



Beycesultan, 1959: Sixth Preliminary Report

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BEYCESULTAN, 1959

SIXTH PRELIMINARY REPORT

By SETON LLOYD

A FINAL SEASON of excavating at Beycesultan was arranged in the autumn of 1959 and lasted from 15th September to 28th October. The work was once more in charge of the Director, who was accompanied by Mrs. Seton Lloyd and a staff consisting of Mr. Martin Harrison (Institute Scholar for 1958-59) and Mrs. Harrison, Mr. Harry Smith of Christ's College, Cambridge, Miss Carol Cruikshank, Mr. Michael Brett as architect and Bay Osman Aksoy as Turkish Government representative. The Assistant Director and Miss Clare Goff also took part in the excavations during the second half of the season.

It had been decided on this occasion to concentrate the entire resources of the expedition on the continued clearance of the Middle Bronze Age palace on the eastern summit of the mound, partly excavated in the seasons of 1954 and 1955, in the hope of recovering as much of the plan as possible before the excavations finally closed down. This was accomplished with considerable success. Two large new areas of the building were cleared and a point reached where any further extension would have met with serious practical difficulties. The depth at which the palace ruins are located can be judged from the fact that almost half the season was spent in the rather unrewarding task of recording and removing the remains of subsequent occupations, represented by four major building-levels (I-IV). Some initial disappointment was also occasioned by the excessively dilapidated condition of the palace ruins themselves when first encountered in the north-eastern area. But on the north-west side they were found to be a great deal better preserved; and during the final weeks of the season much new and surprising light was thrown on the planning and architectural principles illustrated by the construction of this unique building. These architectural discoveries indeed constitute the major results of our last season's work; for no museum objects or removable antiquities of any sort were found in the palace ruins. A little more will presently be said in this connexion, since their absence has led to certain important conclusions regarding the destruction of the building and the varying states of preservation in which its different sections had survived.

Areas Excavated

First then, the two main areas excavated in 1959 can probably best be located by reference to the plan published in *AS.* VI, Fig. 3, representing the stage which the clearance of the palace had reached by the end of the 1955 season. One of them, which may be referred to as the North-east Area, was a northward extension of the east wing of the building, already partially excavated in 1955 (map squares E/2, E/3, E/4 and D/4; cf. also the present Fig. 1). The other, to be called the North-west Area, was

on the west side of the central courtyard and exposed a new wing of the building, some walls of which had already been observed in Trench "K" (map squares E, F, G/7, 8, 9; cf. the present Fig. 2). Towards the end of the season these two areas were connected, across the southern end of the central courtyard, by an eastward extension of Trench "K". The North-east Area was dug in two sections ("AA" and "CC"), separated from each other by the old Trench "Y", cut in 1958 to determine the extent of the building: but for the present purpose it may be treated as a single unit (cf. the present Fig. 1).

Later Occupations

Over the whole of the North-east Area the remains of Late Bronze Age occupations stratigraphically distinguished as levels IA, IB and II, had been totally cleared and removed in previous seasons (cf. *AS.* VI, Fig. 2). In 1959 therefore we were mainly concerned with levels IIIA and B (also falling within the Late Bronze Age), and with two sub-periods in Level IV, which has hitherto been considered to represent a long period of occupation by a "squatter" population, after the destruction of the palace. The first systematic rebuilding of the city in Level III could here indeed easily be recognised in the stone foundations of comparatively well-built private houses, ranged along either side of the two parallel streets, which continued to be a feature of the "palace-enclosure" in Level II. Beneath these in Level IV, both the character and the orientation of the houses changed very considerably, and various stages could be distinguished in the re-occupation of the old palace site, following the disaster by which the city was destroyed in 1750 B.C.

