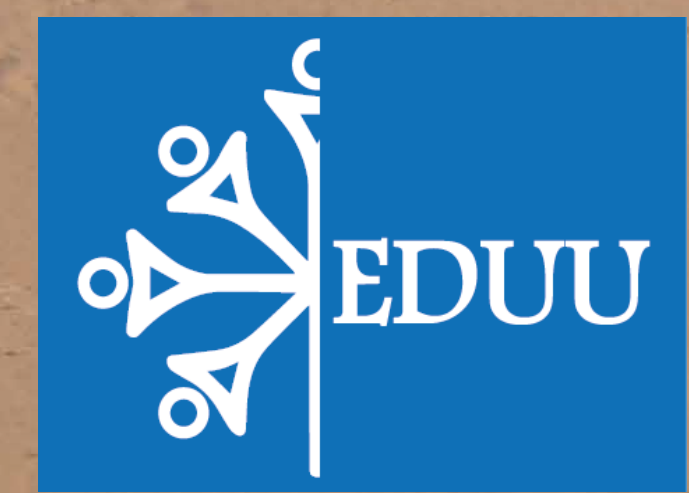




Tell Jidr: A Late Antique Megacity in Central Mesopotamia

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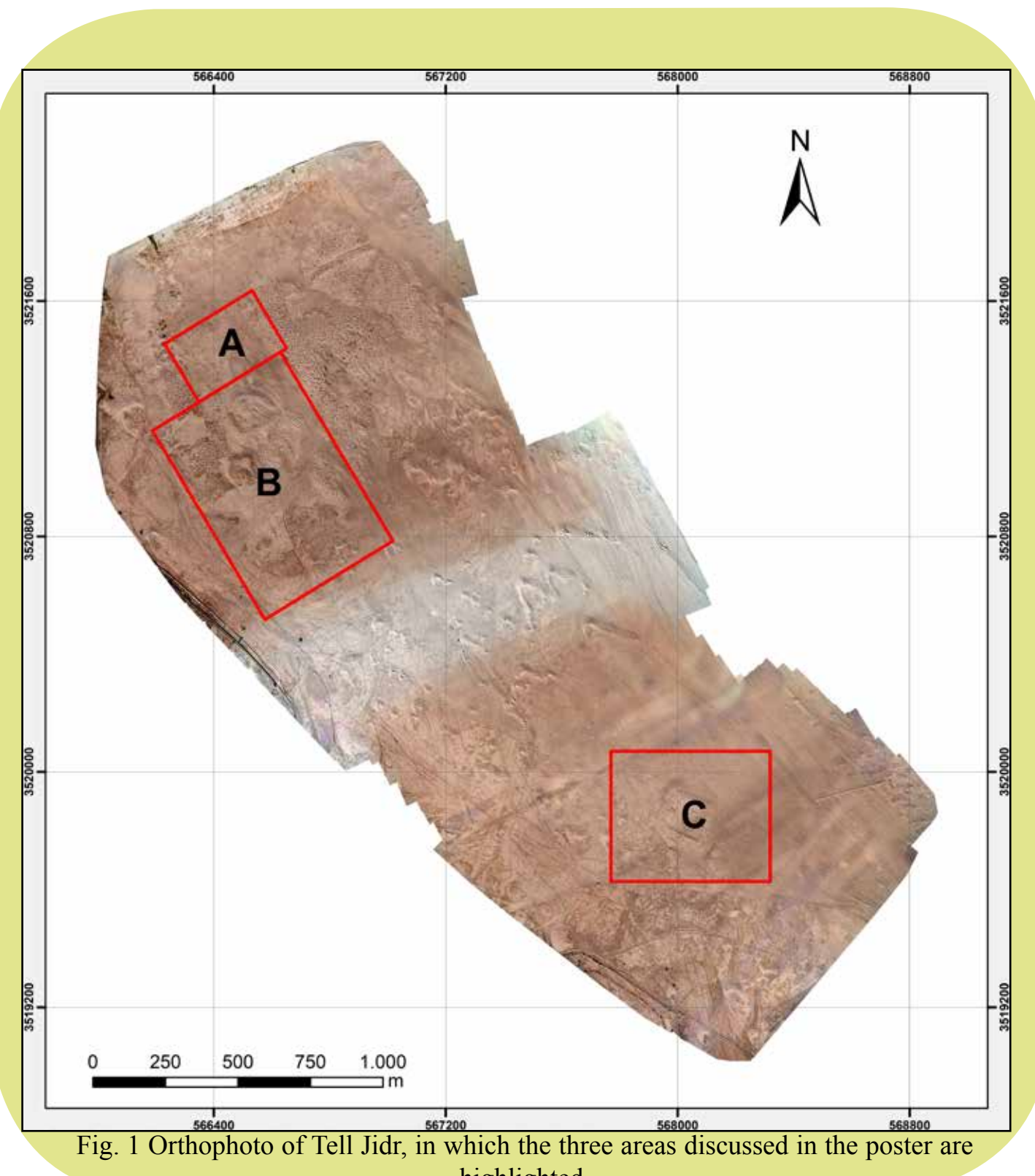


