

# Al-Andarin/Androna: Site and Setting

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Al-Andarin, ancient Androna, mentioned in the *Itinerarium Antonini* as a *mansio* on the road from Chalkis to Isriye and identified as a *kome* in a mosaic inscription of the 5./6. century AD<sup>1</sup>, covers an extensive area of about 1.6 square kilometres (Figs. 1. 2)<sup>2</sup>. Lacking city (*polis*) status the *kome* Androna nevertheless enjoys some urban features. With its two circuit walls, eleven churches, two baths, a great military building (*kastron*) in the centre and a lot of houses buried under sables, it is one of the greatest and most important sites in the region of the so-called ‘Limes de Chalkis’<sup>3</sup>.

The field project started in 1997 with the geodetical elevation of the site (Figs. 2. 36), and excavations began in 1998 as an international collaboration of a Syrian, British and German team, trying to clarify the development of the site from Roman to Byzantine and into the Early Islamic periods through the study of the defensive organisation and monumental layout, the water supply and the agriculture of Androna. The results for the baths in the centre – the Byzantine one excavated by the British, the early Arabic by the Syrian team – and the study of the *kastron* – the two circuit walls and the house-architecture by the German team – allow a first insight into ancient and medieval Androna<sup>4</sup>. For the comprehension of the monumental layout of the site it is important, that the buildings of Androna are standing on limestone. The mass of basalt stones found in these buildings had to be transported over long distances to Androna<sup>5</sup>.

The following report will focus on the situation of Androna in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century, that means, on the question of continuation and discontinuation in early Byzantine and early Islamic times.

## 1 THE MILITARY BUILDING (*kastron*)

The *Kastron*, dated to 558–559 AD and sponsored by Thomas, a citizen of Androna<sup>6</sup>, covers an area of about 6000 square meters (Fig. 4). It is closely

linked to the buildings of Qasr ibn Wardan and to the great Syrian cities and at the same time deeply rooted in local tradition. The ground plan shows a door flanked by towers on the west- and south side (Fig. 3), two great ramp-houses<sup>7</sup> connecting the double storied living and working rooms, arcades carried on piers surrounding the inner court and a church in its centre, which was not part of the original building concept<sup>8</sup>. I will concentrate on the intensive reuse of the *kastron* in the early Islamic time, which informs about the situation of the centre after the 6<sup>th</sup> century. I select the southwest part of the building.

The situation at the beginning and the end of our excavation (Figs. 5. 6: the white arrow points to the lintel of the west door) illustrates, that the rooms of the ground floor are standing up to about 6 meters, filled not only by a mass of materials from the upper rooms, but also by constructions of Islamic times. The west hall is reached through the huge vestibule of the west door (Fig. 7) and the western ramp-house (Fig. 8), which leads to the upper rooms as well as to the

<sup>1</sup> Mouterde – Poidebard I, 60–63. 174; Salame-Sarkis 1989, 322–325. For the geographical situation of Androna and for the discussion of older surveys see recently Strube 2003, 2006; Mundell Mango 2002; Griesheimer 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See the aerial photo in G. Gerster – R.-B. Warnke, *Flugbilder aus Syrien von der Antike bis zur Moderne* (Mainz 2003) Abb. 90. 91. I thank Georg Gerster for the concession to publish one of his aerial photographs. For the geodetical plan of the site see Strube 2003, Abb. 1. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Mouterde – Poidebard 1945, 61–63. 171–174. 217 pl. CX–CXIII.

<sup>4</sup> For the preliminary report about the campaigns of the German team in the years 1997–2001 see Strube 2003, 25–115 and for the report about the Byzantine bath see Mundell Mango 2002, 303–310.

<sup>5</sup> For the questions concerning the quarries see Strube 2003, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Discussion of the inscription and detailed information about the excavated parts of the building in Strube 2003, 31–76.

<sup>7</sup> In each ramphouse at least one course of the ramps began with three steps (Fig. 8).

<sup>8</sup> See the inscription of the church in Prentice 1922, Nr. 916. 917.



loophole way, running around the whole building (Figs. 6, 9).

