

# Exploring Neo-Assyrian Rural Settlements in the Erbil Plain: Results from the Sebittu Project, 2023-2024

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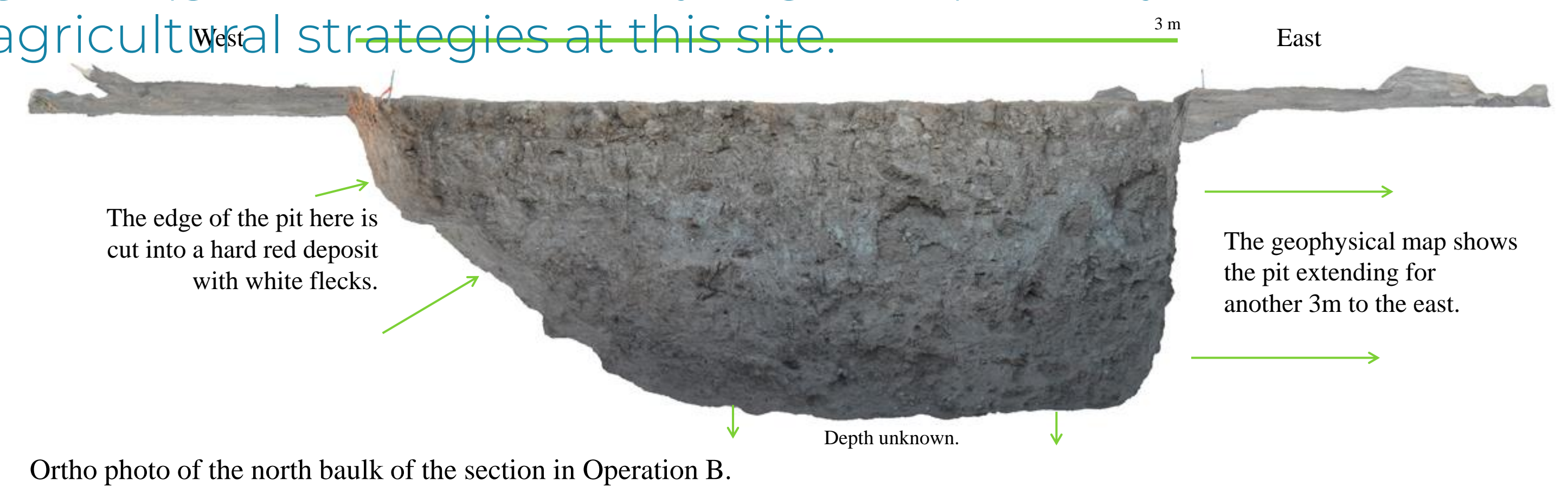
## Introduction

The Sebittu Project consists of seven rural settlements centered around Site 292, all of which were previously identified by the EPAS project. These settlements are identified as farmsteads (<1 ha), hamlets (between 1 and 5 ha), and villages (>5 ha). Each site is now located in an agricultural setting with a variety of crops being planted each year. During the 2023 and 2024 seasons of the Sebittu Project three of seven sites were surveyed using a combination of pedestrian and gradiometric survey. Pedestrian survey was limited to the 2023 season at sites 290 and 275 (Kharaba Tawus) however both sites, as well as Site 298 (Sirawa) were surveyed with magnetic gradiometry in 2023 and 2024 respectively.



## 2023 season excavation

At Site 290 we excavated a 3m x 1.5m sounding revealing two stratigraphic layers including a Neo-Assyrian pit below modern plow zone. Preliminary palaeobotanical analysis suggests that grains (glume wheat, barley, legumes) are key to the agricultural strategies at this site.



