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ENRICO FOIETTA, *New Considerations and Data regarding the North Border of the Kingdom of Hatra (North Mesopotamia) during the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD*

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NEW CONSIDERATIONS AND DATA REGARDING THE NORTH BORDER OF THE KINGDOM OF HATRA (NORTH MESOPOTAMIA) DURING THE 2nd AND 3rd CENT. AD

Enrico Foietta

Keywords: Hatra, Parthian empire, Roman empire, landscape study, borders

Parole chiave: Hatra, Impero Partico, Impero Romano, studi sul paesaggio, confini

Abstracts:

This paper regards the study of the north border of the Kingdom of Hatra, which corresponds to one of the hottest war scenario between the Roman and Parthian empires during the 2nd and the first decades of the 3rd cent. AD, before the new alliance against the Sasanians.

Questo articolo riguarda lo studio del confine settentrionale del Regno di Hatra, che corrisponde a uno dei più caldi scenari di guerra tra l'Impero romano e quello partico durante il II e i primi decenni del III secolo AD, prima della nuova alleanza contro i Sasanidi.

During the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD, the Kingdom of Hatra became one of the most important buffer states in a strategic position between the Roman and Parthian Empires in the Near East (fig. 1). Probably founded during the Post-Assyrian period 80 km southwest of the modern city of Mosul, the city of Hatra reached the impressive extension of 300 ha. From the second half of the 2nd cent. AD, the city was encircled by a double pseudo-circular defensive wall built by the local Lord Nasru (AD 128/129- 137/138). Small shrines, palaces, and funerary buildings were spread across the urban landscape, which was subdivided into districts by irregular main and secondary streets, while the temples within the central Temenos area (e.g. Great Iwans and Twin Iwans) were built or re-built in stone at this time.

During the 2nd cent. AD, Trajan (AD 117) and Septimius Severus (AD 197, 199) attempted to siege the city three times, without success. Other important Roman military campaigns were conducted under Roman emperors Caracalla and Severus Alexander with the main goal of conquering Mesopotamia, but probably without winning the Kingdom of Hatra. Only in AD 240/1 did Hatra fall to the Sasanian army, most likely ruled by the king Shapur I (AD 241-272). After this defeat, the entire region was re-organised under the new ruler, both politically and as settlements, largely employing nomad and semi-nomad tribes.

In the last decades, several scholars have tried to define the characteristics and extension of the Kingdom of Hatra by crossing data from: surveys (Iraqi and English investigations), interpretation of satellite and aerial images, historical sources, placement of Hatran inscriptions and archaeological remains in the regional landscape. Their research mainly focused on the lands that lie between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the northern mountains of the Jebel Sinjar.

After briefly summarizing the results of previous researches, this paper will focus on the north border of the Kingdom, which corresponds to the hottest war scenario between the Roman and Parthian empires throughout the period under consideration until the new alliance between Hatra and Rome, probably in the first decades of the 3rd cent. AD, against the Sasanians.

¹ For the city and the urban layout: VENCO RICCIARDI 2000, GAWLIKOWSKI 2013, FOIETTA 2018.

² For the fortifications: GAWLIKOWSKI 1990; 1994; FOIETTA 2015; 2016.

³ Cassius Dio 67, 10; 76, 11-12; Herodian, 3, 9, 4-6; 3, 1, 2-3.

⁴ OATES 1968, pp. 73-76.

⁵ HAUSER 1998; 2000, pp. 193-196; SOMMER 2003, pp. 14-18; VENCO RICCIARDI 2008; GREGORATTI 2013, pp. 47-54; FOIETTA 2018, pp. 141-156; PALERMO 2019, pp. 99-105.

⁶ This alliance is testified by the recovery of three latin inscriptions discovered in Small Shrine IX at Hatra: OATES 1955; JAKUBIAK 2015.



Fig. 1. Map of the Near East, c. AD 200, Severan period (re-edited from SOMMER 2003, Abb. 20)

Previous results: an overview of the territory under the military and political control of Hatra

A regional GIS bringing together all survey data conducted by Iraqi archaeologists, which were entirely published in 1986, has been created several years ago by the Italian Expedition at Hatra (Torino) to better define the regional territory under the rule of Hatra. The maps with the placement of 268 archaeological sites have been georeferenced, and the Parthian and Roman sites, corresponding to the triangles in the map (fig. 2), have been verified using as main support the CORONA images that had been declassified by the Defense Ministry of the USA, georeferenced, and shared by the CORONA ATLAS (University of Arkansas).

The hollow ways, a sort of linear depressions probably marking ancient routes, previously analysed in the area by M. Altaweel and S. Hauser, and the qanats, water underground structures, clearly detectable by remote sensing technique, have been marked and also verified in specific layers.

The sites with Hatran inscriptions (oriental Aramaic) have been also reported in order to have an almost complete survey of the archaeological occurrences in the area. Important inscriptions in Hatran have also been discovered in the region at Saadiya (no. 35), Khirbet Jaddalah (no. 68), Khirbet Qabr Abu Naif (no. 71), and Tell Abrat al-Saghira (no. 209). Such inscriptions were originally engraved on blocks or lintels of important constructions such as forts, funerary buildings, and perhaps temples; each one shows a date, which may refer to the year of their construction or of some important event related to them.

Other Hatran inscriptions must be considered as more problematic due to the distance of their recovery from Hatra, their support, and script (e.g. graffiti). In particular, the most distant inscriptions have been discovered in the Tur Abdin zone (Turkey), approximately 300 km north of Hatra, and in the area of the Middle Euphrates (Dura-Europos and Tell Sheikh Hamad).

⁷ IBRAHIM 1986, pp. 39-40; FOIETTA 2018, p. 45. For a complete list with geographic coordinates of the sites surveyed by J. Ibrahim: FOIETTA 2018, Appendix 1, pp. 509-519. The transcription of the toponyms follow the original publication.

⁸ <http://corona.cast.uark.edu/>; last view: 10/09/2019. For the georeferencing and orthorectification process: CASANA, COTHREN 2013.

⁹ ALTAWHEEL, HAUSER 2004; FOIETTA 2018, pp. 117-127.

¹⁰ RAYNE 2014, pp. 230-237; FOIETTA 2018, p. 104.

¹¹ FOIETTA 2018, pp. 143-147.

¹² VATTIONI 1981, p. 106; AGGOULA 1991, pp. 174-175; BEYER 1998, p. 116 (S1).

¹³ PENNACCHIETTI 1988; BEYER 1998, p. 27.

¹⁴ VATTIONI 1981, pp. 107-108; BEYER 1998, p. 117

¹⁵ LERICHE, BERTOLINO 1997.

¹⁶ For this question: FOIETTA 2018, pp. 147-148.

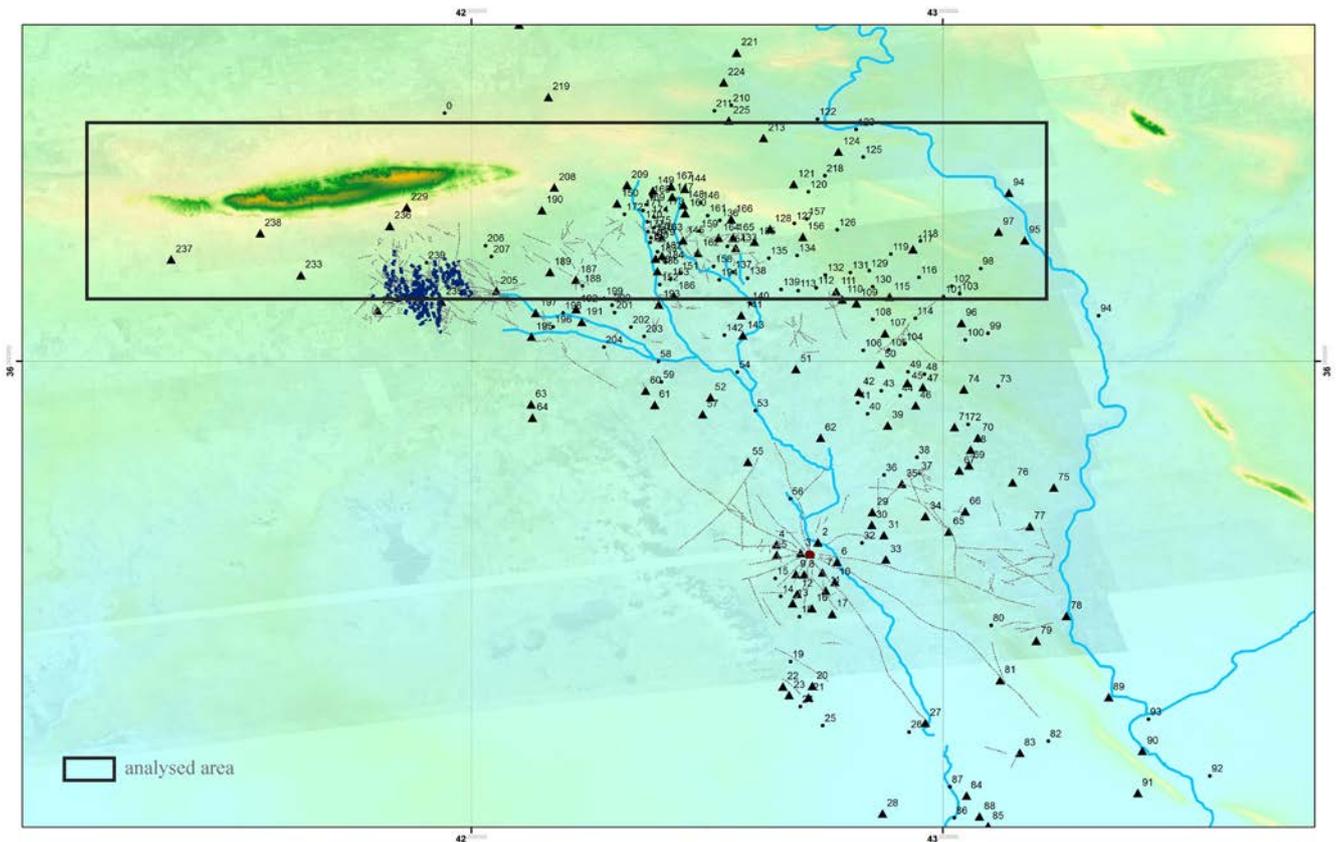


Fig. 2. HatraGIS map: Parthian and Roman sites marked with triangles, re-edited from the Iraqi survey published by J. Ibrahim in 1986.