The ground floor of the west hall (Fig. 4) – 15,30 m long, 7,80 m broad and at least 6,30 m high – was originally covered with cross vaults and opened in full height to the loophole way. Some of these openings were closed in Islamic time by mudbrick walls and the hall was subdivided into three rooms (Fig. 9). To one of the mudbrick walls, constructed between the pillars and their opposite, we owe the preservation of the Annunciation scene with Gabriel and St. Mary (Fig. 11)<sup>9</sup>. The presence of this scene in a room that was originally used for communal purposes was surprising. Unexpected was also the situation in the eastern tower, flanking the south gate of the *kastron*: fallen mudbricks protected a small section of a wall with paintings of early Islamic time (Fig. 12)<sup>10</sup>. Small finds provide first information about the different phases of reuse and their chronology, further information gives the horizon of destruction of the *kastron*: The *latrina* south of the western hall (Fig. 4), which offered place for about 20 persons<sup>11</sup> – as well as the great south hall were reused only during a shorter period – up to the 9<sup>th</sup> century maximum. These were destroyed by a fire<sup>12</sup>, which also destroyed a greater part of the west hall. The section with the pillar showing the Annunciation was not in use after the 9<sup>th</sup> century, only the northern part of the west hall could be reused until the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The good preservation of the south hall (Fig. 10)<sup>13</sup> and the dense information of the collapsed vaults of its upper rooms (Fig. 13) we owe to this early destruction<sup>14</sup>. The marble column with its limestone capital (Fig. 14) closely connected with the best north Syrian workshops<sup>15</sup>, leads to a further aspect of the *kastron*: the rich spectrum of imported materials<sup>16</sup>. In the upper rooms we find red and green porphyry and different kinds of marble for revetments as for opus sectile and glass-mosaic<sup>17</sup>. They testify to an intensive import of precious materials – the broad spectrum of decoration in basalt completes the picture (Fig. 15)<sup>18</sup>.

The church in the court of the *kastron*, which is a later addition with another donor and without the characteristic masonry of the *kastron* (Fig. 20)<sup>19</sup>, shows, that the broad spectrum of materials was not only characteristic of the *kastron*. The interior of the church was deeply destroyed, but we could clarify the main features: The interior arcades were supported by limestone capitals on 'brescia' columns<sup>20</sup> – not by pillars, as Butler had supposed<sup>21</sup>. The interior of the church presented a colourful view with its marble revetments, its opus sectile in porphyry, different kinds of marble and natural stones and its limestone capitals on 'brescia' columns, covered by heavy basalt blocks – it is the

coloured picture of the church of Q. Ibn Wardan (Fig. 21)<sup>22</sup>, repeated in the south church and the church of the archangels in Androna<sup>23</sup> and certainly also in other churches of the region.

The small finds also reflect the long history of the *kastron* (Figs. 16–19): In the *kastron* as in then outer circuit wall of the site we found lamps from Early Byzantine to Abbasid times (Fig. 16), model ware of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century and glass of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 17), imported north African ware and a greater spectrum of ceramics of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> (Fig. 18) and in the house excavation a concentration of ceramics of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 19).

## 2 THE EARLY BYZANTINE AND THE EARLY ISLAMIC BATH (Fig. 22)

The general layout of the early Islamic bath (Fig. 24)<sup>25</sup> – there are serious hints, that it dates to the Umayyad time<sup>26</sup> – is closely linked to the bath of Thomas (Fig. 23)<sup>27</sup> and to the 6<sup>th</sup> century bath of Zenobia/Halabiyya<sup>28</sup>, with one exception

<sup>9</sup> The discussion of this painting in Strube 2005, 183–196.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Strube 2003, 42 Abb. 23. Wall painting was also an important factor in the early Byzantine bath of Androna: Mundell Mango 2002, 309.

<sup>11</sup> Strube 2003, 47–49 und Abb. 29, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Possible causes of the fire (following an earthquake?) will be discussed in a future publication.

<sup>13</sup> Strube 2003, Abb. 33–36.

<sup>14</sup> Strube 2003, 55.

<sup>15</sup> Strube 2003, 54 Abb. 39; Strube 1983, 59–64.

<sup>16</sup> See also the situation in the bath of Thomas: Mundell Mango 2002, 306–307.

<sup>17</sup> Strube 2003, 41 Abb. 18–20; Mundell Mango 2002, 306 Fig. 11–13.

<sup>18</sup> See also Strube 2003, 68 Abb. 55, 70 Abb. 56–58.

<sup>19</sup> Butler 1922, 50; Prentice 1922, Nr. 916, 917.

<sup>20</sup> The same kind of 'brescia' was used in the upper stories of the *kastron*.

<sup>21</sup> Butler 1922, Taf. 1. The results of the excavation are going to be presented in detail in the final publication.

<sup>22</sup> There is one difference: In Qasr ibn Wardan the clerestory was built up in sunbaked bricks, in Androna it was constructed in basalt blocks.

<sup>23</sup> The measures of the limestone/marble columns, bases and capitals in the two churches make it more than only probable, that the interior was quite near to the picture of the *kastron* church.

<sup>24</sup> Compare the materials in Strube 2003, 95–108.

<sup>25</sup> The architect of the Syrian team prepares a detailed revelation of the bath. I thank Radi al-Uqdah for the concession to publish the preliminary ground plan, showing the main features and the general layout of the bath.

<sup>26</sup> The general layout of the architecture and a kufic inscription are the main arguments for an early date. Robert Hoyland informed me, that he dates the kufic inscription, written on marble and excavated by the Syrian team, to the Umayyad time.

<sup>27</sup> See Mundell Mango 2002, 303–311.

