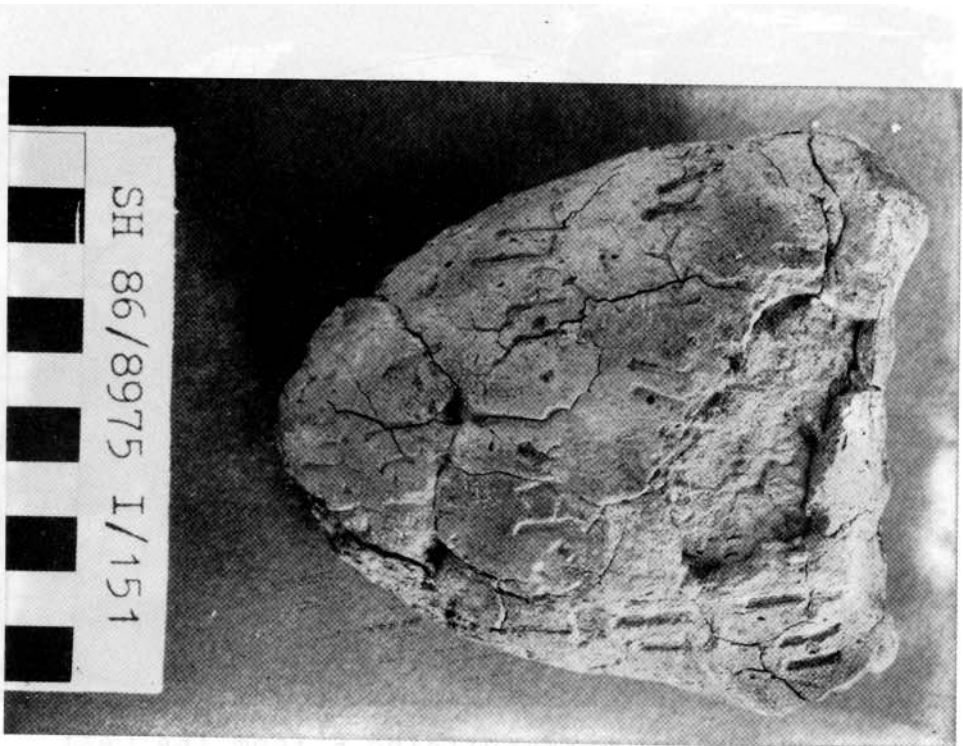
3 House 1 from the west



Room W of the northern extension of Building F
from the north

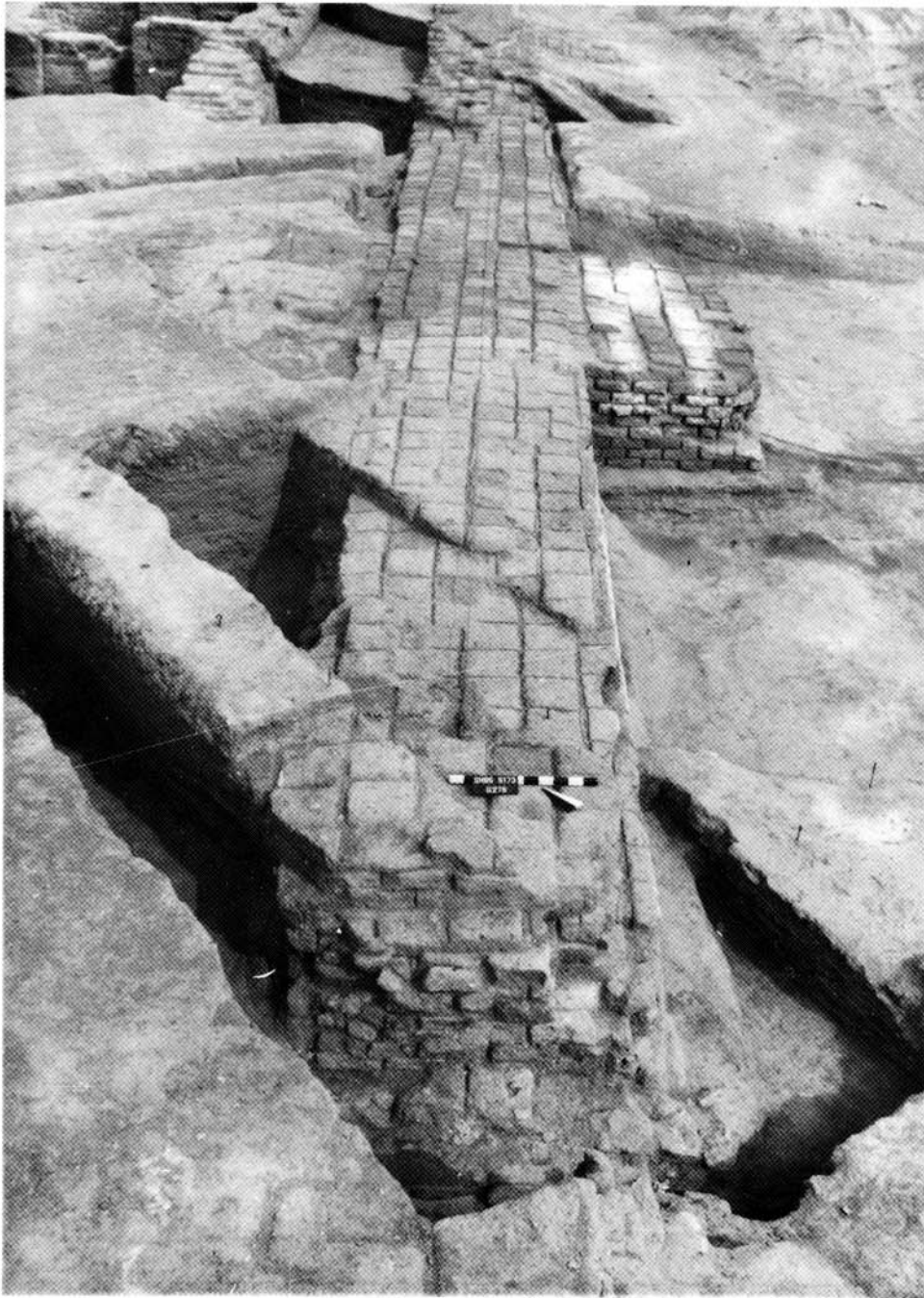