Thanks to the new maps elaborated with GIS applications, it has been possible to suggest a preliminary hierarchy of sites for an analysis of the settlements' pattern in the region.

In proximity to Hatra, the maps report 10 sites of small dimension (1-5 ha), which can be considered satellite-sites that were probably under the direct rule of the city. CORONA images show a system of radial hollow-way routes, testifying the connection with the other centres and its surrounding landscape, probably for the exploitation of natural resources.

Ashur (no. 78) was situated 50 km south-east of Hatra. Several scholars suggest that after the first half of the 2nd century AD the city was controlled by Hatra, drawing their considerations upon architectural influences on religious architecture, the lack of a local Lord (*marya*) for the related period in the city, and the discovery of a large amount of coins minted at Hatra. The site's dimension presumably corresponds to 75 he, provided that the ancient Assyrian curtain wall still maintained its function in the Parthian period. Along some springs used as water points for caravans there is a double route that probably connected the two in ancient times as well.

The site of Khirbet Jaddalah (no. 68), located 50 km north-east of Hatra (fig. 3), was probably a local fort connected with a Hatrean family group (fig. 3). The fort

Fig. 3. Aerial photograph of Khirbet Jaddalah, oblique view from a height of 60 m. Royal Air Force (12.22; 14 November 1938) (KENNEDY, RILEY 1990, p. 231, fig. 186).



¹⁷ HAUSER 2009, pp. 73-77.

¹⁸ FOIETTA 2018, footnote 271.

¹⁹ See: ANDRAE 1912, taf. II.



Fig. 4. The milestone from Karsi (PALERMO 2019, p. 29, fig. 3.2).

was excavated by an Iraqi expedition, which has unearthed most part of the main structure and in some trenches the defensive wall.

Two medium sites are identified south of Hatra: Umm Etlail (no. 22) and Tell Ajri (no. 84). According to the size of the ruins, both can probably be considered large villages, as stated by S. Hauser, and identified respectively as *Phalcara* and *Sabbīn* stations reported on the Tabula Peutingeriana. They were connected to Hatra by two separate long routes.

The northern area of the Jazirah displays a more complex settlement pattern, with the occurrence for the most part of small and medium 'Parthian/Roman' period sites connected by numerous hollow-ways. Some of the sites are located along a well-identifiable, long route between Tell al Hadhail (no. 205) and Hatra. Following the record of the Tabula Peutingeriana, S. Hauser has indicated two main routes in the region leading to Hatra. The first one directly crossed the steppe between the Jebel Sinjar and Hatra, while the second route connecting the Sinjar to the Tigris, followed initially an east-west direction to then sharply bend along the Tigris. According to the Iraqi survey, Parthian sites have been detected as far as the southern fringe of the hills of the Jebel Sinjar, where important 2nd and 3rd cent. AD Roman sites such as Singara (no. 229) and Ain Sinu (no. 208) are located.

There were no settlements west of Hatra, probably because of the much less favourable environmental conditions. This so-called 'no man's land' was occupied by semi-nomad and nomad people related to Hatra or other 'Arab' kingdoms. Several tracks probably started from Tell Dibshya (no. 4) and crossed the steppe lands towards the Euphrates.

According to these data, it has been proposed that in the 2nd and in the first decade of the 3rd cent. AD, the 'borders' of the Kingdom of Hatra ran along the Tigris, dividing the Kingdom of Hatra and the important Kingdom of Adiabene, along the eastern bank of the Euphrates and south of the Jebel Sinjar (fig. 1). Most part of this paper will be specifically devoted to this topic. The southern limit with the core of the Parthian Empire is difficult to define, but scholars usually place it not far from the site of Tell Ajri (no. 84).

²⁰ IBRAHIM 1983; PENNACCHIETTI 1988, pp. 144-145; FOIETTA 2018, p. 146.

²¹ ALTAWHEEL, HAUSER 2004, p. 80.

²² FOIETTA 2018, pp. 142-143.

²³ ALTAWHEEL, HAUSER 2004, pp. 76-77.

²⁴ DILLEMANN 1962, pp. 203-210; OATES 1968, pp. 73-88; PALERMO 2015; PALERMO 2019 pp. 248-254.

²⁵ The Kingdom of Adiabene is well known mainly from Historical sources: READE 2001; MARCIAK 2014; 2017.

The main focus of this paper regards a detailed study of the area located approximatively between the western limit of the Jebel Sinjar up to the Tigris. This area has been usually defined from a Roman perspective as one of the 'edge of the Roman Empire'. The chosen north limit for the analysed area (fig. 2) corresponds in particular to the north fringes of the Jebel Sinjar.

Detectable on these mountains and foothills are in fact several centres, which are without doubt Roman sites from the 2nd-3rd cent. AD, as Ain Sinu (no. 208), and the important city of Singara (no. 229). This information is confirmed not only by field data, but also by Roman historical sources and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* that probably proves the presence of settlements and routes during the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD for the Near East area.

The fact that the Jebel Sinjar, its closest valleys, and foothills were subjected to Roman political and military control is well known and confirmed also by the discovery of two milestones in these lands. The first, dating to the Trajan period (116 AD) was found at Karsi (15 km north-west of Singara) (fig. 4), while the second, dating to Severus Alexander (AD 222-235) was discovered close to the village of Hama (5 km south-west of Singara).

Recently, R. Palermo - as previously did other scholars - has suggested, on the grounds of historical sources, field data, and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the existence of an approximatively east-west Roman route, which connected the far district of Resaina and Nisibis to the Jebel Sinjar and then to the Tigris, facilitating the transit of people and goods during the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD. The street was probably traced in the Trajan period and stabilised when the 'Severan frontier' was planned, as proposed by D. Oates.

After a detailed study, S. Hauser has suggested a match of several well-known sites with the toponyms mentioned on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (fig. 5). In particular, he suggests a match of the city of Singara with *Sirgora*, Ain Sinu with *Zagurrae*, Tell Afar with *ad Pontem*, Kh. Khan al Zanazil with *Abdae* and Mawsil/Mosul with *ad. fl. Tigrem* along this east-west street. For a second central route to Hatra along the steppe, he proposed a match with other sites, namely Tell Hanu with *Zogorra* and Tell Hadhail with *Vicat* (fig. 6).

A focused analysis of the Iraqi survey for the interested area can integrate our information, especially with the aim of identifying the 'Parthian part' or better the 'Hatran side' of this complex frontier area. Along the south valleys of the Jebel Sinjar and the other eastern hills reaching the banks of the Tigris, several 'Parthian and Roman' sites have been identified by the recovery of diagnostic pottery sherds by the Iraqi survey. In the Tab. 1, the most important of these sites are listed. For each site is reported the progressive number assigned by the Iraqi survey, the toponym (if present), a brief description, the extension, when easy to determinate, and the bibliography.

To be added to the above list is Al-Han/El-Hamda (35° 56'N; 41° 4'E), which lies some 85 km south-west of Singara. It is described as a 'square fort' of 40 x 40 m, which A. Stein and later D. Kennedy and D. Riley, given the recovery on the surface of Roman bronze coins, have identified as a Roman post (fig. 8).

The area under study in this paper is extremely complex from an archaeological point of view because it was probably highly exploited and well-connected for a long period of time, as testified by the presence of numerous radial hollow-ways from the most part of sites in different chronological periods (fig. 9). This complex route network is not easy to date with precision, considering the absence of archaeological excavations on them and the long lasting settlements in the region. However, it is possible to suggest that hollow-ways, which link together sites of Parthian/Roman chronology, were possibly in use at that time, showing a strongly connected network for this period.

²⁶ OATES 1968, pp. 73-92: 'Singara first came under Roman control when it was captured by Lucius Quietus, the general of Trajan, in AD 114-115, and the road linking directly to Nisibis was built soon afterwards. [...] The use of the title Aurelia in the third century suggests that it may have become a colonia after the campaigns of Lucius Verus, but if so, it seems unlikely that it was retained for so long. It was, as we have seen, incorporated in the Severan frontier line from the Khabur to the Tigris, and may have been garrisoned by the I Parthica. Its communication with the lower Khabur were improved at the time of Severus Alexander's campaign in AD 232 when it lay on the line of march followed by the main body'. DILLEMANN 1962, pp. 203-210; OATES 1968, pp. 73-88; PALERMO 2015; PALERMO 2019 pp. 248-254.

²⁷ CAGNAT 1927; OATES 1968, pp. 97-108; OATES 1968, p. 74, footnote 3; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 76; PALERMO 2019, pp. 29-31.

²⁸ OATES 1956, pp. 197-199; OATES 1968, pp. 73-80; PALERMO 2019, pp. 155-158; pp. 210-214.

²⁹ Before him D. Oates suggested a different match: OATES 1968, pp. 78-80.

³⁰ D. Oates suggested a different match with the site of Gonaisiya (see OATES 1968, p. 76, fig. 5).

