Forum

Urban Squares in Late Bronze Age Ugarit: a Street View on Ancient Near Eastern Governance

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Introduction

This article deals with the socio-political dimension of public space in 13th-century BC Ugarit, with a particular focus on the city's squares. Ugarit, located on the Syrian seacoast immediately north of modern Lattakia, is one of the best-documented towns in the ancient Levant and a touchstone case-study for urban design. In the following, I explore how urban space intersects with the events of the 13th century, when Ugarit was a thriving capital governed by a monarch who was a vassal to the Hittite Empire.

Today, the correlation between urban design and governance in ancient cities is increasingly investigated using an "archaeopolitical" approach.[1] According to

this perspective, political authority is always performative, people-oriented, and negotiated in public. In archaeological terms, an archaeopolitical perspective focuses on public space to apprehend the negotiation of power between rulers and other civic community members.[2] In ancient Near Eastern studies, text-oriented scholars are currently rediscovering a similar interest in non-royal institutions and the politics of consensus.[3]

[1] Fargher et al., "Wealth Inequality, Social Stratification, and the Built Environment" (2020); McAnany, "Approaching the Archaeopo-

litical" (2018); Martin, "Reflections on the Archaeopolitical" (2016). Central to this approach is collective action theory, as theorized in the social sciences since the 1990s. Essentially, collective action theory postulates that governance works through cooperation and bargain rather than coercion and mystification. One of its tenets is that "the more principals (rulers) depended on the populace for labor, tribute, or other revenues, the greater the agency (or "voice") a population had in negotiating public benefits." (De Marrais and Earle, "Collective Action Theory" [2017]: 183). Daniel Fleming has used collective action theory to interpret the social landscape of Emar, Mari, and Israel: Fleming, *Legacy of Israel* (2012), *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors* (2004) and *Time at Emar* (2000).

[2] "Civic community" is here intended to mean every community of persons bound together by a sense of belonging to a specific urban place, following Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1964), 95.

[3] E.g., the essays on collective governance in Wilhelm, *Organization, Representation, and Symbols of Power* (2012), 85–225, the session on "the world of politics" in Rollinger and van Dongen, *Mesopotamia and the Ancient World* (2015), 413–86, and Martin and Snell, "Democracy and Freedom" (2005).

Archaeological research, however, has only modestly responded to the new paradigm. Adelheid Otto's studies on the Late Bronze Age Middle Euphrates[4] and other studies on urban space in Iron Age Syro-Anatolia[5] are relevant exceptions. These studies identify squares as an essential feature of Levantine cities between the 13th and the 9th century, finding that squares were used either as marketplaces (particularly in Late Bronze Age cities)[6] or as ceremonial spaces (particularly in Iron Age cities).[7] Market squares and ceremonial squares have been studied separately, mainly because the known examples date to different periods. In both cases, however, the form and function of squares are entangled with and reflect the city's political situation. The case of Ugarit stands out as perhaps the only one in which fieldwork has recorded both a market square and ceremonial squares, and thus fills a gap in our understanding of the evolution of public space between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age.

In the Late Bronze Age, Ugarit extended over 28 hectares. In nearly a century of excavations, a Syro-French team investigated an extraordinary 25% of the site's area (Fig. 1).[8] Most architectural features date to a short period of intense building activity sandwiched between a catastrophic event (probably an earthquake) around 1250[9] and the city's abandonment around 1190.[10] In this 60-year period, at least five urban squares existed: a market square downtown (the "Central Square"), two squares around the Royal Palace, and two squares near the Temple of Baal, the city's main temple. The form and urban qualities of these squares reflect political decisions made in the aftermath of the earthquake.[11] Marguerite Yon has argued that in this period the urban population increased, and domestic units became more densely agglomerated. In her view, urban squares were built "to free up space within a city on the verge of suffocation."[12] The present analysis proposes a different view, that the proliferation of urban squares was connected to the need to shape a civic identity and raise support for the monarchy.

The argument is based on the combined analysis of three main aspects of urban space: its configuration in terms of access and visibility,[13] its symbolic connotations and affective properties,[14] and the way urban space was used. From the point of view of methodology, each line of inquiry has been pursued with different analytical techniques: the overall degree of access and visibility has been studied using the toolbox of Space Syntax Analysis, the affective and sensory properties of space have been derived by the analysis of urban design, and use patterns have been studied through the distribution of small finds and semi-fixed installations.[15] While a step-by-step description of the methodological protocol is beyond the scope of this paper,[16] the basic principles and results are introduced in the course of the case-study and then reflected upon in the conclusions.

[4] Otto, "Private and State" (2017), "The Organisation of Residential Space" (2014), and "Archaeological Evidence for Collective Governance" (2012).

[5] The reference works are Mazzoni, "The Gate and the City" (1997) and Pucci, *Functional Analysis of Space* (2008). Most recently, see Herrmann, "Urban Organization under Empire" (2017); Manuelli and Mori, "The King at the Gate" (2016); Gilibert, "Religion and Propaganda" (2015); Osborne, "Settlement Planning and Urban Symbology" (2014).

[6] Otto, "Marketplaces" (2019).

[7] For the collected evidence, see Gilibert, "Archäologie der Menschenmenge" (2012) and Pucci, "Enclosing Open Spaces" (2006). For ceremonial temple squares, see Mazzoni, "Open Spaces around the Temples" (2015). For the specific case of Tell Halaf, see Gilibert, "Death, Amusement and the City" (2013).

[8] Yon, "Ugarit: the Urban Habitat" (1992).

[9] Following Olivier Callot, the earthquake happened early in the reign of king Ammistamru II (c. 1260–1235): Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 204–205, and "La région nord" (1986), 748, 751–52. The earthquake theory, still insufficiently substantiated by published archaeological evidence, finds support in the re-dating of an earthquake to c. 1260 at Tell Sheikh Hamad in the Western Jazira: Kühne, "Impact of Earthquakes" (2016). Tell Sheikh Hamad is located on a minor seismic fault line, which, as sources on historical earthquakes in the region show, can be involved

in major events with an epicentre in the region of Antioch: Sbeinati et al., "Historical Earthquakes of Syria" (2005).

[10] Cohen and Singer, "Late Synchronism between Ugarit and Emar" (2006), 134; Kaniewski et al., "The Sea Peoples" (2011). The city was raided by enemies; the inhabitants fled the city before destruction. Traces of a last stand against the enemy punctuates the archaeological record: see, e.g., Lagarce and Lagarce, "Maison aux albatres" (1974), 10.

[11] Margueron, *Cités Invisibles* (2013), 107.

[12] Yon and Callot, "Habitat à Ougarit" (2006), 68; Yon, "Ugarit: The Urban Habitat" (1992), 29; see also Gachet, "Centre de la ville" (1996).

[13] The reference works are Hillier and Hanson, *Social Logic of Space* (1984) and Hillier, *Space is the Machine* (1999).

[14] De Matteis, *Affective Spaces* (2020).

[15] Here, the terminology is derived by Environment-Behavior Studies (Rapoport, *Meaning of the Built Environment,* [1982]). Inferring activities and past behaviour from archaeological assemblages is the tenet of household archaeology, see Müller, ed., *Household Studies in Complex Societies* (2013).

[16] For a comparable approach, see Fisher, "Placing Social Interaction" (2009).
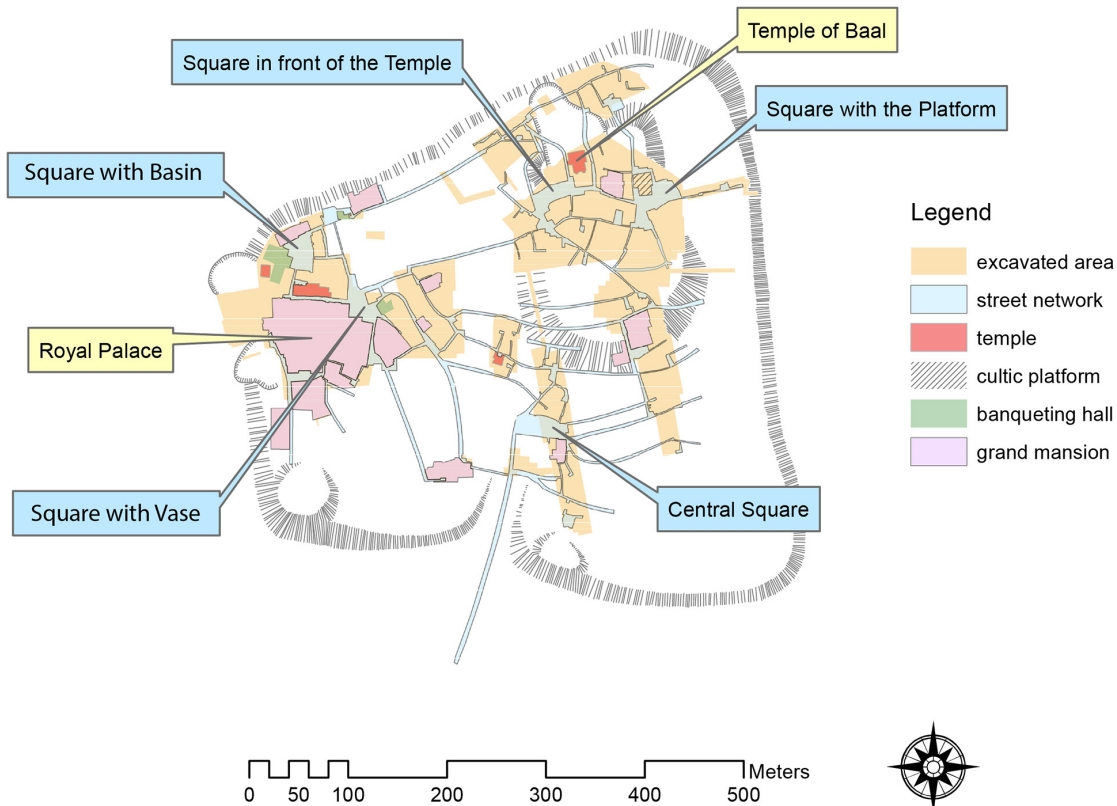
Figure 1—Topographic overview of Ugarit in the 13th century, with partial reconstruction of the street network and location of the main urban features discussed. The schematic relief lines are traced after Yon, *Arts et industries de la pierre* (Paris 1991), 6.

This contribution begins by discussing the number and living conditions of the city's inhabitants. My analysis will show that Ugarit's population, while overall remarkably affluent and influential, was divided in competing segments and groups, and this contributed to a socially tense atmosphere. The second part of the contribution looks at each of the city's squares in detail, proposing that the market square was a free and unpredictable space of encounter, while the ceremonial squares were conceived as a spatial system for large-scale public rituals and feasting under the aegis of the king. The ruling class used these events to promote a specific construction of cultural unity, cement hierarchies, and legitimize a political course striving for more independence from Hatti. In the concluding remarks, I discuss the case of Ugarit in a broader perspective, discussing how the framework proposed in this paper may contribute to "archaeopolitical" studies and urban studies in general.

Households, Residential Patterns, and Wealth Distribution at Ugarit

Although population-size estimates for ancient settlement are notoriously imprecise, different back-of-the-envelope calculations for Ugarit—based on combinations of epigraphic, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence—allow for the estimation of the number of people living in Ugarit at around 6,000–8,000 individuals,[17] probably corresponding to about a quarter of the total population of the kingdom.[18] This figure

[17] Garr, "Population Estimate" (1987); Liverani, "Histoire" (1979). A higher population estimate of nearly 10,000 is proposed by Schloen, *House of the Father* (2001), 333. Analogous figures have been proposed for Neopalatial Knossos (Whitelaw, "Estimating the Population of Neopalatial Knossos" [2004], 153) and pre-industrial towns in general: Reba et al., "Spatializing 6,000 Years" (2016), 160034.

[18] In the 1970s, Heltzer and Liverani independently estimated the rural population of the kingdom at 26,000 individuals (Heltzer,

would imply a population density within the city walls of 214–286 persons per hectare, or six to eight individuals per urban household (whereas a rural household would count four to five inhabitants[19]). When population density is so significant, built space becomes a battleground for conflicting interests, "from the top-down planning of ruling elites through the bottom-up actions of households."[20] To infer the interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes from the archaeological record, the approach adopted here looks at Ugarit's urban remains "from the outside in," adopting a view from the street.

Ugarit's urban fabric consisted of a compact and nearly continuous agglomeration of multi-storied stone buildings. Most houses were flat-roofed stone-and-timber buildings, internally arranged around small enclosed courtyards functioning as air shafts and light wells.[21] Houses clustered in irregular house blocks, with great variation in individual house size. Leaving aside the 10,000 m² royal compound, most inhabitants lived in houses with a ground-floor area of 130–140 m².[22] However, there were also free-standing grand mansions five times as large or larger (the *Maison aux Albâtres*, for example, had a ground-floor area of over 1,000 m²) as well as relatively modest homes of 50–90 m² ground floor. Large houses coexisted with smaller ones, often sharing the same house block. Each house could be further fractioned or enlarged, and this resulted in intricate solutions. This architectural jigsaw necessarily fostered cooperation and familiarity among people living in different houses. At the same time, it implied selective control over limited architectural resources, and thus potential conflict. For example, most water wells were privately owned, and not every house had one.[23] The unequal distribution of space in general and in particular the unequal access to infrastructure indicates that asymmetrical power relationships were deeply ingrained in Ugarit's urban fabric, and a critical constituent of its social life.

David Schloen has convincingly argued that Ugaritic houses, or "residential units," were typically inhabited by multi-generation patrilocal joint families.[24] To explain inequality, Schloen has proposed that house blocks were owned by "urban clans," i.e., "extended, composite households whose members understand their physical proximity and economic cooperation in terms of common ancestry."[25] In his view, asymmetry in household space related to the "unequal household relationship between fathers and sons,"[26] with male relatives living with their wives and families under the leadership of the oldest among them, the patriarch, who occupied the most extensive residential unit.

Schloen's view, however, does not sufficiently consider the role of public space in structuring social interactions. While "urban clans" may have occasionally

Rural Community [1976], 103) or 22,000–29,000 individuals (Liverani, "Histoire" [1979], who distinguishes between 20,000–25,000 villagers and 2,000–4,000 individuals affiliated with royal estates). Adding 6,000–8000 city dwellers, the total population of the kingdom was thus estimated at 28,000–36,000 individuals. According to these calculations, city dwellers would have amounted to 16%–29% of the total population. Based on the newly published administrative list RS 94.2411, Vidal recently proposed a lower estimate for the rural population of 11,000–14,000 individuals, organized in 200 villages, with, on average, fourteen families per village with four to five members per family (Vidal, "On the Demography of Ugaritian Villages" [2014]). If this were true, the total population of the kingdom would drop to 17,000–22,000 individuals, with a considerably higher percentage of city dwellers (27%–47%). Vidal's new estimate, however, should be emended by adding the personnel of the royal farms (Ug. *gt*) and vineyards, shepherds employed full-time by the palace (see Liverani, "Economy of Ugaritic Royal Farms" [1989]), and the personnel employed on fields owned or endowed by the palace to members of the urban elite (a single person might be granted up to ten different plots of land: van Soldt, "City Administration" [2010], 257; see also van Soldt, "Landholders in Administrative Texts" [2010]). Epigraphic sources mention at least seventy royal farms, but there were likely considerably more (Heltzer, "The Economy of Ugarit" [1999], 425 n. 7). Estimating the existence of c. 140 farm estates in total, each employing on average of eight to ten persons (Liverani, "Economy of Ugaritic Royal Farms" [1989], 132–35), we obtain 1,100–1,500 farm employees. If we consider it possible that roughly as many individuals might have worked in royal vineyards or as shepherds, we see that Liverani's 1979 estimate of 2,000–4,000 personnel employed in rural estates may still be correct after all. The total population of the kingdom would thus be around 19,000–25,000, the actual figure being likely closer to the upper extreme. This calculation assumes that urban dwellers did not amount to more than one quarter of the total population.

