

Fortifications of Prehellenistic Beirut; The Archaeological Site BEY 020

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In September 1996, excavation activities in BEY 020 came to a

close after three campaigns conducted by the author and by Hélène Sader from the AUB. The location of the site had been chosen with the promising results of the neighbouring excavations in mind: Leila Badre (BEY 003, AUB Museum) and Naji Karam (BEY 013, Lebanese University) had - among other findings - laid bare long stretches of a "glacis" to the northwest and to the east of our prospective site. There was hope of establishing the missing link between these fortificatory structures. The hope came true: together with our neighbours we ended up with a glacis of impressive dimensions which will, at least partly, be preserved as a monument open to the public (Fig. 1).

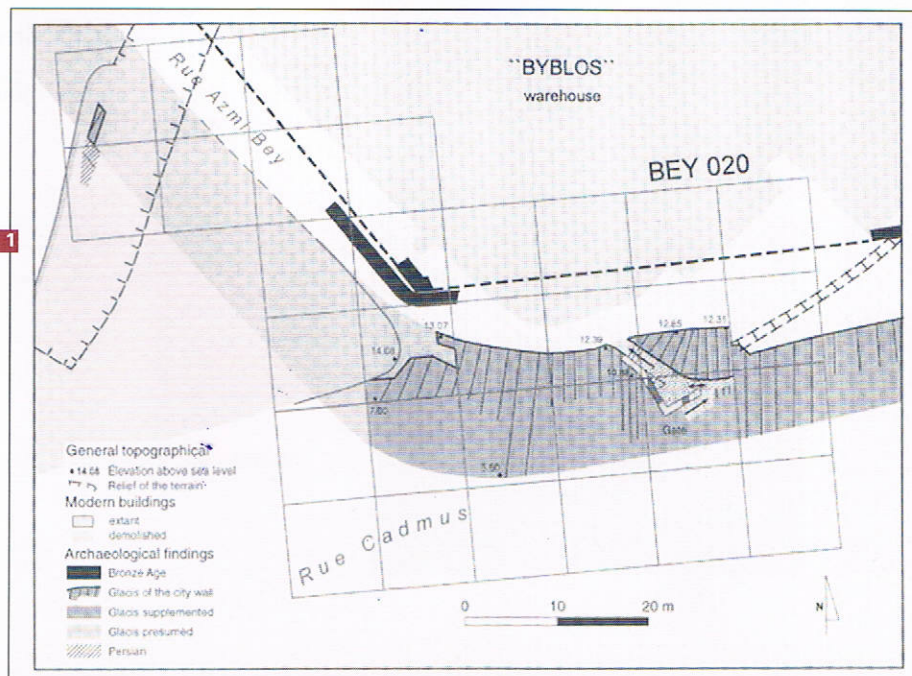
The glacis is what is left of the city-fortification of Phoenician Beirut. It consists of a ramp coated with stones and, originally, ran up to the city-wall which rose above it. Neither the city-wall nor the upper edge of the glacis are preserved, and yet: with an extant height of up to 8m. rising at an angle of 30 to 35 degrees, the remaining glacis still offers an awe-inspiring aspect (Fig. 2). At places where it was destroyed by modern building-measures such as foundation-trenches or sewers, its substructure could be examined in more detail: the coating covers layers of earth alternating with stabilizing layers of stones; several "pillars" of stones give additional support from behind.

Towards the end of our second campaign in autumn

1995 we had observed a slight change of direction in the course of the glacis - before it disappeared under one of our baulks. In September 1996, we removed the baulk and came upon a flight of stairs four of which were preserved and led up from, possibly, a narrow gateway (Fig. 3).

For the purposes of stratigraphy, the glacis is the main dividing line between earlier layers below and later layers above it. In the west of BEY 020, the ramp rests on remains of two phases of the Bronze Age city-wall (Fig. 4). A more exact dating to the Middle Bronze Age is possible because of its resemblance to the walls at the Middle Bronze Age city-gate in BEY 003: both structures are built in a similar way out of similar materials, using large limestone ashlar of up to 1 metre length and square-shaped in section. This city-wall was founded in BEY 020 on the high-rising edge of a rock while a later reinforcement, also of Bronze Age date, was erected in front of that rock and still measures 5 m. in height and more.

The layers above the glacis consist mainly of rubbish that the inhabitants of the settlement wanted to get rid of. It is not possible to pinpoint the beginning of these deposits, which, in the course of time, grew to a thickness of at least 5 m. necessitating two successive retaining walls at the foot of the glacis. As the layer immediately on top of the glacis includes a large number of stones, the first deposits may have been preceded by a destruction of the city-wall. The stratigraphy of the



1. General plan of the site BEY 020.

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layers above the glacis is rather homogeneous, including a layer of burnt debris flowing over the earlier one of the retaining walls and dividing the bulk of deposited layers roughly into halves. Only some layers in the eastern part of the excavation, laid bare in 1995 already, showed a disproportionately large amount of Iron Age painted pottery. We left two blocks of layers standing to be carefully removed in 1996. The huge quantity of pottery in that area - more than 43,000 sherds were more or less cursorily handled in 1996 - was then explained by the probable vicinity of a gate (see above) giving easy access to the dump. A thorough investigation of the ceramic material will take up several years. Let it here only be noted that, besides the overwhelming majority of various indigenous common wares, there were also a few imports from Cyprus (Late Bronze Age) and a considerable amount of Attic black glazed ware (5-4th century B.C.).

The dump on top of the glacis yielded also many small-finds the most remarkable of which are fragments of terracotta figurines. Most of them belong to well-known types such as horsemen, tambourine players, female figurines (of the "Pillar-Ashtarte" type or, frequently, of a naked pregnant type with spread arms, (Fig. 5), or of a

pregnant type with Egyptian hair-dressing), male figurines (as equivalent to the last-mentioned female type: a bearded type with tiara).

Above the early Iron Age layers, but below the continuous burnt layer, we came upon a rather particular feature: a dog cemetery (Fig. 6). More than a dozen skeletons could be ascertained; it is quite obvious that they were not just dumped, but carefully arranged in shallow pits, sometimes covered with large potsherds. With the kind assistance of the Directorate General of Antiquities the bones were taken to Tübingen, Germany, for palaeozoological analysis.

More detailed information about, at least, the two 1995 excavation seasons in BEY 020 will shortly be available in the forthcoming first volume of *B.A.A.L.* It will contain a "Preliminary report" by Uwe Finkbeiner and Hélène Sader, with contributions by Peter Jablonka on stratigraphy and architecture, Ingrid Hitzl on Attic imports, Kirsten Lehmann-Jericke on terracotta figurines, and Ziad Sawaya on coins. The present article has drawn on the preparatory work for the publication in *Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises (B.A.A.L.)* and on the documentation of the last (1996) campaign.



2. The "glacis" of the Phoenician city-wall.

3. Flight of stairs on the "glacis" leading into the city.

- 4. The reinforced Bronze Age city-wall.
- 5. Female terracotta figurine of Phoenician date.
- 6. Grave in the dog cemetery, ca. 500 B.C.

