

BETWEEN THE RIVERS AND OVER THE MOUNTAINS

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Edited by

M. Frangipane, H. Hauptmann, M. Liverani, P. Matthiae, M. Mellink

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Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche Archeologiche e Antropologiche dell'Antichità
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INDEX

Un ricordo di Alba Palmieri	Pag.	9
Remembering Alba Palmieri.....	»	12
R.J. Braidwood, <i>Some Selected Archaeological Reflections</i>	»	15

THE PRE-URBAN PERIODS

G. Arsebük, <i>Yarımburgaz, a Lower Palaeolithic Cave Site near Istanbul</i>	»	23
H. Hauptmann, <i>Ein Kultgebäude in Nevalı Çori</i>	»	37
O. Aurenche, <i>L'origine de la brique dans le Proche Orient ancien</i>	»	71
M. and A. Özdoğan, <i>Pre-Halafian Pottery of Southeastern Anatolia</i>	»	87
U. Esin, <i>The Relief Decorations on the Prehistoric Pottery of Tülintepe in Eastern Anatolia</i>	»	105

THE EARLY URBAN ERA

H.J. Nissen, <i>The Early Uruk Period - A Sketch</i>	»	123
M. Frangipane, <i>Local Components in the Development of Centralized Societies in Syro-Anatolian Regions</i>	»	133
M.S. Rothman, <i>Another Look at the 'Uruk Expansion' from the Tigris Piedmont</i>	»	163
M.G. Trentin, <i>The Early Reserved Slip Wares Horizon of the Upper Euphrates Basin and Western Syria</i>	»	177
D. Schmandt-Besserat, <i>Images of Enship</i>	»	201
G. Algaze, <i>Processual Regularities in the Expansion of Early Sumerian and Mature Harappan Civilizations</i>	»	221

GLYPTICS AND ADMINISTRATION

H. Pittman, <i>Pictures of an Administration: the Late Uruk Scribe at Work</i>	»	235
M. Behm-Blancke, <i>Glyptische Traditionen Beiderseits des Ost-Taurus im Ausgehenden 4. und Frühen 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr.</i>	»	247
P. Amiet, <i>Rayonnement mesopotamien et originalité syrienne. A propos de quelques sceaux-cylindres du Louvre</i>	»	261
P. Ferioli and E. Fiandra, <i>Arslantepe Locks and the Šamaš «Key»</i>	»	269
J. Oates, <i>An Akkadian Administrative Device from Tell Brak</i>	»	289

THE BRONZE AGE IN SYRO-ANATOLIAN REGIONS

Eastern Anatolia

C. Burney, <i>Arslantepe as a Gateway to the Highlands: a Note on Periods VIA-VID</i>	»	311
I. Caneva, <i>From Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age III at Arslantepe: a Lithic Perspective</i>	»	319

*Sanlıurfa Kültür Varlıklarını
Saklayan Kurumlar*

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Saklayan Kurumlar*

EXCAVATIONS, SURVEYS AND RESTORATION WORKS AT HARRAN

NURETTİN YARDIMCI – Ankara

I would like to express my pleasure for having had the chance to cooperate for a long time with Prof. Dr. Alba Palmieri, the estimable scientist and the director of Malatya-Aslantepe excavations, as the General Director of Antiquities and Museums of the Ministry of Culture of the Turkish Republic.

The fact that southern Mesopotamian cultures extend up to the Malatya region was revealed especially by the excavations Prof. Dr. Alba Palmieri carried out at Malatya Aslantepe.

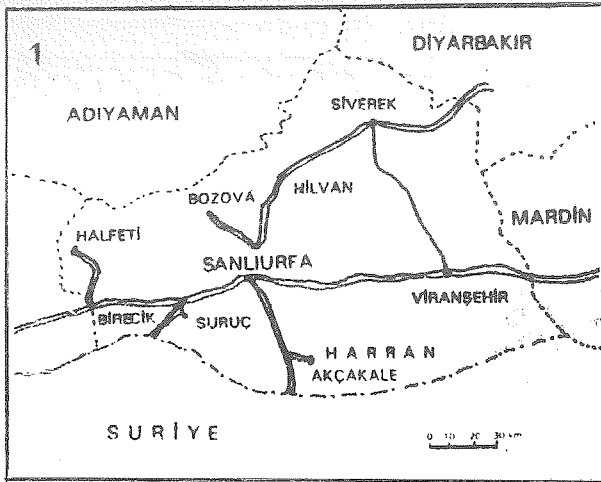
I should take this opportunity to remember with appreciation and to express my gratitude to this invaluable scientist and colleague, Prof. Dr. Alba Palmieri, for the immense contributions she made to our knowledge of Anatolian Archaeology.

Harran, which is situated 44 kms. southwest of Şanlıurfa, attracts interest not only because of its ancient ruins, but also because of its unique architectural style.

In the Harran plain, there are hundreds of mounds reflecting the rich past of the region. Harran which was known since early times, is a very important site on the road linking the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia. According to relevant sources, the site was continuously inhabited between the III millennium B.C. and the 13th Century A.D. (fig. 1).