[19] Vidal, "On the Demography of Ugaritian Villages" (2014): 47.

[20] Fisher and Creekmore, "Making Ancient Cities" (2014), 4.

[21] Mudbrick and half-timbered solutions were used for the upper stories, as recorded in Mallet and Matoïan, "Une maison au sud" (2001), 85–86. Domestic architecture at Ugarit fits more into the Eastern Mediterranean *koiné* than that of the Syrian inland: Palivou, "Cosmopolitan Harbour Town" (2007).

[22] Callot, *La tranchée* "*Ville Sud*" (1994), 150–51, 200.

[23] Schloen, *House of the Father* (2001), 330.

[24] *Ibid.*, 317–33.

[25] *Ibid.*, 317.

[26] *Ibid.*

been coterminous with a house block, neither archaeological nor textual evidence indicates that this was the rule, nor the preeminent organizing principle of social interactions. In some cases, people might have engaged more with neighbors across the street than with people living in an unconnected unit of the same house block.[27] This possibility is reinforced by the frequent location of house entrances in dead-end lanes or on small squares with a semi-private character,[28] which points to small-scale, informal neighborhoods going beyond or cutting across the individual house block.[29] Furthermore, most streets were significantly narrower than the average room,[30] and passageways might have occasionally connected properties across house blocks, creating complex spaces.[31] Conversely, non-residential spaces such as magazines or gardens were sometimes built into house blocks but remained independent from adjacent households.[32]

In sum, at the household level, social life and civic interactions seem to have been influenced more by the agglomerated, labyrinthine, and "networked" nature of the urban fabric than structured around the isolated house block. In this perspective, the unequal distribution of domestic space is more likely to reflect individual power and wealth than patriarchal kinship ties and points to a tense admixture of competition and cooperation among Ugarit's inhabitants.

A further point concerns the distribution of wealth and status. At Ugarit, the overall quality of life was extraordinarily high. As pointed out by Marguerite Yon, "even the houses identified as 'modest' by the original excavators are well built and on average bigger than houses classified as 'important' at other sites, Emar for example."[33] Monumental funerary crypts, cuneiform archives, and many refined objects, including luxury imports, were excavated in small houses as well as vast mansions.[34] Cuneiform archives attest that the business of most private households included trade, administration, and scribal or cultic offices, with a high degree of interconnectedness among different spheres.[35] Peasants, craftsmen, and small traders seems to have lived mostly outside the city walls. Artisan workshops, industrial production, or large-scale storage facilities could not be identified anywhere in the city[36] (whereas they were found at Minet el-Beida, Ugarit's port). Ugaritic households had strong ties to the rural world and owned farmland,[37] but the absence of significant stables

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[27] Sociological studies have found that neighborly relations evolve between people sharing the same street rather than between people sharing walls: Grannis, "The Importance of Trivial Streets" (1998). At Ugarit, when proof for extended families sharing adjacent residences do exist, such as in the case of the *Maison du prête-magicien* (inhabited by the diviner-priest Agaptarri and his son), we observe that the single residential units were internally connected by opening a door in the unit's perimetral walls—an otherwise rare feature in most excavated house blocks.

[28] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 112–13.

[29] Note the nosy "neighbors next door" (*šē'i bābi*) preoccupying the "Poor Man of Nippur" (STT I, 38, ll. 19 and 48), to be distinguished from "family and relatives" (*kimtu u salātu*, ll. 20 and 49): Franco D'Agostino, *Testi umoristici* (2000), 121 nn. 44–45. The importance of small neighborhood squares for social life was also highlighted by Kontolaimos, "Late Bronze Age Mediterranean Urbanism" (2013).

[30] Streets were rarely broader than 2.5m (Margueron, *Cités Invisibles* [2013], 105; Callot and Calvet, "Rues et places à Ougarit" [2000], 159; the average room size was 11.13 m²: Garr, "Population Estimate" [1987]: 38)

[31] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 49 identifies buttresses for a possible passageway connecting *Îlot VII* with *Îlot VIII*. Note also the hydraulic system connecting the Royal Palace with an adjacent southern annex (Calvet, "Installations hydrauliques d'Ugarit" [1981], 44), making it plausible that the latter might have been in direct communication with the former through a passageway above street level.

[32] E.g., in the *Centre de la Ville*, space G, where both the location of the main opening and the inventory indicate that this space, in its last phase, was an annex of the *Temple aux Rhytons* across the street (Callot, "*Les huileries* du Bronze Récent" [1987]). Note also, in the "Ville Sud", Locus 20 of Îlot VI, Locus 23/24 of Îlot X (Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* [1994], 181) or Locus 20 of Îlot XIII (*Ibid.*, 176).

[33] Yon, "Ugarit: the Urban Habitat" (1992): 25.

[34] A striking example is the *Maison de Rashapabou* in the *Quartier Résidentiel*, with a below-average ground floor of only 80 m² (Yon, *City of Ugarit* [2006], 72) but an inventory including an impressive array of extraordinary objects and exotic imports, as well as at least twenty-four cuneiform tablets (Matoïan, "La Maison dite 'de Rashapabou'" [2013]). Rašap-abu, the owner, was the overseer of the port of Ugarit and an important royal official, involved both in state affairs and in private transactions (van Soldt, "Private Archives at Ugarit" [2000], 231). In the *Ville Basse*, an average residential neighborhood, weights, scarabs, or cylinder seals were found in 86% of the excavated houses, and cuneiform tablets in 30%: Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 196. A list by findspot is published *ibid.*, 219–26. Hoards of valuables were found throughout the city: *ibid.*, 83, 187; Schaeffer, *Ugaritica III* (1956), 169–78, 251–75.

[35] van Soldt, "Private Archives at Ugarit" (2000).

[36] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 186–90. However, a few tiny independent spaces may have been shops: e.g., a series of single rooms behind the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* may have been a sort of bazaar (Yon, *City of Ugarit* [2006], 68). Also, a few houses included ground-floor spaces that were likely used for trade activities: e.g., the front room of house "A" of Ilot XIII in the South City neighbourhood (Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* [1994],69).

[37] As proven by numerous installations for processing cereals and producing olive oil, keeping animals, and composting manure: Schloen, *House of the Father* (2001), 335–42.

or private silos indicate that, within the city, agricultural produce was processed as an integrative activity among others, such as weaving and spinning,[38] or (in the case of the grand mansions) as part of a medium-scale business.[39]

This situation created a double standard. Inside the city, among the generally well-off, wealth, power, and status disparities entangled the citizens in a web of unequal relationships and competitions. Conversely, among the rural population, where the affluence enjoyed by the urban dwellers must have been mostly unattainable, the wealth and power divide between and within rural households is likely to have been significantly less marked than among urban dwellers. This disparity created two independent sets of political interlocutors: the rural population, flattened into dispossession and without political leverage, and the urban population, wealthy, influential, and fragmented. Against this social backdrop, consensus-seeking politics were geared to address city dwellers. The political inclinations of the city dwellers mattered, because their wealth made them influential, while their social divide made them factious and inclined to dissent.

Street Network and Street Life

The exceptional extent to which Ugarit's street network is known gives us an opportunity to ponder aspects of street life that are otherwise seldom accessible archaeologically. At Ugarit, the street network was laid out according to a radio-concentric pattern, resembling a spider-web (Fig. 1, 3).[40] In this "rhizomatic" design, most points were mutually invisible in space but at the same time well connected.[41] Barriers were insignificant, centralized surveillance was difficult, and people were free to choose among multiple, meandering alternative paths. The urban rhythm was measured on a small scale: if we assume unimpeded traffic and a relaxed walking speed of ~1.4 m/second (~5 km/hr

or 3 miles/hr),[42] the average inhabitant could reach any location from any point in town within fifteen minutes at most.

With few exceptions, streets were narrow, contorted, and designed for pedestrian use. The winding layout generated continuous shade and created a favorable atmosphere for street life.[43] Most streets were between 1.5 and 3 meters wide.[44] They were wide enough for a bi-directional flow of pedestrians and loaded donkeys,[45] but left little space for anonymity, forcing passers-by into touching distance, where details of complexion, grooming, and body odors were inevitably detected. In this perspective, walking in the street was an intrinsically social activity.[46] Specifically, encounters between acquaintances and close contacts with strangers must have been constant and unpredictable, exposing passers-by to opportunities, risks, and public perception.[47]

[38] Matoïan and Vita, "Wool Production and Economy at Ugarit" (2014), 327.

[39] As in the case of oil production at the *Maison aux Textes Littéraires* (Roche-Hawley, "Scribes, Houses and Neighborhoods" [2013]: 422–26) and oil stockage at the *Maison aux Albâtres* (Lagarce and Lagarce, "Maison aux Albâtres" [1974]: 9–10).

[40] Margueron, *Cités Invisibles* (2013), 106, fig 91.

[41] Marshall, *Streets and Patterns* (2004), 155.

[42] For empirical calculations of this average walking speed, see Fruin, *Pedestrian Planning and Design* (1971), 39–42, in line with more recent studies (see Browning, "Speed of Walking" [2005]: 390–91); Rahman et al., "Pedestrian Walking" (2017). Clearly, the average walking speed diminishes if the terrain is steep (which is not the case at Ugarit), if people walk in groups, and/or if streets are crowded. For a specific Near Eastern example of predicting pedestrian movement in a steep urban environment, see Branting, "Simulating Movement at Kerkenes Dağ" (2010). For calculations of the average walking speed of various groups of people at different crowd densities, see Oberhagemann, *Static and Dynamic Crowd Densities* (2012), 22.

[43] Shepperson, "Planning for the Sun" (2009)*:* 367–68.

[44] The width of a street could vary significantly: the so-called *rue Merneptah*, for example, a central street lined with important houses, could vary from 1.9m to 3.5m in width within a stone's throw: Callot and Calvet, "Rues et places" (2000), 159, with other examples; see also Yon, *City of Ugarit* (2006), 66. Margueron, *Cités Invisibles* (2013), 105 proposes to group Ugaritic streets in a three-tiered hierarchy according to their width: alleys (below 1.5m), streets (1.5m–3m) and avenues (above 3m). Only avenues, of which the 4m-wide *Grand Rue* is so far the only excavated example, could truly accommodate bulky transports.

[45] At Ugarit, heavy transports were implemented through loaded donkeys (in fact, "a donkey" was a measure of load: note Ug. *ḥmr* and Akk. *imēru*). Occasionally, horses and horse chariots entered the city too. Chariots appear to have been stored at private mansions, perhaps transported therein disassembled; see Feldman and Sauvage, "Chariots in the Late Bronze Age" (2010): 78. For single pieces of a chariot delivered to a carpenter in Nuzi, see the text HSS 15, 202 (Kendall, *Warfare and Military Matters* [1975], 236–37; Zaccagnini, "Pferde und Streitwagen" [1977]: 29).

[46] Ingold, "Culture on the Ground" (2004). See also Kontolaimos, "Late Bronze Age Mediterranean Urbanism" (2013): 150, concluding that Ugarit's plan encouraged neighbourhood life.

[47] On street encounters as a defining urban experience, see Hubbard and Lyon, "Introduction: Streetlife" (2018).

Conversely, spaces for public conviviality and congregation were few. At crossroads or cul-de-sacs, small open spaces facilitated everyday activities[48] but clearly addressed only the immediate neighbourhood. In five cases, however, the dense urban fabric opened into larger public squares, ranging approximately from 500 to 800 m² in extent. Compared to grand esplanades known elsewhere, these squares had a rather intimate scale,[49] yet they were the only public spaces inside the city walls where the population of Ugarit could meet at the scale needed to develop a sense of civic community. Their nodal locations reflect their social importance and their different functions. In a succinct analysis of public space at Ugarit, Olivier Callot and Yves Calvet remark that the city's squares are "each very different from the other,"[50] without elaborating further. The following sections are an attempt to qualify precisely this point.

The Central Square

Within the city of Ugarit, an ample public space—here designated as "Central Square"—stood at the heart of the "Ville Sud," Ugarit's topographic center (see Fig. 1). The Central Square was an unpaved esplanade of approximately 800 m², about three-quarters of which was excavated in 1959 and 1960 (see Fig. 2).[51] Excavations revealed that the square was a centuries-old urban feature, as the 13th-century surface rested upon a 1.5–2m thick deposit of (organic?) debris with no built structures.[52] The area was preserved as a public space throughout the city's history. At some point around or after 1250, the southern frontage was reconstructed according to an orthogonal plan.[53] This intervention shows a perduring commitment to the open space and

underscores the long-term vitality of this square, which appears to be among Ugarit's longest-lived urban features. I follow Callot in interpreting it as a market square.[54]

The interpretation as a market square is based on the combination of five elements, with parallels in other Levantine cities, Tall Bazi in particular. These elements are the square's location, its long depositional history, the fact that small objects used for trade were found on its surface, the presence around it of notable buildings connected with trade and exchange, and the presence of a stela of a "market god." This evidence corresponds with five of the six archaeological features listed by Lorenz Rahmstorf as indicators for market places worldwide: large open areas, massive layers of trampled organic debris, "light" archaeological features such as benches, postholes, and stalls (see below on the presence at the Central Square of a porch and a public trough), evidence of production (so far missing at Ugarit), weights and scales as typical finds, and traces of cultic practices.[55]

The Central Square was the point of arrival of the *Grand Rue* and the most accessible spot in town from the countryside.[56] The *Grand Rue* (the north-south oriented, straight and wide avenue entering the Central Square in its south-eastern corner: see Fig. 2) connected Ugarit's main city gate directly to the Central Square.[57] This route and the square itself stood out in the dense network of streets as unusually broad and open to the public eye. According to empirical studies, visibility is the strongest known correlate of pedestrian movement. Specifically, movement is directed by lines of sight, or isovists: people generally converge where more lines of sight meet.[58] A map of isovists at Ugarit shows that the *Grand Rue* and the Central Square were the spaces most exposed to public view in town (see Fig. 3). Here, according to perceptual studies of lines of sight, individuals must have experienced a "rush of information" and a "dilation of view and exposure"[59] conducive to swift movement and effective navigation,

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[48] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 106.

[49] Japanese architect Yoshinobu Ashihara indicates the 500–600m² range as the point of equilibrium for a "psychologically comfortable" urban square: Yoshinobu, *Exterior Design* (1970).

[50] Callot and Calvet, "Rues et places" (2000), 161.

[51] The approximate total area of the square has been recently determined through geomagnetic prospection: Al-Maqdissi et al., "Ras Shamra-Ougarit en 2007 et 2008" (2010): 46.

