

TAŞLI GEÇİT HÖYÜK. REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS AND SURVEY OF THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MAIN MOUND

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1. INTRODUCTION

The site of Taşlı Geçit Höyük (36°55'34.99"N, 36°42'37.68"E) and the so-called Chalcolithic mound (Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2, 36°55'59.41"N, 36°42'21.39"E) are located on a basaltic outcrop system in the south-eastern branch of the valley of Islahiye (Pl. I) in Turkey, about 11 km south of Tilmen Höyük and at a short distance from the bed of the Kara Su river. They lie near a ford through which the road connecting Kilis to Islahiye used to cross until as late as the Ottoman period (Marchetti 2011a).

At Taşlı Geçit Höyük, rescue excavations were conducted between 2009 and 2010 by a joint Turco-Italian expedition, under the direction of Nicolò Marchetti of the University of Bologna.¹ This initiative was of the greatest urgency, since gradual erosion caused by the seasonal flooding of the Tahtaköprü dam reservoir had been seriously damaging the site since the dam's completion in 1974.

¹ The 2009 and 2010 excavations at Taşlı Geçit Höyük were carried out under the scientific direction of Nicolò Marchetti of the Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna with the administrative supervision of Gaziantep Museum and its director Ahmet Denizhanogulları and the unfailing support of the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage and Museums, Ankara. I thank Nicolò Marchetti for his guidance and support. The project was financially supported by the University of Bologna and the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (PRIN 2007 project) and that of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (DGSP directorate – 6th Office). This publication was financed with the contribution of MIUR – Ministry of Education, University and Research through the PRIN project prot. 2015SJMPLF_003. The research and compilation of the manuscript for this publication were made possible through a generous grant from The Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications. In particular, this paper is part of the publication project “Taşlı Geçit Höyük. Final Report on the 2009 and 2010 Excavations”, coordinated by Federico Zaina (<https://whitelevy.fas.harvard.edu/excavations-tasli-gecit-hoyuk-2009-2010>). Thanks are also due to my many Turkish and Italian colleagues and friends for their help and suggestions. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Federico Poole for English proof reading, to Gabriele Giacosa (University of Bologna) for his comments and criticisms on the pottery assemblage, to Giampaolo Luglio and Massimo Zanfini for the topographic survey, to Marco Valeri for the production of the maps and to Valentina Gallerani for the digital inking of the sherds.

The aim of the two seasons was to reconstruct the chronological development of the urban layout of the site through time (Marchetti 2011a: 298). Thus, an integrated approach was applied, encompassing, environmental and landscape research, coupled with topographical, geophysical and archaeological investigations.

The excavations (Pl. II) brought to light a complex sequence of archaeological phases ranging from the Middle Bronze Age IB (1900–1800 BCE, henceforth MB IB) to the Hellenistic period² (Marchetti 2011a; 2012). Although scattered and often not well preserved due to later intrusions, MB IB remains were documented across the entire site, suggesting the existence of a wealthy and extensive town in this period. Taşlı Geçit Höyük was later monumentalized with massive enclosure walls and public buildings during the Late Bronze Age I (1600–1400 BCE, henceforth LB I), and was destroyed at the end of this period (Benati and Zaina 2013). During the Iron Age III (720–550 BCE, henceforth IA III) and the Hellenistic periods (330–63 BCE), the settlement shrunk slightly. At this time, the town encompassed several domestic buildings scattered on the slopes of the acropolis and in the lower town.

Geophysical investigations and a survey conducted at the site and in the surrounding landscape at the beginning of the 2009 campaign highlighted numerous potential areas for archaeological excavation on the acropolis, in the lower town and in the immediate outskirts of the site. We identified and documented three main architectural clusters outside the settlement by means of satellite remote sensing followed by an archaeological survey and excavation. The aim of this investigation was to understand the evolution of the settlement pattern in the outskirts of Taşlı Geçit Höyük and in the surrounding landscape through time. We identified and excavated two areas close to the site: one at the southern foot of the tell, named Area F, the other on the basaltic outcrop west of the site, named Area Q. Moreover, at the south-eastern end of the southern basalt outcrop (Pl. V), the Turco-Italian team identified several rectangular pits, about 2x1 m. Inside the pits, scattered undiagnostic pottery sherds were documented (Pl. VIII.1). These pits may be interpreted as burials, partially dug in the basaltic rock or in the clay soil and lined with medium- or small-sized basalt stones. In addition to these pits, numerous small circular holes, about 10–20 cm in diameter and a few centimetres deep, were distributed throughout the area (Pl. VIII.2). As the satellite images show, this part of the outcrop is fully submerged by the Tahtaköprü dam during much of the year. It is therefore presumable that the limited archaeological deposits had been completely washed away and it is consequently not possible to hypothesize a correlation between the pits and the holes, or to be certain that these pits are actually burials.

² Evidence of the Early Bronze Age period was found scattered at the foot of the höyük.

We conducted a surface survey in a third area, a low flat mound which we named Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2, 700 m north of the main site of Taşlı Geçit Höyük. This mound showed a concentration of Chalcolithic materials. Given the absence of any occupation earlier than the 3rd millennium BCE at Taşlı Geçit Höyük, it is presumable that this site was the main settlement of the Chalcolithic period in the area.

The results of the archaeological investigations conducted by the Turco-Italian team between 2009 and 2010 in the outskirts of Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Areas F and Q) and in the surrounding landscape (Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2) are presented below.

2. AREA F AND THE SOUTHERN BASALT OUTCROP

2.1 *Architectural evidence from the southern basalt outcrop*

Our study of the landscape surrounding the site of Taşlı Geçit Höyük revealed a complex web of low basalt outcrops to the north, west and south. These natural features are remains of the Holocene low terracing extending along the Kara Su river (Turkish Geodetical Survey 1962).³ The presence of basalt soil directly on the surface is partly due to slow erosive process caused by the Tahtaköprü dam reservoir. This erosion has removed the topsoil layers and part of the archaeological deposits.

The southern basalt outcrop around the mound of Taşlı Geçit to the south and south-west yielded substantial structural evidence consisting of limestone and basalt walls. An integrated analysis of aerial and satellite imagery, including 2000s–2010s open-access Google Earth Pro® images,⁴ revealed two main clusters of walls: one along the lower south-western slope of Taşlı Geçit Höyük, immediately south of Area H, and a second one on the large, almost rectangular outcrop west of Area H.

The northern cluster is oriented north-east and aligned with the building excavated in Area F (Pl. VI) as well as with the earliest structural phase uncovered in Area H (Pls. III, VII). The orientation of the structures only partially follows the rounded shape of the mound. The structures are sufficiently well preserved to allow some hypotheses to be put forward about the layout of the settlement and the house plans (Pl. IV). Assuming that the entire group of identified structures is contemporary, a first cluster to the north-west can be distinguished,

³ A georeferenced geological map of the Islahiye valley can be accessed through the OrientLab platform (<https://www.orientlab.net/islahiye/orientgis-map/>).

⁴ Other types of satellite missions such as CORONA or Hexagon covering earlier timeframes (1960s–1980s) did not provide enough high-quality imagery for our scopes.

separated from the rest of the buildings by a space about 5 m wide and almost 20 m long. This could be interpreted as an architectural unit located along a road connecting the site to its southern outskirts. A second group of structures, lying between areas H and F, extends over an area of approximately 30x50 m. The presence of three aligned long walls to the south and a corner wall to the south-east suggest that here two streets delimited the buildings. We hypothesize that there was one last small group of structures at the east end of the cluster, at the foot of the mound. These structures are aligned with the other large cluster of structures located on the basalt outcrop to the west of area F (Pl. IV).

The southern cluster is mostly concentrated west of area F. Given its almost north-south orientation, it does not seem connected with any of the excavated structures in Areas F and H. On the contrary, this alignment matches that of several Hellenistic buildings brought to light in areas A, B, C, D, and M. This topographic layout is probably the result of a distinctive form of urban planning that is attested elsewhere in the Levant, such as at Apamea of Syria, Jebel Khalid (Cohen 2006) and Karkemish/Europos (Di Cristina et al. 2017). However, considering the remarkable distance between the southern basalt outcrop and the Hellenistic buildings of Taşlı Geçit Höyük, as well as the lack of stratified material from the Hellenistic period, this interpretation must be regarded as hypothetical. Our study of the visible structures revealed at least one architectural unit and what may be streets. More specifically, a rectangular building can be distinguished within the southern cluster (Pl. IV.1-2). Most of the walls of this unit are oriented almost precisely north-south or east-west, while only few of them have totally different alignments, suggesting one or more different structural phases.⁵ The building appears to be separated from the rest of the urban layout by streets to the north and east, and possibly to the west. Other walls visible to the east and west cannot be coherently ascribed to one or more architectural units.

The Bronze Age fortification system, which has been extensively documented at different spots in the site, is almost absent here. We hence lack any further clue to the chronology of the surface evidence.

2.2 Area F. Stratigraphy and architecture

Area F is located 35 m south of the mound of Taşlı Geçit and a few meters west of the main cluster of the southern basalt outcrop. The aim of the excavation was to assess the state of preservation of the architectural evidence of the southern basalt outcrop and shed light on

⁵ The limited elevation differences do not provide any indication regarding the presence of different structural phases.

its chronology. To this end, an 18x10 m rectangular structure visible from satellite and aerial photos was chosen and dug during the 2009 campaign.

The alignments visible on the surface delineating the rectangular building in area F were partially covered by a thin sandy-limy topsoil named F.500⁶ (Pls. IX-X). This layer is the result of slow natural sedimentation of lime and sand during the winter and spring seasons, when the waters of the Tahtaköprü dam submerge the area. F.500 included several small finds and pottery sherds of different periods. The building in Area F (Pl. VI.1-2) consists of four rooms (L.511, L.512, L.513 and L.514), separated by seven stone walls (W.501, W.502, W.503, W.504, W.508, W.509, W.510). The walls are constituted by faces of large or medium-size basalt stones (sometimes with slight traces of cutting) filled in with small stones (Pl. XI.1-2). All the walls are about 1.5 m thick and rest directly on the natural basalt outcrop. W.502 exceeds 20 m in length, while W.501, W.503, W.504 and W.508 all measure about 8 m. W.509 is less than 3 m long. The preserved part of W.510 is about 3 m long. Two rooms, L.511 (Pl. XII) and L.512 (Pl. XIII), were fully exposed, while the other two were only partially investigated.

The topsoil layer F.500 covers a thin deposit, named F.505, constituted by hard clay soil and extending over the whole area. Given the presence in it of materials dating from different periods, it is possible that this layer is the result of an accumulation over time of deposits brought by the dam water. F.505 directly covers the basalt virgin soil in several spots. Inside rooms L.511 and L.512, some layers related to the building itself are still preserved. In particular, in the southern part of room L.511, between walls W.502, W.503 and W.504, a small cluster of medium-size basalt stones and pottery, named F.506 (Pl. XII.2), could be part of the collapse of the three walls. L.511 has two passageways. One connects the room to L.512

6 Abbreviations used in the texts: Each layer is identified by a capital letter defining its function and a progressive number. D. = drain; F. = fill; G. = grave; H. = hearth/kiln; L. = floor; P. = pit; T. = tannur; W. = wall. Each find is registered according to the following system: site code (TG) year (09); pottery find (P), small find/object (O) or sample (S); absolute progressive number. Small finds receive the "O" during the study phase. Pottery finds are provided with bucket number and sherd number. In the pottery description the following codes have been used:

- Class: SW = Simple Ware; PW = Preservation Ware; KW Kitchen Ware
- Technique: W = wheel; WH = wheel-hand
- Firing: H = high; M = medium; L = low
- Inclusions type: M = mineral; V = vegetal; Y = vegetal and mineral
- Inclusions size: S = Small; M = Medium; L = Large
- Inclusions freq.: L = Low; Ml = Medium Low; M = Medium; Mh = Medium High; H = High
- Fabric color: I/O = inner/outer; C = core
- Surface treatment: B = burnish; Gl = glazed; S = slip; SB = slip-burnish; SM = smooth
- Colors: Gr. = green; R. = red; Bl. = black; Br. = brown; W. = white

to the north, while the second, to the east between W.504 and W.515, may lead to an outdoor area. A second cluster of medium-sized stones, similar to F.506 and named F.507, was distinguished to the north, between rooms L.512 and L.513 (Pl. XIII.2). This may also be interpreted as a collapse, in this case of wall W.501. Another deposit was identified in room L.513. It is a thin, clayish layer (F.509) containing small finds and pottery sherds from different periods. Like F.505, it may have been formed by the accumulation of deposits brought by the dam water over time.

