

TELL QRAYA

a summary of the 1984 season—by Stephen Reimer

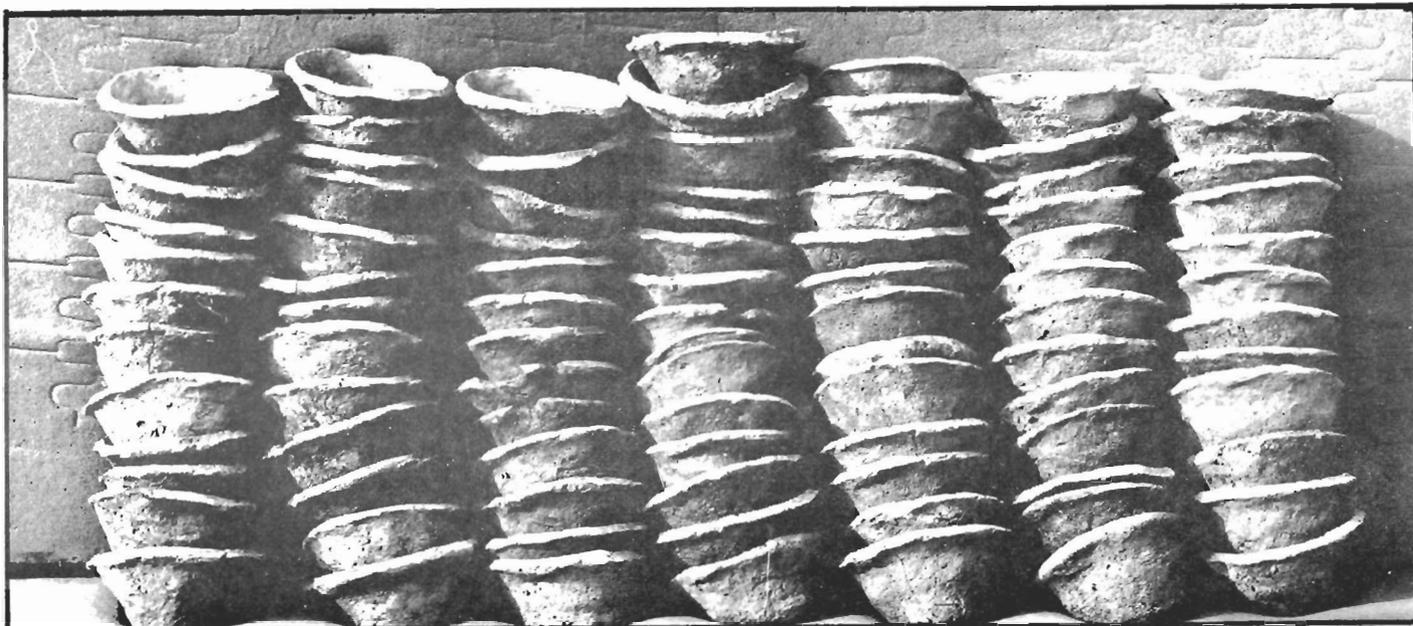
Tell Qraya, identified as a Protoliterate site during a reconnaissance survey in 1977 and excavated in four seasons since then, was again excavated in the Fall of 1984. The site is approximately 150 meters in diameter and has about three fourths of its surface occupied by modern houses. It lies on the west bank of the Euphrates river and sits on a rock shelf which has preserved the Tell from erosion by the river. Excavations are being carried out under the directorship of Giorgio and Marilyn-Kelly Buccellati and in conjunction with excavations at nearby Tell Ashara-Terqa. During the 1984 season, the writer acted as field

director and was assisted by his wife, Darleen Reimer and Mr Mark Chavalas.

In 1981, Mr Dan Shimabuku and the writer began a 10 X 10 meter square with the goal of establishing a stratigraphically controlled sequence of pottery from the surface, to virgin soil; an estimated six meters in depth. Approximately three meters of material were removed during that season and so, in the 1984 season, this operation was continued. In addition, three other squares were opened this season and excavated to a depth of about one meter, most of which was modern debris or stratigraphy disturbed by modern bull-dozing.



OVERVIEW OF 10 X 10 METER SQUARE SHOWING OVEN, DISPOSAL PIT, AND BASE OF WALL



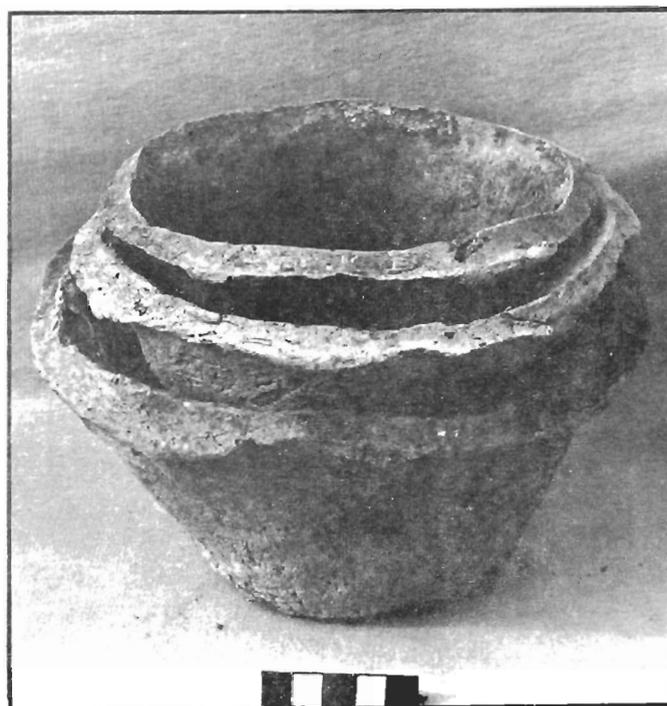
A PORTION OF THE UNBROKEN BEVELED-RIM BOWLS

at least with only minor breaks. One complete pouring lip bowl was found along with several other partial ones. Two interesting spouted jars were found with handles on the top, much like a modern day teapot. Other small vessels included a small narrow-neck jar, a small saucer, one small bowl and a small incised four-lugged jar.

