HAKEMI USE EXCAVATIONS WITHIN THE ILISU PROJECT

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Key Words: *Hassuna • Samarra • Upper Mesopotamia • Neolithic Pottery • Ilısu Project*

Abstract: Hakemi Use is located in the Upper Tigris valley. This mound settlement is *ca.* 150 km to the north of the modern Turkish-Syrian border. This site is within the flooding zone of Ilısu Dam built on the Tigris River. The excavations were started in 2001 and were completed in 2012 by a Turkish team from Hacettepe University at Ankara. The site consists of two individual settlements situated 200 m apart. The eastern one, known as Hakemi Use II, was a small Medieval (14th century) settlement. Hakemi Use I, to the west, contain just two periods: Late Assyrian and Late Neolithic. The archaeological deposit at Hakemi Use I are approximately four-meter deep and contain two building levels for Late Assyrian, and five building levels for Late Neolithic. This study covers a general assessment of the excavations carried out in the Hakemi Use I settlement.

ILISU PROJESİ HAKEMİ USE KAZILARI

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Hassuna • Samarra • Yukarı Mezopotamya • Ilısu Projesi*

Özet: Hakemi Use Yukarı Dicle Vadisinde konumlanmaktadır. Bu höyük yerleşimi günümüz Türkiye-Suriye sınırının yaklaşık 150 km kuzeyindedir. Yerleşim Dicle Nehri üzerine inşa edilen Ilısu Barajı göl sahasında kalmaktadır. Kazılar Ankara Hacettepe Üniversitesine mensup bir heyet tarafından 2001 yılında başlatılmış ve 2012 yılında sonlandırılmıştır. Burası birbirinden bağımsız 200 m uzaklıkta iki yerleşimden oluşmaktadır. Bunlardan doğuda bulunan ve Hakemi Use II olarak anılan küçük yerleşim Orta Çağ'a (14.yy) tarihlendirilmiştir. Batıdaki Hakemi Use I yerleşimi ise Geç Assur ve Geç Neolitik olmak üzere sadece iki dönemde iskan edilmiştir. Yaklaşık 4 metrelik arkeolojik dolguya sahip olan Hakemi Use I yerleşiminde Geç Assur dönemi 2 yapı katı, Geç Neolitik ise 5 yapı katı ile temsil edilmektedir. Bu çalışma Hakemi Use I yerleşiminde yürütülen kazıların genel değerlendirmesini içermektedir.

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Introduction

Hakemi Use was visited for the first time by an American team at the end of the 1980s as part of a survey undertaken in the area within the scope of the *Project of identification and conservation of the cultural assets to be flooded by the Ilısu Dam reservoir*[1]. There exists a second settlement to the east of the mound, which has not been reported by the American team (Fig. 1a). This second settlement, which is quite flat, almost at the field level, and located approximately 200 m to the east of Hakemi Use, was named Hakemi Use II by our team. Soundings at the small site revealed the existence of a Medieval (14th century AD) settlement of a single building level within Hakemi Use II. The higher Hakemi Use I settlement in the west was used as a cemetery by the medieval inhabitants in the east. The upper layers of the Hakemi Use I settlement have been destroyed during Islamic burials.

Location

Located within the borders of Tepe in Diyarbakır's district of Bismil, the settlement has a diameter of approximately 120 meters (1,2 hectares) and a height of 4 meters. Its actual size was reduced due to long years of agricultural activity on privately-owned land. It is situated on the right bank of the Tigris River concerning the flow direction. Today, the flat settlement, located 200 meters from the asphalt road connecting central Bismil and Tepe, is hardly visible from the road. Formerly located on the Tigris riverbank, the settlement is currently situated about 200 m south of the relocated riverbed (Fig. 1b).

Excavations

Systematic excavations at Hakemi Use were started in 2001 and the most recent field works were carried out in 2012. Excavations were focused on the area near the former Tigris riverbed in the northern part of the settlement to establish the relationship between the river and the settlement. Virgin soil was reached in some of the trenches in the north of the settlement. Excavations conducted in these trenches covering an area of approximately 1000 m^2 allowed to identify the stratigraphy of the settlement (Fig. 2a). The studies revealed that Hakemi Use was inhabited only during the Late Neolithic and Late Assyrian periods. Although during the first years of the excavations, it was presumed that there could also be Old Assyrian, Middle Assyrian, and Early Iron Age periods[2], the building levels became more evident as the excavations proceeded. On the other hand, the results of other excavations in Ilısu allowed a comparison of materials recovered in Hakemi Use and it has been established that the settlement was inhabited only during the Late Assyrian period after the Late Neolithic (Fig. 2b).

