

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT ŞAR
COMANA CAPPADOCIAE, IN 1967

Richard P. HARPER AND İnci BAYBURTLUOĞLU

The site of Comana Cappadociae lies, according to Strabo (XII. 2. 3.), in a deep and narrow valley of the Antitaurus, on both banks of the river Sarus. That this description is aptly fitted by the ruins at the village of Şar, in the valley of the Göksu or Sarız çay, in the kaza of Magara (in 1967 renamed Tufanbeyli), at the northernmost point of the vilayet of Adana, was soon noted by visitors. The best evidence for the location of Comana is given by the Tabula Peutingeriana and by the Itineraria Antoniniana, both of which show the city to be on the direct route from Caesareia (Kayseri) to Melitene (Eski Malatya). The Tabula Peutingeriana shows that the traveller had to cross a range of mountains as he approached Comana from the west, as now one can approach Şar by the direct route across the Antitaurus. The Itineraria Antoniniana (210.5 - 211.4) give a distance of 154 Roman miles between Melitene and Comana, while a milestone in the village at Şar, of the great series belonging to that road, bears the number 157. This close correspondence makes it certain that the ruins at Şar are those of the classical Comana, even without the cumulative circumstantial evidence of the inscriptions. The relationship of the Hittite Kummanni, and Kizzuwatna, with Comana is of course another problem which, regrettably, remains unsolved.

The Excavation

In 1965 it was decided that Comana was a suitable site for a joint Turkish and British excavation by the British Institute

of Archaeology at Ankara and the Museum of Archaeology at Ankara. Accordingly funds were raised; grateful thanks are due to the Ministry of National Education of the Turkish Republic, to the British Academy, to the Leverhulme Trust and to the Council of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, in respect of grants made for the excavation. A team led by the writers undertook excavation and planning of the site in August 1967.

The Site Plan

The first concern of the expedition was to produce an accurate plan of the central area of the site, showing the visible monuments in their proper relationship. By the exertions of Mr. Richard Lawless the whole of the eastern part of the village of Şar, containing all the standing monuments except a church near the school, was mapped. One of the more notable features that emerge is the right-angle junction, suggesting the rudiments of a grid plan, between the road coming in from Caesareia past the Kırık Kilise and the present main axis of the village, both of which appear to have ancient buildings aligned with them. Other topographic ventures included an attempt to trace the Caesareia road back towards the Kuru Bel. Two milestones *in situ* are now known on this route. Harper hopes in a later article to present the new evidence for this part of the Melitene-Caesareia highway. For the present it suffices to say that Hogarth's "branch road to Comana", diverging from the "main road" at Kemer, does not exist.

The main road lies through Şar, whence there is an easy route to the Kuru Bel and so to Kayseri.

Also visited was a small castle on a spur near the top of the mountain immediately south of the river at Şar. This castle commands a view of the whole of the east side of the Antitaurus in this region, including the Kuru Bel and the Gez Bel passes, and, on the east, the greater part of the route of the road from Kemer to Göksun (Cocosos). The spur is only walled on the side facing the mountain, the natural defences of the other sides being more than adequate for protection and indeed making it something of a hideaway. Although the extant walls may only be of mediaeval date, the site may be that of one of the Hellenistic Φροῦρα of Cappadocia.

The Kırık Kilise

Excavation work was started at the well known and preserved Kırık Kilise a large Roman tomb beside the road north of Şar. Harper has published an inscription from the vault of this building naming the Senator Aurelius Claudius Hermodorus, perhaps the same Aurelius Hermodorus who was *praeses* of the province of Mediterranean Noricum in A.D. 311. Although when that inscription was recorded the vault could be entered, it was still largely choked with rubble. The lower part of the west front and the north side were obscured, while the interior of the upper floor of the building was completely covered, as was all the east end where it ran back into the hillside. A puzzling feature was the number of funerary inscriptions that had been recorded in the region of the building, some of which were indeed still lying in it, and that had no obvious connection with it. Within an hour of the beginning of the excavation the answer to this question became apparent, for at the east end the curving wall of an apse appeared. What we were dealing with was the Roman tomb converted into a

Byzantine church. Many tombstones and other pieces of stonework had been incorporated during the conversion.