Room AA of house I from the north

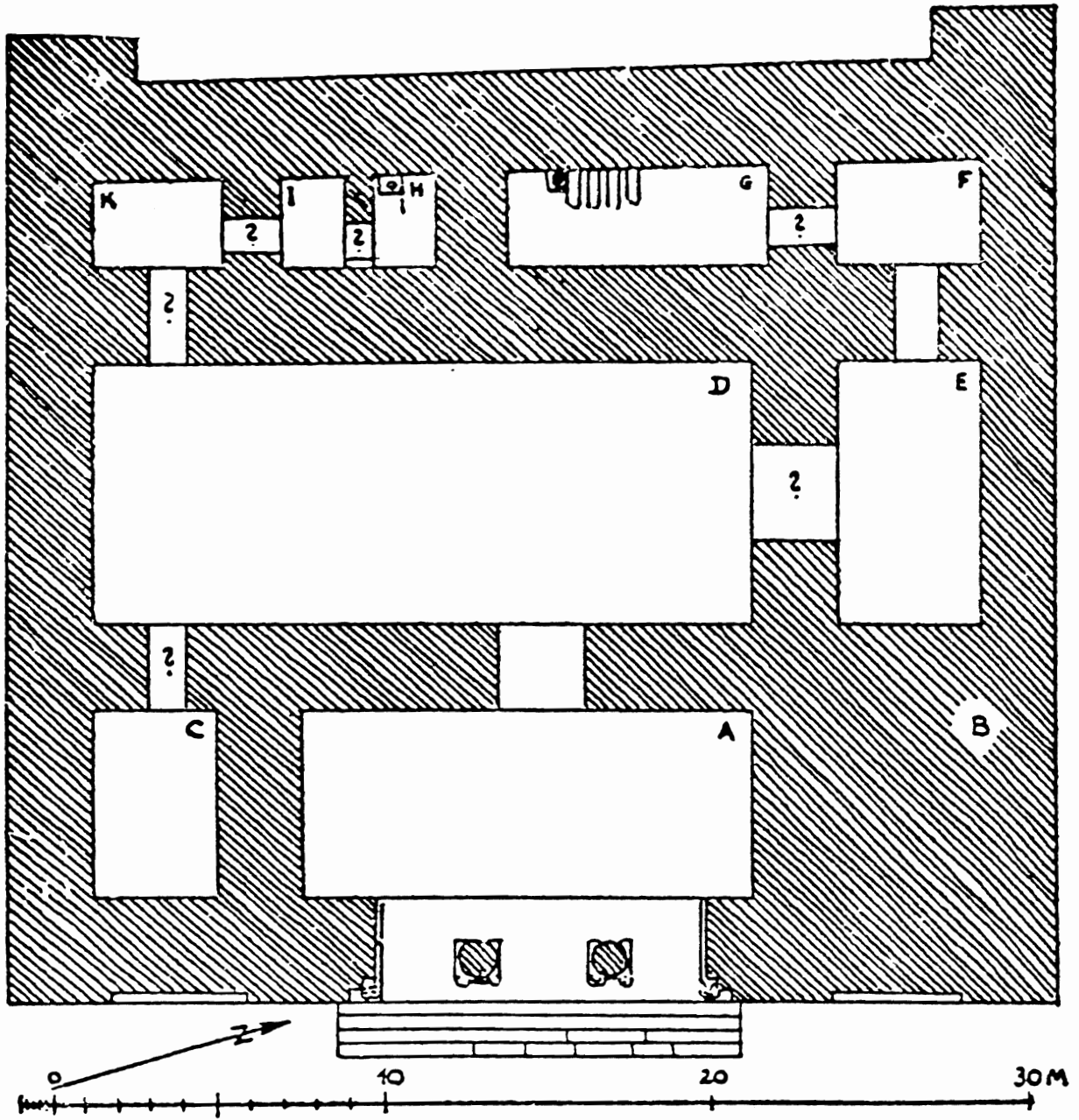


8 Heart-shaped clay bullae with Aramaic inscription, found in room B, building F, phase 2 (Foto: U. Rauser)

