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An Ubaid Kiln at Tell Nader (Kurdistan Region in Iraq)

Konstantinos KOPANIAS

Since 2011 the University of Athens has conducted three projects in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq: the excavations at the sites of Tell Nader and Tell Baqrta, and a topographical survey with the aim of locating the battlefield of Gaugamela.¹ The present paper will focus on an important find from the 2013 excavation season at Tell Nader.

Tell Nader lies on the outskirts of the city of Erbil, approximately 6.3 km E-NE of the citadel (36.173148°, 44.075490°). It is ca. 1 hectare in area and ca. 5 m high. Prior to its discovery it was partially destroyed by a bulldozer during construction works. Preliminary reports about the finds from the 2011 and 2012 excavation seasons have already been published² and a series of more detailed papers will also appear in the Conference Proceedings “Archaeological Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Adjacent Areas”.³

The excavation so far have revealed three undisturbed stratigraphic layers. Layer 4 includes a number of pyrotechnic constructions with pottery mainly from the Late Ubaid period (fig. 1). The numerous wasters, as well as the deposition of unbaked clay (fig. 1: red area) and an area where the clay was processed (fig. 1: beige area), prove that pottery was produced on site. Shortly after the abandonment of the kilns and ovens, the area was used for the disposal of sherds, animal bones and various items (Layer 3). A total of four child burials, without any offerings, have been unearthed (fig. 2: red), as well as a female skeleton (25-39 years old) buried in one of the abandoned circular-shaped kilns (fig. 3). The female was placed into the kiln in a prone position with legs flexed and arms folded under her body with fingers extended. The head was towards the southeast while her legs were towards the north (fig. 4). With the exception of three dog teeth from different animals, no offerings were found. An initial study by Sherry Fox has shown that this woman had been head-shaped in infancy.⁴ In another paper, the present author has suggested that headshaping is an element that hints at the association of the Ubaid material culture with a particular population group.⁵

The 2013 excavation season brought to light a deeper layer (Layer 5) of slightly older pyrotechnic constructions (fig. 4). One of them has a particularly complex design and will be discussed in the present paper (fig. 5-8).

The combustion chamber (fig. 5a-b: dark grey; fig. 6-7, marked as D) was found full of ashes. It was constructed in the following way: first, a narrow, oblong pit was dug out and its walls have been covered with a thick layer of clay. This pit was then covered by a thick clay roof (c. 0.30-0.35 m). The west part of the combustion chamber had no roof for a length of ca. 0.83 m. Two big stones were placed in front of the entrance to the west. In the center, a part of the roof was removed during the excavation, in order to reach the interior of the chamber. The chamber is very narrow and has no vent holes for the supply of oxygen. It seems probable that the wood fuel was not lit in it, but at a nearby place, possibly in the pit directly to the east of the chamber (fig. 5a: light grey for the concentration of ashes). The hot coal was then shoveled inside the chamber. After the firing, the ashes were emptied from the chamber and discarded in front of it to the west (fig. 5a: light grey). The thickness of the roof of the chamber shows an

¹ For more about the Gaugamela Project, see ZOUBOULAKIS 2016; for more about the Tell Baqrta Project, see KOPANIAS *et al.* 2014 and 2016; for recent news about the projects, see <http://arbela.uoa.gr>.

² KOPANIAS *et al.* 2013; KOPANIAS *et al.* 2014.

³ BEUGER 2016 (pottery); Fox *forthcoming* (human remains); HADJIKOUMIS 2016 (animal remains); KOURTESSI-PHILIPPAKIS *forthcoming* (lithics).

⁴ KOPANIAS & Fox *forthcoming*. For other cases of headshaping in the Ubaid, see LORENTZ 2010.

⁵ KOPANIAS *forthcoming*. https://www.academia.edu/4580516/Headshaping_at_Tell_Nader

effort to insulate it as best as possible in order to avoid heat loss. Its interior was found empty of finds, with the exception of a few lithic tools and some pottery sherds in its unroofed western part.

