

# THE 2011 EXCAVATIONS AT WĀDĪ ḤAMARĀSH 1 AND 4, AŞ-ŞĀFĪ, JORDAN

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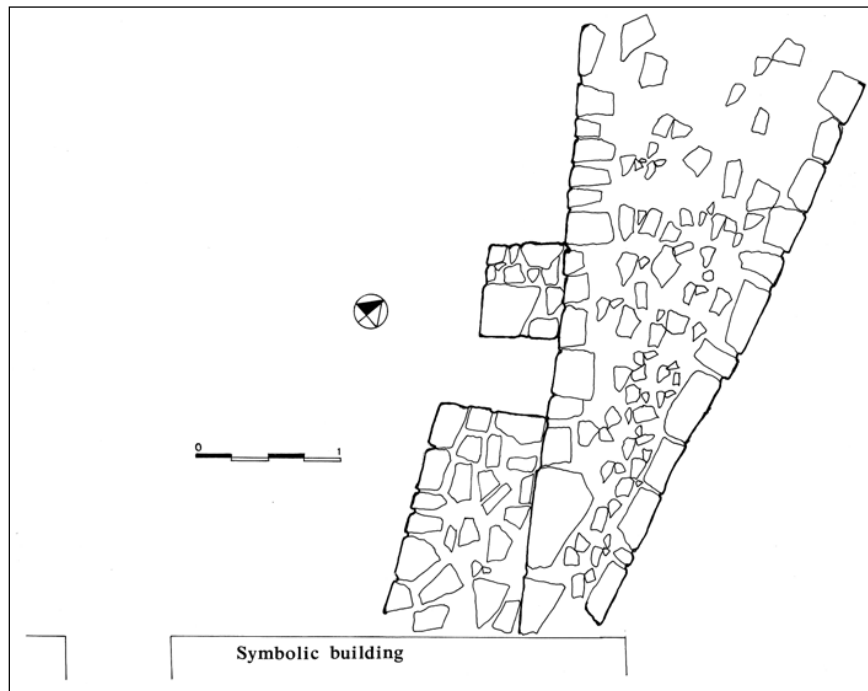
During the 2011 field season, research at the PPNB site of Wādī Ḥamarāsh 1 continued (Sampson 2011a, 2011b). Additionally, a test excavation was started at the nearby PPNA site of Wādī Ḥamarāsh 4, which overlooks the Wādī al-Ḥasā river.

## Wādī Ḥamarāsh 1

Initially, the excavation was extended north-west from the large symbolic building investigated last year (Sampson 2011a), in order to examine whether more buildings or an open space existed in front of it. At the depth of 0.20m, a wall was exposed extending to the north-west, which had an extraordinary trapezoidal ground plan (Fig. 1). It is a low construction which had been added to the western wall of the building at

a late stage. More importantly, a small wall with a rectangular niche was subsequently added to this construction. The presence of a standing stone, 1.33 m high, in the area probably explains this unusual construction and the niche in which it was probably placed (Fig. 2). The excavated sections demonstrated that, with the exception of the trapezoidal structure, an open area or courtyard measuring *ca.* 15 x 20 m existed in front of the main building. A pavement of stone slabs was observed in the south-west corner of the building. The presence of a courtyard is of particular importance and emphasises the significance of the symbolic building (Fig. 3).

Later, Area V on the south-west side of the settlement was investigated. Area V, which measures 22 x 18 m, is the largest area to be