The tomb is 9.25 m. wide; its length in the upper storey is 18.00 m., the bottom course of the east wall, bedded in the rock of the hillside, being retained as the lower of two chancel steps in the Byzantine reconstructions; the height at the west end, with pediment cap-stone restored, is 9.00 m. above ground level. It is built throughout of fine ashlar masonry. The vaults are entered by a small doorway at the west end, 1.30 m. high and 0.90 m. wide. Above the door is a small round opening. This doorway leads to the first vaulted chamber, 3.50 m. high, 4.00 m. long and 2.25 m. wide. On each side wall are two rows of three *loculi* about 2.50 m. deep. All the *loculi* were empty. The Hermodorus inscription is on a block below the centre *loculus* of the lower row on the north side. The floor of the chamber had been disturbed by treasure-seekers. From the east end of this chamber a vaulted tunnel 2.30 m. long and 1.25 m. wide slopes up slightly and ends in two apertures. The lower of these leads into another *loculus* 3.50 m. deep, which was originally blocked by a false wall, 0.30 m. thick, 1.50 m. from the mouth. This false wall had been smashed by a robbing from above, but parts of it remained in its recessed socket. Beyond the false wall were found pieces of roof-tile and of a coarse red pot. No skeletal remains were found. The upper aperture is in the form of a small doorway, 1.10 m. high and 0.70 m. wide, with sockets for a door or movable grating. This doorway leads on to the cobbled floor of an inner vaulted chamber 2.65 m. long and 2.35 m. wide. In the Byzantine remodelling it was cut off at the springing of the vault, level with the top of the first vault, to make the flat floor of the nave, but must originally have risen 1.00 - 1.50 m. higher and extended back over the central tunnel. Level with the top of the small door on the north east and south sides a ledge

projects about 0.50 m. This is much damaged by fire and by the fall of heavy masonry and rubble with which this chamber was filled.

On the west front the bottom of the north-west corner engaged pilaster was left unfinished, perhaps remaining underground. The capstone of the pediment was found embedded in the earth in front of the building. The other missing stones of the pediment were not found. On the north and south sides the moulding above the lower engaged pilasters is carried right along until it is lost in the added Byzantine transepts. On the south side it continued halfway across the transept before being robbed out. Below this moulding the walls are plain, above it they are largely rebuilt except for a small part towards the west end, where they are the original work up to roof level. The inside of the west wall presents today a ragged appearance; this is because, in the Byzantine remodelling, walls and a vaulted roof running back from the central arch were cut out to make more room in the nave. Traces of mortar on the surviving floor show how these walls linked up with the cut off west wall of the lower inner chamber.

The dating of the tomb to the early - middle of the 4th century by prosopographic argument is not unsupported by the architecture. Strzygowski made a general comparison of the style of this building with Diocletian's Palace at Spalato. The arches of the west front of Kırık Kilise do match well with those on the north tower of the Palace. Near at hand, but undated, is a Roman tomb with the same lightly marked engaged pilasters at Gereme on the southern slopes of Mount Argaeus.

The tomb must have been converted to church use in a fairly late Byzantine context for there were Christian tombstones among the inscribed pieces reused as paving stones outside the north door. The north and south walls of the tomb were rebuilt to include windows and the north

door, as can be seen in the east-west section. Patches of small stonework were introduced where necessary for repairs. The inner walls were removed and a floor of crushed brick was laid over the resulting flat area. It extended over that part of the inner vault that overlapped the central tunnel, the space over the tunnel being filled with rubble held in by a rough retaining wall over the lintel of the small doorway. It did not extend over the rubble in the main inner chamber, which we assume to have been a later fill, the chamber being boarded over during the period of use as a church. Major extension works were done at the east end where an apse and transepts, stepped up from the level of the nave, were built of robbed or small stone. The apse and the north transept are cut into the hillside. There is another door in the west side of the north transept. Access to the two doors on the north side from the road is by an entrance way built of reused stone, including an inscribed column drum from the Roman tomb immediately to the south of Kırık Kilise, then by steps at the north-west corner, a sloping path and more steps leading to a terrace outside the north door, with more steps up to the transept door. A considerable amount of roof tile was found, especially in the north transept. This will have been the Byzantine roofing material throughout. The south transept had to be built up. It has a basement consisting of two parts which join to form a flat floor. Both parts have small access doors at the south end. The part to the west is a long, deep and narrow chamber with the north-east part of its vault surviving. The shorter, shallower, eastern part contains two stone-lined graves housing male skeletons. The one near the door was somewhat disturbed, the second, undisturbed, lay with his head to the west. Beyond the second grave was an unused space with clean fill.

