

THE OUTER FERTILE CRESCENT CULTURE:
NORTH EASTERN CONNECTIONS OF SYRIA AND PALESTINE
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM B.C.

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1. Introduction

In the third millennium B.C. there existed a vast and homogeneous cultural network which extended from Northwestern Iran through the Caucasus across Eastern Anatolia and had a visible impact as far as Syria and Palestine to the south, and Central Anatolia to the west. Looking at the panorama thus created on a map of the ancient Near East, it appears that this culture overarched the well-known areas of higher civilization which have come to be known as "The Fertile Crescent" because it embraces in an arc like fashion the desertic areas at the center (Fig. 1). Paraphrasing this term, I have introduced the analogous term "The *Outer* Fertile Crescent" to refer to the mountainous area to the north of the Fertile Crescent. This new cultural construct is more than terminological in its import, since it serves as a pointer toward the impressive cultural homogeneity which ties those lands together during the third millennium B.C. Syria and Palestine form a part of this new cultural construct lying as they do at the extreme southwestern end of the pertinent geographical configuration.

Previously the culture in this area during the third millennium B.C. has had a number of different designations. The two best known terms have a geographical point of reference. One is "Khirbet Kerak," which refers to a site in Palestine and has been used to identify the very distinctive pottery of the third millennium which was found there.¹ The other term, "Kura-Araxes," was used by B.A. Kuftin, a Soviet Georgian archaeologist, to refer to regions of contemporary Georgia and Armenia, just south of the Caucasus range.² Thus the two terms refer to the extreme geographical limits of the area under consideration and, clearly, they are of little value now. "Khirbet Kerak" should be abandoned as a cultural identifier for other reasons also; in Palestine and therefore at Khirbet Kerak as well the pertinent pottery was in use only for a relatively short period of time

¹ Albright, W.F. *The Jordan Valley in the Bronze Age*. Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 6 1926, p. 28.

² Kuftin, B.A. "An Urartian 'Columbarium' on the Slopes of Ararat and the Copper Age of the Kur-Araxes Basin" (in Russian with an English summary). *Vestnik Gosukarstvennogo Muzeja Gruzii* XIII 1943, pp. 92-123.

and existed alongside material typical of the local EB III cultures. Thus its use now for this whole cultural complex is inappropriate. "Kura-Araxes," in referring to a limited geographical area, ignores a very important aspect of the culture, i.e., its wide geographical spread. This is the main drawback also in using the term used by C.A. Burney – Early Trans-Caucasian culture.³

In introducing the term Outer Fertile Crescent, the coherent unity of this vast geographical area is stressed. Thus a designation with a broad geographical aspect linked with a chronological base (the third millennium) emphasizes two important characteristics of this culture. As with all names seeking to encapsulate a whole range of elements into a short phrase, there are drawbacks here too: for example, Syria and Palestine are part of the Fertile Crescent and the Outer Fertile Crescent, or the fact that the last stage of development within the Outer Fertile Crescent does not reach beyond the southern Caucasus. However, this more comprehensive term stresses the most characteristic features without negating others less important.

It is clear, however, that in speaking of a culture we are not envisioning a monolithic unity. All indications point to the southern Caucasus region as being the original place of development for this culture in the early third millennium B.C. Also it is there that we can see the broadest range and most coherent assemblage of those characteristics which typify this culture. From this initial area it spread around the wide mountainous arc, developing different patterns in the different geographical zones. The patterns specific to individual areas were each conditioned by a variety of factors. Some of these included the initial reason for its spread to each particular area; these differ for each area but include such factors as the search for raw materials, new markets and control over the routes to them, or new homelands. The Outer Fertile Crescent culture was also influenced by existing local cultural forces where they occur or lack of them where they were absent. The nature of the subsequent development in each of the new local areas was affected by ties outside that area – both with other regions within the general sphere of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture and also with areas which had entirely different cultural patterns. The internal development within these diverse areas was at the same time affected by the distance from the starting point, i.e., the Caucasus; the farther the affected area was away from direct contact with the original stimulus, the weaker was the stimulation (a well known phenomenon in anthropological literature called the Doppler effect).

Since the Outer Fertile Crescent culture itself was continually evolving throughout the third millennium in the Caucasus, the point in time at which it spread to a new area was a major factor in determining the particular stage of the culture from which the new area was influenced. Therefore, regional variations are also affected by the chronological variations in the time that the Outer Fertile Crescent culture spread to an individual area. We have, in other words, a very complex case of cultural diffusion documentable exclusively through the remains of material culture.

2. Main Communication Routes and Patterns of Site Distribution

The site distribution of Outer Fertile Crescent settlements follows major communication routes within the Caucasus and elsewhere (Fig. 1). These routes are restricted in the Caucasus because of the mountains nature of the terrain. North-south travelers had to cross the Greater and Lesser Caucasus mountain ranges. No third millennium settlements are known from these mountains. Settlement there was difficult because of the rugged nature of the terrain; one cave site, Shan Leget, is thought to be a temporary shelter for pastoralists.⁴ Where the mountains merge into the lower valleys and river terraces we do find numerous sites. In the South Caucasus a

³ Burney, C. and Lang, D.M. *The Peoples of the Hills* 1972, pp. 43-85.

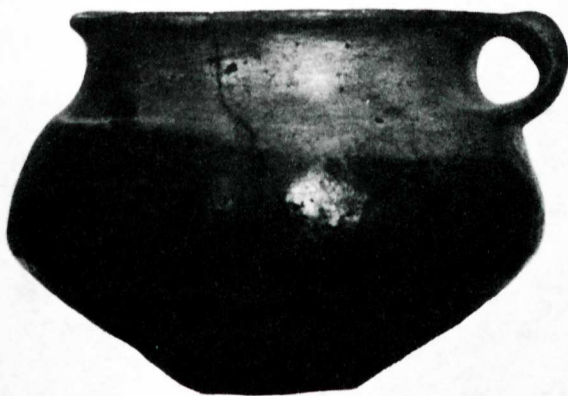
⁴ Krupnov, E.I. "The Most Archaic Culture of the Caucasus and the Caucasian Ethnic Community," *Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology* III (1964), pp. 31-45.

north-south route runs from Tabriz along the eastern edge of Lake Urmia to Erevan and links the Erevan region with northern Iran. The east-west routes are also a problem since the main one along the Rioni-Kura syncline is not useful on either end since the mouths of both these rivers are vast swampy areas. This route however was a very important one in the third millennium as shown by the number of sites located along it. From the plain around Erevan a natural route follows the Araxes River into the region of Erzurum. A main east-west route across Eastern Anatolia parallels the Murat and the Upper Euphrates river systems to the Malatya region. There are a large number of sites all along this route. The principal third millennium routes between Malatya and western Syria are still the least known; surveys in the area of Gaziantep indicate that there are a number of Outer Fertile Crescent sites there.⁵ Down into Syria and Palestine the sites most affected by this culture (e.g., Hama, Beth Yerah, etc.) are along the inland routes. However, the coastal sites also have evidence of its impact (e.g., Ugarit, Tell Sukas, Rosh Hanniqra, etc.).