2.3 Area F. Small finds

The small finds from Area F were found in the topsoil (F.500) and in F.505. The interpretation of both layers suggests that these materials are out of their original context. This hypothesis is also confirmed by the broad range of diagnostic materials from different periods. An example of these is a badly worn coin probably dating from the Ottoman period onwards (Pl. XIV.1). Another example is three fragments of bracelets (Pl. XIV.2-4) made of light blue or green twisted or plain faience, from both F.500 and F.505. These specimens date from the Byzantine (6th-7th century CE) to the Islamic period (8th-9th centuries CE) and may come from Anatolia, the Levant or Southern Mesopotamia (Spaer 1992; Zanon 2013). Similar shapes are widely attested at the early Islamic settlement of Karkemish/Jirbās, among others (Di Cristina and Ferrari 2018).

Two fragments of iron nails date from the early Iron Age (Pl. XIV.5-6), while three almost complete flint blades (Pl. XV.2-4) must be earlier, probably from the Bronze Age. The rest of the assemblage consists of a pair of iron earrings (Pl. XIV.7) and three stone tools (Pl. XV.1, 5-6).

Catalogue of the small finds from Area F:

TG.09.O.235, Coin (Pl. XIV.1)

Material: bronze

Dimensions: th. 0.2 cm; d. 3 cm

SU: F.500

Bucket: TG.09.P.500

Preservation: complete

TG.09.O.71, Bracelet (Pl. XIV.2)

Material: glass

Dimensions: th. 0.6 cm

SU: F.505

Bucket: TG.09.P.501

Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.74, Bracelet (Pl. XIV.3)

Material: glass

Dimensions: th. 0.6 cm; d. 8 cm

SU: F.500

Bucket: TG.09.P.500

Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.72, Bracelet (Pl. XIV.4)

Material: glass

Dimensions: th. 0.5 cm; d. 7 cm

SU: F.505

Bucket: TG.09.P.501

Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.234, Nail (Pl. XIV.5)

Material: iron
 Dimensions: h. 2.7 cm; w. 0.6 cm; th. 0.5 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.227, Indet. tool (Pl. XIV.6)

Material: iron
 Dimensions: l. 3.1 cm; w. 2.7 cm; th. 0.6 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.221, Earrings (Pl. XIV.7)

Material: iron
 Dimensions: th. 0.1 cm; d. 1 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: complete

TG.09.O.663, Indet. tool (Pl. XV.1)

Material: stone
 Dimensions: h. 6.3 cm; w. 5.9 cm; th. 2.6 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.117, Indet. tool (Pl. XV.2)

Material: stone
 Dimensions: l. 5.9 cm; w. 3.8 cm; th. 1.7 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.73, Blade (Pl. XV.3)

Material: flint
 Dimensions: w. 4 cm; th. 0.6 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.78, Blade (Pl. XV.4)

Material: flint
 Dimensions: l. 4 cm; w. 1.9 cm; th. 0.6 cm
 SU: F.500
 Bucket: TG.09.P.500
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.55, Grinder (Pl. XV.5)

Material: stone
 Dimensions: l. 16.2 cm; w. 18.9 cm; th. 8.3 cm
 SU: F.500
 Bucket: TG.09.P.500
 Preservation: fragmentary

TG.09.O.80, Pestle (Pl. XV.6)

Material: basalt
 Dimensions: d. 3.8 cm
 SU: F.505
 Bucket: TG.09.P.501
 Preservation: complete

2.4 Area F. Pottery assemblage

The excavation of Area F yielded 121 pottery sherds from three layers: F.500, F.505 and F.509. Only 14 of these were diagnostic (Pl. XVI.1-2).

The erosive action of the Tahtaköprü dam water has contaminated all three of these layers, as confirmed by the presence of small finds and pottery sherds – especially from F.500 and F.509 – belonging to diverse periods. Therefore, the chronology proposed for the pottery assemblage from Area F must be regarded as hypothetical.

Most of the ceramic horizon from Area F can be assigned to the Middle and Late Bronze Age periods. MB I shapes encompass jars with out-turned rim (Fig. 2.1) of either Simple Ware or Kitchen Ware, as early as the MB IA, of a type occurring in central Syria at sites such as Tell Mardikh (Peyronel 2019: fig. 8.5) and Tell Mishrifeh (Iamoni and Morandi Bonacossi 2010: fig. 7.4). Another MB I specimen is a jar with a thick out-turned rim (Fig. 2.3), with parallels from area EE at Tell Mardikh (Peyronel 2019: fig. 7.7). MB storage ware includes a large jar with an out-turned thick rim (Fig. 2.5), of a type produced in Inner Syria from the MB I (Iamoni and Morandi Bonacossi 2010: fig. 7.8) to the LB I (Mazzoni 2002: pl. LXI.28).

LB shapes include a small jar with an out-turned rim (Fig. 1.4). Although parallels for this specimen are attested as early as the MB I in inner Syria (Iamoni and Morandi Bonacossi 2010: fig. 7.6-7), it is probably during the LB I-II that the type spread throughout the region, as far as the Euphrates (Schwartz et al. 2003: Fig. 32:17; Finkbeiner 2003: Fig. 5:b) and the Islahiye valley (Colantoni 2010: fig. 4.10). Another LB I shape is a krater with a thick vertical rim (Fig. 1.3). A similar shape is attested in LB I monumental levels at Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Benati and Zaina 2013: fig. 8.8), while other LB I parallels can be found at Tell Hadidi on the Euphrates banks (Dornemann 1981: fig. 16.2).

Two hole-mouth cooking pots with a thick rim (Figs. 1.2, 2.2) and a storage jar with an in-turned thick rim (Fig. 2.4) are the only specimens dating to the Iron Age (IA). Both types are well attested in other IA III contexts at Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Zaina 2013: fig. 2, 5).

The most recent specimens from Area F include several Hellenistic tiles (Fig. 1.7-8, Pl. XVI.2) and an early Islamic glazed sherd (Fig. 1.5), probably of the “yellow glaze family”, which may have a brown painted decoration. The type is attested from the 9th century CE onward at Bilad al-Sham and was produced until the 11th century CE in Syria and the Levant (Watson 1999).

3. AREA Q AND THE WESTERN BASALT OUTCROP

3.1 *Architectural evidence from the western basalt outcrop*

Over 30 years of erosion by the Tahtaköprü dam have revealed numerous structures at the foot of the large basalt outcrop west of Taşlı Geçit Höyük. By comparing georeferenced aerial images with 2000s-2010s open access satellite imagery from the Google Earth Pro® platform we were able to detect several wall alignments and reconstruct architectural units and streets (Pls. XVII-XVIII). In 2010, this preliminary identification was coupled with the

excavation of a small area, named Q, inside one of the detected architectural units, in order to provide glimpses of the chronology of the visible structures. To the north, two or possibly three more architectural units can be distinguished (Pls. XVIII, XX). The southern and central ones (no. 3 and 2, respectively) show a rather complex organization, which may be explained as the result of multiple structural sub-phases. The division between these two buildings must be regarded as hypothetical. Both are quite extensive. Architectural unit no. 5 is about 40x25 m (145 m²) while, architectural unit no. 6 may be even larger, measuring approximately 68x25 m (almost 170 m²). The remains of what may be a third unit are less preserved and its existence is therefore highly hypothetical. The three (?) architectural units are almost exactly north-south oriented and fairly aligned with the contour lines.

In this part of the western basalt outcrop, the road system was presumably connected to that of the southern part, with two main streets following the contour lines and possibly some minor streets perpendicular to them between the buildings.

Remote sensing revealed two clusters of stone alignments at the foot of the mound. These alignments follow the contour lines of the outcrop. The southern cluster (Pls. XVIII, XX) consists of four juxtaposed small architectural units. Their quite standardized dimensions (approximately 15x25 m, and an inner surface between 78 and 88 m²) and the limited number of rooms preserved (between 2 and 5) suggest that they were domestic houses. Moreover, the significant slope close to the northern walls and the substantially flat area immediately north of them suggests that there was a street here, running east-west along the northern limit of architectural units 4-7 and following the contour line. Furthermore, the presence of doors facing south in all the buildings suggests that there was a second street on this side.

This type of town plan is widely attested from at least as early as the Early Bronze Age until the Iron Age for many small centres from Central Anatolia to the Southern Levant. In the Upper Tigridian region the excavation of the MB I-II phases of Hirbemerdon Tepe revealed similar juxtaposed buildings, almost rectangular in plan and with a limited number of rooms, following the contour lines of the tell (Laneri et al. 2015). The most eloquent examples occur in LB and Early IA southern Levantine sites such as Beth Shemesh and Beer Sheba (Faust 2008: 105, fig. 3; Shiloh 1978: 40).

3.2 Area Q. Stratigraphy and architecture

Area Q is a small sounding, approximately 6x5 m, opened during the 2010 campaign to test the chronology and type the structural evidence of the western basalt outcrop (Pl.

XIX.1). We chose this area because several massive structures were visible on its surface and the archaeological deposits were uneroded by the water of the reservoir.

Due to our limited time and the start of heavy rains, we were able to investigate only the uppermost fill, without reaching the original floor, in the south-western corner and two rooms of a large building. Corner walls W.1902 and W.1904 are made of large and medium-size roughly dressed basalt stones. Although part of the walls are collapsed or eroded due to their proximity to the slope, their mean thickness can be estimated between 1 and 1.5 m. W.1902 and W.1904 are preserved for about 15 m (Pl. XXIII.1). A third smaller wall (W.1901), oriented east-west, divides the excavated area into two rooms, named L.1907 and L.1908 (Pl. XIX.2). W.1901 is about 1 m thick and is preserved for a length of about 3 m.

The uppermost deposit, which covers the entire Area Q, is the topsoil layer F.1900 (Pl. XXI.1). Few pottery sherds and small finds were recovered from this layer, which is about 10 cm thick and characterized by a clayish soil. Below F.1900, a hard reddish layer containing numerous fragments of mudbricks, named F.1903, was documented inside both rooms. This may be interpreted as the collapse of W.1901, W.1902 and W.1904 (Pl. XXII.1-2).

A check of the surface evidence inferred from the satellite and aerial imagery, was obtained by carefully exposing two large walls next to the excavation area (Pl. XIX.1-2), W.1905 and W.1906. This confirmed the presence of another large room to the east, which we named L.1909 (Pl. XXIII.2).

3.3 Area Q. Small finds

Three small finds were recovered from the topsoil layer F.1900 in Area Q. Two of them are roughly carved basalt grinders (Pl. XIV.1-2), one completely preserved, the other fragmentary. The third object is a flint blade fragment found close to the grinders (Pl. XIV.3).

