

Fieldwork at the archaeological and rock art sites of the Hemma plateau (Hassake, Syria): season 2002⁽¹⁾

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Abstract. In northeastern Syria (prov. of Hassake), the basaltic plateau of the "Hemma" extends over 30 km between the towns of Hassake, in the south, and of Derbasiye, in the north. Eastwards this lava flow dominates the neighbouring plain of the wadi Aweidj of about 20/25 m. On this side, the edge of the plateau and the wadies that cross it were densely settled during the last six millennia BC, as testified by the remains of hundreds of circular and rectangular stone buildings as well as by thousands of carved rocks, constituting the first rock art sites systematically studied in Syria.

The mission

In 1998 and 1999, two brief survey and recording campaigns have been carried out by Paul-Louis van Berg on the site of Khishâm-1, as part of the Euro-Syrian mission of Tell Beydar (fig. 1 a). Since 2001, the archaeological study of the area has been undertaken by a joint Belgo-Syrian mission, which associates the Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie and the Interfaculty Research Center Spaces & Societies - Comparative Approaches of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). This mission intends to survey the whole plateau, to dig several test trenches and to study the rock art. It is directed by Paul-Louis van Berg for the Belgian part and by Khaled Ahmo (Department of Antiquities, Hassake), for the Syrian one. The fieldwork has been funded by the Fonds d'Encouragement à la Recherche de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles, the Research Center «Spaces & Societies -comparative approaches» (ULB), the National Fund for Scientific Research (Communauté Française de Belgique), the National Geographic Society (USA, grant 7202-02), and the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (Brussels).

Archaeology

Overview

The first studied sites in this project are Khishâm-1 and -2 (fig. 1 a). Khishâm-1 is located more or less 300 m west of the village of Khishâm, and about 5 km south of Tell Beydar. This area includes numerous stone buildings and one hundred carved rocks. Khishâm-2, 500 m south of the former site, extends in the valley of the wadi Kakhort, a small affluent of the wadi Aweidj, of which the lower flow crosses the plateau from west to east for about 1 km. The rock art site, encompassing some 450 carved rocks, covers the whole left bank. Archaeological remains are located alongside both flanks, but with a higher density on the left (van Berg 2001a, b; van Berg, Picalause 2001, in press a-b). Kefra, another large site, extends in a vast cirque opened to the south, 3 km north of Tell Beydar (van Berg, Picalause in press b). Archaeological structures are accompanied by 1200 carved rocks.

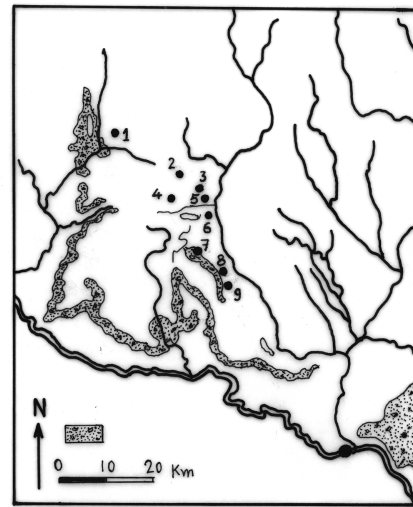
In the Fall of 2002, 25 km of systematic pedestrian survey have covered the eastern slope of the plateau, between the villages of Haramshadad in the north and of al-Halalia in the south, showing that archaeological remains

and rock art are omnipresent.

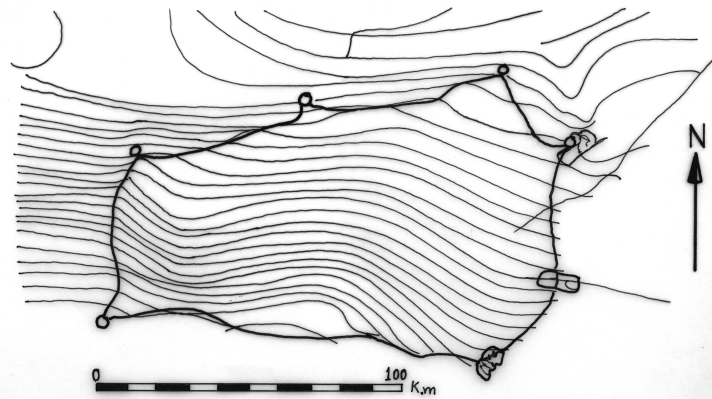
Four main categories of stone remains may be defined:

1. Desert-kites: These monuments, relating to the capture of wild animals, are formed by a polygonal enclosure flanked by small circular cells, mainly at the angles of the polygon and alongside its lower wall; two long rectilinear walls converge towards the entrance. Kites are generally settled on a slope, equilibrated on a natural crest, the opening walls on one side, the enclosure on the other, so that it could not be immediately seen by the entering animals. Two kites were known in 2001, nine more have been found in 2002. The largest one (Khishâm-2, Kite-1) has an enclosure of 140 m long and opening walls of some 500 m (fig. 1 b). Other kites have been found at Kefra (2), between Tell Beydar and Qasrek (2), Khishâm-1 North (2), Khishâm-2 (3) and el-Barfoïya (1). This abundance on such a restricted territory suggests a global economical organisation relating to the capture of animals. Comparison with other Near Eastern sites suggests assigning these monuments to the Chalcolithic or the Early Bronze Age (5th-3rd millennium BC; Helms 1981; Betts, Helms 1986; Betts 1998; Echallier, Braemer 1995). Anyway, kites in Khishâm-2 and Kefra must have preceded large-scale sedentary settlement of these localities.