The Late Assyrian Period

The Late Assyrian settlement, which begins immediately beneath the surface soil, has two building levels[3]. Although no written documents were recovered during the excavations, other finds suggest that

1 Algaze 1989.

2 Since few archaeological surveys were conducted in the area before the excavations in Ilısu, materials comparison was mainly based on excavations carried out in Northern Syria and Northern Iraq. As the building levels became more evident and materials comparison in solid contexts was possible during the excavations in Ilısu, it has been established that all of the Assyrian ware excavated in Hakemi Use belongs to the Late Assyrian period.

3 Tekin 2018, 422.

this might be a small village, perhaps a hamlet, near Tushan, an Assyrian provincial center. Cultural deposits near the surface date from the Late Assyrian period and has been considerably destroyed due to long years of agricultural activity as well as medieval burials on the settlement (Fig. 3a). Consequently, intact architectural remains dating from this period have unfortunately been destroyed to a large extent and only offer a possibility of completion on paper (Fig. 3b). Small and detached *kerpiç* (mud brick) buildings have a rectangular plan as well as stone foundations. Each building has a small front courtyard paved with medium and small-sized untreated stones. There is no unity of direction among the excavated cist and simple burials that were buried under the floors of both houses and yards. Some of these graves containing skeletons of different sexes and age groups offered no archaeological finds while rich finds were recovered in others. It should be noted that often, no archaeological finds were recovered in the carefully arranged cist graves, except for two stone beads recovered in the cist grave excavated in trench G8b in 2005. The cist graves belong to the 1st Building Level of the Late Assyrian period of Hakemi Use. The rectangular tombs measure less than two meters in length (Fig. 4a). The long sides of the graves comprise at least two vertically-placed flat slabs, made of limestone or conglomerate abundantly found in the area, while the short side consists of a single wide slab. Stone plates were placed on the cist graves to completely cover them.

In the Late Assyrian burials, on the other hand, bodies were buried either in a hocker or dorsal position. Some of the dorsally-buried bodies had both hands placed on the abdomen at waist level and an iron knife was left beside the body. Also, terra cotta pots were left in all of the burials, regardless of the dorsal or hocker positioning of the body. In some of the graves, handmade kitchenware was found besides fine, wheel-made *Assyrian Palace Ceramic*[4] (Fig. 4b). Open-ended bronze armlets or bracelets with serpent heads, tile vessels, pieces of embroidered golden dresses, bone tubes with open ends, small animal figures made of ivory, and cylindrical serpentine seals were also recovered in the Late Assyrian burials of Hakemi Use (Fig. 5a).

A multitude of potsherds known as *Early Iron Age Ware* and generally identified with several rows of deep grooves on the exterior side of the rim was found along with the wheel-made Assyrian ceramic (Fig. 5b). This type of ceramics, which was not recovered in any of the graves, is less, in proportion, than the Assyrian ceramic. Although in the first years of the excavations, these wares were believed to represent a separate building level in Hakemi Use[5], this idea was abandoned as the excavations proceeded. As it has been observed in almost all of the excavations within the scope of the Ilısu Project, the mentioned type of ceramic ware and wheel-made Assyrian ceramic ware originate from the same context. They are made of a rough handmade paste and generally have the form of medium-sized pots. Various bowl types can also be observed.

4 Tekin 2009.

5 Tekin 2004.

These wares, which were first recovered in Norşuntepe[6], one of the excavations within the scope of the Keban Project, were named *horizontal fluted ware* or *grooved ceramics* in the archaeological literature. Generally known from the excavations conducted in Eastern Anatolia before the Ilısu Project, they were believed to be characteristic handmade pots dating from the Early Iron Age. However, excavations in Hakemi Use or elsewhere in Ilısu demonstrated that these pots were used together with wheel-made *Assyrian ceramic* in the Upper Tigris valley during the reign of the Assyrian Empire.