Among reused material found in the rubble filling the church, besides many

pieces which must have belonged to the Roman tomb, there was a number of inscribed tombstones, the right side of the face of a bearded statue, and a piece of a sarcophagus, mended in antiquity with two iron clamps. The inscriptions from the excavation will be published by Harper in a future supplement to the "Tituli Comanorum Cappadociae". As a measure of protection for the building, the lower west doorway was provided with a door and the inner chamber was roofed in local materials.

The Ala Kapı

In the latter part of the excavation attention was transferred to the site known as the Ala Kapı from its chief feature, the still standing cella doorway of a small Roman temple facing east. Many other architectural elements were partially visible in the undergrowth. The site of the temple was bounded on the east by a garden, on north and west by a village road, which overlies the northwest corner, and on the south by a house. Work was possible because the owner of house and garden, Bay Süleyman Yergök, had removed his home to another part of the village. We obtained his permission to work in the restricted area afforded by the temple and its immediate foreground and by the ruins of the former house.

The cella is 11.00 m. long and 9.60 m. wide. Its interior was already virtually empty and in use as a garden. No floor remained therefore. The inside of the Roman walls was lined with rough Byzantine stonework. A doorway had been made in the south side. Near the cella doorway a slab decorated with chi-rho and birds was found lying loose. The reversal of the alphas and omega is to be noted. The relief may be dated to the sixth century. It is likely, then, that the

Ala Kapı too was used for religious purposes by the Byzantine population. This use probably preceded the collapse of the east facade, which seems to have fallen forward and slightly to the south.

The platform of the temple extends a further 7.75 m. to the east before descending a step 1.60 m. wide. It was not possible to explore the steps further because of the limited space and the mass of the fallen masonry. In this area lie both ends of the pediment and its central block decorated with a plain circle in relief. On the north side column bases remained together with the base of an anta carrying a semi-engaged pilaster. These enabled the plan of the temple to be restored certainly as tetrastyle prostyle. It must have looked rather like the temple of Fortuna Redux as depicted on reliefs of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. The Corinthian capitals had figurines, three of which were found standing among the foliage. They are similar to, but of better quality than, the recently published capitals at Heracleia Pontica which are dated to the second/third centuries. A magnificent wild boar probably belongs to the frieze above the cella doorway. A number of pieces of the architrave were found. One of these shows a lion, another a lioness, both taking prey, in scenes on the underside.

The greater part of the south wall of the platform and the southwest corner with the base of another engaged pilaster, were exposed. On this wall, near the east end, were scratched two Christian funerary inscriptions. Skeletons relevant to these were found in graves below the bottom moulding of the wall.

All portable inscriptions and pieces of sculpture from the excavation were lodged in safety in the village in the care of the former *muhtar*, and foreman of the excavation, Bay Mustafa Yergök.

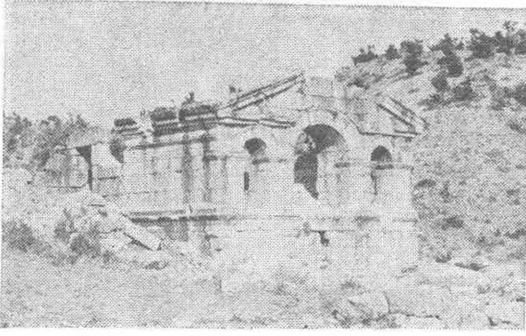


Fig. 1. Kırık Kilise before the excavation.



Fig. 2. Ala Kapı before the excavation.



Fig. 3. West front of Kırık Kilise.

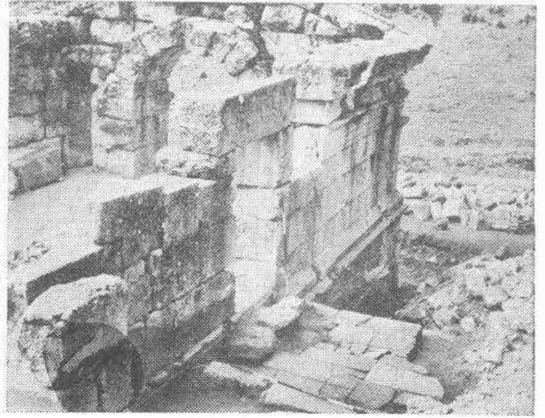


Fig. 4. North side of Kırık Kilise.



Fig. 5. Porch of Ala Kapı temple.