It is clear for instance that at first the only parts of the ruins deemed suitable for re-occupation were the central courtyard and east wing. The west and south wings evidently remained still standing to a considerable height, as we ourselves in fact found them. The raised floors of the large chambers in the east wing evidently offered a firm emplacement for rebuilding: so such stumps of walls as remained standing were demolished down to this level and the debris spread evenly over the courtyard to the west. The size of these old palace chambers is again emphasised by the fact that one of them (Room 24) had a floor area sufficient to accommodate a complete house in Level VB. It can be seen in Plate Ia; a simple building, probably of the *megaron* type, with a rectangular central hearth built up from the pavement and beside it a rather slovenly open rubbish pit. The other circular depressions in this picture are grain-storage pits intruding from the level above. The whole north-east area was honeycombed with such pits, which greatly complicated the excavation of the palace remains in that quarter.

North-east Area

It was in fact only with extreme difficulty that the plan of the north-east area could be recovered, as may be understood from one typical view of its remains which appears in Plate Ib. Nothing above floor level

remained standing. The stone substructure of the walls, often calcined into white powder by the heat of the fire, had spread into the "heating passages" or over the floors on either side, and their alignment could only be fixed by connecting the minute fragments of wall-face which survived. It was possible of course to determine which chambers had raised floors and which "basic" pavements. In Room 24, an abnormally large chamber with "heating passages", we could detect the presence in

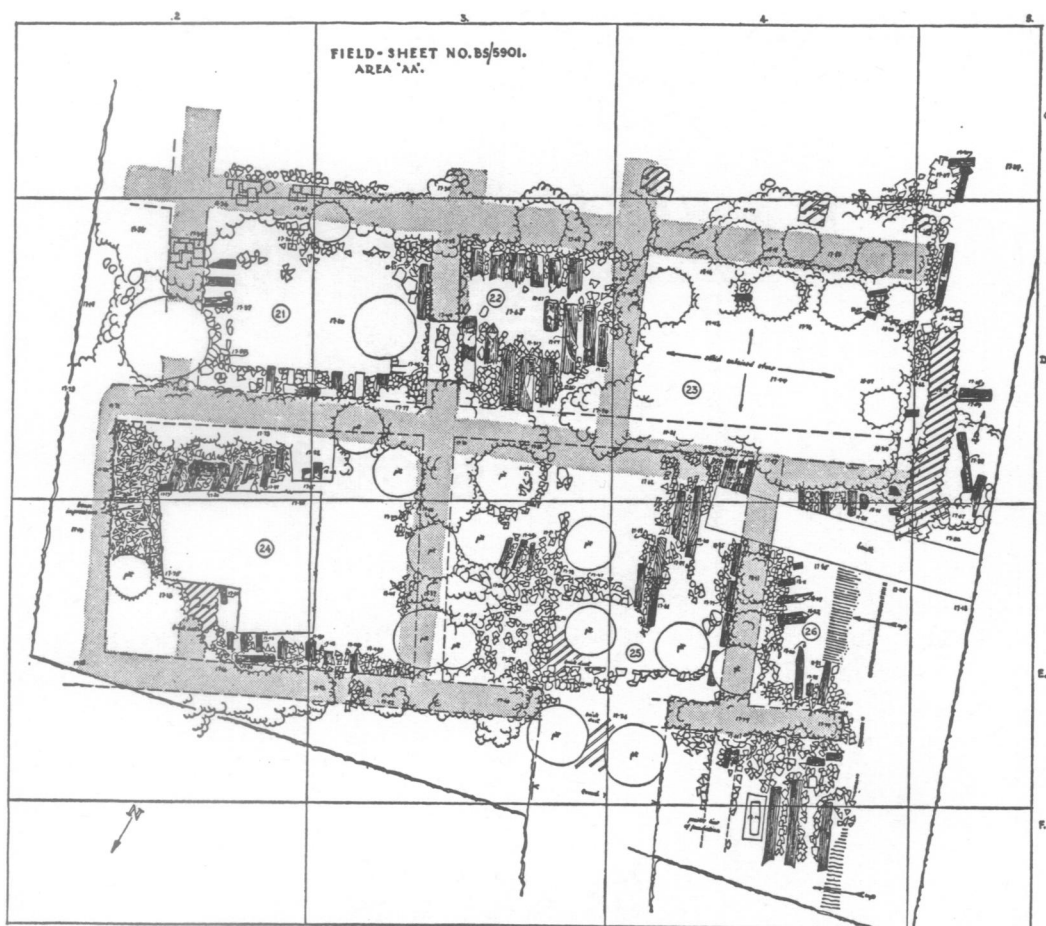


FIG. 1. The North-east Area.

