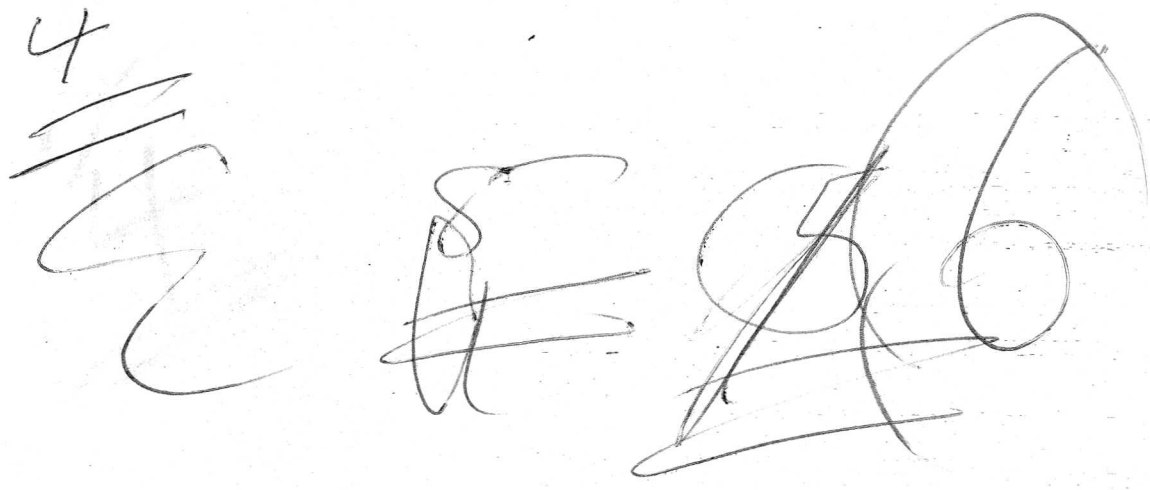


4



TELL ES-SAWWAN
Fifth Season's Excavations (Winter 1967-1968)

Interim Report

By
Behnam Abu Al-Soof, Ph. D.
Director of Archaeological Exploration

I. The fifth season's operations at Tell es-Sawwan began on November 25th, 1967 and continued until January 25th, 1968. The writer was field director, assistant archaeologists were Shah es-Siwani, B.A. Ghanim Wahidah, B.A., and Walid Yasin, B.A. Photographs of the excavations were taken as usual by Antran Evan, chief photographer of the Department. Isa Toma was foreman and the late Mohammed el-Hamidha, assisted, as he always did, with surveying and architectural planning. His untimely death, during the sixth season, was a loss to our Department, and a source of sorrow to those with whom he has collaborated for many years.

The aim of the fifth season was to complete the excavation of Level III with its two architectural phases (A and

B), especially the area within the enclosure and the defensive ditch on Mound B. The work of the fourth season¹ had uncovered, in addition to the remaining parts of Level IV, six T-shaped buildings (Buildings 2, 4-8) belonging to Level III proper².

II. Excavations in the eastern part of Mound B produced some interesting remains.

Building 13 was located near the northern corner of Mound B, and showed the same architectural characteristics as the majority of Level III buildings (i.e. T-shaped plan)³. Building 13 passed, like the others, through both phases of Level III. Its bottom phase (Phase A) consists of large rectangular rooms, altered as usual during the upper phase (Phase B) into small compart-

(1) cf. Sumer vol. XXIV, 1968, pp. 3-15.
(2) Actually what was uncovered of these six buildings consisted mainly of the

lines of their outer walls together with their upper architectural phase.

(3) cf. pls. I; VIII figs. 1-2; and XIV.

ments used as granaries⁴.

Buildings 8 and 9 were completely excavated; 8 had the usual T-shaped plan, but 9 was irregular, consisting of three small rooms (Nos. 425-427) built during Phase B and used from the beginning as a store-house⁵.

Building 11, adjacent to 13 on the west, which was partly excavated during the first and second seasons, showed as a result of the fifth season's excavation, three phases of occupation. The foundation phase contemporary with the beginning of Level III (IIIA); the second phase was contemporary with the gypsum (juss) floor, partition and staircases which are characteristic of Level IIIB; the third phase survived throughout the entire period of Level IV and perhaps into most of Level V⁶.

A number of open spaces, not less than three, were exposed in the eastern part of Mound B. Such open areas were used collectively by the occupants of Level III⁷. Eight to ten bread ovens were located at the southern side of open space 428 (cf. pl. IX, fig. 2). Three large circular clay pottery-kilns were located at both eastern and western ends of open space 470⁸. Kiln no. 1 was built inside a small mud-brick structure (no. 461) situated at the western end of open space 470; kiln no. 2 was found below no. 1 and hence was earlier in date; kiln no. 3 was located 7 m. to the east of kilns 1 and 2 at the very eastern end of open space 470. The diameter of each kiln was nearly 2 m.; lumps of clay were used for the construction of all three kilns. Their walls and floors were thickly

plastered with clay; the extant height of their walls did not exceed 25 cm. Traces of constant firing were everywhere in all three kilns; an opening situated close to the floor in each case must have been used for both fuel and vessels.

Against one wall of most Level IIIB buildings were gypsum (juss) staircases⁹ leading up to the tops of these structures where the granaries were. A number of pebble-laid lanes were uncovered¹⁰; one of them (cf. pl. XI, figs. 1-2) showed three phases of pebble-pavements.

III. Work at the western part of Mound B revealed very little architectural remains belonging to Level III proper. Parts of three walls together with patches of plastered floors were found at the western end of Level III. Other archaeological materials occurring nearby were sherds of various types of Samarra pottery, a pebble-stone door socket, and a few celts. It has been noted earlier (first season, 1964) that the western part of Mound B was badly damaged by recent graves. Another factor which added to this destruction was a later Halaf construction whose foundations were revealed in this season, at western part of Level III.

These consisted of a large circular pebble-laid foundation 12 m. in diameter, with parts of similar foundations from a rectangular chamber attached to its eastern side; with these were found a good number of Halaf potsherds, both painted and plain. This means, perhaps, that Halaf people coming down from the north towards the latter part of the

(4) The excavation of building 13 was completed during the sixth season by Sd. Walid Yasin. Cf. Sumer, vol. XXVI, 1970.

(5) cf. pl. IX, fig. 2

(6) cf. pls. I; XV; XVI fig. 2; and XVII fig. 1.

(7) The numbers of these open spaces

on the Level III plan are: 428-429 and 470. Among the many uses of these open spaces was the keeping of the domesticated animals of the community within the settlement boundary, especially at night.

(8) cf. pls. I; VI-VII; and XII-XIII.

(9) cf. pls. IX-X; and XVIII.

(10) cf. pls. I; IX fig. 2; and X-XI.

life of the site (probably at the time of Levels IV-V) found, most probably, the western part of Mound B less populated or partly deserted, and used the space to construct their Tholos whose foundation we came across in Level III.

IV. The great number of female statuettes which occurred in the cemetery lying below Level I (bottom level) must reflect some particular religious phenomenon. Child burials especially were furnished with female statuettes in addition to the usual stone vessels. This could lead one to suggest that the figurines were substitute mothers to accompany the helpless child on its journey to the netherworld. Otherwise we could see in them evidence that Tell es-Sawwan was a centre for the worship of a female deity, during the beginning of the sixth millennium and perhaps a little earlier. In this case it may have been one of her shrines that was found among the architectural remains of Level I during the first season¹¹.