Harran stands at the intersection linking Babylonia with the west and northwest. It is named after the Sumerian and Akkadian word *Harran-u*, meaning journey and caravan. Harran was also a crossroad for the old Assyrian merchants, who had close commercial relationships with Anatolia.

In the II millennium B.C., Harran was the most important centre second to the city of Assur. The Hittite King Suppiluliuma and the Mitanni King Mativaza signed a pact in the name of the moon god Sin and the sun god Shamash in the Sin Temple which is in Harran. The city has never lost its importance as a cultural centre since the time of the Assyrians. In some sources the patriarch Abraham is said to have stayed and married in Harran, where he had a mescit built in his name. Harran maintained its importance during the Islamic period and became the capital during the time of the last Ummayyad Caliph Mervan II. During this period Harran reached the climax in terms of town planning, arts and technique. Harran was invaded by the Mongols in 1260 A.D. and it was completely

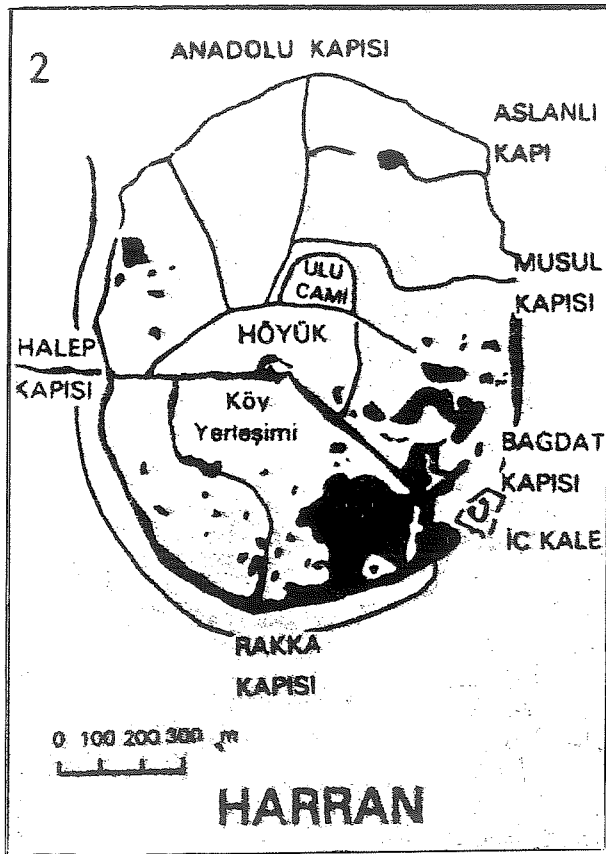


destroyed. After the Mongolian invasion, it was never able to regain its prosperity. Hence it was replaced by another site nearby called Edessa, which is known as Şanlıurfa today.

In the Harran ruins, there are many works of art belonging to various ages. The city walls which have a length of 4 kms., the gates, the well preserved inner castle, the mound close to the city centre and the Ulu Mosque, with its minaret 33.30 m. high built on the northern slope of the mound, are architectural masterpieces reflecting the prosperity of the city (fig. 1, 2).

Many philosophers and scientists have lived in Harran. Sabit bin Kurra, who lived in the 9th century, the astronomer Battani, the physicist and chemist Cabir bin Hayyan can be named amongst these estimable scientists. The city of Harran was visited by many travellers and researchers at different times, who have written about the history of the city and its glamour in the middle ages.

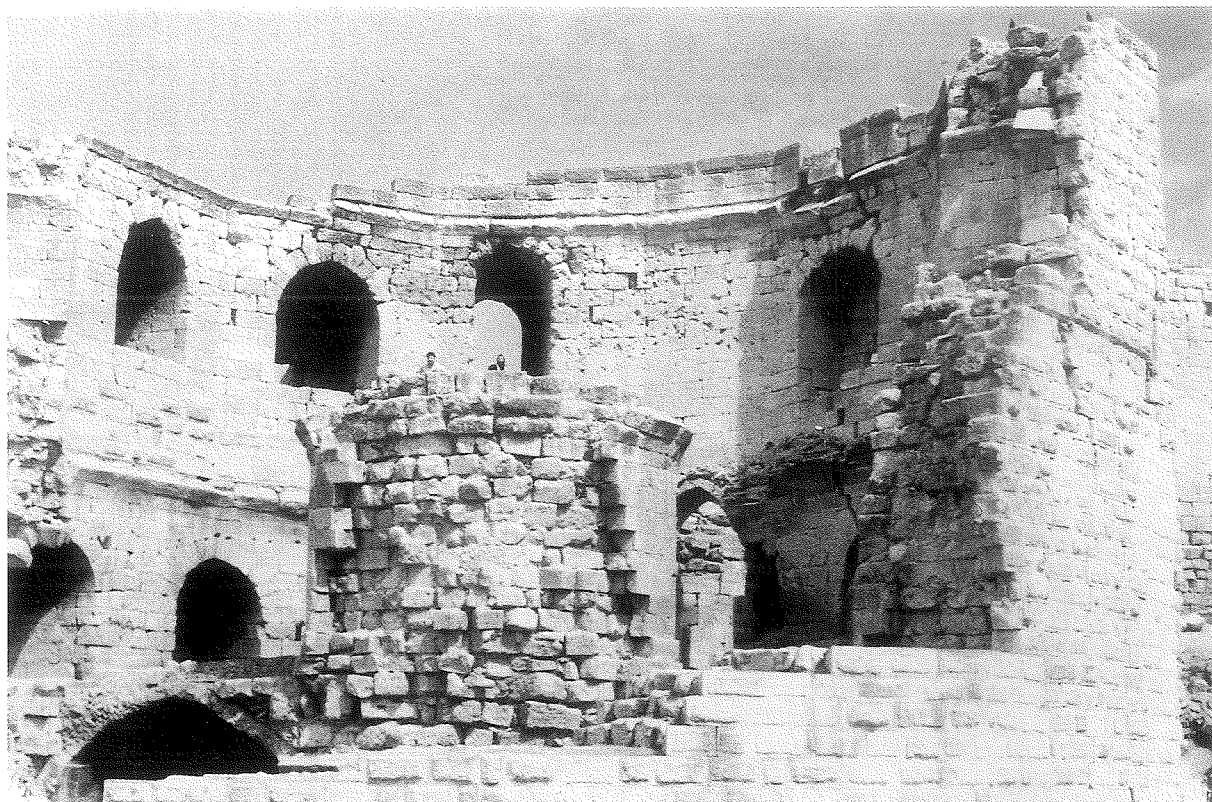
In 1983, a restoration and research program was started in Harran by a team under my direction on behalf of the Ministry of Culture.



