



Fig. 9a. Mushash 163, sounding 1-South, Structures 2 (to the right) and 3 (to the left), view from the east (photo: Th. Urban). Fig. 9b (inset). Sounding 1-South, arrow-shaped stone (photo courtesy of DAI / K. Bartl)

The Early Neolithic site of Mushash 163 is located about 40 km east of Amman on the western edge of the northeastern Badia. It was discovered in autumn 2012 as part of the Qasr Mushash Survey project and excavated in the years 2014–2017.

## MUSHASH 163

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The results indicate the site as a settlement of the late PPNA (9800–8600 calBC) and early PPNB (8600–8200 calBC) with traces of a later settlement phase of the late PPNB (7500–6900 calBC) and/or the early Late Neolithic period (6900–6400 calBC).

Mushash 163 is a rather small settlement of 60 m east–west x 45 m north–south in size, located about 200 m southwest of the Early Islamic site of Qasr Mushash. Geomagnetic prospections in 2013 revealed more than 30 round structures. During the short field seasons six trenches were opened. Altogether, remains of eight buildings were uncovered. In the beginning, work concentrated on the soundings 1-North and 1-South in the northern part of the settlement. Here, a total of three circular structures were partially exposed, of which no. 1 and no. 2 belong to the semi-subterranean building type which has walls also deepened into the natural soil. Structure 3 is situated stratigraphically above these two houses. The building has a small corridor-like gangway in the south, which is connected to another, only partially preserved round or oval structure. The interior of Structure 3 includes several upright standing stones, of which an arrow-shaped stone in front of the western interior facade is the most striking feature (Fig. 9).



In sounding 2, the western part of another semi-subterranean building was recorded, and in sounding 3 a pit was uncovered. Sounding 4 has very complex architecture, consisting of several interconnected semicircles. Several upright standing stones in an east–west aligned row mark this complex and may have served as a substructure for a roof (Fig. 10). On the southern edge of the area, a burial in a flexed position was covered by a row of stone slabs. Two small stemmed cups and a pestle made of basalt were found outside the grave close to the head. According to two radiocarbon analyses, the burial dates to the 2nd/3rd century A.D., i.e. to the Roman period. In sounding 5, two phases of use could be documented. The younger level consists of several small semicircles of unworked stones, the older level is characterized by the negative impression of a large circular building. This was originally cut deep into the virgin soil, but apparently at a later date the stones of this building were removed. The entire area of the original wall was filled with black ashy soil.

The finds are mainly characterized by large quantities of silex flakes and a number of tools. Among them, small projectile points of the Khiam and Helwan type form the most abundant groups. Two flint daggers from the surface indicate a Late Early Neolithic (LPPNB) to Late Neolithic reuse of the site.

The faunal remains consist mainly of bones of gazelle, cattle, equids, canids, and felines. The palaeobotanical finds include tamarisk, pistachio and gramineae (grasses). According to previous analyses, all animal and plant species are wild forms.

The previously available radiocarbon data are consistent to ca. 8900 and 8300/8200 calBC. This period has so far been documented at very few sites (such as Wadi Jilat 7). The results of the work in Mushash 163 therefore form an important supplement to the current state of knowledge. Whether the site was a temporarily used hunting station or a permanently populated place, is a question that must remain open for the time being.

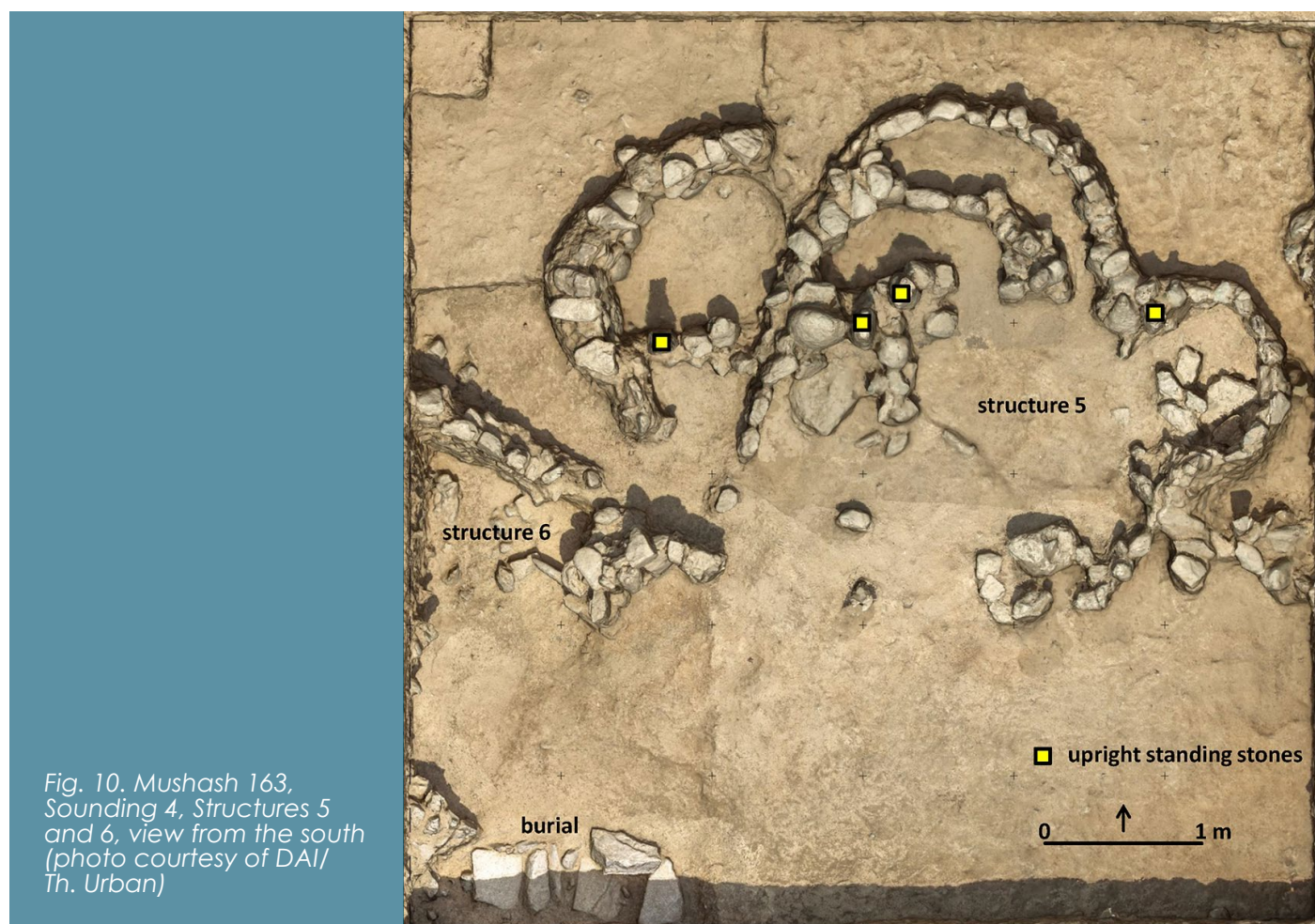


Fig. 10. Mushash 163, Sounding 4, Structures 5 and 6, view from the south (photo courtesy of DAI/ Th. Urban)