

TELL BILLA  
 SOUTHWEST CORNER  
 STRATUM I - ASSYRIAN

SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 METRES

THE JOINT ASSYRIAN EXPEDITION  
 THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, PHILADELPHIA  
 THE AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

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# THE FIRST ASSYRIAN LEVEL AT TELL BILLA

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## PLAN OF STRATUM I-ASS.

It must be emphasized that this plan should be regarded only as a factual recording of what was found in the field. Dotted lines indicate restoration of walls based on evidence only. In most cases restoration was unnecessary. At this time we refrain from indicating hypothetical walls. Almost all gaps in walls are caused by intrusive refuse pits. Burials intrusive in I-ass. did remarkably little damage to structures, as they required little space, and usually they were not far below the *tell* surface.

Seventy-nine rooms, a street and a plaza were excavated in the First Assyrian Stratum. The region is divided into three areas by the plaza and the street. All of the buildings uncovered seem to have been private houses, two of which will be discussed, as examples, later.

The chief building materials used in this level are: *Libn*, a sun-dried mud-brick, baked brick, and stone, named in the order of the frequency of their occurrence. All walls were built of *libn*, with their foundations (wherever they existed) of the same stuff. *Libn* also occasionally was used as a pavement of a room, laid in two courses.

The common pavement is of simple stamped clay, usually quite hard, its firmness coming from use or from having been tamped at the time of laying. Besides this clay, and *libn*, a variety of other materials was used in pavements. Brick was used in Rooms W 32, V 20, V 30, V 54, V 22, X 83, W 23, W 61, W 77 and stone in rooms W 67, W 69, W 2, W 3, V 13a, V 41, V 51, W 61 both materials having been used in W 61. In no room was the original pavement entirely preserved, having been robbed by later inhabitants of Tell Billa.

## ROOM CATALOG—ASSYRIAN LEVEL

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
W 1	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement; walls of ordinary <i>libn</i> ; no specific indication as to use of the room.
W 2	Open courtyard	—Partially paved with stones; <i>libn</i> walls, incomplete; V-shaped wall, non-supporting, separating this room from W 7, and enclosing jar sunk in the pavement, indicates that possibly W 2 was also used as a kitchen, and possibly was part of the large area consisting of W 2 and W 7.
W 3	General domestic	—Usual pavement and walls. The stones showing on the plan belong to an upper phase of this room, as may be seen by comparison of levels. The room had three doors.
W 4	General domestic	—Usual pavement and walls. Two doors; one opening in to a vestibule—W 3, the other in to Room W 5. Next to, and inside the former, are two baked bricks, set flush with the pavement, which may form a hearth, although there was no evidence of fire on it.
W 5	General domestic	—Usual pavement and walls. Originally had three doorways: one opened in to W 6, had a stone sill, and later was blocked with <i>libn</i> . One opened in to W 11, a vestibule; and one in to W 4.
W 6	General domestic	—Usual pavement and walls. Two doors; one, blocked, described under W 5, and the other, somewhat uncertain, also had a stone sill, opening on to the street, or W 11, vestibule.
W 7	Open courtyard, or corridor	—See remarks under “W 2.” A single line of stone is the only paving other than the usual clay. A blocked doorway, having a sill of two large stones, originally opened on to the street.
W 8	Uncertain, but probably domestic	—Pavement and walls usual types. Due to the fragmentary condition of the remains of the room, little can be told as to its use.
W 9	Uncertain, but probably domestic	—Same remarks as for “W 8.”
W 10	Street.	

