

Retracted:

Architectural Features of the Agora(Bazaar) of the Ancient City of Anastiopolis (Dara)

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The disagreement between the excavation director and the authors of the article arose due to some missing references in the images and data presented in the article. In order to resolve the disagreement, the authors have requested the removal of the article

THUS the original article should not be published and that the data and results should not be used as a basis for future research

ABSTRACT

In the ancient settlement of Dara (Anastasiopolis), there are structures that have survived from the 5th and 6th centuries and dated to the Late Roman Period. Agora, which is among the most lively and important structures in the ancient city, is very valuable in terms of forming the main artery of the city due to its location in the planning of the city in history. This study covers the spatial analysis and dating of the units regarding the excavation of the

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shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis). Architectural analysis of the shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis) is presented to the academic community for the first time in this article. As a result of the study, nine shops were identified in the agora. It has been determined that the agora street, which runs along the river in the city, is in a position in connection with the Silk Road. This shows that the trade caravans coming from Mesopotamia entered from here, and the area was a public space reserved for the city's shopping. In addition, it is seen that there is more than one construction phase in the architecture of the shops.

KEYWORDS

Dara, Mardin, Architectural Analysis, Stone Masonry, Ancient City

INTRODUCTION

Dara (Anastasiopolis) is situated 30 km southeast of the city of Mardin, 18 km northwest of Nusaybin, and 7 km north of the city of Amuda in Syria. Geographically, it occupies a commanding position on the southern foothills of the Tur Abdin Mountains, to the north of the Mesopotamian Plain, overlooking the plain itself (Ahunbay, 2005; Karataş & Menteşe, 2022) (Fig. 1a).

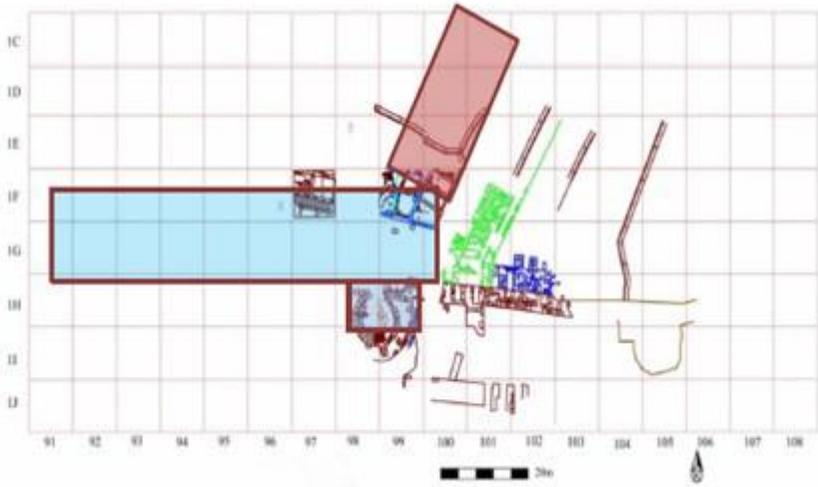
Dara changed hands between the Parthian and Seleucid Kingdoms from the mid-3rd century BCE to the 1st century BCE. In the early 6th century CE, Dara, originally a small settlement, was chosen by the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius (491-518) as a garrison city, and construction activities took place between 503 and 507 (Capizzi, 1969; Preusser, 1911). Anastasius gave the city its name, Anastasiopolis, and transformed Dara into an administrative and military hub for the Mesopotamia region. During the reign of Anastasius (AD 491-518), the decision to establish the city in this area was influenced by its proximity to Nisibis (Nusaybin), its strategic and defensible location, its proximity to water sources, and its dominant position over the plain (Capizzi, 1969; Preusser, 1911). Dara came under the rule of the Sasanian Empire between 577 and 591, and again from 606 to 620. From AD 620 to AD 639, it remained under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire. In 640, along with Dara, a significant portion of Northern Mesopotamia fell under Arab rule. Reverting briefly to Eastern Roman control in the 10th century, Dara

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changed hands between the Seljuk Sultanate and the Eastern Roman Empire until the late 11th century (Croke & Crow, 1983; Collinet, 1924).