the eastern corner of a solid structure which was almost certainly a small staircase (Plate II*a*). Room 25 may have had an entry from outside the building, though the outer wall was too denuded to be certain. Room 26, though one side of it was open to the central court, nevertheless seemed inexplicably to be provided with "heating passages" around the other three sides. Room 23 was at first a puzzle since it appeared to be a solid mass of fallen stonework: but this was eventually identified as the remains of an imposing staircase rising up in two flights from the central courtyard. And here the excavation extended far enough westward for us to learn something of the actual appearance of the courtyard itself. In

(Fig. 2) and they took the form of an area about 10 m. square entirely covered by an undulating mud pavement, once more covered with a deposit of carbonised reeds (Plate II*b*). It took some days to convince ourselves that what we were dealing with was the floor of an enormous upper chamber, fallen almost intact into a similar chamber below, when the wooden posts which supported it burnt through. But this was undoubtedly the case, for the walls still survived of a small hut or storehouse built directly upon it at a different angle by the squatters of Level IV, using burnt brick and stones taken from the ruins (visible in Plate II*b*). Lying near the south-west wall of the chamber, which projected through the fallen floor, were several huge scantlings of timber, up to 3 m. in length and only partly carbonised. These will be referred to in detail elsewhere.

One advantage of these fallen upper floors proved to be that, in falling, they had "blanketed" the fire beneath, and on breaking through them, we came upon a section of the building where the walls remained standing to a height of almost 2 m., the bricks hardly more than blackened by smoke and their timber framework intact, though in a carbonised condition (Plate III*a*). Thus for the first time we were able to study in detail this strange form of construction, which in the past we have so often attempted hypothetically to reconstruct. A study of these ruins in perspective, made by Miss Clare Goff, appears in Fig. 3, with a new diagrammatical reconstruction in the top right-hand corner. One sees the wall divided into "panels" of brickwork, and in the gaps between these, heavy logs laid transversely to form a base for the vertical posts, which we know to have been tied in to roof timbers above.¹ There are also "runner" beams at intervals of five or six courses in both faces of the wall itself and the ends of these also were tied in to the vertical posts and attached by cross-pieces to one another. Then comes the stone sub-structure, which also was reinforced with runner-beams at intervals, and finally the timber foundations. These wooden foundations were a feature which had not previously been observed in other parts of the building, and they now throw new light on the construction of the so-called "heating passages" which have been discussed in previous reports. One now sees how, before starting to build the wall, a foundation trench must have been dug at least three times the breadth of the wall itself. In this beams of wood were laid transversely, side by side. The wall itself was then built along the centre of the beams, leaving spaces on either side, which could either be roofed in with smaller joists to form "heating passages" or simply filled in with earth up to the pavement level on either side. The very long and heavy timbers used as foundations in the case of an important wall can be seen in Plate IV*b*, where they have been exposed by removing the burnt debris from the "heating passage". These were simply tree-trunks of juniper, their ends untrimmed after felling.

¹ Precisely the same form of construction, found by Tahsin Özgüç at Kültepe, is reproduced by Rudolph Naumann in *Architektur Kleinasien* (Tübingen, 1955), Fig. 88, p. 101.