2. Dozens of undated circular buildings (diameter from 3 to 15 m) are settled near the water-courses in all the surveyed sites. Thick walls (c. 1 m) and careful construction tend to exclude an attribution to nomadic populations, as well as an exclusive enclosure function. Stone circles in Khishâm-2, Umm el-Masamir and el-Rahmaniya have yielded abundant ceramic



a



b

Fig. 1:
a: general map of the Hemma plateau indicating the sites surveyed in 2002. 1-En-Nabia; 2-Haramshadad; 3 - Kefra; 4 - Qasrek; 5 - Tell Beydar; 6 - Bashkoy; 7-Khishâm-1 and -2; 8 - el Barfoïya; 9 - Umm el-Masamir; 10 - Al-Rahmaniya. Lower part: Khishâm-2.
b: Khishâm-2: desert-kite 1 (drawn by F. Depuydt).

and/or lithic material.

3. Hundreds of quadrangular structures of various sizes could represent neo-Assyrian settlements (934 - 609 BC), like the one tested in Khishâm-2. In Khishâm-2 and Kefra, these structures may be gathered in organized areas

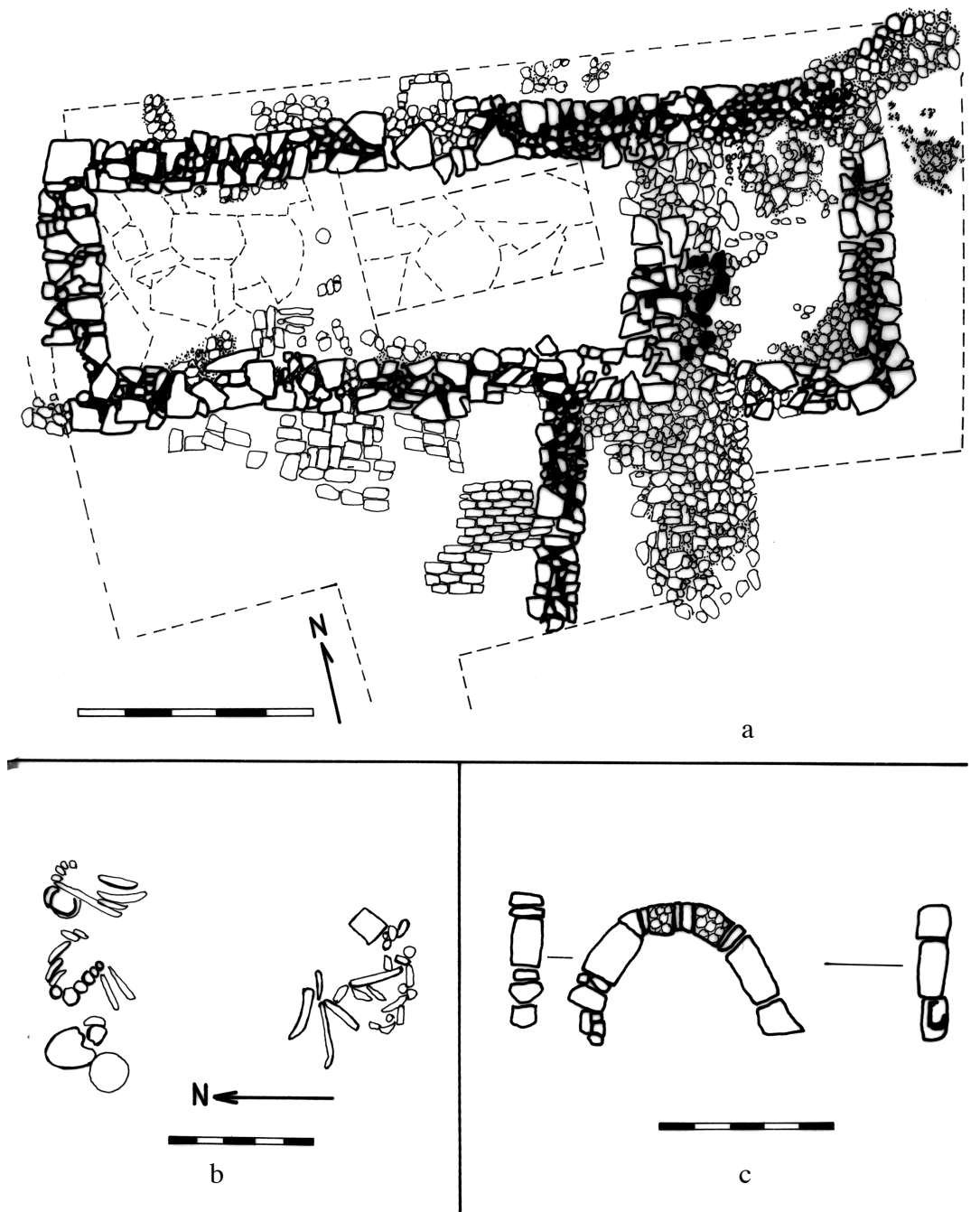


Fig. 2:

a: plan of the excavated architectures in Area 5 Khishâm 2 (Kakhort valley): 1 - bedrock; 2 - walls of the buildings 1 (large rectangular house), no. 2 (north-south wall preceded by a pavement) and no. 3 (small construction east of Building 1); 3 - pavements of Building 4; 4 - Building 5; 5 - walls of the enclosure built south of the buildings 1 and 2; 6 - collapsed walls of the different buildings; 7 - built tombs (cists or covering cairns); 8 - pavement preceding building no. 2; 9 - limit of the tested zone; 10 - hypothetical prolongation of the non entirely unearthed walls.

b: Plan of the child inhumations found in building 1 of Area 5 (Khishâm 2): 1 - tomb no. 11; 2 - tomb no. 12.

c: Fibula discovered on the floor of Building 1.

alongside visible streets. In both cases, large buildings with thick walls suggest the existence of an official architecture, while ruins cover superficies between 60 and 100 hectares. These are thus rural or urban major settlements, even if all buildings were not contemporaneous. On various sites, surface potsherds show that other rectangular constructions probably belong to the Seleucid (323-150) and to the Parthian period (150 BC to 224 AD).