[52] See Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 280 fig. 98, 275 fig. 86, and 408 fig. 370. Stratigraphic details have not been published, but it has been supposed that the existence of the square might go back to the "refoundation" of the city at the beginning of the second millennium: Al-Maqdissi et al., "Ras Shamra-Ougarit en 2007 et 2008" (2010): 46.

[53] Callot and Calvet, "Rues et places" (2000), 161.

[54] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 110.

[55] Rahmstorf, "Detecting Marketplaces in the Bronze Age" (2018).

[56] The *Grand Rue* was connected to bridge on the river Nahr el-Delbe, which provided year-round access for caravans and carts (Yon, "Ugarit: the Urban Habitat" [1992], 26).

[57] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 104–106.

[58] Desyllas and Duxbury, "Axial Maps and Visibility Graph Analysis" (2001), 27.12; Turner et al., "From Isovists to Visibility Graphs" (2001), 118.

[59] Benedikt, "Isovists and Isovist Fields" (1979), 48.

a = *"Boutique" Sud*
b = *"Secteur Sud" of Îlot* VII
c = *Îlot* VIII
d = *Maison aux Tablettes*

Figure 2—The Central Square and its surroundings, modified after Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"*, pl. X. Roman numbers identify Callot's *îlots*, or house blocks.

particularly helpful for visitors less familiar with the city plan and for people transporting goods.[60] This observation correlates well with the scarcity of larger-scale production facilities or storerooms,[61] suggesting that traded products reached the Central Square mainly from outside the city.

[60] The role of the *Grand Rue* as a traffic link between the city and its hinterland is further supported by the presence along it of what has been interpreted as a workshop for agricultural tools: Al-Maqdissi et al., "Ras Shamra-Ougarit en 2007 et 2008" (2010): 40.

[61] For the possible identification of a space for commercial washing of textiles, see Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 190; for the identification of centers of oil production for commercial purposes, see *ibid*., 191–96; for the possible localization of a granary, *ibid*., 76.

Small weights and stone cylinder seals found abandoned or lost on the surface substantiate the hypothesis that the Central Square was used as a marketplace.[62] As observed by Otto, these small finds, also recorded at the market square of Tall Bazi, are consistent with payments in silver and the recording of transactions.[63] Furthermore, at least three non-domestic buildings lining the square link directly to commercial transactions. They are the so-called *"Boutique" Sud*, the *"secteur sud"*

[62] See the inventory of finds in *Ibid*., 221, and the plan with locations of the finds, *Ibid*., 258 fig. 45.

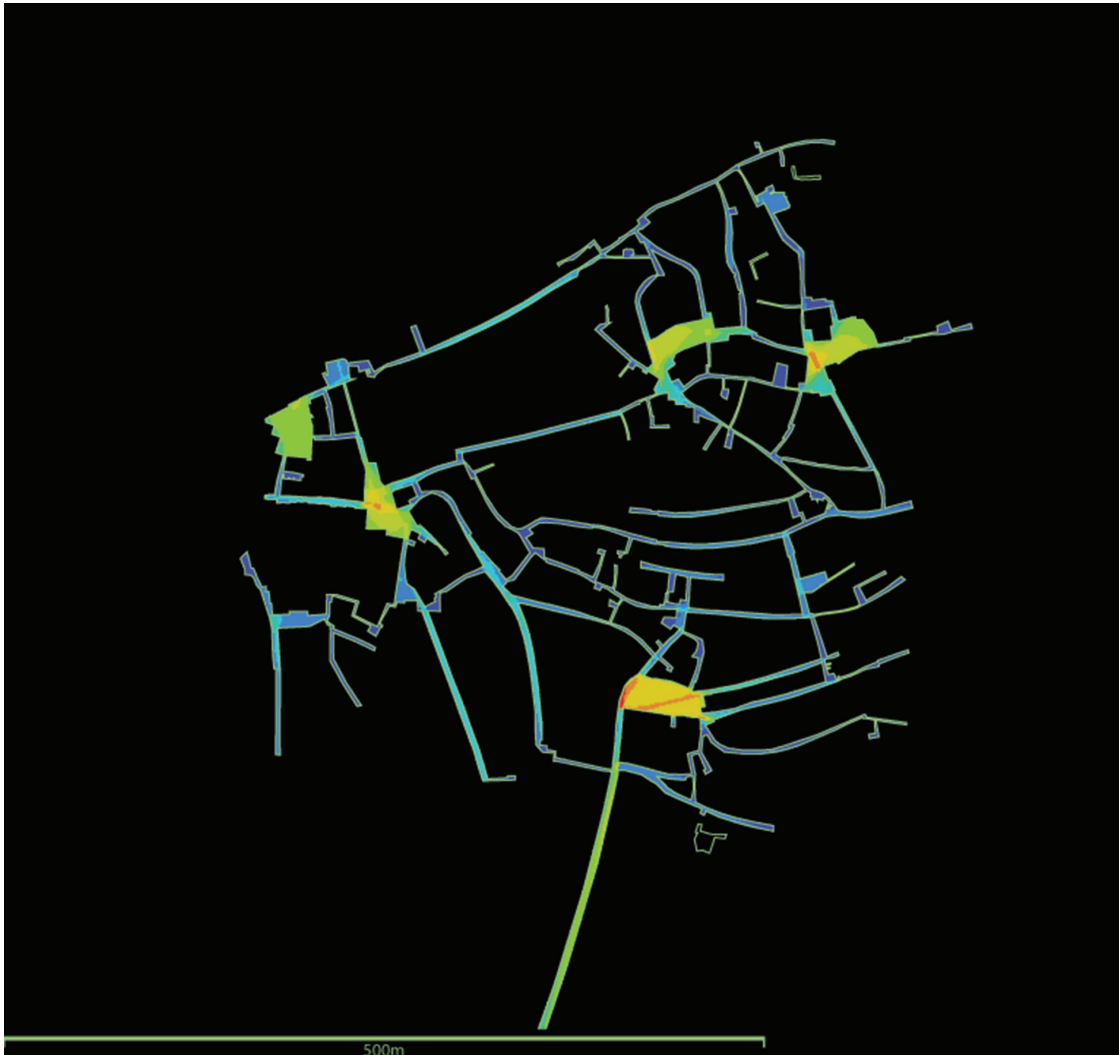[63] Otto, "Marketplaces" (2019), 209, 213.

500m

Figure 3—Visibility graph quantifying global inter-visibility measure within Ugarit's partially reconstructed urban network. Colour values range from indigo for low visibility values to magenta for high visibility values. The graph has been generated using the software depthMapX.

of *Îlot VII*, and the *Îlot VIII* (see Fig. 2 a–c). The *"Boutique" Sud* (a) is interpreted by Callot as a shop or a small tavern.[64] Opposite, the *"secteur sud"* of *Îlot VII*

(b)—a vast hall with multiple entrances—might have been a trading place for valuable items.[65] *Îlot VIII* (c) is

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[64] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 109. Together with an arrowhead, the cylinder seals were the only finds retrieved from this space: *ibid*., 221 (*"Boutique" Sud*). Outside, a stone trough on public soil was meant for everyday public use. Similar "shops" also lined the market square of Tell Bazi: Otto, *Alltag und Gesellschaft* (2006), 260–61. For the presence of public troughs, see in particular Tall Bazi's *Haus 31* (*ibid*., 202–203, 268).

[65] According to Callot, this space was a *dépendence économique* of an adjacent building, the *Îlot VIII*, to which it may have been connected by an upper-floor passageway (Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* [1994], 46–47, 180). The retrieved inventory includes three larger weights (a lion weight, a bull weight, and a copper weight) and a cylinder seal. A similarly articulated building with various weights was excavated at a corner of Tell Bazi's market square. Combining architectural and contextual evidence, Otto interprets it as an "exchange bureau": *Haus 23; Raum 12, 2, 5*: Otto, *Alltag und*

an edifice with a front porch[66] dominating the eastern end of the square.[67] The prominent urban position, its plan, its architectural qualities and its inventory[68] suggest a use connected to elite trade.[69]

A small limestone stela was found not far from the porch of *Îlot VIII* (see Fig. 4). The stele bears the image of the god Resheph as a short-skirted archer god.[70] Resheph, a popular Late Bronze Age deity with several local hypostases, was worshipped at Ugarit as a sort of "divine guard."[71] At Emar and in Hurrian ritual texts from Hattusa, he is specifically attested as "Lord of the Market" (Akkadian *bēl maḫīri*).[72] If the interpretation

of the Central Square as a marketplace is correct, the stele in front of *Îlot VIII* may represent Resheph in his identity of "Resheph of the Market."[73]

The collected evidence points to the Central Square as a hub for trade. Significantly, both the royal compound and known points of collection for centrally-administered deliveries[74] are located elsewhere. Assessments of trade at Ugarit increasingly support the idea that the local economy included a substantial part that was not under the direct control of the royal Palace.[75] If this understanding is correct, we may view the Central Square as a hub for private business. This interpretation is reinforced by the possible presence of informal facilities for traveling merchants[76] and a general city-wide

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Gesellschaft (2006), 185. See also the presence of official scales "in the city square" (*ina rebīt āli*) mentioned in the 7th century accession treaty of Esarhaddon (SAA 2, 4: 23').

[66] Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 48–49.

[67] The dominating effect was increased by a slight slope, a feature of the marketplace of Tall Bazi as well: Otto, "Marketplaces" (2019), 208, 213.

[68] The space inside was divided into two 36m² halls, with double-leaf doors opening outward—an arrangement specific to non-residential spaces. The inventory included rare imported goods: a set of blue frit and faience stemmed goblets, a dagger decorated with a lotus flower, and a "Peschiera dagger"—a flange-hilted, cut-and-thrust weapon of north-eastern Italian production (Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* [1994], 49).

[69] We shall not dismiss the possibility that this building might have served as an assembly hall to discuss and adjudicate issues connected with trade (see RS 13.006, mentioning a *bt qbṣ*, a "house of assembly"; Heltzer, *Rural Community* [1976], 73–74). Perhaps *Îlot VIII* was connected with the activities of the "Elders" (*šibūti*: *RSO* XIV, 249, RS 88.2009, l. 6: LÚ.MEŠ*ši-bu-ti ša* URU^ki), also known as "Fathers of Ugarit" (*abbū Ugarit*: *PRU* IV, 219, RS 17.424+397B, l. 25: [L]ú^iAB.BA^MEŠ URU*u-ga-ri*[-*it*]). This was a collective body of eminent notables—presumably around five in number—with authority on legal matters (Solans, *Poderes colectivos* [2014], 233–35). The "Elders"/"Fathers" of Ugarit acted as guardians of the common law and counterbalanced the royal administration: Bunnens, "Pouvoirs locaux" (1980): 134.

[70] In the Levant, the archer's bow had been an exclusive attribute of Resheph since at least the 19th century: Matthiae, "Rashap's Old Syrian Iconography" (2007), 188–89.

[71] Münnich, *God Resheph* (2013), 149, 156–57, 167–69. The popularity of Resheph is reflected in the onomastics: Ribichini and Xella, "Problemi di onomastica ugaritica" (1991): 167. In Ugaritic texts, Resheph is called "Lord of the Arrow" (*bʿl ḥẓ*; KTU 1.82:3) and "the guard" (*ḥgb*; KTU 1.90:2, KTU 1.168:1). Resheph was equated with the Mesopotamian Nergal and the Hurrian Irshappa: see the god-list RS 20.024: 26; Münnich, *The God Resheph* (2013),136.

[72] For an overview of deities related to commerce, see Rutherford, "Gods of the Market Place" (2019), 83–91. At Emar, Resheph is identified as EN KI.LAM (*bēl maḫīri*) six times: Münnich, *The God Resheph* (2013), 171–72, 186, 189. Among the Hurrian ritual texts from Hattusa there is an attestation of ^d*ir-šap-pì-ni-iš tám-kar₅–ra-a-ši* (Irshappa "of commerce"), immediately followed by the

mention of DINGIR^MEŠ *ma-aḫ-ḫé-er-ra-ši-na* ("gods of the market"): KUB XXVII, I, v.2:23 (*ibid.*, 200). The epigraphic evidence suggests that, at Emar, a temple of Resheph/Negal was located near the market square (Durand and Marti, "Chroniques du Mozen Euphrate" [2003]: 149, 161). This temple was among the city's most prominent institutions, as indicated by the quantities of offerings given during the *zukru* festival and by the high standing of its priest: Fleming, *Time at Emar* (2000), 24 n. 33. At Emar, a priest of Nergal was bestowed the right to build a *bīt mu-ḫu-ur-ti*, a "street chapel" (Durand and Marti, "Chroniques du Mozen Euphrate" [2003]: 149). We may expect the stela at Ugarit to be the remnant of a similar structure (for a review of street shrines in Southern Mesopotamia, see Steinert, "City Streets," 132–37; for an interpretation of the shrine of Nergal at Emar as a larger structure, see Fleming, "Household and Community Religion" [2008], 51). The attestations of a Resheph "Lord of the Market" are paralleled by the mention of a deity ^dLugal-tilla₄ ("Lord of the City-Square") in Mesopotamian god-lists (Lambert, "Lugal-tilla" [1987–90], 153a). In An=Anum VI 28, ^dLugal-tilla₄ is listed as a manifestation of Nergal (Litke, *An: ^dA-nu-um and An: Anu* šá amēli [1998], 202; Steinert, "City Streets" [2014], 136). In Assyria, Nergal "of the street" (*ša sūqi*) was invoked as patron of travelers, who were advised to sacrifice to him before embarking on journeys: cf. *Nergal ša sūqi* in CT 24 41 XI 74, and s.v. *suqū*, CAD S, 403b, 1–4' and AHw, 1062a, 3d. For further text passages and on the role of Nergal as patron of travellers and messengers, see Meier, *The Messenger* (1988), 63.

[73] Similarly, the square in front of the North Gate of Tell Munbaqa, likewise interpreted by Otto as a market square ("Marketplaces" [2019], 210–11). Here, a stone stela was standing in the square in front of a temple entrance, which, according to Otto, may have functioned as place where legal and economic transactions were carried out.

[74] At the *Maison aux Jarres*, located at the eastern edge of the city, presumably near a city gate. According to Zamora ("Casa de las grandes vasijas" [2004]), this building was a small administrative centre, where wine and wheat were delivered and stocked on account of the Royal Palace.

[75] I particularly refer to the extensive review of the evidence in McGeough, *Exchange Relationships at Ugarit* (2007).