To the south of the combustion chamber there is a wall (U236) constructed of mudbricks (fig. 5b: beige). It is preserved up to a height of 0.67 m. Each brick has a length of ca. 0.33-4 cm, as well as width and height of ca. 0.18 cm. To the north of the combustion chamber there are three areas defined by short walls built of mudbricks (fig. 8, marked A-C). The length of each area is approximately 0.70-1.0 m. A long mud-brick wall borders to the north all three areas (U675). Its bricks have approximately the same dimensions as the ones of the southern wall (U236), so it seems that they both belong to the same complex.

The western area (A) was partially destroyed by a later kiln, which was constructed at a time when the initial pyrotechnic construction was no longer in use (fig. 5a-5b: orange). The wall that separates area A from area B has partially collapsed. It was constructed by three layers of mudbricks, two placed flat (width 0.18 cm) and one placed on edge in between them (width 0,8 cm). There was a collapsed kiln inside area A whose roof was constructed in a similar way to the roof of the combustion chamber.

Area B is 104 cm long. A wall built of mudbricks separated it from area C and has a similar width to the wall between areas A and B. In the western part of area B there is an oval-shaped narrow kiln (width ca. 0.15 cm), which was constructed in the same way as the combustion chamber: a hole was dug out and its sides covered with white clay. Below this kiln, there is a slightly older one, constructed in the same manner, the clay of whose walls has a reddish color, brittle and baked by the very high temperatures from the firing. Area B was covered by ashes and very few pottery sherds and lithic tools have been found there. Nothing was found within the two kilns. It is apparent that these simply constructed kilns were only used a few times or maybe even just once. The roof of the kilns was removed and built again with every new firing.

Area C is bordered by a wall to the east, constructed in the same way and with similar dimensions to the walls of the other two areas. It seems that it was initially connected with the wall U236 to the south of the combustion chamber. Nothing was found within area C, not even ashes. A small kiln was also constructed to the west of area C. As in the case of the other kilns, after the last firing its roof was destroyed.

All kilns in areas A, B and C are very small, with a width of just 0.25-0.30 m. They are all connected with the combustion chamber (D) through small vent holes which enabled the circulation of the heat. It is possible that this whole construction (the combustion chamber and all the kilns) were covered by soil during each firing, in order to better insulate them; only the unroofed western end of the combustion chamber (D) remained uncovered. The kilns in all three areas could have been used simultaneously.

To my knowledge, there are no Ubaid parallels for this complex pyrotechnic construction so far.⁶ A kiln with a ventilation system of six connected vent holes leading outside to a larger one was unearthed at level I of Tell Abada⁷ and maybe also at level III.1 at Tepe Sialk.⁸

The very small size of the kilns makes them unfitting for the production of pottery vessels, even very small ones. Thus it seems more probable that they have been used for the production of other small clay objects, maybe even metal ones. The analysis of the wasters found in the vicinity of this construction will hopefully offer a conclusive answer to this question.

⁶ On the Ubaid kilns: VANDIVER 1987; MOOREY 1994; COURTY & ROUX 1995; STREILY 2000.

⁷ JASIM 1985, p. 5354.

⁸ GHIRSHMAN 1938, p. 36 figs. 56; *contra* MOOREY 1994, p. 154.

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فرن من عبيد في تل نادر - كردستان العراق

Konstantinos Kopanias

بدأت جامعة أنطا بالأعمال التنقيب في طبقة العبيد المتأخر في موقع تل نادر في أربيل والتي أصابها التخريب والتدمير. ظهرت طبقة من طابوق طيني (الشكل ١، في منطقة حمراء) أثبتت صناعة الفخار في هذا الموقع.

بصورة عامة عثر على بقايا هيكل عظمي لأربعة أطفال بدون أي أدوات دفن (الشكل: ٢ المنطقة الحمراء) وكذلك بقايا عظام امرأة عمرها يتراوح بين (٩٣-٥٢ سنة)، مدفونة بشكل بيضوي.

