



'Special buildings' at PPNB Shkarat Msaied

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Essays on Near Eastern Archaeology in honour of Sumio Fujii



Edited by Shin-ichi Nakamura, Takuro Adachi and Masashi Abe

Rokuichi Syobou

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To Dr. Sumio Fujii who is adding another decade in deserts

Cover photos: General view of Area E-III (left) and aerial view (center) of Wadi Abu Tulayha.

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Decades in Deserts

Essays on Near Eastern Archaeology in honour of Sumio Fujii

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Special Buildings at PPNB Shkārat Msaied

Moritz Kinzel

Abstract

Since the identification and interpretation of some built structures as “temples”, cult, communal or ritual buildings, the focus of interest has shifted again away from the “normal” or “domestic” to the “special” or “non-domestic” buildings. The “more” complex context seems to be so much more rewarding for the understanding of the Neolithic than the “domestic” structures. However, why are some buildings regarded as “special”? This paper will discuss some aspects of “special buildings” in the context of Near Eastern Neolithic architecture from an architectural and building archaeological perspective. Cases from Shkārat Msaied will show the complexity and duality of “special buildings”.

Keywords: Near Eastern Neolithic Architecture; PPNB; Jordan; Building Archaeology

Introduction

When excavations started in 1999 at Shkārat Msaied the site was recognized of having one occupation phase dating to the Middle-Pre-pottery Neolithic B (Kaliszan et al 2001; Jensen et al. 2006).

The round houses exposed were seen as an undisturbed version of Beidha Phase A buildings, following Brian Byrd’s definition of mainly “domestic” use (Byrd 2005; Kinzel 2013). Now almost twenty years later we know how much more complex the site is. The architecture shows at least six building phases and substantial (sub-phase) modification over the entire period of occupation (Kinzel 2013). Hermansen and Jensen (2002) have shown the presence of features which could be related to “magical” practices in most of the building units, mainly considered as “domestic”.

However, we can identify at least four “special buildings” or buildings of “non-domestic” character¹: Unit F, Unit H, Unit J and Unit K. All are located in the southern part of the excavation area (Fig.1). All of these buildings are placed with their “back” into the slope. This is also true for Unit U, to which we will return to later.

The term special building² was carefully chosen by W.Schirmer back in 1983 to describe the buildings which differ significantly from the other buildings exposed at Çayönü (Schirmer 1983; Kinzel 2013; Kurapkat 2015). These differences

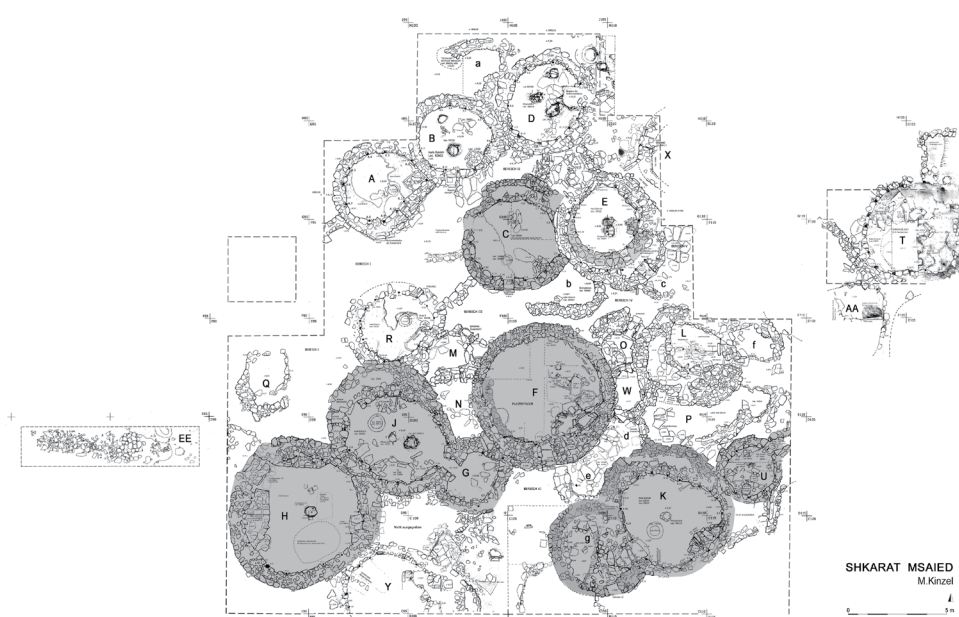


Fig.1 Shkārat Msaied: Site plan with units discussed shaded in grey (M. Kinzel 2018).

not easier (Bille Petersen 2003; Jensen et al. 2005; Kaliszan et al. 2002; Hermansen & Jensen 2002). Lime plaster floors of most buildings seem to be cleaned carefully before the houses were abandoned; but might just reflect the normal caretaking of the houses. At Shkārat Msaied most plaster floors are of white-greyish colour and show rarely traces of pigmentation. The same is true for preserved wall plaster of light-brown appearance. A common feature of the houses is made up of a standing stone slab marking a build-in feature on the right hand of the entrance. Unit C will be presented below in more detail to showcase such a house. In several aspects especially looking at the inventory found inside the structures also Unit K could in this regard be labelled as "domestic" (Purschwitz 2017:135-137).

Special buildings at Shkārat Msaied?

In addition to the above mentioned „domestic“ dwellings there are at least five buildings which differ in architectural terms significantly from the others. These buildings, called unit F, H, J, K and U could be addressed as "special buildings"⁶. This classification as 'special building' followed initially B. Byrd's definition and criteria for 'non-domestic dwelling' (1994:656f as well 2005:114f): 1. The size of the building differs from the „standard“. The building is larger than the "normal" case (at the specific site!). 2. Finds in the building interior are not daily use-ware. Characteristic finds could be: un-used daggers, stone axes, burials, grinders with traces of pigments, adornment, etc. 3. Special built-in features and elements: orthostats, stairs, stone boxes, burial cists, platforms, stained plaster floors, cobble stone pavement, flag stone pavement etc. 'Special buildings' could have been places of ritual or magic practices (Gebel, Jensen & Hermansen 2004), but at least some of these practices seem not be limited to 'special buildings' at Shkārat Msaied. And on the same time a "ritual" meaning of a place respectively building does not exclude daily activities. Function and use of buildings seems to be in general quite flexible and variable and cannot be fixed by one criterion only. Therefore I will use in this contribution the term 'special building' to describe buildings which are based on their architectural features 'special' in the context of the settlement, but not necessarily by their function or the events taking place inside.