[76] Locus 17 of *Ilot* XIV may have been the semi-public court of a caravanserai, as indicated by installations for keeping animals (Callot,
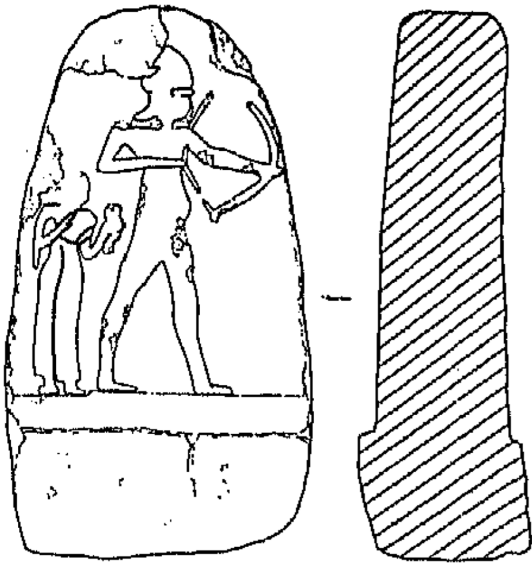
Figure 4—Line drawing of the stele RS 4.546. From Yon, *Arts et industries de la pierre . . .* , 347, fig. 1a.

distribution of artefacts suggestive of independent household provisioning.[77] The houses lining the Central Square avoid opening directly on the square. This detail, also found in the market square of Tall Bazi,[78] indicate that people wanted to keep their domestic sphere apart from the square's business, which, as we shall return to further on, may have been perceived as potentially unsafe and unpredictable.[79]

The Palace Squares

Ugarit's western sector was dominated by the royal palace compound. The architectural complex took on its truly spectacular dimensions relatively late in the city's history, as a result of a mid-13th century redesign. The new building compound came to cover over a hectare and consisted, beyond the Palace itself, of several annexes, including a small temple and a vast banquet hall (the *Bâtiment aux Piliers*, or "Pillared Building").[80] The Royal Palace and its annexes were arranged around a 500 m² open-air space, conventionally called the "Royal Plaza."[81] Despite the label, this space was a ceremonial courtyard segregated from the rest of the town and guarded by military checkpoints.[82] Two large public squares, which we may provisionally call the "Square with the Basin" and the "Square with the Vase," were built outside the royal compound. These squares were exclusively pedestrian spaces, lined by grand mansions, buildings with special functions, and the palace compound itself. Excavations were carried out here in 1937 and 1973 respectively.[83] They revealed that, in both cases, the squares were built by demolishing pre-existing edifices, including private houses.[84] The squares were irregular spaces of at least c. 750 m² each (the Square with the Vase perhaps considerably more).[85] Applying an average crowd density coefficient

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La tranchée "Ville Sud" [1994], 86 fig. 202) and findings connected to trade (*ibid.*, 225 fig. 203). Locus 1 of *Ilot* XI, a private garden with a large entrance door, may also have served similar purposes (*ibid.*, 64). Both spaces have direct parallels in *Bereich* 13 and *Bereich* 39 near the market square of Tall Bazi (Otto, *Alltag und Gesellschaft* [2006], 263). Otto connects these spaces to buildings called *tugguru* and *ḫitru* in the Emar texts (*ibid.*, 55).

[77] Johnston, "Market Exchange at Ugarit" (2017).

[78] Otto, *Alltag und Gesellschaft* (2006), 235–37.

[79] A special case is the *Maison aux Tablettes* (also known as *Maison aux textes littéraires*; Fig. 2d), a 270m² mansion housing a scribal school (on which see now Roche-Hawley, "Scribes, Houses and Neighborhoods" [2013]: 413–44, who links the house to the scribe Nu'mi-Rašap). While the house's domestic wing opened on a side alley, the school premises, fully independent of the domestic wing, were directly accessible from the Central Square. At ground-floor level, a locked internal door was the only connection between the school premises and the rest of the house: Callot, *La tranchée "Ville Sud"* (1994), 59. See also van Soldt, *Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit* (1991), 182.

[80] Otto advances the possibility that the "Pillared Building" may have been a sort of merchant's hall for state-controlled trade: Otto, "Marketplaces" (2019), 207. However, the organization of space did not facilitate the circulation of merchandise and I favour Callot's interpretation of the Pillared Building as an official banqueting hall: Callot, "La région nord" (1986), 744, 754.

[81] *Ibid.*, 754, no. 4.

[82] Yon, *City of Ugarit* (2006), 46. Military devices included loopholes for monitoring the courtyard (*ibid.*, 38) and direct access to the city rampart from the courtyard (as proven by the staircase visible in Margueron, "Palais royal d'Ougarit" [1995], 198 photo 3, and mapped in several plans, e.g., Yon, *City of Ugarit* [2006], 47 fig. 25) and from within the palace (*ibid.*, 38). Inside, sitting benches indicate that the space served as a gathering place for formal activities (*ibid.*, 35). Special paving stones, including a circular gutter stone (?) with a diameter of 2m, may also relate to specific activities (see *Dépliant I* in Schaeffer, *Ugaritica IV*, 1962).

[83] Schaeffer, "Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit" (1938): 317–20; De Contenson et al., "XXXIVe campagne de fouilles" (1974); Callot, "La région nord" (1986), 735–36 n. 5.

[84] *Ibid.*, 752; Yon, *City of Ugarit* (2006), 63; Rey, "Le Palais Nord d'Ougarit" (2009): 218.

[85] According to Rey, the Square with the Vase, in its last phase, "s'étendait plus à l'ouest, sur une partie au moins des ruines ensevelies du Palais Nord" (*ibid.*, 218). Another, more radical possibility is to consider the Square with the Basin and the Square with the Vase

of 2.5 to 3.5 persons per square meter,[86] we can calculate that each square would have hypothetically allowed gatherings of 1,800–2,600 individuals, i.e., a sizable slice of the civic community, at the heart of Ugarit's elite neighbourhood, in immediate proximity of the palace compound. The street configuration allowed pedestrian movement of a significant number of people through multiple points for egress from and ingress to the squares, with full integration into the street network and a specific circuit-like connection between the two squares. Such a configuration is effective when people assemble for a particular purpose and behave in conventional ways, as in religious celebrations.[87] As we shall see in more detail, the careful deployment of urban devices such as vistas on focal points, elevated platforms, and ritual installations suggest that the Palace Squares were planned for events in which royalty, aristocracy, and the civic community interacted according to well-defined scripts.

The Square with the Basin

The Square with the Basin (see Fig. 5), named here after a large basin built in its pavement, was lined by the royal compound walls, to which it gave no direct access. Specifically, it was dominated by the Pillared Building's back façade. The Pillared Building, a vast hall erected inside the Royal Compound, was reconstructed by Callot as a single-story edifice with a grand central stairway leading to a roof terrace.[88] According to this reconstruction, the rooftop terrace created a visual point of contact between the public space and the secluded spaces within the royal compound, looking out on the square with a well-calibrated effect. I assume that the possibility of using the roof space as a stage for formal celebrations in front of a public audience was not lost on Ugarit's palace elite. Rooftop rituals are well known from the Late Bronze Levant, including at Ugarit and Emar,[89] and the use of a rooftop

terrace as a public stage is explicitly attested in contemporary Hittite festivals.[90] The abundant Hittite evidence is particularly significant because Hittite and Ugaritic festivals sometimes shared origins and followed similar blueprints. An example of this is the Hittite *ḫišuwa*-festival, a traditional celebration imported to the Hittite capital from Kizzuwatna (Classical Cilicia), a region with close cultural ties to Ugarit. During this festival, a mock-battle dance was acted out on a roof terrace. The performance took place in front of the king, who appeared on stage as the personification of the Storm God. The rooftop overlooked an open space where participants gathered, closely replicating the urban configuration at the Square with the Basin.[91] Identical protocols in Hittite and Ugaritic festivals give further evidence of the use of a rooftop as a ritual

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one single, grand ceremonial esplanade, fully including the levelled ruins of the so-called "North Palace," as envisioned in Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'acropole* (2011), 135 fig. 1.

[86] Gilbert and Neufert, *Architect's Data* (2002), 17.

[87] An aggregation of this kind would have characterized most civic celebrations and is described by students of collective behavior as a "conventional crowd," as opposed to, for instance, a mob in a riot (Turner and Killian, *Collective Behavior* [1993], 106).

[88] Callot, "La région nord" (1986), 741.

[89] At Emar, a roof (Akk. *ūru*) is used twice as ritual space during the festival for the installation of the *maš'artu*-priestess (Arnaud,

Emar VI.3, no. 370). Libations and offerings on house roofs are also attested in Jeremiah 19:13.

[90] In Hittite rituals, the audience looking up to the rooftop was involved in the performance through speeches and ritual exchanges. Attestations are listed and commented upon in Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (1994), 228–29 (as part of the royal funerary rituals, a priest addresses an audience from the roof of a building, then throws down an empty vessel), 256 (a performer climbs up a rope to the roof on a musical background, then throws down objects), 274 (a dancer dances in front of the king on the roof), 283–84 (as part of a purification ritual, a priest pours wine down a roof gutter, then people throw an empty vessel down), 683 (horn players perform a thunderstorm-inspired music on a roof), 746 (as part of the *purulli* spring festival, girls sing on the roof of the temple of Telipinu), 785–86 (as part of the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM-festival, the king performs cultic acts on the roof of the palace), 867–69 (during the *ḫišuwa*-festival, dancer and musician act out a mock-battle on the roof, in front of the king; later, a priest throws a weapon down a roof and people standing down below throw it back to him, cited also at p. 279 and discussed further below).

[91] Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (1994), 867–69; Groddek, "Die 10. Tafel des *ḫišuua*-Festes" (2010); Gilan, "Kampfspiele in hethitischen Festritualen" (2001), 119; Bachvarova, *From Hittite to Homer* (2016), 260–61. Coincidentally, the *ḫišuwa*-festival also corroborates the existence in the Cilician milieu of public performances acting out or singing parts of the Levantine mythology of the Storm God, a "theatrical" background has equally been proposed for the Ugaritic *Epic of Baal* (Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle* [1994], 21–22, 159) and other related mythological compositions. Hurro-Hittite compositions attest that a 'Song of the Deeds of the Sea' and a 'Song of Kingship' were sung during a festival in honor of Mount Ḫazzi, corresponding to the Mount Zaphon (Jebel Aqra) where the Ugaritic Baal was thought to have its main seat. The songs, now lost, probably narrated the battle fought between the Storm God and the Sea. Circumstantial evidence indicates that they may have been performed at local festivals: Gilan, "Hittites and Neo-Hittites as Cultural Mediators" (2015); Strauss, Clay, and Gilan, "Hittite Song of Emergence" (2014): 6–7.
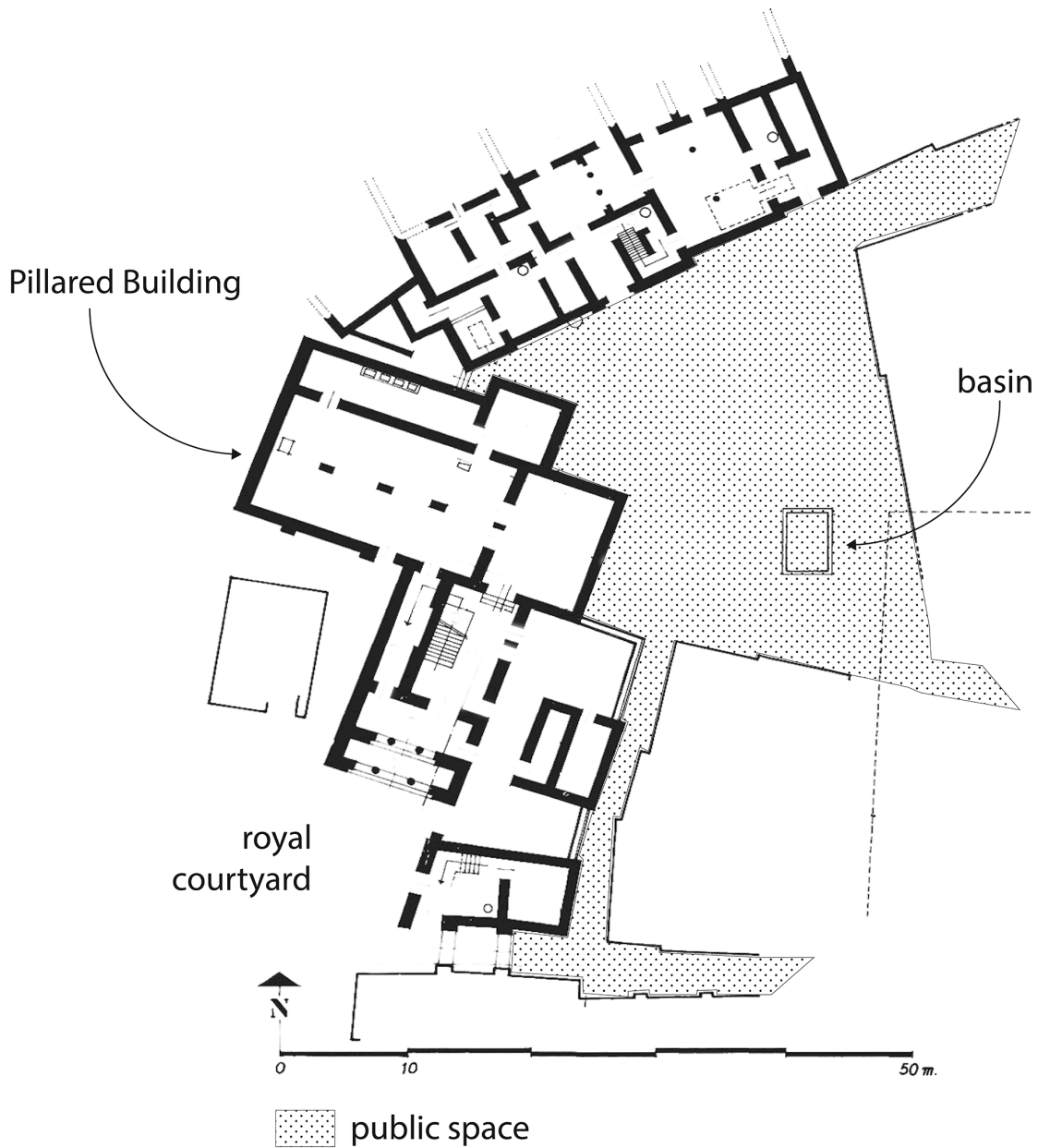
Figure 5—The Square with the Basin, with location of the buildings discussed. Modified after Callot, *La région nord . . .* , 753, fig. 8.

platform. For example, during the Hittite "Festival of the Month," on the day of the new moon, the Hittite king would present offerings and make libations on the roof of a building.[92] Similarly, at Ugarit, during the Festival of the First Wine, on the day of the new moon, the king sacrificed a ram "on the roof" of a building and gave a speech "according to what [was] in his heart."[93] On this occasion, seven bulls and seven

[92] Barsacchi, "Culti ittiti connessi al ciclo lunare" (2019); Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (1994), 274.

[93] KTU 1.41//1.87 (RS 1.003), ll. 50–55, after Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* (2002), 65.

rams were sacrificed. Scholars usually assume that these events took place at the Temple of Baal, but its tower-like architecture would have made its roof ill-fitting for animal sacrifices and virtually invisible from street level.[94] In the light of the architectural data, the Pillared Building is a better candidate. Here, the sacrifice of several animals and the ensuing banquet might have taken place in the grand hall, for selected acolytes,[95] while the king could eventually climb a flight of stairs to the terrace and perform in front of a broader public audience.

The conspicuous 24 m² stone-lined "basin" built into the pavement at the center of the square may also have played a part during celebrations.[96] Its specific function is unclear, but comparable installations (e.g., a large monolithic basin outside the Great Temple of Hattusa[97]) consistently point to a ritual function.

The Square with the Basin appears to have been connected to another square further east.[98] This area, only partially published, was an open space with two public wells and a building in which over 350 standard bowls were found, some of them piled in a stone sink.[99] This evidence may point to the collective distribution of staple food among common citizens, taking place aside from what seems to have been the focal point of events.