Fig. 1 Orthophoto of Tell Jidr, in which the three areas discussed in the poster are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

On the eastern branch of an ancient bed of the Tigris river in the south-eastern Qadisiyah district in Iraq, lies the largest ruins identified during the Iraqi-Italian QADIS Survey Project, located c. between ancient Zabalām (Tulul Ibaikh) and Adab (Bismaya), about 16 km far from each one. In the 1970s survey conducted by R. Mc. Adams, Tell Jidr was classified as a mainly Parthian-Sasanian city with an extension of more than 200 hectares. With the data collected during the QADIS Survey Project we estimated in 618 hectares the maximum settled area. The morphology of the site, investigated through surface surveys, satellite imagery and UAV flights, reveals the original presence of two distinct macro-sectors. A recent finding of an inscribed brick in the northern sector proved the site was Karkara, the original name of this megacity. An intense Parthian and Sasanian occupation has been confirmed, both in the lower cities and on the northern acropolis, by an initial analysis on the pottery assemblage. The pottery also attested the continuous occupation of the same area till the Early Islamic period. Our project, thanks to remote sensing, identified and mapped, with an amazing detail and precision, several ground anomalies like building walls, public spaces, and hydraulic works. This reconstruction allows to preliminarily grasp the urban layout of a forgotten capital city of the first millennium CE.

TELL JIDR, ANCIENT KARKARA

The ancient city of Karkara is a large multi-period site occupied from at least the early 3rd millennium BC down to the Sasanian and Early Islamic periods. The site stretches 4.4 km NW-SE, along the east bank of one of the main Tigris' branches, and 1.9 km SW-NE. Remote sensing, carried out by the Iraqi-Italian team during winter 2016, using open-access satellite imagery (Landsat, Bing Maps Tile System and Corona) revealed a highly complex city, including several structures and ancient channels still partially visible on the surface. Researches in the field were conducted during the last four survey seasons. The first aim was to identify and map the perimeter of the entire site, using Differential GPS, taking dozens of points "to draw" with more precision the area of the site. Our project, thanks to UAV remote sensing, also identified and mapped, in great detail, several ground anomalies like walls, public spaces, and hydraulics works, confirming the preliminary research hypothesis. For this poster, we selected three Areas (Area A, B and C) of the entire city to better show how our team had worked for the comprehension of Tell Jidr urban plan. The first one, Area A (8.5 ha), located in the north-western zone, is representative of a neighborhood, a residential area (see Fig. 2 and 3). Area B, not far from area A (see Fig. 4), represents a wide area (40 ha) with public spaces: public buildings including what appears to be a fortress (a part of its western wall is clearly visible on the ground). Area C, in the center-south of the city is well identifiable by the presence of a square rampart enclosing a 1 ha courtyard, probably a military camp defended by a thick wall with towers. All around this "fortress", there is clear evidence on the ground of walls and buildings, perhaps a military neighborhood (see Fig. 6). A preliminary view suggests an homogeneous dispersion of the Parthian-Sasanian pottery, according to quantities and qualities of the sherds, especially in the north and in the site center. Generally, fabrics are almost clear and high fired, despite their different functional class, and they are characterized by many, very small holes and few black or white particles. Simple Wares repertoire is based on common shapes, such as saucers, bowls and small jar and jugs and many specimens show a green, blue/green and light blue glazed, which covers the whole shape (and which time tends to grow thicker). The recognized Kitchen Wares are characterized by many grooves along the outer surface and a film of yellow-light blue glazed inside; sherds of storage jars, transport amphoras and glazed coffin fragments have been also identified. Furthermore, many slags of over-fired sherds have been collected from all over the site: this evidence may indicate the presence of kilns and/or of a production area.