Case studies

To discuss the challenge to identify and define "special buildings" some cases from Shkārat Msaied are presented here in detail⁷. All presented cases show elements which differ from the 'normal' case and could indicate a 'special' treatment or role

within the settlement.

Unit C

Excavated between 2000 and 2005 Unit C is considered to be a "domestic" unit. It shows all elements of a "domestic" structure. However, there are some "irritating" findings perhaps indicating other functions: 1) The plaster floor shows traces of red pigmentation which has not been observed in other buildings at Shkārat Msaied⁸; 2) the access to the house is very much controlled by a very narrow corridor left between Unit F and annex b leading to the small walled in area III; 3) the entrance is flanked by nicely set sand stone orthostats ("door demarcation stones"); and 4) a nicely shaped orthostat belonging to the build-in-feature.

Unit C is erected on a circular ground plan. It measures externally 5,6m in N-S direction and 5,0m in E-W-direction. The interior covers an area of 14m². The top of the plaster floor is on 998,93m a.s.l. and is about 37cm below the top of the plaster floor of the neighbouring house unit E(2) (999,30m a.s.l.). The height difference to the exterior (Area III: 999,03m a.s.l.) of ten centimetres seems to be a result of the excavation process. Unit C forms a house cluster with Unit E(2) and Unit X. This cluster is placed between the northern group made of units A, B, and D, and the southern cluster formed by unit F, J, M, N, O, R, and L. Unit C was erected together with annex/enclosure b and unit E and shares its eastern wall with the later. There is also a strong link to unit M, N, and S through the shared area III and the access from area IV via the narrow corridor left between Unit F and enclosure b. The exterior wall of unit C incorporates older wall segments of an earlier building. The wall, built of lime and sand stone rubble with wedge stones is preserved up to an height of 64 to 72cm. On the inner face the "post sockets/wall channels" create regular wall segments. The wall width varies from 60 centimetres to one meter. The northern wall segment, oriented to area II, represents a remaining part of an earlier building which has formed already a cluster with unit E1. In the course of the rebuilding of both units the northern, older wall segment was kept and integrated into the new wall running now slightly further south. The small space created by both walls was until now interpreted as a storage space (Bille Petersen 2003:29). An argument for the storage function was that this space was added later to the exterior unit C. However, the building archaeological analyses (Kinzel 2013:63-64) have shown that this is not the case. The inner wall face of the earlier wall shows as well "post sockets/wall channels" for the wooden posts of the roof construction. The positioning and location makes only sense in the

context of a predecessor building (C1). The different chronological context does not exclude the function as storage, but there are also no additional arguments to support the idea.

The curved exterior wall of house unit C(2) has at least 12 “post sockets/wall channels”. An additional 13th slot could be assumed in the badly preserved western wall segment. Just north of it sits a vertical sand stone slab opposite the entrance to unit B; on the same time the stone marks the access to area II covering the space left between the northern and the central house cluster. The northern wall segment of unit C is built together with the wall of unit E and clearly inter locked; in contrast the south-eastern wall segment abuts blunt against the wall of unit E. The entrance to unit C is oriented to the south. On both sides of the doorway two large sand stone slabs were placed vertically. The door has a raised threshold. The interior was fitted with a red stained lime plaster floor. The red colour disappeared when exposed to the sun light. In the south-western quadrant of the room the floor was very bad preserved or completely destroyed. In the remaining areas the floor was actually well preserved. The plaster floor was established on an up to 3 cm thick layer of clayey soil. The plaster surface was extended over the foot of the wall continuing as wall plaster. Opposite the entrance 11 very colourful sand stone slabs were placed in the northern wall segment. The colours range from deep purple and dark red to yellow and greyish green. The slabs seem to be carefully chosen, although they were perhaps not visible at all as some wall plaster remains indicate. Unit C is furnished with a built-in feature (Loc. 50010) located on the right when entering the interior oriented south-eastwards. In contrast to units A and B here only the stone platform is preserved. However, originally a large pointed stone slab stood on the side facing the central space. This stone slab was uncovered; collapsed into the room, directly on the floor. The slab is broken, but its lower segment was still found in situ as a part of the platform construction. The slab with its pointy (triangular shaped) top had a height of approx. 1.10m. The built-in feature was erected before the lime plaster floor (Loc. 50008) was established. In the axis of the doorway the floor shows a for Shkārat Msaied very common plaster feature (Loc. 50009): a depression with a raised rim. The “basin” has an oval shape and measures in N/S 0,39m und O/W 0,24m (Excavation diary B.D. Hermansen, 23.8.2003).

There is a high concentration of bone material, land snails and some chipped stone material in the fine silty soil under the lime plaster floor base (Loc. 50011). In total 15 stone tools were found here; including a drill, two Jericho points, a scraper, five blades with retouches and about 170 fragments and debris.

All in all 185 lithic pieces were recorded. In addition an unfinished green stone bead (Object-No. 51004), a hammer stone with marks (Object-Nr. 51005), and a hammer stone fragment (Object-Nr. 51006) were found in the same context. Directly above the plaster floor (Loc. 2798) two grinder, a polished stone, a bone tool and a cowrie shell (Object- Nr. 51003) as well as a high concentration of other marine shells were uncovered. Below the floor of Unit C a surface (Loc. 50012) with traces of an earlier occupation phase was uncovered; containing a series of post holes and small spots of loose, white silty soil (Loc. 50014). This yellowish-brown layer contains a high amount of organic material and shows a leopard-skin pattern surface (Excavation diary B.D. Hermansen 27.8.2003).

Unit F

Unit F is a MPPNB -round house, uncovered in Squares E100, E105 E105/E110, E105/F105, D100, and D105. It is situated south of Areas III and IV and north of area VI. It is connected with Units M, N and G respectively Unit J to the West. In the East attached to Unit F are Unit O, UNW and annexes e/d, connecting to Unit L, P and Unit K as well as Unit “g”. In North-South-direction Unit F has an external diameter of approx. 7,6m. In East-West-direction the diameter is around. 7,2m. The internal area encircles a space of approx. 26m² (Fig. 4 and 5).