4. In Haramshadad and in Kefra, two small tells have been found in the close vicinity of the plateau.

Material culture

So far, the gathering of surface material has only been carried out in a restricted series of rich sites. Nevertheless, some trends can be drawn out.

The Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods are well represented. The tells of Haramshadad and of Kefra have yielded, among others, ceramics dating to the Halaf culture, most probably in its later phase for Haramshadad (fig. 3, a). Moreover, few potsherds of the northern Ubaid and Uruk cultures have been discovered in Khishâm-1-North and Kefra.

An important Neolithic stone industry (polyedric nucleus, denticulates, small-size retouched elements, borers, etc.) has been gathered on the sites of Umm el-Masamir (fig. 3, b) and al-Halalia, both located less than 10 km northwest of Tell Kashkashok.

The Bronze Age is poorly documented by one potsherd of Metallic Ware and few elements typical of the 3rd millennium; some forms discovered in Kefra-East may be assigned to the medio-Assyrian period (1350-1200 BC).

The Iron Age delivers a majority of neo-Assyrian potsherds, suggesting that the basaltic plateau be densely settled during this period. Few Hellenistic and Islamic elements have also been recorded.

An undated basalt workshop has also been discovered in Umm el-Masamir.

A neo-Assyrian house and two necropoleis in Khishâm-2, Area V

In 2001, Paul-Louis van Berg had carried out two test excavations in a rectangular house of the Area V of Khishâm-2 (Building 1). The building (13 x 6, 5 m) is flanked to the south by a 150m² semi-circular enclosure. A grey floor covered by potsherds was then excavated in the house, as well as 4 human skeletons, inhumed at different heights above it (van Berg, Picalause in press b). The enlargement of the test trenches was undertaken by Nicolas Cauwe in 2002.

The complete cleaning of the walls allowed to recover an architectural sequence, of which the most ancient phase corresponds to Building 1 (fig. 2, a). The dry stone walls (width = 1 m) are built by courses of large bonds. They are preserved on more than 1m high in the south, and 50 cm in the north. A carved rock was found in stratigraphical position, under the northern wall.

In front of the southern wall, but resting on its external facing, other more recent buildings have been found. In the south, a basaltic wall, oriented on a north-south axis is pierced by a door preceded by a stone pavement preserved on 2 m* (Building 2). Resting on the eastern facing of that wall, a third building defines a quadrangular surface of a little bit more than 20 m* (Building 3). Southwards, a large basaltic wall (Building 4) partially doubles the eastern wall of Building 1 and seals up the door of Building 2.

Re-use of the area as a necropolis

In the sediment filling Building 1, seven more human skeletons have been found, showing that the funeral function of the house followed its abandonment. A small basaltic pack along the northern wall and few bone fragments preserved at the centre of the construc-