The archaeological sequence of Tell es-Sawwan, i.e. the five building levels and the cemetery below, falls into two distinct cultural phases. Levels I and II (bottom two levels) and the cemetery below show uniform cultural traits different from those in the three overlying strata (Levels III-V). Materials of both Jarmo and Hassuna types occurred in the earlier context, e.g. stone vessels, stone bracelets, stone rings and stone beads together with a crudely shaped

clay figurines (all elements of Jarmo pre-pottery phase); crude pottery, clay figurines, stone and bone artefacts, and flint and obsidian implements (features of both Jarmo-pottery and Hassuna phases). There were also in both Levels I and II some painted and painted-and-incised Hassuna standard sherds. However, all these elements in the two lowest levels and the cemetery below at Tell es-Sawwan displayed true local peculiarities. More important still were the architectural remains of the two lowest levels which were, and still are, unique to Tell es-Sawwan, being absent at both Jarmo and Hassuna and at other known sites of comparable date. The wealth of alabaster statuettes and alabaster vessels found mainly in the cemetery, and to a lesser extent in Levels I and II above is also unique to this site. Because of all this we feel justified in proposing the nomenclature "Sawwan Culture"¹² to the phase represented by Levels I-II at Tell es-Sawwan, and the cemetery below.

Levels III-V (the three upper strata) at the site fully represent the Samarra culture perhaps better than anywhere else. All types of Samarra pottery were present; in addition there were architectural remains (T-shaped buildings) again unique, so far, to Tell es-Sawwan.

V. Notes on the illustrations¹²
Plate I. Ground plan of northern corner of Level III (Mound B) showing details of Building 11 and 13, kilns 1 and 2, and parts of pebble-laid lanes.

(11) cf. Sumer, vol. XXI, 1965, p. 20; pls. XII fig. 35, and XIII. For possible interpretations of "Mother Goddess" figurines, cf. P.J. Ucko (1968) "Anthropomorphic Figurines", especially pp. 409-426.

(12) Two Soviet colleagues, Dr. Nicolai Merpert and Dr. Nicolai Bader, who were our guests for part of the season, were responsible for plans I-VII. Both are now members of the Yarim Tepe expedition. We are grateful to them for their help.

Plate II. Section A-B, South-west-North-east.

Plate III. Section C-D, north-west-south-east.

Plate IV. Section E-F, east-west.

Plate V. Kiln 1.

Plate VI-VII. Sections of (pottery) kiln 1.

Plate VIII.

1. Taken from the north, showing parts of Buildings 11 and 13 and the gypsum stairway-approach between.

2. Taken from the north, showing details of Buildings 11 and 13.

3. Details of gypsum staircase and its approach.

Plate IX.

1. Gypsum staircase attached to Building 5, taken from the west.

2. Gypsum saircase at Building 9, taken from the north.

Plate X.

1. Gypsum stairs and a pebble-laid lane, taken from the west.

2. Pebble-laid lane, taken from the east.

Plate XI.

1. Three layers of a pebble-laid lane in Level III, taken from the east.

2. Details of the same pebble-laid lane.

Plate XII.

1.2 Remains of kiln no. 1.

3. Remains of kiln no. 3.

Plate XIII.

1-2. Details of kiln no. 1.

Plate XIV.

1. Building 13, taken from the north-east.

2. Granaries in Building 13.

Plate XV.

1-2. Clay ovens in Building 11.

Plate XVI.

1. A granary in Building 5.

2. A granary in Building 11.

Plate XVII.

1. Circular gypsum granary in Building 11 (third stage of Building 11).

2. Gypsum granary in Building 5.

Plate XVIII.

1. Examples of ground-stone tools: querns, a pestle, pounders or snig-bullets, and a net-weight (or a loom-weight) found in various parts of Level III excavated this season.

2. An example of an infant burial in gypsum tray.

Plate XIX.

1. A Samarra painted jar, rim dia. 11.5 cm., base dia. 7 cm., Height 19 cm. IM 71668. Room 436, Level IIIB.

2. Incomplete plain Samarra vessels.

Plate XX.

1. Top left: A gypsum cone, perhaps a gaming piece, Height 4 cm. Base dia. 6.5 cm. IM 71659. In fill of area 463, Level III.

Top right: A gypsum polisher, dia. 5 cm., Height 1.5 cm., IM 71663. In fill of lane 391, Level III.

Second row (left to right):

Stone polishers:

a. dia. 5 cm., Height 1.5 cm., IM 71658. In fill of room 474 Level III.

b. dia. 6.5 cm., Height 1.5 cm., IM 71657. In fill of room 446 Level III.

Third row (left to right):

Stone net-weights (or loom-weights):

a. unprovenanced.

b. dia. 9 cm. IM 71673.

Fill of room 422, Level IIIA.

c. dia. 4 cm. IM 71672. On floor of room 435, Level IIIB.

Bottom row (left to right):

Stone celts:

a. length 7.5 cm., width 3.5 cm. IM 71655. Fill of Level III.

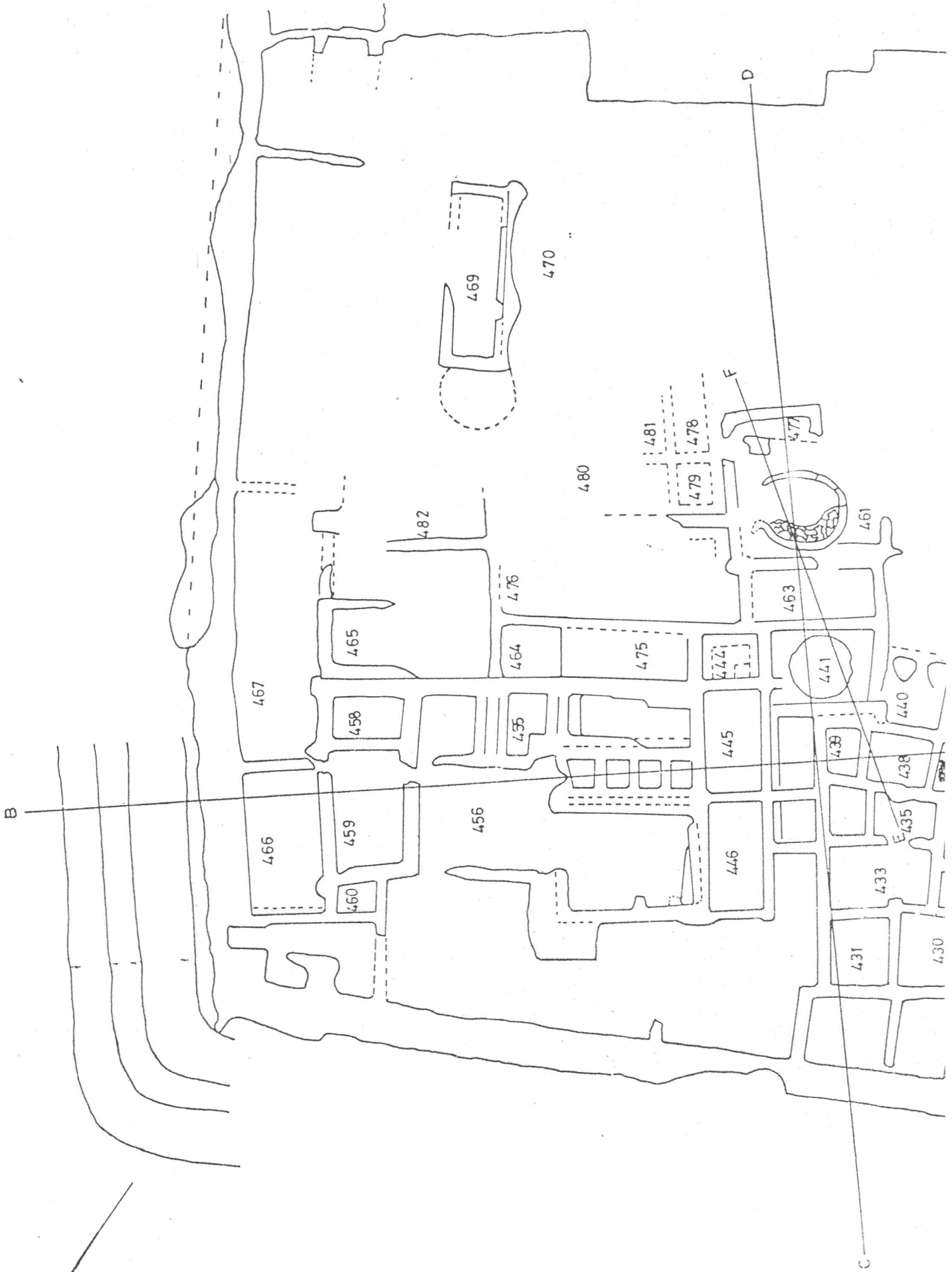
b. length 5 cm., width 3 cm. IM 71656. Fill of Level III.

c. length 6.5 cm., IM 71671. Fill of granary 451 in Building 11.

d. Broken, extant length 4 cm. Fill of room 447 in Building 11.

e. length 8.5 cm., width 3.8 cm. IM 71654. Fill of Level III.

