

Chapter 19

Late Neolithic Architecture

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Introduction

This paper presents a short summary of the findings from the investigation into the late Neolithic settlement form and architecture, which was carried out within GDN (Gdańsk) Area that covers to a greater extent the former Mellaart Areas: A and B situated on the upper part of the western slope of Çatalhöyük East Mound.

The main focus of the research, which is planned to continue until 2016, was to reexamine the structural and socio-spatial characteristics of buildings that were unearthed in the 1960's as the archive and architectural documentation of the uppermost levels is either problematic or unavailable (Düring 2001; Barański 2013). In particular, the intention is to:

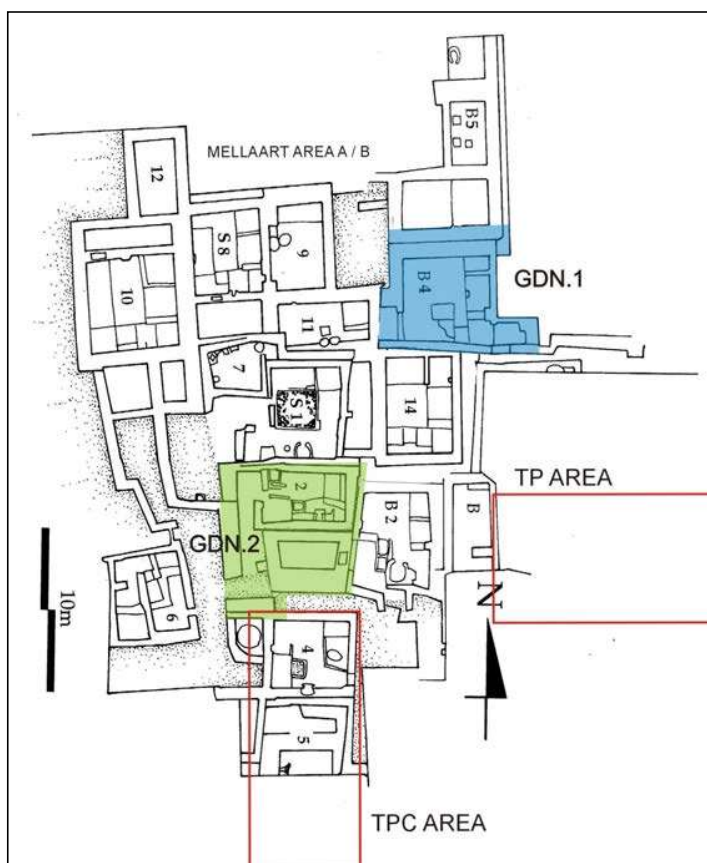


Figure 19.1. Plan of GDN, TPC and TP excavation areas in relation to Mellaart's original excavations.

- 1) Reassess the plans of buildings that were assigned by Mellaart to building-levels I-III by conducting archaeological fieldwork, which includes: a) removing the backfill that had accumulated over the last few decades within the 1960's excavation area, b) general cleaning of revealed architectural features and occupational surfaces and c) detailed recording of all the architectural features.

- 2) Reexamine architectural and structural character of the re-excavated buildings and collate the results with those from other research areas, namely TP and TPC (see Marciniak & Czerniak 2007; Marciniak *et al.* 2012; Barański 2014).

- 3) Reanalyze the stratigraphic relationships between the mentioned buildings not only to challenge the settlement layout argued by Mellaart (see Mellaart 1967: 49; Hodder & Farid 2013: 14) but also to produce (when needed) more accurate data for radiocarbon dating programme managed by Dr. Alexandra Bayliss and Shahina Farid (Bayliss *et al.* 2013).

The original project started in 2013 with ground-truthing by opening a dozen or so small test trenches in different parts of the problematic area. However, it was very difficult to interpret just in plan without excavation as almost no stratigraphic and

structural relationship could be seen but foremost the real outlines of the architectural remnants rarely fit with the available archive plans (Barański 2013). As a result of this the decision was made to expose most of the area by cleaning off the overburden, and only then concentrate on selected corners of some buildings. There were also four students, studying either an architecture or archaeology, invited to join the project in 2014 which

helped to expand the research area and to improve the efficiency of the work that combined approaches and methods characteristic of the both mentioned disciplines. The detailed documentation on architectural features was developed and numerous mud-brick samples were collected in order to carry out geoarchaeological analysis, which will be done by Dr. Serena Love in the forthcoming months (see Love 2012 for method details).