تنقيبات سنة ٣١٠٢ سلطت الضوء على (الطبقة ٥) وجزء من بناء قديم (الشكل ٤) وخاصة من بينها شكل معقد يتكون من غرفة طويلة على شكل بيضوي مع ثلاثة (أفران) ومكان تهوية. الحجم الصغير للتثور (الفرن) يوحي بأنه استخدم لصناعة الفخار والأواني وبعض الدمى من الطين، وربما بعض المواد المعدنية. ولعل تحليل بقايا الآثار يساعدنا على الإجابة عن الأسئلة الكثيرة.

فرن (تهنور) له عوبيدتلنادر كوردستاني عراقي

Konstantinos Kopanias

پشکینی زانکۆی ئەسینالە چینی ئوبید (متاخیر) لە گردی تلنادر لە هەولێر دوای کۆمەڵیک کێکدانو شیوەی دانانی خستە قورکان (شیوەی ١)

(ناوچە سوورە کە) ئەو ناوچە ی قورە کە ی بە دوا هاتوو (شیوەی سەرەتای ١ سەرەتای ناوچە کە) ئەو دەسەلمینی کە فو خاڕ لە ھەو قیئە دروستکراوە. بە گشتی پاشاوە چوار مندال بە پێی ھێچکەرە سەھە کیان دیاری قوربانی (شیوەی ٢ سوور) ھەر و ھە پاشاوە ی ئیسکی ژنە کە (٥٢-٩٣) سالە لە شتیکی شیوە باز نەیی نێژاوە (شیوەی ٣) پشکینی سالی ٣١٠٢ رووناکی خستە سەر چینی پێنجە موبەشی بینایە کێ کۆنتر خستە روو (شیوەی ٤) بە تاییەتی لەوانە شیوەیە کێ ئالۆزی ھەییە، پیکھاتوو لە ژووریکێ شیوە باز نەیی لە گەلسی تەنوو ی بچو کە لە شوی ئی (تھویە) قەبارە ی بچوو کێ تەنوو رە کە بە کار هاتوو و بۆ دروستکردنی فو خاڕ و ھەر و ھەرە نگبو کەرە سە ی تروە کو کازا شە کار ھینرا پێلە شیوە ی بچو کێ لە قور دروستکراو. شیکردنە و ھە ی پاشاوە کازە نگە وە لامی زۆر پر سیار بەداتە وە.

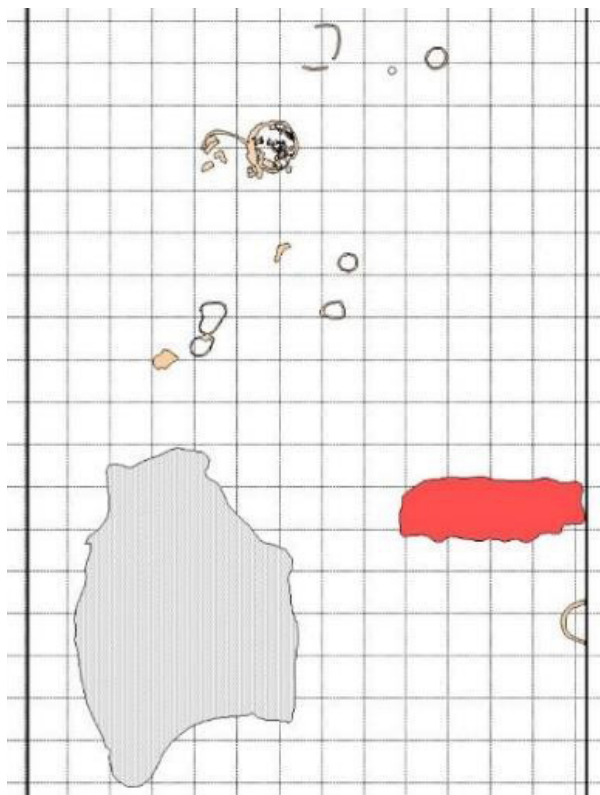


Figure 1: Tell Nader, layer 4. (© K. Kopanias).