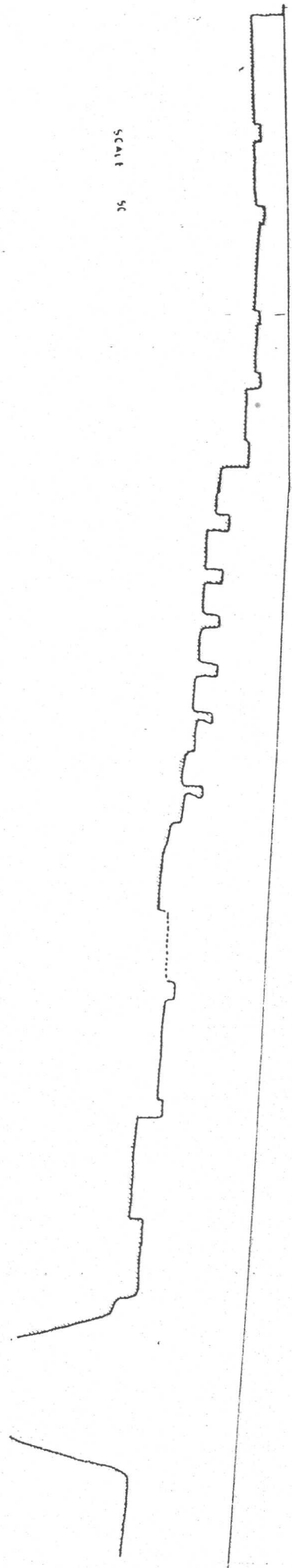
2. Top row: Four crudely-made small clay bowls, and one small crude jar. Various parts of Level III.
- Second row (left to right):
- Bone implements
- Broken spatula, extant length 6 cm. IM 71652. Fill of room 425 in Building 13, Level III B.
 - Awl, length 8 cm. IM 71651. Room 464, Level IIIA.
 - Awl, length 9 cm. Sawwan 5/604. Fill of room 452, Building 9, Level IIIB.
 - Awl, length 8.5 cm. IM 71650. Fill of area 470.
 - Awl, length 9 cm. Sawwan 5/624. Fill of room 447.
 - Broken needle, extant length 7 cm. IM 71649. Fill of room 425, Building 9 Level IIIB.
- Bottom row (left to right):
- Clay spindle-whorl, dia. 4 cm., Height 3 cm. IM 71660. Fill of area 462.
 - Broken bone needle, extant length 8 cm. In fill of Level III.
- Small perforated clay bead, length 2.5 cm. On floor of 347, Building 2 Level III.
 - Small perforated stone bead, dia. 1.3 cm. IM 71665. Room 410.
 - Small black stone stamp seal with a perforated lug, width 1.3 cm. IM 71643. Fill of room 456, Level IIIA.
- Plate XXI.
- A small alabaster statuette, height 5.2 cm., width at shoulder 2.5 cm. IM 71641. Lower fill of area 429, near to eastern wall of Building 8.
 - A hollowed alabaster object, tapering towards a knob at the base. height 12 cm., rim dia. 3 cm. IM 71642. Found at the very western end of Level III (Mound B), in fill; Such objects were usually found among grave furnishings in the cemetery below Level I; its presence here is perhaps accidental, caused by later destruction of the site.



Pl. II

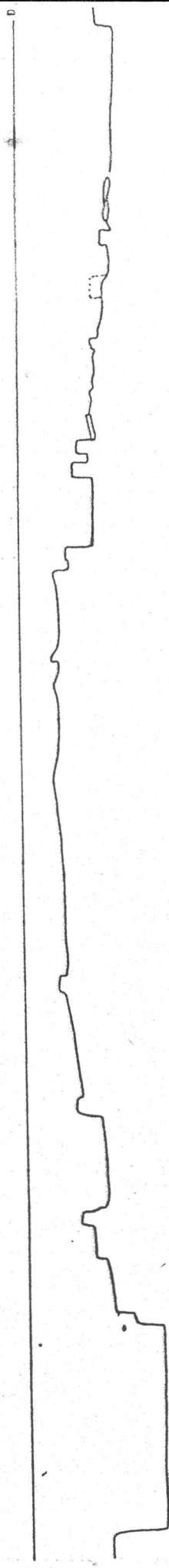
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PL. III