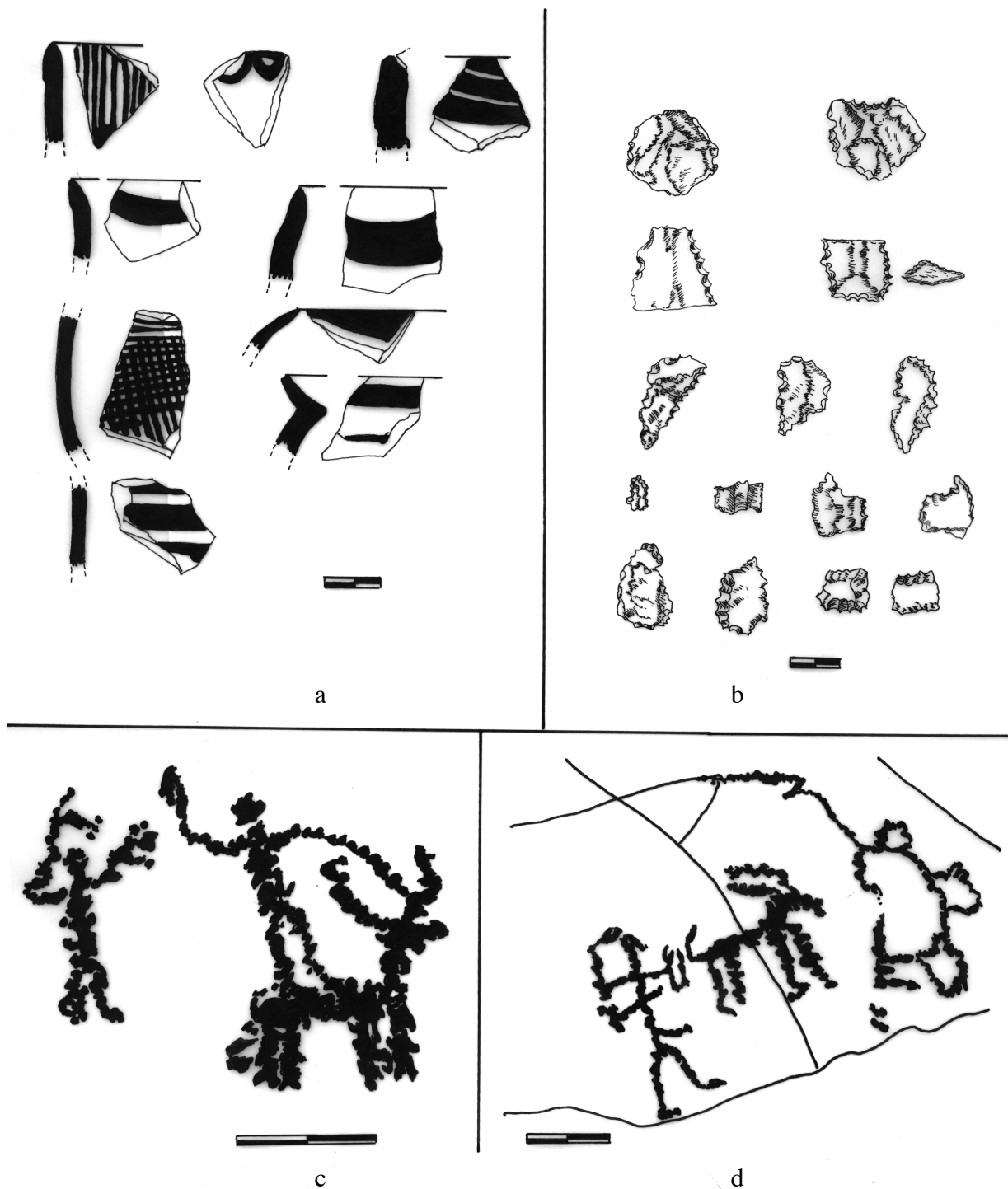


Fig. 3:

a: Halaf ware: 1-5 - Haramshadad; 6-7 - Kefra; 8-Khishâm-2, Area VII.

b: Umm el-Masamir. Lithic material: 1-7, 12 - Flint 1 - flaked element; 2 - nucleus on flake; 3-4 -blade fragments; 5, 7 - flaked pieces; 6 - borer; 12 - flaked element, part of a sickle? 8-11 - obsidian. 8 - flaked element; 9 -fragment of a small blade; 10-11 - troncaures.

c: Khishâm-2: divinity standing on a bull (KH2-E1).

d: Kefra, Sector F: hunter pushing an ibex towards a desert-kite.

tion suggest the existence of three supplementary inhumations. All the bodies are buried in a crouched position and oriented on an East-West axis, head being eastwards or westwards, facing north or south, body laid on the left or on the right side. Two children, 5-7 years old, were buried side by side (fig. 2, b). The grave goods include few ornaments of poor chrono-cultural value: simple copper earrings, a small glass bead, and some bone beads.

A second necropolis lies inside Building 3. At least 5 graves have been built there as small basaltic coffins. Several were empty, but sparse bones found close indicate that the coffins were plundered. One of these graves has yielded a very young child, crouched on the right side, the head towards the East, facing North.

Chronology of the sequence

The floor found within Building 1 has yielded potsherds typical of the neo-Assyrian period and a bronze fibula belonging to the 7th century BC (fig. 2, c). The majority of the potsherds found on the site belong to the same period. It is thus likely that the succession of the buildings was fairly quick. The stratigraphy shows that the second cemetery intervenes at the end of the sequence. The poor state of conservation of the bones, identical in both necropoleis, suggests a restricted chronological gap between them.

Rock art

General characteristics

(The study of the rock art at Khishâm-2 and Kefra is carried on by Vincianne Picalause and by Serge Lemaitre respectively.)

In Khishâm-2, the repertoire encompasses animal and anthropomorphic figures (ibex, gazelles, bovines, lions, dogs, wild canids, wild donkeys, horses, cervids and scorpions, hunters, characters with raised arms or holding weapons [axe, sword, spear]).

The figures may be isolated, juxtaposed or form real scenes. Among those, the most frequent show interactions between anthropomorphs and animals: character touching an animal, lion or bovid hunting, animal held by a tether, horseman. Few original scenes depict the hunting of a fantastic animal, archers or a young animal suckling its mother. One also notes few scenes of agrarian type, among which an anthropomorphic character using a plough. Divinities can be easily identified since these are represented standing on their associated animal, according to an old Mesopotamian tradition (Fig. 3, c). One must also add 50 representations of desert-kites, to which are associated animals, hunters and divinities.

In Kefra, the themes are very close to those of Khishâm-2 (fig. 3, d). Nevertheless, isolated representations of animals and of human characters constitute more than 50% of the corpus. One observes local thematic variations: for instance, ibex are dominant in Area B, while anthropomorphic figures are in majority in Area C. Many scalariform and geometric figures (squares, rectangles, ovals sometimes segmented) have also been recorded.

Carving techniques

Three carving techniques have been observed: pecking, grooving, and scraping. The last two techniques are mostly recorded in Kefra. All may be combined, grooving sometimes appearing as a preliminary stage to pecking.

Dating elements

Dating rock carvings is a very difficult issue (Taçon, Chippindale 1998; Rosenfeld, Smith 1997). In the Khishâm case, we however have some chronological indications since rock art corresponds to the Mesopotamian iconography known to traditional archaeology.