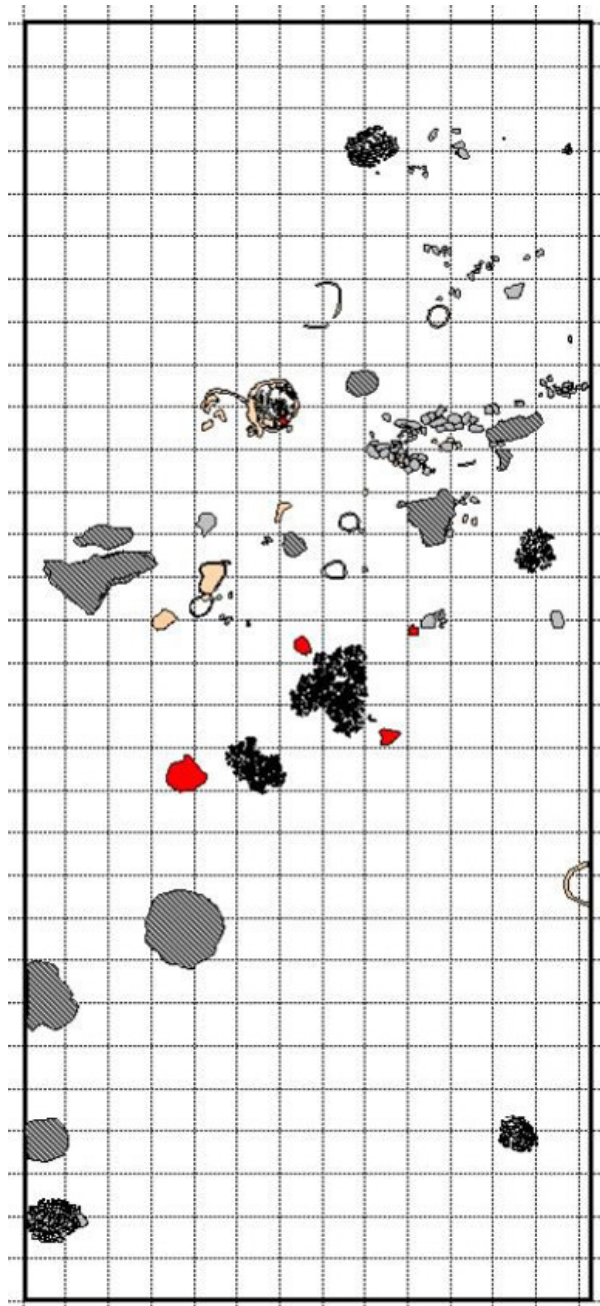


Figure 2: Tell Nader, layer 3. (© K. Kopanias).

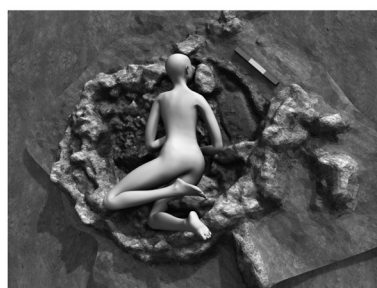


Figure 3: Female burial in Tell Nader, excavation season 2011. (© K. Kopanias). 3D reconstruction. (© L. Kopania).

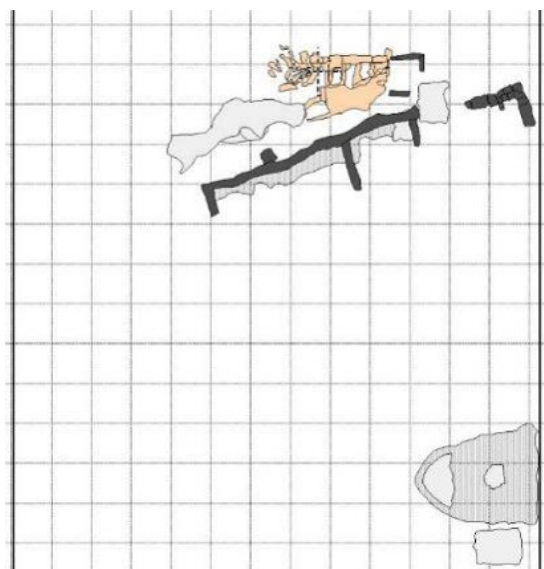


Figure 4: Tell Nader, layer 5. (© K. Kopanias).