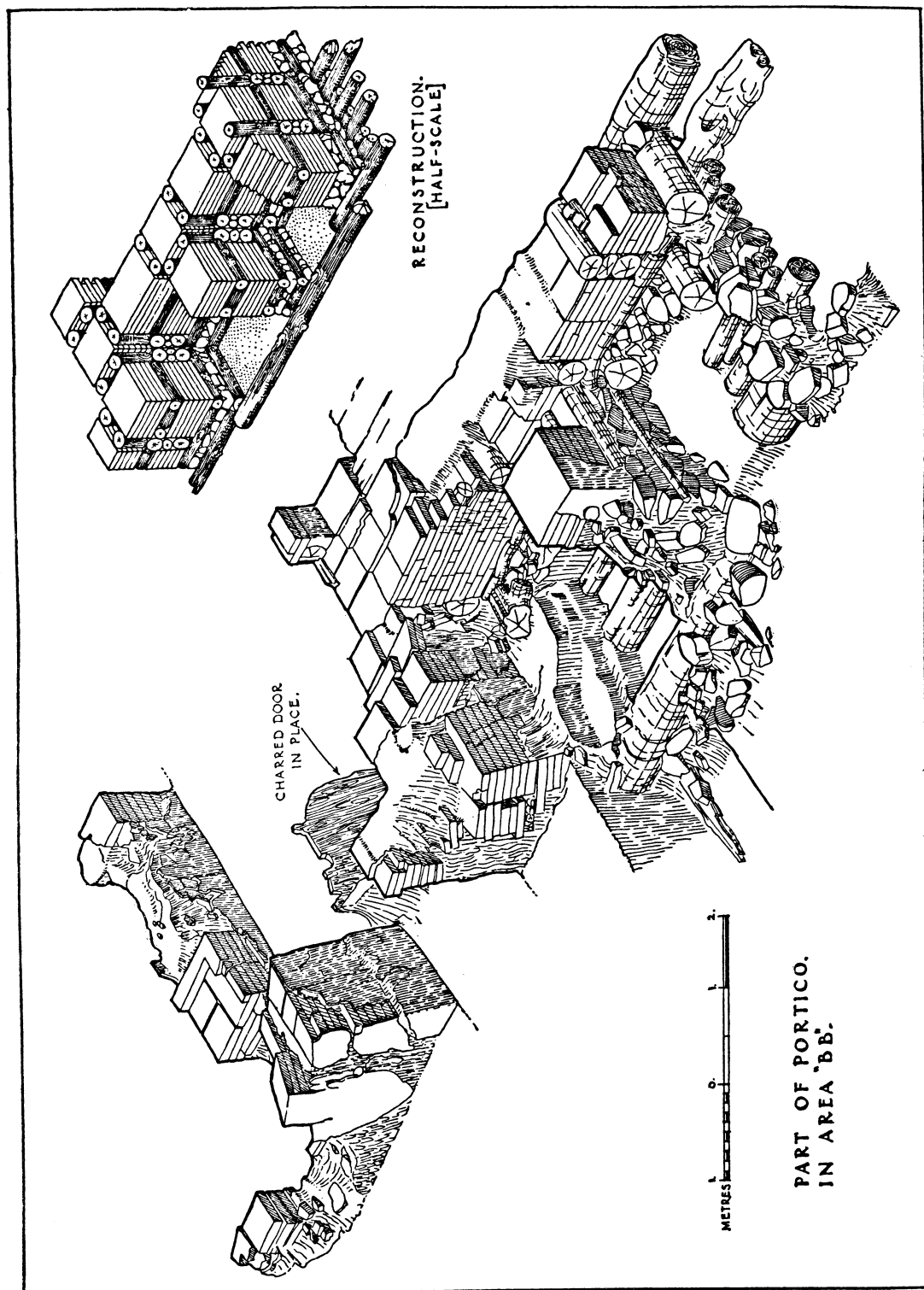
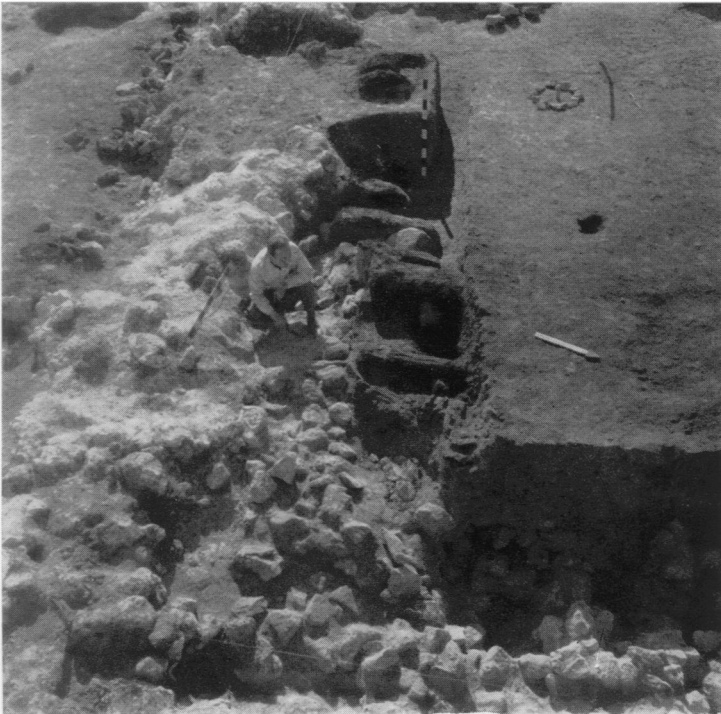