³¹ HAUSER 2009, pp. 72-73.

³² The proposal suggested by Iraqi archaeologists of a match between Vicat and the site of Tell Abrat-al Saghira (n. 209) should be refused (AL-ALOUSI 1954, pp. 145-148; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 73). For the description of this site see forward.

³³ Jebel Ishkaft, Jebel Sasan, Jebel Sh. Ibrahim, Jebel Shanin, Jebel Jawan and Jebel Najma (OATES 1968, 14, fig. 2).

³⁴ IBRAHIM 1986, pp. 39-40.

³⁵ KENNEDY, RILEY 1990, pp. 163-164.

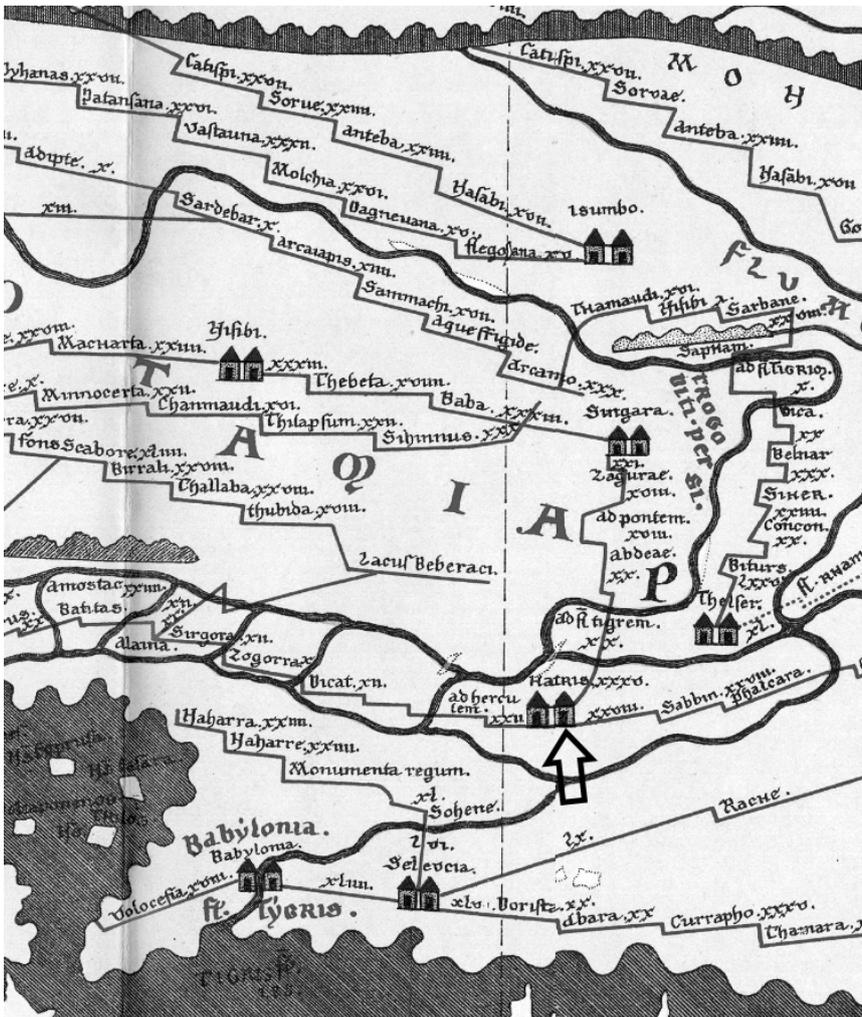
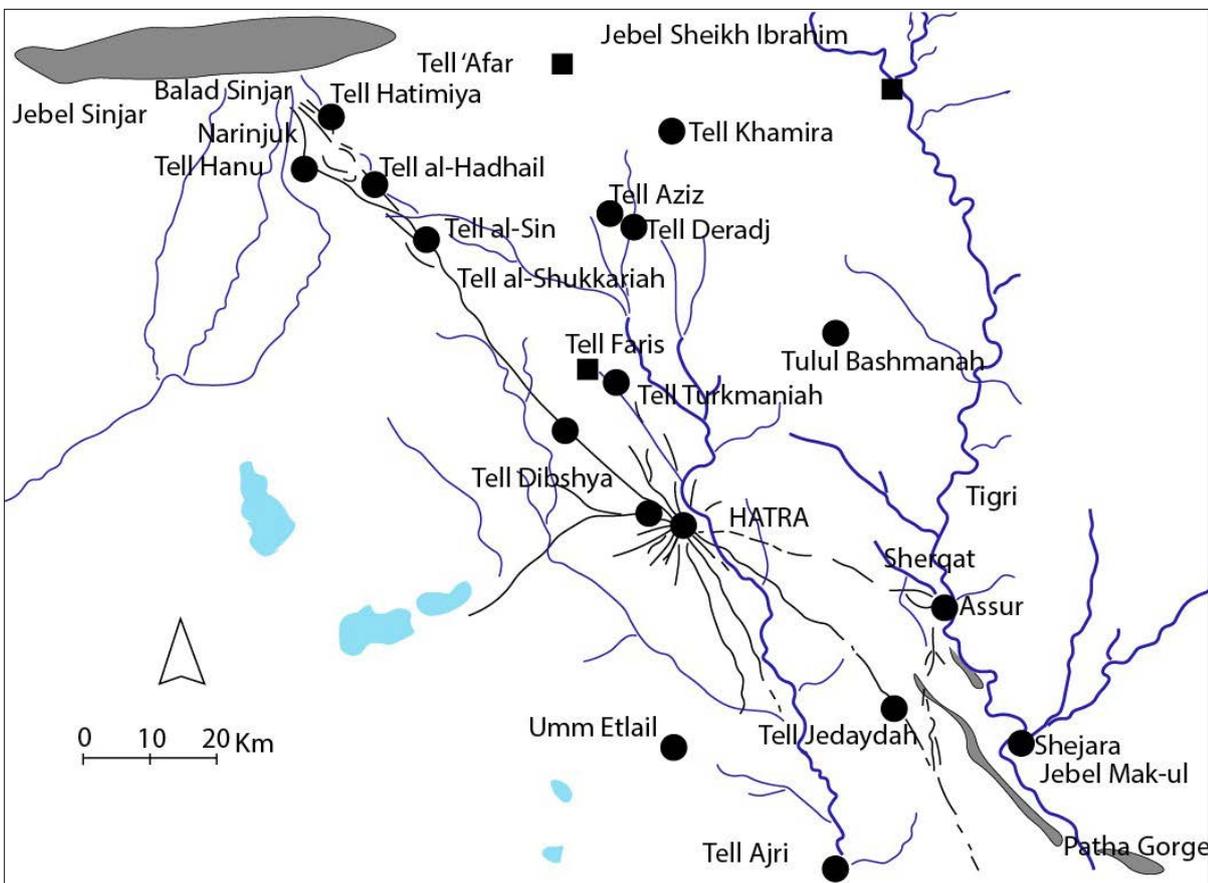


Fig. 5. Detail of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.

Fig. 6. Network of the hollow-ways detected by M. Altaweel and S. Hauser (re-edited from ALTAWEEL, HAUSER 2004, p. 64, fig. 2).



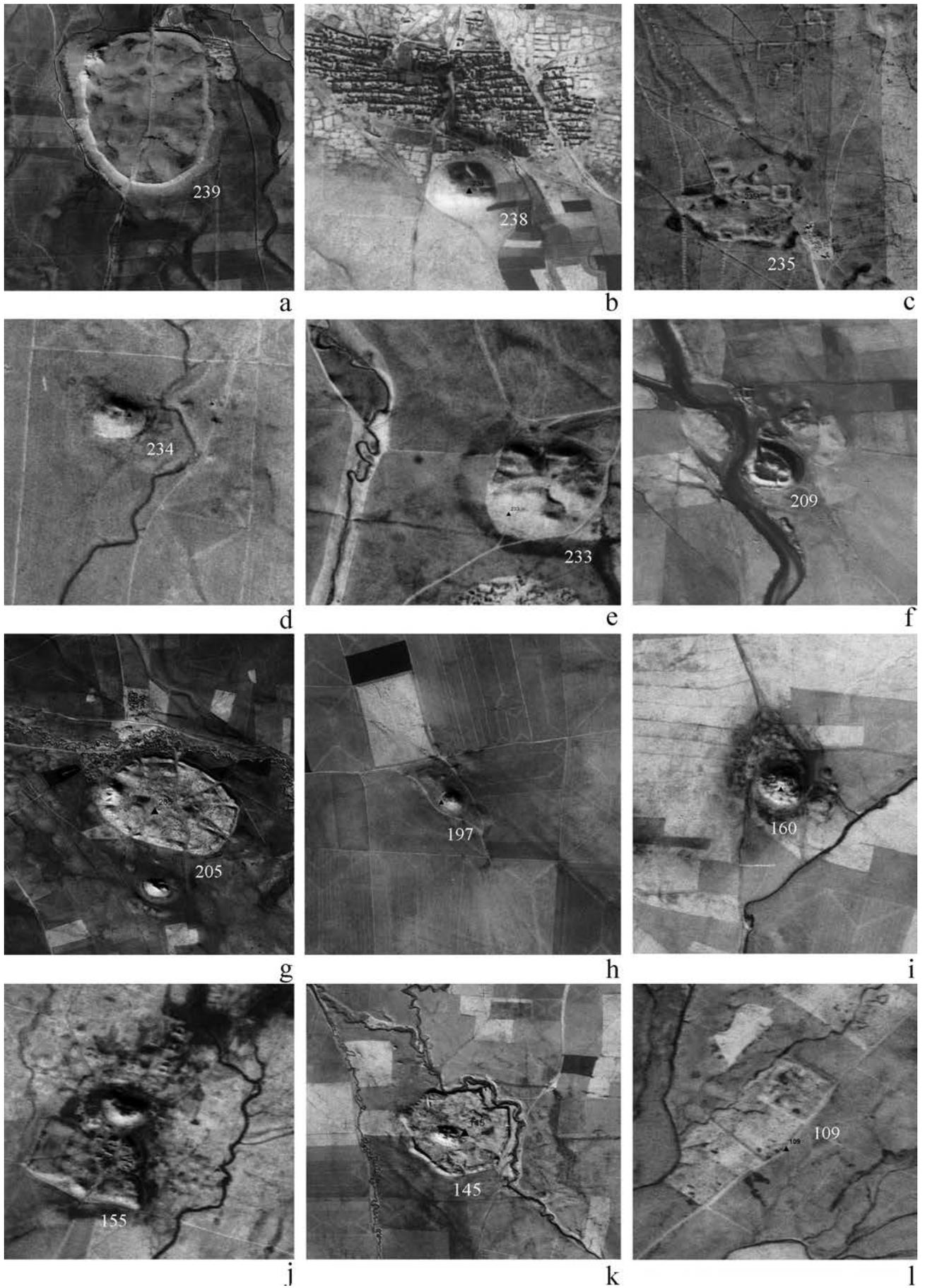


Fig. 7. Satellite images of the most important sites detected in the area of study (CORONA image December 1967 – HatraGIS).