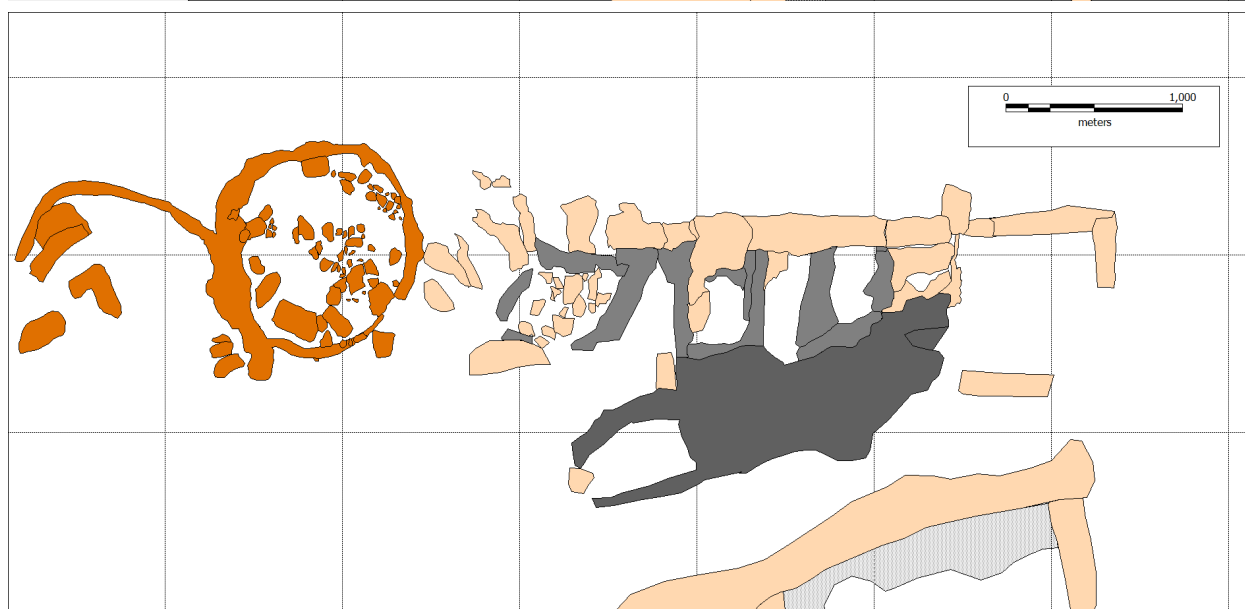
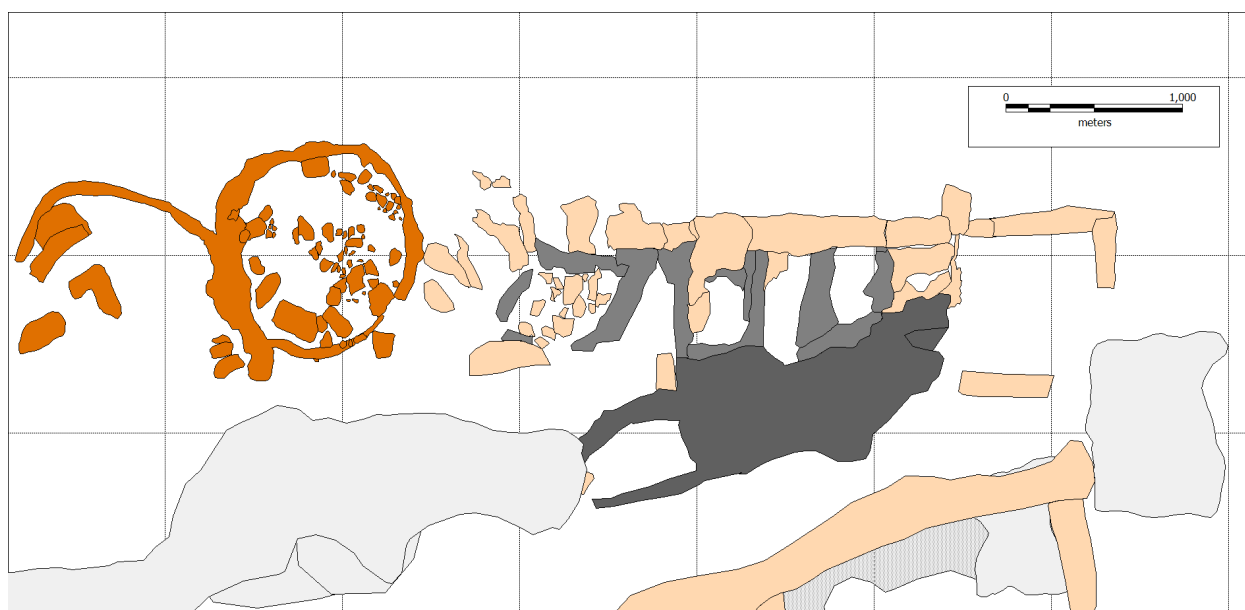