FIG. 3. Architectural remains of Room 32.



(a) Private house in Level IVb occupying a single chamber in the ruins of the Burnt Palace.



(b) South wall and "heating passage" in Room 24.



(a) Structure in the corner of Room 24.



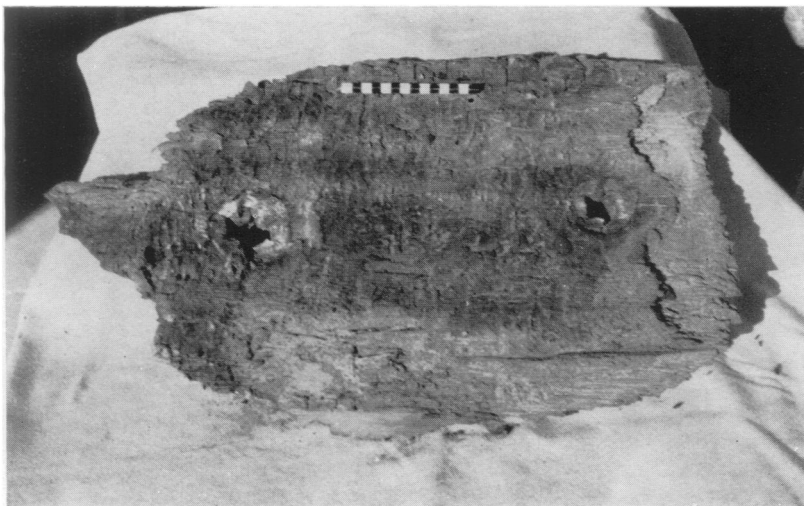
(b) Fallen upper floor lying over the ruins of the reception hall (Room 28).



(a) Well-preserved walls of the "Portico" (Room 32) with timber framework intact.



(b) Fallen upper floor in Room 33 covered with carbonised hay.



(a) Fragment of timber with square sockets for circular wooden bosses.



(b) Timber foundations of the south wall of reception hall (Room 28).

As work on the north-western area progressed, the plan of the west wing began to emerge (Fig. 2). The group of walls described in the previous paragraph shaped themselves into a pair of rectangular niches and the foundations were uncovered of a second pair, facing the first across some sort of portico. This was approached from the west through a large chamber, part of which had been cleared during the excavation of Trench "K" in 1955 (Figs. 3 and 8 in *AS. VI*, 1956). It had "heating passages" and a rush-strewn floor. From here, a doorway led northwards to the group of smaller rooms which constituted the west wing (cf. Fig. 3), and here again the fall of an upper floor had preserved the door itself almost intact—a single plank of pine nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ metres in width—standing ajar as it had been left.

None of the rooms in the west wing had "heating passages"; but all had raised floors except Room 36 which seems likely to have been a light-area or perhaps to have contained a staircase. Each room also had the remains of a fallen upper floor, and one, Room 33, was of special interest in this respect (Plate III*b*). In this case the mud floor was deeply bedded, not in rushes but in hay, done up in bundles with cord, in which various wild grasses as well as the leaves and seed-pods of wild flowers were preserved by carbonisation and easily recognisable. (It is hoped that a specialist commentary on them may be published elsewhere.) Lying again upon these were many broken fragments of wooden rods about an inch in diameter. These one supposed to be part of the roof-structure over the upper floor.