The wall segments are constructed as double faced rubble stone masonry in some cases with a fill made of fist-sized stones. The wall width ranges between 45cm to 1,45m. The roughly dressed sand and lime stones are set with a soil / mud mortar in irregular courses. Interior wall faces were probably plastered, as indicated by some poorly preserved fragments of a very thin lime plaster layer. The interior wall face is segmented by 16 wall sockets / post slots – so-called wall channels, where the posts of a wooden scaffold were placed to carry the roof structure. In contrast to other buildings (Unit D, E, H, J and K) in Unit F no central posthole was identified so far. This evidence indicates that the roof structure of Unit F was constructed without a central post supporting the main load bearing beam. Instead two smaller „postholes“ lying on a SW-NE axis off-centre were uncovered, indicating a different roof structure. However, as these pits obviously cutting through several layers of plaster it cannot be ruled out that these post-holes may be of very late origin. Nevertheless it also could point towards a traditional way of constructing, kept over a long period of use. In the south-western quadrant of the building a segment of the external wall (Loc. 90103/110.111) of an earlier building respectively building phase (Phase I) was uncovered. The radius suggests a slightly

smaller building layout, with around 4m in diameter, similar to the ('domestic') houses excavated north of Unit F. The later, still preserved, building constructed during Phase II, has a maximum diameter of 7,6m.

From its primary architectural features Unit F cannot be categorized as 'special building'. It is actually very similar to unit C as described above. But Unit F is one of the most striking buildings when it comes to findings and finds as it resembles the full complexity of the settlement's history (Kinzel 2013; Kinzel et al. 2016). This is especially visible in various building phases, and a complex stratigraphy indicating a long and eventful use history of the building. It is striking that Unit F does not show features understood earlier as common features at Shkārat Msaied; e.g. "blocked" doors⁹ and deliberately burning at the end of its use life (Kinzel 2013:68-72). Why are these features absent?¹⁰ It may relate to the most significant difference with the other buildings: the presents of at least 14 burials of which 12 are excavated so far. In addition to the burials Unit F show a wide range of finds: various types of grinders, ground stone tools, bone tools, flint objects of extraordinary quality, fine polished stone plates, stone slabs with (graphic) incisions, Shaft straighteners with geometric patterns and an extraordinary large green stone bead (obj. 81311) (Thuesen and Kinzel 2018).

Unit F was most probably initially a 'normal' house which was turned into a mortuary house when an important person died

and buried there; triggering a series of burials and related events. This shows an interesting process where a 'normal' building can gain importance through a person living there or a narrative related to the place and actual events taking place within and changing its perception.

Unit H and Unit J

Building units H¹¹ and J¹² are sharing some general features. The layout of both buildings is based on the same original idea: a single spaced interior with two doorways opposing each other; one NW oriented and the other oriented to SE or E. Both buildings were shaped by much different needs leading to other spatial concepts. Unit H is the largest building exposed at Shkārat Msaied yet and stands out with eight meter external and six meter internal in diameter. Unit H appears to be a semi-subterranean building – expressed also in the two staircases leading down to the interior. It is unclear if the stair of the eastern access (Loc. 90034) to unit H might be a later modification. Unit J shows only some steps in context with the north-western access. Unit J cuts into the slope with its northern and north-western quadrants, but connects on the same level to unit G. While building unit H maintained in general its original arrangement; unit J changed over time completely. It is striking that both buildings are lacking the usual built-in features. Noteworthy is also the fact that unit H obviously is lacking a plaster feature in the plaster floor in the context of the doorways. The absence of these features clearly points towards a different function of these buildings. Both buildings share parts of their wall: the south-western segment of unit J is integrated into the north-eastern segment of unit H exterior wall. It cannot be clarified which of the buildings came first or if both were actually built together at the same time.

The north-western access of unit H (loc. 90027) was obvi-



Fig. 4 Shkārat Msaied, Unit F, Top-plan based on 3D-model, hatching indicates misplaced stones; prepared by M. Kinzel 2018.



Fig. 5 Shkārat Msaied, Unit F: interior with excavated burials (2010).

ously added, as in unit J, in a later use phase. As a result of the decay of the walls, the context here was severely disturbed. The access from the east (loc. 90034) leading away from area VI is a well-built, but collapsed staircase. The entrance is 75cm wide. The stair construction corresponds to that known from house K. The steps consist of large sandstone slabs, which are lined with smaller stone slabs.

Both in the northern and western parts of the interior walls segments were built at an undefined point in time. These additions changed the appearance of the interior space from a round space into a clearly rectangular one. In the western part of the building a stone slab aligned in an east-west direction has been installed in wall (Loc. 90046). South of it a horizontal laying stone slab of similar dimensions is placed; which could be interpreted as a stair.

In the centre of the structure a post hole is located aligned with some stones, with a diameter of 50 to 60cm (Loc. 90030). The interior face of the exterior wall (Loci 90004, 90037 & 90038) is segmented by 11 post sockets. The post sockets have a diameter of about 11 to 15cm. The distance between the “post sockets” varies from 0,43 to 1,55m.

The backfilling of the house structure consists mainly of wall and roof collapse (Loci 90010, 90011, 90012, 90017, 90020, 90021, 90022, 90031, 90032, 90036 & 90041). The lower layers

of the deposits show traces of severe fire (Loci (90001, 90003, 90005, 90007, 90016, 90023, 0025, 90035, 90042). The source of fire lies in the southern half of the unit and destroyed the lime plaster screed there. The damages by fire might relate to yet unclarified activities taking place inside the building or the “storage” of (flammable) materials.

A 90 degrees collapse of a segment of wall locus w2345 into the interior of unit H indicates very well the original wall height for up to 2,28m. In addition to other larger sandstone slabs, there was also a “stone ring” with a diameter of 40cm, which had a hole of 17cm in diameter and was clearly attributable to the roof, presumably the edging of a ventilation hole. In the interior, embedded in the layers of wall and roof collapse, was a large stone slab, 88 x 152cm in size and 8-13cm thick (loc. 90013) found. The flagstone has rounded edges and at the bottom (?) end it has an 88 x 36cm large worked surface area with peg marks; suggesting the stone was originally positioned upright, as it is known from other buildings e.g. units F, C and K. The original location of the “stele” is unknown; but the roof was proposed as a possible place of display (Kinzel 2013:74). Apart from the above findings, there are no installations or features in the interior of House H. Both units show significant differences in their internal layout. While unit J is characterized by a row of workspaces (J.II to J.IV) separated from the main room by low stone settings along the southern wall segment, unit H shows none of those spatial demarcations. Numerous ground stones were recovered in unit J and all finds points towards a place of production and food procession. Unit H is lacking this clear relation to ground stone tools. Noteworthy is that in unit J the plaster feature sitting in the axis of the entrance was sealed, re-located and rebuild after unit G was added at the eastern entrance to unit J. Unit H does not show any of those plaster features. But both buildings comprise a centrally placed post hole stemming from the wooden support structure of the roof construction. In con-