In order to evaluate the role of Syria and Palestine within the wider spectrum of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture, we will now compare and contrast the cultural expression in both the Caucasus and Syria and Palestine.⁶

3. Major Evidence for the Outer Fertile Crescent Culture: Ceramics

One of the most visible characteristics of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture, which links Syria and Palestine with the Caucasus and other regions are the burnished ceramics. The most common type of burnished ceramics is handmade, with an exterior covered by a slip and then burnished, usually black but at times brown to red. A variation of this type is the widely known black and red "Khirbet Kerak" type vessels from Syria and Palestine. These are, however, a local variety, much rarer in the cultural inventory farther to the east (Pl. I). It is



Pl. I — Red and Black Burnished Vessel,
Kvatskhelebi, level C1

interesting to note that the use of highly burnished vessels of red, black or a combination of red and black appears to be a cheaper imitation in pottery of metal prototypes. Van Loon had already suggested this in connection with the later red burnished Urartian pottery which was distributed over the eastern portion of the Outer

⁵ Archi, A., Pecorella, P.E., and Salvini, M. *Gaziantep e la sua regione*. Rome 1971. Dr. P.E. Pecorella was kind enough to show me the ceramics from this survey.

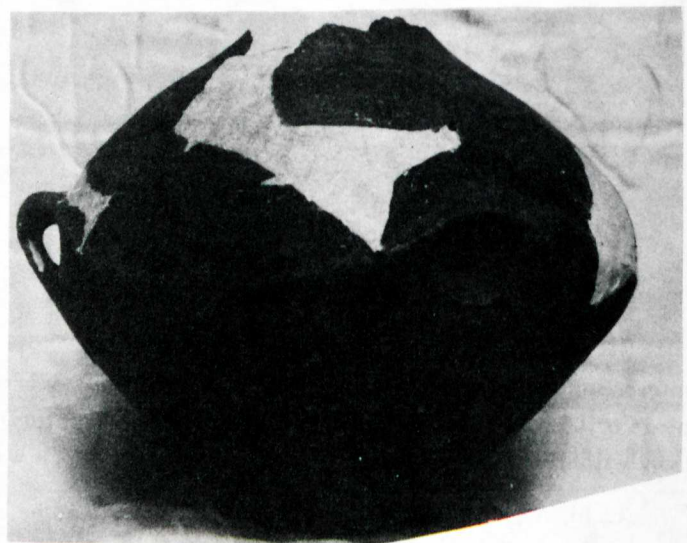
⁶ Since the purpose of this paper is to point out the connections between these areas, the local differences between Palestine and Syria will not be stressed. See Ruth Amiran, "Chronological Problems of the Early Bronze Age Early Bronze I-II: the City of Arad; Early Bronze III: the Kherbet Kerak Ware." *AJA* 72 (1968) pp. 317-8.

Fertile Crescent in the first millennium B.C.⁷ Many vessels are made by a coiling technique, sometimes inside baskets (Pl. II). Larger jars were constructed in the Caucasus in two parts joined together in the middle of the body with a raised ridge of clay left at this juncture (Pl. III).



Pl. II — Basket Impression,
Kvatskhelebi, level C I

0 5 cm

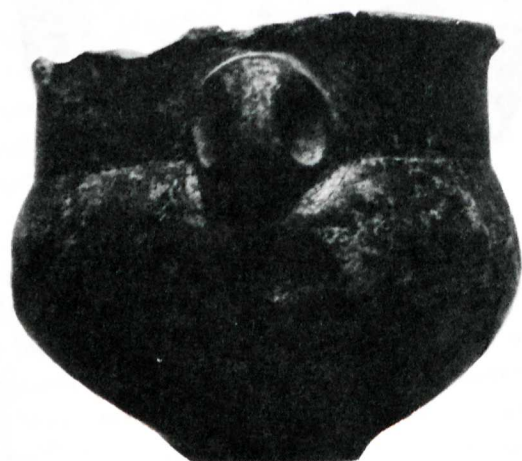


Pl. III — Large Jar with Ridge around Central
Portion, Kvatskhelebi, level C I

⁷ Van Loon, M. *Urartian Art* Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut 1966, p. 31.

The ceramics in the Caucasus and in Syria are similar in both shape and decoration. The inventory of shape types common to both areas includes bowls, cups and lids.⁸ A tall stand in the form of a hyperboloid is common in Syria and Palestine⁹ but rare in other geographical areas where lower and more rounded shapes are preferred; one parallel example however is found at Garni in Armenia.¹⁰

The decoration too of these vessels carries common elements connecting the Caucasus with Syria and Palestine. In the Caucasus the earliest vessels are characterized by their globular forms and small bases. They are decorated with impressed round or oval indentations. Handles or lugs are often added (Pl. IV). This type of pattern is quite common in Syria and Palestine.¹¹ The next stage in the development of these ceramics exhibits a wide range of decorative types as well as motifs. Relief decoration is the most common type with both geometric and naturalistic patterns found, in this case on vessels (Pl. V) as well as lids (Pl. VI). An exaggerated zig-



Pl. IV — Burnished Cup Showing Handle with Indentation Below, Mokhra Blur, (Echmiadzin), level 6



Pl. V — Spiral Relief Decoration, Kvatskhelebi, level C 1



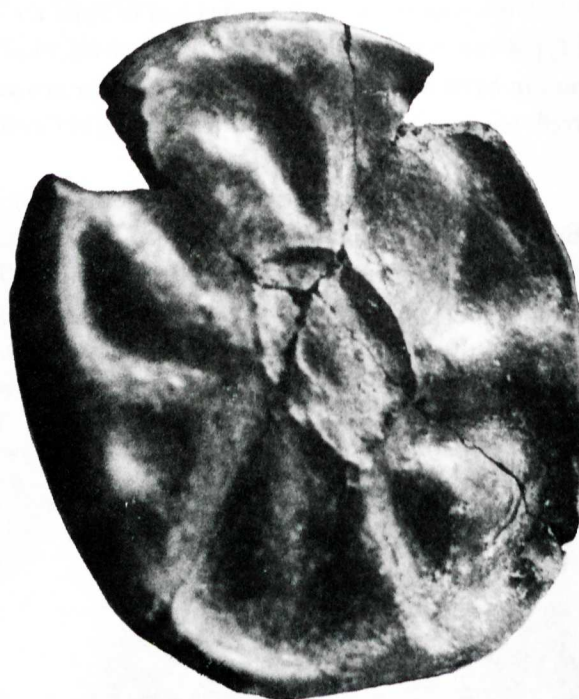
⁸ For a fuller description of these types and a comprehensive treatment of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture see Marilyn Kelly-Beccellati, *The Outer Fertile Crescent in the Third Millennium B.C.*, forthcoming.