From a stylistic point of view, there is

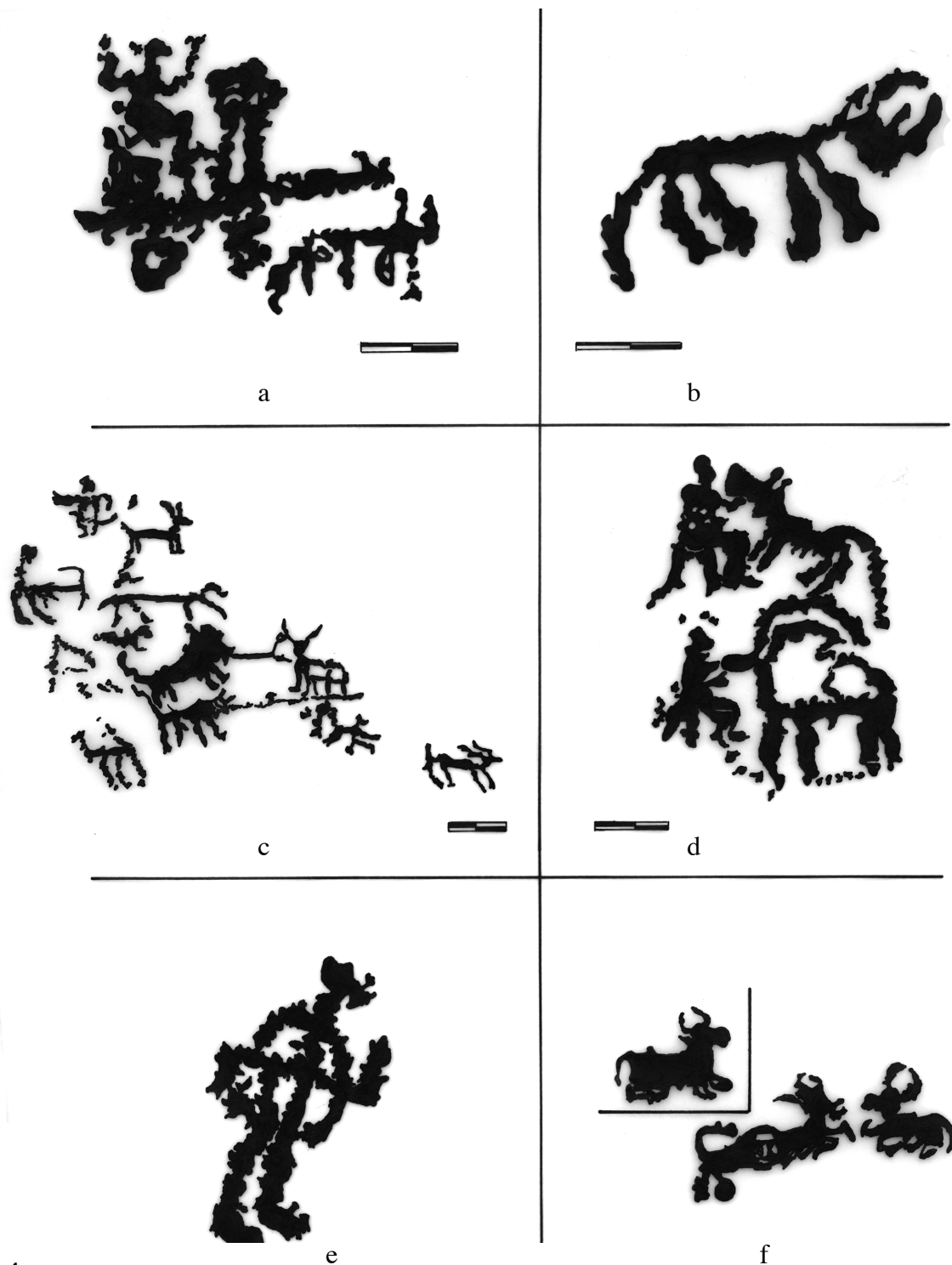


Fig. 4:

a: Kefra: chariot (KF-I61).

b: Kefra, bull with an excrescence between the horns (KF-J51, detail).

c: Khishâm-2: lion hunting with a spear (KH2-D41).

d: Khishâm-2: banquet scenes associating a character seated on a stool and, once an ibex, once another animal (KH2-F81b, detail).

e: Khishâm-2: character carrying a quadruped on his chest (KH2-F60).

f: Khishâm-2: lion attacking a bull from behind (KH2-D42).

nothing close to the supple artistic forms of the Pre-ceramic Neolithic. The chronological presentation only indicates a terminus post quem for the apparition of a given theme, based on its introduction in the traditional archaeological iconography. Unless there is a contrary indication, the carvings can thus be of later date. When they do not rest on direct and probing comparisons with the glyptics, our chronological estimations must be confirmed by excavations and results gained from other rock art sites of the Near East.

5th-4th millennium

- A character with ibex horns (KH1-S-50) finds counterparts in the Suse-A pottery, dating to the 5th millennium (von der Osten-Sacken 1992: pl. VI, fig. 9).

- A frontal character holding two lions (KH2-C42) or two bovinds (KH2-D33) in profile and symmetrical, in the so-called posture of the , belongs to a type known « master of animals » since the 4th millennium.

- A human character, with a triangular chest, raised arms and semi-flexed legs, evokes figures found on seals and sealings of the later northern Ubaid and Gawra cultures, dated between 4,400 et 3,000 BC (Homès-Frédéricq 1970: pls. II, VI, 73-76; von der Osten-Sacken 1992: plate 10 n*5).

- Characters with a long neck and elongated head on the side or maybe with an animal head, are close of the same series (Homès-Frédéricq 1970: pl. III, 37-38, pl. VIII, 109-110, pl. XI, 150 ; von der Osten-Sacken 1992) and are also present in a mural painting discovered in Halawa and dated, according to Orthmann, to the first phases of the Early Dynastic (Orthmann 1989: 101-104; plate 10, no. 2, 6).