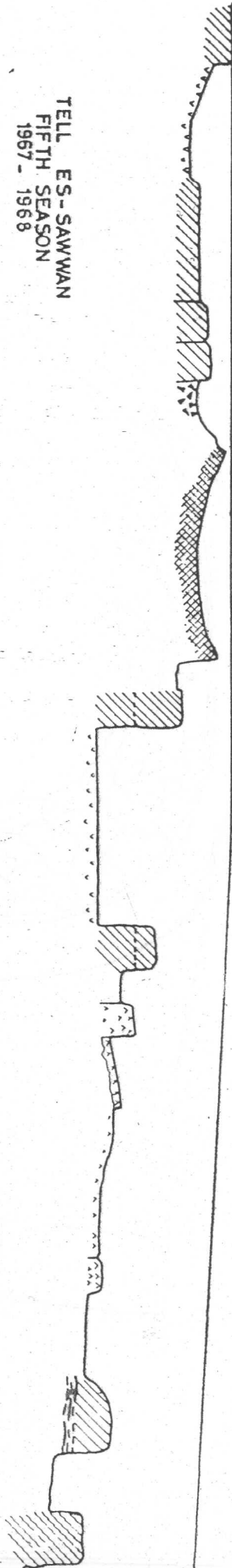
SECTION C · D



SCALE 1 50

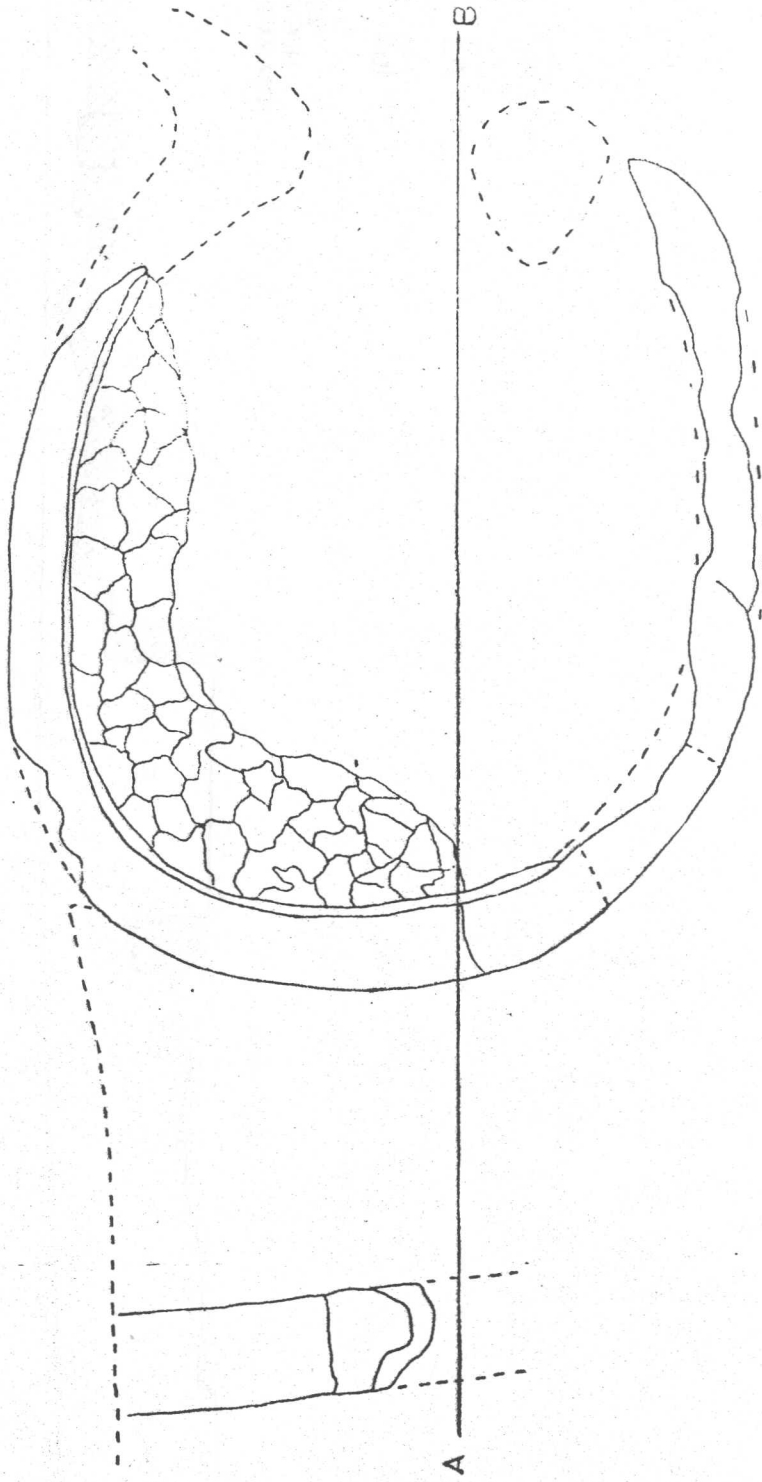
TELL ES-SAWWAN
FIFTH SEASON
1967-1968

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--------|
|  | MUD-
BRICK WALLS |  | MILN |
|  | MUD FLOOR |  | DEBRIS |
|  | GYPSUM GUSSE |  | ASHES |
- SCALE 1 : 20



PL. V

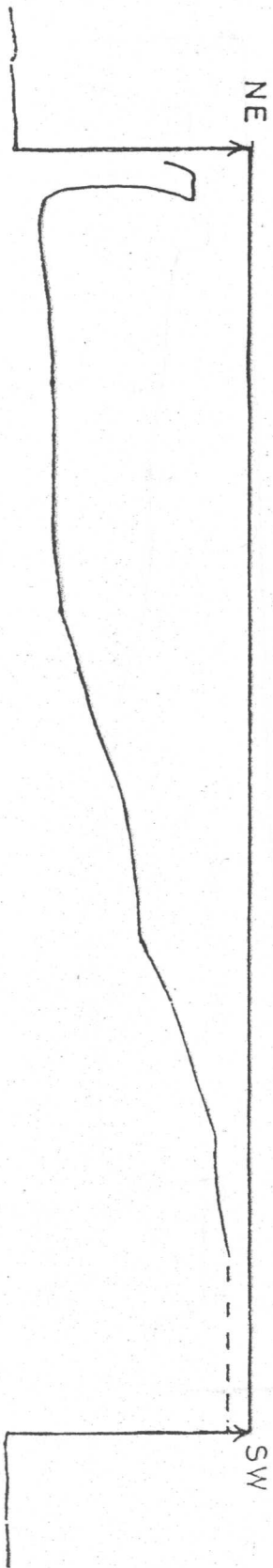
POTTERY KILN



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PL. VI

POTTERY KILN
SECTION 1

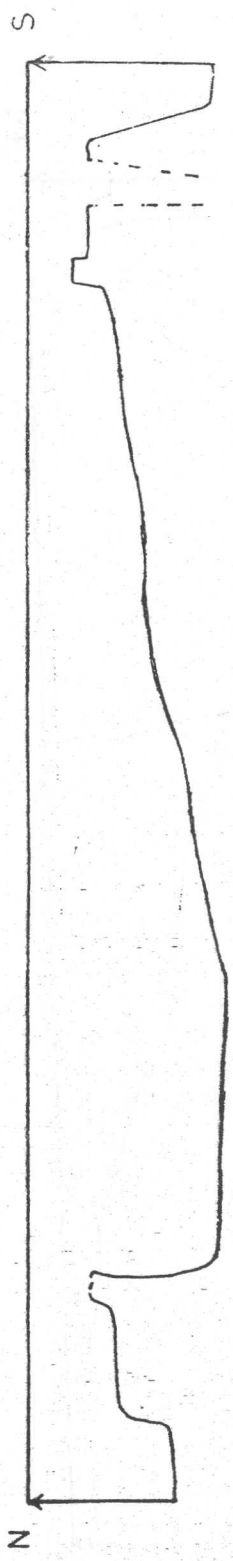


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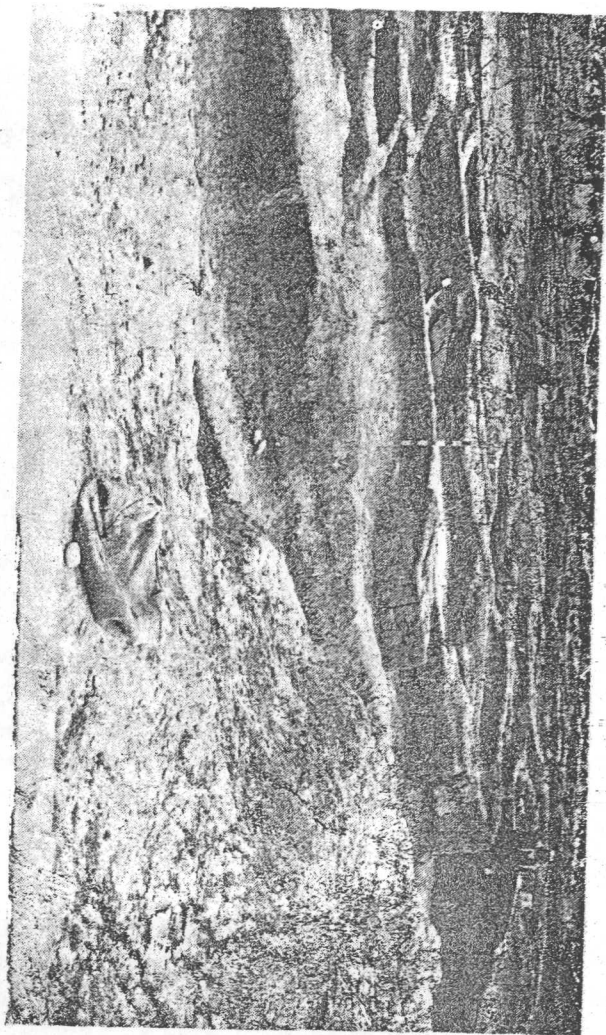
PL. VII