1. Structure in front of the symbolic building.



2. Structure and standing stone.

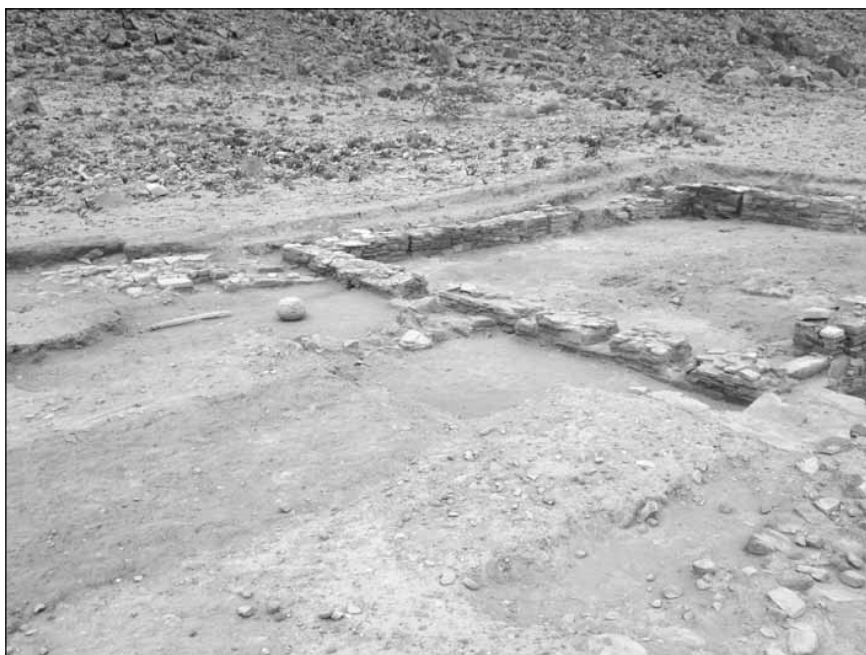
exposed so far (Figs. 4 and 5). The excavation began with the exposure of walls 1 to 3, which together form a street of considerable width (locus 1). Just below the ground surface, a few ground stone tools, animal bones and traces of burning were found. The street extends to the east, where it is somewhat constricted by a protruding, small, round construction (36), which in turn gives access to a large space (21).

At the north side of the area, a densely built cluster of medium-sized loci and very small storage spaces were exposed. Of particular interest is locus 11, which has a pavement of slabs covered by lime plaster (Fig. 6). The plaster probably extended up the walls, which only survive to

