

Chapter 22

GDN Area: Research on Late Neolithic Architecture

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The paper presents a review of preliminary results from GDN (Gdańsk) Area situated within a relic of Mellaart's A and B trenches (Mellaart 1962) at Çatalhöyük East (Fig. 22.1). The main focus of this research on the archaeology of architecture is to evaluate on the site some of the archive plans and even more importantly to test former hypotheses and to re-interpretate spatial organisation of the Neolithic settlement at its final phases of occupation (Barański 2014a: 194).



Figure 22.1. Overview of Mellaart A/B Area before the current excavation work was commenced (Photo: Jason Quinlan).

2015 GDN trench was situated in the southern part of the 1960s excavation area in the immediate neighbourhood of TP Area (see Marciniak and Czerniak 2012) and TPC Area (see Marciniak *et al.* 2012). It covered about 187m² and included remnants of buildings from Mellaart Levels I-III (Fig. 22.2). The coordinates of the corners of this trench of irregular shape were as follows: 954.5 E 987 N; 965.0 E 987.0 N; 965.0 E 984.5 N; 972.0 E 984.5 N; 972.0 E 994 N; 973.0 E 994.0 N; 973.0 E 996.0 N; 964.0 E 996.0 N; 964.0 E 997 N).

GDN research turned out to be challenging in many ways. The late Neolithic architecture was not only heavily disturbed by roots and animals but also affected by severe weather conditions. It must not be forgotten that the interiors of the buildings had been backfilled naturally over the decades with material com-

ing gradually from exposed walls and sections as well as commanding areas. In addition, the south-eastern part of Mellaart's trench has been lately sealed artificially with a considerable volume of dry-sieved spoil coming from TP Area. The removal of all these deposits was strenuous and time-consuming. Following sondage excavations in the hot and bright sunlight as well as final re-backfilling with just four team members and no help from the site workmen was equally difficult.