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
W 11	Uncertain—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. On account of the fragmentary condition of the walls, and lack of significant objects from the room, it could not be determined what its use was. The probability is that it is either a corridor or a vestibule.
V 12	Street.	
V 13	Uncertain—	Pavement and walls, as far as were followed, were of the usual types. The room had had at least one door, with a stone sill, opening into the courtyard V 13a.
V 13a	Open courtyard—	Partially paved with stone. Extent of the courtyard not determined. It is clear that it must have been the center of another private house. Its three doors opened in to Rooms V 13, V 14 and V 16.
V 14	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. The single door opens on to the courtyard V 13a.
V 15	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. In the west corner of the room was a storage jar. One door, the only one, opens into the vestibule V 16.
V 16	Vestibule, perhaps entry corridor—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. The northeast side open, and two doors, one opening into V 15, the other into V 17. Its narrowness would preclude the possibility of its having been used as a living room, if the open side had not already done so.
V 17	Kitchen—	Usual clay pavement and walls.
V 18	Storage room—	Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Projecting from the northwest wall of the room were two small walls, which formed three bins for the storage of supplies or food. Near the center of the room was a small bench about 20 cms. high, and 34 cms. square.
V 19	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "A", will be discussed in more detail under that heading.
V 20	Open courtyard—	Brick pavement; <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "A", q.v.

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
V 21	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "A", q.v.	
V 22	Entrance court, or vestibule—Brick pavement; <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "A", q.v.	
W 23	Toilet room—Brick pavement; <i>libn</i> walls. Toilet made of stone. Part of House "A", q.v.	
W 24	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "A", q.v.	
W 25	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 26	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 27	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 28	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 29	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 30	Open courtyard—Paved with brick and stones. Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 31	Toilet room—Paved with brick and clay. Brick baseboard around the walls. Toilet of <i>libn</i> and brick. See more detailed discussion under House "B".	
W 32	Vestibule—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "B", q.v.	
W 33	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
V 34	Uncertain—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Discussed under House "B", though not a part of it necessarily.	
V 35	Vestibule—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Part of House "B", q.v.	
V 36	General domestic—Both pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . Part of House "B", q.v.	
V 37	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Had one door opening into Room V 41.	

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
V 38	Uncertain—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. As this was not entirely excavated, it is difficult to say what the use was. Probably "general domestic."
V 39	Court or kitchen—	Partially paved with stone and brick. The room was incompletely excavated. In the northwest corner was a raised platform of baked brick, supported by rubble of broken bricks and stones, and plastered on its top, horizontal surface. Next this, in front of a high-silled door (to Room V 40) was a large pottery jar one third sunk into the floor, and standing at the mouth of a drain which led out of the courtyard. The paving of bricks was very regular and in good condition where it existed, but stopped abruptly at several points, as shown in the plan. Near the south wall and parallel to it was a low wall composed of brick, stone and mud, open at the west and returning against the south wall at the east end. This was about 35 cms. high and formed a sort of long trough. The paving ran under this. At the east end of the room was a slightly raised platform of broken brick and stone, under which the brick pavement ran. Two doors; one is mentioned above; the other opened into the unexcavated area, possibly a street. This door had a sill about 30 cms. above the pavement of V 39. The sill was of baked brick and there was a jamb on either side, of the same material. The room had a base-board of baked brick. There were signs of burning around the door, the jambs, and the outside of the wall.
V 40	General domestic—	Usual pavement of clay and <i>libn</i> walls. A drain from V 39 crossed the room diagonally, leading into the unexcavated area. Three doors: one with a clay sill, slightly raised, led into V 39; another, the sill of which was lower than the pavement of V 40, led into V 41; and the third, with a sill of stone, opened on to the unexcavated area.
V 41	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. In two parts of the room are patches of stone pavement. Two doors: one with a door-socket of stone leads into Room V 40; the other into V 37. In view of the thinness of the wall separating V 37 and V 41, it may be suggested that it is not a supporting wall, but rather a partition.