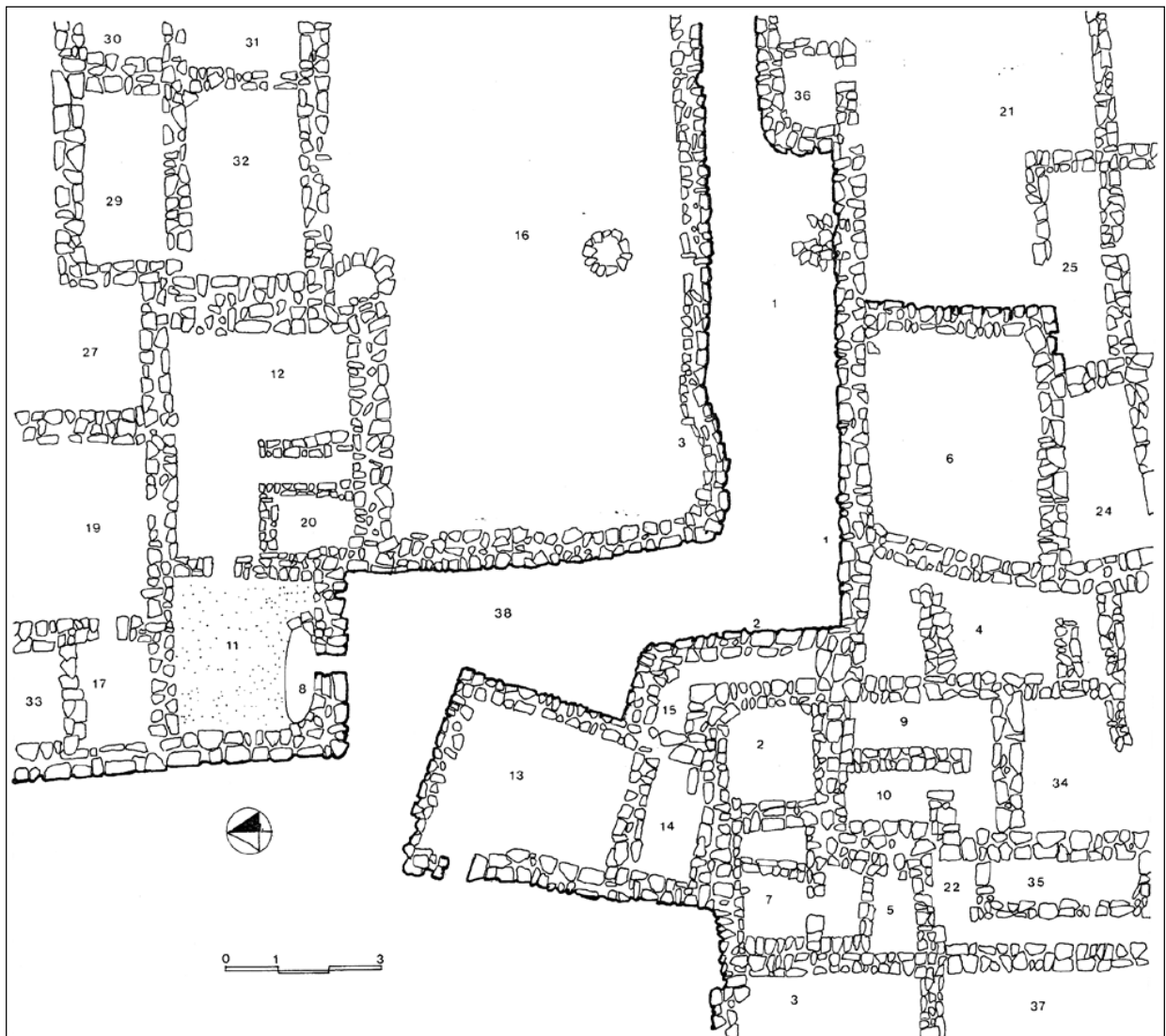
a low height. This particular area has access to an extraordinary narrow, ellipsoid locus (8) with an entrance in the southern side (Figs. 4 and 6). This locus has a depth of 2.10 m and, because it was plastered, could have been used as a cistern. The door opened on its southern side, where a street (38) was located. This demonstrates that other loci in the same general area also had access to locus 8. Locus 11 communicates eastwards with another large room (12), which had a small storage space and niche. To the south was a large open area (16) where a hearth was found. Further excavation in due course may expose more walls at greater depths.

South of the street, a number of buildings were found. The largest room is trapezoidal locus 13, with a door in its western side. In locus 2, at a depth of 0.15 m, traces of burning were exposed. In its northern side, at a depth of 0.50 m, several ground stone tools were recovered. Locus 4 is divided in two smaller areas by a later internal west-east wall. Lithics and animal bones were found in both areas. In the northern part of the locus, at 0.40 m depth, a concentration of cores, blades and animal bone fragments were found.

In locus 5, right from the modern ground surface, abundant finds were recovered from a layer of ash and burning (Fig. 7). In the first spit, caprine bones were recovered. At 0.25 m depth,



3. Open area in front of the symbolic building.



4. Plan of Area V.

a medium-sized stone ball with a groove on its upper part (**Fig. 8**) was recovered. At 0.30 - 0.35 m depth, a grinder, mortars and bone fragments were found. In the northern wall, at 0.35 m depth, there is an opening 0.45 m high and 0.38 m wide which communicates with locus 7. At 0.50 m depth, the traces of burning were more intense. A narrow east - west wall divides the room into two smaller areas. At 0.70 m depth, lithics, animal bones and a shell pendant were found.