POTTERY KILN

SECTION 2



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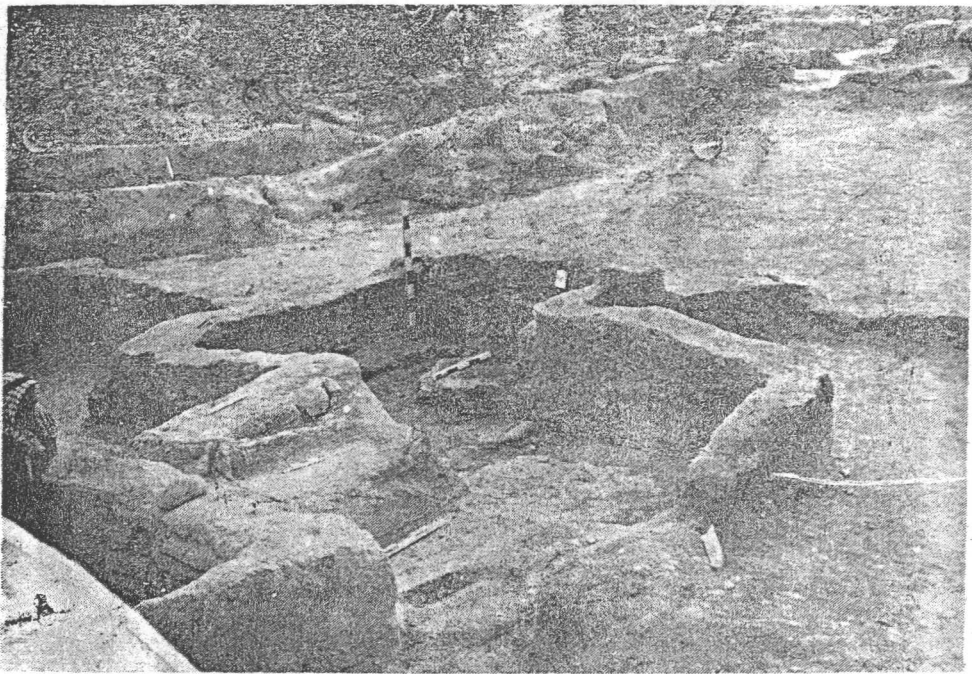
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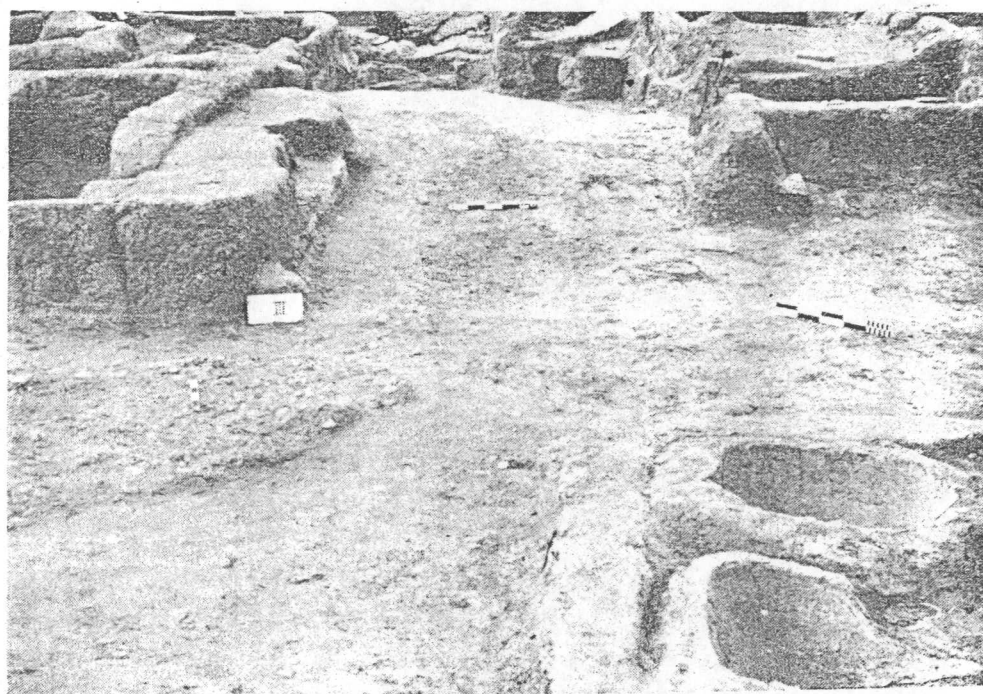
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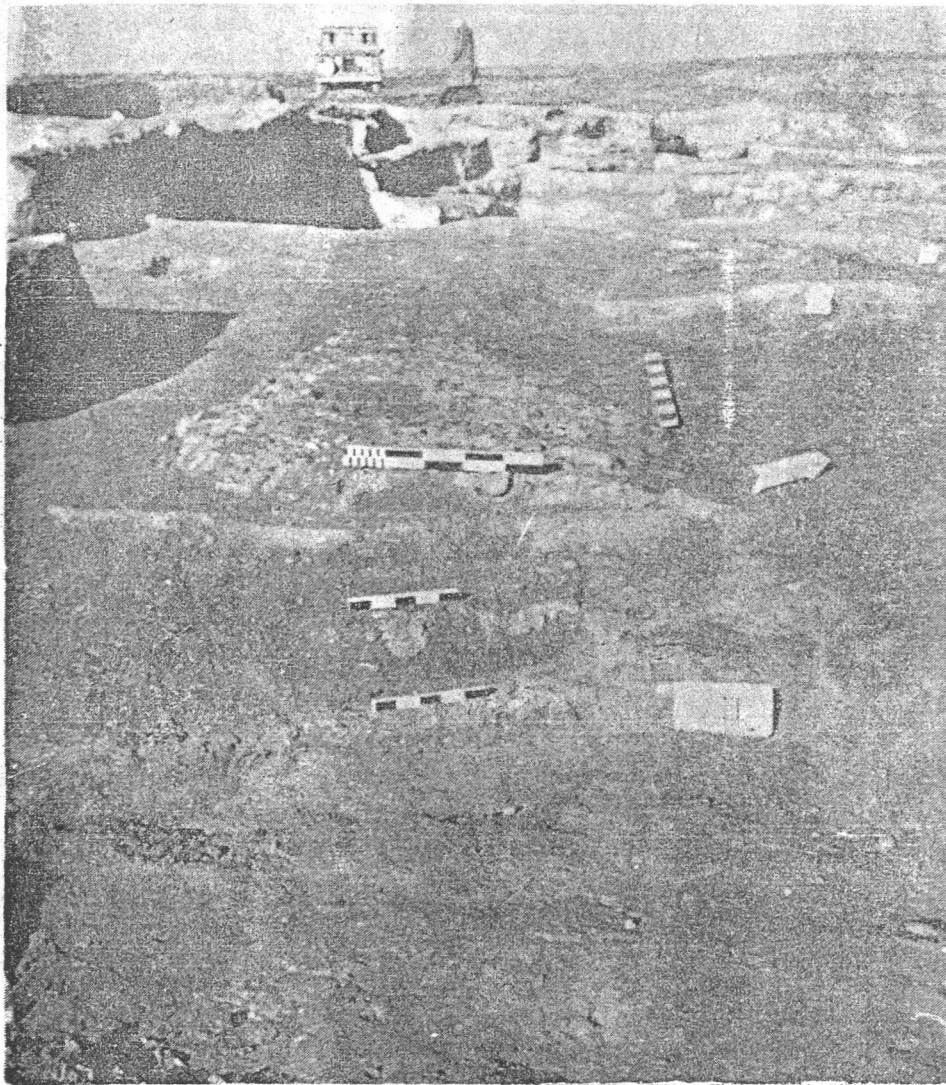
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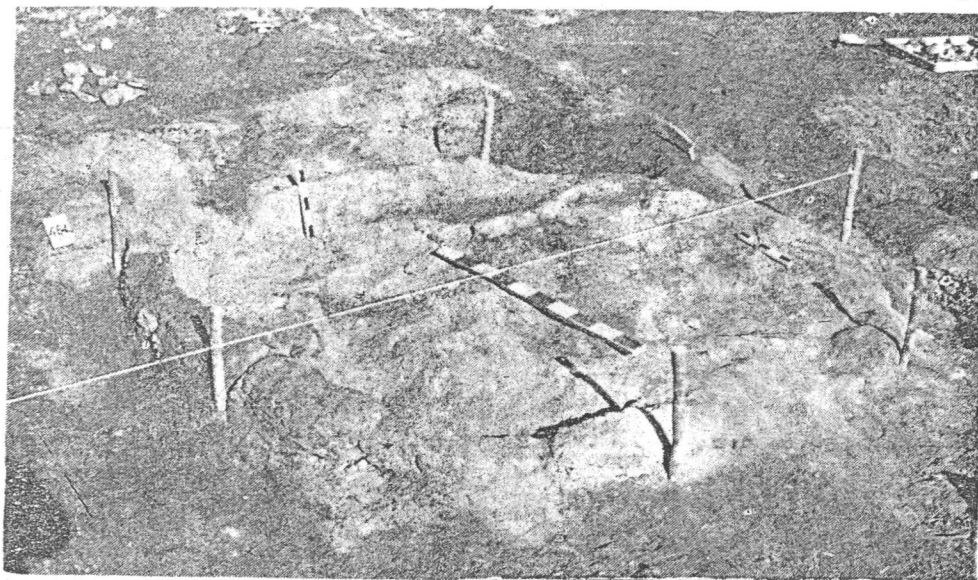