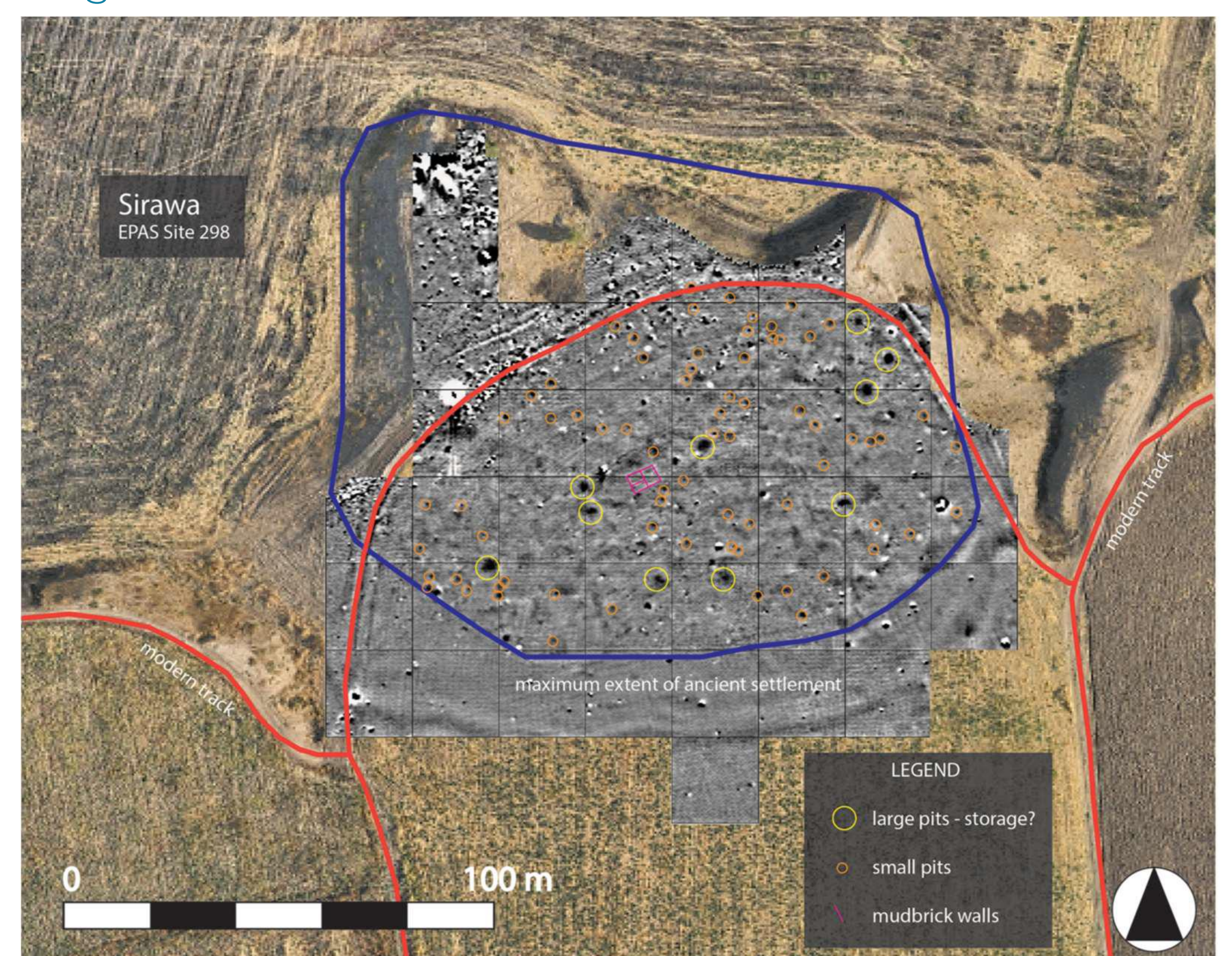
At Site 275 or Kharaba Tawus excavations were undertaken across a 5 x 5 m sounding in which four stratigraphic layers were uncovered. The two most relevant include a post Iron Age shallow pit, and potential Iron Age building collapse. The preliminary palaeobotanical analysis suggests that the agricultural strategy at the site is based upon free-threshing wheat. A distinctly different strategy than at Site 290.

## 2024 season survey

Site 298 or Sirawa was examined using gradiometric survey during the 2024 season. One of the main goals was to locate and map ancient features for future investigation.