In the southern part of Area V, a dense habitation unit exists with small areas which were excavated to a depth of between 0.40 and 0.70 m. Two larger areas (6, 21) are located at the south-east corner of Area V. In locus 21, just below

the surface, an unusual find was recovered: a sandstone slab with two rows of cup marks and relief decoration around them that may be characterized as a game board (**Fig. 8**). Two years ago, two sandstone slabs with cup marks were found in Locus 18 of Area I (Sampson 2011b). These may have been associated with the stone bowlets found in all areas of the site. Similar items have been found at the PPNB site of Ein Suhun (Kaliszan *et al.* 2002: 16) and at Wādī Abū Ṭulayḥa (Fujii 2007: fig. 31, Fujii 2008: fig. 30.11).

Approximately 350 ground stone tools and several dozen stone vases were recovered from Area V. During the 2011 field season more than one thousand ground stone tools - excavated



5. Area V from the west.



6. Locus 11: pavement and lime plaster.

from 2008 onwards - were registered. To date, more than 1600 square meters have been excavated at the site.

#### **Wādī Ḥamarāsh 4**

The site of Wādī Ḥamarāsh 4 is a small PPNA settlement situated on the top and slopes of a hill overlooking the Wādī al-Ḥasā river (**Fig. 9**). Illicit excavation and severe erosion have partly destroyed its round structures. Seven loci were cleaned and investigated on the hilltop. Most



7. Area V: locus 5.



8. Sandstone slab with cup marks and relief decoration.

important was Locus 1, built on a small plateau and disturbed by looters (Fig. 10). The build-

ing is 3.50 m in diameter and was constructed of large blocks and small stones. The soil was dark



9. Wādī Ḥamarāsh 1: site grid.



10. Wādī Ḥamarāsh 4: PPNA round structure.

with traces of burning; it contained, down to a depth of 0.90 m, many lithics, animal bones, a few shells, a green stone bead and a single cylindrical pestle. At 0.90 m depth on the north side of the locus a quern with cup mark, animal bones and flint tools were found. At a depth of 1.10 m, a floor was exposed upon which human and animal bones were scattered. Under the floor in the eastern part of the locus, more human and animal bones, a turquoise bead and lithics were found, among them an arrowhead of al-Khiam type (Gopher 1994).

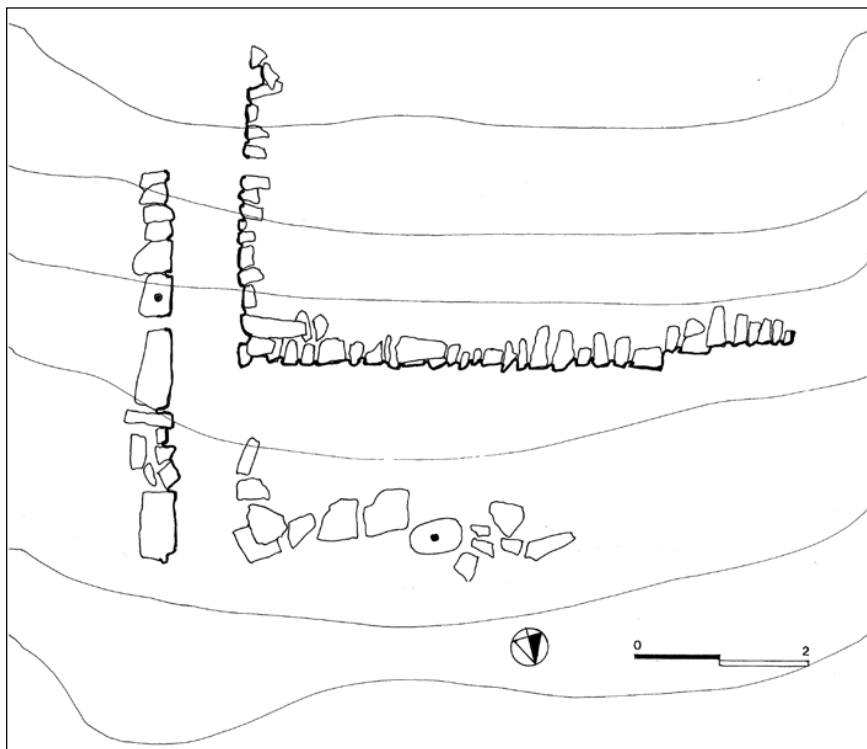
At 1.35 m depth there was an earlier floor which did not extend over the whole surface of the locus. The human bones probably belong to two burials, one adult and one juvenile. At a depth of 1.40-1.50 m and lower down, part of a skull and other human remains were recovered. Disturbed soft soils with scattered bones existed down to the natural soil, which was found at a depth of 2.00 m.