Hakemi Use was one of the small settlements near the Assyrian provincial capital of Tushan. The small resident population, perhaps consisting of a single big family, must have accomplished their mission. This is proven by the similarity of quality between the archaeological deposits recovered in the graves and those recovered in the *Assyrian Triangle* area (Fig. 6a). Written documents reveal that beginning from the mid 7th century BC onwards, the authority of the empire was compromised by the rising independence movements in distant regions such as the Upper Tigris valley. The political turmoil also undermined the authority of the provincial capital of Tushan within the region and small settlements subordinate to the central government such as Hakemi Use were gradually abandoned. Current data suggests that Hakemi Use was abandoned before the fall of Ninova, the Assyrian capital. A small Muslim village was established long after, in 14th century AD, 200 meters east of the main settlement, which was to be permanently abandoned later.

The Late Neolithic Period

Of the 4-meter-deep conserved archaeological deposits in Hakemi Use, a section measuring approximately 3,5 meters in depth belongs to the Late Neolithic period. The lack of a sterile layer between this section and the upper Late Assyrian settlement led to a blend of remains from both periods. As mentioned above, it was possible to reach virgin soil in quite a large area during the excavations. At the very base, on virgin soil, an animal bone was dated 6.100 BC by radiocarbon dating. The first population of the settlement inhabited a small village on the plain by the Tigris River.

Pottery

Five building levels belonging to the Late Neolithic period were identified within the settlement. Although architectural remains and archaeological deposits recovered within these five building levels show no significant differences, slight dissimilarities, mostly in pottery types, can be observed between the first two building levels and the rest. The pottery in Hakemi Use can be categorized into four main groups according to building levels as follows[7]:

6 Hauptmann 1969/1970.

7 Tekin 2013, 496, Tab. 44.1.

Building Levels	Standard Ware %	Dark-Faced Burnished Ware %	Orange Fine Ware %	Fine Ware %	Total %
Building Level 1	69	11	13	7	100
Building Level 2	70	12	13	5	100
Building Level 3	72	11	13	4	100
Building Level 4	73	10	13	4	100
Building Level 5	76	9	12	3	100

As demonstrated in the table, the largest group among the Late Neolithic wares of Hakemi Use consists of the *Standard Ware* (Fig. 6b) while the *Dark-Faced Burnished Ware* constitutes the second largest group (Fig. 7a). Named during the excavations in Amuq[8], Hatay for the first time, this latter is prevalent in Northern Syria and Cilicia (Çukurova). This type of ware recovered during excavations in Hakemi Use is also significant for it proves the close relationship between the two geographical regions. The third group consists of the *Orange Fine Ware*, made of a fine paste with little organic matter and occasional lime and sand. The exterior, as well as some of the interior surfaces, have linear painted decoration in tones of red, consisting mostly of diagonal triangles and horizontal and vertical lines within a band that extends from just below the rim till the middle of the body (Fig. 7b). Identified as *Archaic Hassuna Painted Ware* in the Tell Hassuna Excavation Report and named as *Orange Fine Ware* in Tell Sabi Abyad, located along the Balikh River in Northern Syria[9], this type of ware is being recovered in similar amounts in all of the Late Neolithic building levels at the excavation site in Hakemi Use.

The fourth group of Late Neolithic ware consists of the *Fine Ware*. These include *Standard Hassuna Ware*, as identified in the Tell Hassuna excavation report, which has linear painted decoration in tones of brown on a beige paste, as well as pots with incised decoration and Samarra-type pots, known as *Samarran Ware* and the best examples of which were recovered in Samarra[10] and Tell es-Sawwan[11] in Central Mesopotamia. Samarran ware was recovered only at the first upper two building levels in Hakemi Use (Fig. 8a).

Architecture

The Late Neolithic architecture in Hakemi Use usually consists of structures with two chambers, *pisé* walls, and no stone foundations. Yet, structures with circular plans that measure a few meters in diameter were also excavated. Finds recovered in these circular structures are similar to those recovered in rectangular structures. There is a general unity of direction among the structures, most of which extend from east to west. Yet, some are situated on the north-south axis and exceptionally others located on different axes than these two. The structures are not large enough for accommodation; also, a significant amount of the excavated structures do not have doors leading outside. Therefore, these structural remains must have been storehouses or cellars of houses. The living areas must

8 Braidwood — Braidwood 1960.
9 Nieuwenhuyse 2008.
10 Herzfeld 1930.
11 Al-Wailly — Abu Soof 1965.

have been on the second floor, accessed by wooden stairs. Tranches of *kerpiç* (mud-brick) of non-standard sizes were observed in some of the walls on the upper building levels. Both *kerpiç* and *pisé* were used on the same wall.