In 1150, Dara was besieged and captured by Timurtaş, a ruler of the Artuqid dynasty, and became a part of the Mardin Artuqid Principality. Between 1251 and 1259, it suffered significant damage during the Ilkhanate rule. Starting from these dates, Dara gradually became abandoned and transformed into a small village settlement by the 14th century. The current village of Dara, which dates back to the late 18th century, continues to thrive atop the remains of the majestic Roman city (Ensslin, 1928). The first excavation efforts at the ancient city of Dara (Anastasiopolis) began in 1986. These excavations have continued intermittently up to the present day. During the 2020 excavation season, the archaeological work at Dara Ancient City focused on the agoras, specifically the section where the shops were located (Mundell, 1975) (Fig. 1 b-d).

This study encompasses spatial analyses and dating of the units in relation to the excavation of the shops in the agora of Dara (Anastasiopolis) city. The architectural analyses of the shops in the agora of Dara (Anastasiopolis) city are being presented to the academic community for the first time in this article. This study covers the spatial analysis and dating of the units regarding the excavation of the shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis). Architectural analysis of the shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis) is presented to the academic community for the first time in this article.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 1. (a) The excavated section of the agora area in the village of Dara (highlighted in red). (b-c) The state of the shops in the agora before the 2020 excavation season. (d) The state of the shops in the agora after the 2020 excavation season.

METHOD

This study covers the spatial analysis and dating of the units regarding the excavation of the shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis). Architectural analysis of the shops in the agora of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis) is presented to the academic community for the first time in this article. In this research, the findings obtained during the 2020 excavation campaign of the ancient city of Dara in Mardin were analyzed. This analysis revealed the architectural features and dating of the shops within the agora. Agoras, among the liveliest and most significant structures of ancient cities, have served as main thoroughfares in urban planning due to their strategic placements. Additionally, agoras have been endowed with functions that grant them roles as centers for commerce, ceremonies, religion, and gatherings of the public. Moreover, by offering a covered porticoed space, they have provided a sheltered environment, shielding from the challenging weather conditions (Brands, 2004; Kütük, 2016). This has made them focal centers for activities such as shopping and movement, detached from the hardships posed by climate (Karatas et al., 2023).

Dara settlement hosts a diverse range of structures that have survived from the 5th and 6th centuries to the present day, dating back to the Late Roman Period (Göyünc, 1991). Among these structures, one of the most significant is the agora complex. The agora, being among the liveliest and crucial structures in the ancient city, holds great value due to its historical role as the main artery of the city's layout. During the 2020 excavation season, the archaeological work was conducted in the shops that opened to the porticoes. Excavations in this area covered an approximately 50-meter section in the north-south direction. The excavation began at an elevation of 557.15 meters and concluded at an elevation of 554.30 meters. The excavation was overseen by the Mardin Museum Directorate (Mardin Museum Directorate, 2020). These excavation efforts were funded by the Dicle Development Agency (DİKA). The excavated shops and their

architectural characteristics, which were unearthed during the excavation season, are described in detail below.

RESULTS

SHOP NO: 1

This shop is located at the intersection of the north-south-oriented agora and the east-west-running street, just north of the city wall. The shop, situated at the southernmost part of the agora, is not perfectly square due to its corner location. The reason for this deviation is its placement at the corner. The western boundary wall of the shop was constructed longer than the eastern one, conforming to both the street to its south and the agora to its east. This design choice prevented the shop from being completely square. The east, west, and north walls of the shop are believed to belong to the initial construction phase. All of the walls, presumed to be original, were built using large blocks of stone. However, the southern wall of the shop is not original; it belongs to a later period of secondary use. This wall was constructed using a combination of large stone blocks and smaller polygonal stones. The construction of the walls generally involved lime-mortar with additives.