Locus 2 is situated approximately 25 m to the west. The soil was dark from burning all the way down from the modern ground surface. To a depth of 1.50 m, stone artefacts and a few ground stone tools were found. At 1.70 m depth, in the western part of the locus, part of a human skull, small bone fragments and three

stone pestles were discovered. The excavation reached natural soil at 1.90 m depth, although the northern part of the locus went down to 2.00 m. Part of the wall consisted of well-placed small stones, but in its northern part the building walls were constructed of large blocks. To the south, the wall does not extend down as far as the floor. The same pattern was observed in all buildings exposed at the site, suggesting that the short walls served to support the wooden roof of the structure. This type of architecture also occurs at the PPNA settlement of Wādī Faynān in southern Jordan (Finlayson and Mithen 2007).

The rectangular constructions in Area 3 (Fig. 11) at the top of the settlement are, by PPNA standards, somewhat peculiar. Two narrow walls of small stones form a corner. Wall 1 heads north and nearly reaches circular locus 4, whereas wall 2 is heads up to the top of the hill. Just to its west, another wall (3) on the same orientation defines what appears to be a narrow alley, 1 m wide. Another wall (4), now destroyed, stood on a very steep slope. Two big querns with cup marks were incorporated into the walls. A large concentration of flint tools was found in this area, among them an arrowhead of al-Khiam type.

Locus 4, which was circular with a diameter



11. PPNA rectangular structure.

of 3.05 m, is situated next to locus 2. Large and small stones formed a short wall on its southern side. Dark soil appeared at a depth of 0.30 m and continued down to 1.50 m.

Locus 5 is located north of locus 1 and is ellipsoid in shape with a length of 4 meters. The soil from the upper layers was very dark. The entrance was on its northern side, where a threshold was found *in situ*. The excavation reached a depth of 1.20 m, but was not completed.

Locus 6, on the top of the hill, had suffered extensive destruction. It had an ellipsoid shape, with a wall dividing it into two parts. On the eastern side, at a depth of 0.60 m, a thick layer containing a large amount of charcoal was discovered, which extended down to 1.20 m. An enormous quantity of carbonized figs was recovered from this deposit. Even though the current environment of the region is not conducive to fruit trees, it seems clear that this particular tree existed in central and southern Jordan during the PPNA. Seeds of carbonized figs (*Ficus* sp.) have also been found at Dhahrat adh-Dhrā' near the Dead Sea (Edwards *et al.* 2002; Sayej 2004).

Locus 7, next to locus 6, is also ellipsoid in shape. A floor appeared at 1.00 m depth and, under this, a crouched burial was discovered (Fig. 12). On the southern side of the locus, not far from the burial, two upright stones were found with lugs resembling bull horns on their upper parts (Fig. 13). These could be of symbolic sig-

