



AREA D – THE LOWER TOWN

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The «Kultraum»

The «Kultraum» in the area of the lower town was discovered in 1912 by chance while work was being done on Max v. Oppenheim's expedition-house. It could not be further explored until the summer of 1913, because parts of the expedition house had to be torn down first.

The «Kultraum» is situated at the northern end of the excavation area of a living quarter that stretched to the city wall in the south and has at least two building phases (**Fig. 1**). So far, the «Kultraum» is the only pre-Neo-Assyrian sacred building. It cannot be determined, if it was intended for the cult of a deity or for the worship of ancestors.

The excavations of 1913 were executed in a great hurry. As a result many questions remained unanswered, such as the stratigraphic position of the building within the southern lower town. These unknowns can only be uncovered on the basis of new excavations. A major difficulty is the fact, that for 30 years, modern houses of the people relocated here from the Euphrates valley have been built over the entire area of the old expedition house and its surroundings.

Thanks to an agreement that was made with a house-owner, we were able to conduct a sounding inside his courtyard. There we rediscovered part of the northern wall of the ante-chamber of the cultic building and the area just north of it (**Fig. 2**). As expected, the southern part of the trench was disturbed by a well that had been built together with the house of the earlier expedition. Nevertheless, the northern wall of the cultic building was definitely excavated.

Above this wall and in a line slanted upwards towards the north, the bottom of the excavations of 1913, which had been re-filled back then, was recognized; inside the filling numerous finds from the time of the old excavations were recovered.

In the undisturbed northern part of the trench a higher floor level and the remnants of an Iron Age wall, which lay about 1.20 m above the floor of the «Kultraum», were uncovered (**Fig. 3**). Even though no stratigraphic connection to the «Kultraum» can be established due to the damages done by the old dig, it can be assumed that, at the time of the upper level, it had no longer been in use.

Just beneath the bottom of the northern wall of the cultic building we reached virgin soil. Thus, it is confirmed that this structure belongs to the oldest building level in this area of the lower town of Tell Halaf.

(Translation: A. Sollee / B. Sollee)