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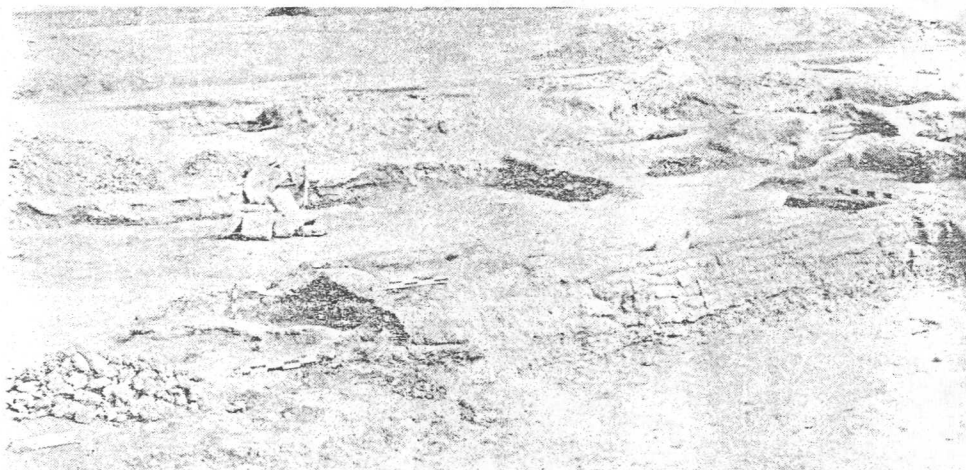
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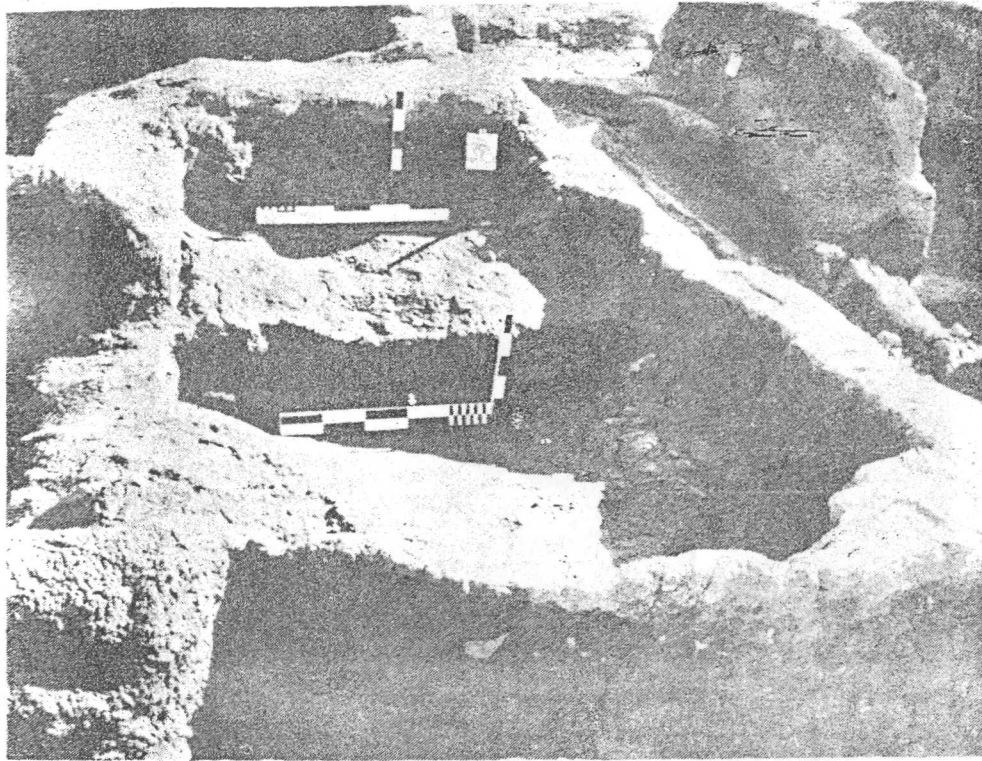
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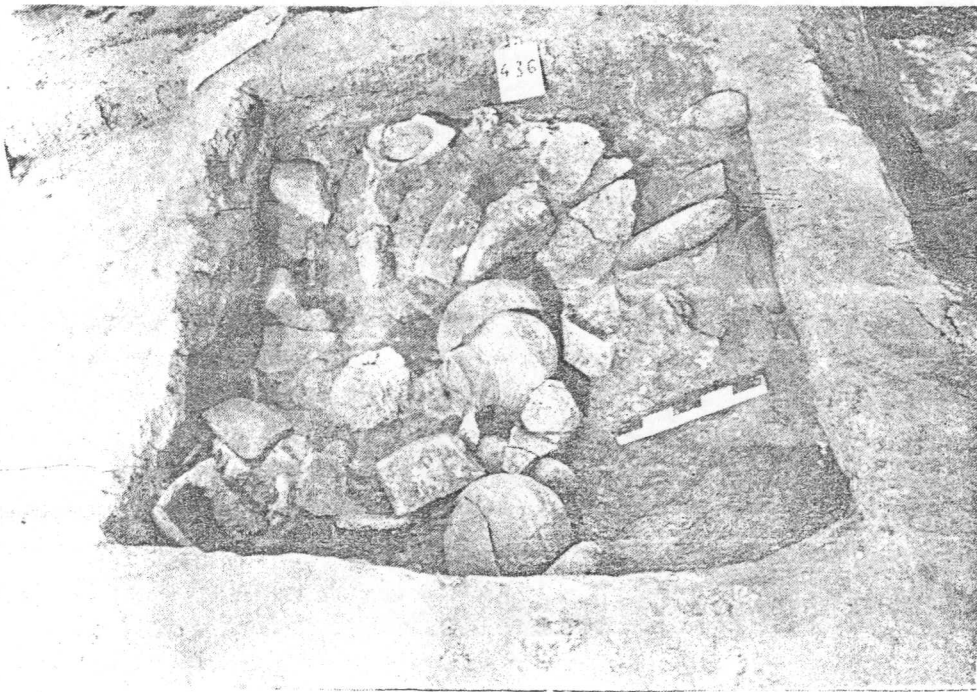
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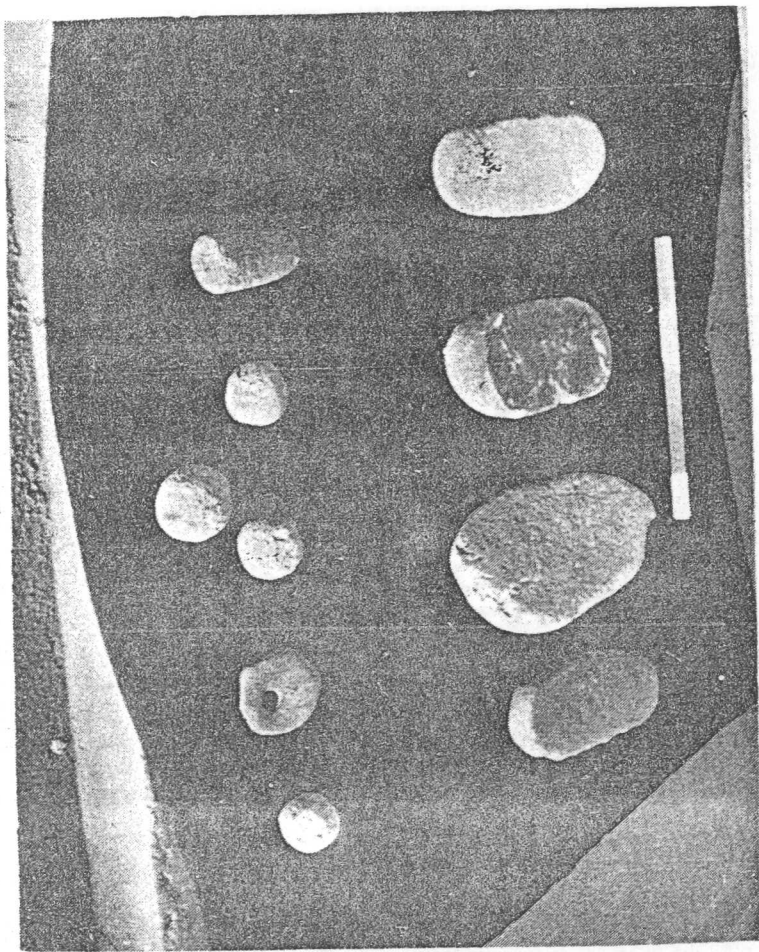
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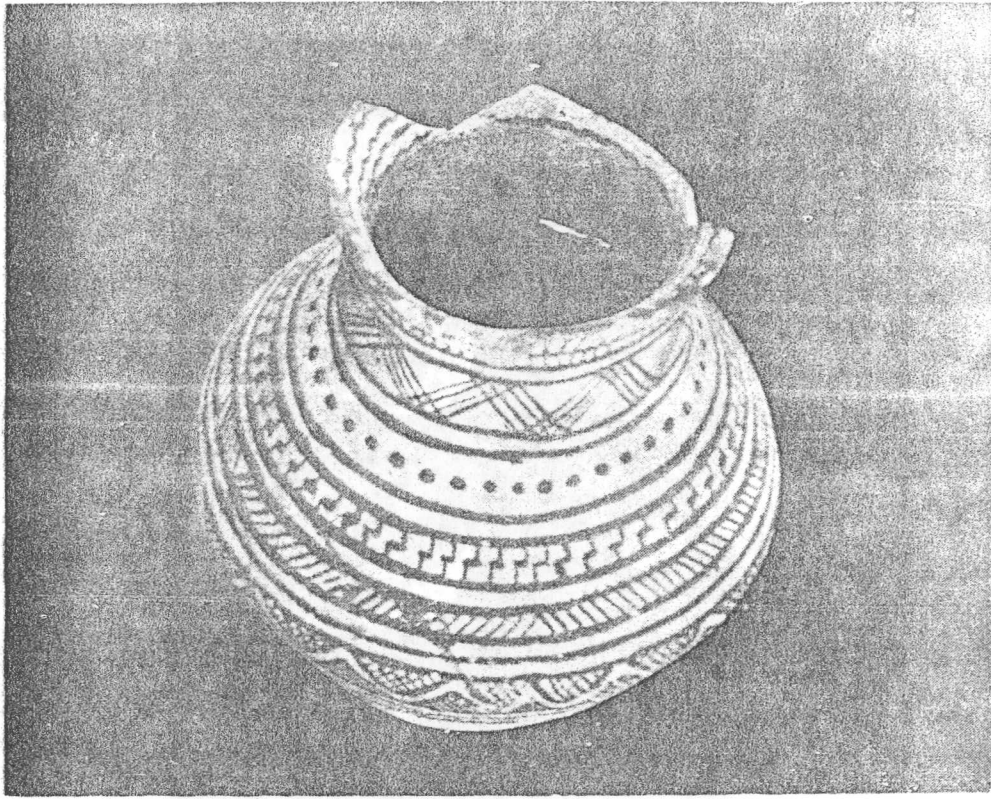