THE CITY WALLS AND THE INNER CASTLE

The city walls are about 4 kms in length and 5 metres in height. There are six entrances: the Anadolu gate in the north; the Aslanlı, Bağdat and Musul gates in the east; the Rakka gate in the south, and the Halep gate in the west. There is also an inner castle which is enclosed by fortifications. This inner castle is situated in the southeast and has a rectangular plan

Fig. 1. - 1) Location of Harran. 2) Fortifications of Harran and site plan.



a



b

Fig. 2. - a) Southwest tower of the inner castle. b) Southeast tower of the inner castle.



Fig. 3. - General view of Ulu Mosque.

with towers in the corners. The inner castle is characterized by four different architectural styles, the oldest being from Hittite. Cleaning and restoration work at the inner castle is still going on. The latest restoration work has been carried out in the first floor of the southeast tower (figs. 1, 2; 2).

ULU CAMI (ULU MOSQUE)

The Ulu Mosque or Cennet Mosque which is one of the important works of the Islamic period is situated on the northeast slope of the Harran mound. The eastern side of the mosque, its mihrab, the fountain and most of the minaret are well preserved. The Harran Ulu Mosque is the oldest mosque in Turkey. It was built by the Ummayyad caliph Mervan II between 744 and 750 A.D. and underwent a big restoration during Ayyubids. The still surviving east wall has been restored here after the first cleaning process (fig. 3).