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
V 42	General domestic or storage—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Had had a door into Room V 43, later blocked with <i>libn</i> as indicated.
V 43	General domestic—	These two rooms had the usual clay pavement and walls of <i>libn</i> . The dividing wall must be considered in two lights: First, that the door indicated as "doubtful" actually at one time existed. Then the dividing wall must have extended to the west wall of the rooms. Later, then, the door was blocked up with <i>libn</i> , and another door cut in at the west end. Second, that the indicated doubtful door never existed, and that the plan otherwise is correct. A door with a stone sill led from V 44 into the unexcavated area, and another, later blocked, led from V 43 into V 42. As may be seen from the "Burial Chart" of the Square V-7, this region was disturbed by intrusive graves, which very probably caused the rather confusing features of these two rooms.
V 44		
V 45	Unexcavated—	Number assigned to the area just outside V 44 and later dropped.
V 46	Entry-way—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Originally this room must have been the vestibule of the small house formed by Rooms V 46, V 47, V 48, V 49. These rooms later were made a part of House "A" and V 46 closed off entirely.
V 47	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. It is quite likely that originally this room was the central courtyard of the small house above-mentioned, later being absorbed into House "A". Two doors, into V 48 and V 49. A third, doubtful, had opened into V 46.
V 48	General domestic—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Two doors, leading into Rooms V 34 and V 47.
V 49	Uncertain—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into Room V 47. There were no indications as to occupancy, but it may be suggested, in view of the interior walls, that the room was a sort of stable for live-stock and fowl.
V 50	Toilet room—	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door leading into the street. Toilet constructed of stones. As there is no communication with houses, the toilet must have been a public one.

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
V 51	Street.	
V 52	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One doubtful door leading into the unexcavated area.	
V 53	Kitchen—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. The south wall is not bonded into the east wall. Three ovens of the common bee-hive type show this room to have been a kitchen. Originally the area now covered by V 53, V 54 and V 55 was all one room or court. Possibly W 56 also was not one of the original rooms in this area.	
V 54	Bath-room—Partially paved with baked-brick, walls of <i>libn</i> . No doors were found. A drain from the paved portion of the room in the southeast corner carried off the water under the wall, emptying into the street.	
V 55	Uncertain—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. This was probably opened to the sky. The irregularity of the enclosing walls would have made roofing extremely difficult, if not impossible. Due to the fact that excavation was not made further to the north and west in this region the rooms cannot be properly described.	
W 56	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Three doors: one leading into V 55, and the other two into the unexcavated areas to the north and to the west.	
W 57	Toilet room—Stone pavement and <i>libn</i> walls, but open at the west end. The stone toilet at the east end was flushed through a drain that ran under the wall into the street.	
W 58	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into the corridor W 58a which probably could not be closed, due to the lack of a jamb at the south.	
W 58a	Entry corridor—Leading from V 55, at the door of which was a stone door-socket to the central courtyard W 61. At the north end the stone pavement of W 57 crosses the corridor.	
W 59	General domestic—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door into W 61, with a sill of clay 30 cms. higher than the pavements of the rooms.	



NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
W 60	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening on to the courtyard W 61. Stone door-socket inside the room.
W 61	Open courtyard	—Paved with stone and the usual clay, with a baked-brick path, four bricks wide, from the door opening into the street to the corridor W 58a. This was primarily the courtyard belonging to the rooms to the north. W 69 apparently did not become part of its complex until a later date.
W 61a	Entry corridor	—Paved at the eastern end with stone, otherwise with the usual clay. It is likely that at the western end it opened into a room or courtyard which lay under the unexcavated area.
W 62	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. This room is independent of other rooms on the plan, and must have been used in connection with unexcavated buildings. Its one door opens into that area.
W 63	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. The same situation applies to this room as does to W 62 above.
W 64	General domestic and kitchen	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opened on to the courtyard W 69. The oven near the south wall was the common type of bee-hive bread oven.
W 65	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into the room W 68.
W 66	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. This room has rather a complicated history. Originally it was not a separate room, but was part of the larger room W 65. A separating wall was built, and a door cut through the south wall into W 67, and the room became a part of that small complex. Later, this door was blocked with <i>libn</i> and another door cut in the north wall, opening on to the paved courtyard W 61, and the room then became part of that complex.
W 67	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Two doors, opening on to Courtyard W 69 and into W 72. A third door at one time existed, into W 66, q.v.