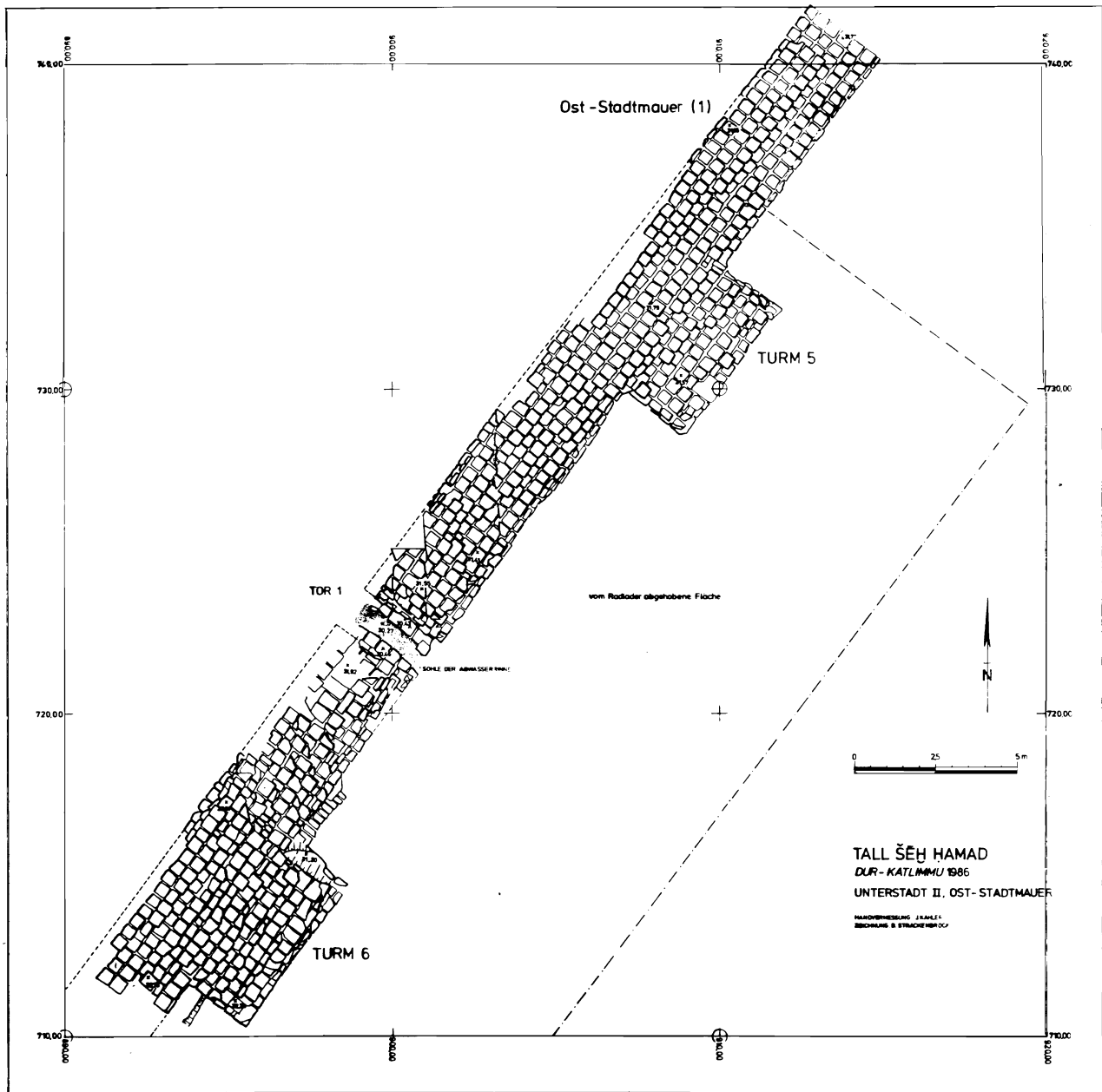
Room B of building F from the 6221



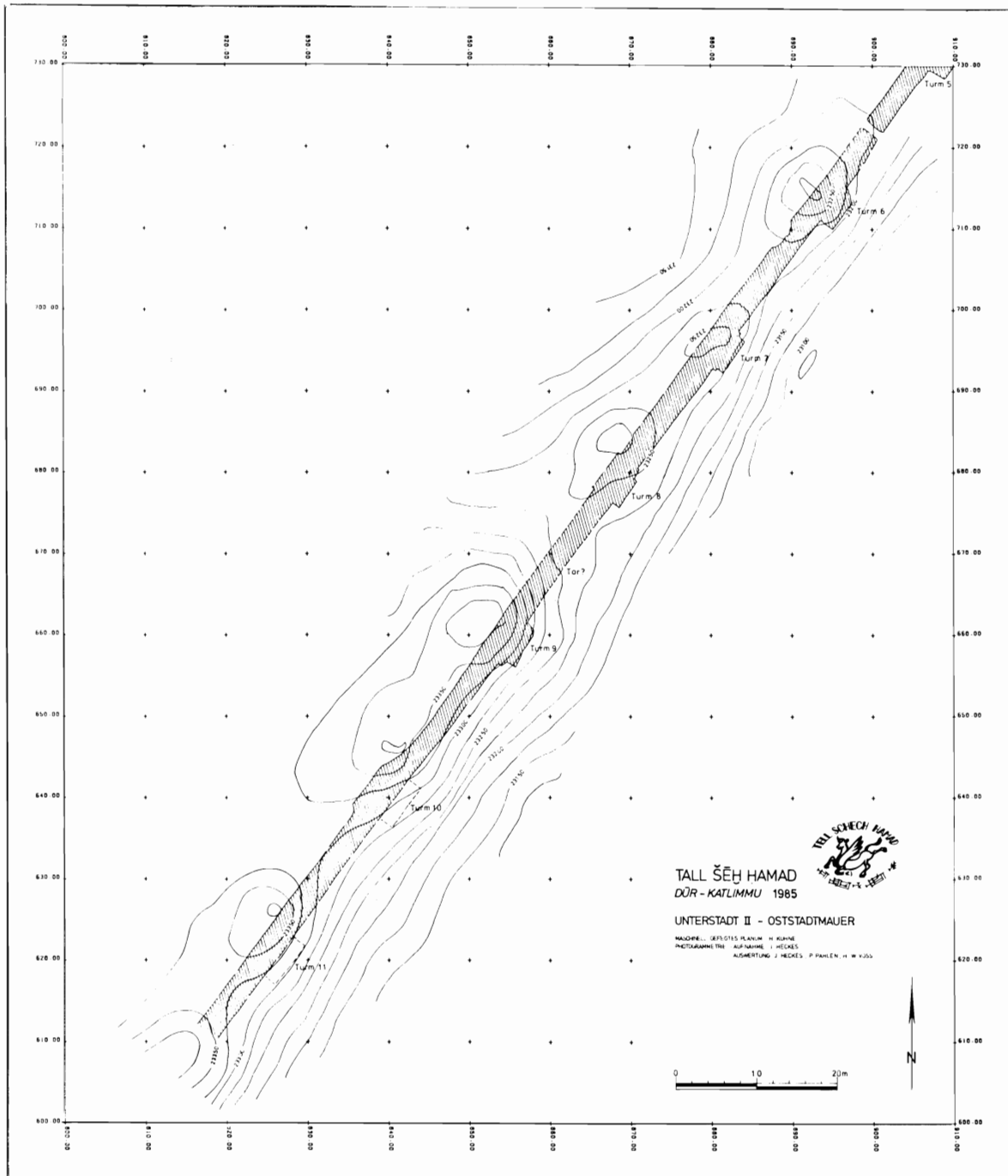
12 Eastern city wall, entrance 1 and bastion 5, from the south