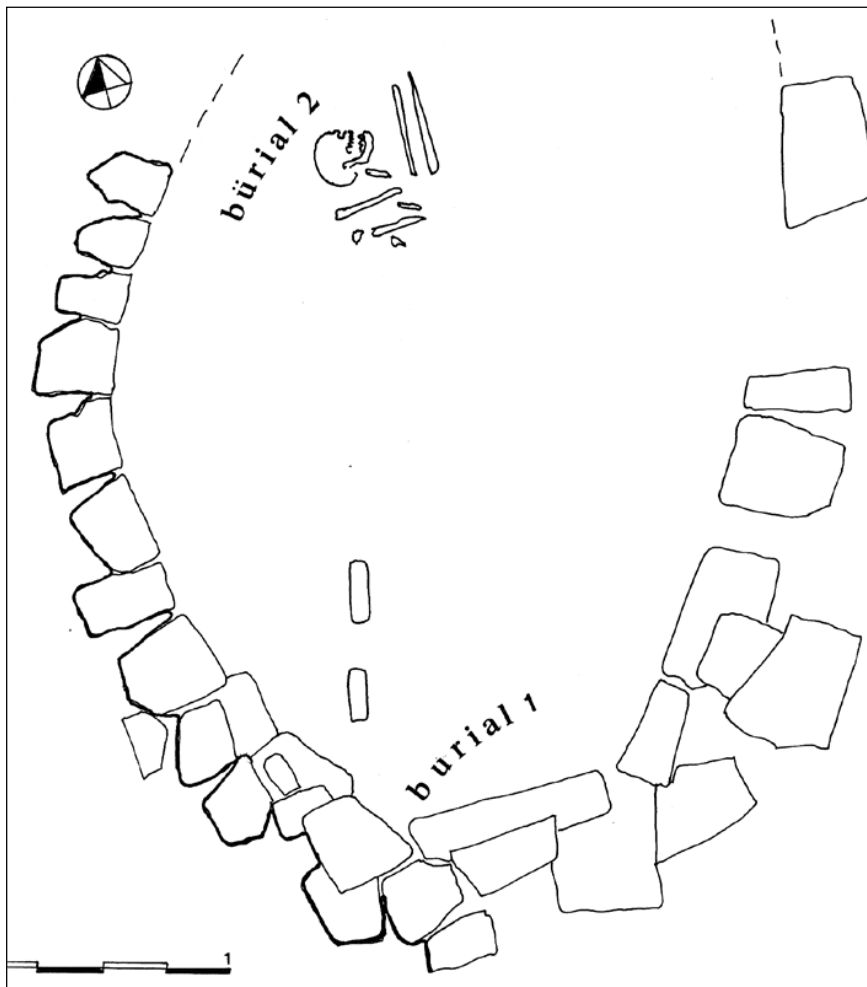
nificance, but their similarity to standing stones in an ellipsoid building at PPNA adh-Dhrā' (Kuijt 2001), which are thought to have supported the beams of floor, suggests a more functional use. Next to the standing stones, a large pestle (length 0.22 m, basal diameter 0.14 m), was found. Another burial was found under the floor on the north side of the locus. The excavation reached a depth of 1.40 m, where a hard floor was exposed, but remains to be completed next year.

In addition to the excavated loci, the whole surrounding area is scattered with querns bearing cup marks (Fig. 14) and pestles (Fig. 15) similar to those known from other PPNA sites in the southern Levant, e.g. Wādī Faynān (Shaffrey 2007: fig. 11.7), Hatoula (Samzun 1994), Gesher (*Paléorient* 1989: pl. I, 2), adh-Dhrā' (*Paléorient* 28: 137) and Gilgal I (Noy 1979: fig. 2-6). Many of the pestles found at Wādī Ḥamarāsh 4, usually conical in form, seem more standardized than those from Wādī Faynān (Shaffrey 2007) or adh-Dhrā' (Kuijt 2001). A grooved stone, characteristic of Natufian and PPNA sites, was found in locus 7 (Fig. 16.38). Similar objects found at other sites in the Near East and Anatolia have been interpreted as shaft straighteners (Wright 1992: 73).

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12. Human burial in locus 7.