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
W 68	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. The east wall was not bonded into the north. Door-socket at door leading into W 65 and a blocked door-way which had led into the paved courtyard W 69.
W 69	Open courtyard	—Stone pavement in the northeastern portion. Large storage jar sunk flush with the pavement and the area paved disturbed by an intrusive refuse pit. This courtyard served W 64, W 68, W 67, and W 70.
W 70	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Two doors: one into W 71 and another on to courtyard W 69.
W 71	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into room W 70.
W 72	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into room W 67. The east wall of the room not bonded into the south wall.
W 73	Street.	
W 74	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door, with a stone socket, opening on to the corridor W 74a.
W 74a	Corridor	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. A drain from the courtyard W 77 to the street W 73 passed through it.
W 75	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One door opening into room W 75a. The size of this room almost precludes the possibility of its having been used for anything more than storage.
W 75a	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Two doors: one led into W 75 and the other, with a stone socket, led into W 76.
W 76	Uncertain	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. A drain from W 77 passed through its wall at the southwest corner. The drain which on the plan is shown in the doorway into the street belongs to a later phase of the room, being almost a meter higher than the base of its walls. There is a stone door-socket at the door into the street. It would be very difficult to say definitely what the occupancy of the room had been.

NO. ON PLAN	OCCUPANCY	REMARKS
W 77	Open courtyard	—Paved with baked-brick. Entrance from the street gained through corridor W 74a. This courtyard is the central area of the rooms W 77a, W 77b, X 82, and X 82a, all of which had to be delineated by reconstruction. Near the center of the north wall of the courtyard, the pavement had been disturbed by the intrusive refuse pit shown on the plan.
W 77a	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement. Those walls that exist are of <i>libn</i> . The east wall is entirely hypothetical, as is the door shown in the south wall.
W 77b	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement. Beyond a short fragment of the north wall, no walls remain.
W 78	Problematical	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Along the
W 79		west wall was a low bench. There is no really adequate
X 81		explanation for this room and the two immediately to the south. Since they are contiguous to the plaza W 80, it is entirely within reason to suggest that they may be small shops of a <i>Suq</i> , as they would have occupied an advantageous position for small businesses. Certainly no other explanation is more adequate. Complete lack of doors in all three of these rooms complicates the problem.
W 80	Open plaza	—To be discussed with the Street, below.
X 82	General domestic	—Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. Two doors, one opening into Courtyard W 77 and another, hypothetical, into X 82a.
X 82a	Kitchen	Usual clay pavement and <i>libn</i> walls. One hypothetical door into X 82. The oven next to the west wall was of the usual bee-hive type for bread.
X 83	Open courtyard	—Partially paved with bricks. This court lay on the down slope of the <i>tell</i> and was consequently destroyed by erosion and little can be learned from it.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