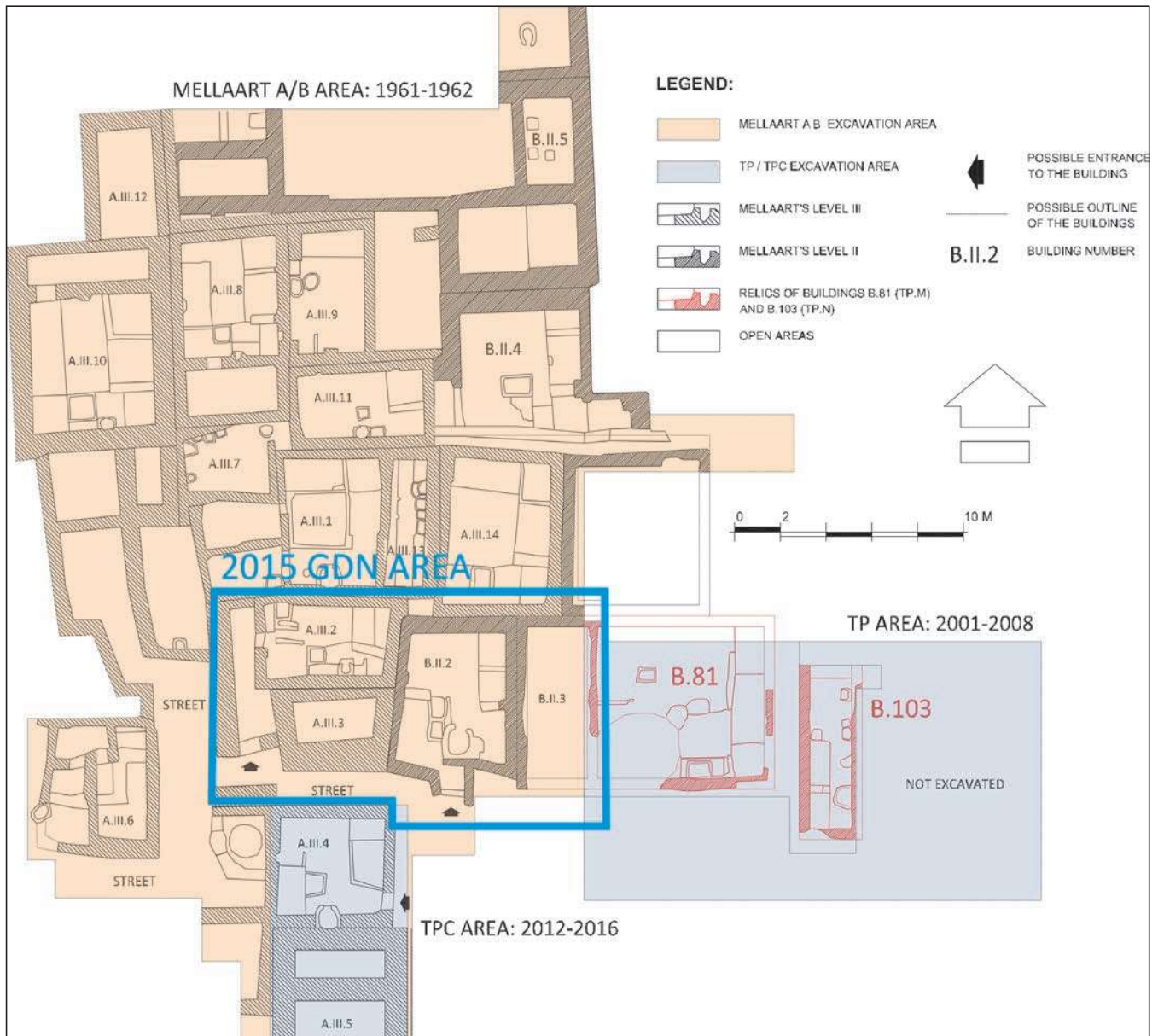


Figure 22.2. Location plan of 2015 GDN Area (after Mellaart 1962).

Despite all these difficulties, our intensive and goal oriented work allowed us to reveal complex life histories of buildings: B.140 (A.III.2) and B.142 (B.II.2) as well as spaces: Sp.555 (B.II.3) and Sp.561. These houses were documented in a cursory manner in the past and their architecture was viewed as static and dehumanised. The built environment, however, is always transitory, evolving and animated. We have documented various transformations of the buildings as well as interactions between the neighbouring spaces. Most of these events were embedded in rituals as reflected in meaningful artefacts. The further detailed

analysis on these and other matters should allow us to view architecture as a multi-faceted process (see Barański *et al.* 2015) and put GDN Area in a broader chronological and spatial context (see Bayliss *et al.* 2014). Consequently, we hope to shed more light on social organisation of the settlement in the Late Neolithic.

Space 555 (B.II.3)

One of the main goals for 2015 season was to provide a direct stratigraphic and chronological context for TP architecture. Hence Sp.555, located directly alongside the eastern limit of TP trench, was assigned as the main research area. The 1960s data indicated that this space could have been a western annex to the main room Sp.440 which was exposed in 2008 (Marciniak and Czerniak 2008: 80-82). This assumption was confirmed by new excavations. In addition, new data was provided on complexity and elaboration of B.81.



Figure 22.3. Overview of Sp.555 as seen from the south.

Sp.555 covered an area of about 29m² and went slightly beyond the northern limit of the main room of B.81. It was delimited by simple walls (F.2874, F.7692, F.7693 and F.8071), one of which constituted also an eastern wall of Sp.440. All these structures were made up of mostly light gray (7/1 5Y) but also very pale brown (7/4 10YR) mud-bricks with a dominant sand component. The difference between the bricks and the mortar was almost impossible to record as both these elements seemed to have the same physical characteristics. Next, most of the internal wall faces were still coated with sandy pale brown (7/4 10 YR) make up that was sealed with a final and thin layer of marl plaster.



Figure 22.4. Close up view on bins situated alongside the northern wall of Sp.555 (Photo: M. Saj).

In the course of excavation it turned out that Sp.555 actually consisted of two rooms which were separated by a simple division wall (F.8059) and connected through a wide wall opening (Fig. 22.3). This break in the wall was highlighted with a plastered threshold (F.8057).

The northern space contained a set of four relatively well preserved bins (F.8066) of a different size. These narrow features with a plastered pisé core were situated along the northern wall (F.8071), which stood up to a height of about 1.6m (Fig. 22.4). The bin's interiors seemed to be deprived of archaeobotanical material.