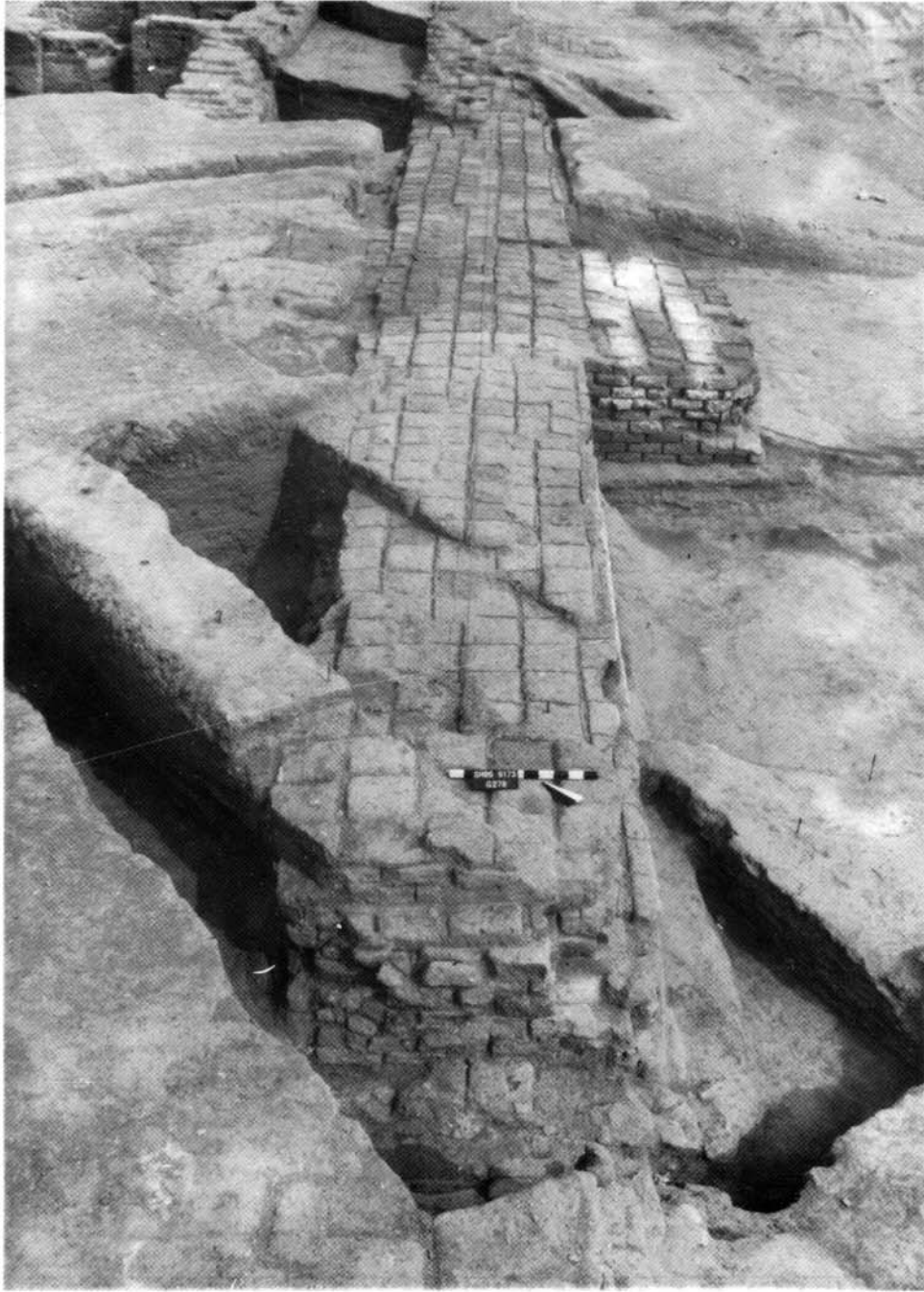
9 Schematic plan of Hilani III in Sendschirli