The Square with the Vase

The construction of the Square with the Vase (see Fig. 6) involved the demolition of houses, the enlargement of streets, and the opening of deep direct vistas on the gates of three buildings. The first and most symbolically charged of these gates is the 2.75m-wide main gate to the palace compound, located at the end of the unusually rectilinear, 90m-long "palace street." The other gates are the 1.80m-wide secondary entrance to the Palace, located at the center of the square's southern limit, and the likewise 1.80m-wide entrance of the so-called *Bâtiment au vase de pierre*. This relatively accurate perspectival planning conjured a formal sense of space, further increased by the official nature of the buildings surrounding the space.[100] The *Bâtiment au vase de pierre*, a pre-existing edifice that lends its name to the square and whose urban visibility increased significantly following the square's enlargement, was a tall building with a grand façade built of the same masonry employed at the Royal Palace.[101] The street opened directly into a lofty 64 m² hall, where two enormous monolithic stone vases were installed. One of them was found *in situ*, in a commanding position which, if the doors were open, would have also made it visible from outside (see Fig. 7). The two vases are extraordinary features, with unusual shapes recalling Aegean-style kraters.[102] Their size and sheer weight are testimony to the remarkable effort that must have gone into their production.[103] They each had a capacity of c. 880 liters, corresponding to about eighty Ugaritic 11-liter jars (Ug. *kd*).[104] A shallow cavity

[94] De Terragon, "Temples et pratiques rituelles," (1994), 206–209.

[95] The OT passage 1 Samuel 20:5 offers an interesting parallel, whence we evince that a selected few banqueted with the king during a festival of the new moon.

[96] The structure is briefly discussed and interpreted as a basin or a reservoir in Callot, "La région nord" (1986), 747, with further references to the scarce mentions in previous publications. I wonder whether it may be identified with the *ǵr* mentioned in the ritual text RS 1.003:23, whose capacity was fourteen jars of wine (Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* [2002], 64).

[97] Schachner, *Hattuscha* (2011), 186 fig. 87. The basin may have been used for ritual ablutions, which, upon certain religious occasions, were necessary before communal banquets: Barsacchi, "Distribution and Consumption of Food in Hittite Festivals" (2019), 15. Further sunken rectangular constructions for ritual purposes are also known from Cyprus: *Building II* at Alassa-Paliotaverna and at the Basin Building from Maroni-Vournes: Fischer, "Monumental Social Space" (2014), 190–91; and, on a ten-fold scale, from Iron Are II-III Tell Afis: Cecchini, "Un bâtiment mystérieux" (2000).

[98] The additional buildings surrounding the Square with the Basin are poorly known, except for the so-called "Queen Mother's Residence," an elite building whose specific function and degree of connection to the royal compound still eludes us.

[99] Margueron, who led the excavations, interpreted it as a space for "a community [. . .] of a large number of people" (Margueron, "Ras Shamra 1975 et 1976" [1977], 176). According to Yon, it may have been a "local tavern" (Yon, *City of Ugarit* [2006], 59).

[100] The Royal Palace, the *Bâtiment au trône* and the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre*. As far as we can judge, not a single domestic building opened onto the square. The only "house" (unpublished) that survived the mid-13th-century refurbishmant opened on a back alley. The *Bâtiment au trône* was a temple that was still under construction when the city was destroyed: Callot, "Bâtiment au trône" (2013).

[101] Callot and Calvet, "Bâtiment au Vase de Pierre" (2001).

[102] McGeough, "Locating the *marzihu*" (2003), 416–17. Large-scale basalt "kraters" were also found at Late Bronze Age Hazor, Qatna, and Ebla, all from temple or palace contexts: Bonfil and Zarzeki-Peleg, "The Palace of the Upper City of Hazor" (2007), 40.

[103] Two similar vases were found at Amathus, Cyprus. The Amathus vases, dating to the 7th century BCE and twice as large as the Ugarit ones, were originally located in the courtyard of a Phoenician sanctuary (Hermary, *Amathonte II* [1981], 83–84, with pl. 19–20; Léon, "Le second vase d'Amathonte" [1990], 11–14). In 1865, it took French military sixteen days to move one of them to the nearby beach to ship it to Paris (Commandant, "Comment fut transporté le vase d'Amathonte" [1927]: 239–47). A miniature reproduction from Idalion, now in the Louvre, shows that such vases had stairs attached (Hermary, *Sculptures* [1989], 446, no. 919).

[104] Zamora, "El ánfora cananea" (2003).

*Bâtiment
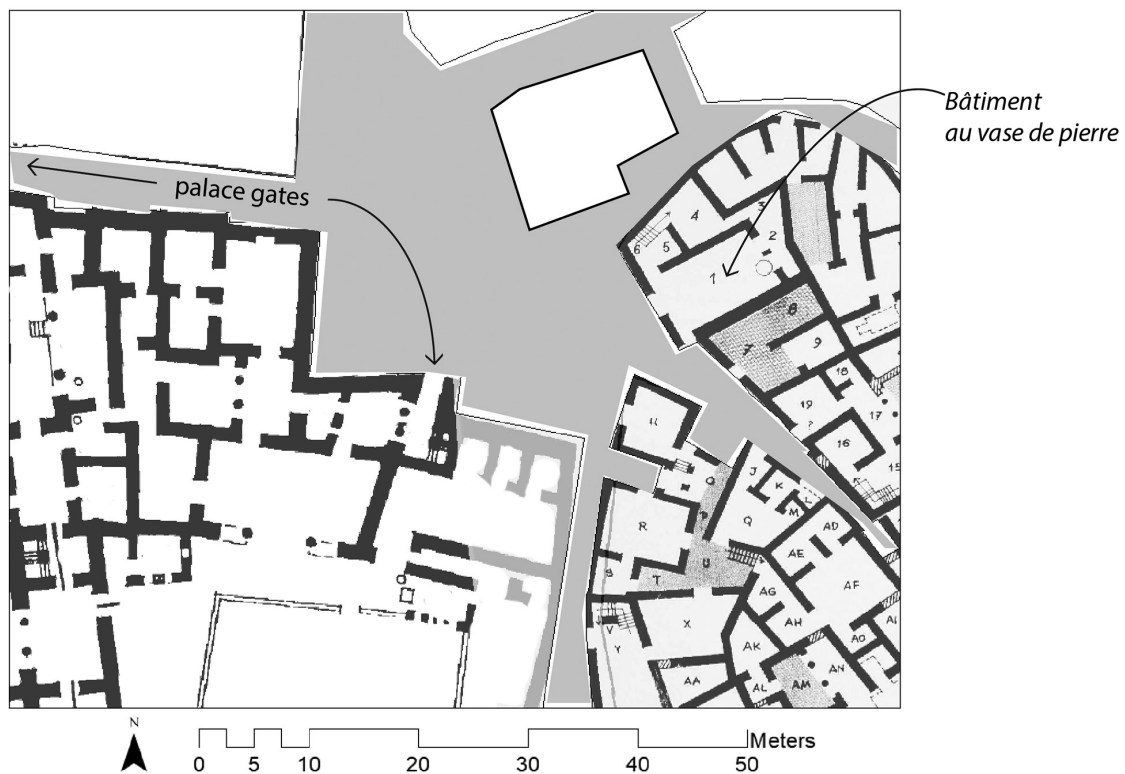au vase de pierre*

palace gates

Figure 6—The Square with the Vase and its surroundings. The figure georeferences and combines plans published in Yon, *City of Ugarit*, figs. 20, 36, 37.

Figure 7—Approximate sketch of the view inside the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* from the square. The original field photo is from Teba and Theodossopoulos, *Graphic Reconstruction*, 392, fig. 6.

carved in the inner bottom of each vase for the settling of sediments suggests that they contained wine, or mixed alcoholic beverages. This is further confirmed by the retrieval of high-quality, Aegean-style kraters from the main hall and of a large quantity of stored or discarded pottery, including Aegean-style drinking sets, from a southern annex. At Ugarit, Aegean-style kraters were employed by the mercantile elite[105] as fine tableware for serving wine and wine-based alcoholic beverages on formal occasions. Based on its layout, monumental qualities, and inventory, the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* has been convincingly interpreted by Silvana di Paolo as an assembly hall for collective drinking.[106] Independent rooms in surrounding buildings may have been connected to it as annexes with storage and preparation functions.[107]

At Ugarit, wine was a valued commodity,[108] cultivated with innovative techniques.[109] It appears that its production and circulation was almost exclusively in royal hands, and that considerable quantities were stored directly in the Royal Palace.[110] Large storerooms—one of them still filled with jars—were located at the southwestern corner of the Royal Palace, less than 60m away from the entrance of the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre*.[111] Textual sources indicate that, on ritual occasions, the royal house granted great quantities of different kinds of wine for collective drinking feasts. The text KTU 4.213, for example, lists a royal delivery of 200 jars (corresponding to 2,200 liters) of wine "on the occasion of the sacrificial banquet" (l. 24).[112] Drinking feasts play an important role in several Ugaritic literary passages, which are sometimes positive and explicit in their portrayal of the resulting drunkenness.[113] In the *Epic of Baal*, an attendant to the god prepares a celebratory banquet and serves hyperbolic quantities of wine, drawing it from an evidently huge wine container. The passage specifies: "a thousand jars he scooped up from the wine vat, ten thousand he mixed from the mixture" (KTU 1.3 I 15–17);[114] Baal himself drank from "a large, imposing vessel / a cup for mighty men" (KTU 1.3 I 12–13) and drinking vessels in general held great symbolic significance in Ugaritic mythology.[115] Mythological scenes found a direct reflection in actual rituals and festivities where deified vessels and jars received offerings.[116] Vessels were also significant cultic paraphernalia: some rituals, for example, required the use of a silver "cup of the gods" for whose manufacture "a total of 150 shekels [i.e., almost 1.5 kg] (of silver) were deposited."[117] In light of the combined archaeological and textual evidence, I propose to see in the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* a venue for state-sponsored collective wine-drinking events of the kind that transpires from the examples above.

In conclusion, the public space around the Royal Palace seems to reflect royally-sponsored situations, with large gathering spaces for the civic community and a three-tiered hierarchy of facilities for communal consumption: the Pillared Building inside the royal compound for the selected few, the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* at the Square with the Vase for a more broadly

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[105] Steel, *Materiality and Consumption* (2013), 33–34.

[106] di Paolo, "Batiment au vase de pierre" (2010), 99–107. Although this urban ensemble has been interpreted by some as a tavern surrounded by small shops (Yon, *City of Ugarit* [2006], 68; Teba and Theodossopoulos, "Graphic Reconstruction Methodology" [2016], 390–92), the monumental qualities and the layout of the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* are suggestive of formal and ceremonial gatherings. According to McGeough, it might have been a meeting hall for elite drinking, for which he calculates a dozen participants (McGeough, "Locating the *marzihu*" [2003], 410*)*. However, given the size of the hall, its monumentality, and its location on the Square with the Vase and next to the Royal Palace, it is likelier that a higher number of participants convened to the spot for formal and festive, but less exclusive and less private purposes.

[107] For instance, the nearby "Annex H" of the so-called *Maison aux Albâtres* was found littered with sheep and goat bones, interpreted as remains of meat preparation and consumption: Chahoud and Vila, "Exploitation of Fauna at Ras Shamra" (2017).

[108] Monroe ("Measure for 'measure'" [2016], 92) calculates its price at 0.026 shekels per litre (a sheep = 1 shekel; a horse = 35 shekels and up, etc.).

[109] Mazzoni, "Age of Migrations" (2018), 212.

[110] Zamora, "La vid y el vino" (2000), 102; Matoïan and Vita, "Administration of Wine" (2018).

[111] Al-Maqdissi and Matoïan, "Céramique découverte par C. Schaeffer" (2008), 129. This part of the palace was connected to the South Square through at least one, perhaps two gates: Yon, *City of Ugarit* (2006), 36.

[112] Matoïan and Vita, "Administration of Wine" (2018): 312. See also RS 19.015, which lists a minimum total of 74 jars (814 liters) of wine "to be consumed during the royal sacrificial rites" (Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* [2002], 215–16 no. 59 and 219–20 nn. 12–13).

[113] Zamora, "L'ébriété à Ougarit" (2005); Matoïan, "Du vin pour le délice de l'assoiffé" (2013).

[114] Translation adapted from Wyatt, *Religious Texts* (1998), 71. Further emphasis placed on the size of the drinking sets (ll. 12–13: "a large, imposing vessel / a rhyton for mighty men") indicates that they were taken to be in direct relation to the exceptional quality of the event (Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle* [1994], 95, 109).

[115] The evidence is reviewed extensively in Belnap, *Meal Events in the Ritual Imagery* (2008), esp. 167–86.

[116] Koitabashi, "Deification of the Lyre" (1992), esp. n. 3.

[117] KTU 4.280: 13–14; Lipiński, "Condition of the Clergy" (1988), 140 n. 87.

defined elite, and the building with the sink filled with cups east of the Square with the Basin for the rest of the civic community. The fortified gates to the royal compound further enhanced the tiered-space organization by drawing a line between an inside ceremonial space around the royal courtyard and an outside ceremonial space around the public squares. Both sets of ceremonial spaces replicate similar principles: the royal courtyard granted access to the Royal Chapel and the Pillared Building, while the squares granted direct access to a temple (the *Bâtiment au trône*) and other feasting facilities. The royal compound and the surrounding public space communicated through asymmetric, top-down sightlines from secluded locales (windows and rooftops) to the squares.[118]

The Temple Squares

The third and last city sector where squares played a significant role was the so-called *Acropole*, Ugarit's highest ground in the north-eastern part of the city (see Fig. 8). Here, two imposing temple-towers and a major official building were located: the Temple of Baal, a twin temple of uncertain identification,[119] and, between them, the *Maison du Grand Prêtre*, the residence of the High Priest, the highest religious office of the city. According to Callot, the temples of the *Acropole* were built at the end of the 19th century.[120] For centuries, they dominated the skyline as twin structures. Around 1250, they collapsed. In the decades that followed, the Temple of Baal was rebuilt according to the original plan.[121] Conversely, the twin temple's rubble was levelled, its precinct dismantled, and its massive foundations reconverted into a flat platform[122] surrounded by a large, irregular public square.

The reorganization of space on the *Acropole* followed criteria similar to the re-planning in and around the Royal Palace. Both areas were structured according to a nested, incremental, socially-graduated hierarchy of access to ritual and celebratory space. The lower tier of this hierarchy was constituted by a system of same-sized squares integrated into the public street network. These squares, large enough to accommodate a significant share of the total population, connected to segregated formal spaces for rituals and elite commensality.

The Square with the Stairway

The rebuilding of the Temple of Baal stretched over several years[123] and was heralded as a historic milestone.[124] The temple was surrounded by a walled precinct.[125] The precinct's focus was the courtyard in front of the temple, equipped with a stepped altar and a statue representing a Ugaritic king—the only statue found in the city so far.[126] The courtyard had a wide, grand entrance facing west, where a monumental stairway, or stepped ramp, led to a square at one end of the rectilinear street to the royal Palace. In this space, no Late Bronze Age building was recorded. Following existing containment walls and the perimeter of known buildings, I propose to reconstruct on the sloping ground an elongated square with a minimum extent of c. 500 m² (see Fig. 8, the Square with the Stairway).[127] In the middle of this space, the grand stairway guided movement and vision towards the temple. The pathos of the ascension was further underscored by four relief steles (see Fig. 9), each decorated with the image of a striding god,[128] probably set on an elevated

[118] This configuration was not entirely new, an earlier version of the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre* pre-dated the renovation. In a previous phase, a bakery was also located here, the so-called *Maison aux Fours*, where large quantities of bread were produced: Curtois, "Fouille d'une maison du bronze récent" (1974): 25–28. Apparently, the 13th-century plan expanded and elaborated upon an existing urban configuration, enhancing its formal and ceremonial aspects.