Catalogue of the small finds from Area Q:

TG.10.O.455, Grinder (Pl. XXIV.1)

Material: stone

Dimensions: l. 31.3 cm; w. 13.7 cm; th. 7.2

SU: F.1900

Bucket: TG.10.P.700

Preservation: complete

TG.10.O.456, Grinder (Pl. XXIV.2)

Material: stone

Dimensions: l. 27.6 cm; w. 14 cm; th. 7.4 cm

SU: F.1900

Bucket: TG.10.P.700

Preservation: fragmentary

TG.10.O.459, Blade (Pl. XXIV.3)

Material: flint

Dimensions: l. 3.8 cm; w. 1.7 cm; th. 1 cm

SU: F.1900

Bucket: TG.10.P.700

Preservation: fragmentary

3.4 Area Q. Pottery Assemblage

The pottery assemblage excavated in area Q consists of 50 sherds from a single layer, F.1900. The diagnostic sherds comprise five rims and three bases (Pl. XXIV.4) dating to the MB I.

The majority of the recovered ceramic has a remarkably coarse fabric. This is a trend already observed elsewhere in both Bronze Age and Iron Age assemblages (Benati and Zaina 2013; Zaina 2013) at Taşlı Geçit Höyük. It is typical for rural centres where pottery was produced locally.

Most of the few diagnostic pottery shapes can be ascribed to the late MB I tradition of Northern Levant and Inner Syria. The open shapes are characterized by two types of bowls with in-turned rims (Fig. 3.1-3). According to Nigro (2002: 110, pl. LII: 69-70), these two types are attested as early as the MB IB in the favissa F.5238 of Tell Mardikh, as well as at Hama (Fugmann 1958: fig. 127/2D113), and live on through the entire MB II, such as at Zincirli (Morgan and Soldi 2021: fig. 19.1-2).

Closed shapes include a jar with a highly out-turned rim and pronounced shoulder (Fig. 3.4) and a small jar (or possible jug) with an out-turned rounded rim (Fig. 3.5). Both first appear in MB IB funerary contexts in Inner Syria (Nigro 2002: 110, pl. LV: 88) and are produced at least until the end of the MB II in the Amuq valley (Heinz 1992: pl. 9.39). Although the specimens from Taşlı Geçit Höyük are more coarsely made than those from the Syro-Levantine centres, they appear to come from the same type of context, namely, part of a large building.

The repertoire of pottery bases comprises three examples with a ring base (Fig. 3.6-8), one of which is made of the typical coarse fabric already observed for the rest of the assemblage, while the other two are of a fine whitish fabric.

4. THE CHALCOLITHIC MOUND

4.1 Surface evidence

Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2, also called by us the Chalcolithic mound, is a small and low mound located 700 m north-west from the main site of Taşlı Geçit Höyük, close to the road leading to the site (Pls. I, XXV.1). It is about 3 m high (Pl. XXV.2), with an almost square flat top (407 m a.s.l.) extending approximately 80x60 m and sloping gently south-eastward toward the Kara Su river bed (Pls. XXVI-XXVII). Remote-sensed satellite imagery retrieved from the Google Earth Pro® platform suggests that the whole site was extensively farmed at least

since the 1980s. A survey carried out in 2010 (Marchetti 2011a) confirmed that the whole area had been cultivated (Pl. XXVII.2), and it revealed a few scattered looting holes (Pls. XXVI.2, XXVII.1). Consequently, the scarcity of surface materials here is partly attributable to continuous ploughing of the soil, which removed at least the upper layers of the archaeological deposit.

4.2 *Small Finds*

The limited small finds assemblage collected from the 2010 survey of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2 includes a couple of miniature stone axe heads (Pl. XXVIII.1-2), and a large roughly carved stone tool with a round central hole and a flat side (Pl. XXVIII.3).

Catalogue of the small finds from Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2:

TG2.10.O.184, Axe head (Pl. XXVIII.1)
Material: stone
Dimensions: l. 8.6 cm; w. 5 cm; th. 3.6 cm
SU: Surface
Bucket: TG.10.P.600
Preservation: complete

TG2.10.O.185, Axe head (Pl. XXVIII.2)
Material: stone
Dimensions: l. 8.6 cm; w. 5.1 cm; th. 2.2 cm
SU: Surface
Bucket: TG.10.P.600
Preservation: complete

TG2.10.O.187, Indet. tool (Pl. XXVIII.3)
Material: stone
Dimensions: th. 6.5 cm; diam. 21 cm
SU: Surface
Bucket: TG.10.P.600
Preservation: complete

4.3 *Pottery Assemblage*

A handful of pottery sherds were found on the surface of the low mound (12). Most are Red Slip as well as Chaff-Faced Ware walls dating to the Late Chalcolithic period (LC). Among these, the only diagnostic fragment is that of a hole-mouth pot (Fig. 3.9). This shape is widespread both in the Central Anatolian and the Syro-Levantine regions. In the Islahiye valley and immediately neighbouring areas, it is attested between the LC 3 and the LC 4, such as in level Vb at Cöba Höyük (Du Plat Taylor et al. 1950: 102-103, fig. 19.19) and Phases 3-0 at Oylum Höyük (Helwing 2012: 218, fig. 18). Parallels with more distant areas, such as Arslantepe VII (Balossi Restelli 2012: figs. 5, 8-9) and Tell Afis phase 18e (Giannessi 2012: fig. 8.7), confirm this chronology. However, the date proposed for the ceramic horizon of

Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2 must be considered as preliminary and requiring an excavation to be confirmed.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the basalt outcrops immediately outside Taşlı Geçit Höyük and the survey of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2 have provided insights on the occupation of the area, particularly during the Chalcolithic, MB I, LB I as well as the Hellenistic periods.

The earliest phase of occupation, LC 3-4 (3900-3400 BCE), is documented at Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2. The small size of the settlement indicates that it was probably a minor centre, especially if compared with Coba Höyük V (Du Plat Taylor 1950), Gedikli Höyük (Alkım and Alkım 1966) and Tilmen Höyük (Duru 2003; Marchetti 2011b: 28). As remarked above, during the Early Bronze Age the town moved about 700 m further south (Marchetti 2011a). Although the excavations do not allow us to accurately establish the extension of the settlement of Taşlı Geçit Höyük in this period, the surface evidence is limited to the area of the tell. Remote sensing and ground truthing of the external areas were thus an important means of shedding light on the extension and chronology of the numerous structures still preserved.

During the MB IB, Taşlı Geçit Höyük was an important centre of the Islahiye valley. While the 2009 and 2010 excavations confirmed the full occupation of the main mound (Marchetti 2011a; 2012), the integrated remote sensing, survey and excavations in its immediate outskirts suggested that at least the western basalt outcrop was settled during this period. In total, the urban area of Taşlı Geçit Höyük may have reached an extension of 6 ha. The absence of defensive structures in both the western and the southern basalt outcrop leaves the relationship between these outcrops and the main mound unclear. Moreover, the excavation in Area Q confirmed the presence of massive, possibly monumental, structures dating from the MB I. This information, coupled with an analysis of the surface evidence, supports the existence of buildings with different functions.

The excavations on the acropolis and the lower mound have shown that LB I is the main urban phase at Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Marchetti 2011a; 2012; Benati and Zaina 2013). The existence of a city wall around the main mound has also been confirmed, as well as the presence of monumental evidence. Our survey and excavation of the western and southern basalt outcrops is hardly sufficient to draw conclusions about the extension of the LB I town beyond the city walls. The presence of a few LB I pottery sherds in Area F, mixed with diagnostic materials of later periods, and the different orientation of the southern cluster call for further excavations in areas less damaged by the Tahtaköprü dam reservoir.

No.	Pottery No.	Phase	Context	Techn.	Firing	Inclusions	Fabric color	Surf treat.
1	TG.09.P.500/1	Top soil	F.500	W	M	YSM+	7.5YR 7/1 (C-I/O)	-
2	TG.09.P.500/2	Top soil	F.500	W	M	MSMh	7.5YR 5/4 (I/O) 7.5YR 4/2 (C)	-
3	TG.09.P.500/3	Top soil	F.500	W	M	MMMh	7.5YR 3/1 (I/O) 7.5YR 4/2 (C)	-
4	TG.09.P.500/4	Top soil	F.500	W	M	MSL	5YR 7/6 (I/O) 2.5YR 5/8 (C)	-
5	TG.09.P.500/5	Top soil	F.500	H	H	MMM	7.5YR 8/4 (C-I/O)	Gl. Gr.
6	TG.09.P.500/6	Top soil	F.500	H	M	MLH	7.5YR 4/2 (I/O) 7.5YR 2.5/1 (C)	-
7	TG.09.P.502/1	1	F.509	W	M	YLMh	2.5YR 6/6 (C-I/O)	-
8	TG.09.P.502/2	1	F.509	W	M	YLH	2.5YR 7/8 (C-I/O)	-

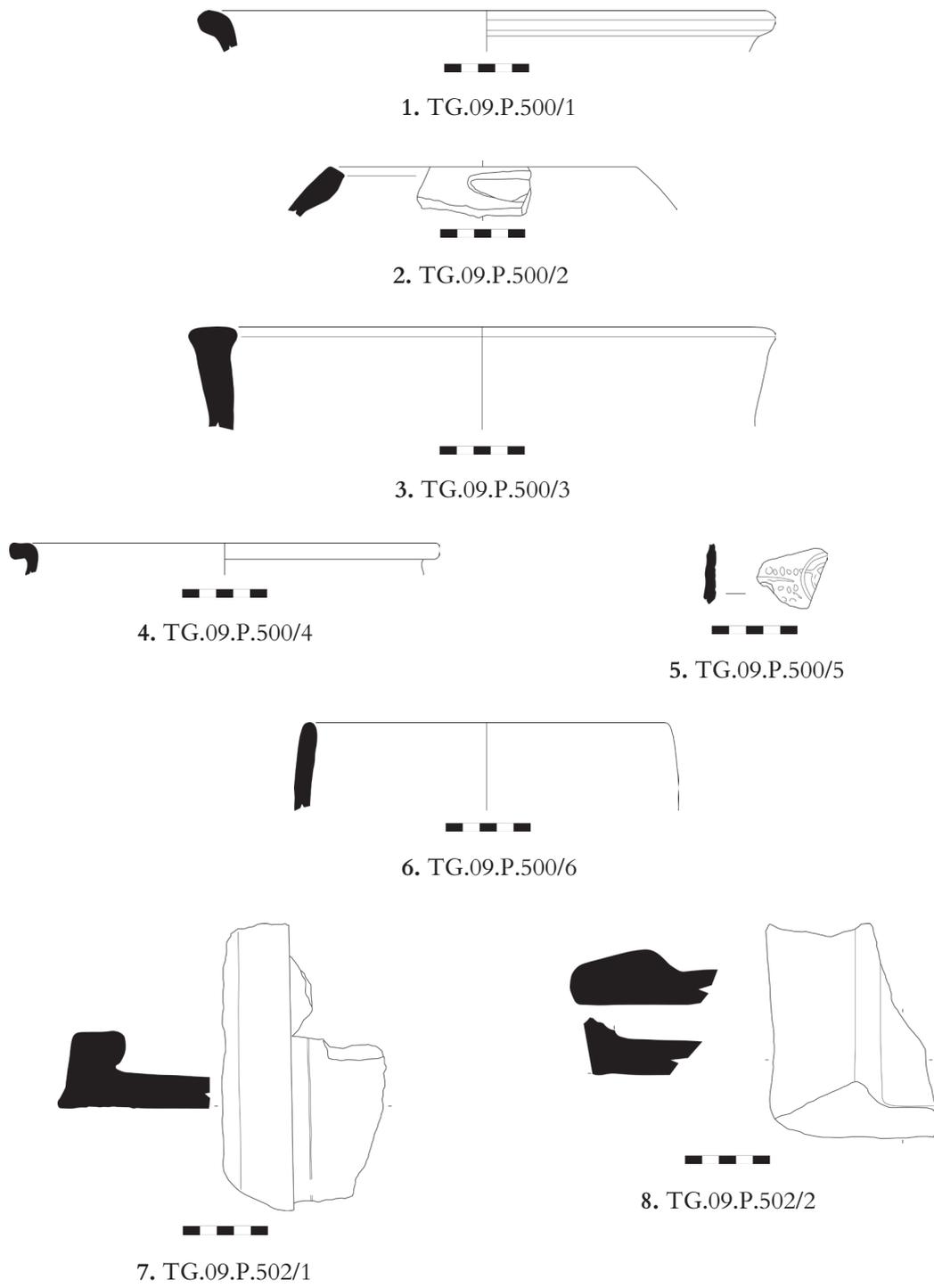


Fig. 1 Pottery assemblage from F.500 and F. 509, Area F.