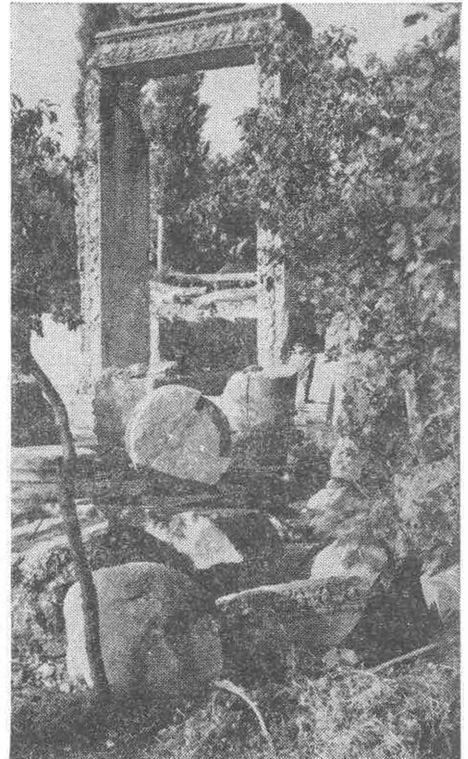


Fig. 6. Ala Kapı temple from the north-east.

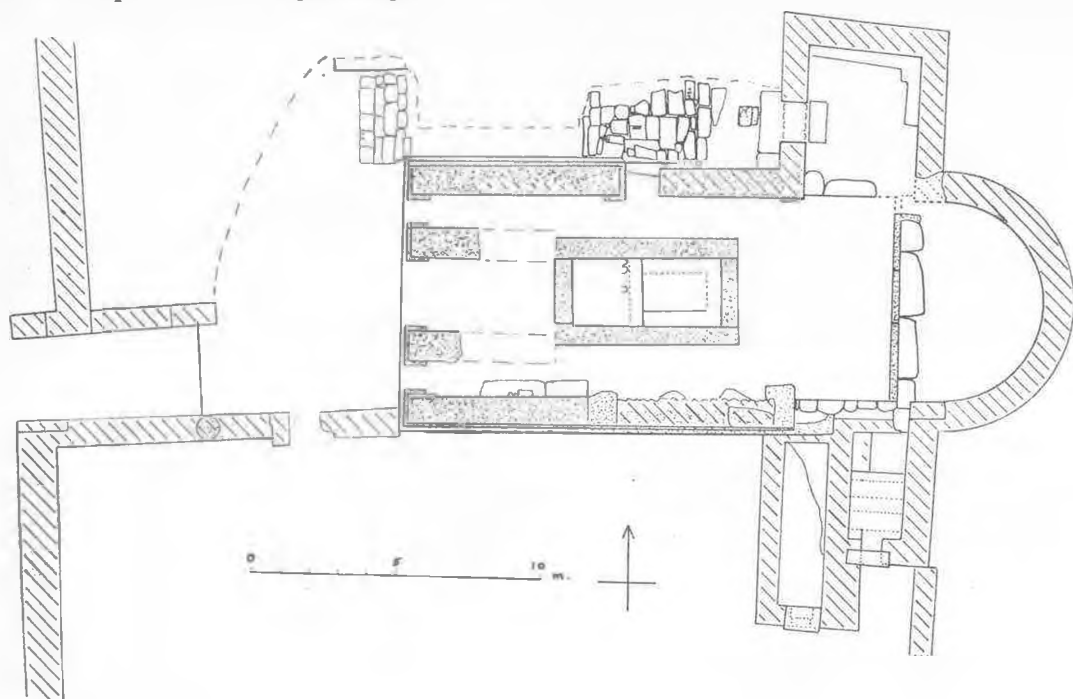


Fig. 7. Plan of Kırık Kilise. Stippled walls are Roman, crosshatched walls Byzantine.