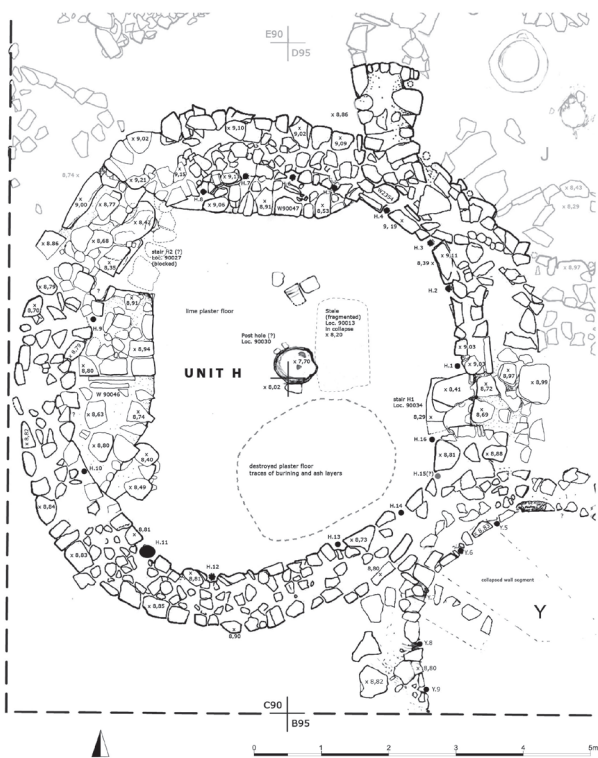


Fig. 6 Shkārāt Msaied, Unit H, Ground plan after Kinzel 2013, M. Kinzel 2018.



Fig. 7 Shkārāt Msaied, Unit H after excavation in 2010.

trast to unit J the interior of unit H was modified over time into a space of ‘rectangular’ character. The western and northern wall segments were filled by walls built along the chord lines creating an almost square space measuring 4,5 x 5,5m. Both buildings were burned at the end of their use. Whether this is an accident or a deliberate action related to their function and role within the community and settlement cannot be said at the moment.

Unit K

In contrast to other units at Shkārat Msaied the unit K is clearly built semi-subterranean, placed into the slope¹³. As it was the first exposed building with two staircases and a central posthole, it was significantly different compared to other units and was understood as a possible “special building”. The high density of finds suggested a different status within the settlement too. However, the inventory itself could easily interpret as “domestic” (see Purschwitz 2017:135-137). The circumstance that the building was finally destroyed by fire could also point towards a „special“ status or purpose of the building. The initial uniqueness of two stairs turned ‘normal’ when unit H was exposed and showed as well two stairs. In addition unit J and unit U have as well steps leading into their interior.

Unit K is built partly into unit “g” and forms the eastern limits of area VI¹⁴. The building is located in squares D110, D115, C110, C115 and C105/C110. Unit K belongs together with Unit F and Unit L to the group of originally isolated standing single-

room round houses. The last preserved interior plaster floor surface is about one meter below the exterior surface. Enclosure d/ e is situated Northwest between unit K and unit F. North of unit K is unit P located and unit U sits to the northeast. Southeast of unit K another MPPNB structure is placed, but its preservation is - due to the slope erosion and later terracing activities- very limited.

Unit K measures about 7m in North-south direction and about 6m in East-West direction. The floor area covers approximately 18,4m². The exterior wall is preserved up to 1,6m. The wall plaster is preserved up to one meter and shows traces of a possible painting or pigmentation. In the inner face of the wall in total 21 “post sockets” were identified. Two of them are placed alongside the western staircase and were originally part of the heavily modified unit “g”. Due to the limited preservation north of the stair we might miss here some features.

Access to unit K is provided via unit “g”. The doorway is oriented towards South-south-east. A stair leads along the inner face of the unit g’s exterior wall downwards to unit K’s interior. It is unclear if unit “g” was still in use, when unit K was occupied. The (western) stair has at least six steps (Loc. 80013; Hermansen et al. 2006; Kinzel 2013:77-79). The steps are made of large sand stone slabs. For the transport of these slabs two or more persons were needed. The cover (tread) stones are supported by a number of smaller stones and additional slabs. To stabilize and position the tread slabs smaller wedge stones are used. The six risers have following measures (from bottom up): 21cm, 12cm, 16cm, 16cm, 15cm und 15cm. In total a height of about 0,95m is bridged. Heights are given in average values due to tilted step surfaces.

The entire interior is covered by a wish-greyish lime plaster floor (Loc. 60219 und Loc. 70115).

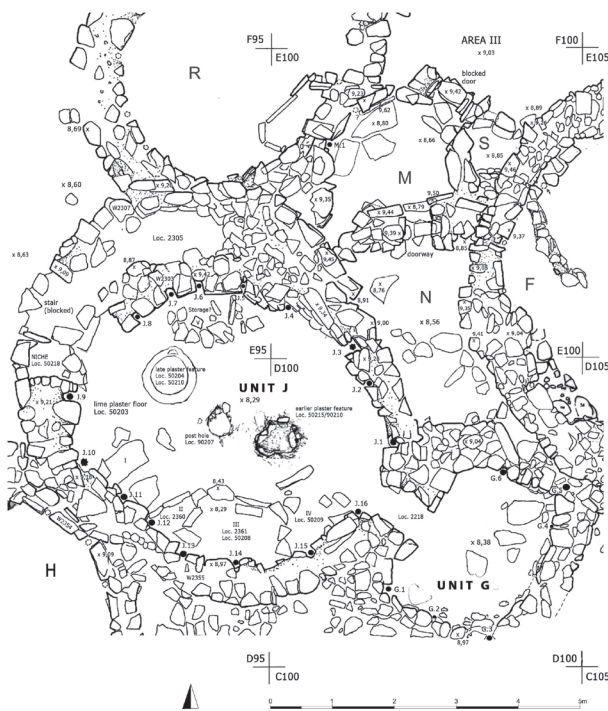


Fig. 8 Shkārat Msaied, Unit J, Ground plan after Kinzel 2013, M. Kinzel 2018.