No.	Pottery No.	Phase	Context	Techn.	Firing	Inclusions	Fabric color	Surf treat.
1	TG.09.P.501/1	1	F.505	W	M	YMM	7.5YR 7/1 (C-I/O)	SB Br.
2	TG.09.P.501/2	1	F.505	W	M	YSM	7.5YR 5/4 (I/O) 7.5YR 4/2 (C)	-
3	TG.09.P.501/3	1	F.505	W	M	YSM	7.5YR 3/1 (I/O) 7.5YR 4/2 (C)	-
4	TG.09.P.501/4	1	F.505	W	M	YMM	5YR 7/6 (I/O) 2.5YR 5/8 (C)	-
5	TG.09.P.501/5	1	F.505	H	H	YMM	7.5YR 8/4 (C-I/O)	-
6	TG.09.P.501/6	1	F.505	H	M	YLM	7.5YR 4/2 (I/O) 7.5YR 2.5/1 (C)	-

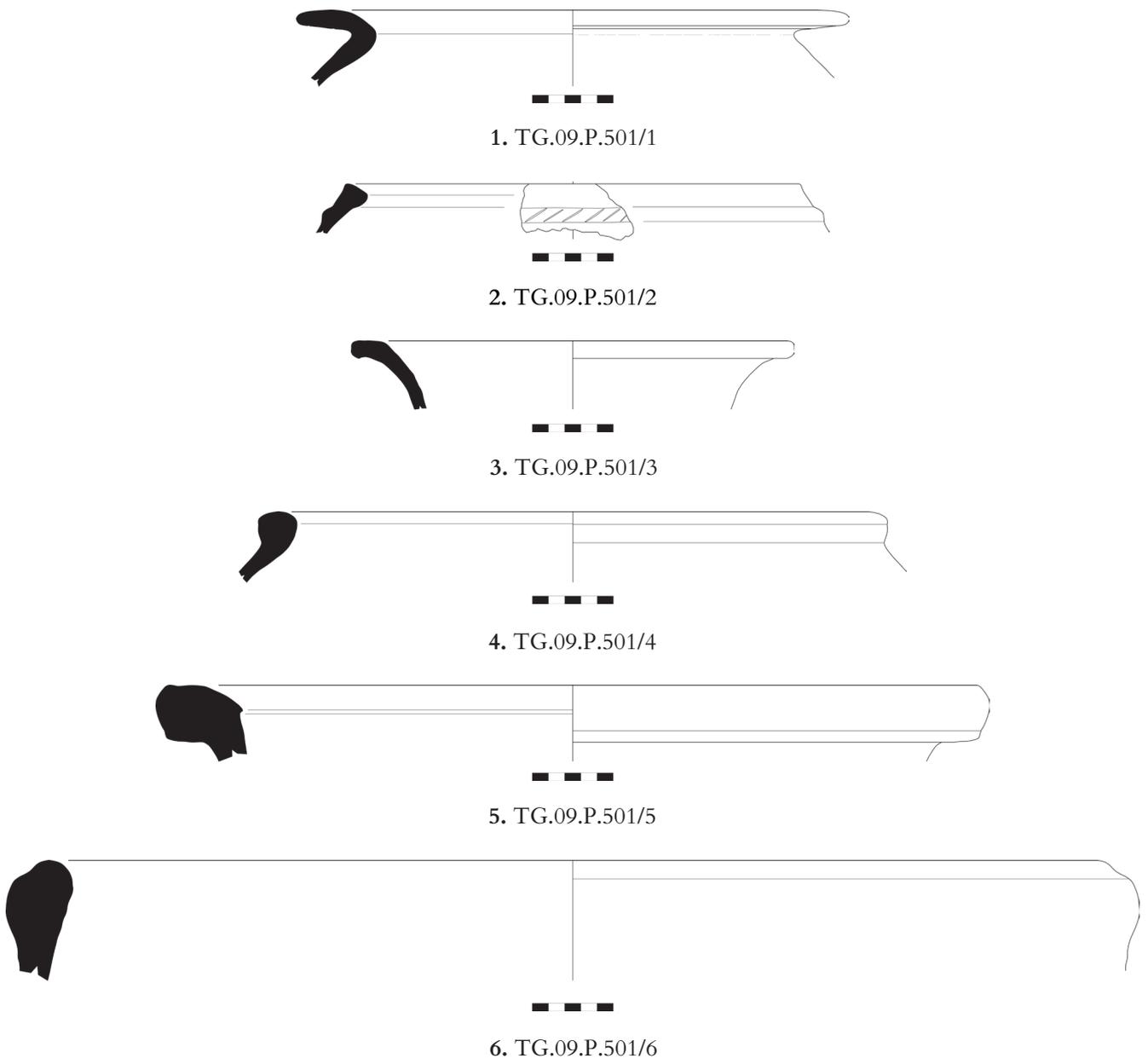


Fig. 2 Pottery assemblage from F.505, Area F.

No.	Pottery No.	Phase	Context	Techn.	Firing	Inclusions	Fabric color	Surf treat.
1	TG.10.P.700/2	1	F.1900	W	H	MSMh	5YR 7/6 (C-I/O)	-
2	TG.10.P.700/8	1	F.1900	W	H	MMMh	5YR 7/6 (C-I/O)	-
3	TG.10.P.700/1	1	F.1900	W	H	YSM	5YR 7/4 (C-I/O)	-
4	TG.10.P.700/3	1	F.1900	W	H	YSM	5YR 7/6 (C-I/O)	-
5	TG.10.P.700/4	1	F.1900	W	H	MSL	7.5YR 7/6 (C-I/O)	-
6	TG.10.P.700/7	1	F.1900	W	M	MMM	5YR 7/6 (I/O) 2.5YR 5/8 (C)	-
7	TG.10.P.700/5	1	F.1900	W	H	YSM	10YR 8/2 (C-I/O)	-
8	TG.10.P.700/6	1	F.1900	W	H	MSL	10YR 8/2 (C-I/O)	-
9	TG2.10.P.1000/1	/	Surface	H	L	YLMh	5YR 6/6 (C-I/O)	-

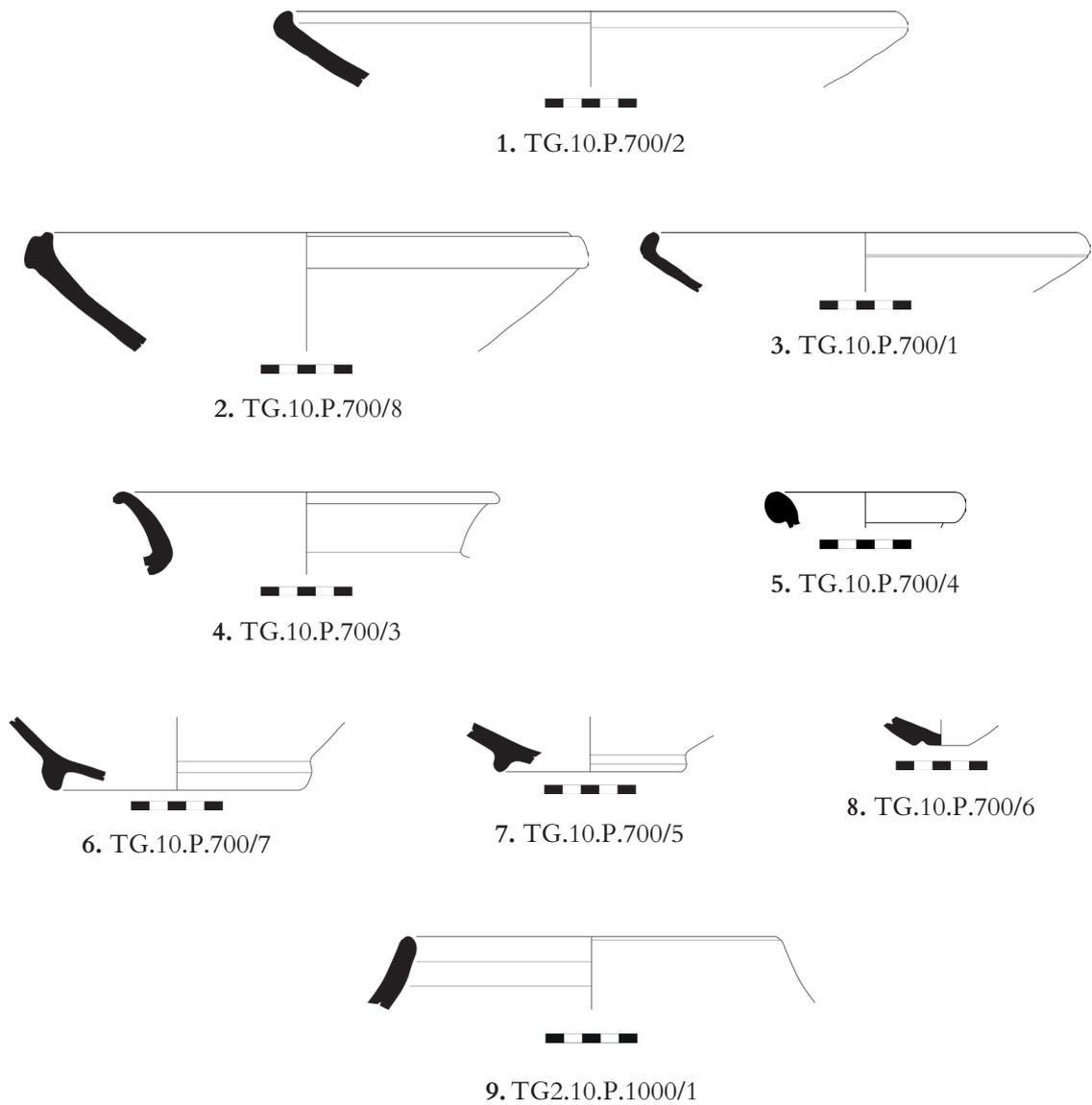


Fig. 3 Pottery assemblage from F.700, Area Q (Nos. 1-8) and from the survey of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2 (No. 9).