The shop has a geometrically trapezoidal shape rather than a perfect square. Internally, it measures about 4 meters in the north-south direction and approximately 5 meters in the east-west direction. The east wall of the shop is 2.90 meters, the west wall is 4.20 meters, the north wall is 5 meters, and the south wall is 5.20 meters in length. The wall thickness varies between approximately 0.65 to 0.80 meters. While most shop entrances in the agora open towards the east, the entrance of this shop faces the south street. Moreover, the shop entrance is comparatively wider than the others, measuring around 2.5 meters in width. The door jambs and threshold of the entrance have survived to the present day. The fact that the door opens

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inward into the shop can be deduced from the jambs flanking the entrance on either side (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. *The post-excavation state of shop no. 1.*

SHOP NO: 2

The shop is located west of the agora. The shop has an approximately square plan (Fig. 3a). It has been observed that the original foundations belong to the east and south walls, while the northern wall belongs to a later secondary use phase. The original walls were constructed using large stone blocks. The northern wall, on the other hand, was created by combining large stone blocks with smaller polygonal stones. The construction of the walls generally involved lime-mortar with additives. Geometrically, the shop is nearly square. Its dimensions are approximately 5.55 meters in the north-south direction and 5 meters in the east-west direction. The east wall of the shop is 5.60 meters, the west wall is 5.50 meters, and the north and south walls are each 5 meters in length. The wall thickness varies between 0.70 to 0.80 meters. The entrance of Shop No. 2 opens towards the east, facing the agora.

The doorway is approximately 1.70 meters wide. The door jambs have collapsed, and only the threshold has survived to the present day. In the middle of the threshold and along the edges, there are mortise slots for wooden tenons that held the door upright (Fig. 3b). In the center of the shop, there is a round base with an approximate diameter of 0.65 meters. It is believed that this base was for a column that supported the superstructure of the shop (Fig. 3c).

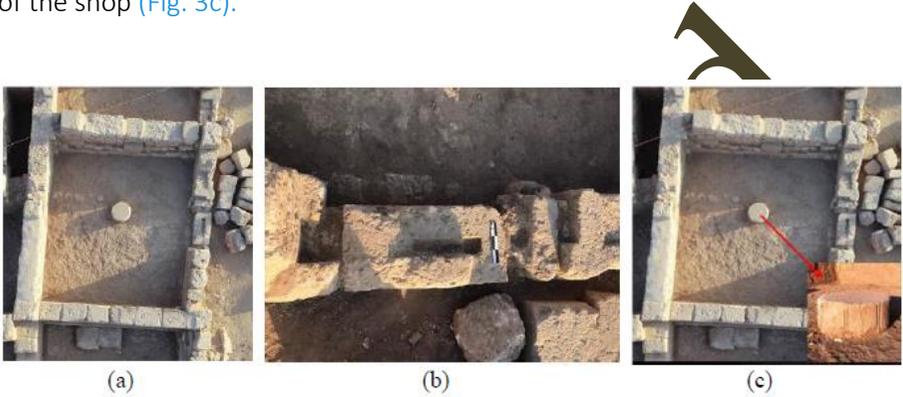


Figure 3. (a) The state of shop number 2 after excavation. (b) Door threshold and lock recesses. (c) Details of the pedestal located in the center of the shop.

SHOP NO: 3

The shop is located west of the agora street (Fig. 4a). This nearly square-shaped shop has only its eastern wall that is original, dating back to the Eastern Roman Period. The other three walls are later additions built on original foundations. The eastern wall was constructed using large stone blocks. The other walls were created by combining large stone blocks with smaller polygonal stones. Additionally, the northern wall of the shop was raised with brick in a later period. An east-west-oriented wall was added to the northern half of the shop in subsequent periods, dividing the shop into

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two unequal spaces. This wall is approximately 5 meters in length and around 0.60 meters wide (Fig. 4b).

It is estimated that this wall was likely constructed during the Islamic period. Geometrically, the shop is almost square. It measures about 4.90 meters in the north-south direction and approximately 4.95 meters in the east-west direction. The east and west walls of the shop are 4.90 meters, and the north and south walls are each 5 meters in length. Wall thickness varies between 0.70 to 0.80 meters. Shop No. 3 features two doors. The first door is located on the only original wall of the shop, the eastern wall. This door opens towards the agora.

It is 1.55 meters wide and contemporaneous with the agora. On the threshold, there are mortise slots for wooden tenons that held the door upright, both in the middle and at the edges. The second door is positioned on the western wall of the shop and is believed to have been constructed during the Islamic period. This door's opening is approximately 1.25 meters wide. The door jambs and threshold have remained intact (Fig. 4c).