⁹ For example see Braidwood, R.J. and Braidwood, L.S., *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch*, Vol. I, OIP LXI, 1960, fig. 282:13.

¹⁰ Khanzadjan, E.V. *Garni IV*, Akademia Nauk 1969 (in Armenian with Russian summary), fig. 54.

¹¹ e.g. Sukenik, E.L., "Late Chalcolithic Pottery from Affuleh," *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement* 1936, pl. X:3.

Pl. VI – Lid with Relief Decoration, Khizanaant Gora



Pl. VII – Incised Decoration Filled with a White Substance, Shengavit

zag pattern found commonly in the Caucasus has its closest parallel in Syria and Palestine I in the Amuq and at Affula, and Beth Shan.¹² In many of these examples the relief decoration is placed in the center or widest part of the body of the vessel; often the decoration is concentrated in only one position on the body giving a directionality to the vessel.¹³ This frontal orientation is emphasized in some cases by the placement of a handle on the opposite side of the vessel from the decoration. Grooved and incised patterns are also found. The incisions are often filled with a white substance (Pl. VII). In Syria and Palestine a type of decoration called fluting was more common

¹² Hennessy, J.B., *The Foreign Relations of Palestine During the Early Bronze Age*, 1967 pl. LXVII:2, LXX:7; Braidwood and Braidwood, *op. cit.*, fig. 285:7.

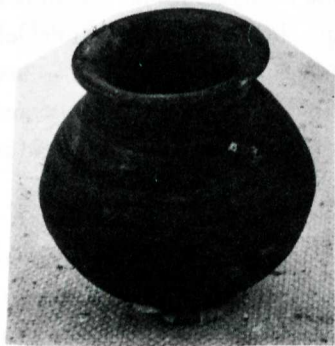
¹³ e.g. Khanzadjan, E.V. *The Culture of the Armenian Highlands in the Third Millennium B.C.* (in Armenian with Russian summary) 1967. fig. XIX top (Shresh Blur).

than elsewhere, but it is not unknown in other geographical regions (e.g. Shengavit II, III, and IV Guzelova and the Amuq¹⁴). The patterns of fluting include plain bands (more common in Syria and Palestine than elsewhere) or parallel zigzags. Zigzags are known in Shengavit¹⁵ but came into their own in the Trans-Caucasus in Kvatskhelebi B when large zigzags were frequently incised on the bodies of vessels.¹⁶

These two phases which are separate and distinct in the Caucasus as well as Eastern Anatolia are merged in Syria and Palestine into one phase which contains all the important elements of both. This is seen in the ceramic forms as well as the decoration.

There is no doubt that the Outer Fertile Crescent burnished ceramics were made in each of the local areas (Northwestern Iran, the Caucasus, Eastern Anatolia, Syria and Palestine) since it would have been impossible to transport the large amount of pottery found in all these areas. The techniques used for making the burnished vessels, however, are very similar throughout the Outer Fertile Crescent. This is especially interesting in the case of Syria and Palestine since there, at least, the burnished pottery produced in EB I had given way subsequently to other types of ceramic wares and decoration.¹⁷ The fact that this older type of decoration was again popular in western Syria and Palestine is further evidence of the strong cultural impetus of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture there.

The total ceramic inventory in Syria and Palestine, however, is different from the other areas in the Outer Fertile Crescent in one important respect. In Syria and Palestine a wide range of ware types not related to the burnished Outer Fertile Crescent pottery tradition was manufactured. In the Caucasus, for example, only the burnished pottery was made while in Eastern Anatolia (using Korucutepe as an example) the burnished pottery was over 80% of the ceramic inventory and imported wares were less than 5% of the total ceramic assemblage.¹⁸ This major difference in the ceramic situation for Syria and Palestine points up the fact that the Outer Fertile Crescent cultural expression is conditioned by a variety of factors, in part internal and in part external.



The theory that the burnished pottery may imitate metallic prototypes has already been mentioned. One other aspect of this should also be discussed. During the same time period one of the other types of pottery being locally manufactured in Syria is called Metallic ware (Pl. VIII). The distribution of this pottery centers in

Pl. VIII – Small Metallic Ware Vessel, Terqa, TQ3-318

¹⁴ Sardarian, S.A., *Primitive Society in Armenia* (in Armenian with Russian and English summary), 1967 pl. L, LXIII:4; Koşay, H.Z. and Vary, H., *Ausgrabungen von Guzelova* Ankara 1967 pl. LIX:G.224; Braidwood and Braidwood *op. cit.* fig. 281:37, 38 and fig. 283:11.

¹⁵ Sardarian, *op. cit.* pl. LXIV:1.

¹⁶ Djavakhishvili, A.I. and Glonti, L.I., *Urbnsi I: Archaeological Excavations Carried Out in 1954-1961 at the Site of Kvatskhelebi* (in Georgian) 1962, pl. XXXII:2, 5.

¹⁷ For a comparison between the manufacturing techniques of the EB I and EB III burnished in Syria and Palestine, see Balfet, H. *Céramique Ancienne en Proche-Orient, Israël et Liban, VI^e-III^e millénaire*. Etude Technique. Paris 1962.

¹⁸ Kelly-Buccellati, M. "Statistical Description of Significant Groups of Pottery," in *The Excavations at Korucutepe, Turkey 1968-70: Preliminary Report, JNES 32* (1973) p. 437.

north Syria at sites along the Euphrates River as well as the Habur River and its tributaries.¹⁹ The Outer Fertile Crescent burnished wares are, on the other hand, concentrated at sites in western Syria. Metallic ware then is in complementary distribution geographically with the Outer Fertile Crescent burnished pottery in Syria and probably served the same functions. At some sites both of these two types of pottery can be found but one is usually in a much lesser quantity than the other and obviously imported (for example the burnished pottery at Tell Chuera²⁰ and the Metallic ware at Korucutepe²¹).

4. Other Evidence for the Outer Fertile Crescent Culture: Architecture and Domestic Accessories

Another distinctive feature of the Outer Fertile Crescent can be found in its domestic architecture: circular or rectangular house plans. At the site of Pulus/Sakvol in Eastern Anatolia the rooms of the houses were rectangular while their arrangement within the town appears to be circular.²² We have from this period a well preserved town plan at Kvatskhelebi in Georgia where the town burned down in a fierce fire, leaving the houses and their contents intact (Fig. 2).²³ The town was arranged along three streets with rectangular houses constructed with rounded corners. Access to the Kvatskhelebi houses was through a small entry room. The large main room contained a central hearth with a post hole near it; a bench was positioned along the rear wall (Fig. 3). Cups and jars were found on the house floors while larger vessels with their lids were placed on the benches in holes placed there to insure stability.