Tab. I

Iraqi survey number and toponym	Description	Ext.	Fort or fort like structures	Bibliography	Fig.
239 - Tell Hatimiya	Ovoid/Circular mound, ø 300 m, h. 3.50 m	80 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	fig. 7a
238 - Tell Hiyal	Square mound; approx. 100 x 100 m. The structures exposed are built in rubble and mortar.	2 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	fig. 7b
237 -	Circular mound ø 150 m, h. 4 m	3 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	
236 - Tell Dara	Semi-oval mound, 200 x 100 m, h. 16 m. On a close mound have been discovered several column drums on the surface (drums ø 40 and 80 cm).	17 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	
235 - Tell Hanu	Square mound 100 m x 75 m, h. 5 m	7.5 ha	X	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	fig. 7c
234 - Khirbet Gritoluk	Triangular mound 100 x 100 x 75 m, h. 6 m	3.5 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	fig. 7d
233 - Girgi Khadrog	Semi-circular mound, ø 80 m, h. 4 m	5 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 77	fig. 7e
229 – Singara	City	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 76; OATES 1968, pp. 97-108	
213 - Tell Abu Wajnam	/			STEIN 1941, p. 157; OATES 1968, p. 77; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 74	
209 - Tell Abrat al-Saghira	Polygonal mound (see next paragraph)	2.5 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 73	fig. 7f
208 - Ain Sinu	Ain Sinu 1 (barracks) and 2 (castellum)		X	OATES 1968, pp. 80-89; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 73	
205 - Tell Hadhail	Rectangular mound with three tells inside and hillocks. A 'citadel' of ø 200 m, h. 30 m placed at the north-west corner; another circular mound located 500 m from the first one, ø 120 m and h. 30 m. The remains of an ancient channel divide the mound.	47.6 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 72	fig. 7g
197 - Tell 'Azu	Elongated mound; 100 x 60 m, h. 6 m.	6 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	fig. 7h
195 - Tell as-Sown	2 semi-circular mounds: ø 50 m, h. 3 m; ø 30 m, h. 2 m			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	
193 -	Oblung mound (60 x 50 m), h. 2 m			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	

192 -	/	/	/	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	
191 -	/	/	/	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	
190 - Tell Umm Al-Shibabit	Rectangular mound 100 m x 90 m, h. 7 m; a triangular mound 80 x 50 m, h. 150 m	9 ha	X	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 71	
189 - Tell Mutalah	Rectangular mound (150 x 60 m), h. 4 m			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 70	
187 - Tell Hilu	Semi-circular mound ø 150 m, h. 4 m			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 70	
186 - Tell al-Shair	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 70	
183 - Tell 'Awad	Mound placed west of Tell Al-Rimah. There are graves all around the mound	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 70	
182 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 69	
167 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
166 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
165 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
164 -	Low square mound	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
163 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
160 - Tall Zimbeg	/	17 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 67	fig. 7i
156 -	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 68	
155 - Tell Shibba	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 67	fig. 7j
150 - Yarim Tepe	Mounds excavated by the Russian Expedition			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66	
149 - Ober Mella Yasim	Series of round mounds			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66	/
148 -	Round mound	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66	/
147 - Tell Qara Tepe	/	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66	
145 - Tell Al Rimah	Site A and D with Parthian sherds			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66; POSTGATE, OATES, OATES 1997, p. 21, 57.	fig. 7k
144 - Tell Afar	City: two mounds discovered around the watersources	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 66	
143 - Tell Al-Hafel	Semi-circular mound ø 200 m, h. 3 m. A modern village is built over a part of it	/		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 65	

141 – Tell Al-Buqer	Rectangular mound: 1400 x 120 m, h. 5 m.	/	X(?)	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 65	
128 – Khirbet Sheikh Ibrahim	Stein identified it as a castellum	/	X	STEIN 1941, pp. 301, 310; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 63	
124 – Khirbet Khan Al-Zanzil	Low mound of about 700 m.	0.78 ha		IBRAHIM 1986, p. 63	
117 – Khirbet Abdalah 'Othoman	Irregular mound l. 400 m; h. 3 m, surrounded by low mounds			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 62	
115 - Tell Abu Jarathi	There are 2 mounds. The first is circular in shape. ø 300 m at the base. A limestone doorway similar to funerary buildings from Hatra has been discovered.			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 62	
111 – Tulul Umm Al-Shinin	Two low mounds to the south of the Jebel Umm Al-Shinin. A square mound is mentioned by Stein (18 x 18 m)		X	Stein 1941, p. 310; IBRAHIM 1986, p. 61	
110 - Khirbet Jyea	Square enclosure (110 x 110 m) with a mound in the centre (ø 50 m, h. 6 m)		X ?	IBRAHIM 1986, p. 61	
109 – Khirbet al-Yazidi	Rectangular mound. The ruins of a building built in rubble and mortar are visible (l. 38 m; w. 30 m)			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 61	fig. 71
97 – Khirbet Zanazil	Irregular area with a small mound nearby			IBRAHIM 1986, p. 59	
95 – Qinytra	Big fortress built over the Tigris river		X	IBRAHIM 1986, pp. 58-59	

The area probably also had a high agriculture production, increased by the construction of several qanats, which can be easily identified on both ground and satellite images by their air wells dug at regular distances (figs. 10-11). Many of them have been identified by L.E. Rayne and have been re-verified on CORONA image catalogue. Most likely some of them were used during the Roman/Parthian period, especially the qanats detected nearby Roman and Parthian sites.

A relevant number of new archaeological anomalies (714) have been identified in the rectangular section demarcated for this study, employing remote sensing techniques (fig. 12). Their presence testifies a complex, dense, and long-life occupied territory, which was probably also influenced to a great extent by the historical war episodes of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. We hope that in the future it will be possible to survey some of them in order to gain new important chronological and topographical information.

The site of Tell Abrat al-Saghira (no. 209) is especially interesting for the purpose of this paper, not only for its position close to Ain Sinu (no. 208), but also because it was surveyed by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities in 1954, after being looted by the local people of a nearby village. The illegal excavations focused on the north-east mound corner and exposed several column drums, a Hatran inscription on a block (fig. 13), and a small bronze gazelle. Except for the drums, which were re-buried at the site, all other items have been recovered by the Department of Antiquities.

The approximately rectangular mound, located about 1 km from the modern village, was probably encircled by a ditch, whose remains are easily detectable on the ground and slightly visible on satellite images (figs. 14-15). A

³⁶ RAYNE 2014, pp. 230-237.

³⁷ The name of the mound in the publication on Sumer is al-'Abara,

but I preferred to maintain the toponym used in scientific literature.

³⁸ AL-ALOUSI 1954, p. 145.

Fig. 8. Aerial photograph of El-Hambda, oblique view from a height of 100 m. Royal Air Force (12.18; 20 April 1938).