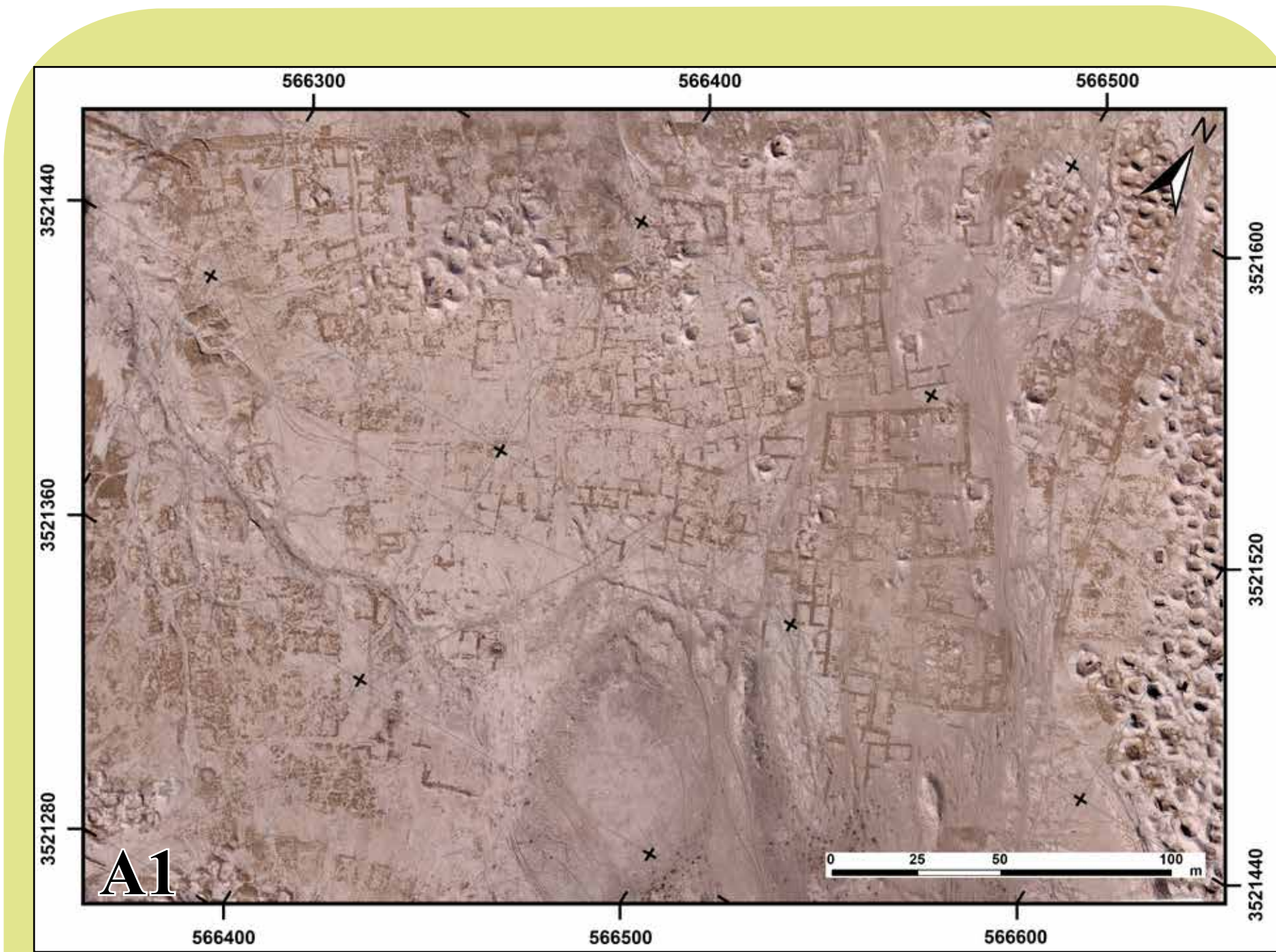


Fig. 2 Area A, in which are clearly visible the walls of the houses on the surface.

