

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ  
WORLD HERITAGE LIST N° 434

## A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The Necropolis of Bat

Location : Interior Region

State Party : Oman

Date : December 23, 1986

## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the inclusion of the proposed cultural property on the World Heritage List be deferred.

## C) JUSTIFICATION

As far back as 3000 B.C., the Sumerians had boatloads of copper and stones (probably diorite) brought from Magan (the region which corresponds to historic Oman, to the northwest of the Sultanate of Oman and to the east of the United Arab Emirates). Archaeological surveys carried out over the last 15 years have located a large number of human settlements from this period, extending from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman: in 1973 the Harvard Archaeological Group reported 17 in the Sultanate of Oman alone.

Together with the Al Burayimi border zone, the Ibri region to the southwest of Djebel Akhdar is the richest in necropoles and archaeological sites dating back to the third millennium. Excavations, started in 1972 by a Danish team, have shown that the village of Bat, 30 kms east of Ibri, seems to have been inhabited continuously for over 4000 years. The necropolis consists of about 100 dry-stone tombs, which resemble traditional hive-shaped huts, vaulted in "tas de charge" and divided into two or three chambers : burials here were not collective, as was the case at the site at Umm an-Nar, near Abu Dhabi, dating from the same period but each tomb contained from two to five distinct burial places.

Outside the area where burials are dense and where there are no dwellings, between 200 and 300 tombs have been found within a radius of one to two kilometres. These lie alongside the remains of some large circular stone buildings, 20 m in diameter, whose function is still a mystery. The remarkable absence of openings and the interior layout of non-communicating rooms are behind the hypotheses that they may be silos or cisterns; however, there is no further evidence on which to base this assumption.

ICOMOS is very much aware of the extent to which our knowledge of the protohistory of the Arabian peninsula has progressed thanks to the surveys carried out by Hastings, Humphries and Meadow (published in 1975) and the results of the excavations undertaken by Krifelt (published in 1976). The pre-urban site of Bat, whose necropolis was one of the first to be identified and studied, is unquestionably of great interest for the history of this cultural area.

However, there exist other similar sites very close to Bat which are more spectacular because they are better conserved (the site at al-Aïn is the first to come to mind). For this reason ICOMOS feels that any inclusion on the World Heritage List at this point would be premature. A better alternative would be to study the possibility of a joint nomination for the Bat and al-Aïn sites; the exact limits of the two sites should be defined and a minimum legal protection ensured for them. This is at present sadly lacking in both cases and only their isolation and lack of fame have so far managed to guarantee their preservation.

ICOMOS, April 1987

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## A) IDENTIFICATION

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## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III and IV.

## C) JUSTIFICATION

The protohistoric site extending north of the village and palm grove of Bat, where excavations began in 1972, includes a settlement and a necropolis from the third millenium B.C.

In the settlement zone, north of the confluent of a small waterway and the Wadi al Hijr, the first features one notices are five stone "towers". These structures are very representative of the first Bronze Age in the Oman peninsula. One of these towers has been entirely excavated by the Danish team led by Karen Frifelt. Through archaeometry, it has been determined that it was built between 2595 and 2465 B.C., dates confirmed by the examination of typical ceramic materials. At the level of the substructures, the plan of the tower, which is 20m in diameter, features a series of exterior surface projections and two rows of parallel rooms on either side of a large median platform in masonry with a well in the centre.

From the tower, which serves as the site's reference point, can be distinguished immediately to the east on the slope a series of rectangular houses with central courts and, to the north, a vast necropolis which can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group is located at the top of the rocky slope. Its dry-stone tombs -among which are ones from the 4th millenium, although in some cases they may have subsequently been modified- are scattered along the path from Bat to Al Wahrah.

The much more densely concentrated second group extends over a river terrace southeast of the wadi and includes more than a hundred dry-stone "beehive" tombs, which tend to be organized according to an overall plan. The most ancient ones are to the north. They have only one entry and one funerary chamber and were a collective burial place for a small number of dead. Towards the south, the sepulchres become more monumental. They have two entries which open onto two and sometimes four funerary chambers and were intended for a greater number of dead.

Although the group constituted by the settlement and necropolis zones of Bat forms a coherent and representative whole, it would be unfortunate not to add to it two contemporary archaeological sites that are nearby :

- the tower of al-Khutm, 2 km west of Bat,
- the group of beehive tombs of Qubur Juhhal at al-Ayn, 22 km east-southeast of Bat.