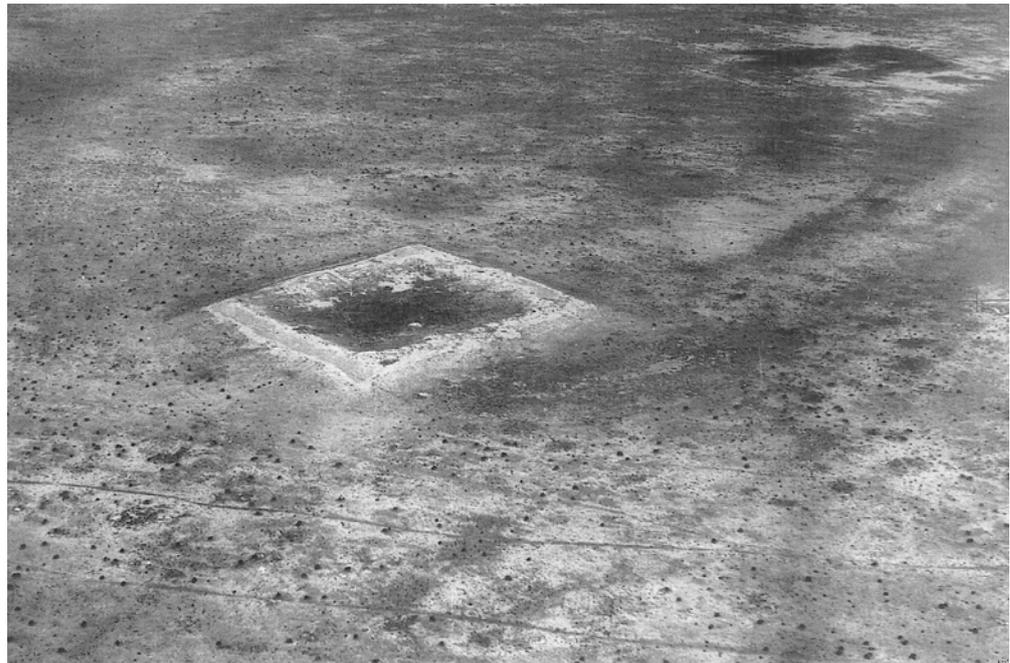
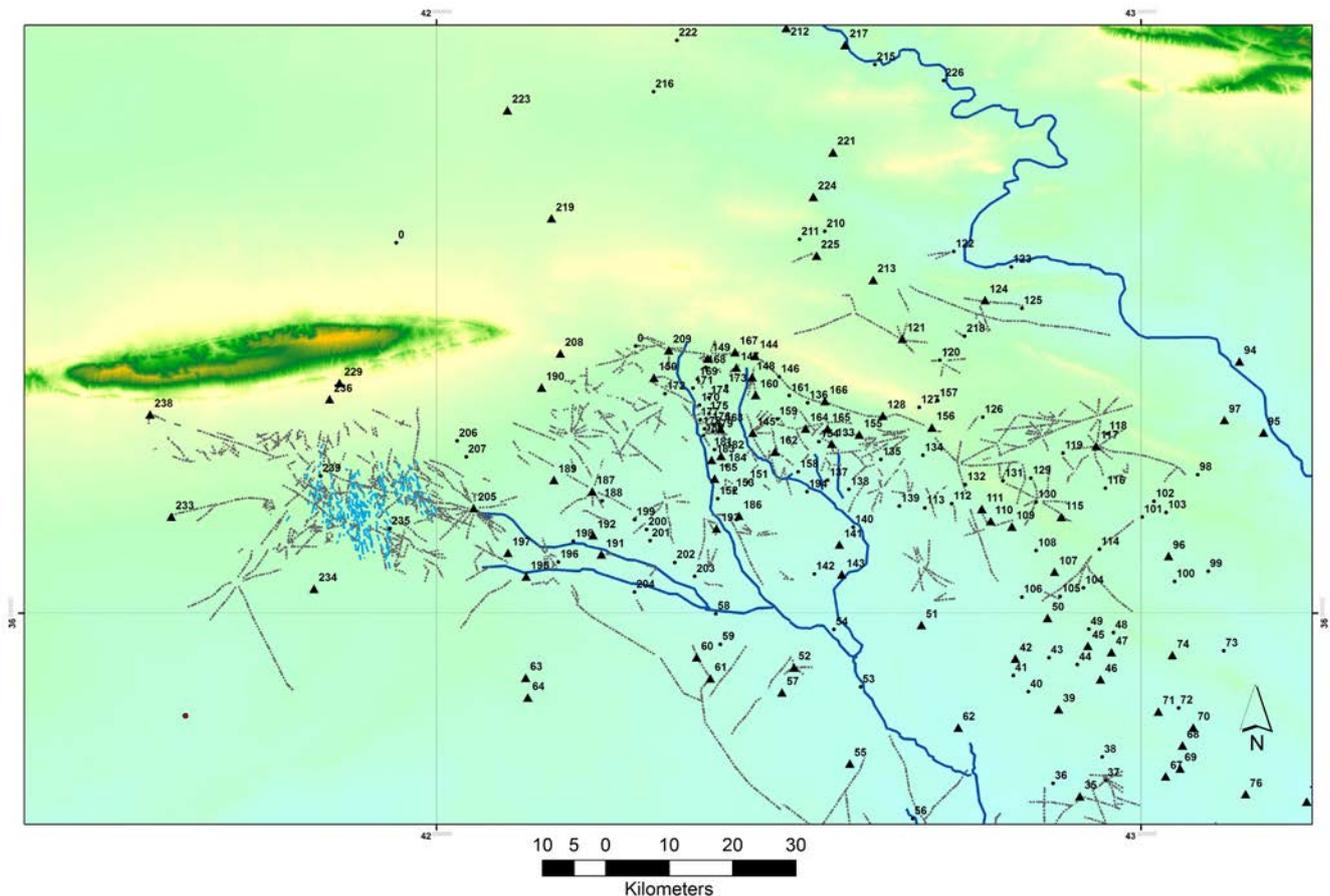


Fig. 9. HatraGIS map: Parthian and Roman sites marked with triangles, hollow-ways in grey and *qanats* in ligh-blue.



water source flows close to the mound, testifying an easy access to underground water from the site, while on the west, runs a small seasonal *wadi*. A watermill was built north-west during the Islamic period. At the top of the mound, a higher tell of approximately rectangular shape, proves the presence of a big construction. A smaller, square tell is connected south-east. The north and south slopes of the mound were not as steep as the others. Two possible entrances/gates have been discovered at approximately 10 m from the beginning of the slope. From the layout of these remains are detectable the ruins of a possible curtainwall, which were remarked also by S. Al-Alousi.

³⁹ This structure, the curtain wall and the gates have been probably sacked by the local people to obtain stones (AL-ALOUSI 1954).

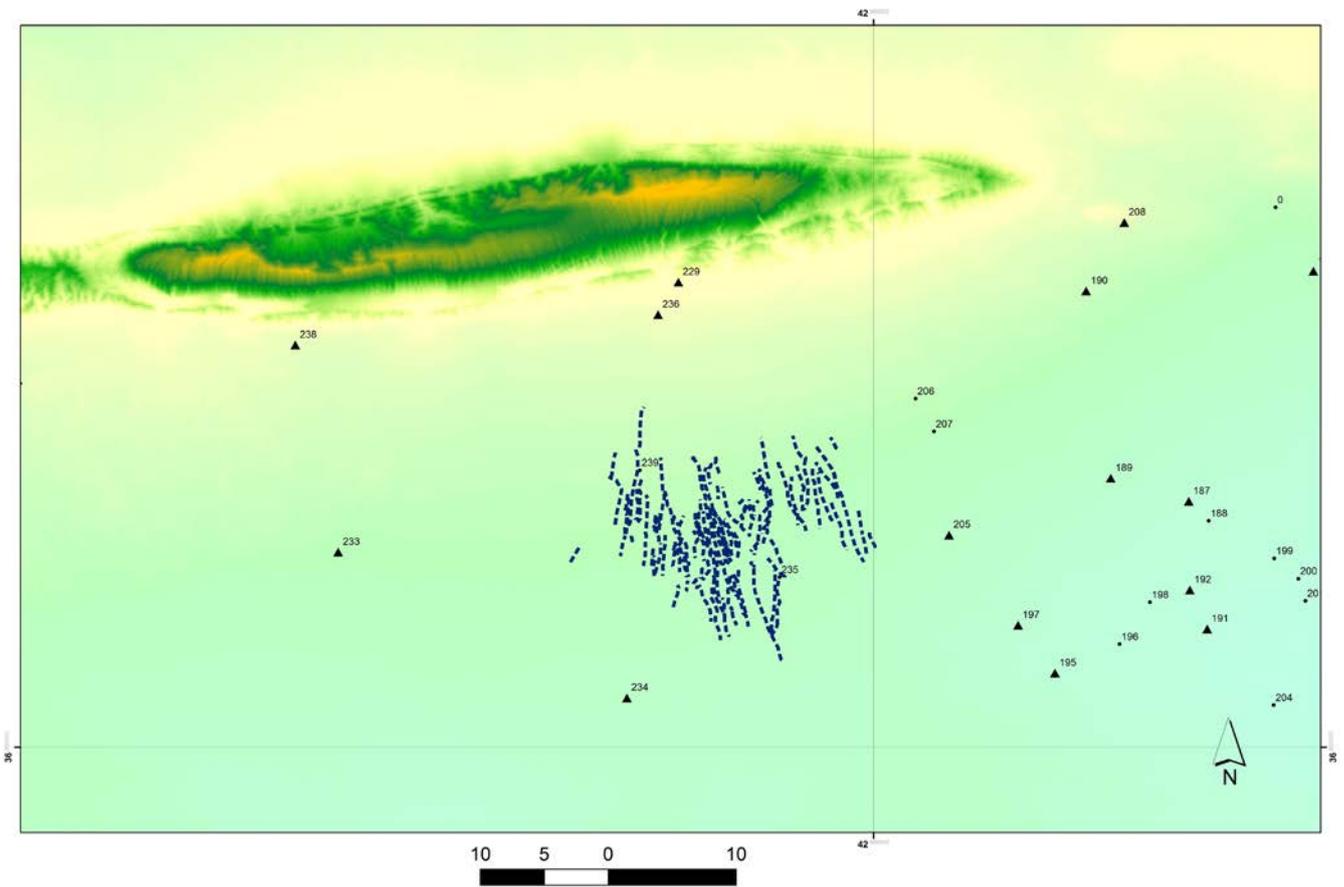


Fig. 10 HatraGIS map: detail of the Jebel Sinjar with the *qanats* marked in blue.