- Representations of kites could be placed be-

tween 4,500 and 2,000 BC. If this hypothesis is confirmed by excavation, one should therefore assign, grosso modo, to this period other carvings made in a similar style.

3rd millennium

Several representations find their direct counterpart in cylinder-seals of the Early Dynastic (or Early Jazira) IIIb.

- Found on several rocks, the character standing on an animal that he holds by a tether fastened to the nostrils is similar to representations of divinities known by glyptics and by other related material of the 3rd millennium (Amiet 1980: pl. 39, fig. 603, Predynastic). The character of the rock KH2-E1, above a bull, could be Adad, the Mesopotamian god of thunder and of good rain, or one of his Amorite or Aramaean successors.

- A character seated on a four-wheel chariot towed by two animals (KH2-F81b) can be dated to the second third of the 3rd millennium BC, on the basis of comparison with the glyptics. In Kefra, a closely related representation (fig 4, a) must be given a similar date (Jans, Brettschneider 1998).

- In Kefra (KF-J51), a cow presents an excrescence between the horns (fig. 4, b). This type of representation is also found in the glyptics since the Early Dynastic (Amiet 1980: pl. 100 nr 1329).

- A plough scene (KH2-G27) also has a direct counterpart in the glyptics (Collon 1988: 146 no. 615 sealing of Fara, Iraq, Early Dynastic A-B, Collon's Period IIe; Amiet 1980: pl. 106, fig. 1403).

- Lion hunting with a spear (KH2-D41: fig. 4, c): the theme is already present on an Uruk stele dated to the Predynastic period (Amiet

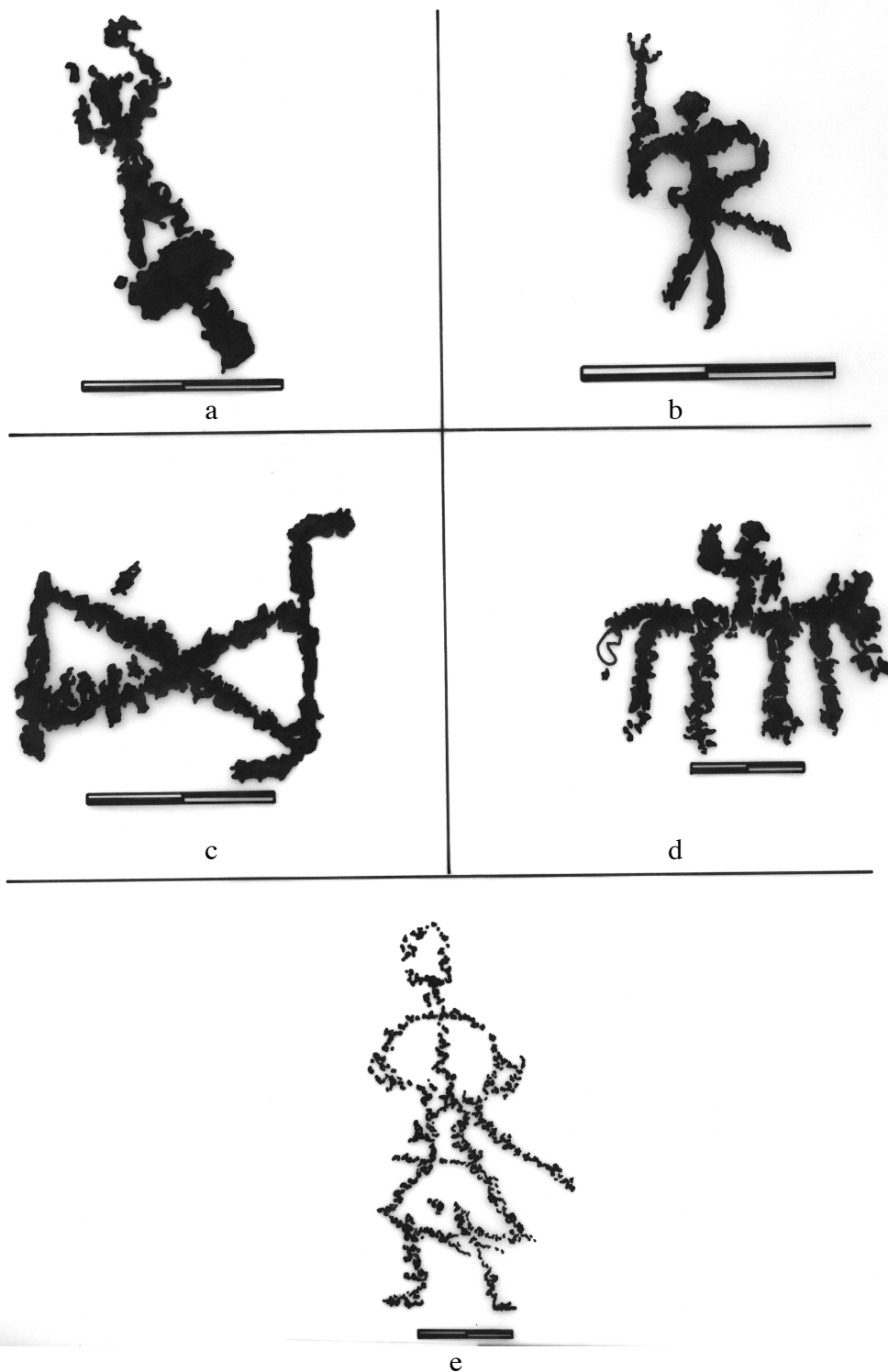


Fig. 5:

a: Khishâm-2: character with a pointed hat standing on an altar (KH-2-B25, detail).

b: Khishâm-1, North-3: character with a sword at its belt and holding a trident.

c: Khishâm-1-South: animal of which the body is represented by two triangles opposed by the summit.

d: Khishâm-2: representation of horseman (KH2-H7).

e: Khishâm-2: character dressed with a flared skirt (KH2-F104).