However, there were various artefacts found within the infill of the bins ((22871), (22883) and (22888)), namely a worked stone, a cattle femur, two horn cores, a cattle astragal and two mandibles belonging most probably to a cattle and a boar. There was also a cattle cranium found in an upside down position as if it had fallen from an upper part of the wall into one of the bins. This artefact was situated next to relatively large and cuboid architectural debris but was not attached to it.

There is another interesting architectural feature to mention. We mean an ovoid and large form (F.8072) made up of clay that was situated against an eastern wall (F.2874) and adjacent to one of the bins. There were some small fragments of red and white painted plaster observed on its surface. Unfortunately, the very poor state of preservation of this feature precludes us from reconstructing its original form and function. However, a scar on the wall face suggests it could have been much larger.

The southern space within the annex was characterised by a north-east corner platform (F.8060) with a bench. Together with eastern and southern walls (F.2874 and F.7693) this feature was partly damaged by retrieval pits (F.8062 and F.8067) assigned to Sp.420. Next, a hearth (F.8061) in the form of a shallow rimmed structure was found to the south of the platform. There were also various special deposits found directly on the floor (F.8065) of Sp.555 (Fig. 22.5). The most interesting set of artefacts includes: a stone polisher, a stone palette, an aurochs mandible, fragment of an articulated cattle limb, and sheep / goat bones. These artefacts were found lying in a row in close proximity to an elaborated wall opening in the southern wall (F.7693) that connected Sp.555 and Sp.567. This break in the wall with well-rounded and plastered corners was blocked with a bucranium and two horn cores (22835).



Figure 22.5. Close up view on special deposits on the floor of Sp.555.

Both northern and southern rooms within Sp.555 had a multi-plastered marl floor (F.8066 and F.8065 respectively). Curiously, no inlaid pebbles were observed as compared to a screed floor within the main room of B.81 (see Marciniak and Czerniak 2008: 81). In addition, the floor level in Sp.555 was documented about 0.7m and 0.3m lower than floor level in Sp.440 and Sp.561 respectively. However, the unearthed bottom of Sp.561 was, in fact, laid later than the floor within the annex.

The entire interior of Sp.555 was filled with debris of diverse nature ((22813) and (22871)) comprising mostly crashed building materials and chunks of stratified sediment sealed with a thin ashy deposit (22870). It is very likely that these architectural remains originally made up a ceiling or roof structure that collapsed suddenly. And that would at least partially explain numerous and exceptional artefacts that were found within this heterogeneous room-fill. A mace and a richly decorated arrow rectifier are two of the stone tools especially worth mentioning. This room-fill and underlying sequence of floors within the northern part of Sp.555 were truncated by a large and oval pit (F.8068) that was only partly excavated.

Space 561

The discovery of Sp.561 to the south of the annex and the main room of B.81 came as a surprise as it was not documented in the 1960s plans. More importantly, this space was connected through carefully modelled wall openings with not only Sp.555 (B.81) but also Sp.537 (B.142). With such stratigraphic and architectural evidence in hand, we decided to slightly extend the initial trench limit to the south in order to learn more about the character of this space. Despite this additional work, Sp.561 clearly extended beyond the limits of excavation. What we managed to expose, however, was an L-shaped area of about 14m² (Fig. 22.6) that was delimited, from the north and west by simple and plastered walls (F.7692-7694 and F.7696). In the north-west part, these walls were set on bare compound foundations (F.3090 and F.3091) reminiscent of structures documented and excavated in TP Area (Barański 2014b: 175). This architectural and structural configuration seemed to be built onto the main building block of B.81 as a part of an extension.



Figure 22.6. Overview of Sp.561 as seen from the north.

The most elaborate architectural feature of Sp.561 was a plastered platform with a low and narrow bench at its southern edge (F.8063). It was situated within a north-west recess alongside the northern wall with a wall opening (F.7694). This break, about 0.6m wide, was almost identical to the wall opening in the southern wall of Sp.555. What is even more meaningful it was also blocked with a bucranium (22894), however, most probably a double one.

There were some stone tools and phytolith concentrations found directly on the platform surface. But most importantly a collection of about 200 astragals together with other worked stones and many diagnostic pottery sherds were deposited within the room-fill (22811) that sealed the entire Sp.551.