Because of the nature of the exposure in the Outer Fertile Crescent levels in Syrian and Palestinian sites, we have few indications of town plans. However we do have from several sites examples of private houses. In the Amuq sites of Tell Judeidah, Dahab, and Chatal Hüyük traces of domestic architecture showed that houses there had rectangular rooms made from mud bricks with some evidence for stone foundations.²⁴ This same pattern is also found in the houses at Hama²⁵ while those from Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) are made out of stone.²⁶

One major link in the architecture during this period throughout the Outer Fertile Crescent is the homogeneity of architectural accessories. Clay benches, silo pits, bins, processing areas, and ovens are found as standard elements inside houses as built-in and therefore permanent installations. For example, in a house at Tell Judeidah (JK 3: Floor 11) a bench was excavated which ran around the walls of one room. A corner contained an arched oven with another one in a horse-shoe shape in a room or court nearby.²⁷ A basin in the center of the house and a bin in another corner completed the accessories. These can be compared with the standard accessories found in contemporary houses in Eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus and Northwestern Iran.

The most striking of these Outer Fertile Crescent household accessories can be seen in the types of permanent and movable hearths and hearth stands used. One type, a hearth, is circular and has three or more projections from the rim toward the center; this type is found in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus only (see Pl. IX).

¹⁹ Kelly-Buccellati, M. and Shelby, W.R. "Terqa Preliminary Report No. 4: A Typology of Ceramic Vessels of the Third and Second Millennia from the First Two Seasons," *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 1/6 (1977), pp. 11-12.

²⁰ Kühne, H. *Die Keramik von Tell Chuera* 1976, pp. 33-72.

²¹ Kelly-Buccellati 1973 *op. cit.* p. 437 (Early Bronze Type V).

²² Koşay, H. "Pulus (Sakvol) Excavations, 1969," *Keban Project 1969 Activities*. Middle East Technical University Keban Project Publications, Ser. I, no. 2, 1971, pp. 103-6.

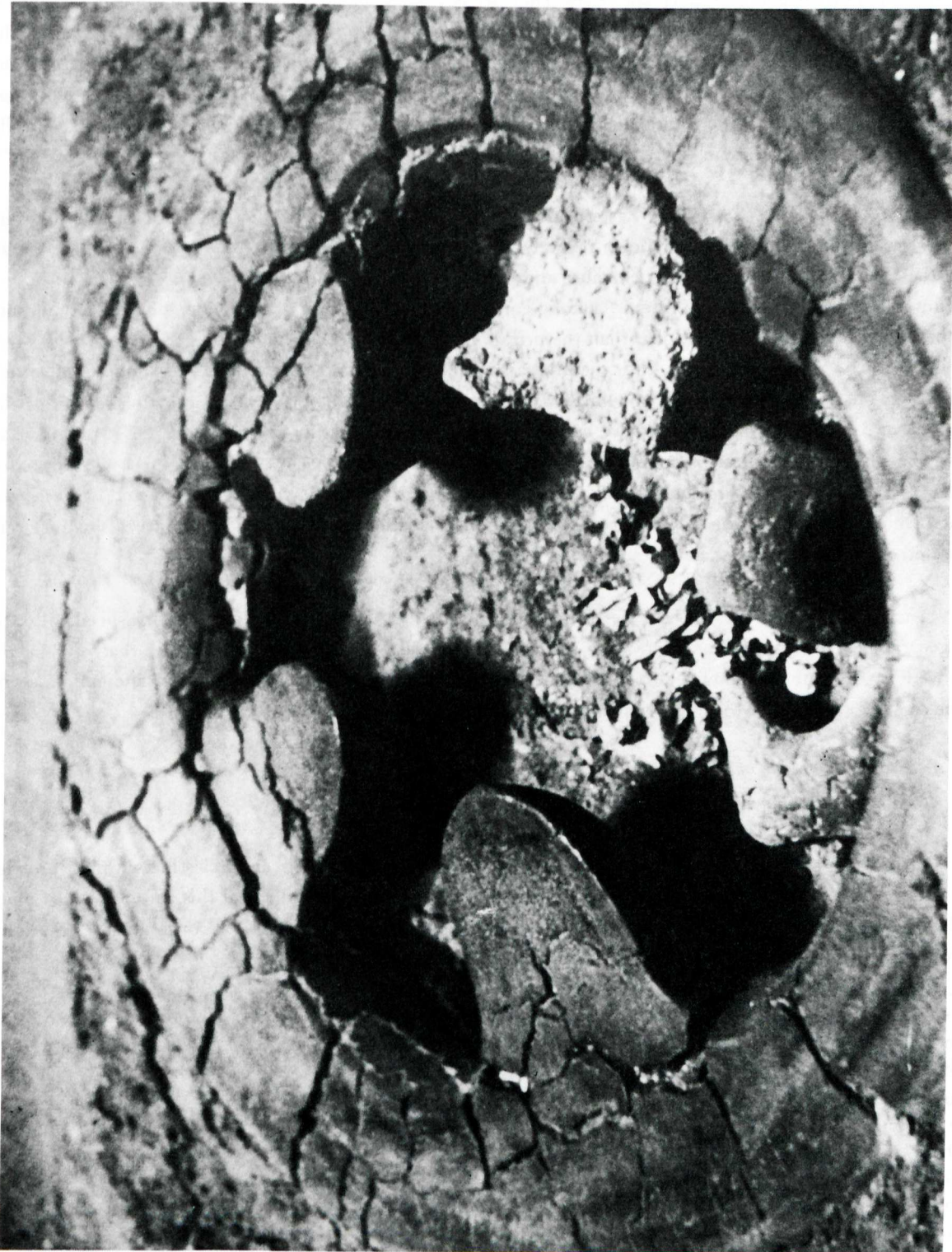
²³ Djavakhishvili and Glonti, *op. cit.*; Djavakhishvili, A.I., *Construction Techniques and Settlement Architecture in the Southern Caucasus from the Fifth to the Third Millennium, B.C.* Tbilisi, 1973 (in Russian), fig. 11.

²⁴ Braidwood and Braidwood, *op. cit.* p. 345.

²⁵ Fugmann, E. *Hama* Copenhagen 1958, pp. 38-48.

²⁶ Maisler, B., Stekelis, M., Avi-Yonah, M., "The Excavations at Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) 1944-1946," *IEJ* 2 (1952): pp. 165-173.

²⁷ Braidwood and Braidwood, *op. cit.* pp. 346-349.



Pl. IX — Hearth from the Center of the Main Room of a House Kvatskhelebi, level C1. Note two hearth stands inside.