Figure 5a-b: Tell Nader, layer 5: Kiln. (© K. Kopanias).



Figure 6: Tell Nader, layer 5: Kiln. (© K. Kopanias).

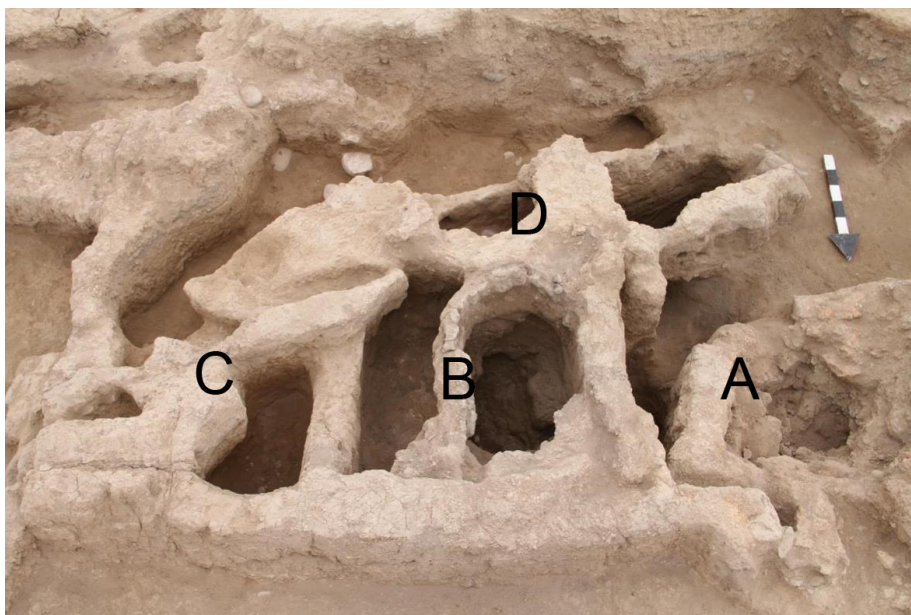


Figure 7: Tell Nader, layer 5: Kiln. (© K. Kopanias).

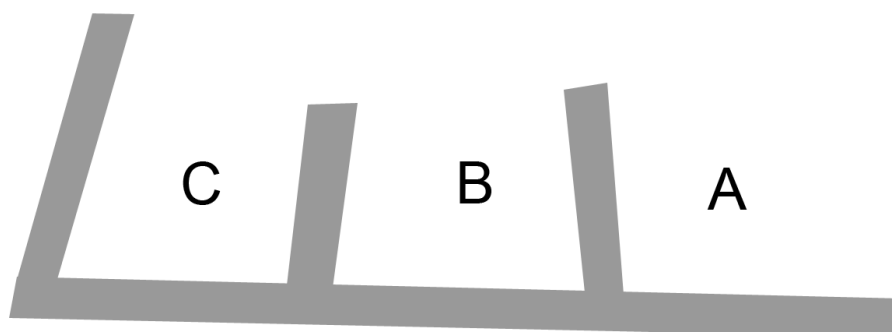


Figure 8: Tell Nader, layer 5: Areas A-C of the kiln. (© K. Kopanias).