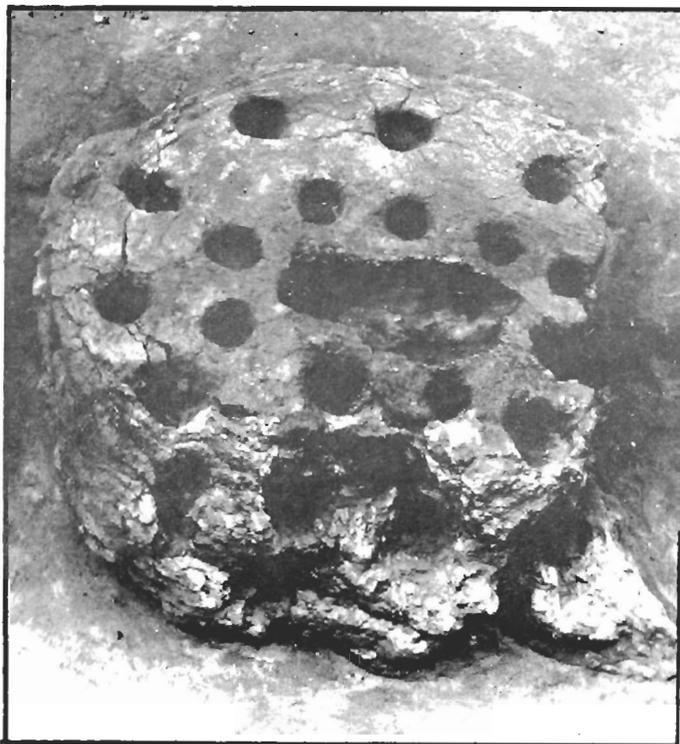
A very interesting find was a complete ladle along with another almost complete ladle. These together with numerous jar stoppers and bulla fragments support an interpretation of this area as an outdoor cooking area for food, combined with a disposal area for food material and containers. The predominance of beveled-rim bowls in this context suggests that the use of beveled-rim bowls might be connected with some aspect of food preparation or consumption.

Besides the numerous vessels uncovered, there were also several cylinder and stamp seal impressions found on various unbaked clay objects. The impressions were all of animate objects (non geometric), and included animals such as a turtle, a scorpion, a boar, a bull, and a snake. There is also an impression of a row of prisoners with hands tied behind their backs and a rope between the prisoners. Another impression pictures a woman in a sitting position holding a spindle whorl and wool.

There are of course many other objects which cannot be included here. A final one which merits attention though is a portion of a well made stone vessel, perhaps a shallow bowl. The stone is a black and white marble which is not found in the area of Tell Qraya and must have been imported, more than likely, from the northern area of modern day Syria. Tell Qraya must certainly have established trade relations with its northern



THREE SIZES OF BEVELED-RIM BOWLS



OVEN TOP EXCAVATED TO BASE OF FIRE PIT

In the 10 X 10 meter square begun in 1981, approximately one meter of stratigraphy was removed, several major features were found and an almost unbelievable amount of pottery was recovered. The features together with the artifacts suggest an interpretation of this area as a "food processing" facility.

One of the important features of this area was a large oven (which might also be interpreted as a kiln). The oven had a thick (approximately 20cm) ceramic "grill" with holes to allow heat from the fire below to pass through into a chamber above. The top chamber was not preserved except for a few fragments close to the grill which were two to three centimeters thick, similar to the tannurs used for bread.

Connected to the oven area is a small disposal area or midden. There appears to have been a pit, about two meters in diameter and about a meter and a half deep, which, once it was full, the disposed material overflowed into the larger cooking area with the majority of vessels clustering near a wall on the edge of the area. A large majority of the vessels were the ubiquitous beveled-rim bowl. Approximately 160 unbroken beveled-rim bowls were found along with many more which were broken. A very rough estimate would be that more than 1000 beveled-rim bowls were discarded in this area.

Along with the beveled-rim bowls, numerous other vessels were found in this area. There were several large spouted and unspouted jars which, though broken, appear to have been discarded in tact or



POTTERY IN DISPOSAL PIT



GROUP SHOT OF IMPORTANT SMALL VESSELS

neighbors and, based on typological considerations, was also influenced by the larger southern Protoliterate culture.

As the only known Protoliterate site between lower Mesopotamia and the Khabur triangle/Big Bend area, Tell Qraya is

important simply for demographic reasons. But continuing excavations are demonstrating the importance of Tell Qraya as it contributes to a greater understanding of the Protoliterate culture.



LADELS



SEAL IMPRESSIONS