Another semi-circular type of hearth stand has a wide-spread distribution extending from the Caucasus through Eastern Anatolia to Central Anatolia and down into Syria and Palestine. These have three internal projections indicating that they originally supported a vessel. They are conceived everywhere as anthropomorphic.²⁸ Some examples show a single figure with the face and torso in the center of the semi-circle and the appendages at the two ends. Other examples are conceived as three figures with the main one in the center and two others on the ends. In most cases the facial features are incised; noses or other parts of the body are applied. One exceptionally detailed example from Ozni in Georgia is definitely a male since it shows the male genitalia on the centrally placed figure. Some of the hearth figures are depicted as animals, i.e. at Shangavit²⁹ Guzelova³⁰ and Ugarit.³¹

In two areas, the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, larger horseshoe shaped hearths are placed in buildings which appear to have had a cultic function. At Kvatskhelebi, level C1, one of the buildings on the northwestern side of the town did not have an entry chamber and contained objects considered by the excavators to have a cultic function (Fig. 3).³² Sites in Eastern Anatolia contain a number of examples of large hearths in buildings which have a different architectural plan than the private houses. At Sakyol (Pulur) three such "Shrines" were found in level X.³³ The one in room 83 is pictured as having a trefoil shape with three faces, one on the back and one each on the two other ends. In addition there were two smaller appendages at the ends, also with faces.³⁴ We can compare this with the type of cultic furniture at Korucutepe and Norşuntepe.³⁵ Here we have an arrangement whereby three hearths in graduated sizes were placed one inside the other (Pl. X). This evidence for religious architecture in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia may or may not be unique. In Syria and Palestine the amount of horizontal excavation in Outer Fertile Crescent levels is limited so that the presence of distinct religious architecture cannot be excluded.

The importance of these accessories is due not only to the fact that they connect very specifically the whole geographical area from Georgia to Syria and Palestine but also to the resulting inference that certain activities were carried out in common over this whole geographic expanse. They are an important indication, along with the ceramic evidence, of the underlying unity of this culture.

5. Chronological Development

In order to view the Outer Fertile Crescent culture as found in Syria and Palestine within a broader framework it is necessary to first summarize the evidence for the early development of this culture in the Caucasian Chalcolithic period and then see its later effects on the Caucasian Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Against this background we can then place the Syro-Palestinian material in proper perspective.

²⁸ See Hennessy, J.B. *The Foreign Relations of Palestine During the Early Bronze Age*. London 1967, pl. LXXI where he has collected the most important examples from Syria and Palestine.

²⁹ Khanzadjan, *op. cit.* fig. XVI.

³⁰ Koşay, *op. cit.* pls. XIII, XIV.

³¹ de Contenson, H. "Les Couches du Niveau III au Sud de l'Acropole de Ras Shamra," *Ugaritica* VI, 1969, fig. 10:5.

³² Djavakhisvili and Glonti, *op. cit.* pl. XI.

³³ Koşay, H. "Pulur (Sakyol) Excavations," *Keban Project Activities*, No. 1 Publication No. 2 p. 104.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 75-76.

³⁵ Van Loon, M.N., editor, *Korucutepe* Vol. 2, 1978, pp. 20-23; 97-98; Hauptmann, H., "Die Grabungen auf dem Norşun-Tepe. 1970," *Keban Project 1970 Activities*, Series I, No. 3, 1972 pp. 103-117; hearths with smaller elements inside larger ones are found also in southern and western Anatolia but are otherwise unrelated to the Outer Fertile Crescent examples, see Diamant, S. and Rutter, J., "Horned Objects in Anatolia and the Near East and Possible Connections with the Minoan Horns of Consecration," *Anatolian Studies* XIX (1969) pp. 147-177.



Pl. X — Three Hearths, Graduated in Size, Korucutepe

In Georgia especially, but also in Armenia, we can trace the beginnings of the continuous development in the material culture of which the Outer Fertile Crescent evidence is a stage; a development which extends from the Neolithic through the Middle Bronze and even into the Late Bronze period. Starting around 6,000 B.C. the site of Shulaveri, located 60 kilometers south of Tbilisi, has nine well stratified levels of round houses; pottery is found in all these levels with knobbed decoration beginning in level three while burnished decoration begins in level one. Levels 3-1 at Shulaveri overlap with levels eight and seven at Imeris Gora, where also the round house tradition with burnished pottery continues. After Imeris Gora round houses with burnished pottery associated with the Outer Fertile Crescent material are found at Khramis Diddi Gora and Khizanaat Gora.³⁶

The Outer Fertile Crescent material is placed within the third millennium not only through comparative materials in well dated sites throughout the area, but also by a series of C-14 dates. The earliest dates from the Caucasus cluster around 2850 B.C. while those from other parts of this geographical expanse are later, for instance Yanik Tepe EB I 2621 or Hama J 2438.³⁷ These C-14 dates then add further confirmation to the other archaeological evidence which indicates that the earliest evidence of this culture is to be found in the Caucasus.

At the end of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture in the Caucasus, too, we find a development through the ceramics into the Middle Bronze Age with the continuation of dark burnished pottery in both Georgia and Armenia. In both the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze periods we have a scarcity of settled sites, so much so that it has been proposed in the literature that the population reverted to a nomadic or semi-nomadic state. This may be the case, although at present evidence supporting this hypothesis is scarce. The archaeological record does show a great discontinuity; older sites are abandoned with the evidence from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages coming mainly from graves. If this is indeed the case, then it is all the more remarkable that the continuity in material culture as seen in the ceramic production, both in form, burnishing, and in incised or applied decoration is as great as it is in the face of the change from a sedentary, even in some cases an urbanized population, to a nomadic one.

Indeed, if we had to characterize the evidence we have for the Outer Fertile Crescent culture our analysis would have to evolve around two main poles: the essential conservatism of the material culture on the one hand and on the other, the cultural dynamism which enabled it to spread effectively over such a wide area geographically and to continue for such a long period of time as the dominant culture in these areas.

The Outer Fertile Crescent culture in moving to areas outside the Caucasus was affected by a variety of differing factors in each of the new areas. Specifically in Syria and Palestine, we had a unique situation in that here there was already established a large sedentary, even in some places such as Ugarit, an urbanized population. This population in addition had strongly established cultural patterns as seen in the material record. Yet the Outer Fertile Crescent influence was so strong itself that its presence led to the reintroduction of burnished pottery which had not been made for several hundred years. Because, however, local ceramic traditions were strongly felt the two traditions existed side by side. In architecture too new architectural accessories introduced from Outer Fertile Crescent sources existed within the context of the pre-existing local architectural tradition.

Another factor contributing to the Outer Fertile Crescent cultural expression in Syria and Palestine is that it spread there after it had already had a long development in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia. As a result of this, elements from both of the first two stages of development can be seen in the pottery made in Syria and Palestine (Fig. 4).

³⁶ Djavakhishvili, A.I., *op. cit.*

³⁷ Hama J while not within the influence of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture serves as a *terminus ante quem* for that region. All of these dates are uncorrected.

6. Historical Considerations

There are numerous theories in the literature as to why this culture spread as it did throughout the Outer Fertile Crescent. The most prevalent theory is a migration model which postulates the movement of large numbers of people out of one homeland and settling as a coherent group in another well defined geographical area. The impulses for this migration and the reasons for the choice of the new settlement area have never been fully considered.