13. Plan of locus 7.



14. Quern with cup marks.

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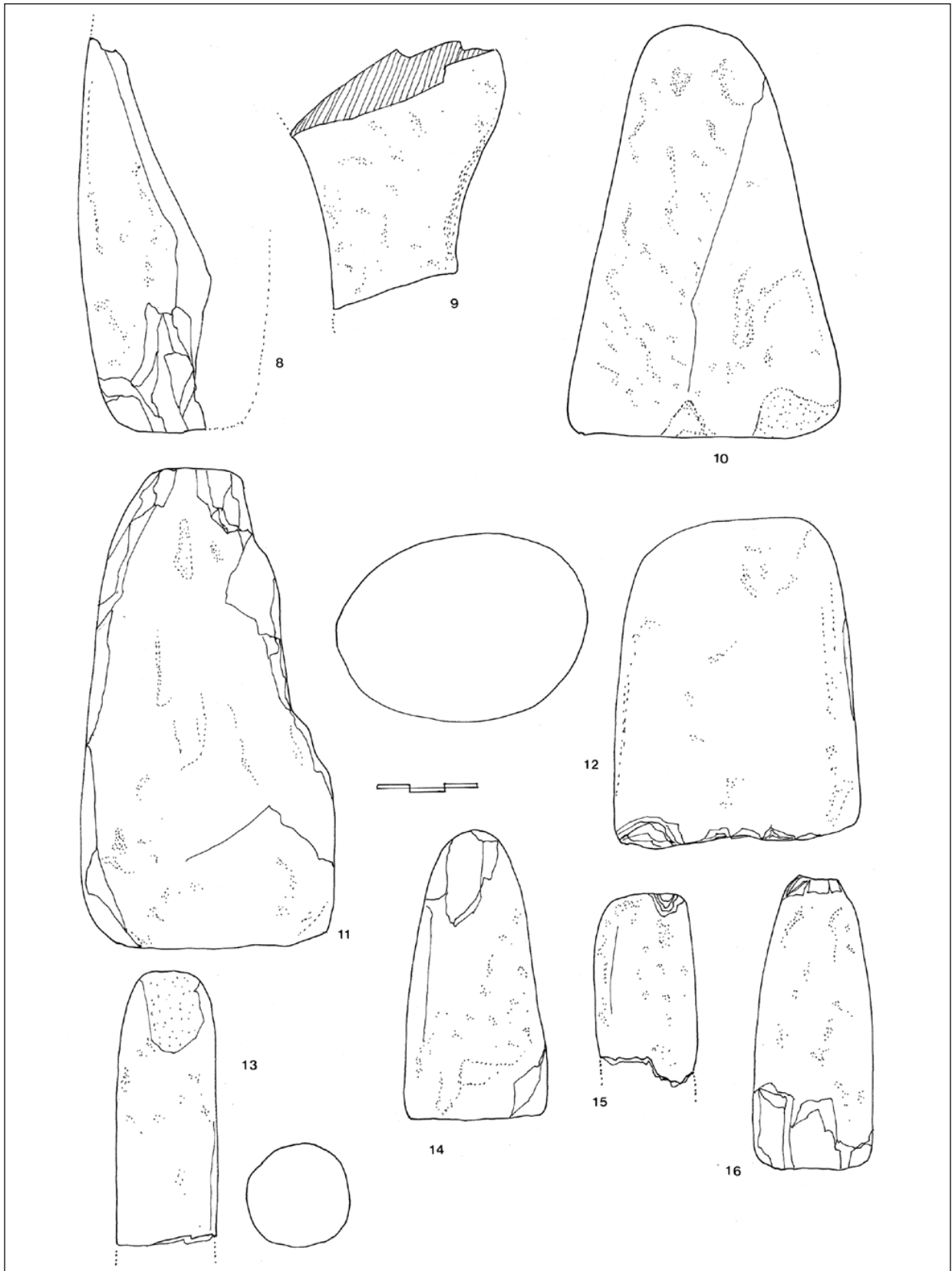