1980: pl. 40, fig. 611).

- Banquet scenes (KH2-F81b)-- associating a character seated on a stool and once an ibex, once another animal (fig. 4, d)-- also bear comparisons with the glyptics since the Early Dynastic II/IIIa (Selz 1983: II, pl. 13, fig. 162, feminine character seated in front of a caprid). In Mari, a cylinder-seal (M 7928-H563), dating to around 2600 (Early Dynastic II), shows a character with a bird head seated in front of an animal (Hammade 1994).

- The gesture and the attitude of a character carrying a quadruped on his chest (KH2-F60: plate 4, lower left) are reminiscent of representations of the Early Dynastic glyptics (Amiet 1980: pl. 100, no. 1319 et 1327, pl. 102, no. 1355 et 1356).

- A character in profile fighting against a standing animal (KH2-E53) can be compared with a seal attributed to the Early Dynastic in upper Syria (Amiet 1980: pl. 85Bis, fig. K).

- A lion attacking a bull from behind (KH2-D42: fig. 4, f). This theme is present in lower Mesopotamia since the Uruk period when it becomes the main subject of the "contest scenes" (Collon 1988: 27 and nr 940). The bull with three legs folded under his body with the fourth leg semi-flexed in front is present in Abu Salabikh since the Early Dynastic IIIb (Green 1993 : fig.2, no. 80 et 88; also Amiet 1980: pl. 33, fig. 530, pl. 38bis, fig. G, proto-Elamite; in Fara: pl. 53, figs 740, 743, 746,747, pl. 54 no. 752-A, 758, 762, 780).

- Representations of isolated horses: in Syria, the horse is attested since the period of Ebla (24th century B.C.).

2nd millennium

- It is too early to evaluate the presence of a 2nd millennium B.C. rock art in Khishâm. The

only element that seems evident enough is a representation of a character standing on an altar (column surmounted by a thick table) and with a pointed hat (fig. 5, a), which recalls the Hittite or Syro-Hittite art (KH-2-B25). Comparable altars are known in the glyptics of this period in Emar, on the Euphrates (Beyer 2001: A62, p. 84 et A74, p.92). A segment of the northern wall of Building 1 stands on a rock with carvings of a similar style.

- Some representations of lion could also belong to this period (Keel, Uelinger 2001: fig. 51 BR, style common Mitanni).

- In Khishâm-1 North-3, a character with a sword on his side and holding a trident probably represents a divinity (fig. 5, b). A dating to the 2nd millennium B.C. seems probable.

- Animals of which the body is represented by two triangles opposed by the summit have been found in Kefra-East and in Khishâm-1-South (fig. 5, c), an iconographic convention known in the Palestinian ceramic decoration of the Late Bronze Age (2nd half of the 2nd millennium BC; Keel, Uelinger 2001: figs 80-81).

1st millennium

For this period-- the first millennium corresponding to the installation of Arameans, its western Semites, in northern Syria-- it is probable that links with Palestinian and Phoenician iconography are more important.

- Representations of horsemen (KH1-S18; KH2-H7; fig. 5, d) should not be earlier than the end of the 2nd millennium BC. Keel and Uelinger mention some representations relating to Phoenician and north-Syrian influences in Palestinian glyptics (Keel, Uelinger 2001: 143-157).

- One also finds, in Palestine, dated to the Iron Age II A-B (1000-800), »a group of cylinder-seals [i] of local production that show, in front

of the caprid, a human character with raised arms in sign of adoration *ī*) « Keel, Uelinger, 2001: 153-155, figs 178a-b-c). These figures evoke some images of Khishâm-1 (KH1-N27).

- In en-Nabia, a rock exposes the association of two divine symbols: a scorpion (Ishtar) and a thunderbolt (Adad). The style of the thunderbolt recalls the neo-Assyrian period (9th-7th century BC).

Parthian period:

- A few large figurations of warriors holding a sword and having a sheath at the belt (e.g. KH2-B11) could belong to this period.

- A couple composed of a seated character and of another one standing, holding an axe and having a bird on the head (KH1-S53). The style of this frontal representation, where the eyes of the main character are not pecked, is exceptional in the rock art at this moment and is rather similar to a Parthian relief of Hatra in northern Iraq dating to around 150 AD (Colledge 1967: 159, fig. 46; Christides 1982: 110, fig. 4; van Berg et al.; in press).

- Two or three representations of characters dressed with a flared skirt (KH2-F104) could be assigned to the end of the Parthian period, around the beginning of the 3rd century AD (fig. 5, e).

Interpretive elements

Hunt

The figured wild fauna, the multiple hunting scenes, the real kites and their representations show that during part of their existence, the sites of Khishâm had a cynegetic function. Representations of kites surely constitute the most promising elements for interpretative possibilities. What was their meaning? Was the Kakhort valley related to a pilgrimage, a necessary passage or a gathering place? Did

one come in order to illustrate the good hunt gained elsewhere, in order to consider sacred its own enclosure by carving it on the rocks, or in order to offer its image to the gods? Different functions must be investigated.

Generally speaking, wild fauna does not play a fundamental role in the dietary system during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC (Vila 1998). Therefore, several research paths are open.