The 2014 four-week long field season focused on two areas: GDN.1 and GDN.2 that were approximately 67 and 80m² respectively (Figure 19.1). The following results were obtained:

Research within GDN.1 Area

The GDN.1 trench was situated in the north-east part of the research area and was limited to the interior of building B.143 (Figure 19.2).



Figure 19.2. Orthophoto of GDN.1 with buildings and features.



Figure 19.3. Central area of Building 143 with white clay floor and raised hearth with a kerb.

Building 143

The re-exposed B.143 (recorded as B.II.4 by Mellaart) is situated on a midden and has a T-shaped plan with two small annex spaces in its southern part. The labour-intensive removing of the backfill and the general cleaning of the occupation surfaces allowed revealed the remnants of a few relatively well preserved architectural features within the preserved interior of about 35.3m². The eastern part of the building was occupied by repeatedly plastered platforms and benches. The most of the rest of the interior was covered with a white clay floor with a centrally situated and raised hearth with a kerb (Figure 19.3).

The general outline of the building seemed not to differ from the one that was embedded on a published plan of Mellaart's building-level II (Mellaart 1967: 57). However, a more detailed study of the architectural remnants revealed the following: firstly, the western part of the building was heavily eroded and very much truncated as a result of excavation that was undertaken in the 1960's. Therefore the original plan of the building was not possible to re-excavate. Moreover, the unearthed and partially plastered walls were rarely preserved higher than a dozen or so centimeters above floor level as a result of intentional demolition after the building went out of use as well as later truncation by a foundation ditch for the construction of the following B.144. Both structures overlaid each other to such an extent that they had been considered by Mellaart as actually one building, B.II.4, and had been drawn as such on the mentioned plan of building-level II. However, the foundations of B.144 were situated partly on the floor and platforms that made up B.143. Also, both structures had different structural character. The walls of B.143 were 0.46m thick and can be described as simple structures that were made up of light orangish gray mud brick and light gray mortar while walls of B.144 were much thicker and constituted compound brickwork (Figure 19.4). Secondly, the size and the orientation of B.143 and B.144 are slightly different if we compare it to the archive plan, which seems to be largely simplified. This note applies to both the walls and the internal features.

Lastly, some of the architectural features were not registered during the 1960's archaeological campaign or at least they were not recorded on the plan. We found, for example, remnants of an oven or a kiln set in the southern wall behind the hearth as well as a lower part of a brick pilaster and possible raised clay pads, which were set against respectively the western, northern and eastern walls of B.143. On the other hand there was no such an element as pilaster to articulate an extent of the eastern wall but a stepped and nicely plastered bench. The mud-brick structure situated in the north-east corner of the eastern side room turned out to be a later addition to the wall of B.144. Its detailed character will hopefully be fully understood next season.

Building 144

The extent of damage to the remnants of B.144 made it very difficult to analyze and reconstruct the form and function of this structure. However, it is reminiscent of large and elaborate buildings recorded within the TP Area (Barański 2013). The re-excavated foundations were most likely of compound structure and about 1.10m thick, using a building technique that seems to be quite typical for the late Neolithic Çatalhöyük. The bond was namely made up of parallel lines of stretchers with a solid core between them (that consisted of large but irregular fragments of mud bricks bound with mortar) and a header course being inserted most probably at every second or third course (Figure 19.4).