[119] Alternatively identified as Temple of Dagan or, more likely, Temple of El: Feliu, *God Dagan* (2003), 272–74.

[120] Haydar et al., "Rapport 2009 et 2010" (2013): 463.

[121] Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 61.

[122] Approximatly calculated at c. 70cm high: *ibid.*, 189 fig. 69.

[123] *Ibid.*, 62.

[124] Specifically, it was transfigured into a key episode of the *Epic of Baal*, as discussed in Wyatt, "National Memory" (2017).

[125] Estimated by Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 54, as occupying c. 900–1000 m²; excavated c. 895 m².

[126] RS 4.546: M. Yon, *Arts et industries de la pierre* (1991), 347 fig. 1 a; Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 56. The identification with a king is based on the *Wulstmantel* typical of Syrian royalty, also used in contemporary images of Ugaritic kings: note the limestone statuette RS 88.70 and the image on cultic stand RS 78.041 (both from the *Sanctuaire aux Rhytons*) as well as the image of the king on stele RS 4.227 (*Baal au foudre*). See also Niehr, "Sanctuaire aux rhytons" (2014): 74.

[127] Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 25, 55, ascribes the lack of architecture to erosion.

[128] The steles are RS 4.427 ("*Baal au foudre*"), RS 2.038 ("Stele of Anat"), RS 2.037 ("*Baal au plumes*") and RS 4.429+ ("*Baal au cartouche*"). The larger stele, RS 4.427, represents the god Baal and includes a miniature image of the king; the remaining three gods, dressed in Egyptian attire, are the goddess Anat (perhaps) and two warrior gods with ambiguous attributes (one of them seems to wear

Temple of Baal   cultic platform

Maison du Grand Prêtre

N

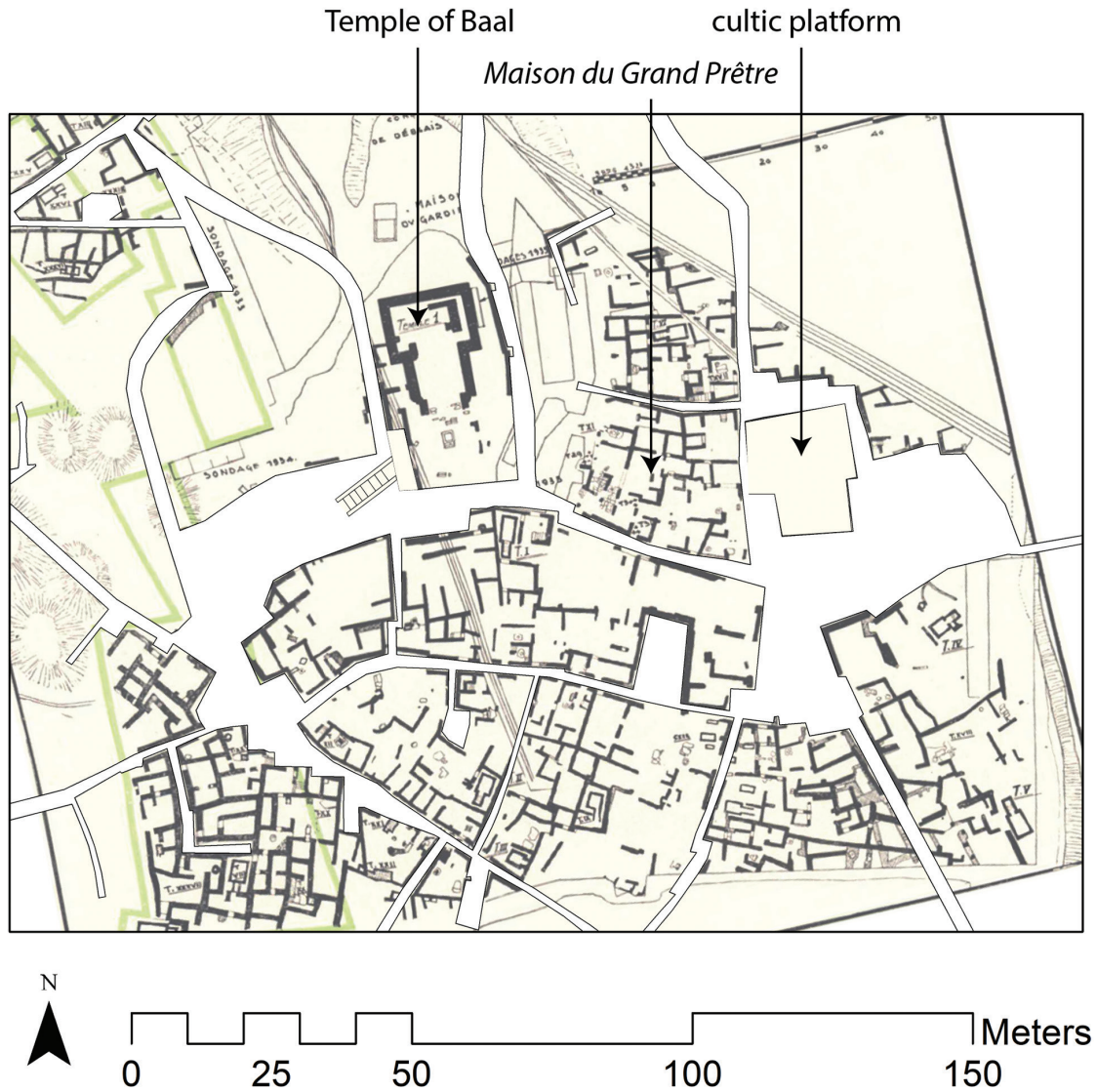0   25   50   100   150   Meters

Figure 8—The squares on the *Acropole*: west, the Square with the Stairway; east, the Square with the Platform. Modified after Schaeffer, "Les Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit Huitième Campagne" (1937): pl. XXVI.

terrace[129] and re-creating a divine procession entering the sacred precinct. The larger stele, the famous *Baal*

au foudre (RS 4.427), depicts the storm god killing the sea-serpent Yam[130] and extending a protective dagger over a miniature king on a pedestal (perhaps a reference to the royal statue erected inside the precinct).[131] Prominently displayed and remarkably accessible to all, the gods created a powerful visual connection between

ostrich feathers, typical of the Egyptian god Amun, but also a gazelle head protruding from his tiara, possibly identifying it as Resheph, represented according to Egyptian iconography: Levy, "Mekal Stela" (2018). The steles are formally and stylistically homogeneous and evidently part of a single ensemble. They were recovered collapsed and partly fragmented north of the paved ramp; the findspots are given in Yon, *Arts et industries de la pierre* (1991), fig. 2.

[129] The steles were found in collapsed position; the reconstruction of their original set-up is hypothetically derived by Schaeffer, "Quatrième campagne (printemps 1932)" (1933), 122 fig.14, and

the sparse information given in Schaeffer, *Ugaritica II* (1949), 121–30.

[130] I follow Wyatt, "Ba'al au Foudre" (2018).

[131] Niehr, "Sanctuaire aux rhytons" (2014): 74.

h = 142cm

Figure 9—The four steles recovered outside the temple gate: from left to right, RS 4.427 ("*Baal au foudre*"), RS 4.429+ ("*Baal au cartouche*"), RS 2.038 ("Stele of Anat"), and RS 2.037 ("*Baal au plumes*"). Line drawings and relative proportions from Yon, "Les Steles de pierre" (1991), 326–27, figs. 6–7.

the square and the temple precinct, bringing the main cultic actors out into the streets.

This set-up is a unique and original example of Late Bronze Age monumental public art, opening a window on the intertwining of politics and religion at Ugarit.[132] In the 13th-century, North Syrian rulers, including Ugarit's, increasingly adopted monumental images to decorate public space. However, while other rulers under the Hittite sphere of influence followed the Hittite visual language, at Ugarit the gods were depicted in a local style, mixing traditional Syrian elements with Egyptian attributes.[133] Beyond the religious and cultural values that this choice may have conveyed, avoiding Hittite signature visuals was a political statement

[132] Monumental art has a long history in Northern Syria, but the specific inspiration for the Ugarit set-up may have been derived from Hittite prototypes: see the relief at Hattusha's King's Gate, dated to the late-14th century by Schachner, *Hattusha* (2011), 92–93, 159, and also the storm god stela found at Çağdın (now Akçaköy), near Carchemish: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Die Hethiter und ihr Reich* (2002), 349, cat. no. 127. These are forerunners of later Iron Age public installations, such as the Long Wall of Sculpture at Carchemish. Previous Syrian monumental reliefs, whose iconographies influenced later Iron Age art significantly, were only rarely used to decorate streets and squares. In the 14th century, however, the Hittites had started to use monumental art to decorate public spaces with religious reliefs, using

them as the backdrop for the royal state cult: Gilibert, "Religion and Propaganda" (2015), 138–39, and Glatz, "Landscape Monuments and Political Competition" (2011).

[133] Ugarit's avoidance of Hittite visuals as opposed to other centres' adherence to them should not obscure the fact that Hittite signature images were controversially received everywhere. At Alalakh, after the Hittites lost control of the city, an orthostat representing the former Hittite governor Tudhaliya and his wife Ašnu-Hepa was reused as a step of the staircase to the main city temple, where it was regularly trodden over in contempt.

about Ugarit's affiliations, independence, and ambitions, which favored Egypt over the Hittites as a cultural and political point of reference.[134] Significantly, the stele present the king as an integral part of the visual ensemble, thus linking the philo-Egyptian stance to the royal family. We need not think that this standpoint was shared by the entirety of Ugarit's civic community. It is likely that different parties existed and that monumental art was employed as a propaganda tool.

The set-up's addressee was the civic community, including all those who did not or could not enter the temple. The area in front of the temple was a boundary space, since access to the temple was selective. The walls of the temple precinct acted as visual, symbolic, and emotional curtains.[135] Their purpose was to segregate the temple courtyard from the square, creating a secluded atmosphere. The temple courtyard was also a place where exceptional inscribed objects attesting to the antiquity of the temple and the ruling dynasty were kept.[136] When the gate's double doors opened, the architectural ensemble's affective power deployed its full potential, turning the main entrance into a theatrical frame for the altar in the courtyard. The altar, a flat cultic platform,[137] functioned as an architectural pivot,

visually linking the outside square, the courtyard, and the highly segregated locations inside the temple. Only the very few were granted access inside the temple. Egyptian-style memorial steles erected inside the temple's cella by high functionaries epitomize that the temple's space belonged exclusively to the uppermost religious and political echelons of the Ugaritic society.[138] Several Levantine temples were similarly organized, combining a highly secluded inner sanctum of strictly limited access, a segregated precinct for medium-scale elite gatherings, and an outside space for large-scale civic participation.[139] The archaeological evidence indicates that the celebrations in the temple precincts revolved around animal sacrifice and banqueting. This most ancient practice developed significantly in the Late Bronze Age, increasingly transforming temple precincts and their surroundings into arenas for large-scale feasting.[140] At the so-called Ceremonial Precinct of Hazor, the debris of a great fire sealed the remains of one such feast,[141] leaving us with a virtual photograph of a situation that has a direct reflection in the Ugaritic urban organization. Nearly 17,000 discarded bones were found heaped on the floor around the altar, belonging almost exclusively to sheep or goats (67%) and cows (30%), with a preponderance of adult male animals.[142] Justin Lev-Tov estimates that a minimum of 100 sheep and goats aged between one and three years

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[134] The intertwining of art and politics at Ugarit are discussed by Glatz, "Negotiating Empire" (2013). See also Morris, "Egypt, Ugarit, the god Ba'al" (2015). The political meaning ascribed to selected iconographies is also evident in the monumental art of the Levantine Iron Age, when city-states ruled by dynasties with competing cultural identities used selected iconographies and monumental scripts to play out their differences. For example, it is useful to contrast Karkemish and Malatya, where the Luwian heritage was predominant, with Zincirli and Tell Halaf, both ruled by Aramaean dynasties. Although these centres shared a common urban culture (Tamur, "Style, Ethnicity and the Archaeology of the Aramaeans" [2017]), Karkemish and Malatya consciously promoted a long-term commitment to Hittite Empire signature images of power, while Aramaean elites at Zincirli and Tell Halaf carefully avoided them (Gilibert, "Religion and Propaganda" [2015]).

[135] Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 55.

[136] Before being abandoned, the temple was cleared. Subsequently, and increasingly so in the late-18th century AD, the ruins were searched for treasures. This history of spoliation notwithstanding, excavations retrieved from the courtyard statues sent from Egypt (Schaeffer, "Quatrième campagne (printemps 1932)" [1933], plate XV), including two sphinxes inscribed with the cartouche of Amenemhet III (Matoïan, "Ougarit et l'Égypte" [2015], 40), dating to the foundation of the temple c. 1800. In the courtyard was also found a 15th-century royal letter (RS 4.449) mentioning the name of the Ugaritic king Ibira, thus going back to the very origins of the ruling dynasty (Vidal, "Origins of the last Ugaritic dynasty" [2006], 173, with previous literature).

[137] Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 55.

[138] Schaeffer, "Deuxième campagne (printemps 1930)" (1931), plate XIII, 3. The best known among these steles is the "Stele of Mamy," recently re-discussed in Levy, "Baal-Zaphon Stele" (2014).

[139] Among the best-documented are Ain Dara, Tall Munbaqa, Tall Bazi, and Hazor: Otto, "Gotteshaus und Allerheiligstes" (2013), 375; Lev-Tov and McGeough, "Feasting in Late Bronze Age Syro-Palestine" (2007). Cf. also the case of Tell el-Qasīle (Vieweger, "Die Kultausstattung "philistäischer" Heiligtümer" [2012]) and of Temple 1230 at LBA Beth-Shean (Mullins, "Late Bronze Age and Iron Age temples at Beth-Shehan" [2012]). On access and space structure of Levantine temples, see Susnow, "House of the Deity" (2020).

[140] Yasur-Landau and Susnow ("Ceramic Assemblages" [2017]: 144) advance two hypotheses to explain why during the LBA feasts and banquets in temples increase: "These were likely means to rally popular support of the rulership at times when the Egyptian court presented onerous demands for taxes and corvée to the Canaanite rulers, which could only be met by placing a heavy burden on the Canaanite commoners (. . .). Alternatively, we may attribute some Egyptian influence to such activities (. . .)."

[141] Zuckerman, "Feasting in Late Bronze Age Hazor" (2007): 196. For the interpretation of Building 7050 of Hazor's Ceremonial Precinct as a temple, see Zuckerman, "Hazor's Acropolis in the Late Bronze Age" (2010).