10 Plan of eastern city wall between bastion 5 and 6



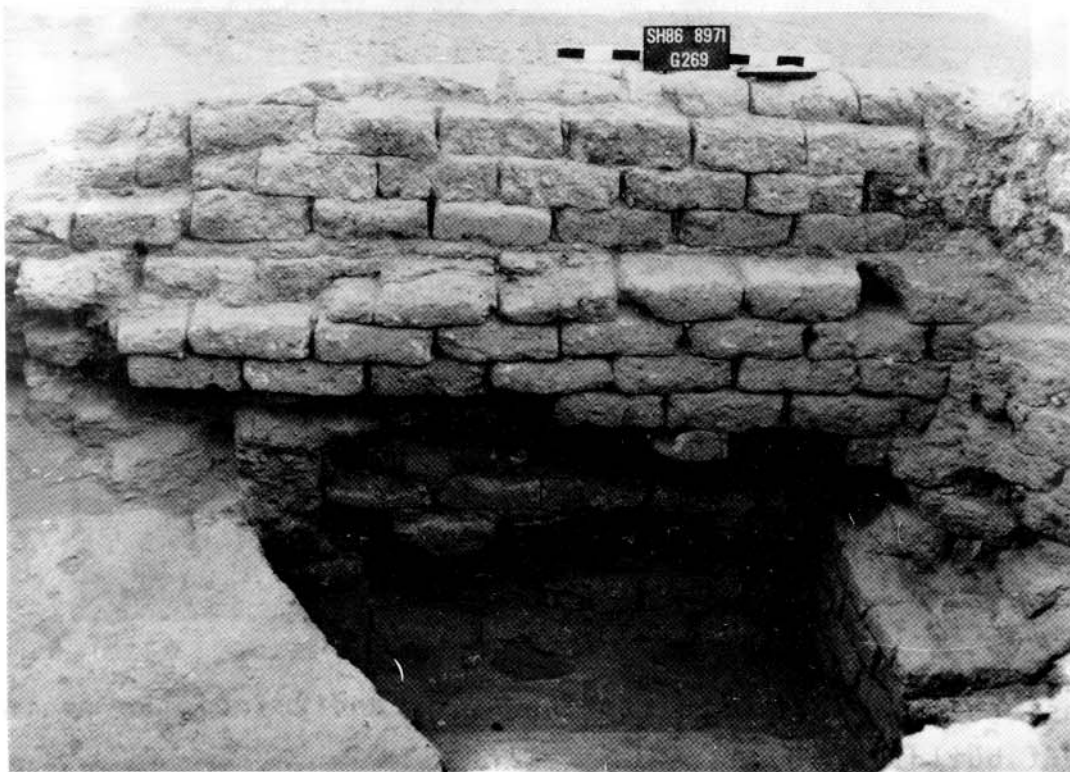
11 Schematic plan of eastern city wall between bations 6 and 11



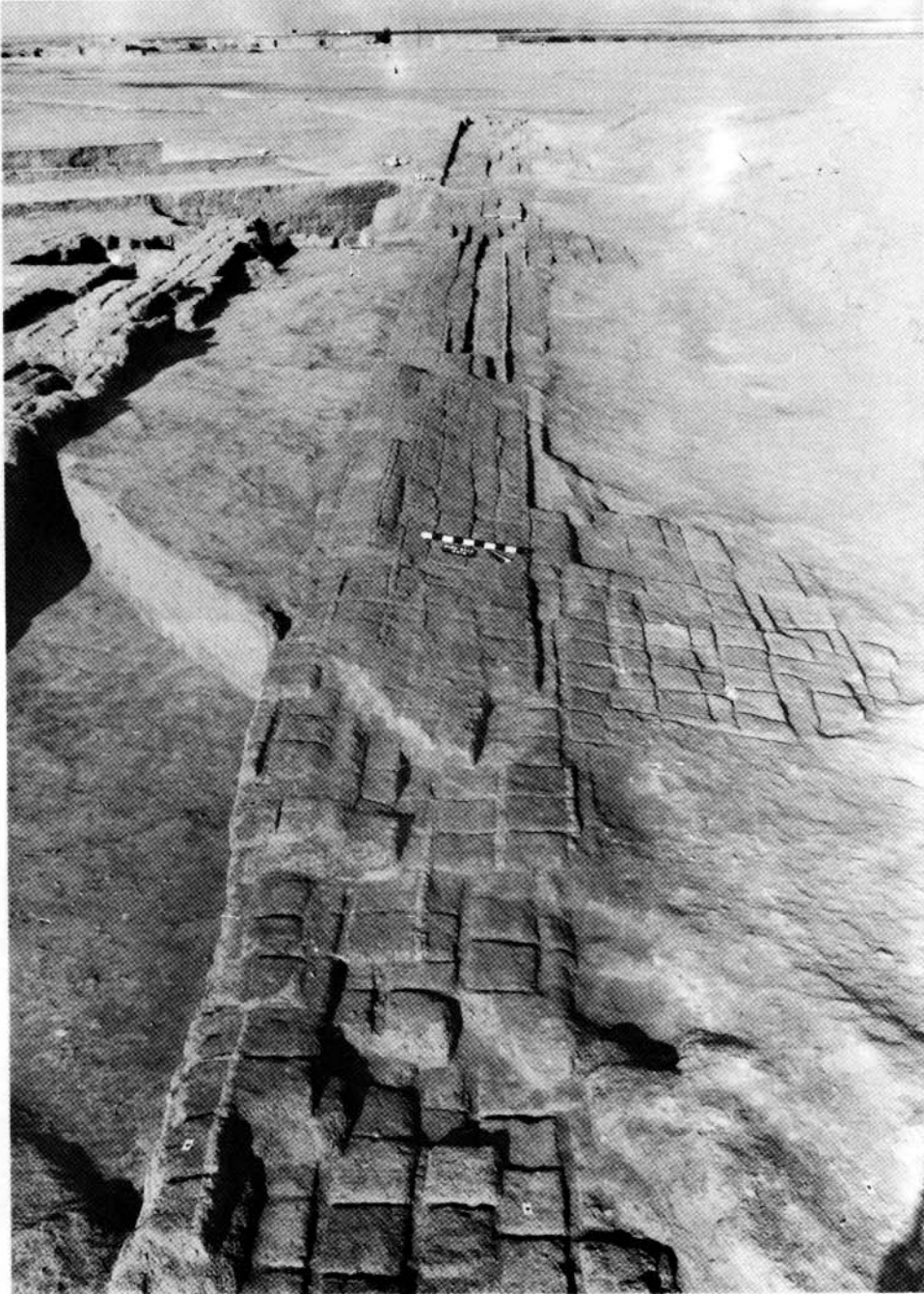
12 Eastern city wall, entrance 1 and bastion 5, from the south