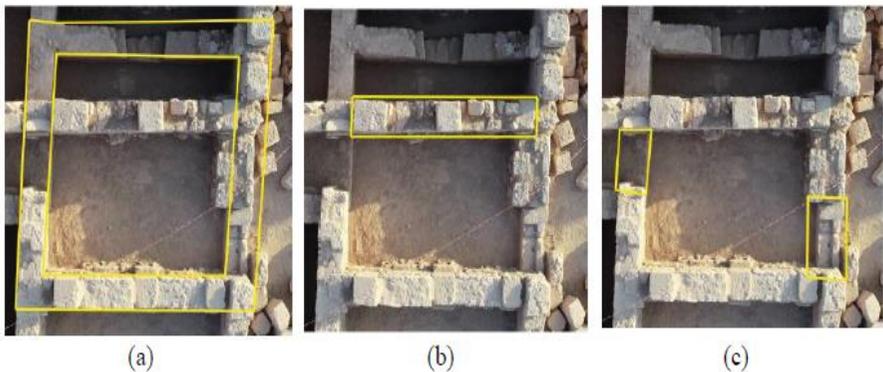


Figure 4. (a) The original boundaries of shop no. 3. (b) The wall added later to the shop. (c) The doors providing entry to Shop No. 3.

SHOP NO: 4

Shop No. 4 is located west of the agora street (Fig. 5a). This nearly square-shaped shop has only its eastern wall that is original. The other three walls are later additions built on original foundations. The eastern wall was constructed using large stone blocks. The other walls were created by combining large stone blocks with smaller polygonal stones. In the initial construction phase, the shop was square-shaped. In later Islamic periods, two parallel walls were added, running east-west, dividing the shop into three unequal spaces (Fig. 5b). These walls are approximately 5 meters in length and around 0.80 meters wide. Between these later-added walls, there is a column base and a fragment of a column that supported the superstructure (Fig. 5c-d). The plinth of this base measures 80 cm, and the round portion on which the column sat is about 60 cm in diameter. Metal farming tools were found right next to this base. Among these iron tools, one is a shovel approximately 40 cm long, and the other is a hoe about 25 cm in length. The shovel has a triangular-shaped tip with a wooden handle hole at the back. The hoe is rectangular and also has a handle hole. Despite corrosion, both artifacts were found in remarkably robust condition. Geometrically, the shop is almost square. It measures about 5 meters in the north-south direction and approximately 4.95 meters in the east-west direction. The east, west and north walls of the shop are each 5 meters, and the south wall is 4.90 meters in length. Wall thickness varies between 0.70 to 0.80 meters. Shop no. 4 features two doors (Fig. 5e). The first door is located on the only original wall of the shop, the eastern wall, and is believed to have been constructed during the Eastern Roman period. This door opens towards the agora and is 1.70 meters wide. On the threshold of this door, there are mortise slots for wooden tenons. The second door is positioned on the western wall of the shop, directly opposite the eastern door, and is believed to have been constructed during the Islamic period. Moreover, this door is approximately 70 cm higher in level compared to the eastern door (Fig. 5f). The elevation of the door from the lower shop level suggests that

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this door was added later and allows access to the space behind the shop, numbered as Shop No. 3. The door's opening is approximately 1.25 meters wide. The door jambs and threshold have remained intact.

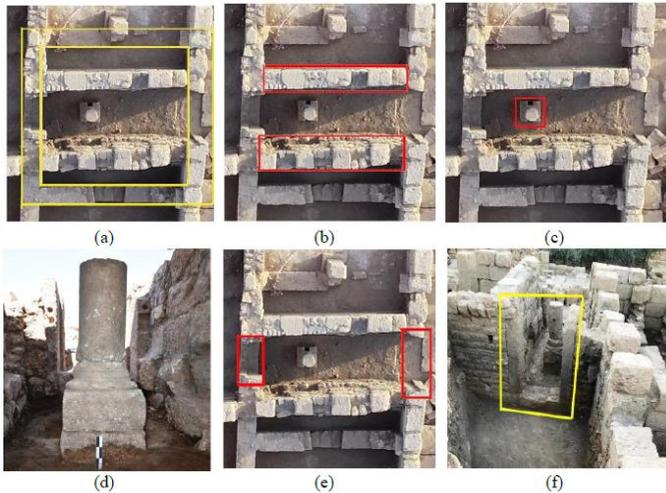


Figure 5. (a) The original boundaries of Shop No. 4. (b) The walls added later to the shop. (c-d) Column fragment and base between the later-added walls. (e) The doors providing entry to Shop No. 4. (f) The door providing entry to the shop from the west side.