The buildings are detached, separated by a distance of a few meters from each other. The settlement plan in Anatolia during the Neolithic mostly includes houses attached by common walls, as opposed to detached buildings in Mesopotamia. This interesting distinction might be due to a difference in the conceptions of the conventional family in the two geographical regions. In Anatolia, where a family structure with strict boundaries had not yet appeared, structures were related to each other and open to common use in contrast to Mesopotamia, where nuclear families were probably clearly separated. This is a topic of discussion that needs to be studied in depth along with other finds.

A large number of furnaces and kilns were uncovered within the empty spaces inside and in-between the structures. These architectural elements are very similar in building techniques but differ in their floors. Fireplaces on the upper building levels were mostly covered with irregular gravel as well as certain amounts of flat pebbles, collected from the Tigris River, while large, regular, and flat stone slabs were used as paving material on lower building levels. The furnaces were mostly built for cooking. Children's and infants' graves buried under the floor near the furnaces in the houses are also interesting.

Burials[12]

A great number of burials were found buried under the floors inside as well as outside the buildings. Burials were uncovered at all of the building levels. They are all simple earth graves and contain bodies of different sexes and age groups, buried regardless of the unity of direction. No archaeological finds were recovered in some of the burials while other burials, especially women's burials, offered plenty of terra cotta pots. Most of the burials were designed for one person. Yet, there are also those in which two bodies were buried.

Distinct traces of straw and reeds in some of the graves suggest that bodies were wrapped in straw before being placed in the tomb. Also, stains of red ochre were observed on skeletons in some of the burials. Cranial deformation in some of the bodies is quite noteworthy and can be observed in all age and sex groups. This tradition, still observed today in Diyarbakır and South-eastern Anatolia in general, involves the infant's skull being tightly wrapped in a cloth to deform it for aesthetic purposes only.

Small Finds

As a Late Neolithic settlement, Hakemi Use is quite rich in its variety of small finds. These include spindle whorls made of clay or stone, suggesting textile production in the settlement, as well as awls made of leg bones of small cattle, demonstrating the prevalence of leather-craft. Yet, no workshop-like chambers were uncovered in the settlement. Most

[12] The graves in Hakemi Use are discussed in detail in an article in preparation for publication by Prof. Dr. Yılmaz Selim Erdal, Department of Anthropology of Hacettepe University, and will only be broadly explained here.

probably, open areas, rather than closed spaces, were preferred for the works.

The majority of stone tools consist of tools belonging to the chipped stone industry[13] and mostly made of local flintstone. Although fewer than flintstone tools, Hakemi Use has also a fine repertoire of obsidian tools, the closest obsidian beds being 250 kilometers east, within the Van Lake Basin (Fig. 8b). Three '*bullet-type*' obsidian cores have been recovered so far during the excavations, which suggests that chipped stone tools were made in the settlement.

Grinding tools used for the consumption of grains were made of limestone and basalt, abundantly found in the vicinity. A small number of rectangular mortars and cylindrical pestles made of basalt were also recovered, as well as a large number of grinding stones, typical of Neolithic settlements.

Stamp seals were recovered at each building level. The stamping surface of these seals made of clay and stone are all geometrical in shape, except for one that is circular and bears a linear of a four-legged animal. A great number of clay impressions made by several different kinds of stamps were also recovered[14]. These seal impressions are mostly found on clay slabs used as pot lids.

Tokens made of clay and stone are certainly the most interesting among the small finds. These objects were used for arithmetic calculations by non-literary or illiterate populations from the Early Neolithic onwards. Mostly made of clay and occasionally of stone, these tools have spherical, semi-spherical, conical, flat circular, and nail-like forms. Often recovered in groups, these objects were possibly kept in organic pouches or similar containers.

Conclusion

Until recently, the existence of Hassuna/Samarran ware, the first painted ware in Mesopotamia, within the borders of Turkey was rather questioned, this type of ware being considered rather typical of Iraq and Syria. The great number of excavations and studies conducted in these areas resulted in an assumption that the core region of the mentioned ware did not extend to the borders of Turkey. This has been partly disproved by the Ilısu Project. Excavations in Hakemi Use proved that Hassuna/Samarran ware reached as far as the Upper Tigris valley in the north. Yet, the Hassuna/Samarran cultural pack, mostly identified with ware, is far from being clear. Constructions based on few excavations[15] by some experts of Mesopotamia proved to be lacking solid foundations as the number of studies increased in time[16].