Fig. 9 Shkārat Msaied, Unit J interior - state of excavation in 2003 (Shkārat Msaied Neolithic Project Archive).

A posthole (Loc. 70113) is placed in the centre of the room and shows the impression of four trunks which were tied together and fixed with some smaller stones. The burned posts were uncovered under the roof collapse. Possibly the post had been set on fire intentionally. The charred roof beams were found on top of the posts partly still in structural order. In the same context remains of the Neolithic roof construction as well as lumps with plastered roof surface were present in the room fill.

Between the posthole and the stair a plaster feature with raised, broad rim (Loc. 70112) is placed. The depression (Loc. 70119) was filled with a very fine and loose white powder of high calcite content. The total organic carbon (TOC) content of the material (Sc.S.72148) is so small that it is practically free of organic matter. The high calcite content suggests that the sample could be of re-carbonated burnt lime (Sobott 2011).

South of this feature a stone slab (Loc. 80012) was placed vertically into the floor. The slab is oriented in north-south direction and is 85cm long and about 35cm high. It leaves an opening of about 50cm width. The function of this room divider is unclear. The stone leads the view towards the large stone slab standing in the eastern part of the building. The vertically placed slab is incorporated into another staircase leading upwards possibly to the roof. Originally this could have been a built-in feature which was later modified into a stair (Hermansen et al. 2006; Kinzel 2008a; Hermansen 2009). The stair (Loc. 80011, Excavation di-

ary 21.8.2005 A.M. Harpelund) is formed by eight steps re-using mainly discarded grinders similar to the steps leading into unit U. The stair ascends from north to south and runs ca. 1,76m turning slightly eastwards. The (preserved) stair reaches a height of ca. 1,73m above the interior floor level. The stones of the steps are set in mortar. The steps- risers and treads- are partly covered with mortar and were later re-modelled.

In the corner between the stair (Loc. 80007, 80011) and the curved exterior wall (Loc. 80010) a kind of shelf was installed. Twigs and branches were inserted here to serve as shelf boards. The findings show imprints, charcoal and a dark, organic rich soil (Loc. 80009).

An indicator for the roof as a second activity area delivers a fireplace collapsed into the interior of unit K. The fireplace with a high concentration of ash and charcoal was sitting within the roof collapse about 15cm above the plaster floor of the building, but actually on the smooth surface seen as the roof top (Jensen et al. 2005; Hermansen 2009).

In the collapse material around the eastern staircase a high number of ground stone tools, mainly grinder, were found. One of the bigger pieces was located half way up the stairs blocking the steps. At the lower end of the stair several stone tools were found, grinders, mortars, and pestles (Loc. 80011). At least one of the grinders shows traces of deep red pigments. Starting on the last step of the stairs they create a kind of pavement that leads towards the centre of the room. Perhaps this arrangement is connected with events or rituals which have taken place just before the house was burned down. The central post of the building was set on fire intentionally and kept alive for some time. Experiments at Beidha suggest that it was necessary to add significant amount of fuel to set these houses on fire and burn



Fig. 10 Shkārat Msaied, Unit K, Ground plan after Kinzel 2013, M. Kinzel 2018.



Fig. 11 Shkārat Msaied, Unit K, interior of the building showing plaster feature and post hole (Shkārat Msaied Neolithic Project Archive 2005).

them down (Dennis 2005). An accidental destruction seems to be unlikely in this context; but can also not be excluded.

The eastern stair construction is integrating an earlier built-in feature with stone platform and vertically placed stone slab. This slab has a very unusual shape – head-on view of a Rapa-Nui Eastern Island figure. The findings in Unit K provide a very good evidence for the original heights of walls and the overall appearance of a PPNB-building. The exterior wall of unit K is in its eastern segment up to 1,60m preserved. The documented amount of wall stones in the room fill of unit K suggest that the exterior wall was at least 2,10m high.

Since the discovery of the stairs there is a debate if the existence of an inner stair implies the presence of a second storey. This must not be the case. However, the roof has clearly to be seen as an activity floor for daily works (Hermansen 2009; Kinzel 2013:79)

Unit U

Building unit U is so far the smallest building unit excavated at Shkārat Msaied and in this aspect a ‘special building’. It is located in square D115, northeast of unit K. The structure makes use of the space left between unit K, unit P and the other structures to the east and south. Its exterior diameter is both in north-south as well as in East-west direction only about 3,5m. The interior is in north-south direction 2,5m and in East-West-direction 2,3m wide, covering an area of about 5,5m². The curved exterior

wall (Locs W70416 and W80412) is built as double faced rubble masonry. It is preserved to a height of 1,10m comprising seven courses. Although the building has such a reduced size and diameter the roof construction was not adjusted in general. Still a wooden scaffold forms the load bearing structure represented by nine “wall channels” set in regular distances.

The building is oriented towards the north-east with its entrance placed there. The doorway (Loc. 80415) is 60cm wide. Two steps are leading down into the interior of unit U. Both steps are made of re-used grinders. A pavement made of stone slabs (Loc. 80402) was uncovered in the southern part of the room. On the pavement, against the wall a large worked stone block was placed showing an intensively worked (picked) surface (Loc. 80403). Around the block (Loc. 80400 und 80407) and in-between the pavement slabs (Loc. 80402) a high concentration of lithic industry debris was found; as well as in the joints of the wall segment (Loc. 80412) behind the block. About 25cm below the pavement a white, well-preserved lime plaster floor was exposed (Loc. 80405). On the plaster surface a stone with an irregular surface was placed serving as a kind of work platform (Loc. 80410). In the small trench through the central part of the building a fireplace (Loc. 80413) of the pre-architectural occupation phase could be documented.