[142] Lev-Tov and McGeough, "Feasting in Late Bronze Age Syro-Palestine" (2007), 96, Table 5-1.

were butchered on site.[143] Modern studies indicate that adult goats grazed on pastures yield on average 19 kg of edible meat.[144] Applied to the Hazor assemblage, this parameter gives a total of 1,900 kg of sheep or goat meat, arguably enough to feed the entire city. This amount was apportioned unequally. A relatively small quantity of selected cuts, specifically heads and limbs (amounting to less than 9% of the animal carcass), was consumed in the precinct, together with rare delicacies such as fallow deer or Nile catfish, while the rest was consumed elsewhere. The Hazor assemblage gives us a key to read the organization of space in and around Late Bronze Age temple precincts as venues for large-scale celebrations where "ranked differences were reinforced through spatial differentiation of feasting participants."[145] At Ugarit, this organization of space was complemented by the creation of an ample gathering space nearby, described in the following section.

The Square with the Platform

The *Acropole*'s second temple was reconverted into a platform, coming to occupy the center of a large irregular square (see Fig. 8).[146] Similar elevated terraces in the middle of open spaces are known from other Levantine sites, including Ebla, Tell Afis and Emar, where they were used as sacrificial spaces and focal points of collective feasts.[147] At Late Bronze Age Emar, the over-

all configuration was strikingly similar to Ugarit's. At Emar, a "terrasse cultuelle" was built adjoining a public square,[148] just opposite "Temple M_2"[149] and next to the residence of the diviner ("Building M_1").[150] We can draw a parallel between this triad and the situation at Ugarit, where the cultic terrace formed a unity with the surrounding public square, the adjoining Residence of the High Priest, and the nearby Temple of Baal. Both configurations of space likely reflect similar multi-staged sacrificial rituals performed under the aegis of the city's pre-eminent religious officiants, taking place partly inside the temples and partly outside them.[151]

Two inscribed steles found in front of the terrace, RS 6.021 and RS 6.028, provide evidence for specific sacrificial rituals connected to funerary cults.[152] Their epigraphs (KTU 6.13 and KTU 6.14, respectively) commemorate funerary offerings (Ug. *pgr*) and the slaughtering of oxen.[153] The rituals were sponsored by two eminent members of the Ugaritic high society, queen Tariyelli and Uzzinu, *sākinu* of the city.[154] The steles were probably intended as "a protocol documenting

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[143] *Ibid.*, 99.

[144] McGregor, *Meat and Offal Yields of Goats* (2007).

[145] Lev-Tov and McGeough, "Feasting in Late Bronze Age Syro-Palestine" (2007), 107. The Hazor assemblage compares well with preliminary data from Tall Bazi: Otto, "Ritual Commensality and Daily Commensal Practices" (2015) and "Gotteshaus und Allerheiligstes" (2013), 375.

[146] Although excavations did not detect the square's limit, its approximate extent is likely to have been around 1,000 m²: Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* (2011), 85.

[147] See the overview of the evidence in Mazzoni, "Open Spaces Around the Temples" (2015). Specifically for Tell Afis, see Mazzoni, "Temples at Tell Āfis" in (2012); for Umm el-Marra, Schwartz, "Memory and its Demolition" (2013); for possible evidence at Byblos, Sala, "Early and Middle Bronze Age Temples at Byblos" (2015). Cultic terraces in public areas are also known in Late Bronze Age Cyprus, for examples at the sites of Myrtou Pighades and Phlamoudi Vounari: Knapp, *Archaeology of Cyprus* (2013), 376–79. Iron Age parallels along the Levantine coast are the *Sanctuaire B1* at Tell Tweini (Bretschneider at al., "Gibala: the First Two Excavations" [1999]), a structure at Sarepta (Pritchard, *Sarepta* [1975], fig. 36), and, most significantly, the spectacular sacrificial terraces at Hama, Carchemish, and Tell Halaf: Gilibert, "Archäologie der Menschenmenge" (2012).

[148] Margueron, "Architecture et urbanisme" (1982), 31–32.

[149] Perhaps to be identified with the temple of ^{d}NIN.URTA, a god of town affairs, according to Fleming, "Textual Evidence for a Palace at Late Bronze Emar" (2012), 108.

[150] Building M_1 was the residence of the Zū-Ba'la family, a dynasty of diviners, prominent religious leaders and masters of a scribal school from the 1260s to the 1180s: Cohen, *Scribes and Scholars of Emar* (2009), 147–238 (ch. 5), "The scribal school at Emar" (2012). On absolute chronology, see also Démare-Lafont and Fleming, "Emar Chronology and Scribal Streams" (2015).

[151] At Ugarit, stone slabs, a round stone basin and a stone trough found next to the platform may further index the presence of animals and food processing activities, although their publication is limited: Schaeffer, "Deuxième campagne (printemps 1930)" (1931), pl XI, 2, to be integrated with Matoïan, "Le aleph et le taw" (2016), 57 table 1, pt. 10. Callot interprets these installations as the remains of an oil mill, but does not elaborate further (Callot, *Sanctuaires de l'Acropole* [2011], 32). Further findings retrieved on the cultic terrace include figurines of an ox (RS 6.020) and a lion (RS 6.265; "Le aleph et le taw" [2016], table 1, pts. 3, 14).

[152] Niehr, "Zwei Stelen mit Weihinschriften" (2011), 84–86, with reference to previous literature.

[153] Loretz and Dietrich, "'Weihen' ('ly S) von pgr, Ochsen und Gegenständen" (2005); Lange, "Food and Libation Offerings" (2012), 170–71.

[154] The *sākinu* was the most important political officer of the city after the king. He exerted authority in several fields, most importantly acting as judge in prominent legal disputes, notably as a representative of the king in supra-regional court-cases presided by the viceroy of Carchemish: van Soldt, "City Administration of Ugarit" (2010), 251–55.

the legacy of a person, made for the time following his death."[155] Yet they also memorialized the specific event of their erection. A possible occasion to consider is the funeral of king Niqmaddu III around 1215–1210 BC, in which both Tariyelli, who was Niqmaddu's mother, and the city as a collective ritual entity played a major role.[156] It was perhaps upon this specific occasion that the cultic terrace first came into use.

The Separate Coexistence of Ceremony and Market

The comparative analysis of urban space at Ugarit underscores the coexistence of two clearly differentiated kinds of squares: a set of connected ceremonial squares and a market square. In this section, I argue that the two sets of spaces held equally important but contrasting political significance and were construed as mutually exclusive spaces. Specifically, I argue that the Central Square was ambiguously perceived as an important and necessary but potentially dangerous social space, where individuals gathered off the radar of official control. Conversely, ceremonial squares were devised as public spaces for civic rituals, where social interactions followed formal rules and reinforced a specific ideological and religious discourse.

Textual sources help us explore the socio-political connotation that the Central Square might have had for Ugarit's citizens. Iron Age II biblical sources connote urban squares (Hebr. *reḥōb*) as informal and dangerous places (Prov. 22:13), where foreigners, prostitutes and "strange women" hang around (Judg. 19:15–30; Gen. 19:2; Prov. 7:12),[157] episodes of violence are usual (Prov. 26:13), and righteousness "cannot enter" (Isa 59:14).[158] Squares are also a privileged place for public shaming (2 Sam. 1; Deut 13:17) and rumors and gossip (Prov. 1:20).[159] In cuneiform sources, public space often bears similar negative associations, also including associations with dirt, stench,[160] pollution, and witchcraft: demons and witches were believed to roam the streets, and a passer-by could be bewitched

just by looking at something evil or by being accidentally exposed to magical substances.[161] The negative association of squares and crowds resonated similarly in 13th-century Ugarit. At schools, Ugaritic scribes probably studied the *Instructions of Shuruppak*,[162] a Sumerian text admonishing thus: "You should not place your house next to a public square: there is always a crowd there."[163] The Ugaritic incantation RS 22.225, another educational text copied as a school exercise, identifies the market, the assembly, and the city gate as places of exposure to the "evil eye."[164] Such cautionary passages indicate, of course, that people would often spend considerable time doing business in the streets and that some enjoyed the thrill of city life. In the ancient Near East, *pū sūqim*, the "voice of the street," was a widespread cause of anxiety.[165] In a wisdom text taught at the scribal school hosted at the *Maison aux Tablettes*, citizens were advised: "In the alley, in the street, in the square—do not open your mouth!"[166] In fact, the power of rumor and gossip cannot be overstated. They ruled over prestige and reputation, helping to shape consensus and stimulate political action.[167] Humorous tales from Babylonia, such as *The Poor Man of Nippur* or *The Doctor of Isin*, mention urban squares as the quintessential place where people risked defamation and ridicule.[168] Market squares, in particular, were flexible gathering spaces which inherently promoted informal civic engagement.[169] They were liminal spaces where insiders mingled with outsiders, and where subversive political actions might be taken. Pertinently, a text from Emar described in graphic terms how the local market square once became

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[155] Niehr, "Zwei Stelen mit Weihinschriften" (2011), 154.

[156] As attested in the passage KTU 1.161, ll. 32–34.

[157] Schmidt Goering, "Moving and Thinking" (2019), 76.

[158] Wright, "Urban Gates, Squares and Power" (2002), 28–29.

[159] See also Rendu Loisel, "When Gods Speak to Men" (2016). One is reminded of an ironic graffito at a market square at Roman Ostia: *lege et intellige mu(l)tu(m) loqui ad macellu(m)*, "read and understand that at the market many things are said."

[160] De Zorzi, "Rude Remarks not Fit to Smell" (2019).

[161] Steinert, "City Streets" (2014), 139.

[162] Viano, *Reception of Sumerian Literature* (2016), 361. Another Akkado-Hurrian bilingual is documented at Ugarit in RS 15.10 (Arnaud, *Textes de bibliothèque* [2007], 46).

[163] Black, *Literature of Ancient Sumer* (2006), 285. See also Alster, *Instructions of Suruppak* (1976).

[164] I follow Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* (2002), 162. For this incantation as part of the scribal curriculum, see Márques Rowe, "Scribes, Sages and Seers in Ugarit" (2008), 105.

[165] Steinert, "City Streets" (2014), 149–50.

[166] *Ugaritica V*, 163: I 21–22; II 28–31. See also Cohen, "An Assyrian Teacher at Ugarit?" (2017), who links the manuscript with the activity of an Assyrian scholar teaching at the *Maison aux Tablettes*.

[167] Besnier, *Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics* (2009); Laurence, "Rumour and Communication in Roman Politics" (1994); Hunter, "Gossip and the Politics of Reputation in Classical Athens" (1990).

[168] D'Agostino, *Testi umoristici* (2000), 120.

[169] Fisher, "Making the First Cities on Cyprus" (2014).

the epicenter of a political revolt involving both peasants and high-ranking officials.[170] When, as in the case of Ugarit's Central Square, the seat of power was not immediately adjacent, centralized control was a logistical challenge.[171] This background may explain why, at Ugarit, the market square was kept separate from governmental consensus-seeking initiatives and urban planning.

At Ugarit, decision-makers counteracted the marketplace as a designated place of interpersonal contact by creating new ceremonial squares for communal rituals around representative institutions. In particular, the ruling dynasty co-opted community cults to legitimate the local political course, investing resources in building squares gravitating around the royal compound and the Temple of Baal. These new ceremonial squares played a pivotal role in defining access to and seclusion of selected symbolic spaces. In particular, specific architectural devices were employed to create visual links between spaces otherwise separated, as in the case of the gate to the Temple of Baal, which opened onto the courtyard altar, and the door to the *Bâtiment au vase de pierre*, which framed the colossal stone vase inside. I argue that this configuration was planned to integrate large-scale, community-wide events with exclusive feasts and rituals.

Textual evidence supports the notion that public festivals and other collective events in the Ugaritic cultic calendar saw the participation of many, and sacrificial lists confirm that, upon the occasion of the big festivals, a great number of animals—mostly sheep, goat, and cow—were offered to the gods, yielding vast quantities of meat[172] and implying large-scale redistribution and

feasting. Furthermore, rituals were sometimes explicitly performed on behalf of the urban population in its entirety[173] and involved urban processions with numerous stations.[174] Texts from Emar also specify that, during big festivals, different people had different access to specific spaces, rituals, food, and alcoholic beverages according to their rank and status,[175] in a way that resounds well with the archaeological evidence from Ugarit.

Lev-Tov and Kevin McGeough propose that the rationale of public feasting in the Late Bronze Age Levant was to enhance a sense of common belonging while at

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autumnal "Festival of the First Wine," for example, at least fifty-eight ewes, fifteen rams, thirty-five cows and two bulls were slaughtered, an event that must have yielded over three tons of meat. Calculated after the animal sacrifices listed in RS 1.003, as published in Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* (2002), 59–65. Calculations do not account for possible repetitions of selected sets of offerings (e.g., as indicated in l. 36), which would further multiply the results. I already introduced above the factor of 19 kg of edible meat per sheep or goat. For an approximate quantification of the meat yield of a beef carcass, I use here a very modest factor of 50 kg of meat per cow or bull. The situation was similar at Emar, where for the big *zukru* festival the killing of 700 lambs and fifty calves was prescribed: Fleming, "Textual Evidence for a Palace" (2012), 104.

[173] As in the royal funerary ritual KTU 1.161, or the "ritual for national atonement" KTU 1.40. The latter explicitly includes women and foreigners, and envisages a public, collective atonement celebration under the aegis of the king and queen of Ugarit. Sanders interprets it as a distinctive "model of political communication in which power flows from the ability to recruit people into relationships of alliance [. . .] through ritual and persuasion" (Sanders, *Invention of Hebrew* [2009], 75). At Emar, where the cultic calendar was close to Ugarit's and written evidence more explicit, public gatherings of the entire population for sacrificing rituals happened several times on occasion of the *zukru*-Festival: see the numerous attestations presented in Fleming, *Time at Emar* (2000), 49, 72–73, 82, 91, 108 n. 265, 126, 148 (the whole population eats at the gate), and 153–54. See also Fleming, "The Emar festivals" (1996). For the specific role played by public space during the *zukru*-Festival, Manuelli and Mori, *"The King at the Gate"* (2017): 231. For a ritual banquet which saw the participation of the whole city and took place "in front of Dagan" at the time of Zimri-Lim of Mari, see *ARM* XXVI 215: 9–14.

[174] KTU 1.43, for example, prescribes that the king shall walk a seven-fold circuit, leading a parade of divine effigies through the city, and that "everyone shall follow the gods on foot" (l. 24). In some cases, religious processions were organized as a response to emergencies (e.g., an enemy siege: KTU 1.119). Mostly, however, processions were held at prescribed moments of the year (e.g., the explicit mention of the date in KTU 1.112, l. 1). The Ugaritic texts also indicate a diversified organization of ritual space, mentioning ritual rooms within the Palace, "sacrificial pits" elsewhere, and other enigmatic structures (Pardee, *Ritual and Cult* [2002], 228–29).

[175] Fleming, "Seeing and Socializing with Dagan" (2015).

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[170] Adamwhite, *Late Hittite Emar* (2001), 233–39; Durand, review of Arnaud, Emar VI/3 (1989); Arnaud, *Recherches au Pays d'Aštata* (1986), 26–27, text no. 17. For marketplaces as loci of conflict and sedition there is much comparative evidence from early modern Europe, e.g., van Gelder, "Protest in the Piazza" (2020).

[171] An opposite situation may be observed in Late Bronze Age Nuzi, where the interconnected open spaces "C49–D11" and "I19–I21," which may be tentatively identified with the "small market" and the "big market" mentioned in the texts (CAD M/I, 93a, s.v. *maḫīru* 1 ["market place"]; cf. Zaccagnini, "Markt" [1989–90]: 422b), were sandwiched between the city gate and the palace: Starr, *Nuzi* (1939), with plans 11 and 13, 198, 205, 250–53.