Architectural Features

To the east of the portico was the great reception hall (Room 28) whose fallen upper floor had so puzzled us at the beginning of the excavation. It had an abnormally wide doorway leading south-west into a similar large chamber (Room 29), and here was another interesting architectural feature. The wooden threshold consisted of three heavy baulks of roughly dressed timber, laid longitudinally side by side on a foundation of smaller beams; and still bedded in the carbonised wood, in an appropriate position, was a hemispherical plate of bronze which must either have been the lining of a socket in which the door-pivot revolved or a "shoe" attached to the pivot itself, as has been found in Assyrian buildings. Near this doorway also lay the three large wooden fragments previously mentioned, which may have formed part of the door-lining or architrave. On the reverse side of one, when we lifted it, we found two square sockets about 30 cm. apart, still containing the remains of circular-headed wooden bosses which may perhaps have been ornamented with carving (Plate IV*a*). It has always been assumed that architectural features of this building such as wooden columns, panelling, etc., may have been enriched in this way; but this was the first, and may remain the only evidence found during the excavations to confirm the impression.

Some further puzzling features of the palace building came to light

during this final season's excavation and not all of them have yet been satisfactorily explained. One was the perennial problem of raised floors and "heating passages". The latter seemed to occur in all chambers except those obviously too small (e.g. those of the west wing), and those serving as light-wells or for other reasons obviously open to the sky. These latter were floored at what came to be called "basic" pavement-level (i.e. level with the tops of the timber foundations). In a few cases these floors were "made up" with logs of wood and stones in between to hold them in position (e.g. Rooms 22 and 25 in Fig. 1). But in others the pavement was merely of trampled earth—with no obvious provision for drainage. Again in the so-called "portico" (Room 32) there was an earth pavement at basic level. One therefore descended into it from the raised floor of the large vestibule (Room 31), and a steep ramp, made up with logs and stone, brought one up from it to that of the reception hall (Room 28), leaving the ends of its wide "heating passages" exposed on either side. One can only suppose that the latter would have been boarded up to make a presentable appearance. But since it will presently be shown that all three of these chambers form units in the main axial approach to the building from the west, the mud floor of the portico, contrasting with the rush-strewn and artificially heated pavements of the reception rooms on either side, is difficult to explain, and one must perhaps suppose that, on ceremonial occasions at least, it was covered with some sort of woven matting, of which no trace could be expected to remain.

The Plan Reconstructed

Having dealt in a summary manner with the construction and certain other details of the newly-exposed parts of the building, we may now consider the plan as a whole. And for this purpose, the schematic reconstruction made in the autumn of 1959 (Fig. 4) may be referred to.

First, then, it will be seen that the outside limits of the building have still only been clearly defined in two places. The double outer wall on the south side is one and the northern wall of the north-east wing the other (since it was shown in Trench "Y" that the building extended no further in this direction). An attempt was made at the very end of the 1959 season to complete the clearance of the east entrance, found in 1955, but this was frustrated by a sudden change in the weather. Judging from the formation of the mound, however, the east wing seems unlikely to extend beyond the last range of chambers now partly exposed on that side. The west wing, on the other hand, clearly does have a further extension northward, and the shape of the mound leaves room for a good deal more building on the north side. The comparative scarcity of storage-space and service arrangements in the part of the building excavated has suggested to us that on this side there may have been a wide service courtyard surrounded by storage magazines (similar to Rooms 4 and 14 in AS. VI, Fig. 3).