The fill of the interior showed that regularly soil or earth material was deposited inside the building obviously by natural erosion processes. Material has entered the building via the entrance oriented towards the slope and also was washed down from the walls or out of the joints accumulating in the interior. Winter rainfalls and surface run-off water could be responsible for these processes. As S. Dennis studies in Beidha (Dennis & Finlayson 2005; Dennis 2009) have shown, it is not unusual that during one (normal) winter about 5cm of soil deposits can accu-

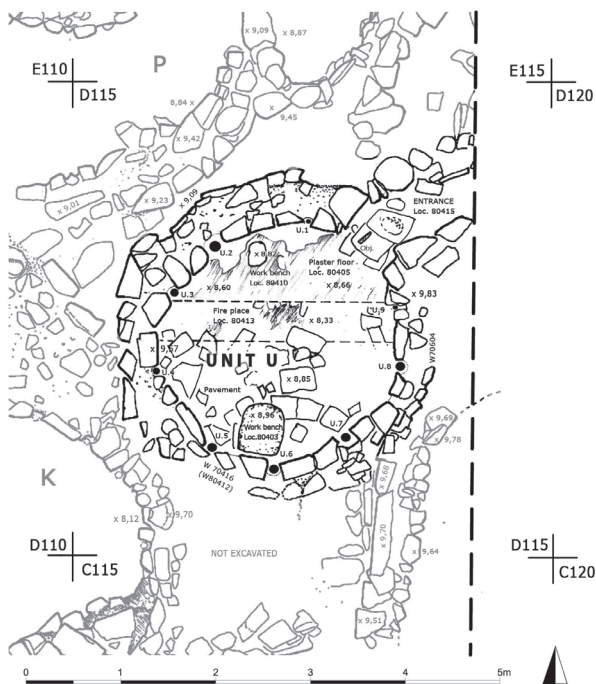


Fig. 12 Shkārat Msaied, Unit U, Ground plan after Kinzel 2013, M. Kinzel 2018.



Fig. 13 Shkārat Msaied, unit U (Shkārat Msaied Neolithic Project Archive 2005).

Table 1 Shkārāt Msaied building units - basic data, after Kinzel 2013: Tab. 2.2

Unit	Excavated year	Shape	Ø (m)		Interior area (sqm)	Floor level (height a.s.l.)	preserved wall height (m)	neighbouring / attached units	Access / Doorways / Entrance					Stairs		
			N/S	E/W					quantity	width (m)	orientation	blocked	"flanking" stones	threshold	quantity	steps
A	1999, 2001, 2002	round	-5	-5	11	998.59	0.93	B	1	0,40	SE	X	4	X		2
B	1999, 2004, 2010	round	4,7	-4,7	12	998.9	0,79-0,85/0,88	A, D	1	0,60	S	X	2	X		
C	1999, 2003, 2004, 2005	round	5,6	-5	14	998.93	0,64/0,72	E	1	0,55	S	X	2	X		
D	2000, 2003, 2010	round/oval	5,5	-5	13	999.41		B, a	1	>0,50	SE			X		
DD	2000, 2010	rectangular?														
E	2000, 2003, 2010															
E1	2001, 2003	round	4,7	4,5	11	999.01	0,3/0,93	C, X	1	>0,45	SSE			X		
E2	2003	oval	6	5,4	17	999.3	0,93	C, b, c, X, ?	1	0,55	SE		2	X		
F	2000-2005, 2010, 2015, 2016	round/oval	7,6	7,2	26	998.6		G, M, N, O, W, d, e	1	0,55-0,70	S	earlier X		X		
G	2001-2003	polygonal	>3,6	>2,8	5	998.38		F, J, N	1?	0,55 (to J)	NW					
H	2000?, 2005, 2010	round	-8	-7,7	29			J, Y	2	1,35 (NW); 0,78	NW, E	NW X	2	X (NW)	2?	
J	2001-2003, 2010	oval	-6,8	6(7,5)	17	998.29		G, H, N, M, R	2	1,00 (NW), 0,55	NW, SE	NW X	2	X	1	3
K	2001, 2005	oval	-7	-6	18	998.07		P, U, d, e, g, ?	1	0,55, + 1,00	S /SW			steps	2	7/7
L1	2001, 2004-2005, 2010	round	-5	5,6	10		0,74/0,80	O, W, P, f, AA		ca. 0,50	S	X		X		
L2	2001, 2005, 2010	oval?	3,5	3,5	5	998.82	0,68	O, W, P, f, AA	1	< 0,55	E	X			steps	
M	1999	polygonal	3,3	2	3,25	998.56		R, S, N, J	1(+1)	0,45	NE	X	2 (face to face)	X		
N	1999	polygonal			4,8	998.66		G, J, F, M	1	0,45	N		2	X		
O	2001, 2003	polygonal	3	2,4	1,92	998.93		F, W, L	1	0,40	N	X		X		
P	2001, 2003-2005	polygonal	-2	-7		998.72		W, d/e, K, L, U		ca. 0,55	W	X				
Q	2000	curved	3,5	2,4												
R	2002, 2010, 2014, 2015	round	4	5	9	998.67		J, M	1	0,50	NE	no info		X		
S	1999	polygonal	0,8	0,8	0,64			F, M								
T	2001, 2010	round	-5	?		999.67		AA			?					
U	2005	round	3,5	3,5	5			K, P, ?	1	0,55	NE	collapse?		X	1	3
W	2001, 2003	polygonal	2	1,2	2,4			O, F, d/e, L								
X	2004, 2005	round						E	1	0,50	WNW	?	2	X		
Y	2005, 2010, 2014	round	4,3	6,65	13			H	1	0,53	E	?	2			
g	2010	round/polygonal	4	5,3	12			K, d/e	1	0,6	SSE	collapse?	?			

mulate inside a PPNB round house structure.

Due to its architectural characteristics building unit U can be described as well as one of the "special buildings" at Shkārāt Msaied. In general structures of significantly smaller sizes than the average buildings are described as storage facilities (Bartl 2004). In the case of unit U this can be excluded, as the flint tools and debitage point towards an interpretation as small workshop building (Purschwitz 2017:99-100; Excavation diaries by Charlott Hoffmann Jensen, Mareike Andresen 4/2005, and Christoph Purschwitz 8/2005).