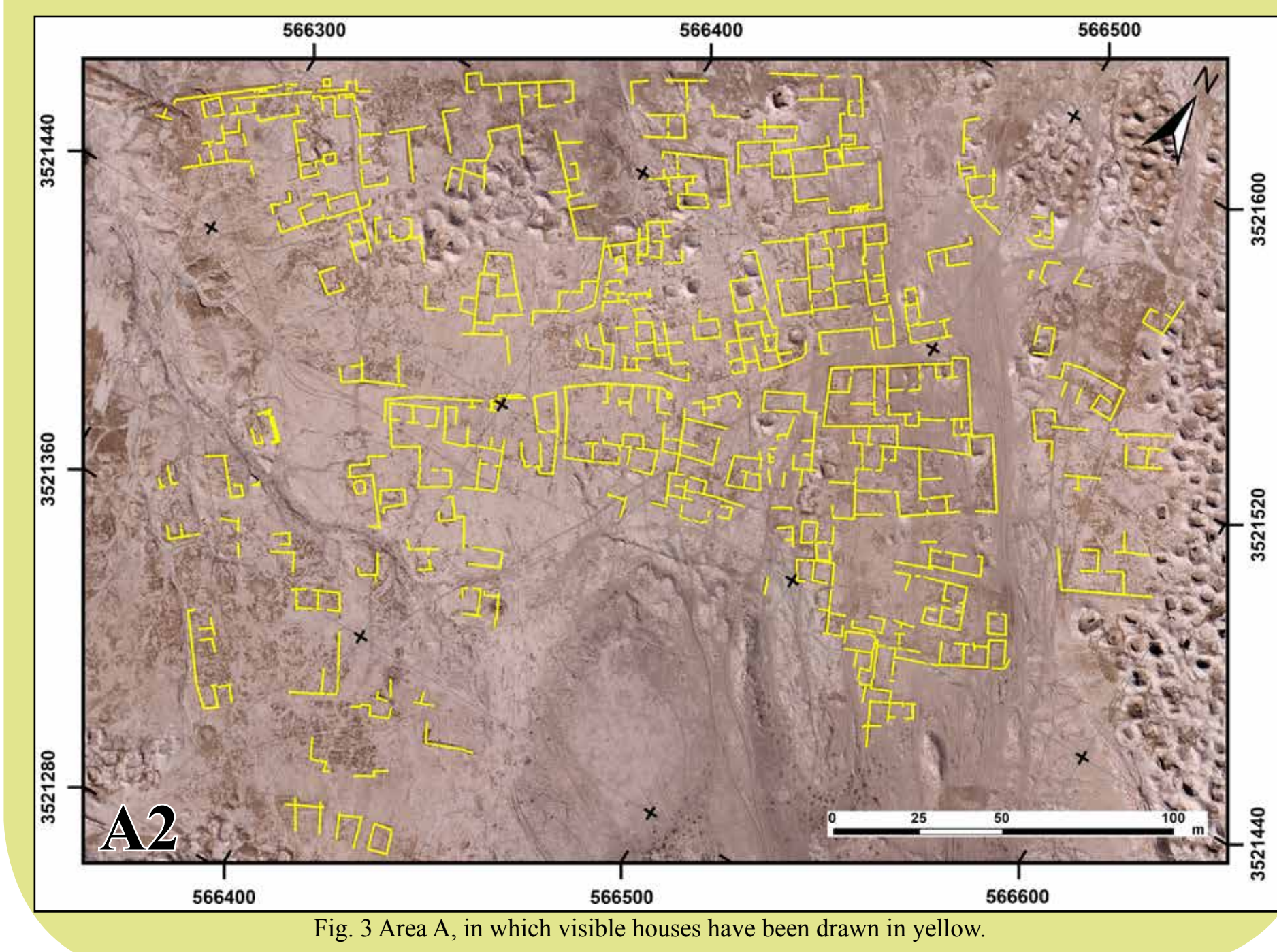


Fig. 3 Area A, in which visible houses have been drawn in yellow.

