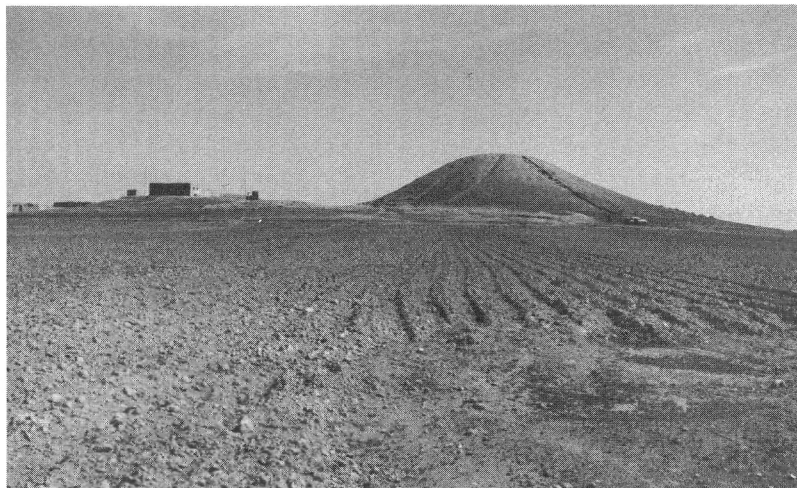


The Early Village Site of Tell el-Kowm, Syria

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The outbreak of war in the Near East in June, 1967, cut short the expedition's work, and much of the study, tabulation, and photography needed for detailed reports was left unfinished. The lifting of travel restrictions on Americans to Syria and a grant from the American Philosophical Society to cover a portion of the expenses made it possible in February and March of 1971 to finish the required work on the artifactual material and to arrange for the shipment of the car-



General view of Tell el-Kowm from the north showing the step trench.
Photo by Rudolph H. Dornemann.

bon, vegetal, and faunal samples to Drs. van Zeist and Ducos, who took part in their collection in the field. A study collection of artifacts was also sent to Chicago for examination by appropriate specialists.

Our work on the Tell el-Kowm materials now stored in the Palmyra Museum was facilitated by a hospitable staff, unrestricted access to the artifacts and the opportunity to reside in the Department of Antiquities rest house in the ancient precinct of the Temple of Ba'al. We were once again amazed at the amount of material that resulted from five days' digging and barely succeeded in finishing work in the given time. The task could not have been completed in a month without the assistance of Mr. William Dornemann, our volunteer draftsman for all pottery sherds and plaster vessel fragments.

A two-day visit to Tell el-Kowm impressed us once again with the size and importance of this early village site in its seemingly enigmatic location in the Syrian "desert," about 120 kilometers northeast of Palmyra. The step trench of 1967 had clearly illustrated the importance of the long sequence of pre-pottery, plaster vessel, and early pottery phases on the 25 meter high tell. The provisional date assigned to the early village settlement is the sixth and seventh millennia B.C. The opportunity for more relaxed examination of the village than was possible in 1967 proved well worthwhile in confirming the suspicion of an extensive lower tell stretching south and east of the high tell (a rough estimate of the size indicated about 17 acres, as opposed to 5 acres for the high tell). We observed a second water source, with modern pump installed, at the eastern edge of the lower tell, corresponding to the one just north of the high tell. An extensive pit dug by villagers in the southeastern section of the low tell revealed a portion of a large room with plastered brick walls identical to the structures in the plaster-vessel phase of the step trench. Another pit, dug nearby, was even more interesting in that extensive portions of brickwork were revealed. Together the pits seemed to indicate a series of rooms along the edge of the low tell at this place, and the heaviest section of brickwork indicated a line along the edge where one would in later periods expect to find a fortification wall.

Visits to sites along the way between Palmyra and Tell el-Kowm proved that it was not an isolated settlement, but that wherever good water sources existed in the area contemporary settlements are likely to be found. Since we had spent three weeks on a detailed study of the Kowm material, which still has few published parallels, it was possible for us to identify contemporary flints and plaster vessels which otherwise would have had only limited meaning. The largest contemporary tell we visited is only half the size of Kowm, but its

water source is still used to supply the local village of 'Araq as well as the T-3 petroleum pumping station 20 kilometers away.

The work at Tell el-Kowm, thus, has merely scratched the surface and indicates that a new chapter in the pre-history of this area will have to be written.