There are several characteristics of the spread of this culture which are quite striking; among them are the vast distances it did spread into geographical areas and ecological zones which were quite different from the Caucasus where the original adaptive patterns to the environment were first developed. These new zones were not only different from the point of origin of this culture but there were major differences even among the new areas where the culture had a significant impact (e.g., Syria and Northwestern Iran). Another striking feature is the chronology of the spread of this culture. In the case of Syria and Palestine, for instance, Outer Fertile Crescent influences are not felt until around 2600 B.C. This is in the middle of the overall chronology of its development. The type of artifacts found in Syria and Palestine are those which can be attributed to the first and second stages of the development of this culture. Thus we cannot postulate a single wave of people coming out of the Caucasus and spreading as far away as the Mediterranean area.

The other popular theory in the literature postulates Outer Fertile Crescent influence entering Syria and Palestine through itinerant craftsmen, presumably metallurgists. This explanation too is insufficient to cover the profound impact we can see in the Early Bronze culture of Syria and Palestine.

It is obvious that a more diversified model must be used to be able even to begin to explain the complexities of the changes in space and time brought about by the Outer Fertile Crescent culture. As a result of my study of the different cultural patterns developed by this culture throughout the Outer Fertile Crescent it is obvious to me that the mechanisms which caused such a spread were a complex and varied as the culture itself. Some of these factors include geographical proximity, ecological similarity, availability of raw materials, access to markets, population pressures, and close "frontier" areas. Even with this list all the factors are not included since there are many aspects of this culture and its spread which cannot yet be explained.

Only the question of why the Outer Fertile Crescent culture spread to Syria and Palestine will be taken up here. These two areas are the farthest removed geographically. Therefore the differences between Syria and Palestine and all the other areas where the Outer Fertile Crescent culture had a significant impact are great; they include environmental conditions, culture milieu, and human geography.

Even with these negative factors operating, the Outer Fertile Crescent culture did spread to Syria and Palestine. The distribution of its influence there was, however, selective as we find artifacts associated with this culture mainly on inland sites. When it did spread it did so with its main cultural identifiers intact. That is, those cultural elements which we can single out from the archaeological record as being the most significant (i.e. burnished pottery, hearth stands, and the use of elaborate architectural accessories) were essentially unchanged in Syro-Palestinian sites. This is true even if some elements, such as the preference for pottery with red interiors and black exteriors was more emphasized there.

The main difference between the cultural expression in Syria and Palestine and that farther east is in the nature of the interaction with the local culture. In the areas farther to the east we have only one of two possible situations occurring: either the Outer Fertile Crescent culture was the long established local culture as in Georgia,

Armenia and Azerbaijan or, on the other hand, there was no significant widespread local culture to which the Outer Fertile Crescent culture would have to respond. This however is not the case in Syria and Palestine as previously mentioned. At these sites the Outer Fertile Crescent culture existed alongside of the local culture in apparent harmony. Neither the arrival in Syria and Palestine nor the subsequent interaction with the local cultures appear to have been accompanied by violence.³⁸ We have no evidence of destruction levels which could have been caused by the coming of a new, different and large number of people.

The specific reason for the spread into Syria and Palestine must have revolved around commercial activities. The sophisticated urban cultures in Syria and Palestine with their large and compact population groups were ready markets for Outer Fertile Crescent sellers. Their goods were probably in the form of actual imported objects which were made in the Caucasus or in Eastern Anatolia (for how these could have been imported, see below). The most likely candidates for these objects are metal tools and weapons, the making of which had a long history in the Caucasus in the earlier Outer Fertile Crescent period. Raw materials may have been brought from Eastern Anatolia, especially metallurgical supplies.

One aspect of these business arrangements is the trade on the Black Sea between Georgia and Central Anatolia and then down into Syria and Palestine. On the basis of ceramic evidence it appears that there is a relatively strong tie between Georgia and Central Anatolia on the one hand and Syro-Palestinian sites on the other. One negative argument which strengthens this interpretation is the fact that this is not the case between Armenia and these same areas.³⁹ Therefore some influences must have come directly along the Black Sea from Georgia.

These commercial activities which were the vehicle for the Outer Fertile Crescent influences in Syria and Palestine meant that a certain number of people would have had to be directly involved. However we have no evidence in the archaeological record that they were coming in numbers, even though this trade and the routes over which it traveled were part of a centrally organized activity. Certainly we do not have evidence of enclaves of foreigners as we have later in the Assyrian merchant colonies in Central Anatolia. The purveyors of the Outer Fertile Crescent culture in Syria and Palestine were probably a certain number of people whose activities centered around commercial ventures. They must have either come from or had access to other centers of this culture and transmitted this new information in a culturally permeating but nonviolent manner.

³⁸ This is substantially the case even if at particular sites there are traces of destruction associated with the advent of Outer Fertile Crescent culture.

³⁹ I suspect that the Black Sea had begun to be an avenue of trade even before the third millennium B.C. Other evidence for trade via the Black Sea can be seen in the connections between the Aegean and Maikop (north of the Caucasus Mountains) in the mid-third millennium B.C., see Phillip P. Bestancourt, "The Maikop Copper Tools and Their Relationship to Cretan Metallurgy," *AJA* 74 (1970) pp. 357-8. Recently in Georgia an Outer Fertile Crescent site was found on the Black Sea coast.