Comparison and Discussion

The structures identified as 'special buildings' at Shkārāt Msaied are not necessarily linked to ritual, cultic or magical practices. They might have housed various purposes and functions. Their individual modifications suggest that they served very specific tasks and purposes which cannot be specified further at the moment. Finlayson (2015) stressed that the importance of Rollefson's identification of special buildings aka temples or ritual buildings at Ain Ghazal was not recognized and acknowledged in the same way the discovery of the monumental structures at Göbekli Tepe by Klaus Schmidt made their mark. Special buildings in the southern Levant seem to be overlooked and not considered in the debate of the origin of religions as they should¹⁵. Although in recent years more examples have been identified: e.g. structure 075 at WF16¹⁶; the building units at Shkārāt Msaied presented here, the so-called sanctuary at Beidha but also the re-excavated House 37¹⁷; which resembles some features of the Shkārāt Msaied houses (Makarewicz & Finlayson 2018). How-

ever, in some of the most prominent PPNB sites of the Petra-Region Ba'ja and Basta no special buildings were identified so far (Kinzel 2013; Gebel et al. 2006). Nevertheless in some cases the basement, e.g. at close by LPPNB Ba'ja, serve as well as burial ground, while the remaining building obviously was still in use for daily life activities (Gebel et al. 2017). In Basta two building units (Room 16 in Area A and Building BVIII) could be approached as special buildings as they show different features and concepts than the other exposed structures (Gebel et al. 2006: 214). But the actual functions of most of these buildings stay unclear. In this respect, only Unit F at Shkārāt Msaied can be pointed out to have had a very specific function: a mortuary house – a house of the dead (Kinzel-Duru-Barański in press; Hermansen 2018). As Sumio Fujii (2007a/b; 2010) has shown there are also a number of structures that differ considerably from the 'usual' architectural structures: water management infrastructure as barrages, dams and cisterns. Structure M at Wadi Abu Tulayha shows that built structures can serve very specific purposes and be very different from the common buildings at a site and not being an obvious cult or ritual related building (Fujii 2010).

So what may define a special building? As the case of Shkārāt Msaied shows the presents of build-in-features indicates the present of possible beliefs and "magical" practices (rituals) but does not automatically mark a special building or a "temple". The same could be extended to other sites: At Göbekli Tepe the solemn presence of T-shaped pillars does not turn a building into a special building or a ritual building (Kinzel et al. forthcoming); and at Çatalhöyük not each bucranium represents a

Table 2 Shkārāt Msaied building units features, after Kinzel 2013: Tab. 2.3.

Unit	Floor			Wall		"post sockets"		Built-in-features					House type and function			Fire? traces of burning	
	lime	pavement	mud/soil	mud/lime plaster	upright placed sand stone slabs	quantity	Ø [cm]	work platform	platform/ stone cist	orthostate	"plaster feature" Ø [m]	burials	"central" posthole	domestic	non-domestic/special building		unspecified
A	x			x	x	11	11 (7-20)		x	x	x			x			
B	x				x	13	9 (8-15)	x	x	x	?			x			
C	x (redish)			x	x	16	10,5 (7-20)		x	x	x?			x	?		
D	x	x				13	(7-14)	x			x?		x	x			
DD	x										x		x				x
E														x			
E1	x			x		12			x	x?	x?			x			
E2	x	x		?		16+x?			x	x?	x?		x				x
F	x		x	x	x	16			x	x	x	>15	?	?	x		
G			x			4?								x			
H	x			x		16+x?				?			x	?	x		x
J	x			x		16		x (4)			x		x		x		x
K	x			x	x (stair)	21				x?	x		x		x		x
L1	x			?		7+1+x?				x				x			
L2					x	3+x?				x							
M	x	x			x										?	x	
N	x	x													?	x	
O					x											x	
P		x			x (grinder)											x	
Q																x	
R	x				x	9?+x?					X (<47)	1		x			
S																x	
T	x	x		x		mind.15	10				x		x	x			x
U	x	x				9		x			x?				x?		
W		x														x	
X	x				x										x?		x?
Y														?			
g	?				?	?											

“shrine” (as it was believed for a long, long time). Obviously there was a strong tradition of keeping building shapes of ‘specific’ structures alive while the overall approach to spaces changed. This is somewhat visible in the ‘community houses’ of Jerf el Ahmar (Stordeur 2015) and Tell Abr (Yartah 2004; Yartah 2005). In other cases single buildings may stay out due to features like complex wall paintings as seen at Dja’de el-Mughara (Coqueugniot 2016; Dermeh 2018). But those places do not necessarily are “special buildings” as wall decorations as such are a quite common feature. However, as only a few cases with murals have survived they can turn it something special. The presence of these features can indicate the importance of group identities and shared memories (Hodder 2016; Hodder 2018). Obviously group identities were linked to a specific location and ownership was claimed by burying the dead inside the houses under the floors (c.f. Mithen et al. 2015; Hermansen 2018; Lichten 2007). Communities were formed by the living and the dead (Hermansen 2018). The concept of ‘continuity’ is reflecting the need of conserving history and keeping memories alive as they ensuring the narrative and identity of a community as well as the relationship to a place. In other words, being able to tell the related narrative of a place enables the narrator to claim ownership over a territory and a specific place or building. “Conserving” a place by maintaining a building or actually re-building and modifying it, are strategies feeding into this concept (Kinzel – Duru – Barański in press). Interesting to mention is here that this concept is visible in most built structures – of whatever function throughout the Neolithic.

Conclusion

“Special buildings” are not special as such. They only can be identified when seen in context and if they differ from the normal case. As it is in most cases hard to define the actual use and function of a building the purely architectural definition of a “special building” might be more misleading than helpful. Not only could a normal looking house be “special” by the means of practices executed there; on the same time a building with “special” features could be just a “normal” – more domestic – structure. Shared memories may give meaning to a place that differs from the perception of other spaces and places. However as Blundell Jonas (2016) has shown most social conventions and social meaning in relation to space are not necessarily visible in the architecture and only recognizable with a certain cultural background. Bille and Sørensen (2016) arguing in a similar way that architecture is defined by more than just its physical appearance. In other words this means that also the meaning of the term “special building” is understood by everyone in a different way according to our cultural background and training. At Shkārāt Msaied some structures stay out due to their slightly larger or smaller size compared to the other exposed structures; but they clearly do not show this jump in scale which is characterizing the monumental structures at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2012) or Jericho (Kenyon 1981) where we can witness some of the earliest examples of ‘building beyond the human scale’.

The round house structures at Shkārāt Msaied discussed here, could be seen from an architectural point of view as ‘special buildings’ although the inventory very much reflect daily life ac-

tivities – except perhaps for unit F. But do daily activities actually exclude more exclusive or ritual events? We have to assume that this is not the case at all.

Note on plan material: Heights are in m a.s.l. and should be read as 99x,xxm a.s.l. Given are only the last readings, e.g. 8,53 which would read as 998,53m a.s.l. Original drawings were done in scale 1:20. Plans were edited to be printed in scale 1:50 for Kinzel 2013. All plans were revised for this contribution by the author.