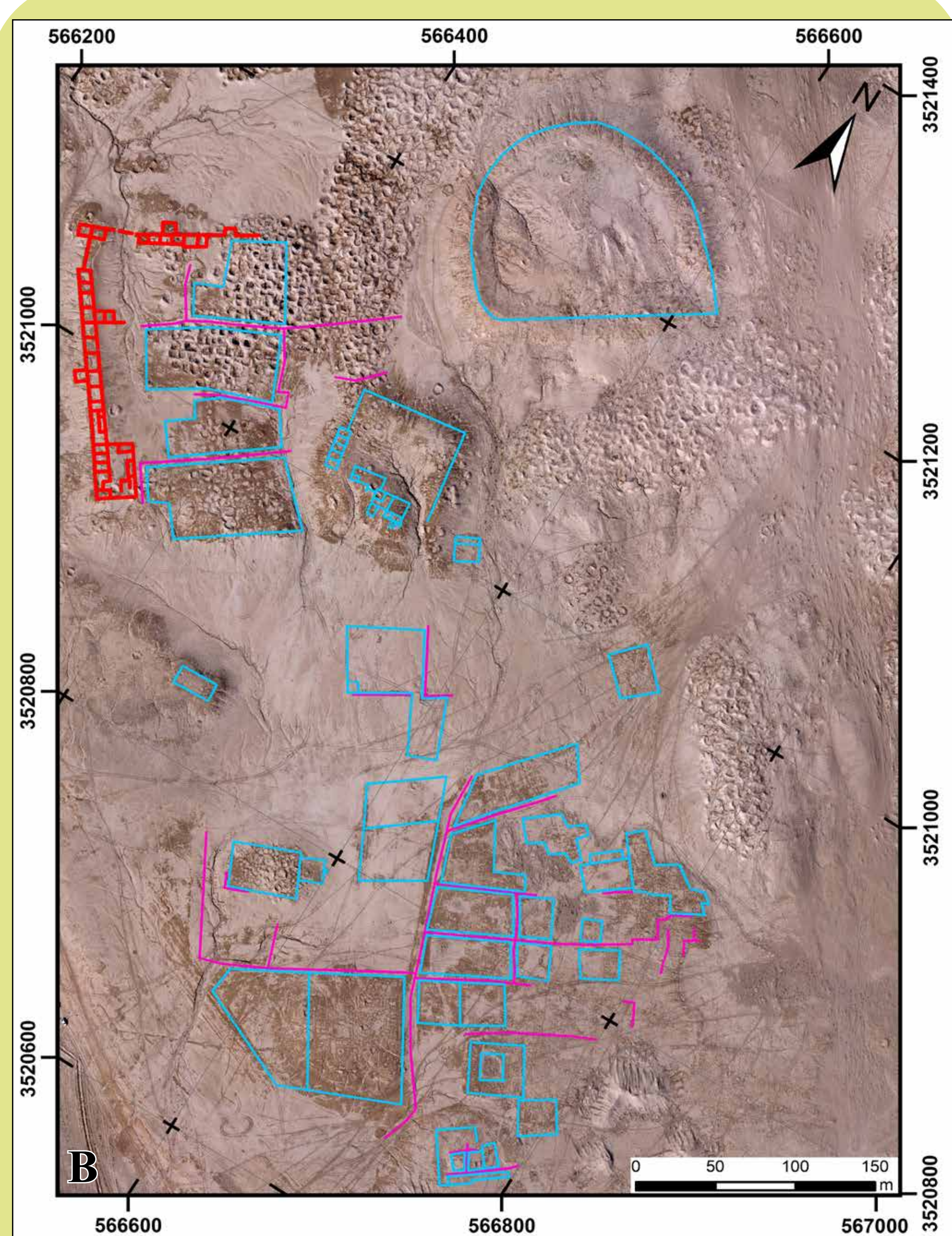


Fig. 4 Area B, in red a fortress, in purple the streets and in blue clusters of buildings. The rounded sector to the north could be the Ishkur temple, where Urnamma's inscribed brick was found.



Fig. 5 Sasanian jar with inner glaze.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Topographical and pottery data show that Tell Jidr/ Karkara has been occupied continually since very early in Mesopotamian history, although during the early 2nd millennium BC the city seems to have shrunk, only to thrive again in Kassite times. The inscribed bricks newly recovered by the Iraqi-Italian expedition suggests the identification of the temple of Ishkur, the Sumerian Storm-god, whose main cult center was built by Urnamma in Karkara, in the northwestern part of the site (see Fig. 4). The 1st millennium BC materials are quite rare. It is during the Parthian and the Sasanian periods that Tell Jidr reaches about 618 ha from the previous 200 ha, becoming one of the biggest cities of that time (rivaling with some major capitals such as Ctesiphon and Zibiyat). At this period the urban plan reveals a functional characterization of the city, with specialized neighborhoods. The importance of the city is also outlined by defensive/military buildings located both in the northern and the southern sectors of the city. The Islamic period is also attested from the typical glazed pottery collected all over the site.