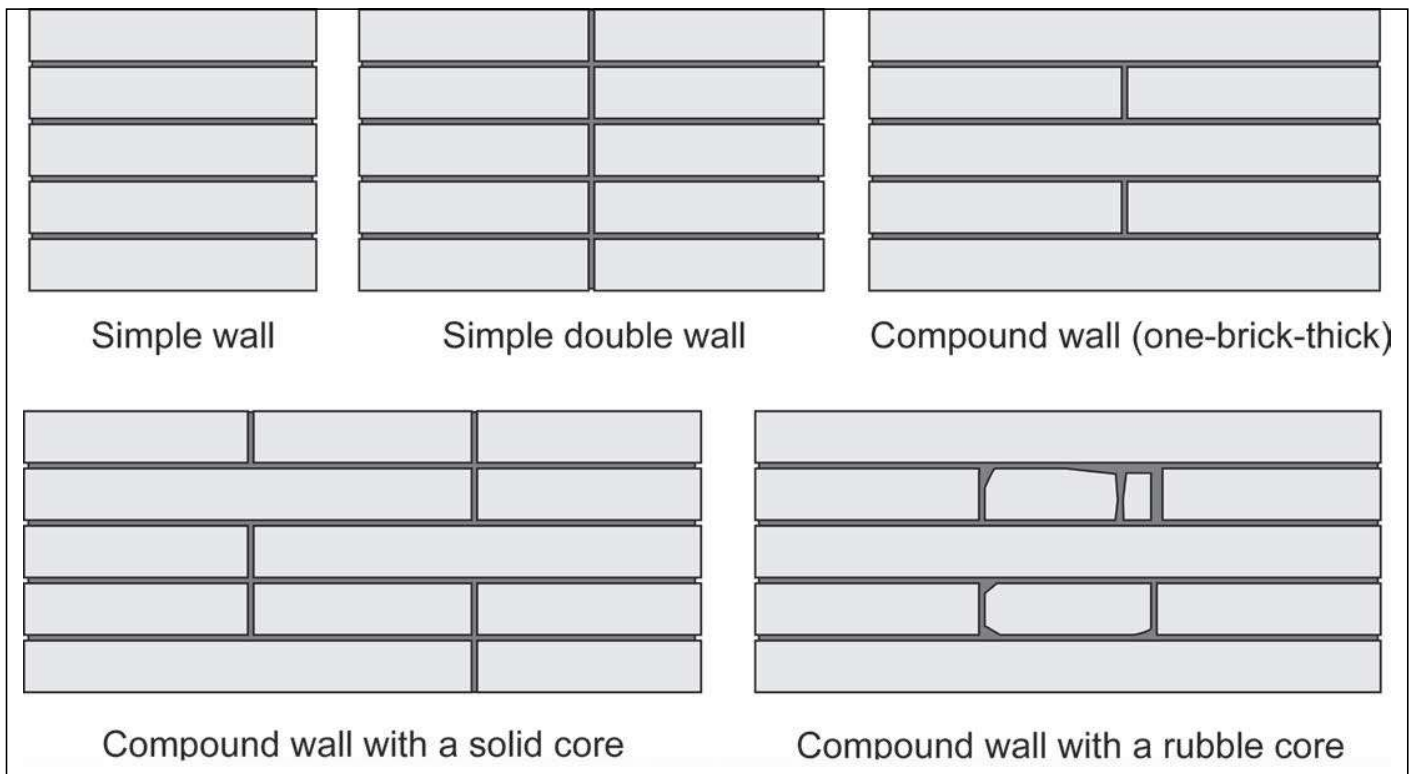


Figure 19.4. Mudbrick wall construction typology.

There were no architectural features other than bare and one-and-a-half-brick-thick foundations assigned to B.144. The structure abutted a southern compound foundation or wall of B.145 (recorded as A.II.5 by Mellaart).

Space 550

Sp.550 was arbitrary assigned to group all the features that are believed to be connected with post-Neolithic and pre-Mellaart activity on the mound.

A part of burial (F.7673), most probably representative of the Middle Ages necropolis, was revealed when cleaning the upper part of the eastern wall of B.144 in the western section of the trench. The skeleton seemed to be placed within a pit with a lower niche, which was sealed with course of mud-bricks. That type of structure very much reminded us of the late burials found within TP and TPC Areas (see Kwiatkowska 2009; Marciniak *et al.* 2012). Only the very western part of the burial was excavated. The unearthed skull, which was lying on its right side, was covered with clean soil and then protected against plants, animals and weather with geotextile and sacks filled with soil.

There was also a cut of a possible pit (F.7684) recorded in the south-western part of B.143. It has an extended oval plan that was oriented along north-west south-east axis. The feature seemed to be almost entirely excavated in the 1960's. Therefore, its function is not clear.