SHOP NO: 5

Shop No. 5 is situated west of the agora street (Fig. 6a). The shop has a square plan, with parts of the eastern and southern walls being original, while the other walls are from a later period, built on original foundations. Original walls were constructed using large stone blocks. The remaining walls were formed by combining large stone blocks with smaller polygonal stones. The structure measures 5 meters in both the north-south and east-west directions. All the walls of the shop are 5 meters long. Wall thickness varies between 0.70 to 0.80 meters. The door of Shop No. 4 opens eastwards

towards the agora. The door opening is approximately 1.70 meters wide. The door jambs and threshold have remained intact. Near the center of the shop, there is a square-shaped pedestal with a half-column on top of it. This column, which supports the roof of the shop, is split into two halves from its center. The column has an approximate diameter of 0.65 meters. About 2 meters south of this column, another pedestal has been constructed to support the roof, forming a square base with blocks placed on top of it (Fig. 6b).

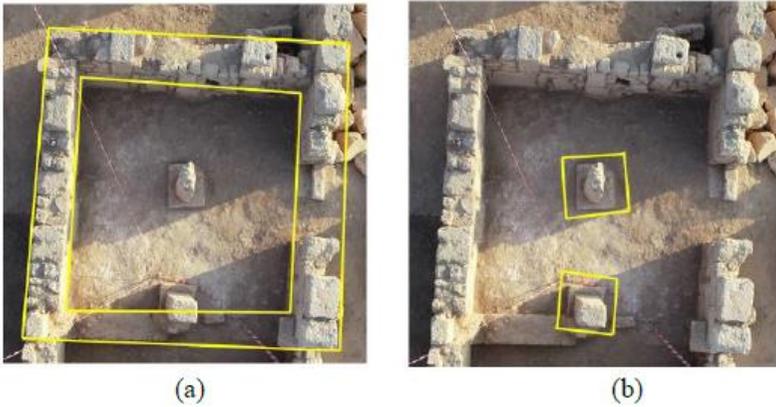


Figure 6. (a) *The original boundaries of Shop No. 5.* (b) *Pedestals supporting the upper covering of the shop and the pedestals on top of them.*

During the excavation, a lime-covered floor was uncovered at a level of 554.30 meters. This floor was found to be at nearly the same level as the agora. As a result, it was deduced that this floor represented the floor of the shop during the Eastern Roman period, leading to the conclusion that the excavation in the area could be concluded. Additionally, pedestals for the columns supporting the superstructure were found on this floor. This situation supports the notion that the lime-mortar floor served as the base of the shop's bottom layer.

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SHOP NO: 6

It is located to the west of the agora (Fig. 7a). Some portions of the eastern, western, and northern walls of the shop are original, while the southern wall belongs to a later phase of secondary use constructed on original foundations. The original walls are built using large block stones. The other wall is constructed by combining large block stones with smaller polygonal stones. The shop has a square plan. The structure measures 5 meters in both the north-south and east-west directions.

All of its walls are 5 meters long. The wall thickness varies between 0.70 and 0.80 meters. The entrance of Shop No. 6 faces east towards the agora. The doorway is approximately 1.65 meters wide. The doorjambs and threshold of the door have survived to the present day. On the wall that borders the shop to the west, there is a square pedestal with a column on top of it (Fig. 7b). The column supporting the upper structure of the shop has a diameter of about 0.65 meters. Excavation work carried out inside the shop revealed many stones belonging to the upper structure. Most of these stones bear chamfers on their surfaces.