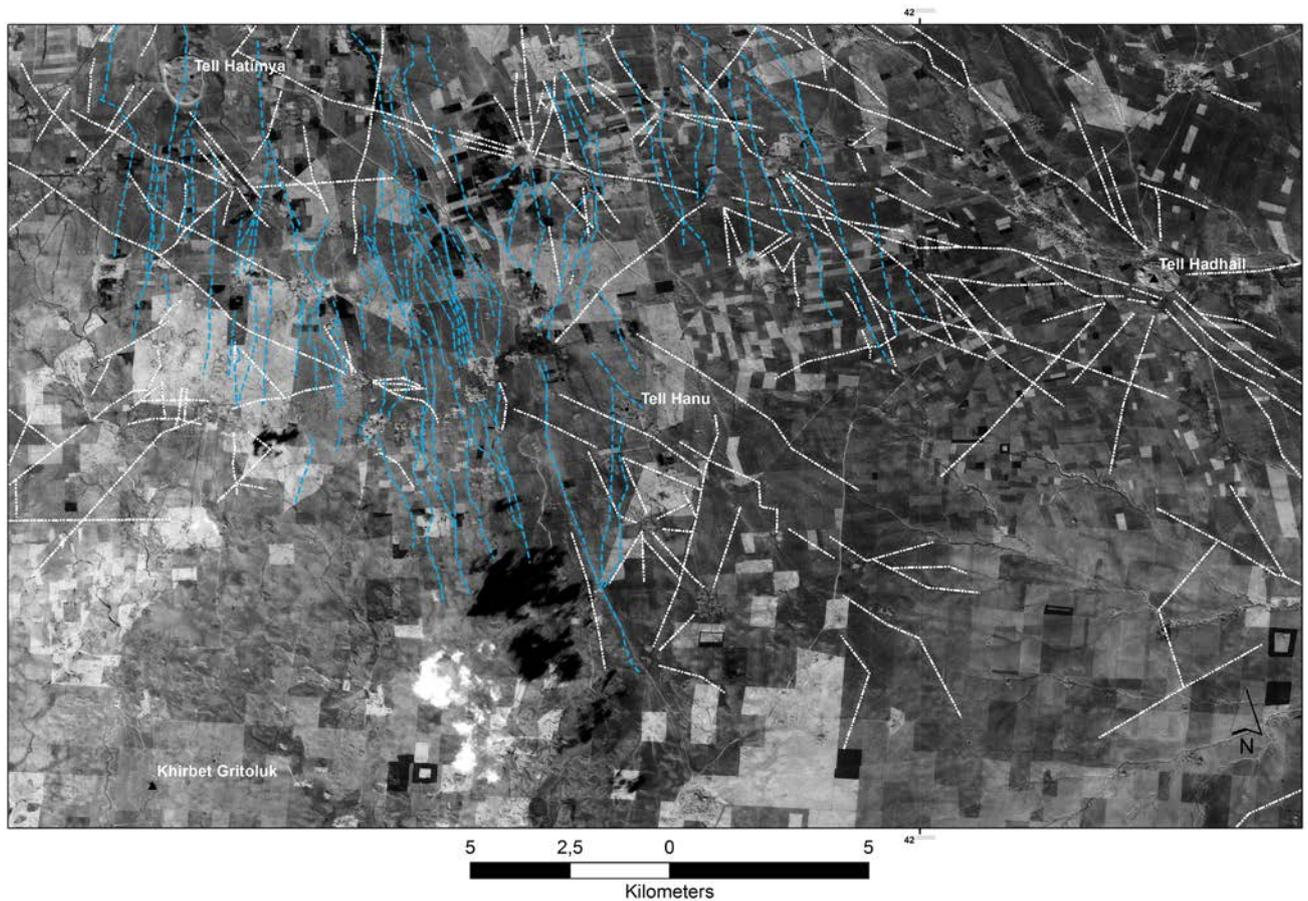


Fig. 11 Area of Tell Hatimya and Tell Hadhail. *Qanats* marked in light blue and hollow-ways in white.

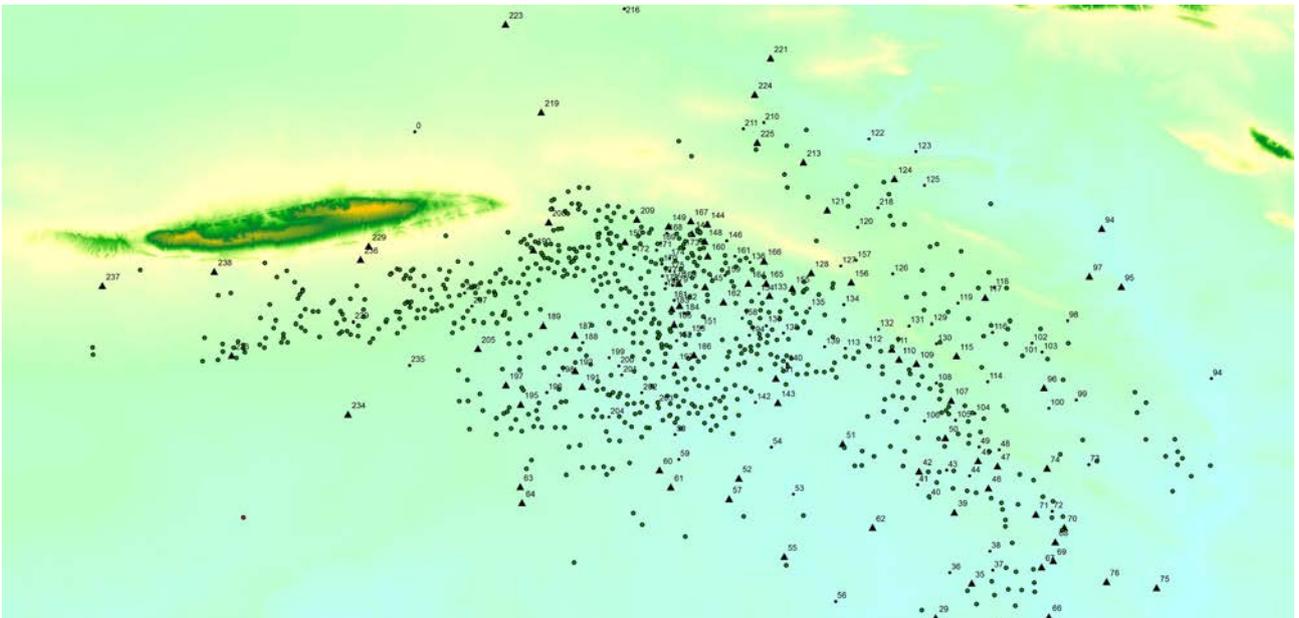


Fig. 12. HatraGIS map: Parthian and Roman sites marked with triangles (Iraqi survey); the green dots represent other archeological anomalies identified with remote sensing techniques.

Fig. 13. Hatran inscription from Tell Abrat al-Saghira (AL-ALOUSI 1954, p. 151).

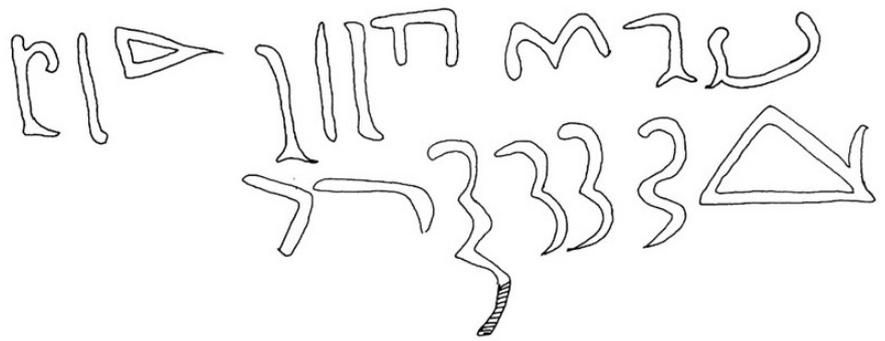
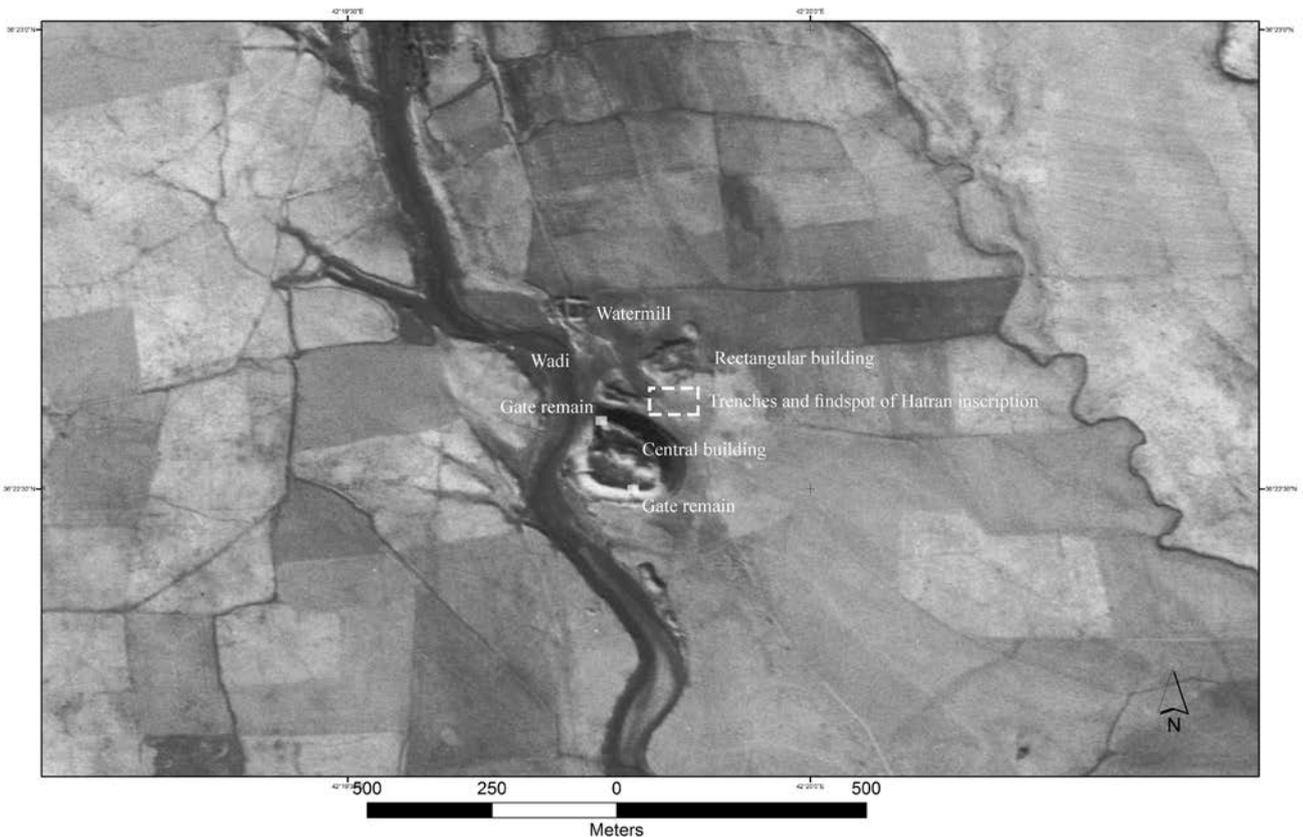