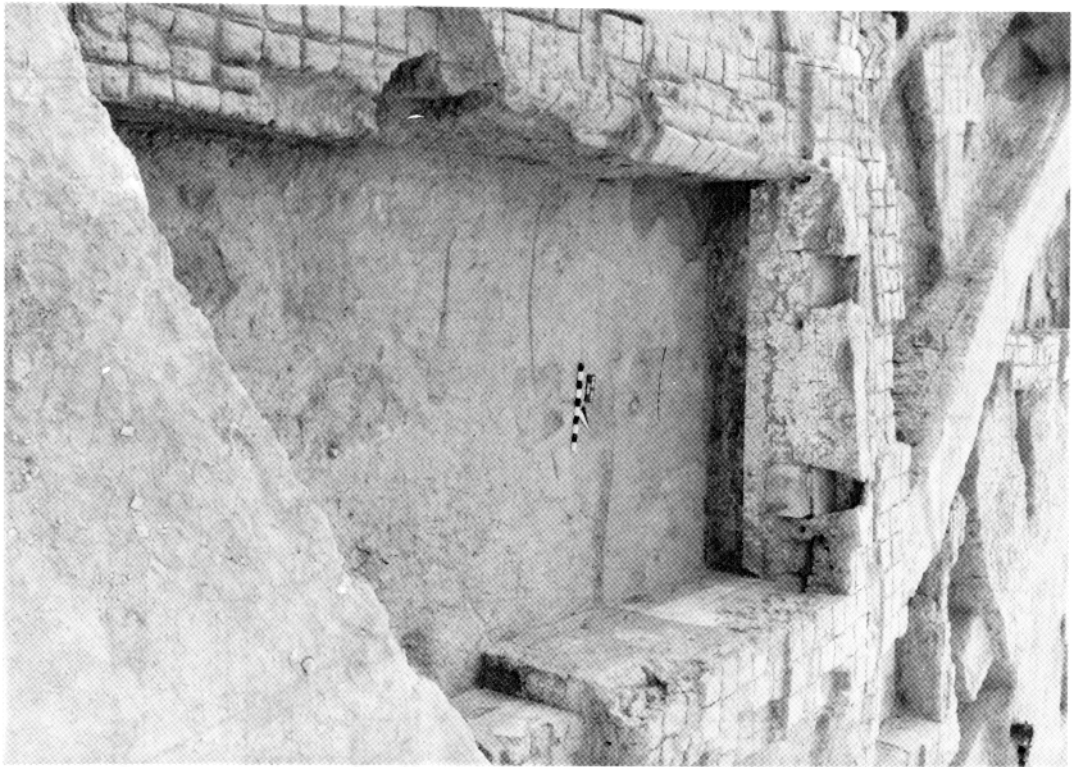
13 Eastern city wall, entrance 1 from the east



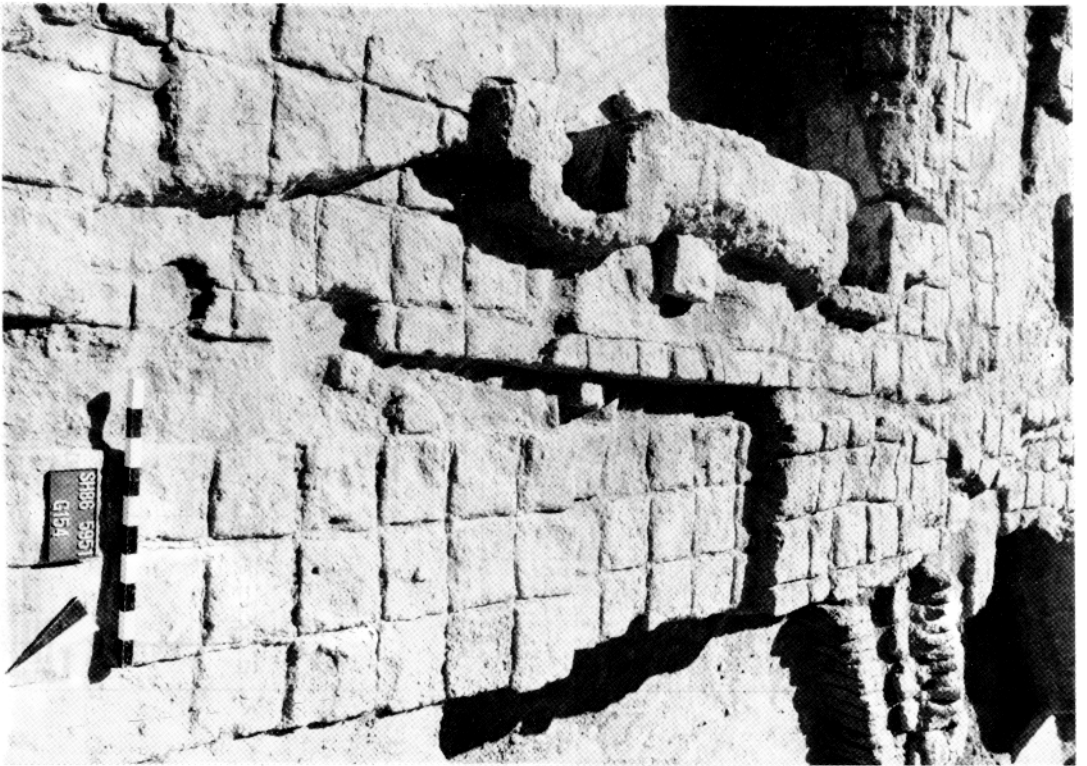
14 Eastern city wall, inner facade with older wall from the west