As for the south-western part of the building, where a fairly large area had to be left unexcavated owing to the accumulation of dumped

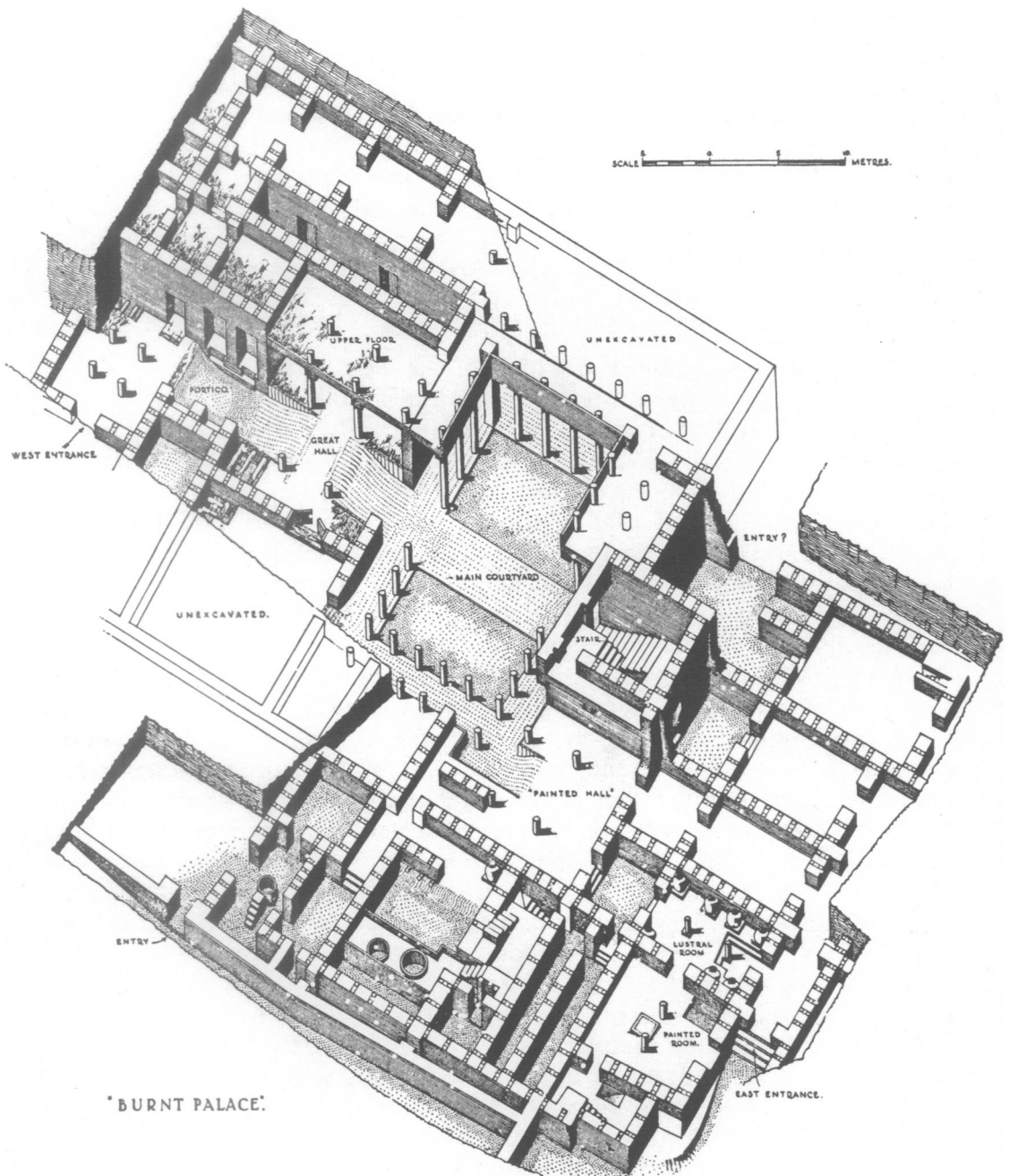


FIG. 4. Schematic reconstruction.

earth, there can be no doubt that here occurred the most important entrance to the building: and we know from the excavation of Trench "D" in 1955 that it was approached up a steep ramp from the direction of the river-crossing, where one of the principal city gates must have been situated. Fairly certainly there would have been a "lustral chamber" similar to that adjoining the east entrance (Room 16), and it was through this that one entered the broad vestibule (Room 31), first discovered in