Building 142 (B.II.2)

B.142 was situated in the central part of 2015 GDN trench and had direct relationships with a set of various spaces, both internal and external. This building was abutted by B.138 (B.II.1) from the north, and B.140 (B.III.2) and B.141 (B.III.3) from the west, and Sp.555 (B.II.3) from the east. On the southern side, it was delimited by an open space Sp.544 characterised by midden deposits (Barański 2014a: 200) as well as ambiguous Sp.593 and Sp.561.



Figure 22.7. Overview of B.142 as seen from the north.

B.142 covered an area of about 38m². It seemed to be made up of only one space (Sp.537) that was delimited by simple walls comprising sandy and very pale brown (7/3 10YR) mudbricks bound with light grey (7/1 10YR) mortar. In general, the plan of the building as well as a layout of internal features matched in the archive plans (Fig. 22.7). B.142 had a central zone of activity that appeared to be sunken in relation

to the surrounding features, including a hardly preserved sequence of raised platforms and benches to the east as well as fire installations, namely an oven and hearths, to the south. The boundaries between clean and dirty areas within Sp.537 were marked by ashy deposits. No art or other installations were observed on the walls as these structural elements were barely preserved beyond the height of the floor surface. Although, a multi-layered wall plaster was preserved in several places (eg. F.7691).

The excavation work concentrated on eastern part of B.142. The south-east corner of the building with the remnants of different occupational surfaces as well as related features and artefacts (e.g. *in situ* preserved ceramic bowl) turned out to be particularly interesting and informative. The partial excavation undertaken in this area allowed us to document a multiple sequence of platforms (F.8073 and F.8078) separated by ashy deposits including rake out material that came from neighbouring fire installations (Fig. 22.8). This sequence was situated on the top of room-fill that seems to be associated with re-building of the southern wall of B.142, which involved, among other things, connecting Sp.537 and newly built Sp.561 through an opening in a simple mud-brick wall set on compound foundations. The contemporaneity and long use of these two spaces is an important argument for complexity in spatial and social organization of space in the Late Neolithic. It also sheds light on ritualized symbolic practices as the wall opening was at some point of time blocked with a double bucranium (22849).



Figure 22.8. Close up view on cross section through sequence of platforms within the south-eastern part of B.142.

Another sequence of only fragmentary preserved platforms (F.8051, F.8052, F.8056 and F.8058) with associated burials (F.7690, F.7699, F.8079 and F.8080) was revealed along the eastern wall (F.7691) of the building. Human remains of at least four individuals were documented and excavated. The bones were found mostly disarticulated due to the 1960s excavation and latter erosion of the cross section. Neverthe-

less, a careful analysis allowed us to reconstruct the depositional history of the burials and to select organic material which radiocarbon dating could be used. In this regard, particularly important and interesting were human remains (22896), including articulated lower legs and feet with associated stone beads of two kinds (Fig. 22.9).



Figure 22.9. Close up view on articulated human remains underneath the eastern platform of B.142.

Space 593

Sp.593 is rectangular in plan and about 1.4 x 1.2m internal space that was interpreted by Mellaart as an entrance to building B.142 (Mellaart 1962: 45; fig. 3). This view was consistent with his understanding of a neighbouring narrow lane Sp.544 as a place where a street ran (see Barański 2014a: 200). The current results, however, clearly stand against this hypothesis. First of all, no connection in the form of a doorway, wall opening or a crawl hole was documented between Sp.593 and B.142. It rather seems that Sp.593 was built as a part of re-building of the southern wall of B.142 as well as extending of B.81 to the south and east. Secondly, the localisation, the shape and the dimensions of Sp.593 were reminiscent of external ovens documented within Sp.333 in the South Area (Regan 2014: 133-136). There was, however, little tangible evidence to fully support this hypothesis due to the 1960s excavation and general wear in GDN Area. Also, no traces of ash neither baked floor surface were found within what could be the inner chamber of the oven. In contrast, the remnants of internal wall faces as well as the base of this feature (F.7697) were all covered with a fine layer of whitish plaster. More importantly, the space was filled in with numerous artefacts, mostly pot stands of various sizes and types (Fig. 22.10). In addition, there were infant burials (F.8089) revealed

within the base of this feature when its northern part was partly excavated. The further analysis of all these artefacts should allow us to provide more information on this ambiguous structure.