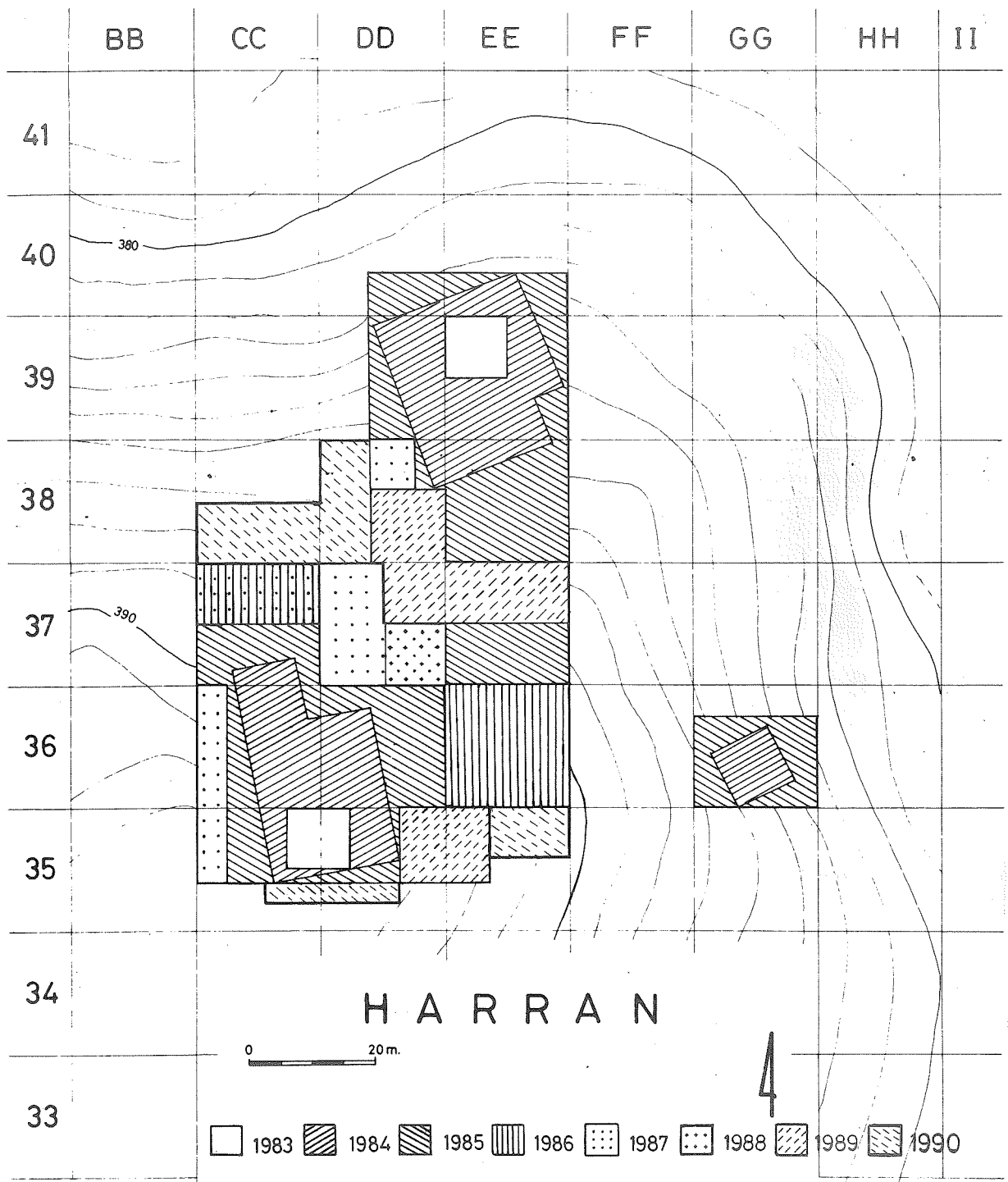


Fig. 4. - Harran excavation area.

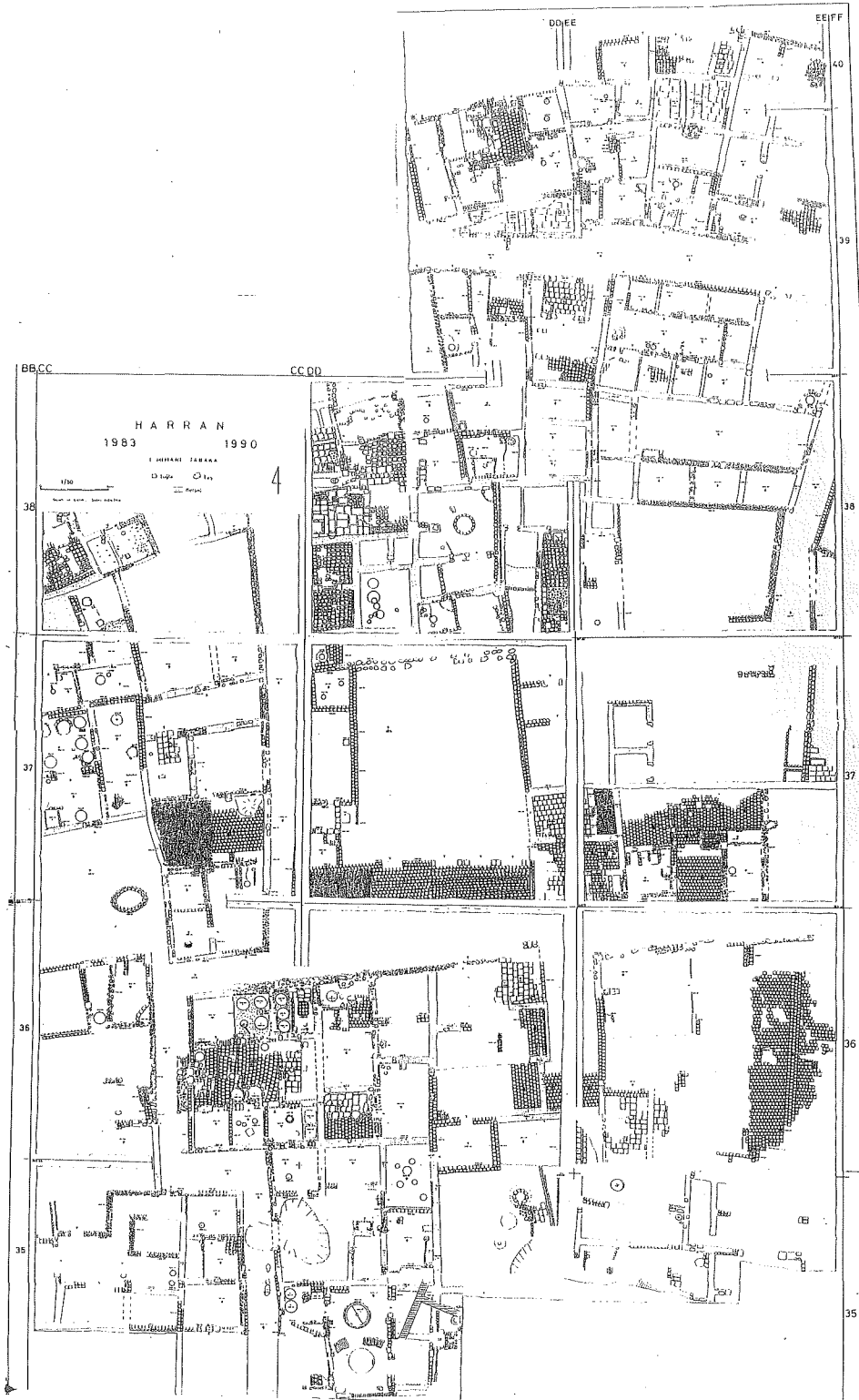


Fig. 5. - First layer plan of Harran.