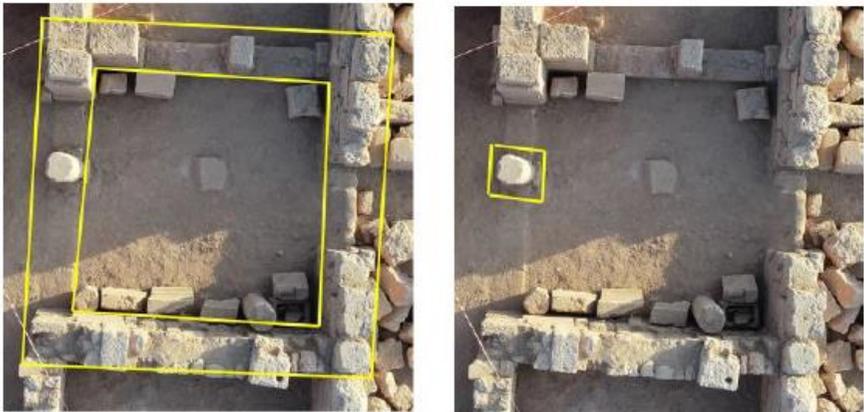


Figure 7. (a) Original boundaries of Shop No. 6. (b) Pedestal and column fragment placed on the western wall during the secondary use of the shop.

SHOP NO:7

The shop is situated to the west of the agora (Fig. 8a). The shop has an approximately square plan. The original foundations are observed in parts of the eastern and southern walls, while the other walls are attributed to a second phase of construction on original foundations. In the construction of the shop walls, generally, lime-infused mortar was used. The shop has a square plan, both in the north-south and east-west directions, with a length of 5 meters. All walls of the shop have a length of 5 meters. The thickness of the walls varies between 0.70 to 0.80 meters. The doorway of Shop No. 7 opens towards the east, facing the agora. The door opening is approximately 1.65 meters wide. Both the door jambs and the door threshold have survived to the present day. Hollows can be seen on the door threshold and the side jambs, which are related to the wooden system of the door (Fig. 8b). In the center of the shop, there are two column fragments with a diameter of approximately 0.52 meters.

These are likely additions from the Islamic period, not part of the original construction of the shop. It is probable that these column fragments belonged to wooden supports carrying the upper structure. During the excavations in 2020, a dual row of interlocked tubes forming a water channel was revealed. These parallel channels were likely used for the drainage of wastewater (Fig. 8c). Each of the tubes that constituted the water system has an average length of 35 cm and a diameter of about 12 cm. The smaller diameter of the mouth of the tubes allowed them to be fitted into each other to form the system. The fact that this waste water system emerges at a point close to the surface (30 cm deep) indicates its construction in a later period (17th-18th century).

The tubes run from east to west, exiting the shop from the west towards the east. Water channels discovered at a relatively higher level have been lowered in a vertical manner in the section where the shop's door is located.

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The channels' path has been diverted by stacking three stone blocks, bored through, at the door opening and transferring the channels to the portico in front of the shop (Fig. 8d). It is highly likely that a waste water channel passed in front of the shops. During the excavation, a column capital was also discovered in the area. It appears that, originally, it was a column capital that was later hollowed out for a different purpose (Fig. 8e). In the course of the excavation work, it was observed that the original eastern wall of the shop went deeper from the agora level. In order to reach the foundation of the wall and understand the initial construction phases of both the shops and the agora, a 2 x 2 meter test pit was opened (Fig. 8f). Based on the data obtained from the excavation in the test pit, it was observed that the foundations of the eastern walls of the shops, assumed to belong to the Eastern Roman period, were approximately 1.55 meters deeper than the agora level. With this information, it is suggested that the agora street might have been constructed not during the initial establishment of the city in the Anastasius period but possibly during the subsequent phase of extensive repairs in the I. Justinianus period (Hussey, 1985).

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Figure 8. (a) The original boundaries of shop no. 7. (b) Indentations belonging to the wooden door system. (c) Tubes of the water system. (d) Location where the tubes of the water system open to the portico. (e) In later phases, hollowed-out for a different purpose from the original.