<sup>28</sup> Lauffray 1991, 114–130, 115 Fig. 48.



namely: The reception hall, which was divided into two compartments by a long row of arcades on columns (Fig. 25). The southern half of the bath (Fig. 26) was constructed in local limestone – the first greater construction in Androna, which used the local stone –, whereas the northern half was completely built in spolia of basalt and reused are also the marble revetments<sup>29</sup>. The great number of lintels as the mass of spolia in general informs about the situation of the centre at the time, when the bath was built: Not only the Byzantine bath, but also a greater number of houses and other buildings had been damaged or were out of use<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless evidence of the bath suggests a certain degree of continuity of the settlement at the site – the excavation of a house near the inner circuit wall confirms this assumption.

### 3 THE HOUSE IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE SITE (Figs. 27–32)

The aerial photograph taken by Georg Gerster in spring 1997 (Fig. 1)<sup>31</sup> shows a building-complex with a court on the northern (Fig. 29) and a great reservoir in front of the southern side (Fig. 27). We began our studies with this house, which lies inside and quite close to the inner circuit wall. We hoped to gain information about an advanced phase of the settlement<sup>32</sup>.

From east to west one can observe the following (Figs. 27, 29, 31)<sup>33</sup>: A huge eastern hall with transverse arches, a long southern porticus, which connects the eastern and western part of the house, a corresponding northern porticus, which opens towards the rooms around a large stable-room (Fig. 28), a great reception-hall at the eastern end of the northern porticus with a rich mosaic floor (Figs. 29, 30). The door in the middle of the south side opens towards a long vestibule, which separates and simultaneously connects the two halves of the building-complex (Figs. 29, 31). The porticoes as the rooms of the eastern part of the house were double storied, two rooms of the western half may have been single storied. The different parts of the building were covered by saddle or lean to roofs.

The main features of the house are: 1) the intensive combination of mudbrick-walls with well-dressed basalt stones (Fig. 31); 2) the fact, that not the court, but the two porticoes and the inner vestibule determined the final organisation of the building (Fig. 29). But this layout is the result of different building-phases<sup>34</sup>: the stable room with its adjoining five rooms was the nucleus of the building, whereas the eastern hall, the two porticoes and the northern reception-hall with its

mosaic floor are later additions. A preliminary chronological frame could be reconstructed by the analysis of the smallfinds, the architectural decoration and the mosaic floor in the northern hall: After a first evaluation, the spectrum of the ceramics begins in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The broad documentation of ceramics – not only for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, but also for the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 19) – opens the possibility to study the development of forms during the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

There are some hints that the nucleus of the house dates to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the porticoes to the late 5<sup>th</sup> or the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The masterly composition of the mosaic with fighting animals alternating with idyllic scenes (Fig. 31) is linked to some mosaics at Houarte<sup>35</sup> and Houad<sup>36</sup> and dates the reception hall to the years after 486/7 and probable to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. A concentration of ceramic- and glass finds of the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century found in the great eastern hall and in rooms of the western half of the house suggest an intensive reuse of these rooms in the Umayyad time.

### 4 THE INNER AND THE OUTER CIRCUIT WALL (Figs. 1, 2, 33, 34, 36)

The date of the two circuit walls and the relationship between them and the *kastron* in the centre of the site is of fundamental importance for the history of Androna<sup>37</sup>. We excavated two gates of the inner and two of the outer wall<sup>38</sup>, and a limited geophysical survey<sup>39</sup> could clarify at least parts of the original course and occurrences of the inner wall<sup>40</sup>. The results of our work can answer some

<sup>29</sup> See also Strube 2003, 93–94.

<sup>30</sup> The main part of the lintels belonged originally to houses. Exceptions are the lintel of 552 A.D. in the south wall of the bath – presumably of a church – and the lintel of the north door of the entrance-area.

<sup>31</sup> Georg Gerster made his splendid aerial photos before the beginning of our excavations.

<sup>32</sup> The results of the first three campaigns are discussed in Strube 2003, 89–93.

<sup>33</sup> The ground plan is not finished: It shows the mainlines of the western half and of the excavation in the court area, but only the eastern half of the building complex with detailed information.

<sup>34</sup> The interpretation of the different phases is preliminary, because the exploitation of our last campaigns is in progress.

<sup>35</sup> Donceel-Voûte 1988, 103–116; 114 Fig. 80; 107 Figs. 73, 74.

<sup>36</sup> Donceel-Voûte 1988, 138–145; 141 Figs. 110, 111; 144 Fig. 116. The mosaics at Androna seem to be older than the mosaics in the church of St. George at Houad (568 A.D.).

<sup>37</sup> See the older report in Strube 2003, 76–89 Abb. 63–73.

<sup>38</sup> For the gates of the inner wall see Strube 2003, 79 Abb. 66–67.

<sup>39</sup> Strube 2003, 82–89.

<sup>40</sup> Strube 2003, 87 Abb. 72.



questions, but obviously extensive prospection and soundings are necessary for final results.

So far, we have been able to clarify the following: There are serious hints, that not the outer, but the inner circuit wall is the older construction (Fig. 33). This inner wall was a huge building project with its mass of quadrated basalt stones and it remains an open question, whether it was ever finished<sup>41</sup>. Geophysical prospection provided first evidence that the inner wall came out of use during the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>. This was confirmed by the excavation of a northwest and a south gate of the outer wall (Figs. 34. 36).