Trench "K". Here one turned at a right-angle to face the main axis of approach to the centre of the building, which passed through the "portico", up into the great pillared reception hall and down again into the central courtyard. Here one was faced by the broad stairway leading to the upper floor. The "portico" itself is difficult to reconstruct, though it can be recognised as a carefully considered architectural feature. The niches did not come down as far as the floor and, if accessible at all, must have been reached by small steps. It would perhaps be over-fanciful to do more than suggest that they were used for some ceremonial purpose.

The Upper Storey

As has been said, the excavation of the west wing provided the first positive evidence of the existence of an upper floor, and it showed that the reception hall (Room 28), which measured 17 by 12 m., was duplicated in the upper storey by a chamber of similar dimensions. On the other hand, neither in the "portico" nor in the vestibule beyond it (Room 31) were any traces found of a fallen upper structure, and one is left to assume that these chambers ran up to the full height of the building, which would be compatible with their function as part of a monumental entry to the palace. As for the east and south wings, in the case of the former no conclusion could be reached owing to the total denudation of the ruins down to ground-floor level: but one would naturally assume that here also there was an upper storey. In the southern wing, on the other hand, the ruins remained standing to almost a man's height: but only in one chamber (the long storage magazine, No. 14), was a large fragment of the upper structure found fallen intact, and as this showed signs of having frequently been replastered on its upper surface, it seemed more likely to be part of a flat roof. It may therefore be right to think only of the west and east wings as standing two storeys high. Even so it is clear that the upper chambers which they contained were as pretentious in size and character as those below: and one is immediately reminded of the principle adopted in the Cretan palaces, of placing the more important suites of reception rooms on the upper floor ("*piano nobile*", as Evans christened it), while the rooms below were merely storerooms and passages. By contrast, in this Anatolian building both floors were obviously used for residential purposes, and this may well be explained by differences of climate due to the altitude of the Anatolian plateau (c. 3,000 feet). The ground floor with its possible provision for heating, was more suitable for use in the winter, while the upper floor may well have consisted partly of "balcony"-type chambers, open on one side to the air, like the wooden upper storeys of modern Turkish houses in nearby villages. Such rooms can of course only be reconstructed from fairly scanty evidence, but Rooms 20 and 26 are two examples which, to judge by their shape, would have had counterparts on the upper floor open on one side to the wooden gallery around the courtyard and so to the open air beyond. It seems probable that the same applied to the huge upper chamber above the reception hall. We in any case gained the impression that the whole of

the upper storey was lightly constructed, perhaps largely of wood (as again is the habit of the very conservative peasant builders of the present day). For the actual volume of fallen debris seemed hardly commensurate with the remains of a heavier structure.

Where an upper storey occurred, open "areas" were of course necessary to bring light to the rooms below. These were easily recognisable by their pavements at "basic" level and seemed logically well-placed for the purpose (e.g. Rooms 30, 36, 22, 19 and 1).

Here then is a Middle Bronze Age public building which, in its construction and planning, has no exact parallel in the archaeology of Anatolia as known up to now. It might have been hoped that, apart from the character of its architecture, the surviving contents of its actual rooms might have thrown much new light on the people who built it. But in this we were again disappointed. The total absence beneath the fallen debris of any kind of removable object whatsoever, has indeed led us to speculate anew regarding the manner in which the building met its end. We had earlier considered the possibility of systematic looting before it was set on fire: but the absence even of broken pottery fragments or other litter which would have resulted, has now brought us to the conclusion that, with news of a hostile army approaching, there may have been time to evacuate the contents of the palace as well as its inhabitants, and to transport them (as indeed the vast quantities of timber for the construction of the building had earlier been transported) to a safer place.

Finally, one may perhaps mention that, if a comparison of the reconstruction in Fig. 4 with the photographs of the actual remains suggests in the former too free a use of imagination, it should be understood that it is based entirely on inferences from evidence which will be presented in detail in a final publication.