Acknowledgment

This contribution focussing on the ‘special buildings’ at Shkārat Msaied took its starting point some years ago when trying to define the building’s at Shkārat Msaied. Studying Neolithic architecture the work of Sumio Fujii always offered material which was somehow different from ours and others. I am grateful that he shared it with me to complete our picture of the Neolithic built environment. I have to thank a number of people discussing this topic with me on several occasions: Marek Z. Barański, Lee Clare, Bo Dahl Hermansen, Cecilie Lelek Tvetmarken, Christoph Purschwitz, Tobias Richter, Julia Schönicke, Devrim Sönmez, and Mette Bangsborg Thuesen. The study on Shkārat Msaied would not be possible without the support by the colleagues of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the Petra Park Authority. The excavations at Shkārat Msaied were supported by the Danish Institute in Damascus and the Danish Palestine Foundation.

Notes

1. After B. Byrd (1994 und 2005:114f) a „domestic “ dwelling is defined by: a) „Small to medium sized “ structure compared to the „other” buildings at the site; b) Artefacts and finds reflect „daily “ life activities respectively „domestic processing and productions; e.g. grinders, silex industry, bone tools and „food “-remains; and c) Existence of multi-functional annexes, c.f. storage, work spaces, etc. ‘domestic’ dwellings are seen in general as the ‘normal’ case in a settlement.
2. Based on the German term: Sonderbau or Sondergebäude.
3. The discovery of the monumental structures at Göbekli Tepe but also the ‘cult buildings’ at Çayönü have led to a number of publications dealing with ‘special buildings’ focusing mainly on those cases from upper Mesopotamia; e.g. Özdoğan & Özdoğan 1989; Özdoğan & Özdoğan 1998; Verhoeven 2002; Dietrich and Notroff 2015; Atakuman 2014; McCorriston 2011; Kornienko 2009 Watkins 2006; Schmidt 2012;

Kurapkat 2015).

4. There are for sure buildings at Göbekli Tepe which have to be addressed as “special buildings” as they differ in several aspects from the “normal” buildings. One case would be building K10-55 (Clare – Kinzel – Tvetmarken in prep.) but also the large monumental structures (A-H) are architectural speaking “special” . The same is true for the latest phase of building C, contemporary with the M/EPPNB architecture and part of the PPNB settlement (Kinzel et al. in prep.).
5. Hemsley’ s study (2008) about PPN domestic structures proposed that the inhabitant group had fewer than 10 people, while a few of the spaces could, according to McBride (2015), have held gatherings of up to 20 people.
6. B. Byrd only distinguishes between „domestic “ and „non-domestic “ dwellings (Byrd 2005) defined not by architectural means but on the analyses of finds respectively use-wear. J. Mattes discussed in her study on cult buildings in Scandinavia the difficulties to agree on general applicable definitions and interpretations for terms like „cult building “ and „house “ (Mattes 2008:119ff). Most definitions are based on an assumption of possible function of an edifice. Mattes prefers Ritual- or Kultbau (ritual building or cult building) for the structures she has studied as a neutral and best fitting term (Mattes 2008:128). D. Kurapkat in contrary is fond of the term „Sonderbau “ respectively „Sondergebäude “ to define these Neolithic structures with non-domestic character (Kurapkat 2009).
7. The building descriptions are based on the documentation presented in Kinzel 2013. The descriptions and interpretations were updated according to the latest results stemming from the excavation in 2014 to 2016.
8. The red-stained, pigmented plaster floors are not unusual in the Petra-region during the PPNB, however the state of preservation varies according to the used pigments. The red colour can easily disappear under the impact of UV-rays (sun-light). This has happened e.g. in Basta, where the dark red-colour of a plaster floor disappeared in one hour to turn into a greyish plaster surface (Hermansen pers. comment). This means that there is a possibility that actually more floors were pigmented than visible today (cf. Dermech 2018).
9. At Shkārat Msaied a number of buildings were found with doorways blocked by dry set stones. No mortar was observed. This kind of construction points towards a seasonal use of the structures. The earlier entrance to unit F (Loc. 120.134) was actually blocked, but with a ‘proper’ wall using mortar.
10. Actually, Unit F also has a blocked doorway. But this one

belongs to one of the earlier phases and was blocked in an early phase. The blocking (Loc. 120.134) has a clearly permanent character. Later the door disappeared behind a small wall forming a little niche feature (Loc. 2261). The wall is covering on the same time two smaller stone boxes (Loc. 110.108; 110.109), set into an earlier plaster floor containing three human skulls respectively some animal bones; including a mandible of a fox (Kinzel et al. 2016; 2017).

11. The structure called unit H is located in the quadrants D90, D95, C90 and C95. Unit H has the largest outside diameter of all structures exposed so far at Shkārat Msaied. It measures about 8.2m in north-south direction and 7.7m in east-west direction. The interior has an (actual) floor area of approximately 21.55m².
12. The structure called unit J is located north east of unit H in quadrants E95, E100 und D95, D100. To the north unit R is built against its exterior wall. To the east units M and N are placed between unit J and F. To the southeast unit F is connected with a wall opening with unit G and forms a two-room structure. Unit J comprises of an external diameter of ca. 6,8m (N-S) and ca. 7,5m (E-W); covering an interior space of about 17m². The curvilinear perimeter wall is built as a double faced rubble stone wall. The inner wall face is regularly intercepted by 16 post sockets. The wall is up to 1,13m high preserved. The northwestern parts of the structure are built into the sloping surface giving it a semi-subterranean character.
13. It has to be admitted that the area south of unit K was not excavated. So it cannot be taking granted that unit K does not repeat the pattern of unit J and F only sitting partly in the slope.
14. Area VI was seen as an open area, but latest works here point towards the existence of an earlier structure here limiting the area to the south (Kinzel et al. 2016).
15. See also Rollefson 2005.
16. At WF16 also some of the other structures could claim to be special buildings as they obviously have served various purposes reflected in very individual spatial arrangements and ground plan conceptions (Finlayson et al. 2011; Mithen et al. 2018).
17. This house already pointed out by D. Kirkbride (1967) has a floor made of fist-sized stones placed into mortar. The size is slightly smaller than the larger units at Shkārat Msaied, Units H and J. Building 37 at Beidha resembles some layout similarities with units J and H (Kinzel 2013:73-76). According to Makarewicz and Finlayson (2018) the building had two accesses, but it is unclear if they were in use at the same time or not.

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