Space 1010

Space 1010 constitutes of backfill of Mellaart Area B (21400) that included a great number of artifacts, namely chipped stones, ground stones, obsidian, animal bones, potsherds as well as some disarticulated human bones. There was also a troublesome cluster (F.7680) of chronologically mixed archaeological material found popping out from the western section within what seemed to be a pit or an animal lair that cut the remnants of the eastern wall of B.144. The feature consisted of unstratified potsherds, stones, animal bones and few human bones, which were all collected during cleaning of the section and the top of the wall.

Research within GDN.2 Area

The GDN.2 trench area stretched from: 1) northern wall of B.140 in the north, 2) midden area Sp.544 and northern wall of B.111 in the south, 3) eastern walls of B.140 and B.141 in the east and 4) walls F.7459 and F.7460 within Sp.541 and Sp.543 respectively that were situated on more or less north-south axis to the west of B.140 and B.141 (Figure 19.5).

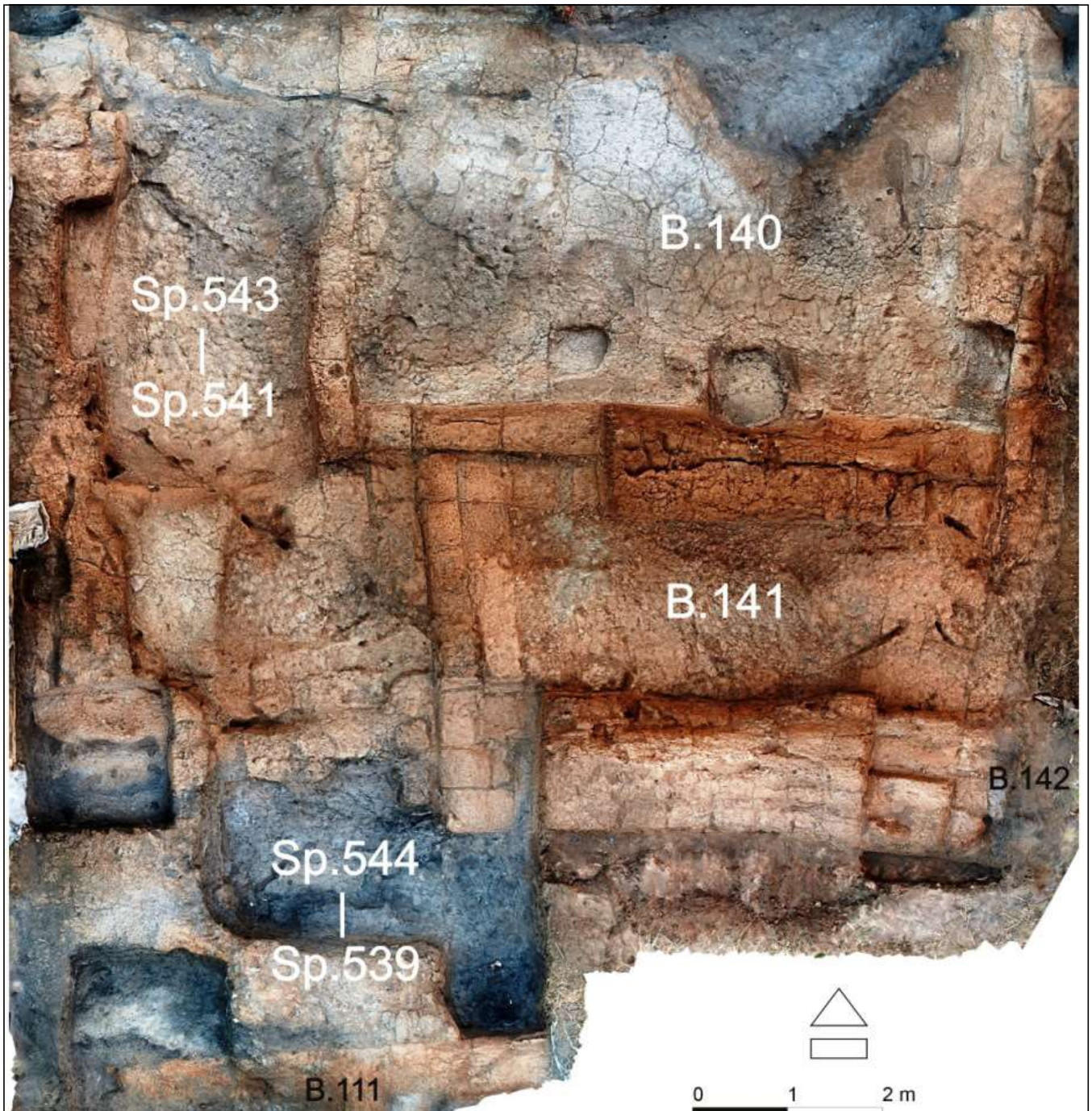


Figure 19.5. Orthophoto of GDN.2 trench.

The backfill removal as well as general cleaning of the occupational surfaces allowed to reveal in its full extent the remnants of walls and interior features of B.140 and B.141, and unspecified: Sp.541 and Sp.543 as well as an open area Sp.544.

Building 140

Building 140 (recorded as A.III.2 by Mellaart) had a rectangular interior plan, about 17.1m², and was situated with its longer edge on more or less west-east axis. The northern part of this structure was badly truncated during the 1960's excavations seasons and most probably as a result of an earlier post-Neolithic activity. The cleaning and observation of the southern section allowed us to determine the long use of the building demarcated by many alternating layers of floors and structural make-ups, as well as internal features that had been clearly built in different occupational phases.

The walls of the building were about 0.51m thick and had a simple structure (Figure 19.4). They were all made up of light orangish brown mud-bricks bound together with light gray mortar. All these walls bore traces of internal partial multi layered white plastering.

The layout of the building interior did not differ too much from the one that can be seen on a plan of Mellaart's building-level III (see Mellaart 1962: 45; 1967: 57) and only slight differences were observed in building size, shape and orientation. The existence and location of most of the interior features revealed in the 1960's were confirmed in spite of their significant damage caused by long exposure to weather. For example, there were a group of installations in the southern part of the building, which consisted of the remnants of an oven base, a basin and more centrally situated hearth with a kerb. There were also the remains of a mud-brick bench and an unspecified platform in the north-west and north-east corners of the building respectively (Figure 19.6).