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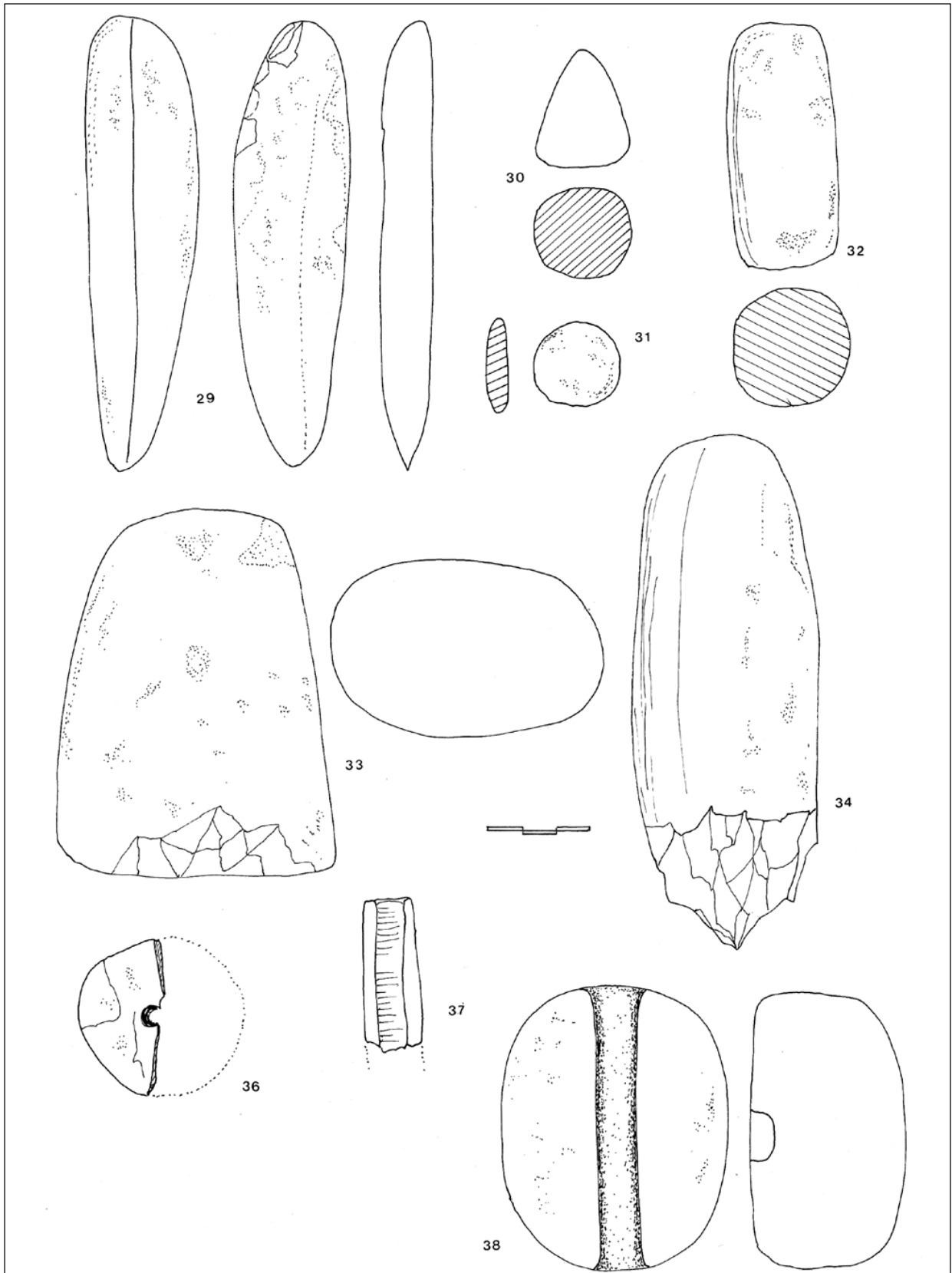
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