The 21 tombs from the 3rd millenium, aligned on a rocky crest that stands out in a superb mountainous landscape of Jebel Misht to the north, are in a remarkable state of preservation. They have not been excavated and constitute an obviously interesting archaeological reserve.

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the archaeological zone of Bat and the additional sites of al-Khutm and al-Ayn on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III and IV.

- Criterion III. The zone encompassing the settlement and necropolises of Bat is the most complete and best known site of the 3rd millenium B.C. It is far more noteworthy than similar sites at Hili, Firq and the valley of Wadi Bahla in the Oman peninsula. Historical sources tell us that the country of Magan (or Makkan) was at that time the principal extraction centre of copper, which was exported even to far-away Mesopotamia as early as about 3000 B.C. The appearance of a more strictly hierarchical social organization (as attested to both in the settlements, where circular defensive structures contrast with rectangular houses and in the necropolises, where the arrangement of funerary space is more complex) goes hand in hand with higher living standards and social changes linked to a trade economy.

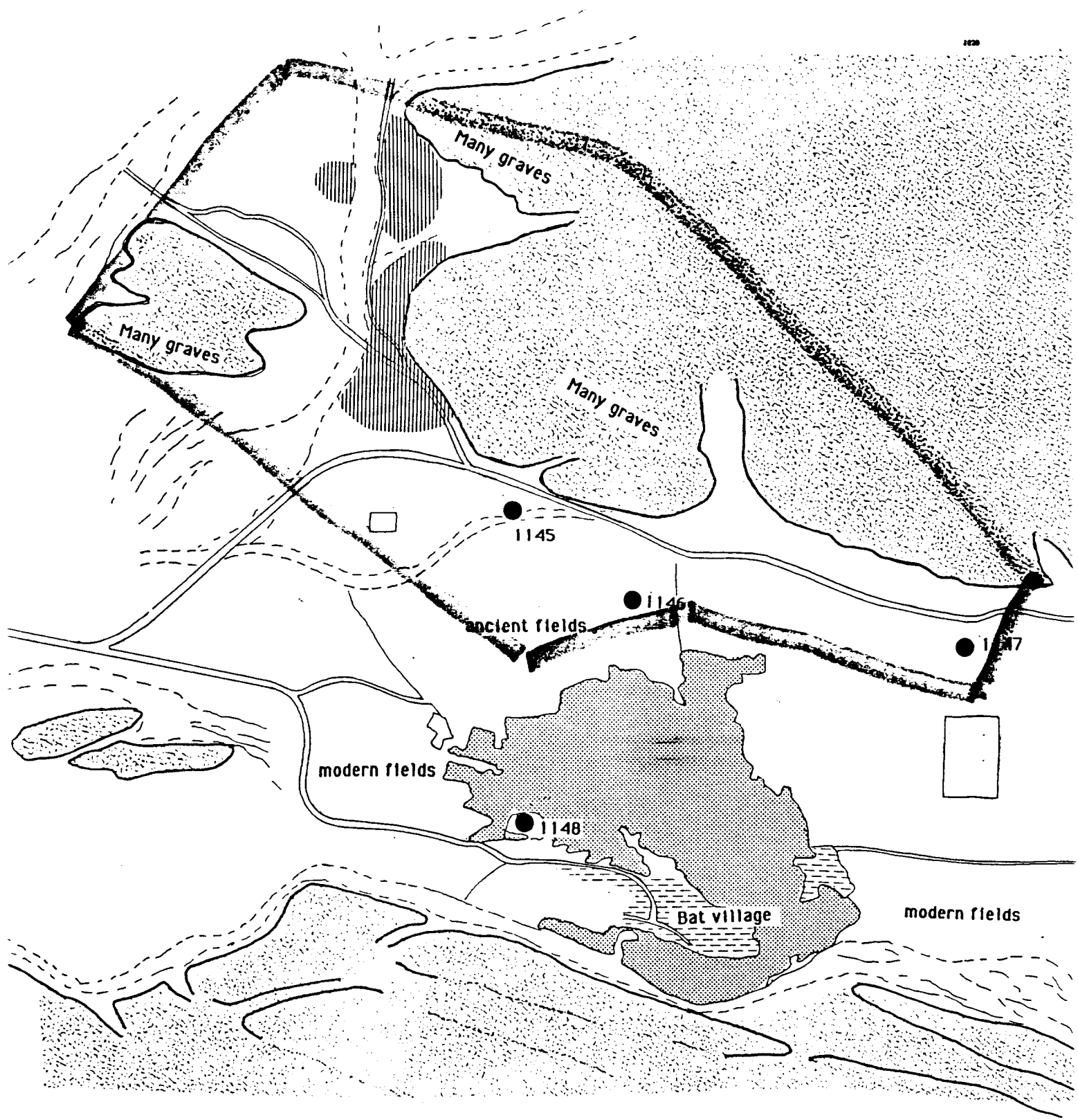
- Criterion IV. In a restricted, coherent space, the necropolis of Bat bears characteristic and unique witness to the evolution of funeral practices during the first Bronze Age in the peninsula of Oman.