### House "A"

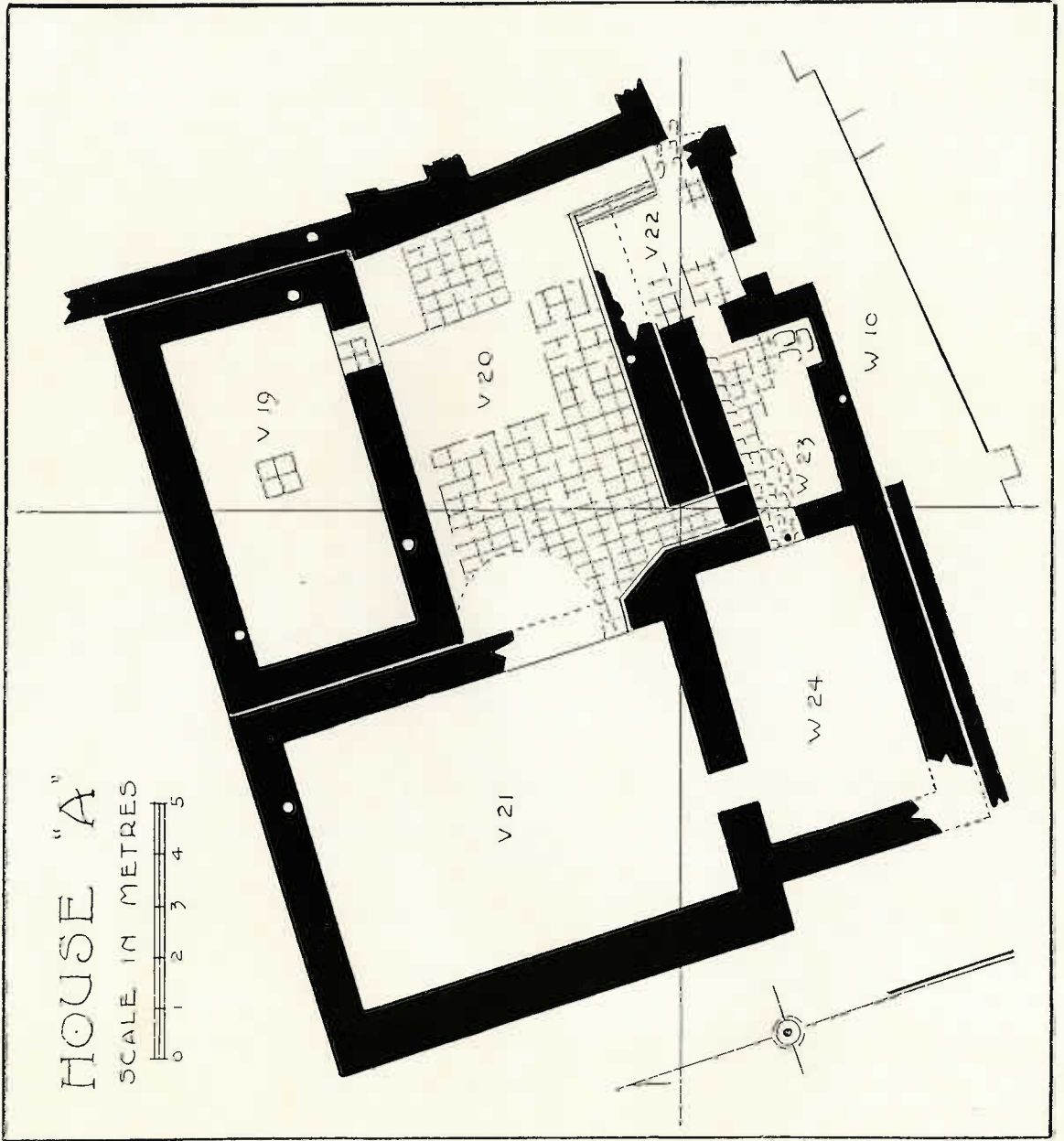
As already noted in the Room Catalogue above, House "A" consists of the following rooms: V 19, 20, 21, 22, W 23 and 24, with the entrance from the street at approximately W 10. Upon leaving the street, one enters the Vestibule V 22, which is quite small and partially paved with broken baked-bricks; a drain runs under the southeast corner of the walls into the street, the drain also being fed by the one of baked brick that runs from room V 20, part of which served as a base for a "hypothetical" wall that may have divided V 20 from V 22.

Doors from V 22 open both into the large courtyard V 20 and into the toilet room W 23. V 20 was almost entirely paved with baked-brick, and in its original state was probably entirely paved. Its walls have a base-board consisting of a single line of baked bricks set on edge, facing the interior of the court. This would have served as an adequate protection against the rapid disintegration of *libn* that is caused by the heavy rains of the district. In the north wall of V 20 a door leads into Room V 19.

Apparently V 19 was the main living-room of the house. It was furnished with a hearth of baked-brick, four square, and is the next largest room of the house, the largest, V 21, having no hearth. Walls and pavements of V 19 are of the usual type. In the west wall of V 20 there was another door, narrow, which led into V 21, also used for "general domestic" purposes. Unfortunately, objects in this area were almost never found in place, and therefore it is quite impossible to say with any certainty what the uses of the rooms may have been.

Very possibly both V 19 and V 21 were reception rooms, or perhaps they were for public use. We will never know definitely. In the south wall of V 21 a door led into Room V 24, another room that was used for "general domestic" purposes, its walls and pavement of the usual type. Again no objects gave us a clue as to its certain use. In the east wall was a door opening into room W 23, its threshold brick-paved, and about 0.40 higher than the pavement of W 24.