The gates of the mudbrick wall, also built in quadrated basalt blocks, flanked by mudbrick towers and with an outer and an inner vestibule (Fig. 34) follow in their general layout the type of the west gate in the wall of Dura Europos<sup>43</sup>. The bulk of the ceramics belongs to the late 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, a smaller part to the 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century (Figs. 16. 17) – the towers were reused in Islamic times. Deep traces of cars on the door sills of the north-western gate suggest its use over a longer period.

Each of these gates was connected with a street, which was flanked perhaps on only one side by a porticus and led to the centre of Andarin (Figs. 35. 36)<sup>44</sup>. The situation of the inner wall in the area of the two gates is of great interest: Some of its huge quadrated stones were reused in the south gate and

the last layers of the inner wall ended some meters before the street. In the north-western part of the town the inner wall is not preserved<sup>45</sup>. But it must have crossed the street, when it was in use at the same time as the street (Fig. 36). This situation and the fact, that the streets are in close connection with the outer wall, suggest that the inner wall was out of use, when the streets in the south and northwest of Androna were constructed<sup>46</sup>.

Up to now excavations and surveys at Androna touched only a small part of the huge site and could only answer some of the central questions formulated at the beginning of my report. But there is no doubt, that future work at Androna will enlarge profoundly our knowledge about the early Byzantine as well as the early Islamic time.

<sup>41</sup> See the discussion in Strube 2003, 86–89.

<sup>42</sup> Strube 2003, 78–79. 86–89. 87 Abb. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Rostovtzeff – Brown – Welles 1939, 60 Fig. 28.

<sup>44</sup> In 2006 I could reconstruct the course of the street starting at the north-western gate up to the Arabic bath. Our limited excavation work brought no evidence for two porticoes, flanking a central street. The surface situation of Androna contains much information about a real system of streets. Its reconstruction demands intensive geophysical prospection.

<sup>45</sup> Only extensive geophysical prospection can clarify, whether at least parts of the foundation are preserved.

<sup>46</sup> The whole problem will be discussed in the final publication.



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## PHOTO CREDITS

Most figures were supplied by the author; additional information on sources is as follows:

- Fig. 1: aerial photograph by Georg Gerster  
Fig. 2/36: geodetical recording Karsten Malige  
Fig. 4: drawing by Ulrike Hess  
Fig. 10: photo by Ina Eichner  
Fig. 16–19: photos and drawings by Güler Ateş

- Fig. 23: after M. Mundell Mango, Excavations and Survey at Androna, Syria: The Oxford Team 1999, DOP 56, fig. 3.  
Fig. 24: drawing by Nada Sahhar  
Fig. 29: drawing by Oliver Hofmeister, Ira Butzner, Yildiz Sevim



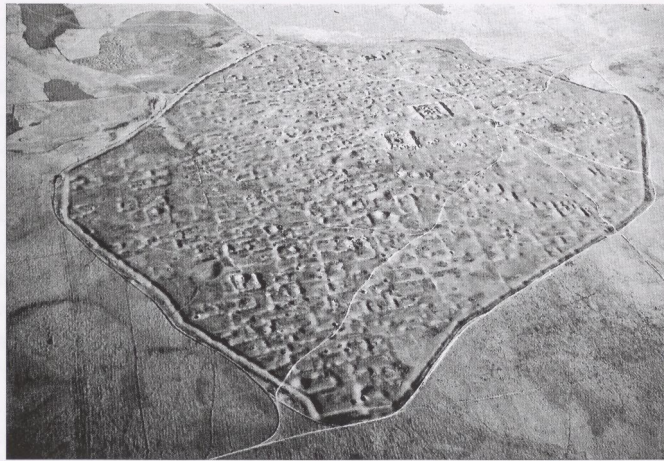


Fig. 1 Androna: Aerial photograph in springtime 1997.

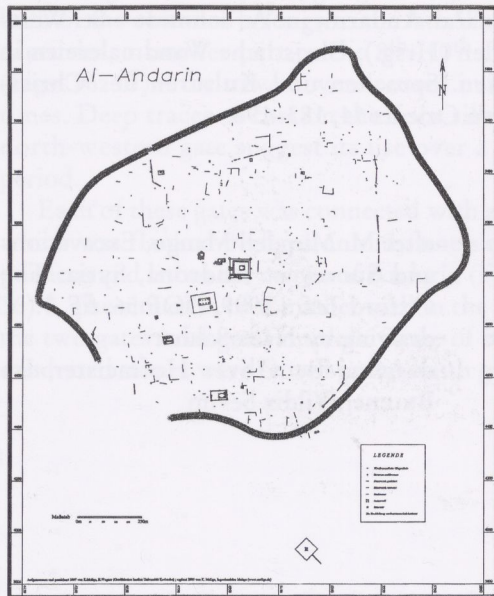


Fig. 2 Androna: Plan of the site.