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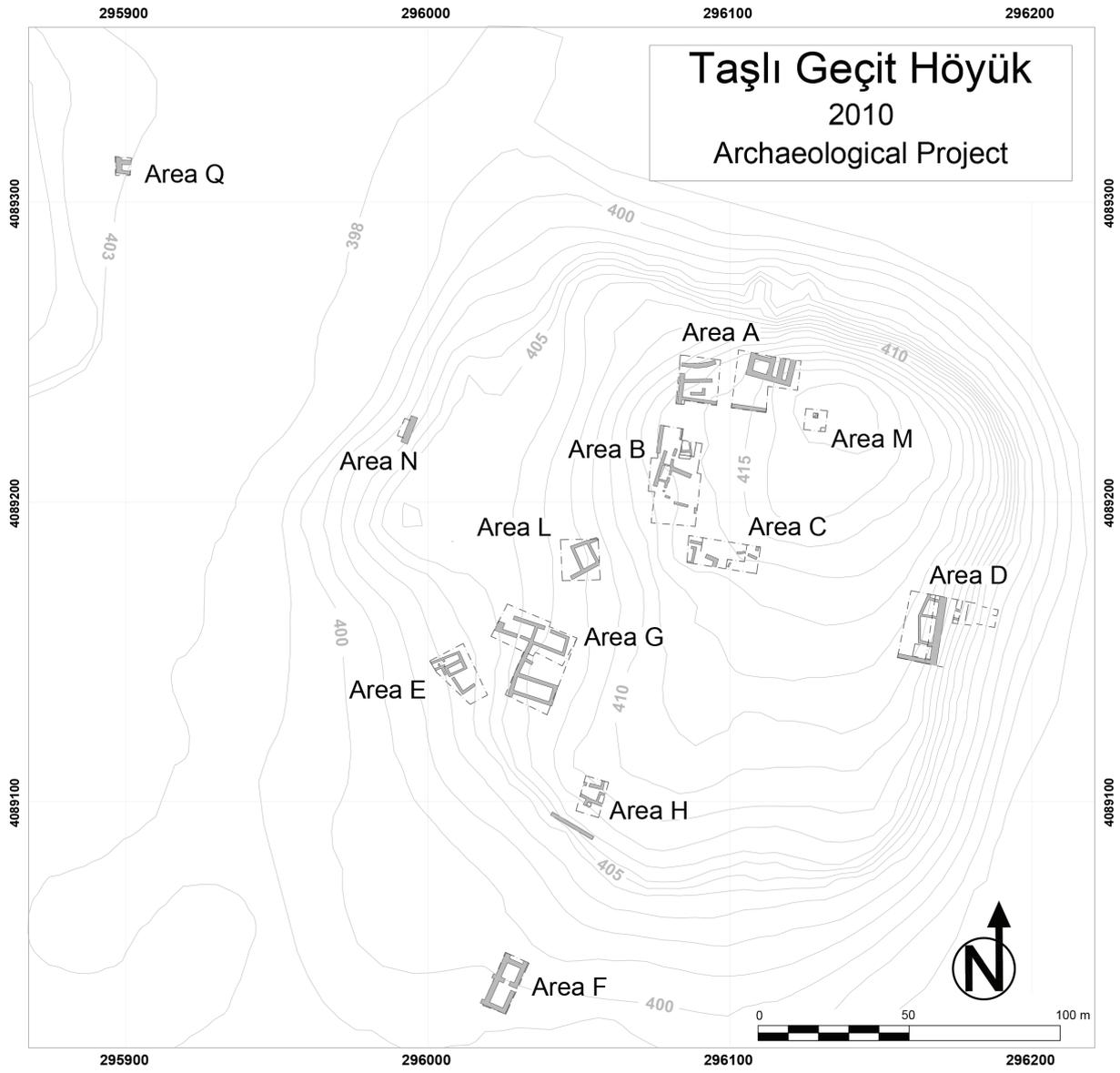
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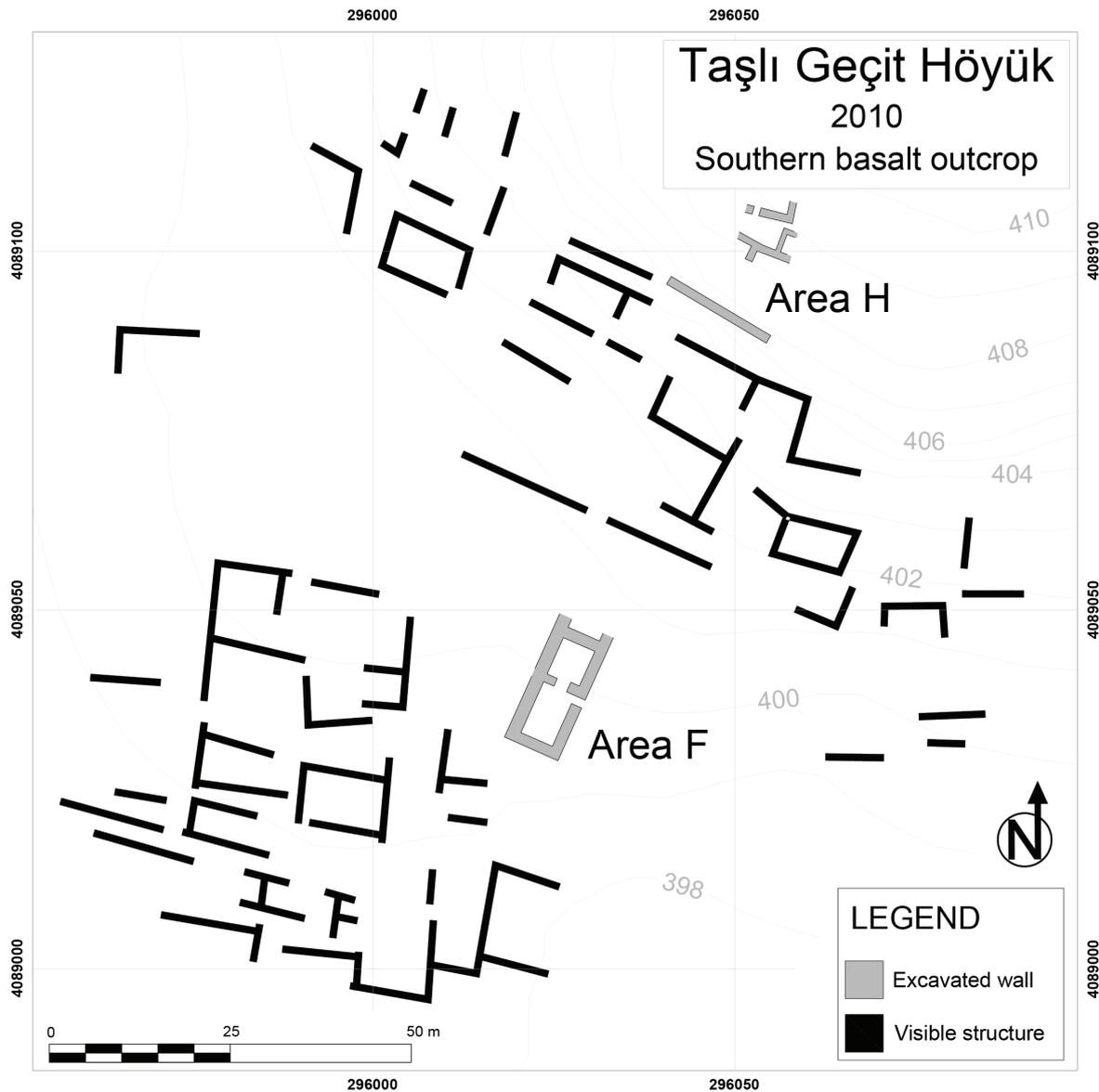
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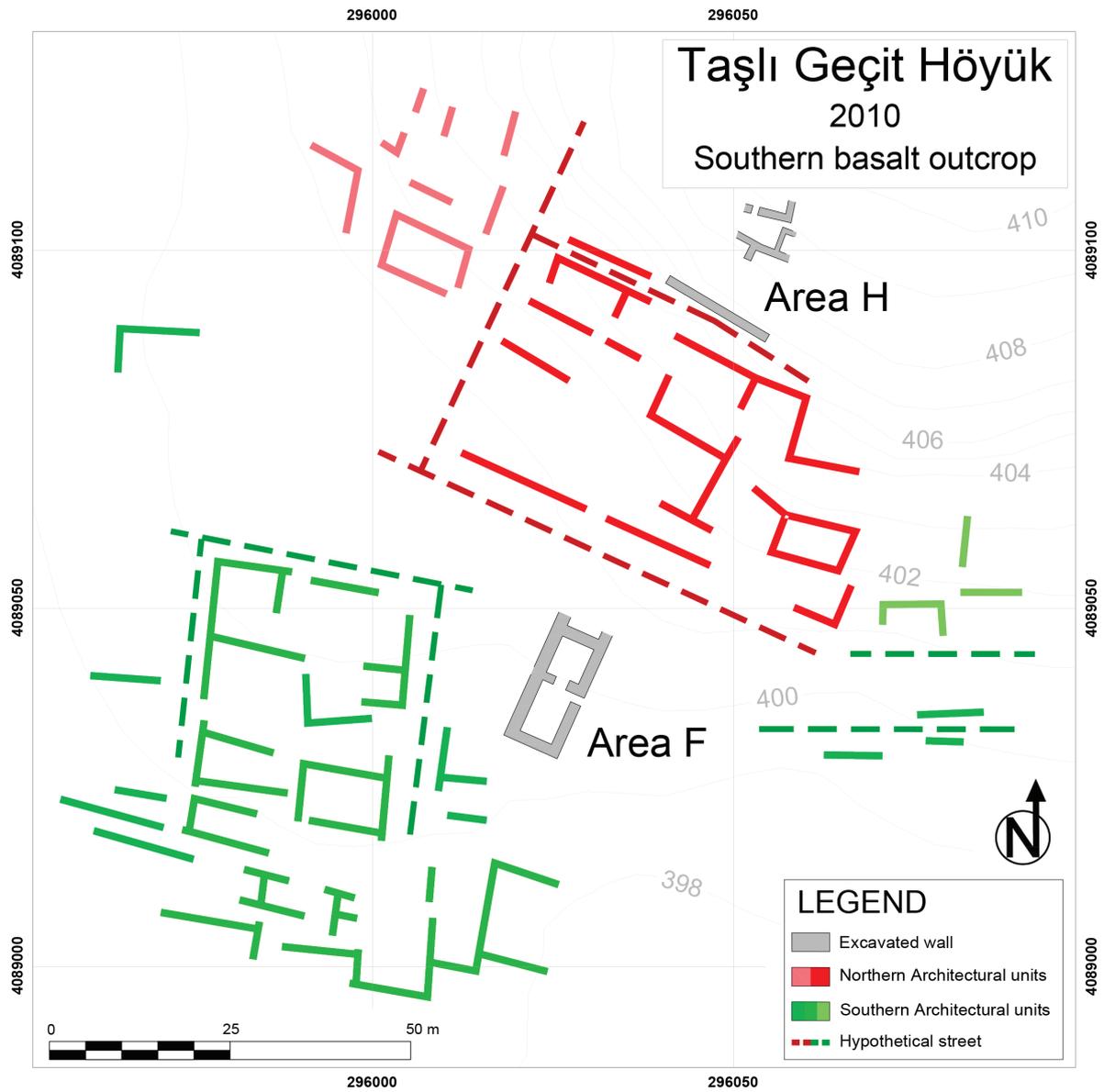
Topographic map projected over a satellite image (Digital Globe 2005) of Taşlı Geçit Höyük and Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.