W 23 was a toilet room, and the only room in the building that contained proof positive for its use. The toilet was the most carefully built that we found on Tell Billa, being made of stone with a ledge on one



side for the placing of ablution ewers. It was built into a niche set in the wall, and drained by a stone channel passing under the wall into the street.

There is a possibility that there originally existed a door in the southwest corner of V 20, there being no other explanation for the niche in this corner. Further digging may show if this be the case.

In rooms V 19, 21 and W 24 there were upper phases, indicating an occupation that was slightly later than that shown on the plan. The indications of the upper phase were merely upper pavements in each of these rooms.

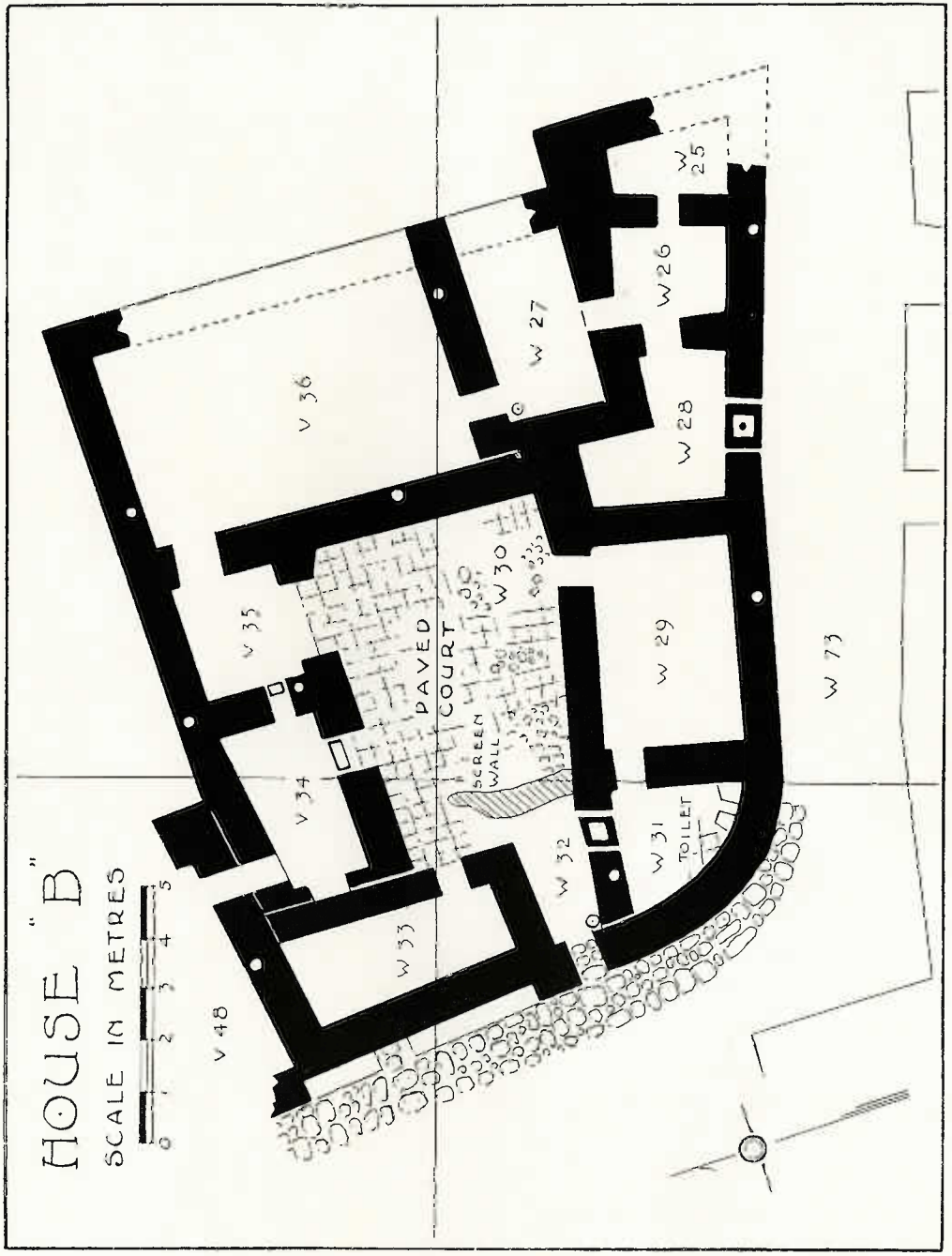
### House "B"