Hassuna and Samarra were identified, during the last century, as two different consecutive cultures of the Late Neolithic in Mesopotamia. Today, in the light of actual data, this can hardly be said. Nonetheless, there was no single homogeneous structure throughout Mesopotamia. The Upper Tigris valley (up until Amanos

[13] An article on the chipped stone tools recovered in Hakemi Use by Prof. Dr. Metin Kartal, Department of Archaeology of University Ankara is being prepared for publication.

[14] An article on the seals and impressions recovered in Hakemi Use is being prepared for publication.

[15] See Tell Hassuna, Tell Shimshara for Hassuna and Tell Matarrah, Tell es-Sawwan for Samara.

[16] For a detailed study on the subject see Tekin 2017.

Mountains), Northern Iraq (including Urmiyah and the Zagros Mountains), and Northern Syria (from Balikh till the Mediterranean Sea) seem to comprise the three main core regions. Yet another area of attraction is Central Iraq (up until Baghdad) while in the south, Tell el-Oueili[17] and Mandali[18] regions are closely related in terms of architecture, Samarran ware, and some small finds. Overall, the culture extended till Hakemi Use in the north and Tell el-Oueili near Basra in the south. It is not possible, nevertheless, to speak of a direct relationship between Hakemi Use and Tell el-Oueili.

The settlement was abandoned around 5.950s BC for unknown reasons. Three contemporary settlements identified during a survey[19] conducted in the area by our team demonstrate that after approximately 100-150 years, during the Early Halaf Period, populations resettled on natural terraces. Natural factors, such as drought and changes of the regime of the Tigris River, might have played a decisive role in the abandonment of the settlements in Hassuna/Samarra. However, excavation results do not allow a definite view on the subject.

Habitation restarted after a long time, at the beginning of the 9th century BC, in a small village or hamlet subordinate to the Assyrian provincial capital of Tushan, which was to be permanently abandoned before the fall of Ninova, the Imperial capital, in 612 BC. Long after, in the 14th century AD, a small Muslim village, located 200 meters east of the ancient settlement, would exist for a short period before being abandoned.

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Figure 8b: A big obsidian tool.

[17] Huot 1976.

[18] Oates 1973.

[19] The survey was conducted only in a small area located on the right bank of Tigris with respect to the flow direction, between central Diyarbakır and central Batman (approximately 100 kms).