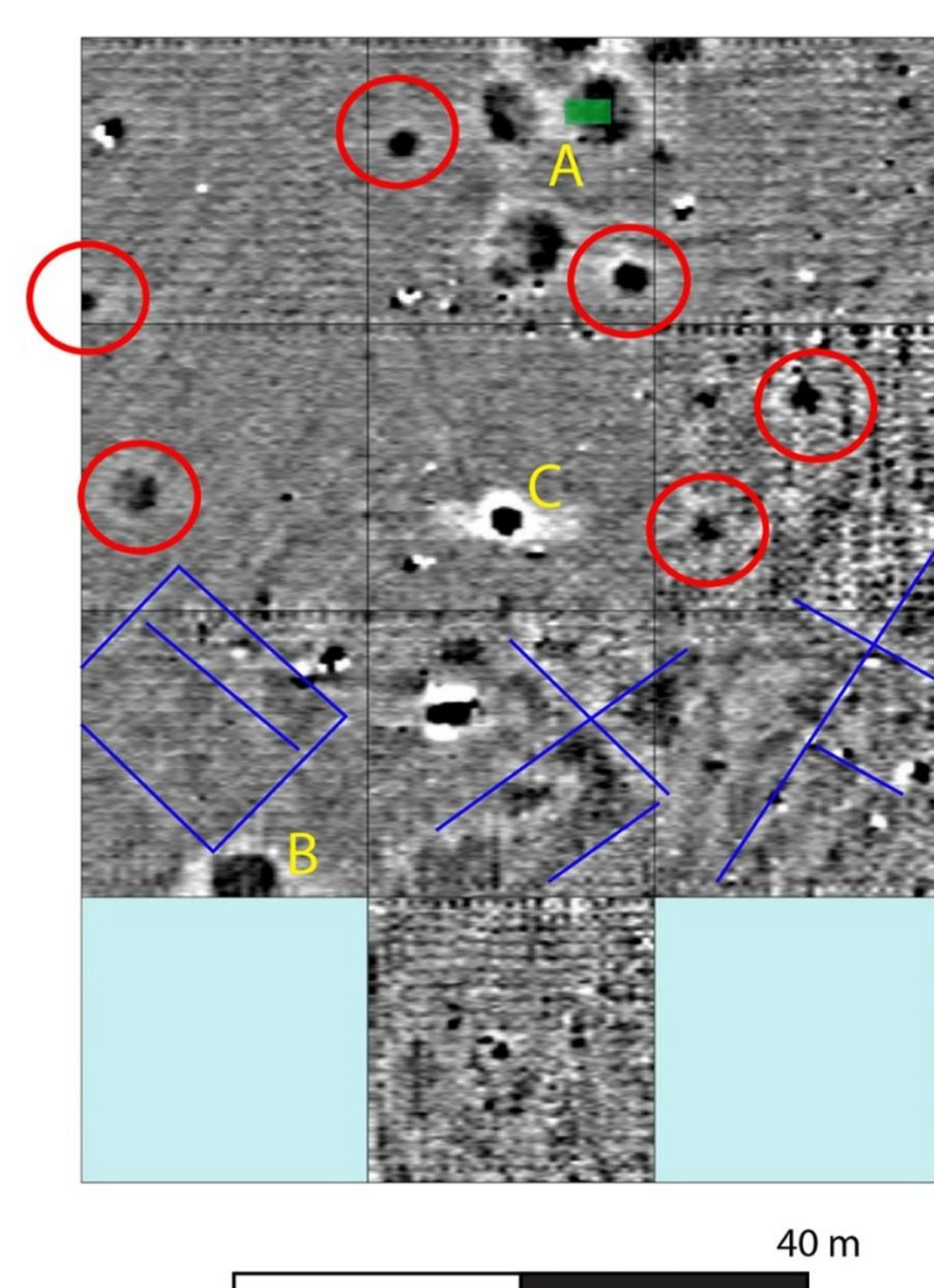
This mapping endeavor revealed the anomalies representing both potential large (yellow) and small (orange) storage pits as well as mudbrick walls (pink). These do require 'ground truthing' but the lack of iron-rich signatures supports the hypothesis that these are ancient, rather than modern features. Additionally, the maximum extent of the site (blue boundaries) was identified and includes the eroding slopes to the north.

The survey indicates that the total area of ancient Sirawa is 1.40 ha, with approximately 55% accessible for future archaeological investigations.