Originally, House "B" consisted of rooms W 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, V 34 and 35. Entry to the house was gained through a door that opened on to the Street, just north of the point where the Street angled to the north. The threshold of this door was of stone, and a stone door-socket was set in the pavement of the room next to the door on the inside, in Room W 32, the entry vestibule.

At some time, rooms of another house (the rest of which has disappeared) were added to House "B." They are: W 25, 26, 27, 28 and V 36. There had been a separate door for these rooms into the Street in the south wall of Room W 28, but when they were made a part of "B," this door was blocked with *libn*, and probably the door from V 35 to V 36 was then cut through.

The central courtyard of House "B" is W 30, which is almost entirely brick-paved. A low screen wall was built across the entrance from the vestibule W 32, giving some degree of privacy from the gaze of passers-by in the Street, much in the same fashion as is today done in 'Iraq's *libn* villages. There are some patches of stone paving in W 30 which may be explained only by assuming that baked-brick was too dear a commodity to be used where it was not absolutely necessary.

All of the rooms of the original house had doors opening on to W 30. Later the doors of W 31 and V 34 were blocked, as indicated on the plan. W 31 was a toilet room, the toilet (Ph 457) made of *libn* and a fragment of baked-brick served as a seat on each side. Around the toilet the floor was paved with baked brick, and a stone drain led from the toilet, under



the wall into the Street. The manner in which the builders were forced to accommodate themselves to the angle of the street is interesting, the curved wall of the room quite unusual.

The other rooms of the Original House are of the usual type, all probably having been used for "general domestic" purposes, and the same applies to the added rooms, with the exception of two: (1) W 26, which doubtless had been the entry vestibule, and which because of its peculiar shape would have been fairly useless as a living-room later, and (2) W 28, small in size and irregular in plan, which was probably used as a storage-room.

The rooms beyond V 34, I believe, belonged to another complex. It is possible that at one time they had been a part of this house, but certainly, at the time that this area was abandoned by the Assyrians, they had been blocked off from "B" and had their own entrance from the Street and their own central courtyard.

### *The Street and the Plaza*

About these two most important features on the plan there is, in truth, very little upon which to expatiate. The Plan of the Southwestern Area gives a picture almost sufficient in itself.

The Street, besides furnishing access to the buildings, had the prime function of being the main drain of the region. In its north-south stretch both sides are paved with stones, sloping slightly towards the center, separated by the channel of the drain.

The Street is wide enough to permit the passage of carts and chariots, and the manner in which the wall of Room W 31 is curved lends support to the belief that it was intended to be used by them.

That the Street extends into the unexcavated areas to the north and to the east is certain, and there also is evidence that another street, or passage, joins it at the northernmost end of the excavated part. More than likely the Street runs to the *waddi* about 120.00 further north, thence down to the level of the plain.

In the lower central part of the plan is the Plaza, W 30. No trace of building was found here, nor further down the slope of the *tell*. While shown on the plan as "unexcavated," actually we tested the slope with



some thoroughness, and found no construction, leading us to assume that here was another entrance to the town.

The bench placed against the exterior wall of W 24 is additional evidence for this. Here the townsmen could rest in the sun, and comfortably watch the activities of the day—for this would have been the nearest entry from Nineveh, a short day's journey by foot or by donkey—and there must have been ceaseless traffic with the great city there. And a small *suq* occupied one side of the Plaza, which would have been of further interest to the idlers, as Mesopotamian *suqs* are today.

It is this region that particularly cries for further excavation. Both Street and Plaza should be completely traced, and the results would be of interest and importance.