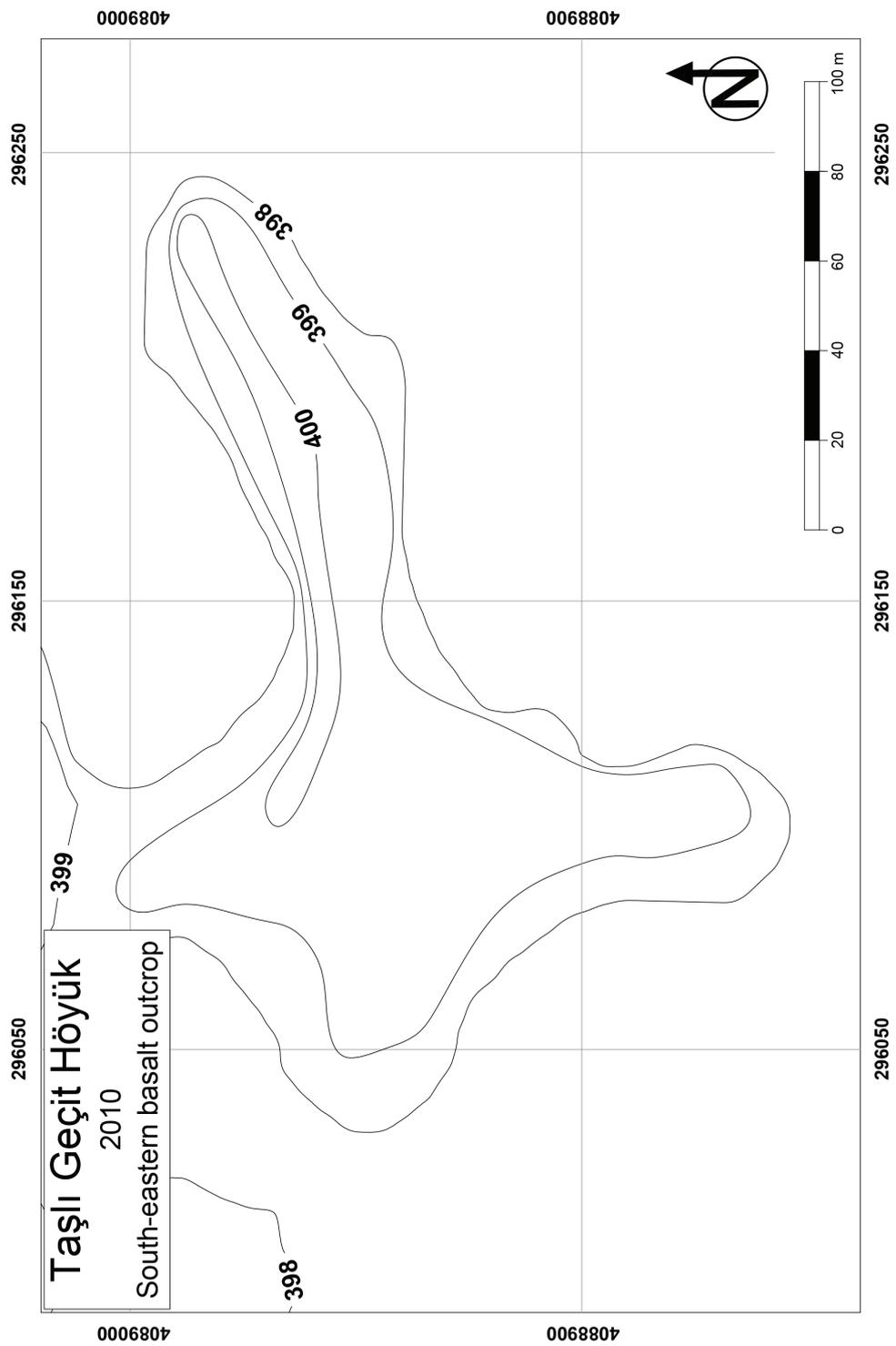
Topographic map of Taşlı Geçit Höyük.



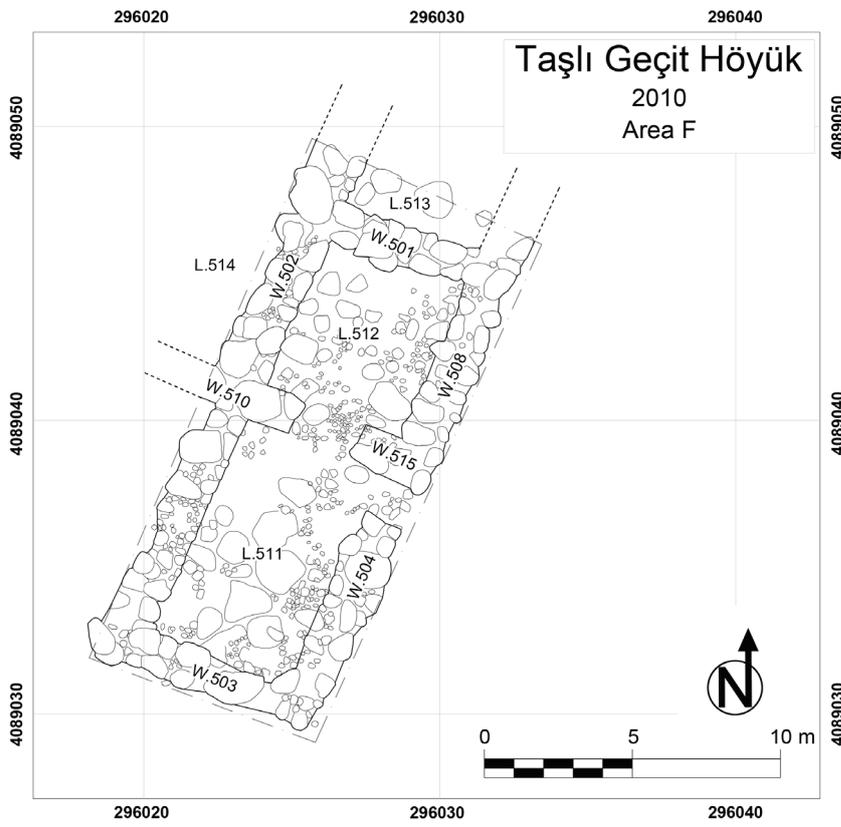
The southern basalt outcrop with the visible structures and excavated areas (F and H).



Tentative reconstruction of the architectural units and roads in the southern basalt outcrop.

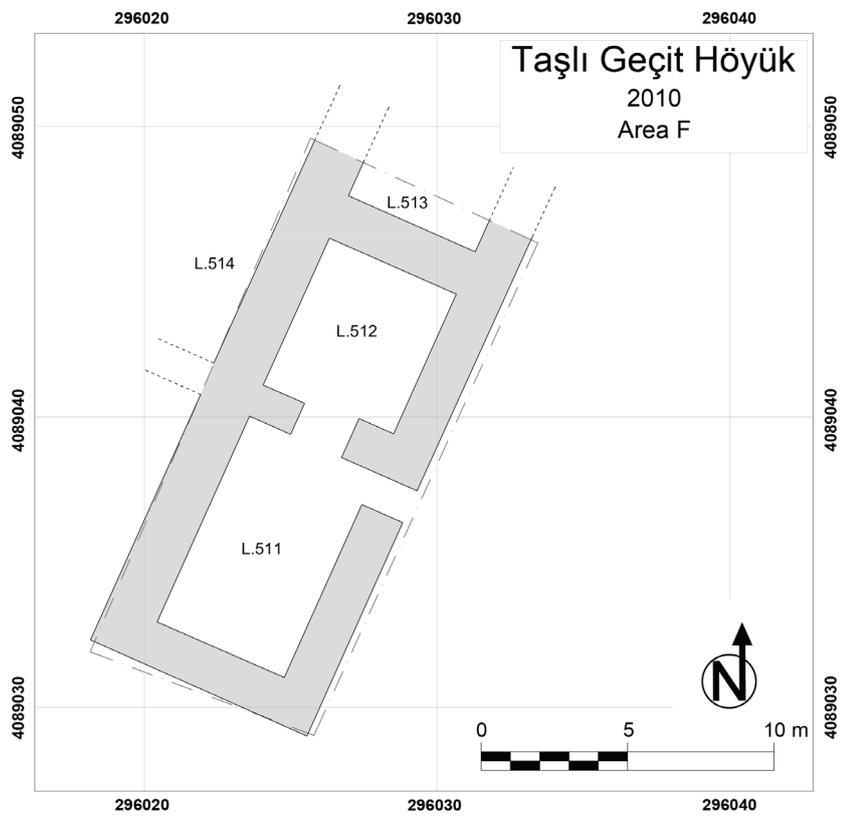


Detail of the topography of the cemetery area in the south-eastern basalt outcrop.



1 Plan of Area F.

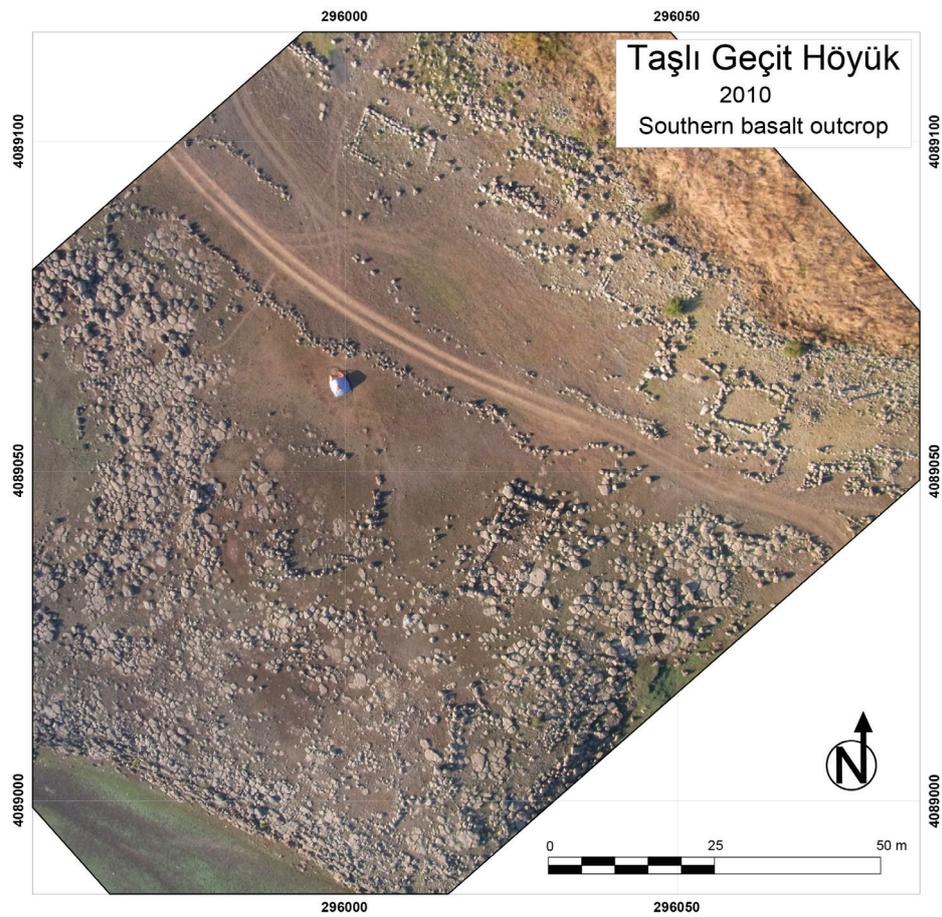
2 Schematic reconstruction of the building excavated in Area F.





1 General view of the southern basalt outcrop from south-west.

2 Orthophoto of the southern basalt outcrop taken with kite.





1 The remains of a pit, possibly a burial from the cemetery area in the south-eastern basalt outcrop.



2 Two small circular holes documented in the area of the cemetery in the south-eastern basalt outcrop.



1 General view of Area F from north-west.



2 General view of Area F from east.



1 The south-eastern corner (W.503 -W.504) of the building from Area F.



2 The south-western corner (W.502 -W.503) of the building from Area F.



1 Detailed view of the remains of the basalt stone masonry of W.508.



2 Detailed view of the remains of the basalt stone masonry of W.502.



1 General view of Room L.511 from south-west.



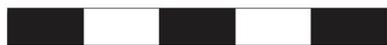
2 Detailed view of the collapse layer F.506 in room L.511.