### Observations of ICOMOS

The archaeological site of Bat ought to be protected in its entirety, including tower 1148 mentioned in the excavation report by Karen Frifelt which is situated some distance away, on the southern border of the palm grove.

In the absence of any surveillance of the site, which is protected according to Article 42 of the royal decree 6/80, two major risks must be fought : the devastation of stone tombs by villagers looking for construction materials, and the appearance of enclosure walls or buildings on the site, which is in a non aedificandi zone. The same observations hold true for the site of al-Ayn, whose only protection until now was its isolated location.

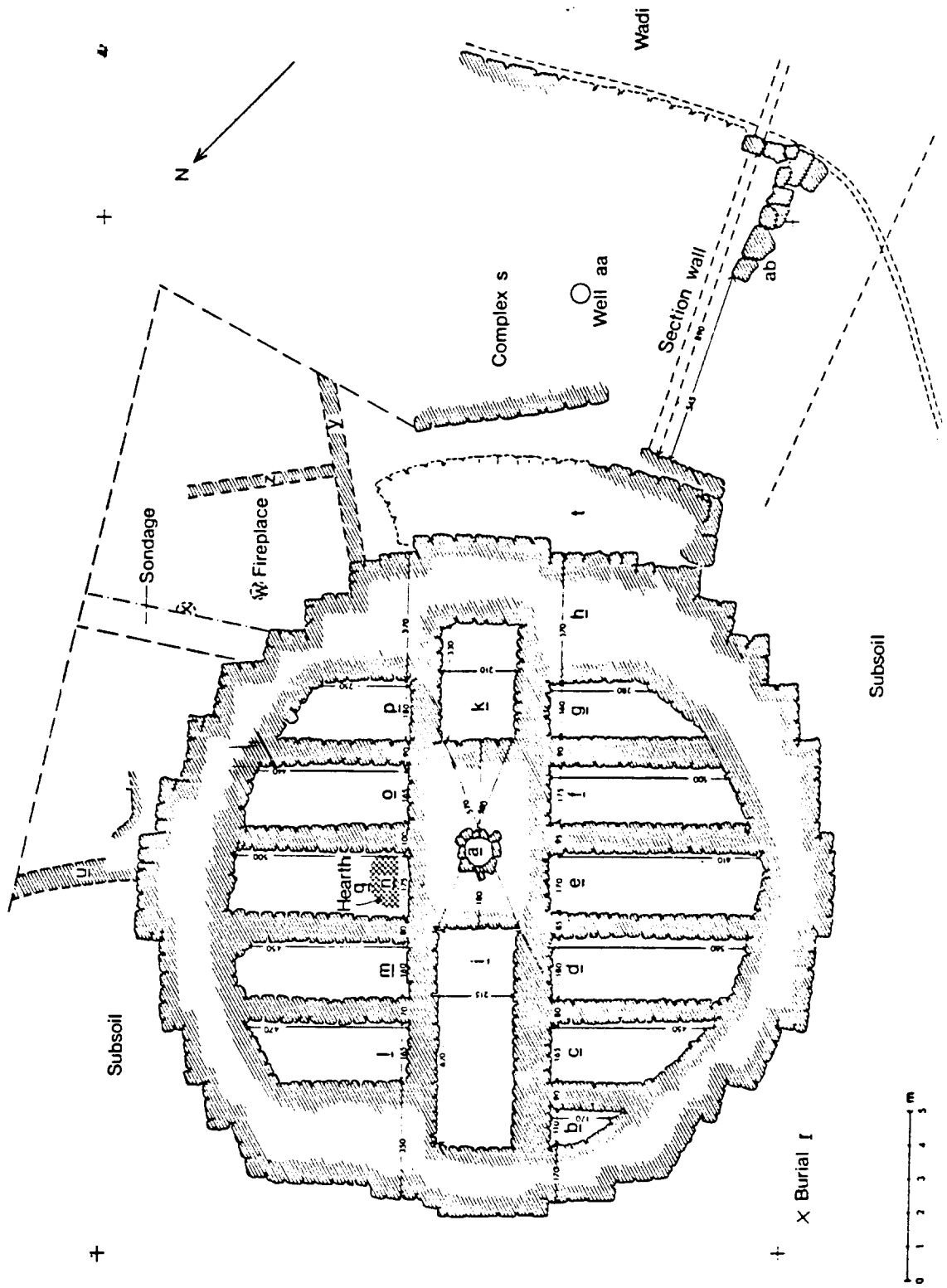
ICOMOS, May 1988



-  Hilly area (450 to 500 m)
-  Built areas
-  Palmtree gardens
-  main extension of necropolis into the plain
-  main Wadi bed
-  main track
-  tower (1145 excavated by Danish team)

### BAT AREA

Interpretation from air photograph (OM 85 31 213)  
additional data from Frifelt 1985, fig. 2



- Bat : tower 1145  
 (after Frifelt 1979 fig. 15)

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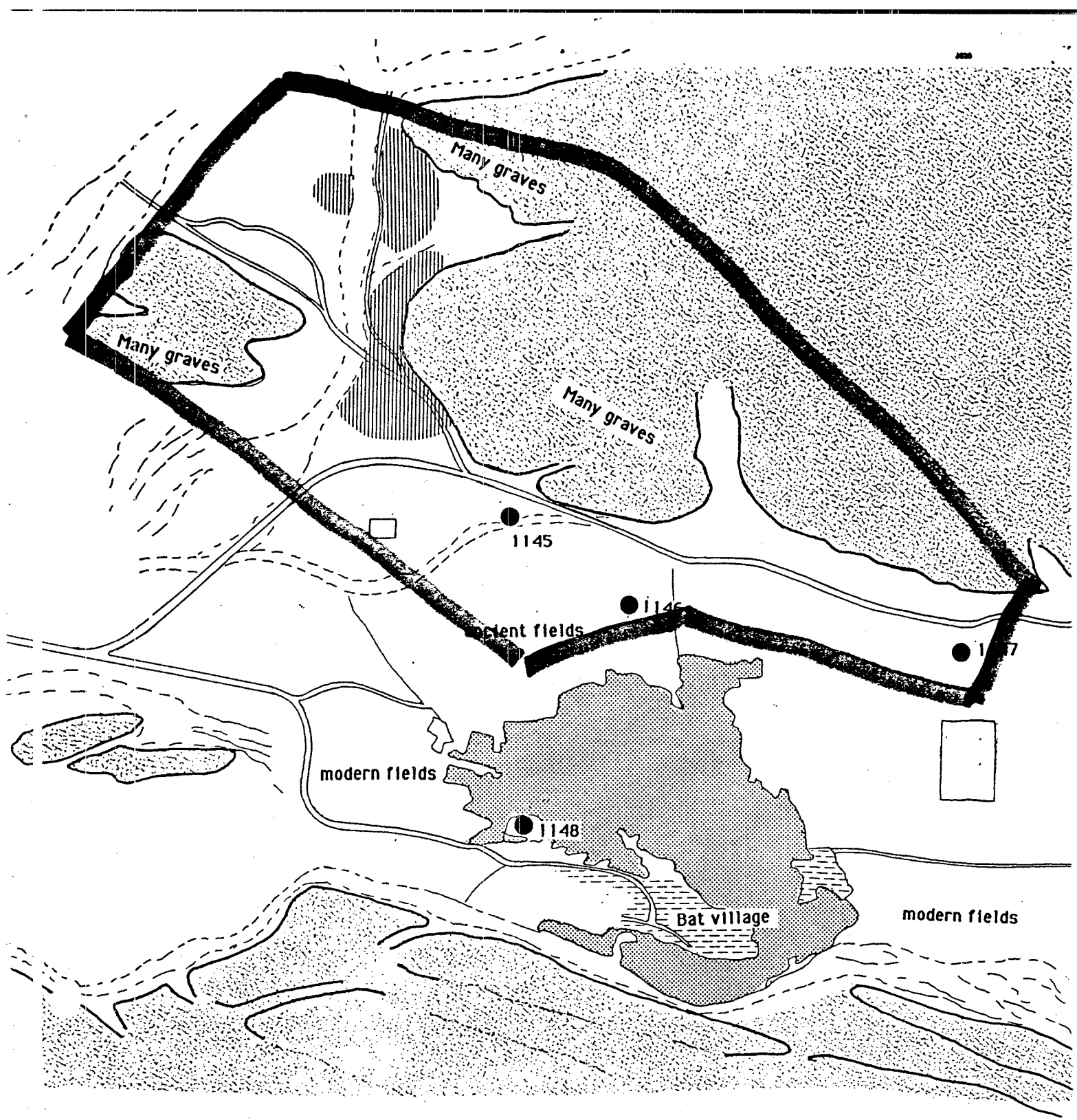
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ICOMOS, July 1988