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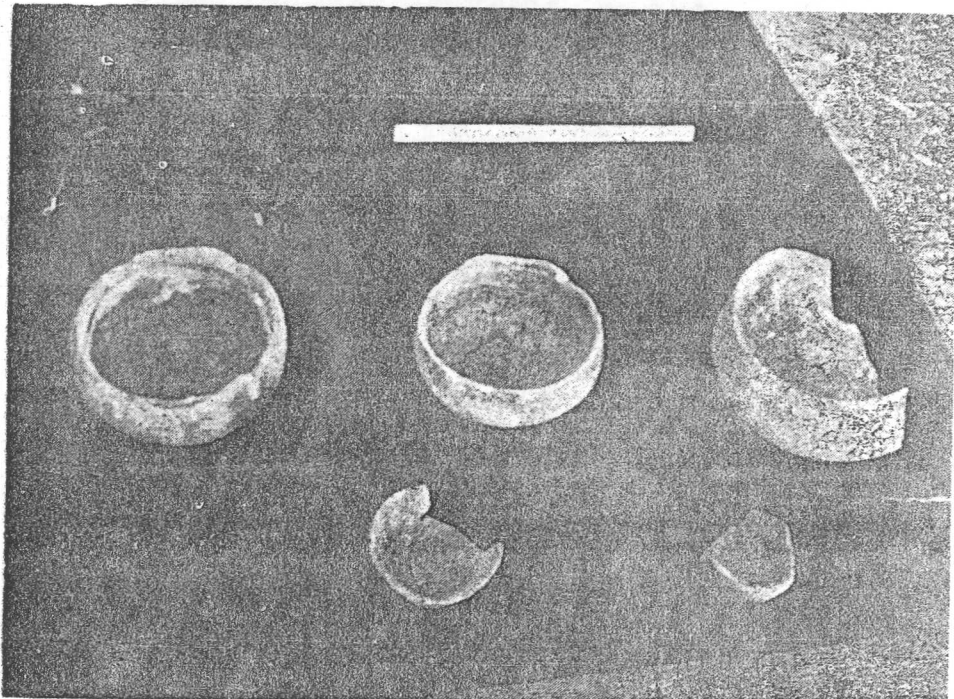