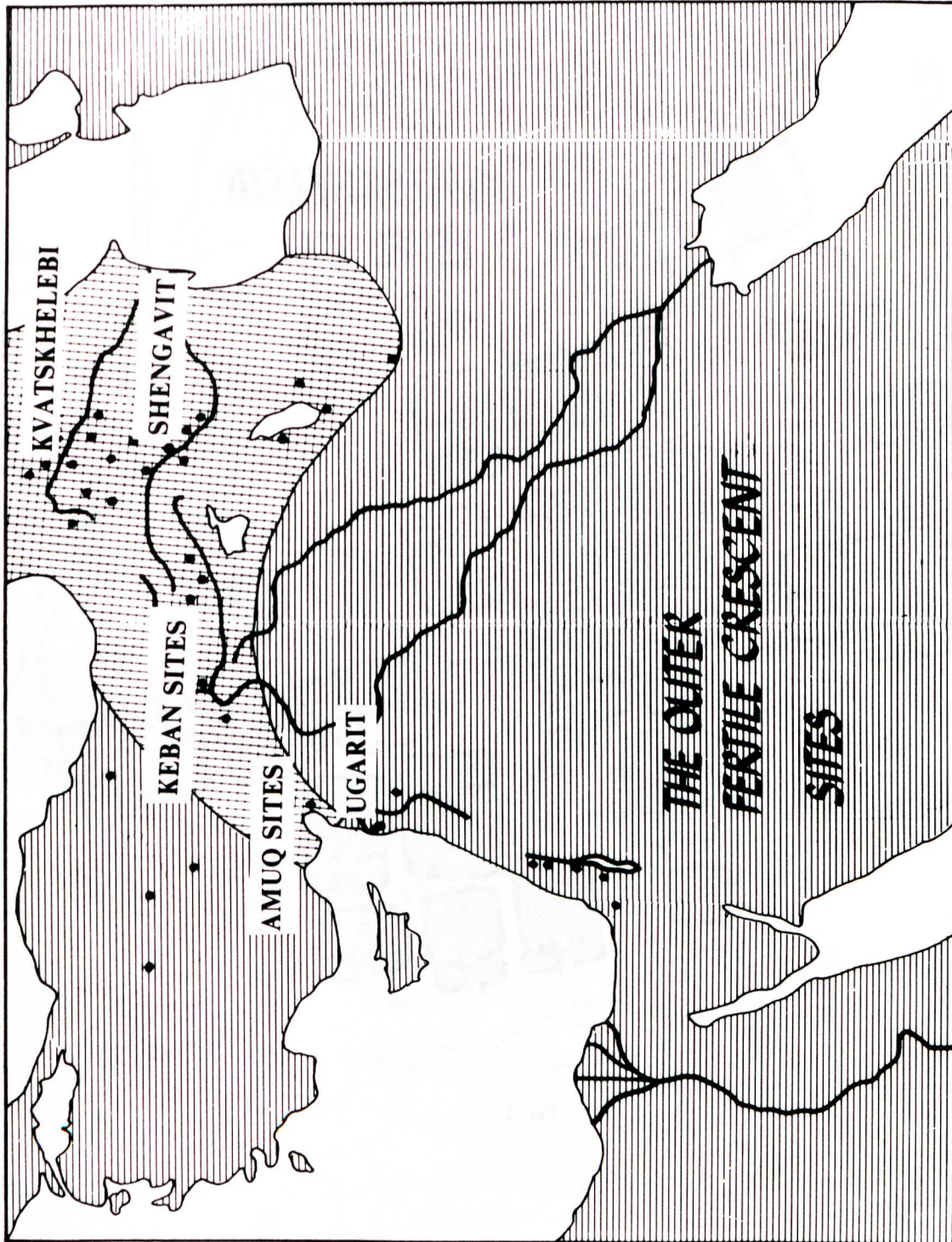


Fig. 1

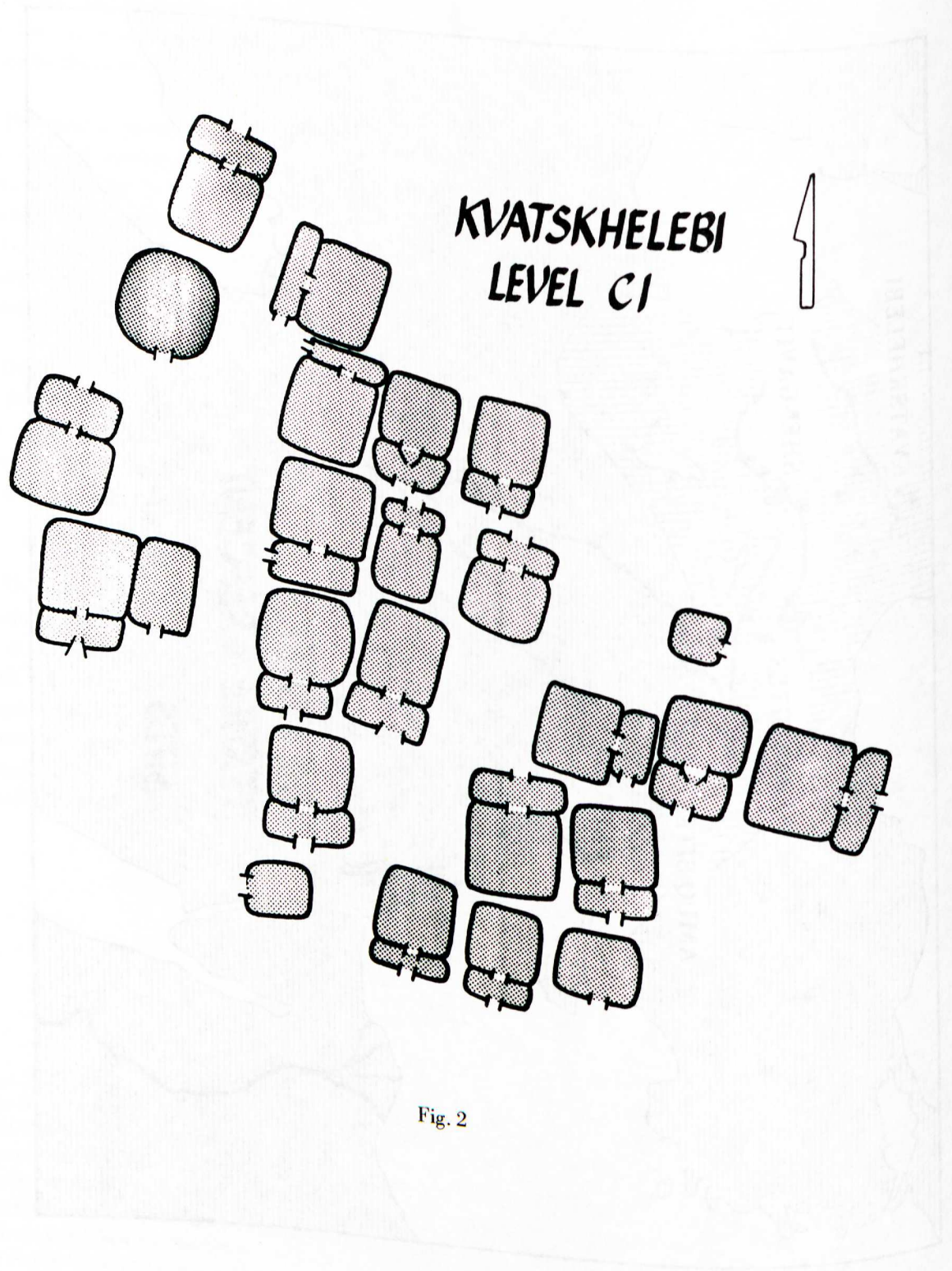
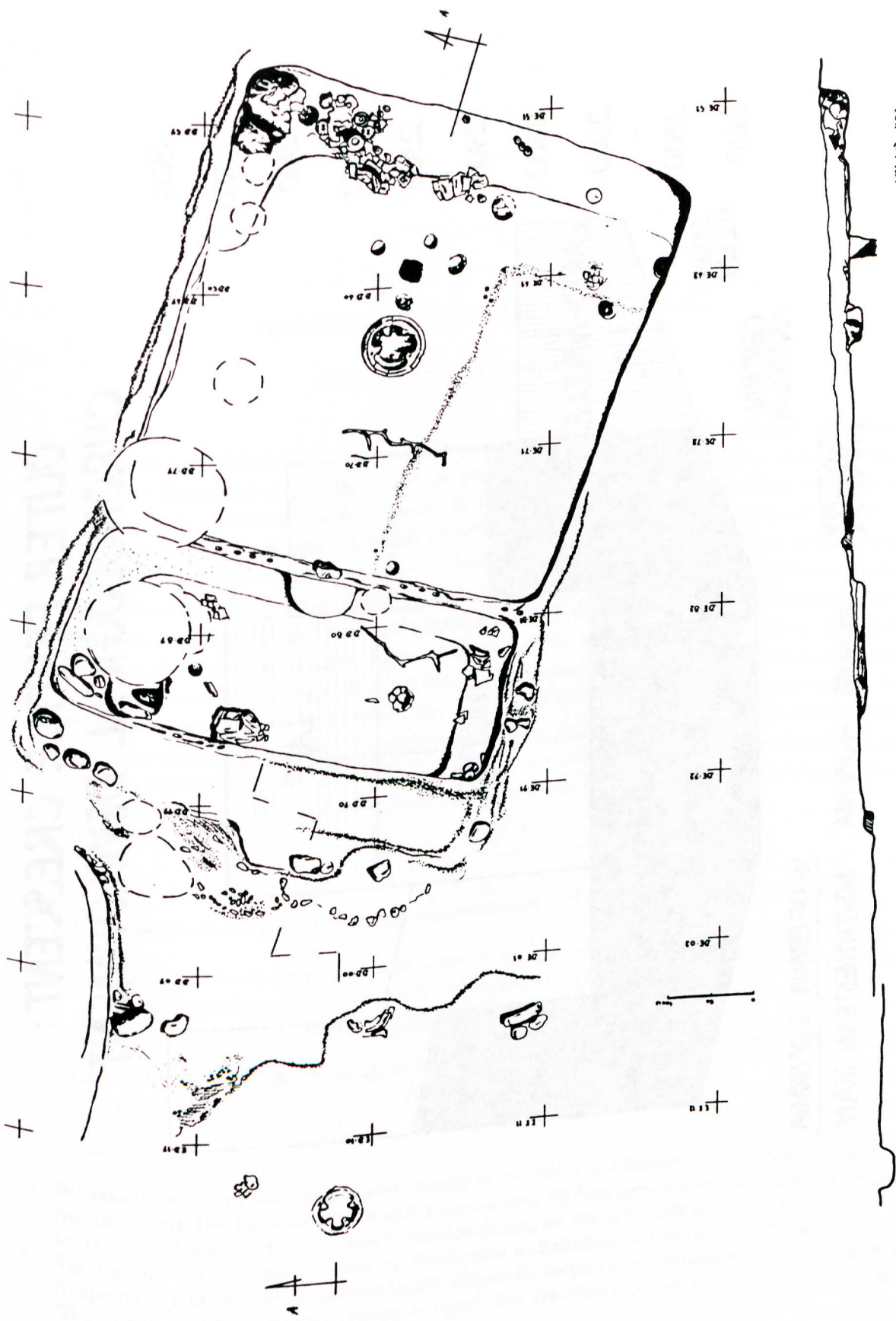