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Fig. 3

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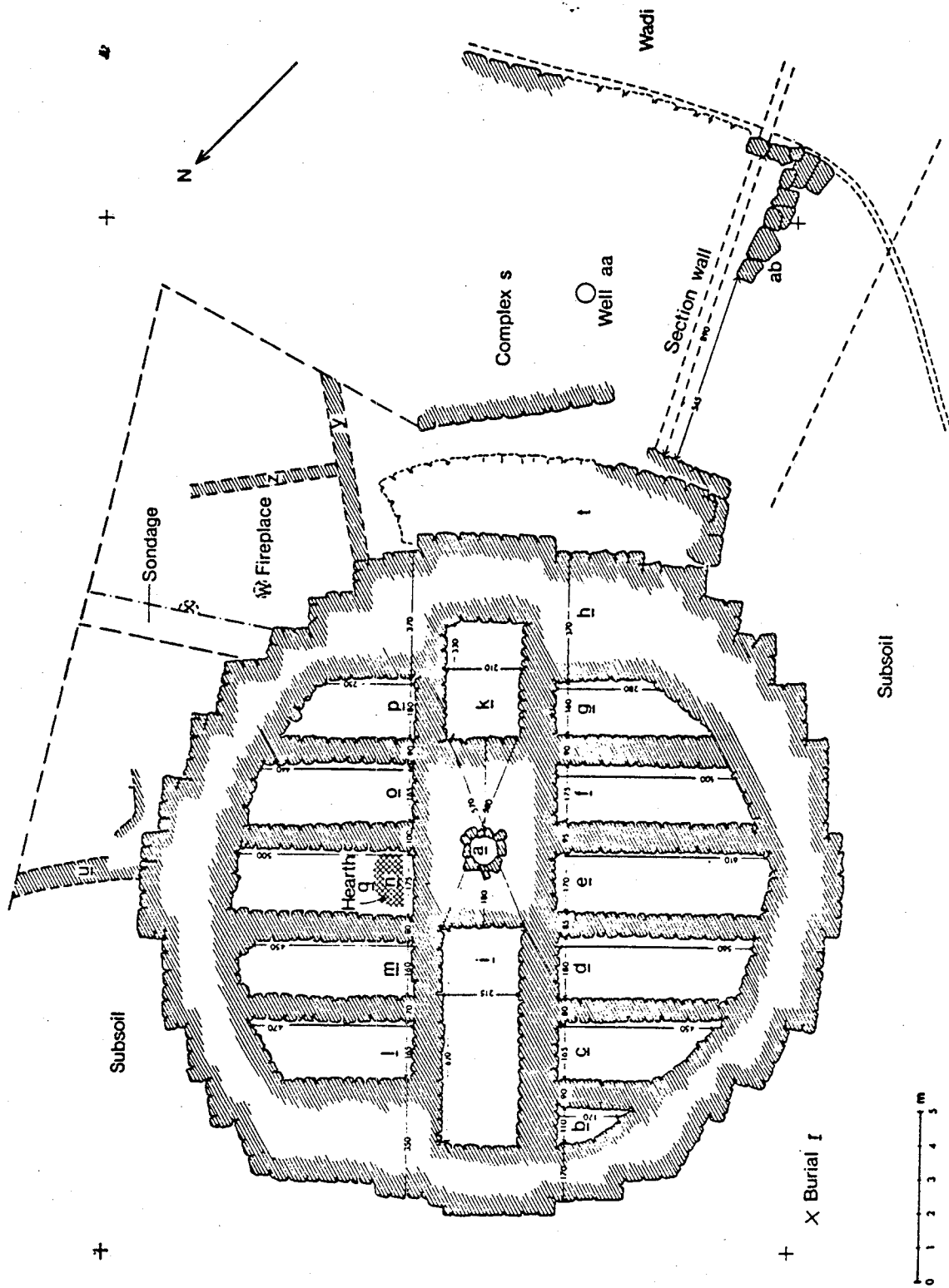


Fig 5 - Bat : tower 1145  
 (after Frifelt 1979 fig. 15)