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Figure 1a

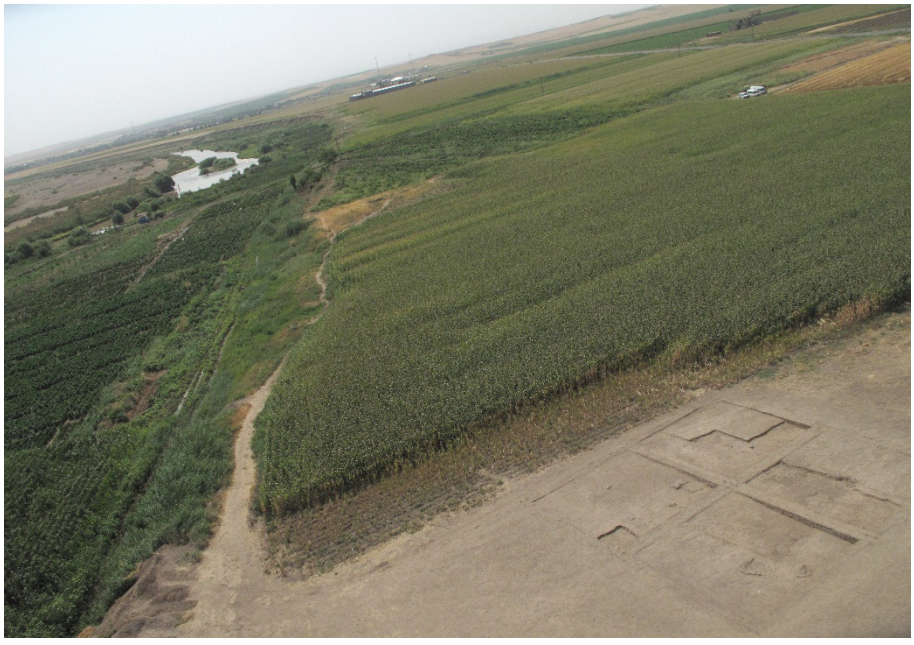


Figure 1b



Figure 2a

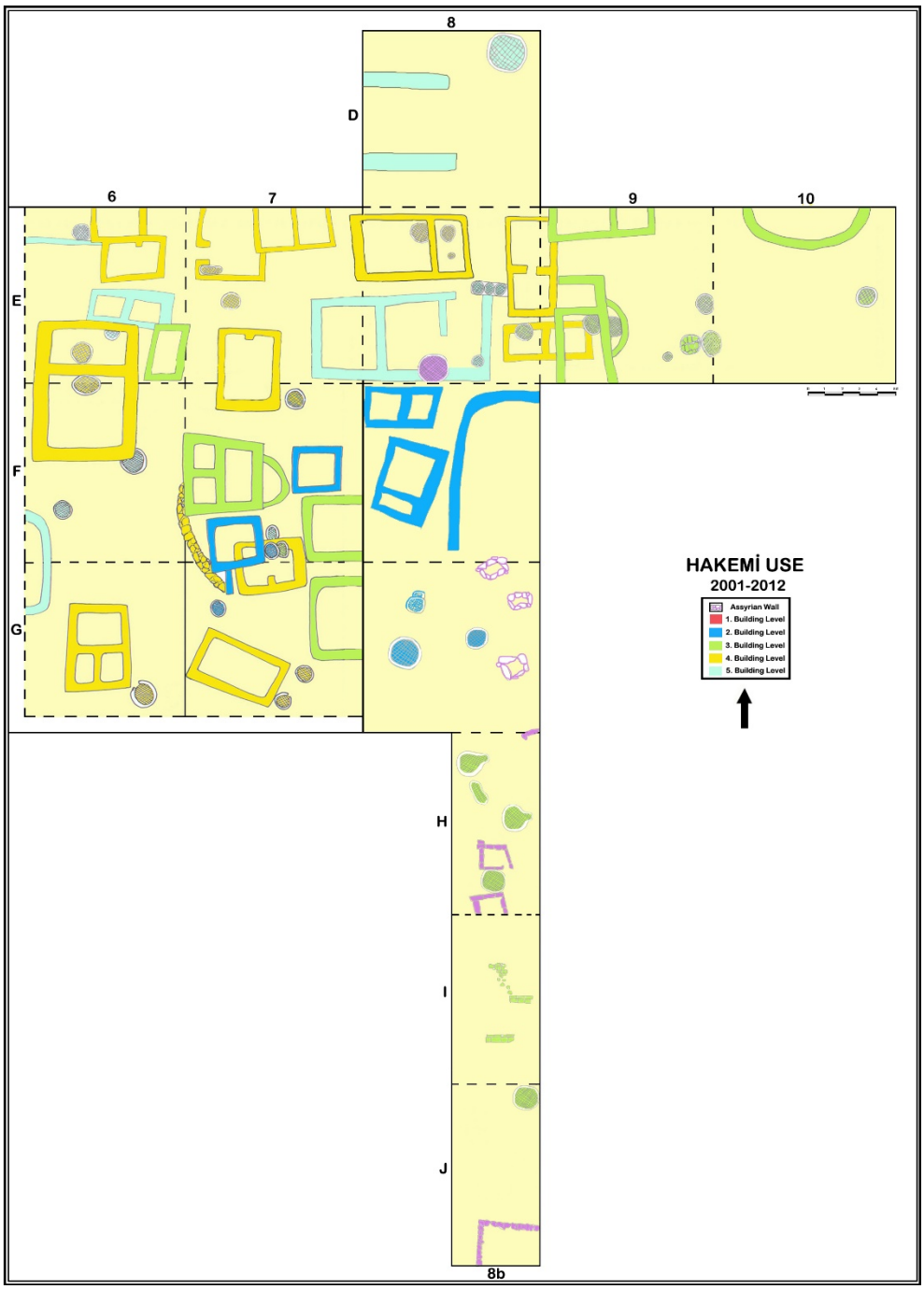

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HAKEMİ USE
2001-2012
Assyrian Wall
1. Building Level
2. Building Level
3. Building Level
4. Building Level
5. Building Level

Figure 2b



Figure 3a



Figure 3b



Figure 4a



Figure 4b



Figure 5a



Figure 5b



Figure 6a



Figure 6b



Figure 7a



Figure 7b



Figure 8a



Figure 8b