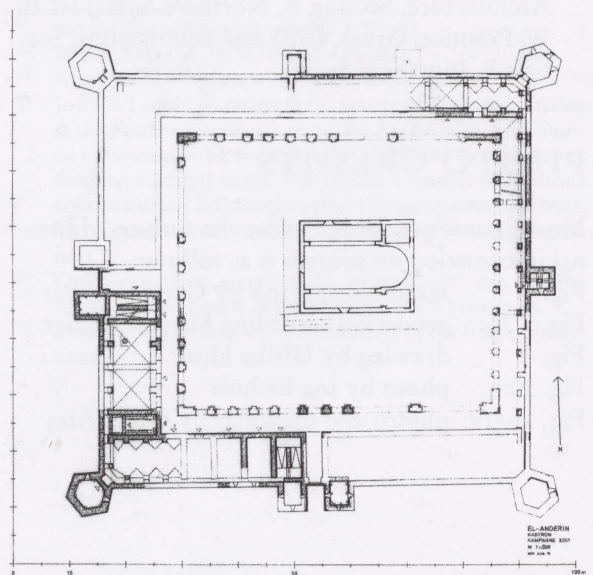


Fig. 4 Androna, Ground plan of the Kastron.



Fig. 3 Androna, Kastron: the western entrance gate.





Fig. 5 Androna, Kastron: view of the western part with the lintel of the west gate (arrow) at the beginning of our excavation.



Fig. 6 Androna, Kastron: the excavated western part with the west gate (arrow).

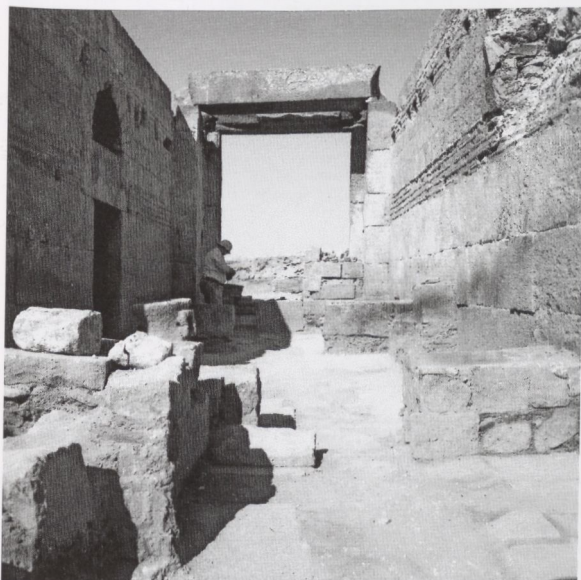


Fig. 7 Androna, Kastron: the vestibule of the west gate.



Fig. 8 Androna, Kastron: the western ramphouse with its eastern entrance-door.





Fig. 9 Androna, Kastrom: the south-western hall with later additions.



Fig. 10 Androna, Kastrom: northern part of the great southern hall.



Fig. 11 Androna, Kastrom: Annunciation scene on a pillar of the western hall.



Fig. 12 Androna, Kastrom: paintings in the eastern tower of the south gate.





Fig. 13 Androna, Kastron: southern hall with fallen vaults of the upper store.



Fig. 14 Androna, Kastron: capital out of the upper store of the southern hall.



Fig. 15 Androna, Kastron: basalt capitals



Fig. 20 Androna, Kastron: church in the court looking southeast.

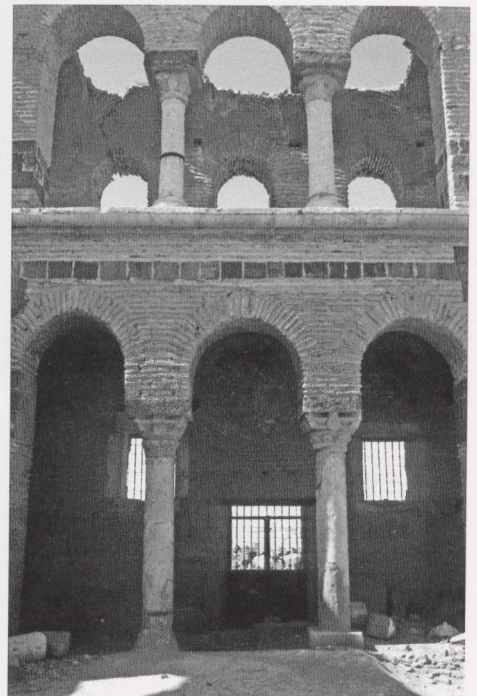


Fig. 21 Qasr ibn Wardan, Church: the northern aisle and its gallery looking north.