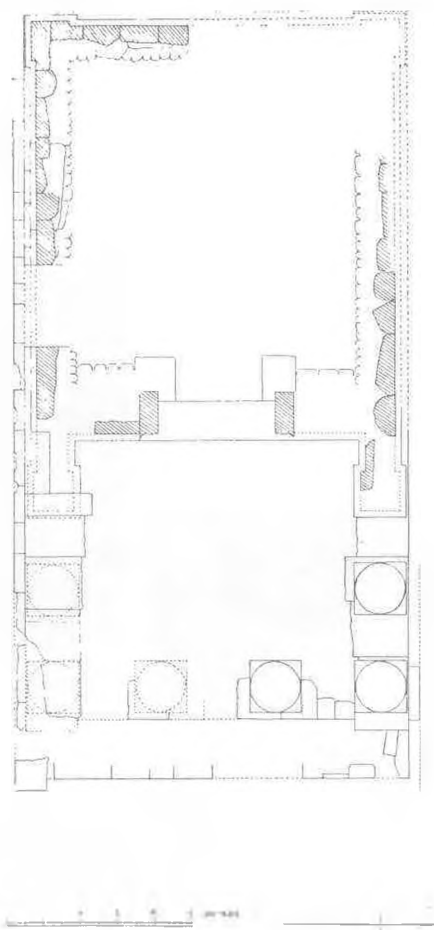
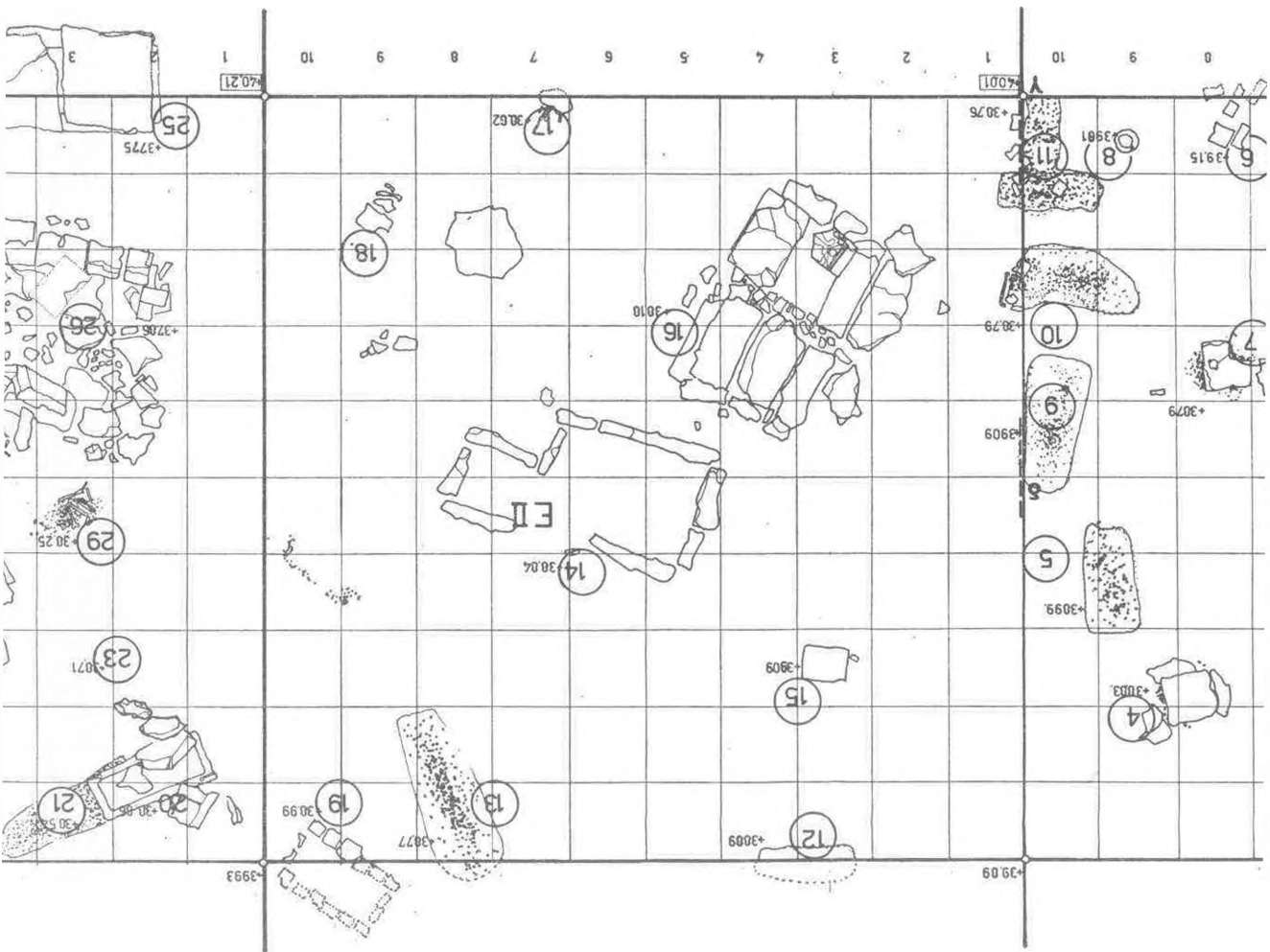
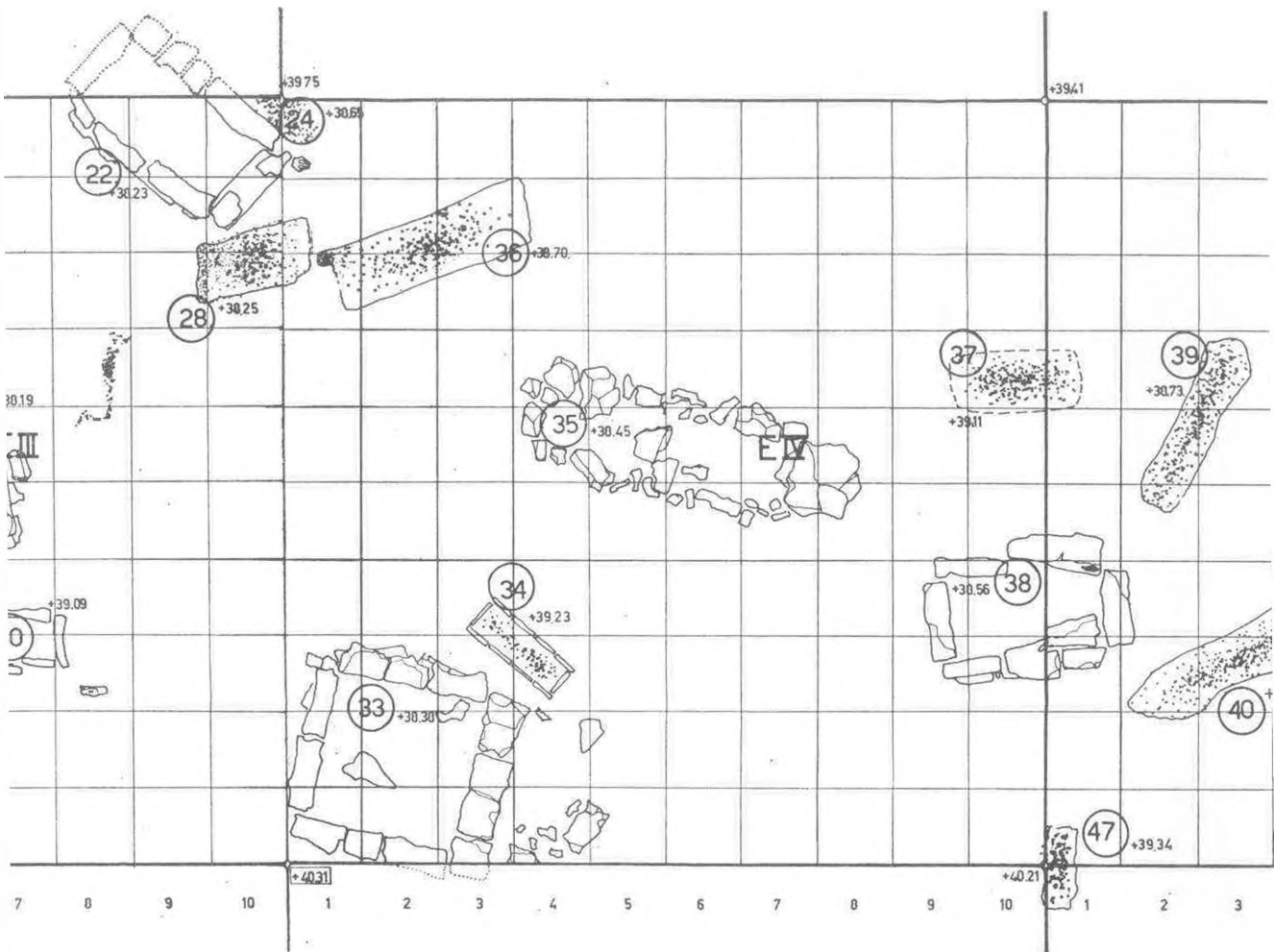


Fig. 8. Plan of Ala Kapı temple.





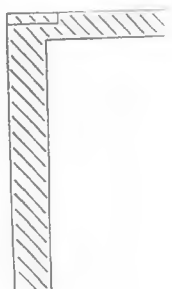
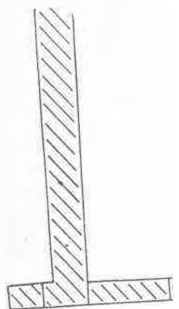


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