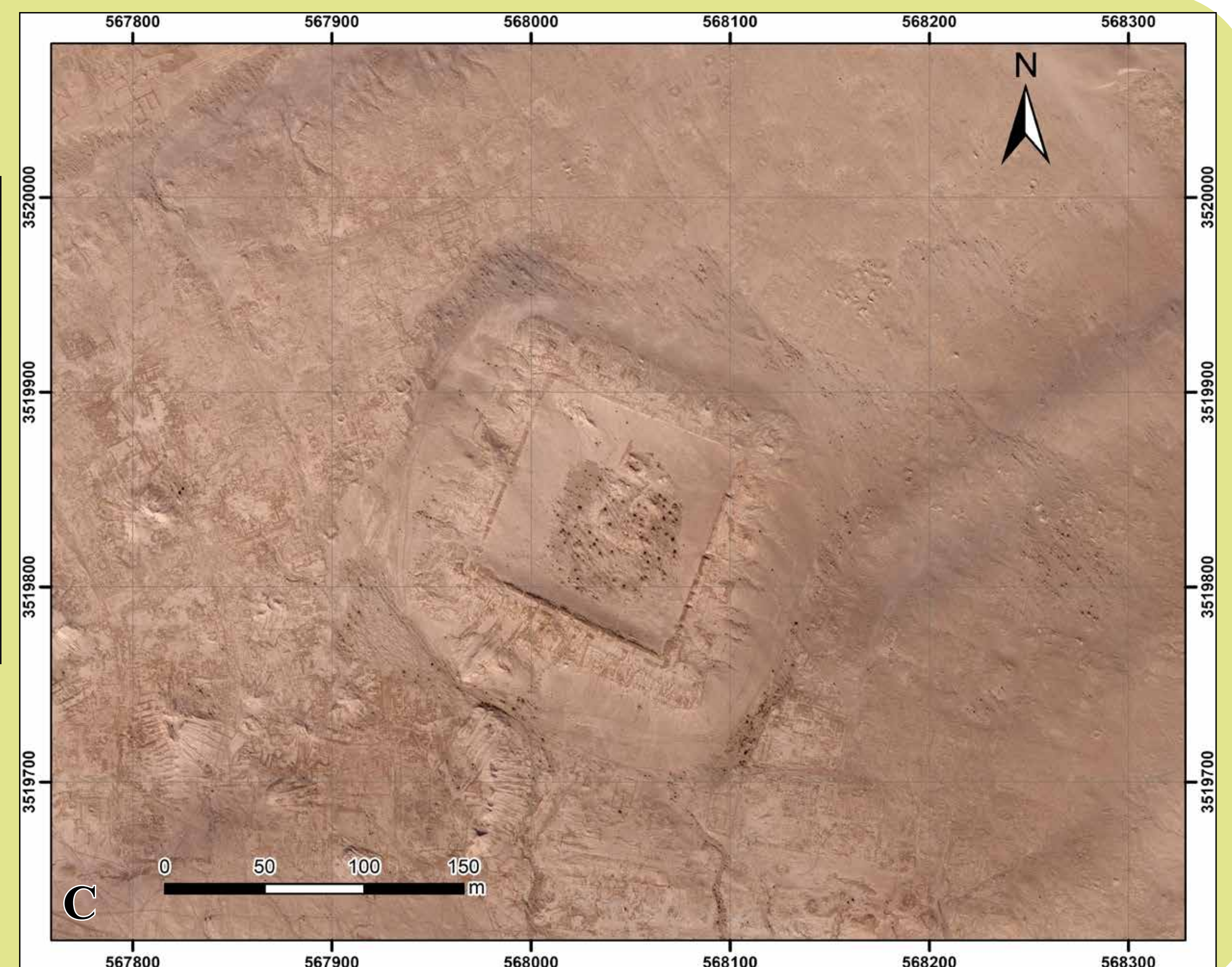


Fig. 6 Area C, in which it is clearly visible the fortified camp and the built neighborhoods all around it.

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