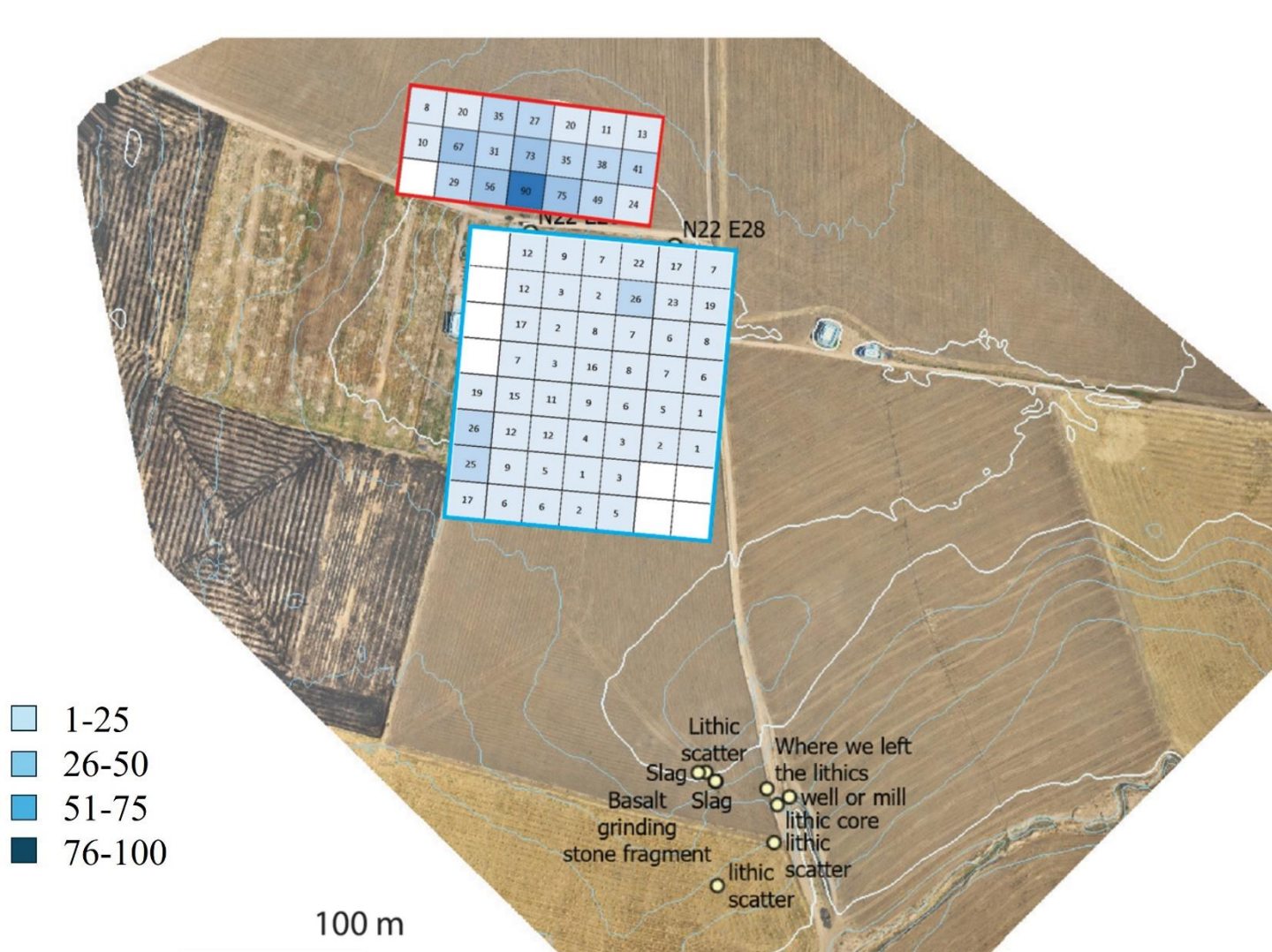


## 2023 season survey

Site 290 was examined through pedestrian survey that guided the areas gradiometric survey was conducted across. The pedestrian survey shows that the highest concentration of Neo-Assyrian pottery is in the center of the survey area. This area was then gradiometrically surveyed (right) and revealed multiple anomalies including potential granaries or pits (red), and walls (blue). Current excavation areas are also indicated in green.



Site 275 or Kharaba Tawus was examined using pedestrian survey across 68 squares (20x20 m each). This map (left) shows raw counts and indicates that higher concentrations are north of the modern road in the top of the slope. This drove the decision to excavate in this area after the survey was completed.



## Acknowledgements

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