Figure 22.10. Close up view of special deposits within Sp.593 (Photo: A. Nowak).

Space 420

Sp.420 was assigned to a group of midden-like deposits that accumulated over remnants of B.81 (Marciniak and Czerniak 2008: 76). In 2015 this open area was further excavated to the southwest and the previous numbering was continued.

The space consisted of a thick and finely stratified midden ((22829) and (22834)) that sealed the room-fill ((22813), (22833) and (22842)) of Sp.555 and Sp.561. These distinct deposits as well as underlying floors (F.8064 and F.8065) and walls (F.2874 and F.7693) of B.81 were truncated by a few retrieval pits (F.8062, F.8067 and F.8069). These features were filled in with soft and ashy deposits that, just as the midden itself, contained a great number of various artefacts. Most of these finds were quite typical of domestic waste, however, a few of them, for example beads in various stages of production, bone tools, pot stands as well as two stamp seals, are worth mentioning.

Building 137 (B.I.5)

When removing the backfill in the south-eastern part of GDN Area, we hoped to reveal remnants of B.137. This building was documented on the 1960s Level I plan and seemed to be characterised by compound mud-brick structures that delimited internal space with a centrally situated hearth (Mellaart 1962: 45; fig. 3). Unfortunately, all the architectural features related to B.137, with the only exception of very poorly preserved eastern foundation (F.2896), were not preserved. This mudbrick structure was most probably dug into the midden (22834) that made up Sp.420.

Building 140 (A.III.2)

In his first preliminary report, Mellaart (1962: 55) suggested that B.140 might have been a stone workshop on the basis of the stone material he collected. The remnants of this building were re-exposed in 2014 and actually some crystals and stone tools were found lying on the floor surface (F.7654 and F.7656) within Sp.540 as well as Sp.541 (Barański 2014a: 199-200). There was, however, too little evidence to fully support or reject Mellaart's hypothesis. Therefore, we decided to reveal once again the two of internal spaces mentioned and excavate the floors that constituted the last of the distinguished occupational phases. As a result, we managed not only to collect, among other finds, more stone tools (e.g. large fragment of a quern) and raw material but also to define the exact extent of some of the internal architectural features, including an oven (F.7651), a basin (F.7650) and a hearth (F.7652) that were all situated alongside southern wall (F.7451) of Sp.540 (Fig. 22.11).



Figure 22.11. Overview of Sp.540 as seen from the east.

We also chose to take an advantage of the fact that the north-eastern corner of B.140 was either truncated by a huge pit or damaged by water streaming down the South Arealope as well as the 1960s sections. We undertook a sondage excavation in this area in order to reveal the life history of Sp.540 in the section as well as to learn more about stratigraphic relationships with the reference to remnants of B.146 (A.III.1) – a so called shrine situated directly to the north of B.140 (see Mellaart 1962: 61-65). The thick colluvial deposits together with some of the underlying room-fill (31906) were excavated until an architectural basal boundary was reached. Consequently, a considerably large and well preserved platform (F.8088), delimited by multi-plastered corner walls (F.7653 and F.7676) with a clear horizontal moulding, was revealed (Fig. 22.12).



Figure 22.12. View on architectural features exposed within the sondage trench.

With reference to the relationships between B.140 and B.146, they still remain a nagging puzzle due to the scale of the 1960s excavation and the fearsome amount of backfill that covers the remnants of related architecture.

Space 544

Some minor excavation work continued also in Sp.544 (see Barański 2014a: 200) in order to assign stratigraphic relationships between this open area and neighbouring buildings. As a result, we can argue that the midden deposits continued underneath compound foundations of B.141 and abutted the walls of B.111 (B.III.4).

Space 1010

Sp.1010 constitutes all the backfill of the Mellaart Area. This year, after discussion with lab specialists, the decision has been made to collect only human bones as well as visual appealing artefacts as all the other finds had very limited archaeological meaning.

Conclusions

The 2015 season was the last of the field seasons undertaken as a part of GDN research. It provided a large amount of valuable data. Rich material culture together with collected architectural, sediment and organic samples is going to be analysed in the following years in order to shed more light on spatial and social organisation of the Late Neolithic settlement.

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