15 Eastern city wall with bastion 4, 3, and **2** from the south; on the left building F



17 Room B with wall paintings partly in situ
 2 from the east



18 Double wall no. 16 with the two niches of
 room B from the north

Maßstab 1:100

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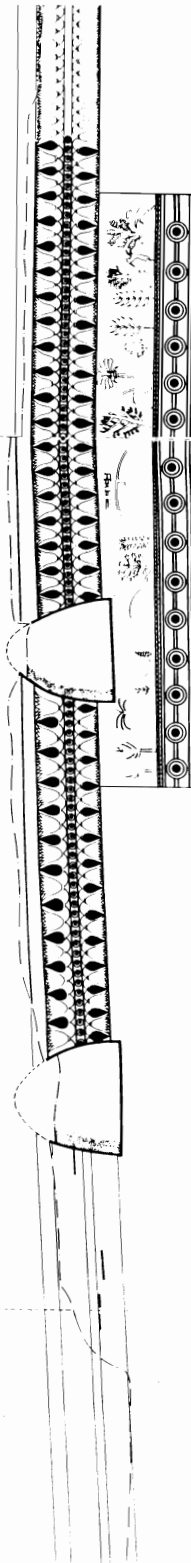
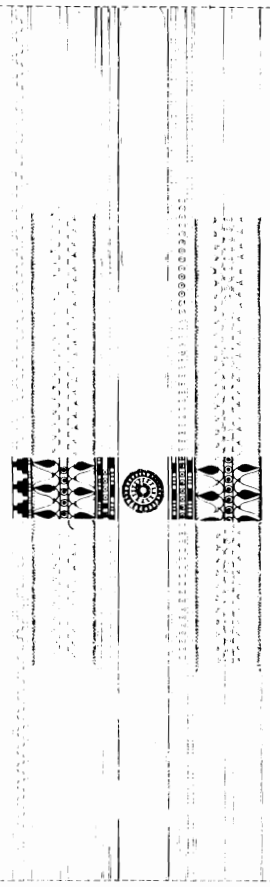
Maßstab 1:100

TALL ŠEĀH HAMAD
 DÜR-KATLIMMU 1986
 GEBÄUDE G. RAUM B

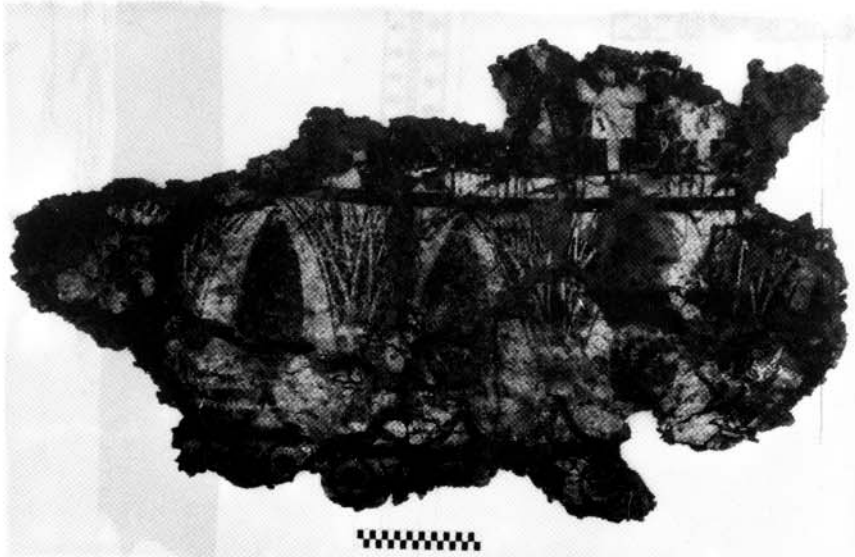
TATSÄCHLICHE UND REKONSTRUIERTE
 WANDMALEREI AN DEN MAUERN 16.118

MASSIV: 1. Entwurf: G. Schumacher
 REKONSTRUKTION: H. Müller
 ARCHITECTUR: G. Schumacher