1 General view of Room L.512 from north-east.



2 The collapse layer F.507 between room L.512 and L.513.



1. TG.09.O.235



2. TG.09.O.71



3. TG.09.O.74



4. TG.09.O.72



5. TG.09.O.234



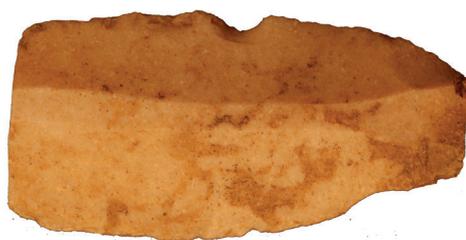
6. TG.09.O.227



7. TG.09.O.221



1. TG.09.O.663



2. TG.09.O.117



3. TG.09.O.73



5. TG.09.O.55



4. TG.09.O.78



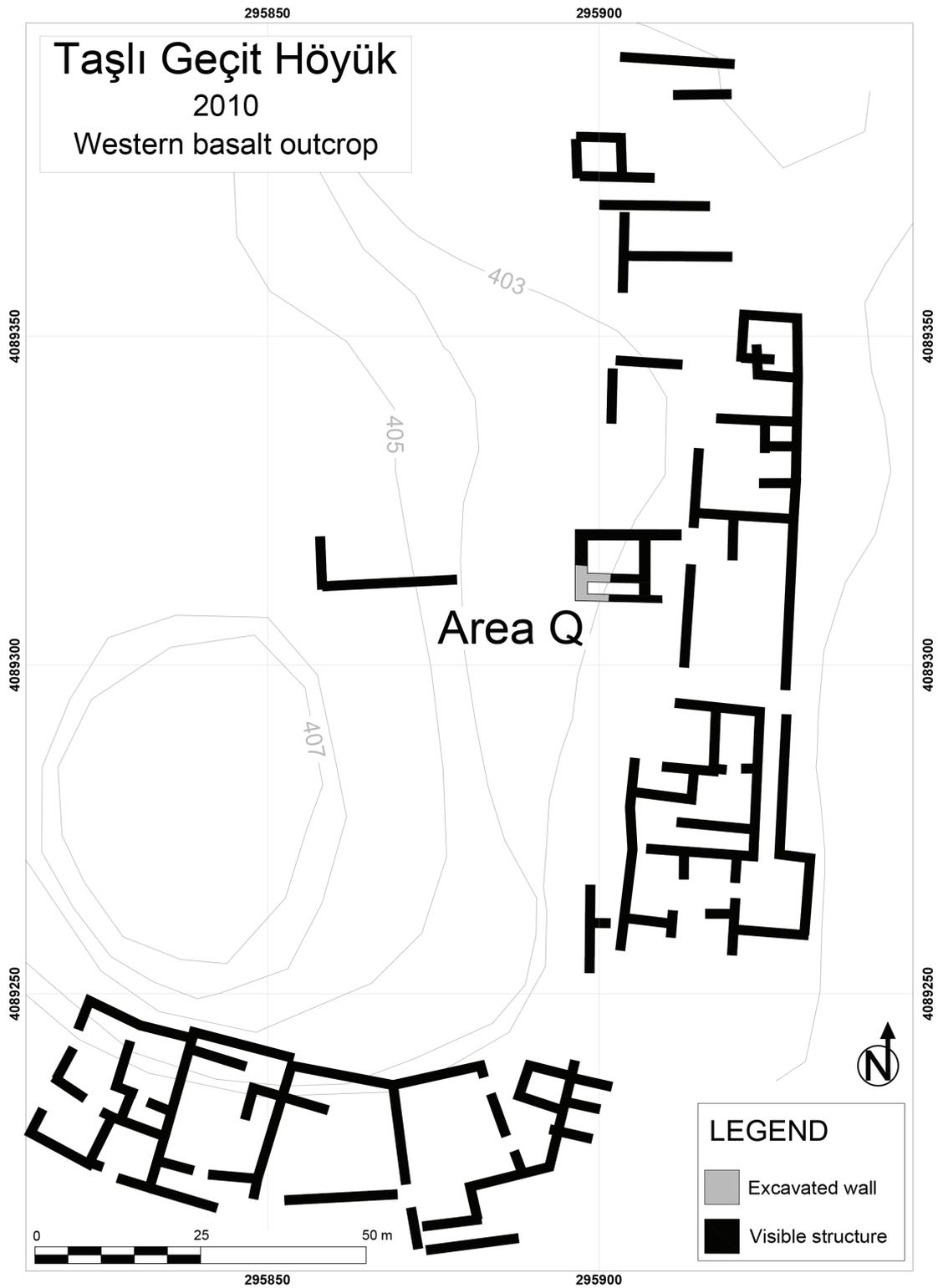
6. TG.09.O.80



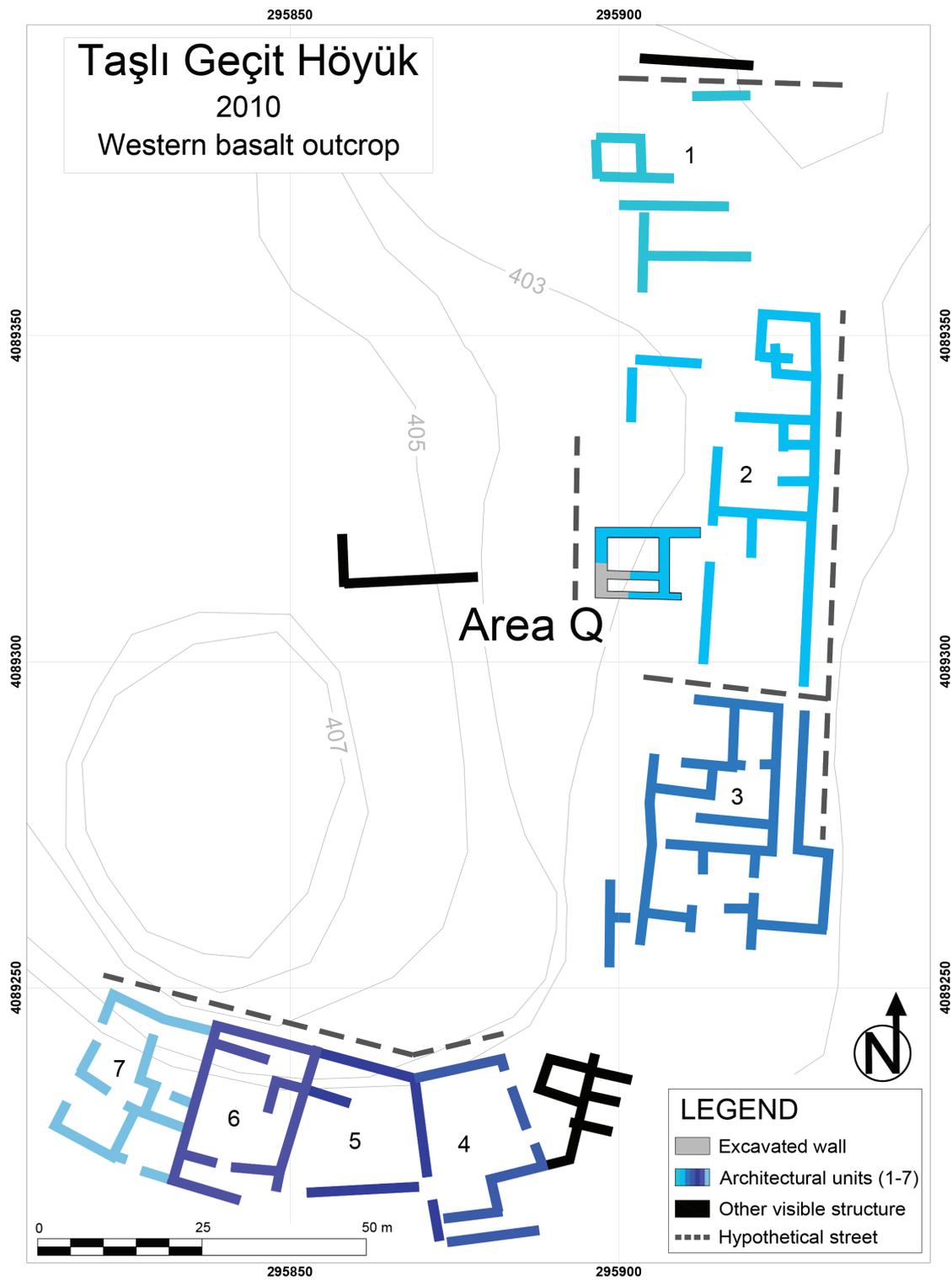
1 Diagnostic pottery sherds from Area F (F.505, TG.09.P.501).



2 Hellenistic tiles from Area F (F.509, TG.09.P.502).

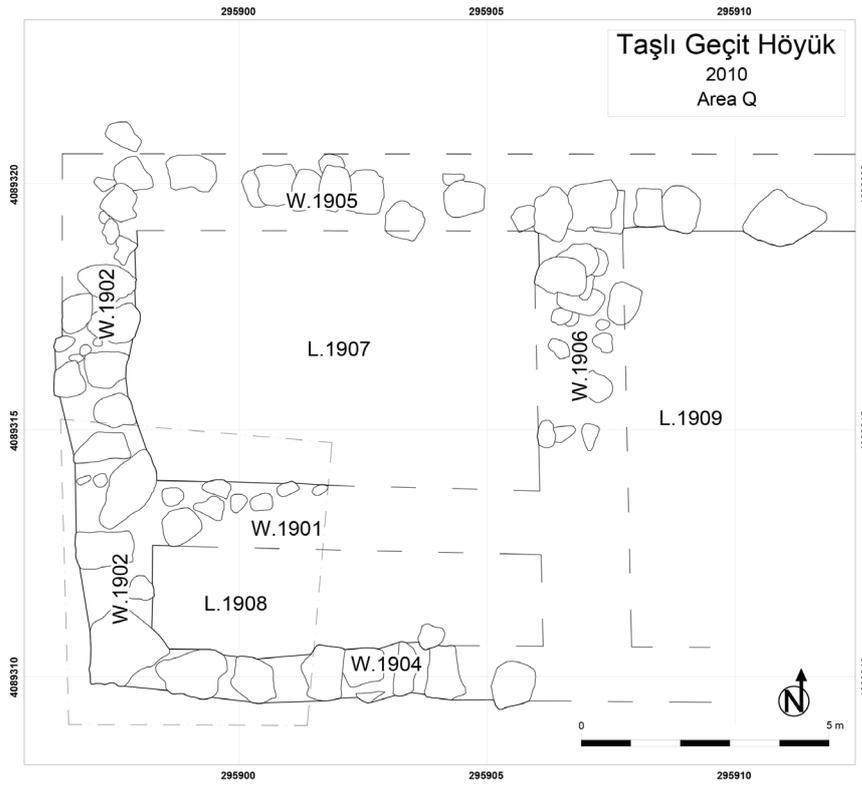


The western basalt outcrop with the visible structures and the excavated area (Q).