SHOP NO: 8

Located to the west of the agora (Fig. 9a), the shop has an approximate square plan. Only the eastern wall belongs to the initial construction phase. The other walls are from a later phase built upon the original foundations. The original walls were constructed using large stone blocks. The northern and western walls, however, were built with large stone blocks combined

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with smaller polygonal stones. The dimensions of the structure are 5 meters in both the north-south and east-west directions. All walls of the shop are 5 meters in length. The thickness of the walls varies between 0.70 and 0.80 meters. There are two internal walls attached to the north and south walls of the shop (Fig. 9b). These were likely added in the Islamic period. Shop No. 8 features two doors, one to the east, the other to the north (Fig. 9c).

The eastern door opens towards the agora. The door opening is approximately 1.65 meters wide. Both door jambs and the threshold have survived to the present day. Notably, there are hollows on the door threshold and on both sides of the door frame, which are related to the wooden door system. The northern door, which opens towards the north, is about 1.25 meters wide and located approximately 1.50 meters above the shop floor level. This suggests that this door is not the original entrance of the shop but was likely added in a later historical period (probably in the 12th century). During the excavation, a pithos was uncovered (Fig. 9d). It has an approximate diameter of 80 cm and a height of 1 meter. The pithos was likely buried in the ground during its period of use.

At the uppermost level where the pithos was found, there was a layer of stone and lime-mixed mortar, supporting the idea that the pithos was buried. It is believed that this artifact, used for storing grains, was an underground storage container. Although the artifact was found in many pieces, almost all parts are present, indicating that the object can be restored. The pithos, characterized by its wide mouth and broad body, features a closing band around its shoulder. After the necessary documentation, the artifact was lifted to the excavation depot. In the course of excavations in Shop No. 8, several stone blocks with master marks were discovered. On the stones, marks in the shape of the letter 'A', about 70 cm in size, were engraved (Fig. 9e). During the ancient era, stonemasons would leave these marks on their architectural creations, effectively signing their

work. This mark, featuring a compass with arms open downward at the top and arms open upward at the bottom, has been in use from ancient times to the present day.

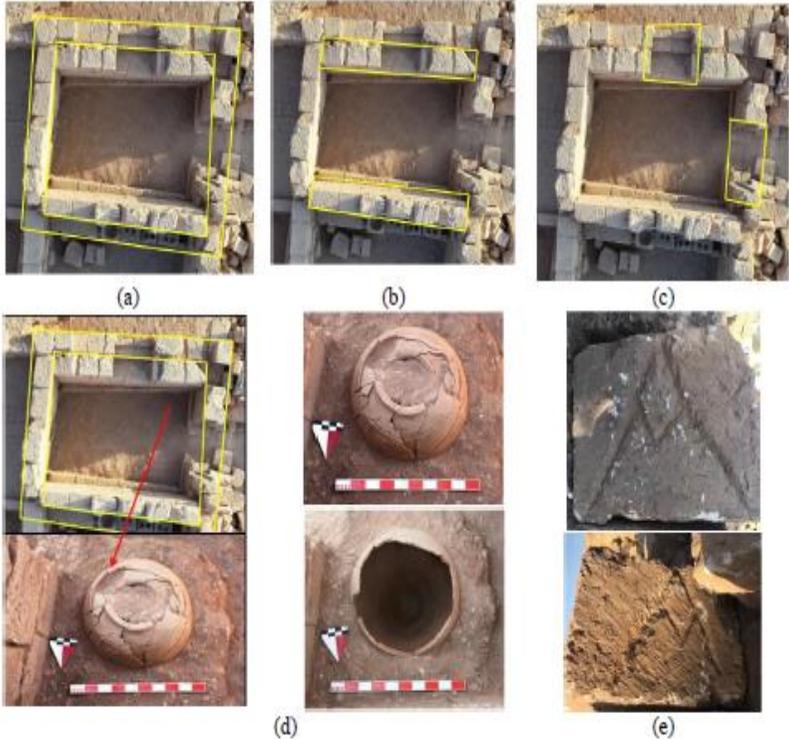


Figure 9. (a) Original boundaries of shop no. 8. (b) Walls added to the shop later. (c) Doors constructed in different periods. (d) Pithos located in the northeast corner of the shop. (e) Stonemason's mark.