Figure 19.6. Building 140.

However difficult it is to confirm that interpretation we found many stone artifacts lying *in situ* on the floor of the building as well as within the possibly related Sp.541. Some of them included fragments of crystals as well as stone palettes that had traces of pigments (Christina Tsoraki-Chan, pers. comm. 31.07.2014). Therefore, it is not impossible that the building was somehow connected or at least contemporary with the so called Hunting Shrine A.III.1 (now B.146) situated directly to the north.

There were a few bones (21402) of the right and left foot found popping out from the section beneath the remnants of the eastern platform. Some of them were articulated, which enforced a presumption that the rest of the skeleton had been removed. When this truncation occurred as well as how the burial was related to the building is not clear. Was it a Neolithic burial underneath the raised platform or are we dealing with human remains that were deposited much later? One cannot rule out any of the two possibilities.

On the other hand, the existence of a doorway or a crawl hole cut into the western wall was not confirmed. Moreover, there was a plaster niche revealed in the south-east corner of the building that was in turn not recorded on the 1960's plan. The exterior plastered face of the western wall of B.142 (recorded as B.II.2 by Mellaart) constituted the back of the mentioned feature, which provides clear evidence that the two buildings were contemporary for at least some time.

Mellaart described A.III.2 as a house that “*produced a large number of stone tools as well as raw material and might have been a stoneworker's shop*” (Mellaart 1962: 55).

Space 541

Space 541 covered more or less a rectangular interior area of about 10.8m². It was defined by the western wall of B.140 as well as unspecified mud-brick structures (no building number was assigned to these walls by Mellaart) that separated the space from the midden area (Sp.544). The very northern part of Sp.541 was damaged as it had been excavated in the 1960's.

Most of the unearthed architectural features were heavily eroded and truncated, which made the observations very difficult. The only relatively well preserved structure was the western simple wall, about 0.51m thick, and made up of light brownish orange mud-brick and light gray mortar (Figure 19.4). It was bonded with the southern wall that seemed to have similar if not the same structural and material characteristics. Both structures constituted the south-west corner of the space where remnants of a plastered platform or a floor and related artifacts including another stone palette were found. This feature as well as the mentioned southern and possible eastern wall of the space seemed to be badly truncated by an unspecified pit as well as result of the 1960's excavations.