Fig. 6. - Ruins of the city unearthed in the first layer of Harran Mound.

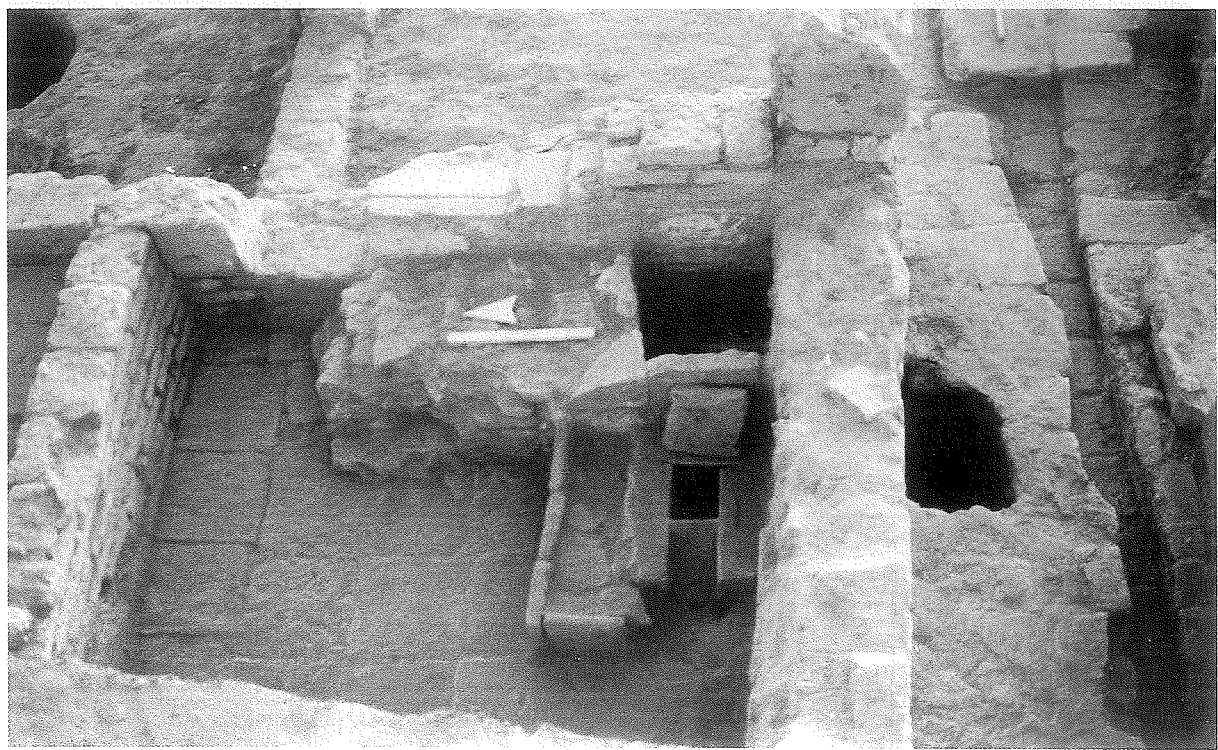
HÖYÜK (THE MOUND)

During our excavations, the remnants of a large city was found in the first layer of the mound which was inhabited in the Islamic period until the 13th century (figs. 4, 5, 6). The architectural style of the 5000 m² excavation area is characterized by narrow streets and row houses of square or rectangular plan type opening to these streets. The houses consist of rooms paved with square bricks sizing 25 × 25 cm (fig. 7a), brick and stone paved courtyards, wells, cellars, kitchens and toilets (fig. 7b). In addition to these, a sewage system made of brick in the form of a wide pipe was also found (fig. 8a). During our excavations in 1991, we unearthed the third of the large millstones made of basalt which were used in grinding industry and run by man power (fig. 8b).

After finding a cuneiform tablet fragment about the Babylonian King Nabonidus in 1987, we found, in 1989, 52 votive cuneiform inscriptions of various sizes among the pavement bricks of a room in the first layer which were of special significance to us (fig. 4, 35 DDEE plan squares; fig. 5) (XII. Meeting on the Results of Excavations, 1990, Ankara, pp. 364-365). These inscriptions referring to the Sin Temple and dated to the 6th century



a



b

Fig. 7. - a) Brick-paved rooms. b) Toilet and water channel.

