CAMEL

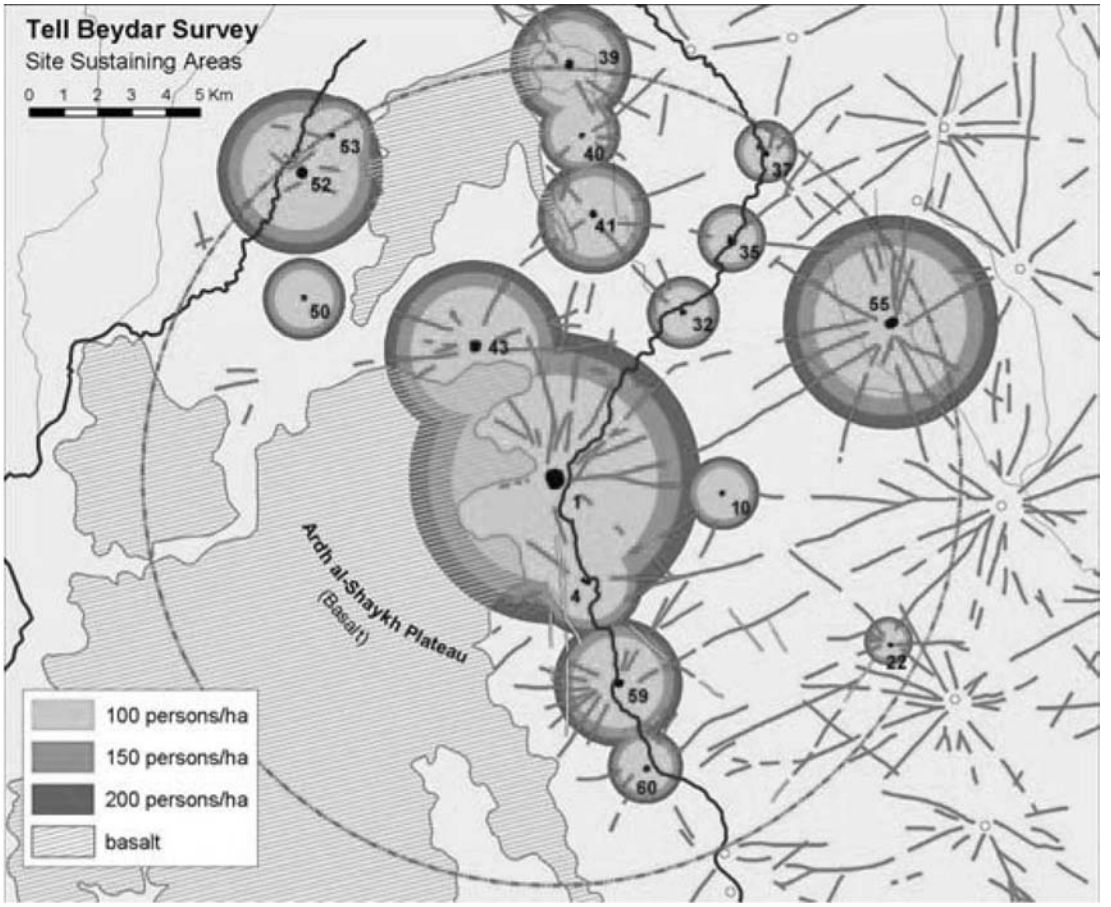
Carrie Hritz

The Center for the Archaeology of the Middle Eastern Landscape (CAMEL) at the Oriental Institute was begun in 1998 under the direction of Tony Wilkinson. The academic year of 2003/2004 has been one of transition at CAMEL with the departure of Wilkinson to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. However, despite an ocean between us, a close collaboration with Wilkinson and the University of Edinburgh continues. As a result of Wilkinson's departure the year has also seen the hiring of a new director for CAMEL, Scott Branting, who assumes the duties of director on July 1, 2004. Branting is no stranger to the Institute as he holds a Master's degree from here in Hittitology. He is an expert in both Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and archaeology, with a specialization in ancient transportation analysis and urban system development. He also serves as Associate Director of the Kerkenes Dağ Archaeological Project in central Turkey.

The mission statement of CAMEL has been outlined in detail in the 2003 *Annual Report*, but some of its major goals can be briefly summarized. CAMEL aims to analyze and understand the ancient Near Eastern landscape by combining both traditional on the ground archaeological surveys with remote sensing methods such as satellite imagery and aerial photograph analysis. Our research methods include geoarchaeological studies of buried landscapes and environmental change as well as incorporating the use of texts to provide information on human use of the landscape. Much of the work of CAMEL includes reconstruction of demography and economic landscapes as well as seeking to understand the ways in which people related to their landscapes. Addressing these historical questions through landscape archaeological research has a long tradition at the Oriental Institute and CAMEL provides a venue for the introduction of new technologies to expand this research. Satellite remote sensing and GIS provide a way to incorporate many different types of archaeological data, such as maps, excavated data, soil information, and survey data, into a single format for analysis. For example, GIS allows for the superimposing of distributions of archaeological sites on soils maps to determine suitable locations for ancient settlement or to investigate the relationship between settlements and the cultivable land surrounding them to address questions of land use, economics, and demography.