1. The iconography of the «goat-god» or in Elam and upper Mesopotamia «ibex-god» during the 4th millennium shows that this animal had an important symbolic value. The presence of an ibex in a banquet scene in Khishâm-2 (EJ IIIb?) gives an indication of this sense.

2. The archaeological documentation for the 4th and 3rd millennia suggests that the ibex did not belong at that time to the diet of the populations of the Upper Mesopotamian tells (Vila 1998). The situation seems to have been similar during former millennia, at least according to the restricted available data. Von der Osten-Sacken states that ibex is hunted all over the Zagros (von der Osten-Sacken 1991). Was the ibex hunted by and for non-urban populations?

3. Rock art representations of ibex hunting, present throughout the Near East, always show an individual archer hunt but never a collective one, thanks to an architectural device inscribed in the landscape. Did hunt modalities change in the region since the 4th-3rd millennium because of the growing success of breeding, leading to the abandonment of collective hunting? Could such a change reflect a modification of the structure of the human groups?

4. Neo-Assyrian kings hunted ibex (Joannès 2001 179). Was this practice already reserved

to particular persons during the 4th and the 3rd millennium?

Religion

The sites of Khishâm not only exemplify cynegetic practices, but also relationships with the supernatural world. Among others, some hybrid-headed animals evoke the »goat-god« known from both glyptics and ceramic decoration from western Iran and northern Mesopotamia during the later Ubaid period and the Gawra culture (von der Osten-Sacken 1992; Barnett 1966; Amiet 1979). Furthermore, the religious content of the aforementioned mural painting of Halawa, with zoomorphic headed characters, is also assured by the large idol face present at the centre of the composition.

It is possible that the major part of the rock art of Khishâm serves religious purposes. All these animal figures, often repeated with no other apparent function than their sole presence, do not suggest anecdotal representations. They could represent, for instance, propitiatory offerings, acknowledgements to a divinity, or have a talismanic value, as it is frequently the case for the glyptics. Rock art images of supernatural beings or animals associated with them could thus have their own efficiency. They could also, like those of the cylinder-seals, mark an individual presence.

Glyptics, like reliefs or statues, show that official artistic communication with gods and men is made, thanks to icons, of recurrent formulas. The graphical and plastic language is coded in the same vein as oral or written praying formulas. In this sense, rock art is not so different from urban art: the variety of represented subjects is even more restricted, as is the case with the modalities of representation.

Cultural Interactions

The rock art of the Hemma belongs to a large interaction zone and of rock art activity

that extends from the Caucasus to Yemen. During the second half of the 3rd millennium, this art seems to be at the crossroads of two cultural streams. The first one, to the west, is related to the rock art expressions found in eastern Anatolia (Uyanik 1974), northwestern Jordan (Betts, Helms 1986; Betts 1998), in the Negev and the Sinai (Anati 1979). The second one is related to the iconography of southern Mesopotamia the influences of which are evident in the glyptics, particularly during the EJ IIIb (Marchetti 1998) and seem to have passed into rock art.

Kites are systematically found in steppic environments (Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Arabia, Central Asia), and it is likely that they were all erected by nomadic populations for whom a massive hunting and the following exchanges represented a major economic income. At Hemma as in Jordan, their representations massively take advantage of the rock surface as a natural landscape, showing an adaptative quality seldom found in most of the other carved subjects, reflecting a mentality very different from the one that prevailed in the confection of the urban art. It is thus probable that steppic populations carved those images. Furthermore, there are no representations of kites in urban art.

There remains to know to which milieu belonged the ideas of representing them in plan. The question is much intriguing since most known ancient representations of enclosures on cylinder-seals belonged to the Elam and Syrian Jazira (Uruk period), as did the representations of the goat-god (von de Osten-Sacken 1991).

Conclusion

The surveys carried out during the 2002 season begin to partially fill a gap in the archaeology of northeastern Syria, generally dedicated to the exploration of tell settlements. Furthermore, this work offers a contextual framework for the local studies undertaken in Khishâm

and Kefra.

The archaeological landscape of the Hemma plateau thus begins to get coherence and consistency. The following seasons will continue to define the chronology and nature of the settlements. We will also have to understand what stages have involved so dense occupations at the periphery and within the plateau, often close to the discontinuous series of tells along the wadi Aweidj.

Furthermore, it becomes possible, on the basis of comparison with the iconography known in other archaeological sources, among other glyptics, to argue the belonging of the rock carvings to several cultural stages, stretching from the 5th or 4th millennium BC to the 3rd century AD. We are thus approaching the construction of a global chronology of the rock art of the Hemma plateau.

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ملخص: تمتد هضبة الحمة البازلتية في شمال شرقي سوريا (منطقة الحسكة) لمسافة ٢٠ كم، بين مدينتي الحسكة في الجنوب والدرباسية في الشمال. أما باتجاه الشرق فيهيمن مد الحمم هذه على سهل وادي عويج، بارتفاع يبلغ ما بين ٢٠-٢٥ متراً. وعلى هذا الجانب، فإن حافة الهضبة والأودية، التي تتقاطع عليها، كانت مأهولة بشكل مكثف، خلال الستة آلاف سنة الأخيرة ق. م. وتشهد بذلك بقايا وآثار مئات المباني الحجرية الدائرية والمربعة، وكذلك آلاف المشغولات الصخرية، التي تشكل أولى مواقع الفنون الصخرية، التي درست بانتظام في سوريا.

Note:

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http://www.espasoc.org/khi_1acc.html
http://www.espasoc.org/2002/hem_1acc.html

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