SHOP NO: 9

Located to west of the Agora, the complete plan of the shop is not yet known; however, it is estimated to have an approximate square plan (Fig. 10a). During the 2020 excavation season, only a small area to the south of the shop was investigated. As a result of the excavations, a brick-paved floor at an elevation of 555.50 meters was uncovered (Fig. 10b).

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The floor covers an area of 2.20 meters in the north-south direction and 5 meters in the east-west direction. Comprising square tiles with average dimensions of 21 x 21 cm, the floor is situated about 1.50 meters above the original floor level of the shop. Therefore, this floor is likely not from the original construction phase of the shop, but rather from a later period, possibly around the 12th century AD. The function of this space has not yet been determined. Further excavation efforts in the area will likely shed light on the intended use of the space.



Figure 10. (a) *The original boundaries of Shop No. 9.* (b) *Brick-paved floor.*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study encompasses the spatial analysis and dating of units related to the excavation of shops in the agora area of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis). The architectural analysis of the shops in the agora area of the city of Dara (Anastasiopolis) is presented to the academic community for the first time in this article.

According to the findings, the Agora of the Ancient City of Dara consists of a stone-paved street, a portico adjacent to the street, and shops/workshops opening onto the portico. In this area where a total of nine shops are found, the shops are arranged side by side, adjacent to the

north-south-oriented agora (Fig. 11). Starting from the southern gate of the city, the agora street paved with large stone blocks continues northwards and is approximately five and a half meters wide, extending for about a hundred meters and observable.

Within the city, the street extending along the river is bordered by a portico on the west side facing the river, and behind it, there are shops/workshops. It is observed that the agora continues northward in parallel with the natural bend of the river, and the structures, mostly square in plan, are present. While the east walls of well-preserved shops have endured to the present day, the other walls have undergone reconstruction during different periods. The average heights of the walls vary between one and three meters, indicating the existence of multiple construction phases in the architectural structures. To substantiate these phases, a test trench was excavated. The conducted test trenches and the revealed architectural elements have confirmed the city's multi-phase structure. Additionally, small finds such as coins, ceramics, and lamps also support this claim. Accordingly, the initial construction of the city, including the city walls and the eastern walls of the shops, took place during the Anastasius period (AD 491-518).

On the other hand, the Agora street was constructed during the reign of Justinian I (AD 527-565) when extensive repairs were made to the city, rather than in the initial establishment phase of the city. Furthermore, in 2019, another trench was opened adjacent to the city walls, and it was documented that the foundations of the walls are also about two to two and a half meters deeper than the agora level. The foundations of the shop believed to date back to the Byzantine period were constructed using large-sized block stones in the isodomic wall technique (Fig. 12a). In the Early Islamic period following the Arab invasions, the walls were built with large blocks, and polygonal stones were placed in between (Fig. 12b). After the 12th century, walls were sometimes constructed using only cut stones, and

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at other times, they were combined with bricks (Fig. 12c). Generally, lime-mortar mixtures were used in the construction of shop walls. When examining the wall techniques used in the shops, construction techniques from the 6th century, 7th to 10th century, 11th to 12th century, and post-13th century periods were identified (Fig. 12d).

After examining the door openings of the shops, it has been hypothesized that the doors constructed during the Byzantine period were later sealed off by subsequent cultures (Fig. 10f). These doors were reopened during the 2020 excavation season, coinciding with the shop excavations. Generally, the doors of the shops in the agora open towards the portico on the eastern side. Almost all doors have a width ranging from one and a half to two meters (Fig. 12e). The coins found during the 2020 excavations have provided concrete information for dating purposes. Despite their corrosion and deformation, the coins were examined, revealing that they belong to three different civilizations. In chronological order, coins from the Byzantine, Umayyad, and Abbasid periods have been identified.



Figure 11. *Arrangement of Architectural Structures in the Agora*



Figure 12. (a) Walls of the Agora Shops from the Initial Construction Phase. (b) Walls of Agora Shops from the Secondary Usage Phase - Combination of Block and Polygonal Stones. (c) Wall Utilizing Both Polygonal Stones and Bricks. (d) Chronological Sequence of Wall Techniques Used in the Shops. (e) Closed State of Shop Doors Prior to Excavation. (f) Open State of Shop Doors after Excavation.

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Retracted