0 5 10 Meter



19. Tentative reconstruction of wall painting in Eisen 2



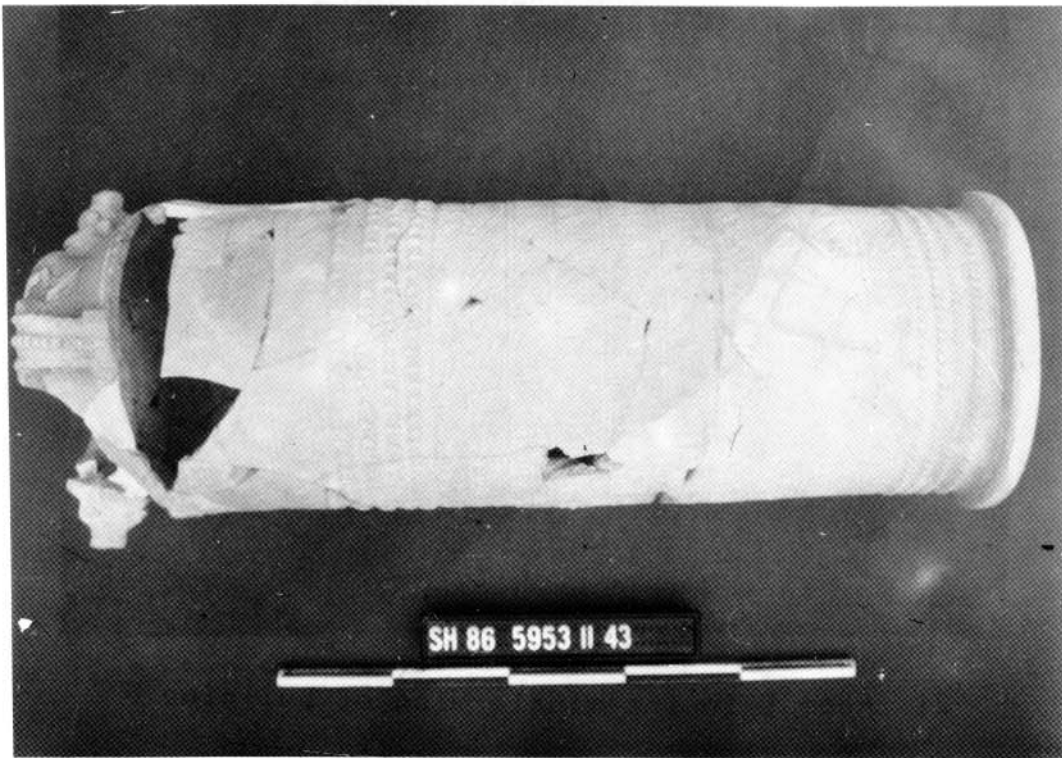
20 Fragments of broken down wall painting in the fill of room B above floor



21 Room D in the middle wing of building G



22 Broken pottery in situ in room D



23 Pot-stand with incised wavy lines and bull protoms from room D

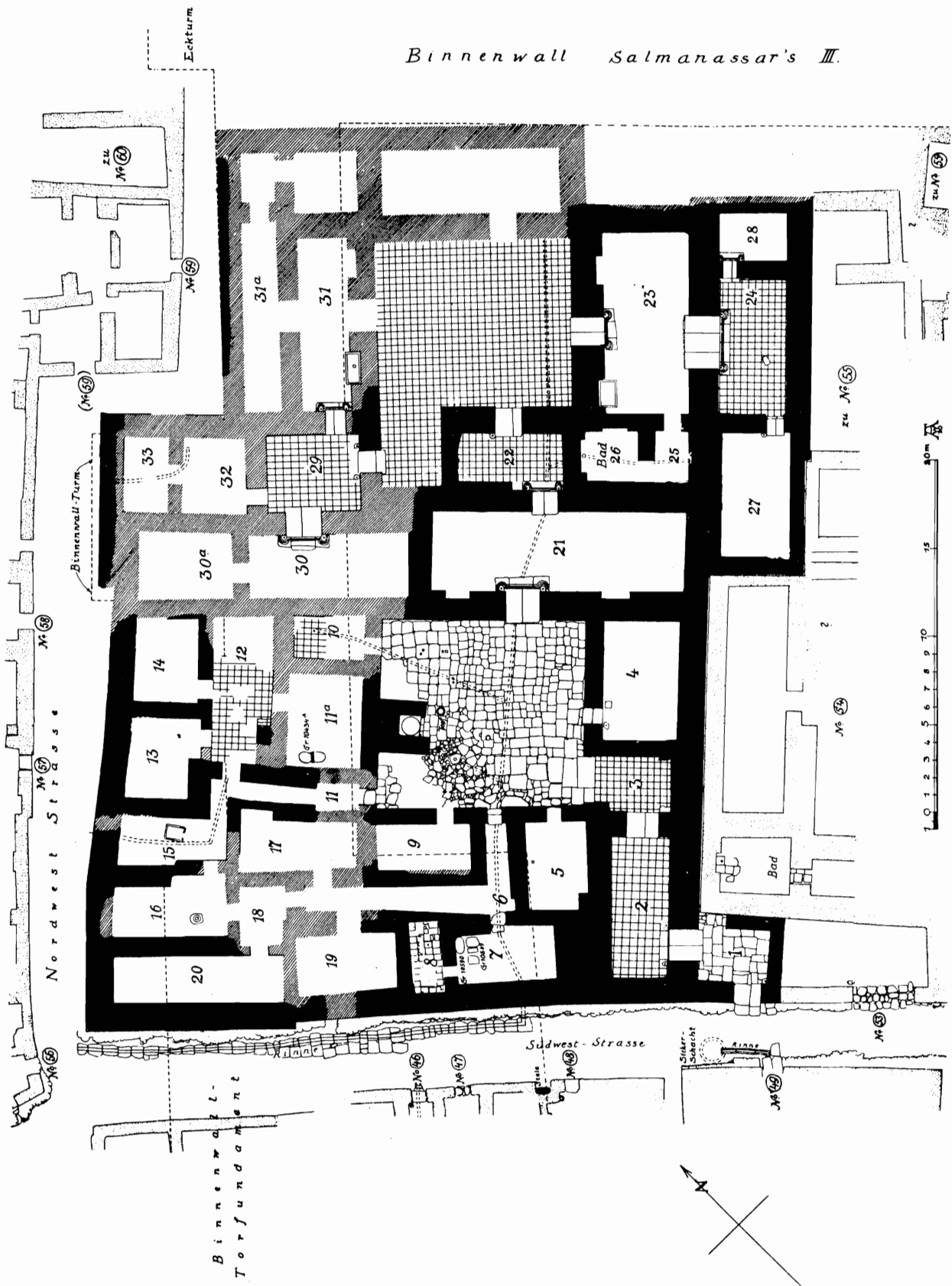


24 Rooms S and R in the middle wing of building G from the south



25 Room G, building G, from the west

Binnenwall Salmanassar's III.



26 Schematic plan of the "Große Haus" from Assur