The relation between Sp.541 and B.140 is not clear at the moment. However, it is very likely that both structures were somehow connected, at least temporarily. Firstly, the walls that defined these structures were visually more than similar. Secondly, the floors or platforms of Sp.541 and B.140 were situated on a distinctive and thick construction make-up. Lastly, there were many stone artifacts found *in situ* within both structures. It is believed that some of the questions that relate to the relations between Sp.541 and B.140 might be answered when results from the mud-brick analysis are available and a small test trench is opened in the 2015 field season.



Figure 19.7. Space 544 situated between the northern and southern walls of Buildings 111 and 141.

Space 544

Space 544 is an open and narrow area between the northern and southern walls of B.111 and B.141 respectively (Figure 19.7). It was argued by Mellaart that this had been a place where a proper street ran. However, fine layers of midden revealed within the space cast considerable doubt on this interpretation (see also Barański 2013). The afore mentioned sediments contained a great number of inclusions, namely animal bones, chipped stones, ground stones, obsidian, potsherds and shells.

Building 141

Building 141 (recorded as A.III.3 by Mellaart) had a rectangular about 5.9m² interior plan and a simple layout with no features but a solid screed floor and a possible mud-brick bench situated along the western wall.

Although very small, the building was characterized by a very specific and massive structure. Its walls were built using the same building material, namely brownish orange mud-brick and grayish mortar, but different techniques (Figure 19.4). For example, the northern wall was defined as about 0.37m thick but simple structure.

The southern wall was in turn a compound one-and-a-half-brick (about 1.2m) thick wall. The bond was made up of three parallel lines of stretchers in one course and headers being inserted probably at every second or third course of mud-bricks. The eastern and most probably the barely preserved western wall was also compound but one-brick (about 0.77m) thick structures that consisted of alternating courses of headers and stretchers. We argue that the observed differences might have resulted from the setting the building on a slope and the need to protect its southern part against damage caused by what we can define now as settlement load. It seemed very likely that most of the mentioned mud-brick structures were situated within a foundation ditch, which had been cut into the underlying layers of midden within Sp.544. Building 141 abutted the southern wall of B.140 and possibly western wall of B.142 (recorded by Mellaart as B.II.2).

Space 543

Space 543 covered more or less the same area as the mentioned Sp.541. It was defined by the western walls of B.141 and B.140 as well as unspecified mud-brick structures (no building number was assigned to these walls by Mellaart) that separated the space from the midden that was revealed in the southern and western part of the research area. The very northern part of Sp.543 was damaged as a result of excavations in the 1960's.

There were no architectural features revealed within the space except for the heavily truncated and eroded southern and western foundations or walls of unspecified structure. The very bad state of preservation of these features made it very difficult to define the original form and function of the whole structure. However, the re-excavated and most probably compound foundations or walls that defined Sp.543 were situated on top of the mud-brick structures and a platform assigned to Sp.541 as well as midden area defined within Sp.544. They were all made up of brownish orange mud-bricks bound with dark gray mortar and were most probably about 1.2m thick (Figure 19.4).

The exact relation between Sp.543 and B.141 is not clear at the moment, although it is very likely that both structures were contemporary or even made up one building compound.

Space 539

There were remnants of unspecified mud-brick structure F.7463 found within Sp.539. This feature was very badly affected by post-depositional processes and the consequence was that neither credible measurements nor other architectural analysis could be undertaken. The mentioned foundation or wall was situated on top of the midden attributed to Sp.544. However, it is not clear whether the feature is of Neolithic origin or represents some kind of structure built during the time of one of the later periods.

Space 1010

Space 1010 constitutes backfill (21401) of Mellaart Area A that included a great number of artifacts, mainly chipped stones, ground stones, crystals, obsidian, animal bones and potsherds. There was also a complete but very fragmented human skull Sk(21473) found, 3D documented and lifted. It was situated within the infill that had accumulated between the exposed walls of B.111 and B.141.

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