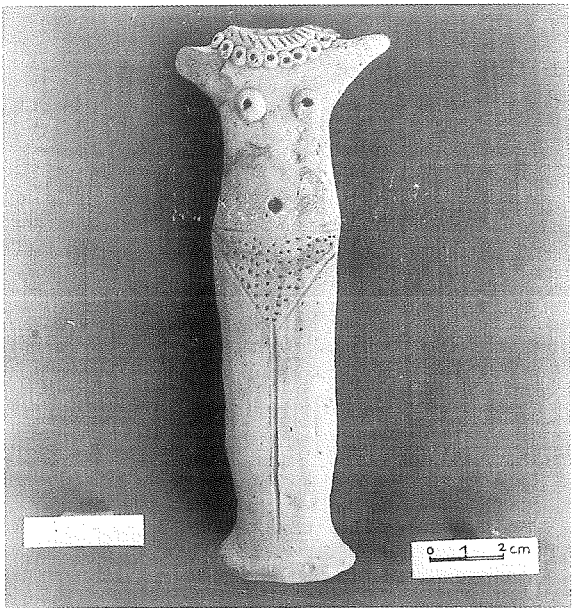


a



b

Fig. 8. - a) Sewage system (brick pipes). b) Millstones.



a



b

Fig. 9. - a) Terracotta female figurine, Early Bronze Age. b) Backside view of the female figurine.



Fig. 10. - Glazed pot with inscription.

B.C., the time of King Nabonidus, were especially important because they provided evidences of the Sin Temple. During our excavations in 1990 and 1991, we found more fragments of votive inscriptions from the same temple.

Among our remarkable finds from the 1990 excavations of the first layer belonging to Islamic period is a terracotta female figurine dated to the ends of the III millennium B.C., the Early Bronze Age (fig. 9). Pottery of different kinds, pots with Arabic inscriptions, glazed bowls, perfume bottles, lamps, bracelets, rings and Roman, Byzantine, Seljukid and Ayyubid coins have also been found in the first layer of the mound during our excavations in 1990 (fig. 10).

The ruins of the city that is dated to the Islamic period occupies even a wider part of the first layer. By now we obtained detailed information about the town planning, architecture and social life of that age. We hope that more finds, perhaps even the Sin Temple will be unearthed in the future years as we go deeper towards the lower layers.

SURFACE SURVEYS

We have discovered 92 mounds during the surveys carried out around Harran mound (figs. 11, 12). Our surveys are still continuing.

The finds from Tel Idris mound which has been found out during our latest surveys at about 1 km. to the southeast of Harran with 50 m. diameter and 4-5 m. height led us to

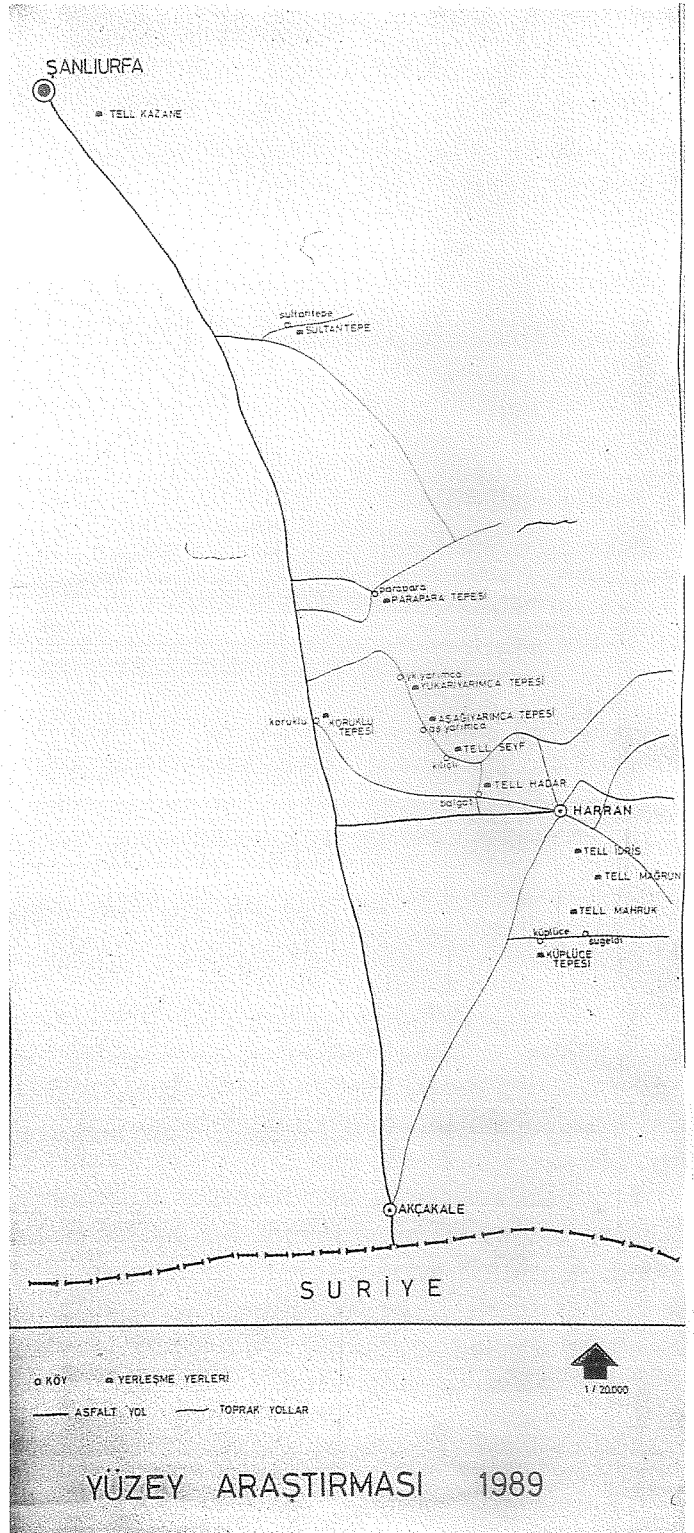


Fig. 11. - Surface surveys at Harran.