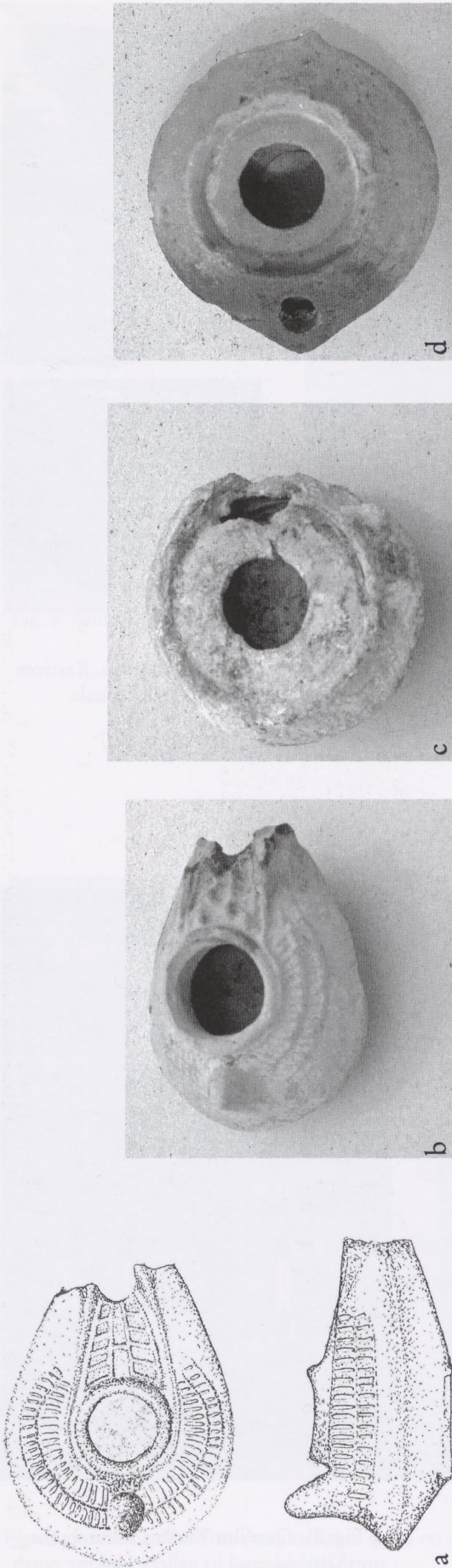


Fig. 16 Androna. Lamps of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century: Kastron (a-c), outer circuit wall (d).

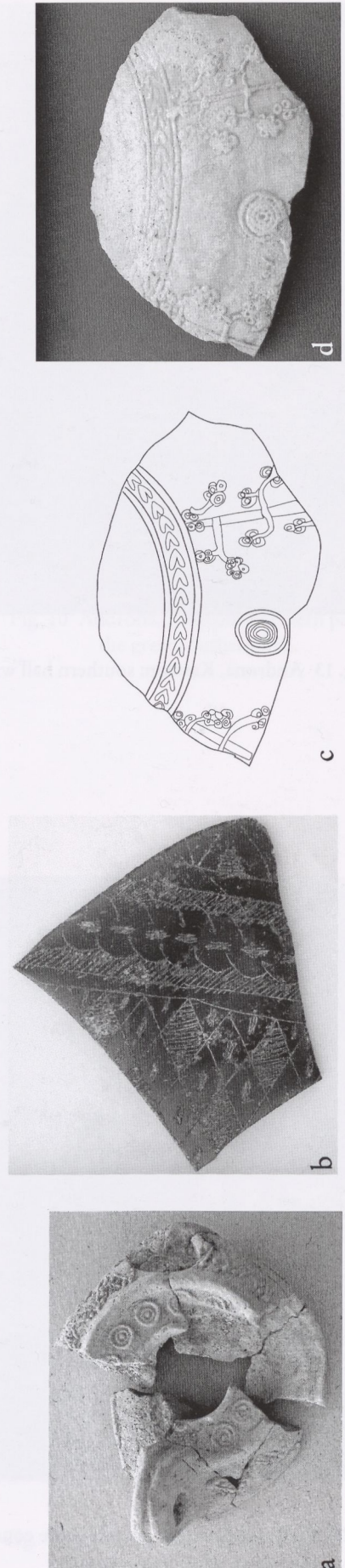


Fig. 17 Androna, Kastron: ceramics and glass of early Umayyad and Abbasid time.