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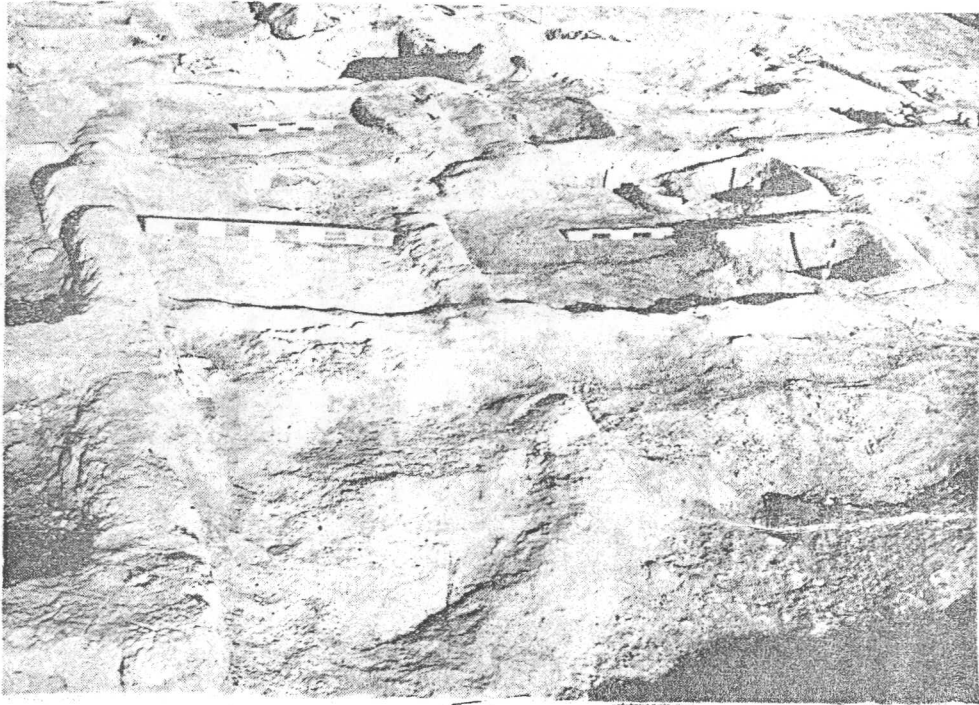
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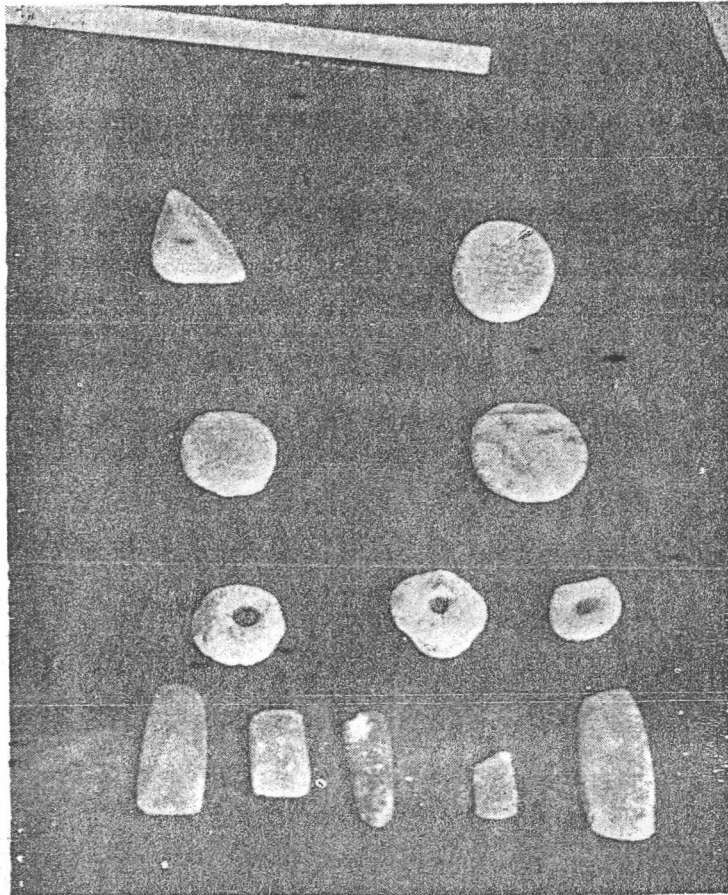
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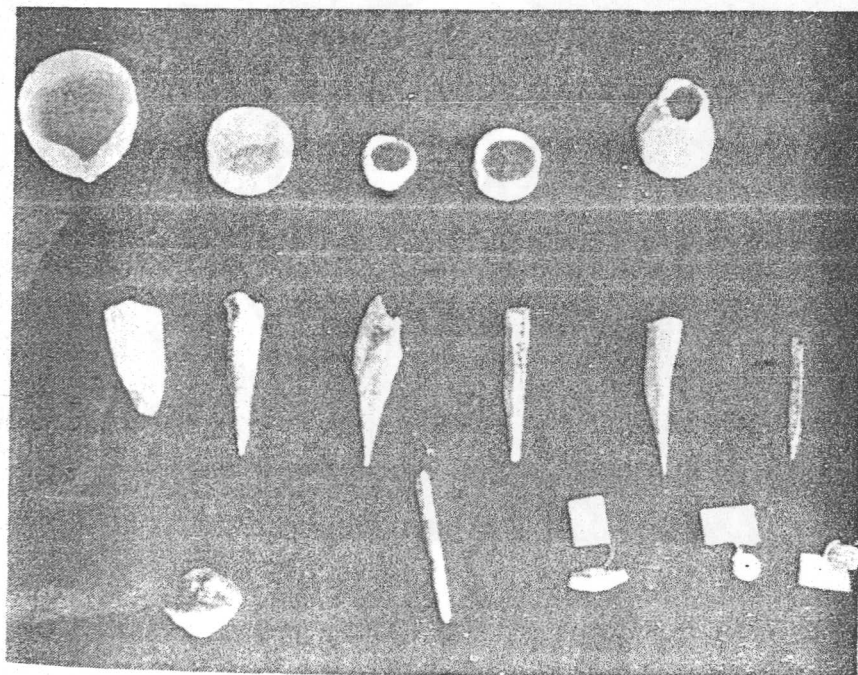
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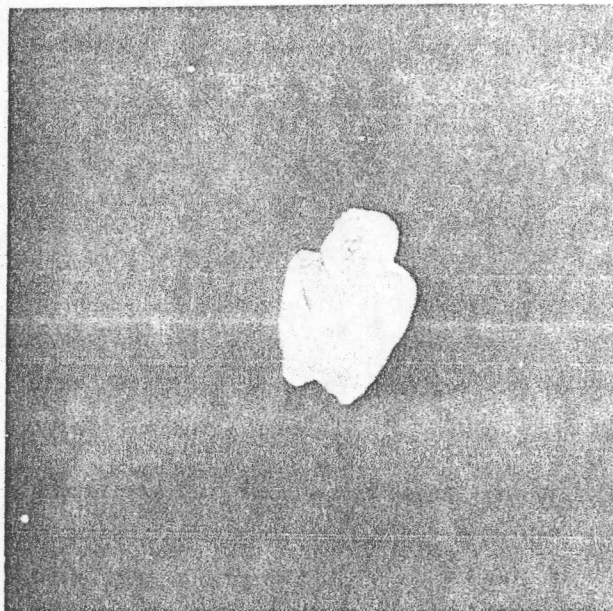
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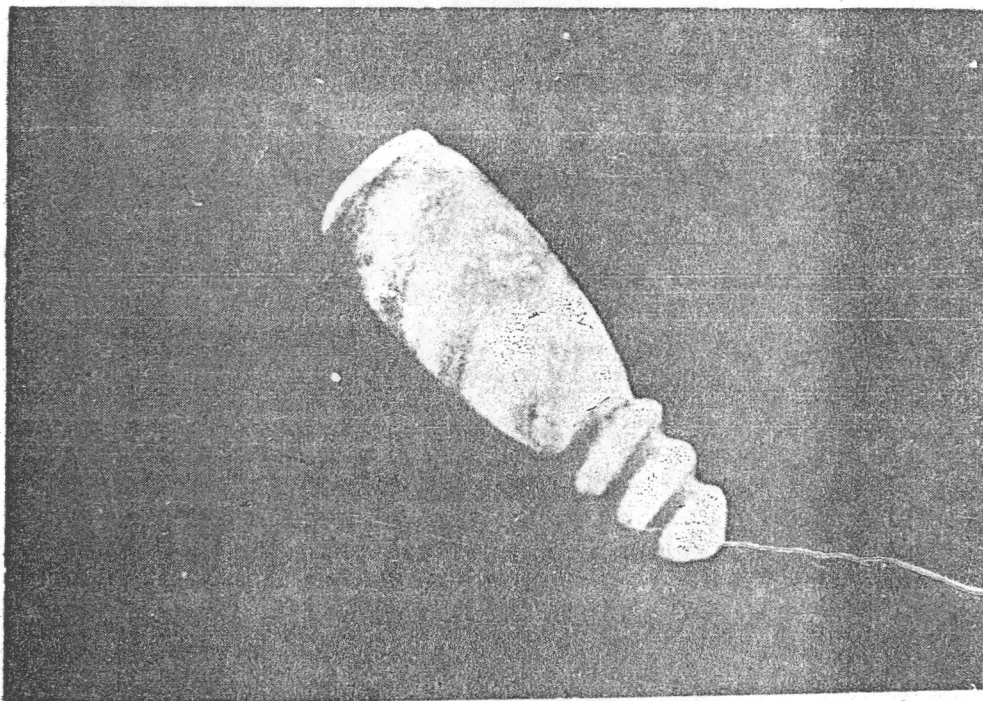
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