Fig. 2



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OUTER FERTILE CRESCENT: CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

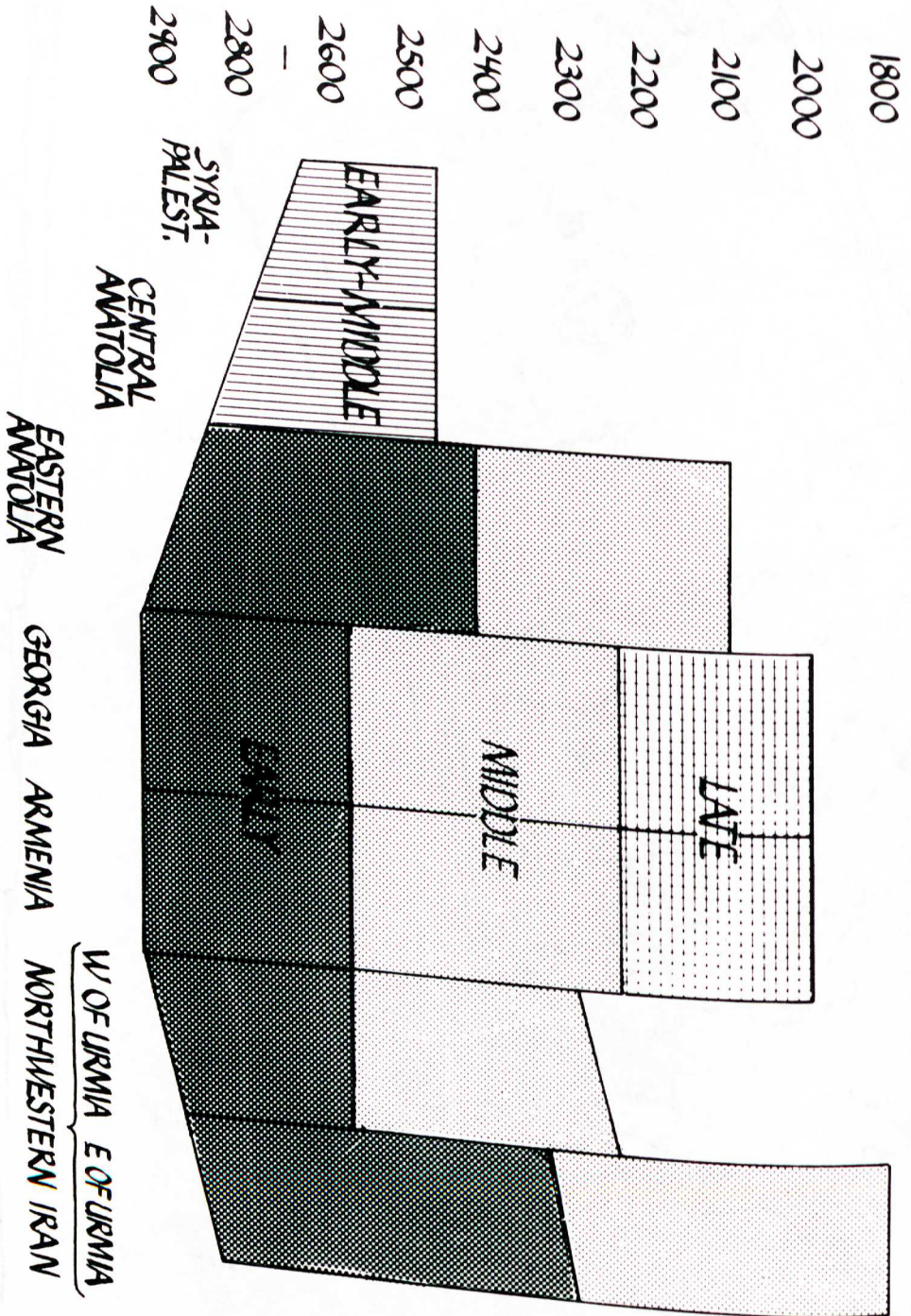


Fig. 4

UGARIT-FORSCHUNGEN

Internationales Jahrbuch
für die
Alttertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas



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UF

Herausgegeben von
Kurt Bergerhof · Manfred Dietrich · Oswald Loretz

Band 11

1979

Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer

Neukirchener Verlag Neukirchen-Vluyn

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