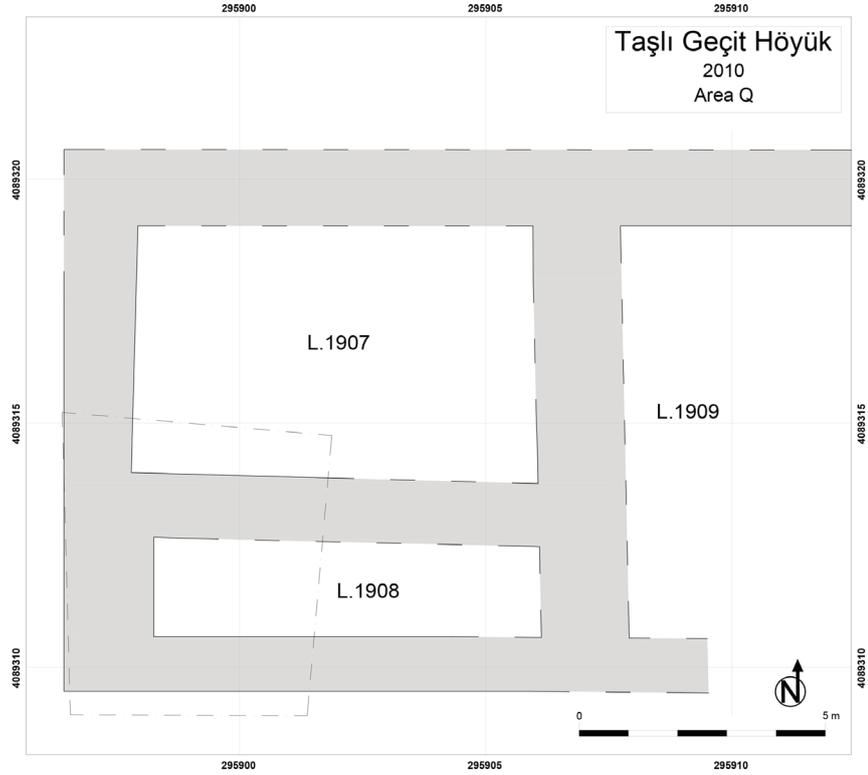


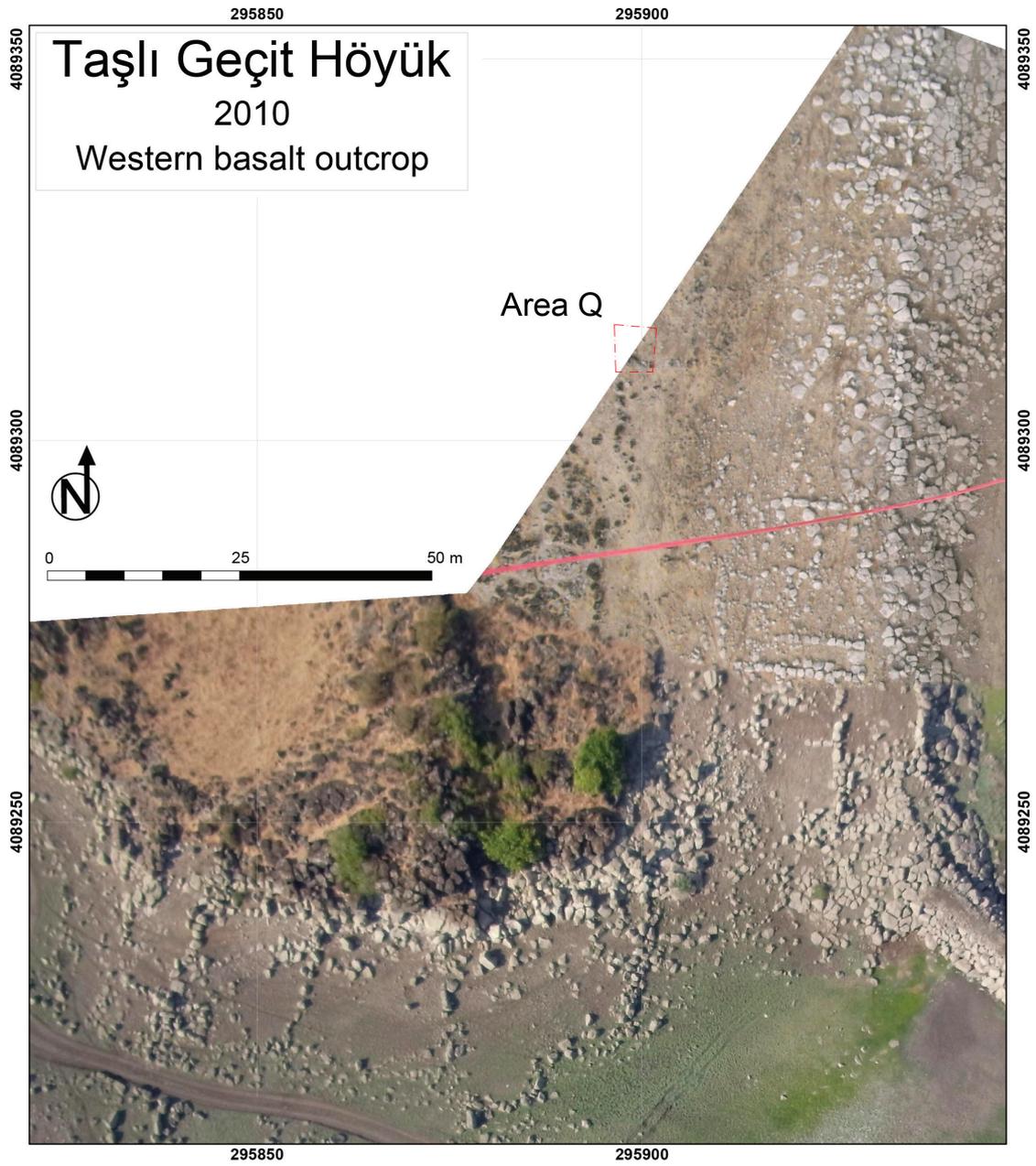
Tentative reconstruction of the architectural units and road in the western basalt outcrop.

1 Plan of Area Q.



2 Schematic reconstruction of the building excavated in Area Q.





Georeferenced orthophotomosaic of the western basalt outcrop taken with kite.



1 General view of Area Q from north-west.



2 The south-western corner (W.1902, W.1904) of the building excavated in Area Q.



1 General view of the mudbrick collapse layer (F.1903) covering room L.1908. from south-east.



2 Detailed view of the mudbrick collapse layer (F.1903) covering room L.1908. from north-east.



1 Detailed view of the remains of the basalt stone masonry of W.1902 from north.



2 General view of room L.1907 and L.1909, with Area Q in the background.



1. TG.10.O.455



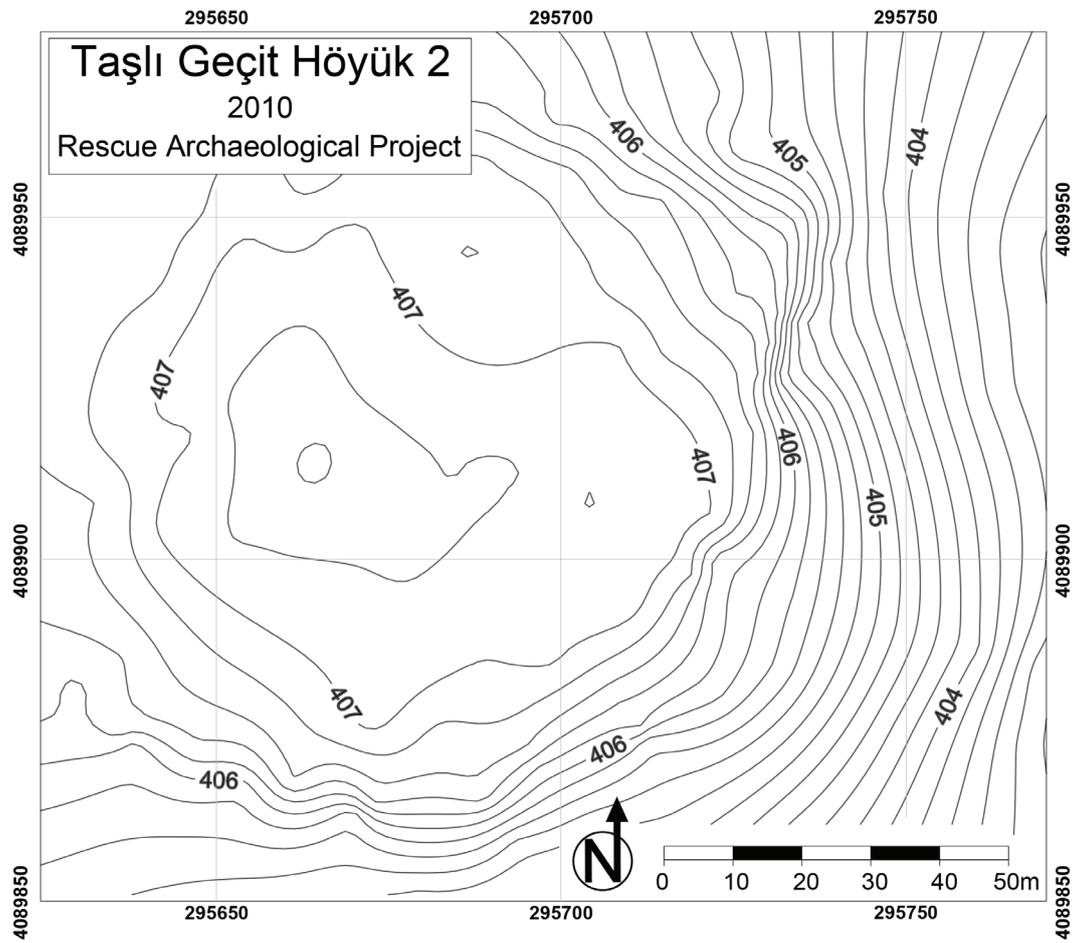
2. TG.10.O.456



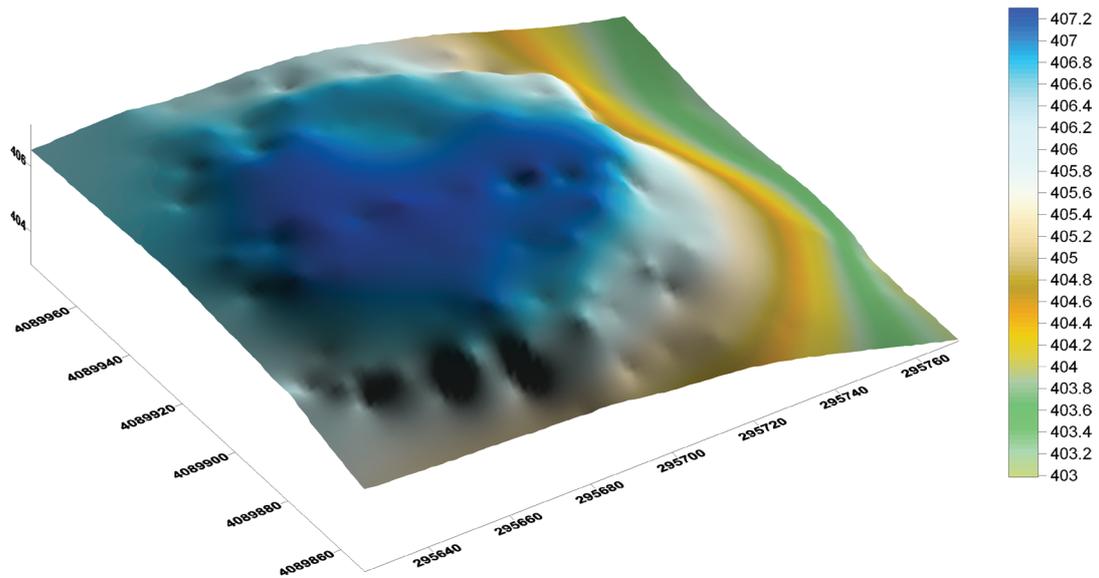
3. TG.10.O.459



4. Diagnostic pottery from Area Q (F.1900, TG.10.P.700).



1 Topographic map of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.



2 Digital Elevation Model of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.



1 General view of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2 from south-east.



2 A looting hole dug in the centre of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.

1 A looting hole dug in the centre of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.



2 Traces of ploughing in the centre of Taşlı Geçit Höyük 2.





1. TG2.10.O.184



2. TG2.10.O.185



3. TG2.10.O.187