1990 YILI ŞANLIURFA HARRAN OVASI YÜZEY ARAŞTIRMALARI

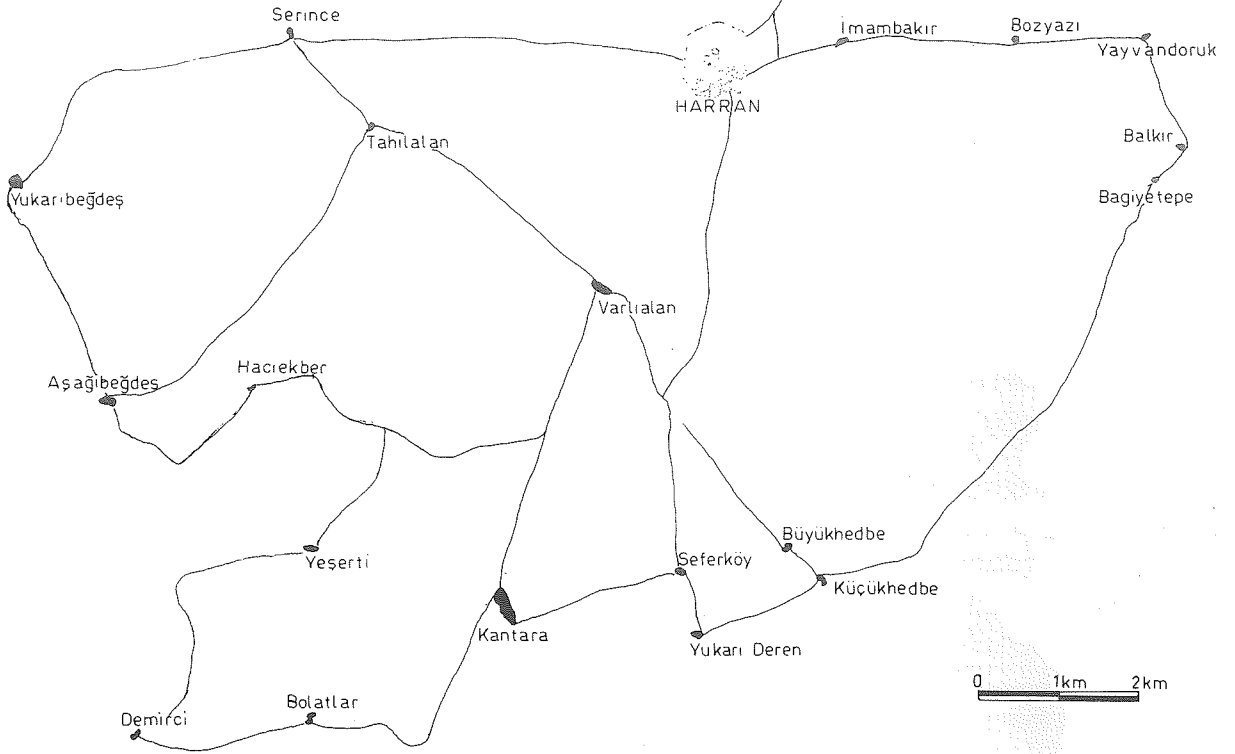


Fig. 12. - Surface surveys at Harran.

the conclusion that it was an important and rich Halaf centre. In addition to the Halaf finds, we also found objects from Ubaid culture such as flint stones, two reaping hooks and small obsidian borers. This mound dating back to the V millennium B.C. is a very notable site which will enable us to understand the development of Halaf (figs. 11, 13).

From the surface finds gathered at Küçük Hedbe mound situated 7 km. south of Harran and having 40 m. diameter, 5-6 m. height, we found out that the mound goes back to the Neolithic period, the VI millennium B.C. (fig. 12). Such Neolithic finds can be seen more often in the Neolithic phase with pottery. Similar examples exist in large numbers in the Neolithic layer at Diyarbakır-Çayönü. Among the objects found at this mound are also materials belonging to the late Chalcolithic period, Uruk, Halaf and Ubaid cultures.

The surveys we have carried out at various mounds, two of which have been mentioned above, revealed that finds belonging to different periods and cultures such as Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Halaf, Ubaid, Uruk, Early Bronze Age, Iron Age, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Turkish-Islamic are widespread over the Harran plain.