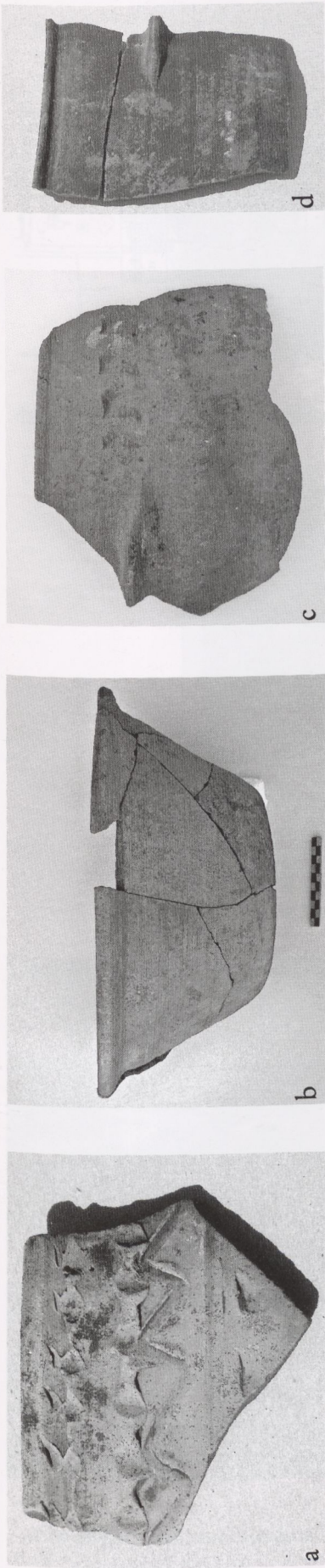


Fig. 18 Androna, Kastron: ceramics of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century.

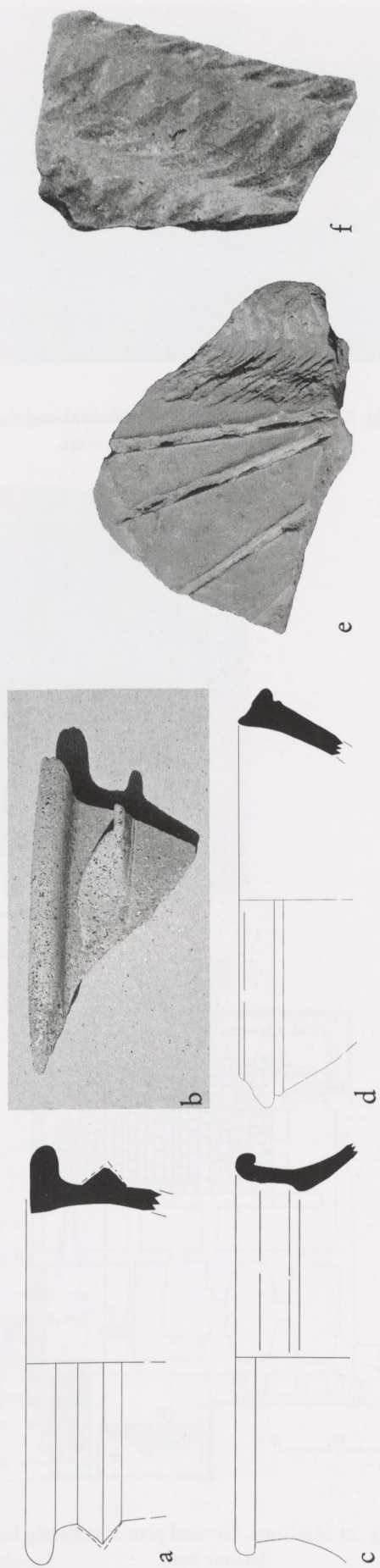


Fig. 19 Androna, House in the northern part of the site. Ceramics of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century.





Fig. 22 Androna. The bath of Thomas and the early Islamic bath looking west.

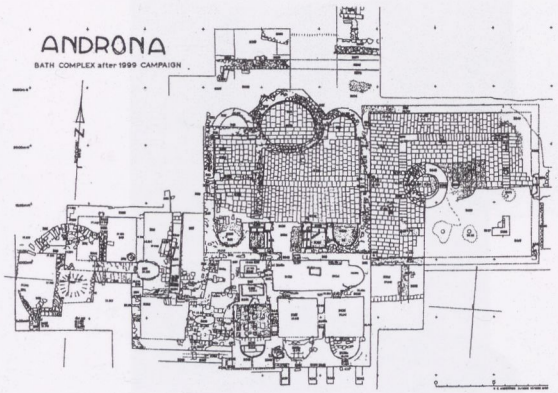


Fig. 23 Androna. Ground plan of the Byzantine bath.



Fig. 25 Androna, early Islamic bath, the northern part.

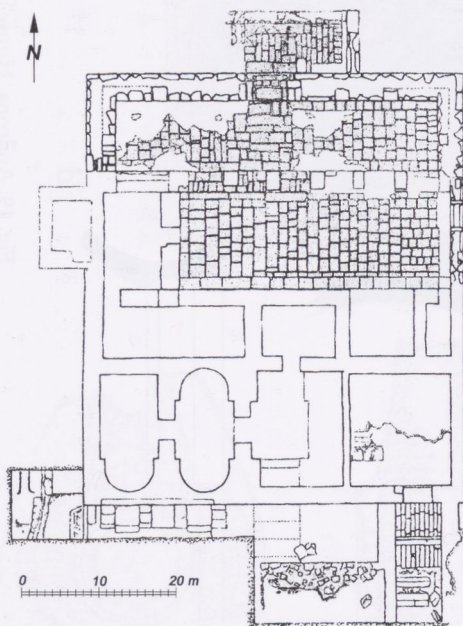


Fig. 24 Androna. Ground plan of the early Islamic bath.