Fig. 14. Tell Abrat al-Saghira with the placement of the archaeological occurrences identified by the Iraqi archaeologists, CORONA image December 1967 (HatraGIS).



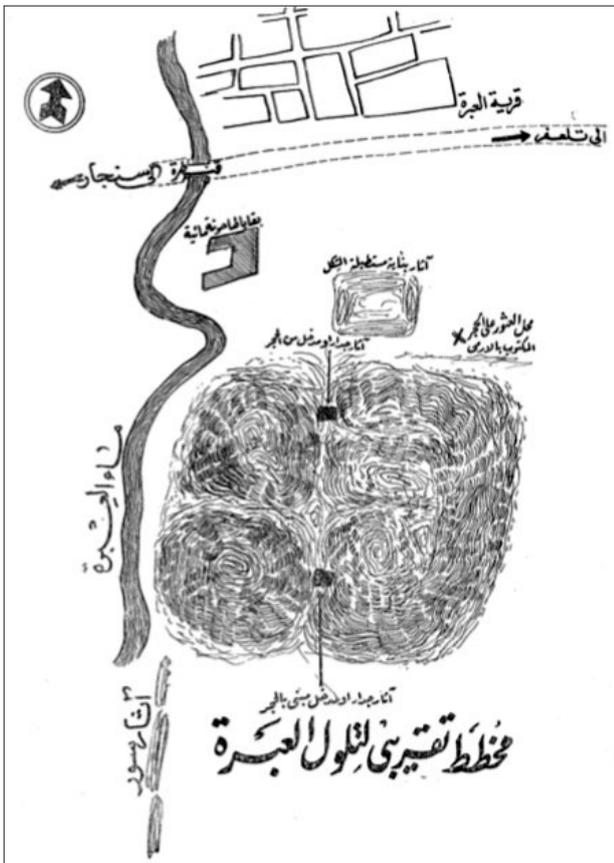


Fig. 15. Iraqi sketch of Tell Abrat al-Saghira (AL-ALOUSI 1954, p. 149).

The heavily damaged Hatran inscription engraved on a stone block (45 x 26 x 15 cm) reports a date, probably 116/7 AD, even if some epigraphists suggest a later 2nd cent. AD date. Moreover, the gazelle pendant recovered finds a precise comparison with a similar example found at Hatra. The shape of the mound and the disclosed ruins characteristic, according to Al-Aloosi, seem similar to that of the fort of Khirbet Jaddalah (50 km north-east from Hatra) before the Iraqi Excavation (fig. 3). Considering this suggestion as well as the size of the mound, it is possible to propose that Tell Abrat al-Saghira was possibly a Hatrean fort, built close to the border during the 2nd cent. AD.

Conclusions

The borders and limits of kingdoms in ancient times often corresponded to geomorphological markers such as rivers, hills, or mountains. Thus, the Tigris and the Euphrates most likely marked the east and west limits of the Kingdom of Hatra during the 2nd cent. and the beginning of the 3rd AD. The lack of a line of forts and related infrastructures, a sort of *limes*, is clear from both the survey results and the photo-interpretation with remote sensing techniques in all the region.

Moreover, the study of the settlements' pattern for the Parthian and Roman period shows a different

type of defence employed in these lands, characterised by the construction of defensive structures in strategic points at irregular distances from the border and along routes, wadis, and seasonal rivers. Several of these forts have been dated by the Iraqi investigations, others have been identified only by remote sensing techniques and their chronology needs to be checked in the future (fig. 16). The Hatrean military infrastructures were probably erected close to water sources at different distances from the fixed border of the period herein considered, taking into account also the constant movement of Hatra-related semi-nomadic or nomadic troops, which were active especially in the western unsettled steppe area, but also probably in the other areas subjected to its military and political control.

According to the discovery detected at the site, and the nearby northern location of Roman sites as Ain Sinu, Singara and Tell Afar during the 2nd cent. AD, the north border of the Kingdom of Hatra probably ran not far from Tell Abrat al-Saghira (no. 209).

Considering their positions, the eastern sites as nos. 121, 117, 97 and 95 (fig. 17) could be related both to the Roman or Hatrean sides, but it is possible to suggest that the ancient border ran north until Khirbet Khan al Zanzil (no. 124), which has been proposed by R. Palermo and S. Hauser as the last rest point of a Roman route, mentioned in the Tabula Peutingeriana before the Tigris, probably in use in the Severan time. Located along the foothills of the chains that stretched north/west-south/east, east of the Jebel Sinjar, are several sites (nos. 149-129), which seem interestingly placed along a possible ancient street, identified by a well-defined hollow-way. These sites according to their size and characteristics are forts or rest-points, but not cities or villages.

The sites of Tell Hatimiya, Tell Hadhail and Tell Hanu (fig. 18), located slightly south of the Jebel Sinjar are impressive for their features and extension (figs. 6, 11). If we consider their position in comparison to Singara and Tell Abrat al-Saghira, it is possible to evaluate them as villages, hubs, and centres of a certain importance perhaps related to Hatra's side and placed along a well-known route, which crossed the steppe to Hatra in an important buffer zone for

⁴⁰ Vattioni 1981, p. 107; Aggoula 1991, pp. 175-176; Beyer 1998, p. 115.

⁴¹ See FOIETTA, BUCCI 2013.

⁴² AL-ALOUSI 1954, pp. 146-147. Cfr. IBRAHIM 1983.

⁴³ Notably the Jebel Ishkaft, Jebel Sasan, Jebel Sh. Ibrahim, Jebel Shanin, Jebel Jawan and Jebel Najma.

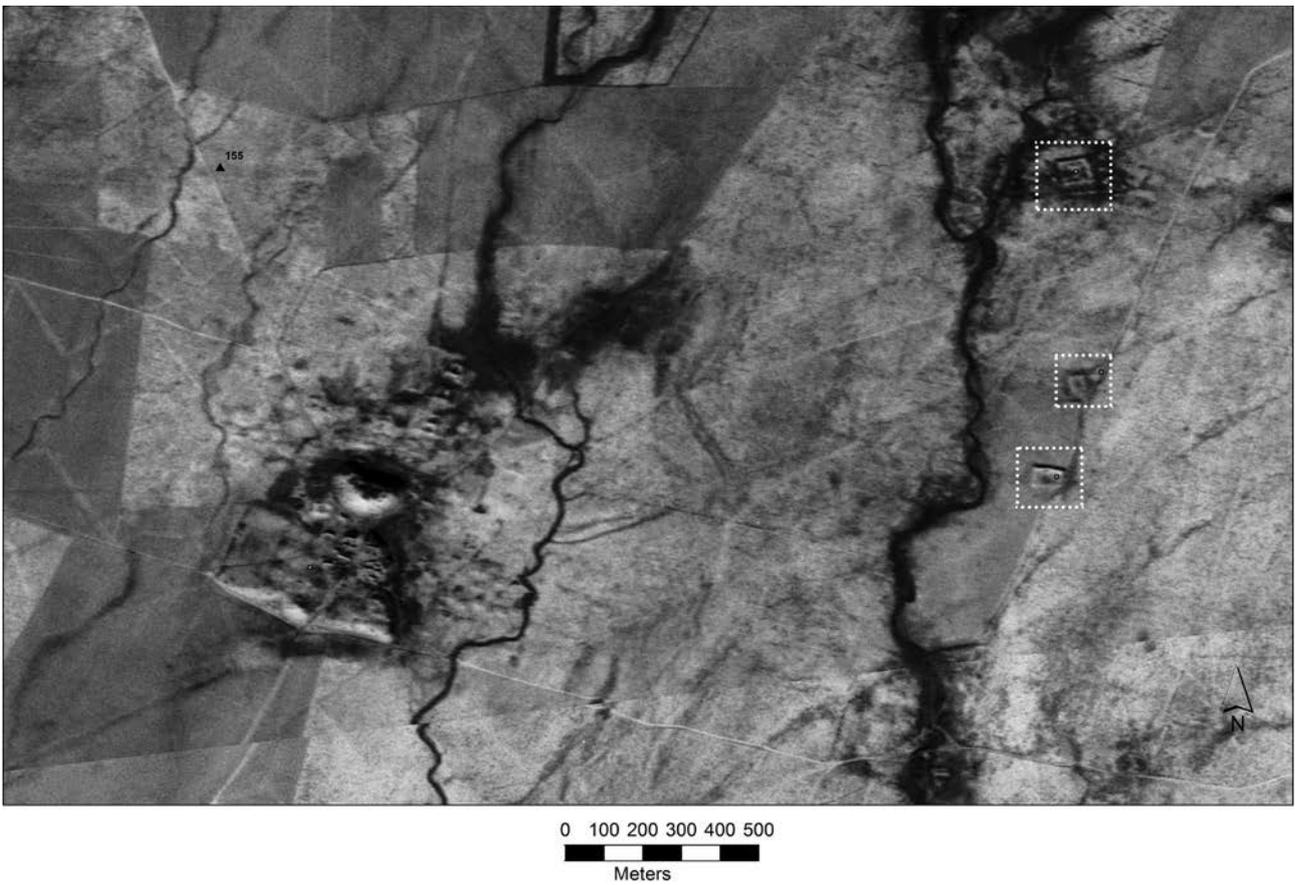


Fig. 16. Fort structures identified close to Tell Shibba (n. 155), CORONA image December 1967 (HatraGIS).