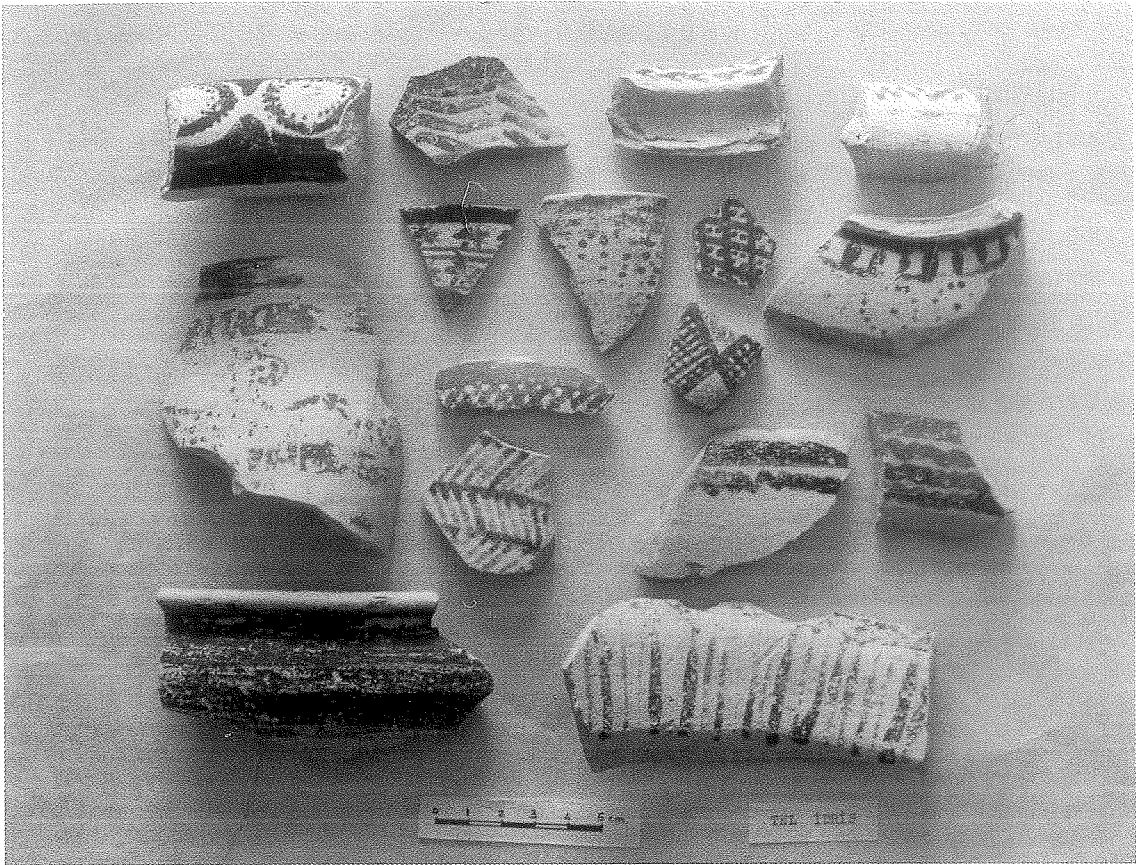


Fig. 13. - Finds from Tel Idris (surface survey).

The surface finds obtained from the mounds demonstrate that Mesopotamian and Anatolian cultures intermingle with each other here at this plain. After the latest surveys and especially Malatya-Aslantepe excavations revealed that the southern Mesopotamian cultures extended up to the Malatya region, the Harran plain has become one of the sites having utmost importance.

S. Bökönyi, <i>Hunting in Arslantepe, Anatolia</i>	Pag. 341
A.M. Conti e C. Persiani, <i>When Worlds Collide. Cultural Developments in Eastern Anatolia in the Early Bronze Age</i>	» 361
G.M. Di Nocera, <i>Die Mittelbronzezeitliche Keramik von Arslantepe: einige Vorläufige Bemerkungen</i>	» 415
N. Yardımcı, <i>Excavations, Surveys and Restoration Works at Harran</i>	» 437
<i>Transcaucasia and Caucasus</i>	
A. Sagona, <i>Settlement and Society in Late Prehistoric Trans-Caucasus</i>	» 453
O. Dzhaparidze, <i>Über die Ethnokulturelle Situation in Georgien gegen Ende III Jahrtausend v. Chr.</i>	» 475
<i>Southern and Central Anatolia</i>	
M. Mellink, <i>The Anatolian South Coast in the Early Bronze Age: the Cilician Perspective</i>	» 495
T. Özgüç, <i>Alabaster Idols and Statuettes from Kültepe</i>	» 509
N. Özgüç, <i>An Early Bronze Age Pot Grave of a Child from Acemhöyük</i>	» 517
<i>Syria</i>	
P. Matthiae, <i>On this Side of the Euphrates. A Note on the Urban Origins in Inner Syria</i>	» 523
P.E. Pecorella, <i>Uno scavo oltre la linea e alcuni problemi ceramici</i>	» 531
 ANCIENT METALLURGY	
A. Hauptmann, J. Lutz, E. Pernicka, Ü. Yalçın, <i>Zur Technologie der Frühesten Kupferverhüttung im Östlichen Mittelmeerraum</i>	» 541
A.M. Palmieri, K. Sertok, E. Chernykh, <i>From Arslantepe Metalwork to Arsenical Copper Technology in Eastern Anatolia</i>	» 573
Ö. Bilgi, <i>Some Unstratified Metal Weapons from the East Anatolian Museums</i>	» 601
O. Belli, <i>Neue Funde Steinerne Gußformen aus Akçadağ bei Malatya</i>	» 605
A. Archi, <i>Bronze Alloys in Ebla</i>	» 615