Fig. 26 Androna, early Islamic bath, the southern part.





Fig. 27 Androna, House. The reservoir and the house looking northwest.



Fig. 28 Androna, House. Stable room.

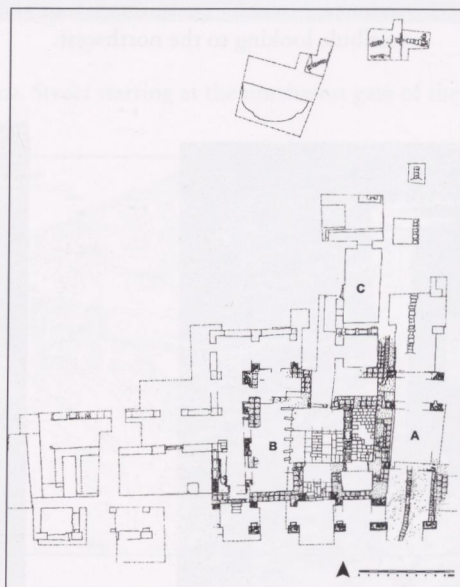


Fig. 29 Androna, House. Ground plan (the western part only in its outlines).





Fig. 30 Androna. House. Ground floor mosaic in the great north-eastern room.



Fig. 31 Androna, House. The southern door and its vestibule looking to the northwest.

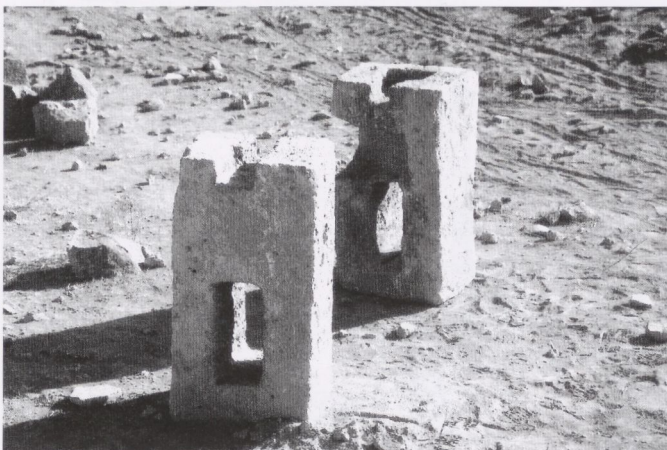


Fig. 32 Androna, House. Piers of oil/wine presses.



Fig. 33 Androna, Inner circuit wall. The east gate with its flanking towers.





Fig. 34 Androna, Outer circuit wall. A gate in the southern sector of the wall.

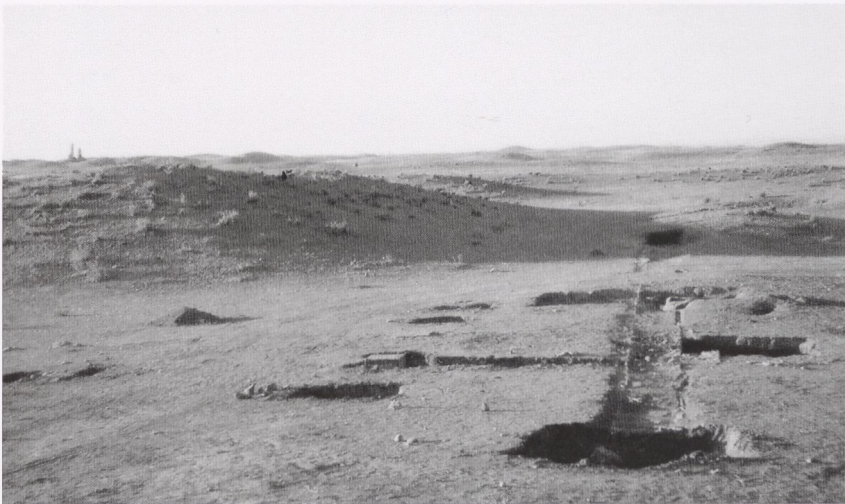


Fig. 35 Androna. Street starting at the northwest gate of the outer circuit wall.

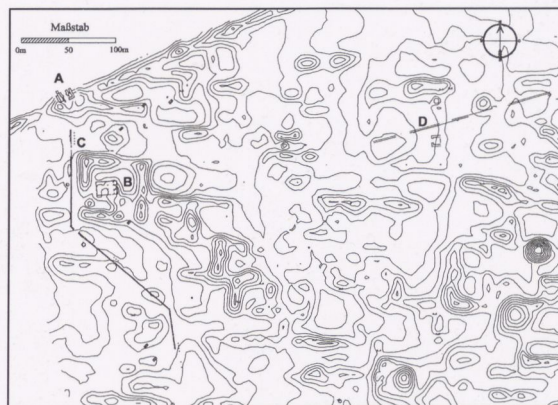


Fig. 36 Androna. Geodetical plan of the north-western part of the site: a) gate of the outer wall; b) church; c) street; d) inner circuit wall.