

Excavation report of sounding D, 2007

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Sounding D is situated ca. 15 metres NNW of the Islamic tomb of Mahmud Ibrahim Pasha, which, with its 363.40m a.s.l., marks the highest point on Tell Fecheriye. In 2006, a step trench was opened in the area, in order to gain insight as to the stratigraphic sequence of the tell. In the lowest step, which originally cut through Sq. 6736, the sounding yield the discovery of a room delimited by mud-brick walls. In the rubble collapsed within the room, a rich and beautifully preserved inventory of early Middle Assyrian pottery was found; immediately beneath the floor, the leg of an equid had been deposited as a propitiatory offering.

In 2007, the operation was extended (Sq. 6735, 6736, 6737), with the aim of learning more about the broader context of the Middle Assyrian architectural remains uncovered the year before.

Directly above the level of the Middle Assyrian architecture, at c. 359m a.s.l., the excavations recovered the rests of an Early Islamic settlement, with inconspicuous stone architecture, a round, stone-lined well, and a number of further minor installations. The Early Islamic settlement was built in part immediately upon the crest of the Middle Assyrian walls; in part, in the Western half of the operation, on a collapsed Roman stone and mud-brick architecture, covered in a rubble of stones, stucco, and tegolae (first recorded at c. 355m a.s.l.). The Roman structures cut directly into the Middle Assyrian ones and many Middle Assyrian potshards as well as some well preserved Middle Assyrian flasks come from a pit near the base of a badly preserved Roman mud-brick wall in Sq. 6737. These observations speak for a long gap between the end of the Middle Assyrian period and the beginning of late antique building activities.

Concerning the Middle Assyrian structures, the excavation in Summer 2007 exposed more of the mud-brick architecture known from the previous season, confirming the existence of a room with a rectangular layout and locating a door with a basalt angle stone at its northern side (the height of the threshold is at 354.80m a.s.l.). As the excavation progressed, it became clear that this Middle Assyrian architecture had been built upon an older, massive building which, at least concerning the room in question, follows an identical layout; the presence of a door exactly underneath the door of the later Middle Assyrian building dismisses the idea that the walls be simply foundations. The walls of the older building are nearly twice as broad (1.70m) as the later walls and the quality of the mudbricks is different and evidently superior. It is apparent that the older walls have been capped at a chosen height – in absolute terms at 354.70m a.s.l. – in order to re-use them as foundations; upon this occasion, the older door was filled with mud-brick rubble and the new basalt angle-stone was embedded into the older mud-brick architecture. The filling of the older room, which has been only partially removed, is not a collapse rubble but a compact, homogeneous matrix with few inclusions. Among the latter are some interesting pottery finds which show close affinities to Mittani period pottery styles and forms. In order to date the older structure with a reasonable certainty, however, it is necessary to await further investigations.



Fig. 1: Final overview of Square 6736.