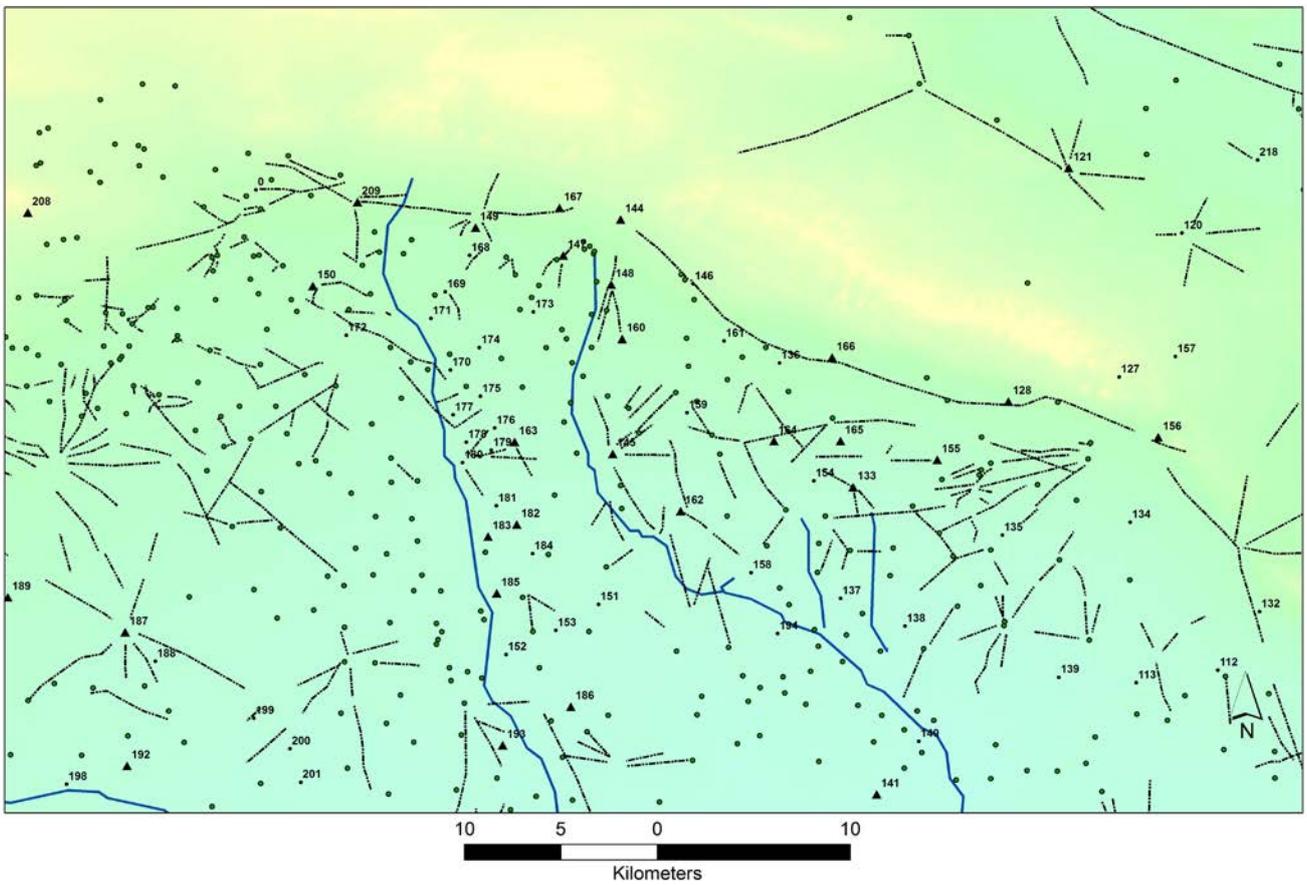


Fig. 17. HatraGIS map: Parthian and Roman sites marked with triangles, hollow-ways in black.

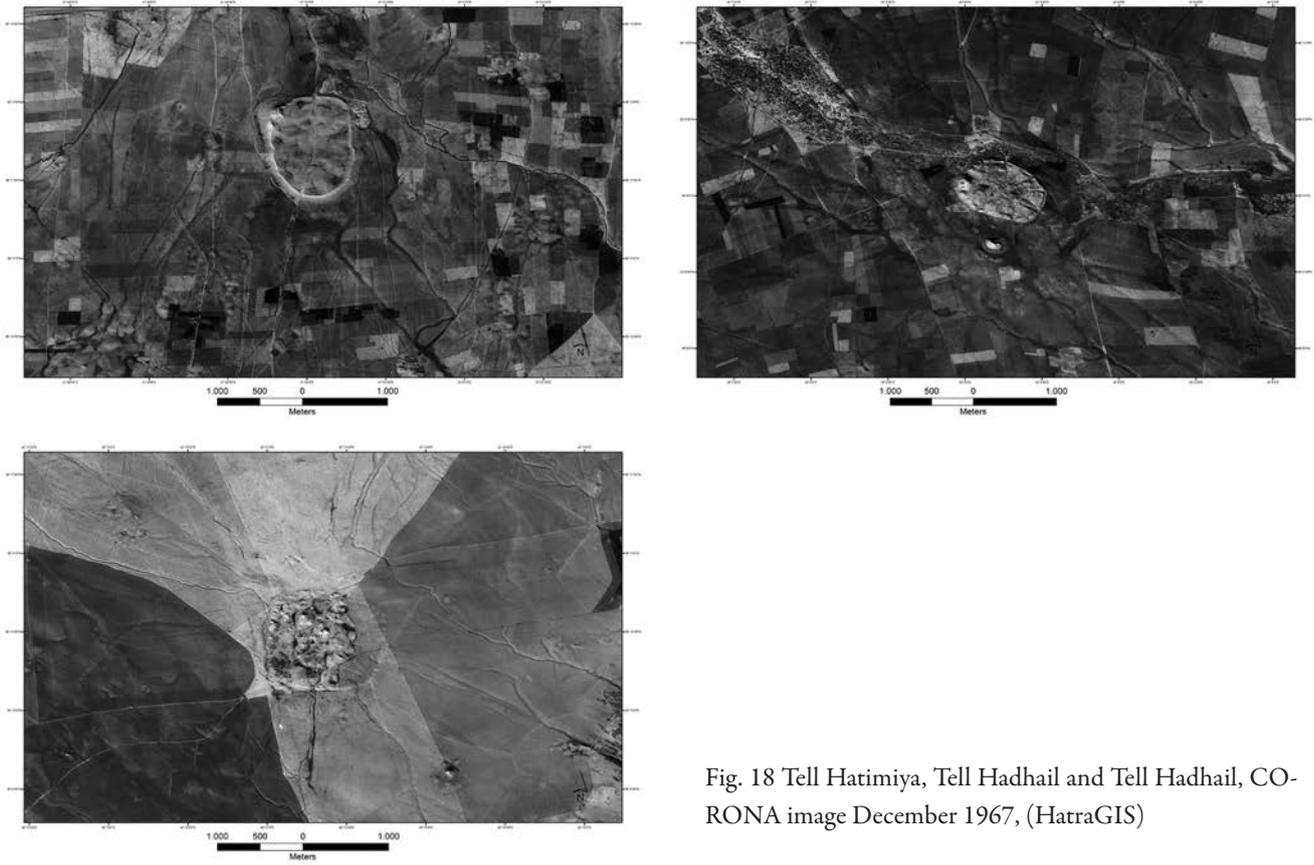


Fig. 18 Tell Hatimiya, Tell Hadhail and Tell Hadhail, CORONA image December 1967, (HatraGIS)

contacts, trades, and exploitation of natural resources. Only new excavations at these sites will allow a better understanding of their characteristic, chronology, and real political and military importance.

The western area of the northern border, between the eastern Khabur area and the Jebel Sinjar, which has not been analysed in detail in this paper, shows a lower density of settlements, probably due to different environmental conditions as well as a lack of data. The later Arabic sources report a land control and taxation of the Kingdom of Hatra extending to the Khabur river and it's striking to find an interesting Hatran inscription, which mentions an unknown *malika* 'King' at Tell Sheikh Hamad, a centre of the lower Khabur.

Only new specific researches on the field and the use of remote sensing techniques also in this western area will allow to better determine the whole complex frame of the north frontier of the Kingdom of Hatra during those interesting centuries of wars and political changes.

⁴⁴ This area is out of the area defined by the Iraqi survey (IBRAHIM 1986, pl. 8).

⁴⁵ See Tabari quoting 'Adi b. Zayd (BOSWORTH 1999, p. 379) and

Ibn Al-Faqiq Al-Hamadani (IX cent. CE): INVERNIZZI 2005, p. 9. For a complete analysis of the question: HAUSER 2013.

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