During 2003/2004 we continued to purchase satellite imagery from the declassified CORONA satellite missions of the 1960s through the generous support of donors to the Oriental Institute. This data is extremely important in that it shows facets of the ancient landscape that have been destroyed, by among other things the processes of cultivation and development, in the intervening years. The CAMEL staff (Carrie Hritz, Mark Altaweel, and Jason Ur) has obtained imagery from large areas of the Near East such as Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq to meet the needs of both new and existing projects of Oriental Institute faculty and students. We have continued to scan and georeference older maps that also contain very useful topographic information such as those from 1918 Iraq. While this digitization of maps is useful for landscape archaeological studies, it also provides a means of preservation of these fragile primary sources.

Work has also progressed on the integration of different sets of archaeological landscape data for southern Mesopotamia. In March 2004, CAMEL acquired and scanned eighteen maps with topographic information from the collection of Robert McC. Adams. We wish to thank Adams for allowing us to do this. This 1:50,000 map series was used as a basis for the surveys conducted by Adams in Mesopotamia over the past thirty years. By incorporating these maps and

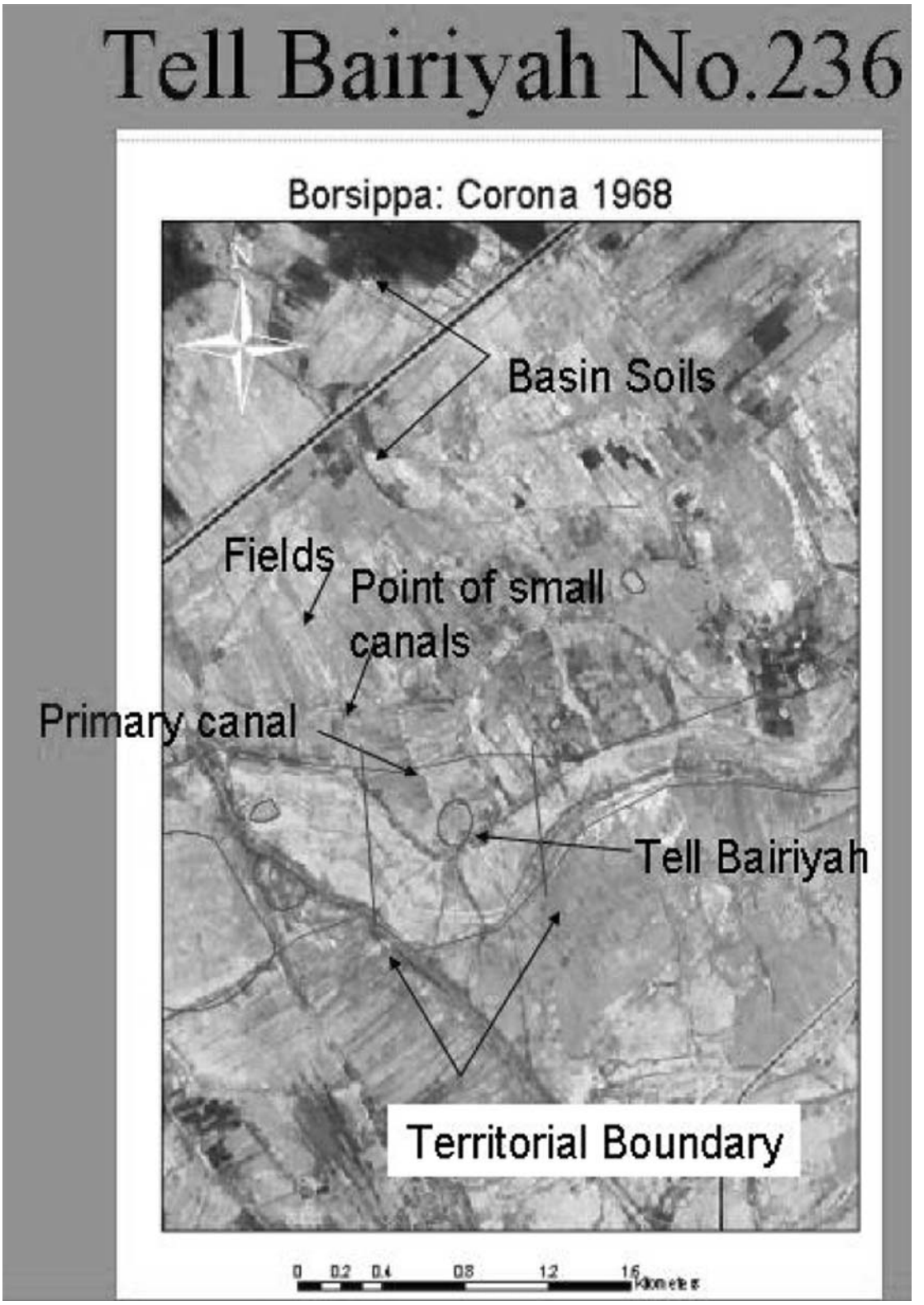


Estimated sustaining areas around Tell Beydar. Processed by Jason Ur

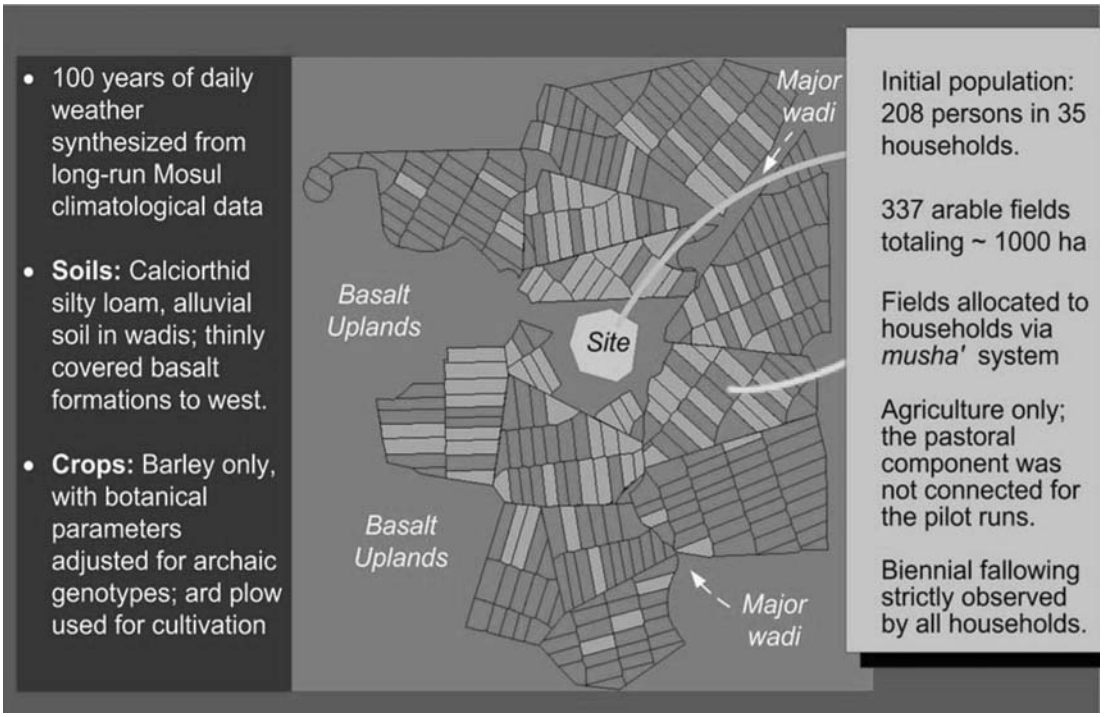
the data marked upon them by Adams into our GIS we will be able to preserve this information for future archaeological surveys and projects. This includes a newly starting CAMEL project aimed at documenting the destruction of archaeological sites in the region with a view towards eventually assisting in the preservation of what has not yet been destroyed.

Finally, CAMEL has also continued to provide data and analysis for the Modeling Ancient Settlement Systems (MASS) Project run jointly between the Oriental Institute and the Division of Information Sciences at Argonne National Laboratory. The landscape data provided by CAMEL represents a crucial component to the overall project's goal of modeling how a Bronze Age Near Eastern society interacted with its landscape.

During the 2004/2005 academic year it is our hope that CAMEL will continue to expand its resources in order to continue to assist Oriental Institute projects and to develop additional projects of its own. In particular we plan, as finances allow, to continue to acquire satellite and cartographic data for larger areas of the Near East in support of our mission. We are confident



Modeled village and surrounding fields. Complied by John Christiansen and Mark Altaweel



Landscape reconstruction near Borsippa. Processed by Carrie Hritz

that, under the leadership of Scott Branting, CAMEL will continue to evolve and play an important role retaining the Oriental Institute's status as a world-class institution supporting archaeology from within the unique perspective of the surrounding landscape.