[172] Pardee, "Animal Sacrifice at Ugarit" (2000), 325. The early Iron Age "Processional Entry" at Carchemish, where images of young men bringing calves and sheep to the altar lined the city's ceremonial square, delivers a graphic illustration of the intertwining of urban space, collective participation and animal sacrifice (Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art* [2011], 120–21). During the

the same time reinforcing existing social hierarchies.[176] At Ugarit, the creation of large public squares around the religious and political building bears witness to specific attention given to extensive participation in rituals and celebrations. These new spaces, organized as a series of stations connecting the royal Palace to the *Acropole*, were part of a broader strategy to exalt the king's religious role and, ultimately, to rally public support for the monarchy.

In order to appreciate the specifics of this strategy, one must turn to Ugarit's political discourse around 1250. In this period, as the grip of Hittite hegemony weakened, Ugarit increasingly resisted Hittite demands and eventually turned to overt insubordination, with the last two kings of Ugarit, Niqmaddu III and Ammurapi, refusing to comply with vassal obligations in several instances.[177] This phase coincides with the promotion of a specific local identity. Local culture was empowered through a new writing system (alphabetic cuneiform)[178] and a new religious discourse which conferred a special prominence to the king as champion of collective interests and counterpart on earth of the god Baal.[179]

The think tank behind these cultural fabrications was essentially state-sponsored,[180] but the people involved were not necessarily based within the royal Palace. Rather, the physical epicenter of this movement

appears to have been the houses surrounding the Temple of Baal[181] and the *Maison du Grand Prêtre* in particular, where unique copies of the most important mythological and religious texts were kept.[182] This major official building, located between the Temple of Baal and the Square with the Platform, housed the High Priest's own scribal school.[183] From here, the High Priest acted as guardian and promoter of the religious role of the king, whom he addressed as "brother."[184] At the same time, he was the organizer and main officiant of the great civic liturgies.[185] As such, the High Priest and the intellectuals frequenting his school functioned as an interface between the royal Palace and the rest of the town.[186] In this role, Ugarit's clergy seems to have joined the monarchy in a more or less overt anti-Hittite stance,[187] contributing to the development of a cultural discourse exalting the king as quintessential to the local identity. The trend may have not only generically responded to Hittite imperialism, but also effectively counteracted specific Hittite interferences in cultic matters, which may have caused Ugarit's clergy to side with the local royals. Based on evidence from the archives of Urtenu, Yoram Cohen has recently demonstrated that Hittite officials were deeply involved in Ugarit's religious life, sending their religious functionaries to the city, advancing demands for Hittite rituals, implementing a state cult, and even taking over parts of local cults.[188]

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[176] Hawley, Pardee, and Roche-Hawley, "The Scribal Culture of Ugarit" (2015).

[177] Liverani, "Histoire" (1979), 1311–1312; Halayqa, "The Demise of Ugarit" (2010); Devecchi, "Ugarit under Foreign Rule" (2019). This perhaps extended even to faking Hittite royal documents, as indicated by the possible counterfeit of a Hittite royal seal identified by Glatz, "Negotiating Empire" (2013), 36.

[178] Boyes, "Negotiating Imperialism and Resistance" (2019).

[179] Wyatt, "The religious role of the king in Ugarit" (2005). See also del Olmo Lete, "Littérature et pouvoir royal" (2012). Fleming has shown how the weight given to different gods had an overt political value. At Emar, he argues, the god Baal reflected royal interests, while the god Dagan was celebrated as a god of common citizens (Fleming, "Household and Community Religion" [2008], 49). The Ugaritic *Epic of Keret* prefigures a situation in which a king is told to step down because of failures in addressing the problems of the common citizens: Shedletsky and Levine, "The "MŠR" of the sons and daughters of Ugarit (KTU$_2$ 1.40)" (1999), 338. This idea connects with the wider topic of the king who redressed social and economic imbalances among the citizens, to become widespread in the early Iron Age (e.g., in the Kilamuwa inscription): see the discussion in Liverani, *Oltre la Bibbia* (2004), 351–57.

[180] A clear measure of that is the personal seal of Ammistamru II, king of Ugarit c. 1260–1235 BCE, which was inscribed in alphabetic cuneiform.

[181] Hawley, Sauvage, and Pardee, "The Scribe *ṯabʾilu*" (2013).

[182] del Olmo Lete, *Private archives of Ugarit* (2017), 13–25.

[183] The *Maison du Grand Prêtre* was an expanded mansion with multiple entrances, multiple staircases, several archives, sparse domestic infrastructures and no tombs. Given its unique characteristics, perhaps this building was the "priestly college" (Ug. *dr khnm*) mentioned in KTU 4.357, l.24.

[184] del Olmo Lete, *Private Archives of Ugarit* (2017), 23.

[185] *Ibid.*, 13

[186] Niehr, "Ritualtexte aus Ugarit" (2020).

[187] Liverani (*Histoire* [1979], 1311) speaks of "passive resistence".

[188] Cohen and Torrecilla, "Hittite Cult in Syria" (2020). Hittite religious imperialism is also visible at Alalakh, which was ruled by a Hittite governor who bore the title "Great Priest." This character took over the main local temple, introduced Hittite cults and made the city main temple the logistic base of Hittite administration: Yener, "Cult and Ritual at Late Bronze Age II Alalakh" (2017). Elsewhere, the clergy was opposed to royal interests. At Emar, for example, where the local monarchy coexisted with strong collective institutions, the diviner's school was aligned with the latter and acted as a loyal collaborator of the Hittites, promoting civic liturgies in which the role of the local king was limited: Cohen, "The Administration of Cult in Hittite Emar" (2011), and "Public Religious Sentiment and Personal Piety" (2007), 332. On the alignment with

The construction of new urban squares for communal celebration is best understood as a facet of the cultural program of the upper echelon of Ugaritic society. The king and the clergy advanced it on many levels, including the promotion of rituals played out in the streets. While innovations in writing systems and the nuances of literary compositions addressed a limited audience,[189] communal celebrations involved the urban population in its entirety. Ugarit's population was culturally mixed, economically affluent, and, as discussed above, entangled in conflicting interests.[190] The "ritual for national atonement" explicitly invited the city population's different components to seek unity, which aptly illustrates how ritual was used to consolidate consensus in a socially tense environment. In this framework, ad-hoc urban squares significantly boosted the community impact of consensus-building events, whereas the market square was probably seen as a space where social conflict was prone to surface in explicit forms.

Concluding Remarks

This paper delineates a new framework for looking at ancient squares as political spaces. In doing so, it approaches urban space as an organic, dynamic, and multiscalar system of intersecting interactions, in which the street network functions as prime connector and point of encounter for different social groups. From the archaeologist's point of view, the challenge lies in disentangling the footprint of the top-down planning of ruling elites from the material traces left by the bottom-up actions of other social subjects. I tackled this problem by combining three methods of inquiry: the analysis of space configuration, the analysis of urban design, and the contextual analysis of small finds and their distribution.

The analysis of space configuration studies the movement of people strictly in terms of access, predicting areas of intense pedestrian circulation with algorithms tested empirically. At Ugarit, it helps distinguish the Central Square as a gathering space topologically independent from the Palace or the Temple. Conversely, the urban design analysis focuses on geometrical features such as elevations, decorative frames, and monuments. In the process, it identifies the connotations of urban space as intended by the planners. This line of inquiry has proven crucial to define Ugarit's ceremonial squares and highlight their affective power. Finally, the analysis of the archaeological inventories introduces the perspective of ancient users. At Ugarit, the inventories contribute to the identification of the Central Square as a marketplace, even if the available documentation is incomplete (as a corrective to this limitation, Ugarit offers an extraordinary amount of textual information, which enormously enriches our understanding of urban life). While each method has significant drawbacks, a takeaway lesson from the case of Ugarit is that their combination creates a solid interpretative framework.

Ugarit was one of the first great Mediterranean cities. Comparative urban studies define the Mediterranean city as a compact and diverse cityscape centered on squares. Its long-term identifying features are the interplay of sacred and secular in its street life combined with an enormous force of attraction as a place of quintessential civilization and economic opportunities.[191] To this day, urban planners across the globe strive to replicate these features and materialize a "Mediterranean" sense of place. But where and under which conditions did it all begin? Because of the central role of urban squares as community spaces, the cradle of Mediterranean urban culture is usually quite firmly placed in the agoras of Classical Greece. But the case of Ugarit proves that the history of the Mediterranean squares is considerably older, and that part of its roots sink deep into the shores of the ancient Levant.

Commentary

Daniel E. Fleming, New York University

I come to this stimulating contribution from longstanding interest in political patterns of second-millennium Syria though not as a specialist on Ugarit. Gilibert's examination of the city's public places in the context of its remarkably well-preserved urban plan is rich in observation of the site and in conversation with specialized studies of relevant social phenomena. We can

collective institutions, see Fleming, *The Emar Festivals* (1996), 85, and "Household and Community Religion" (2008), 48–49.

[189] Boyes "Negotiating Imperialism and Resistance" (2019): 10–11.

[190] Administrative sources document the social tensions ensuing from specific restrictions, special obligations, and differential treatments for different groups. For example, the text RS 17.130 (*PRU* IV, 103–105) indicates that Hittite merchants from the port city of Ura (Cilicia) were not allowed to own a house or land at Ugarit.

[191] Leontidou, "Mediterranean City" (2020).

almost smell the inhabitants as they press against each other in the city squares. While texts play a role in the discussion, the main conclusions are driven by an archaeologist's interpretation of patterns in excavated space. I know history best by texts and benefit from the contrasting sensibility.

I begin with what persuades, and this is substantial. "Urban squares" are the particular excavated features that allow interpretation of a city as whole population—a public, as such and in relation to institutions of governance and communal identity, such as major temples. Here is a place to examine the relationship between people and centers of authority. At Ugarit, there is a basic contrast between the "Central Square" near the main city gate and the other four excavated squares, two next to the palace and two next to the Baal temple. The primary contrast is temporal, with the Central Square evidently oldest and certainly not established to suit 13th-century city planning. The other two pairs of public places appear new to the urban design of the mid-13th century.

All the houses of Ugarit represent a concentration of wealth generally denied the residents of villages in the surrounding countryside. They vary considerably in size, with small and large mingled on the same streets, not segregated into neighborhoods by class. There is no need to understand city blocks to align with individual clans, and relationships appear instead to be "networked" more complexly. Though substantial in size, the entire city was quickly accessible on foot, and primary social contact was in the streets. This urban fabric, with its strong residential component and Central Square at some distance from palace and major temples, existed before the innovations of the mid-13th century and stood in different relation to an earlier configuration of monarchy. One key function of the old public square was commercial. This certainly involved the immediate countryside, but I would not exclude long-distance trade, which need not have depended only on palace initiative. Novel construction of public space in the 13th century reflects an effort by kings to bring new order and hierarchy under their authority to older city custom, including communal worship of Baal and wine-centered feasting.

Within the framework of this compelling analysis, I find particular interpretive choices unnecessarily limiting, especially where patterns of spatial relations are understood to have only a single probable explanation. First, the opening choice of the 13th –9th centuries breaks the continuity of the old collective city framework and

its Central Square with earlier periods. Throughout the discussion, chronological considerations are acknowledged *ad hoc* but play a secondary role in the general analysis, although expanding royal power in communal life lies at the root.

I would look for greater possibility for varied historical outcomes in the context of certain spatial patterns, perhaps with the operation of other social forces not visible in the physical remains. Population density may be higher in walled cities than in rural villages. But are all cities to be regarded equally as battlegrounds for competing interests based only on that density? Why must the mix of households with different incomes be "tense"? Sometimes, indeed, but what other factors might affect the reasons for family location and the nature of relations between families? Commercial partnerships need not bind financial equals, and smaller houses could relate to larger ones by generational difference or marital arrangement.

The Central Square intrigues me particularly. It may be too limiting to define it only by its function as a "market," without the possibility of gathering for ritual, judicial, or collective political purpose. With Emar's *zukru* rites in view, the unexcavated space just outside the main city gate could also have served old public assembly. The fact that houses do not open directly on the square is intriguing but need not reflect it as "dangerous," and the texts invoked to support the idea do not represent the full range of reference to public places in all their excitement and energy.

Once, I contrasted kingship at Ugarit and Emar to emphasize the dominance of the former. But Gilibert now has me wondering whether the communal fabrics were more deeply alike, only with different outcomes in the regional political play of the 13th century.

Virginia R. Herrmann, University of Tübingen

Alessandra Gilibert deftly weaves together a plethora of textual, archaeological, and architectural evidence into a rich new picture of urban assemblies in Late Bronze Age Ugarit. This "archaeopolitical" approach to the interpretation of urban space and social geography in an ancient Near Eastern city is most welcome, and Gilibert's masterful case-study demonstrates the revelatory potential of integrating urban streets and squares with other evidence in an explicitly political and historicized perspective.

The "square" in the ancient Near East has long been a rather neglected topic. This is probably due first to

the usual lack of the type of formal framing and embellishments that distinguished, e.g., the Athenian Agora or the Roman Forum (Iron Age Syro-Hittite cities with spaces framed by relief sculptures are an exception[192]), and second to the characterization of ancient Near Eastern states as examples of "Oriental despotism," in which public participation and assembly played almost no role. In addition to its empirical claims and advocacy for greater attention to urban open spaces, then, the important stand that this article takes is for us to take seriously the role of public negotiation and consensus-building in ancient Near Eastern politics. In political formations that were on their face hierarchical and coercive,[193] to what extent, or under what circumstances, did the voice and consent of the governed matter to ancient Near Eastern rulers and to the course of events?

Gilibert's argument that popular opinion did matter in 13th-century Ugarit is convincingly supported by the investment of rulers in spaces of public ceremony. The extraordinary—actually unique—abundance of archaeological and textual evidence from Ugarit allows the reconstruction of a rationale for this staging in an anti-imperial independence movement led by the united royal and religious elite, for which popular support was sought. The materials for such detailed historical and political reconstruction will not be available in every case, however, and Gilibert could be more transparent about the dependence of her tripartite method of spatial analysis on non-spatial lines of evidence for its interpretation.

Gilibert's description of the anti-imperial development of self-conscious local cultural identity at Ugarit and its promotion through public ceremony invites comparison with the situation of Sam'al (Zincirli, Turkey) under Neo-Assyrian hegemony in the 8th century BCE. In this case, I interpreted the simultaneous occurrence of extensive depiction of subroyal elites or courtiers in distinctive local dress on palace facades, the creation of a district of large courtyard houses in the lower town, and the local king's public declarations of loyalty to Assyria as the king's deliberate cultivation of a class of cosmopolitan local elites who would be supportive of his *pro*-imperial policy and share in its rewards.[194] Referencing the imperial strategy of "cos-

mopolitan subordination" of discrete local cultures, hierarchically ordered beneath the imperial one,[195] I argued that both the creation of local elite culture and its celebration in group events ultimately served imperial interests by disembedding a faction of supporters for potentially unpopular policies from their traditional local and kinship networks.

An important difference in the Ugarit case, is, however, the public accessibility of its ceremonial squares, versus the exclusive location of the ceremonial spaces of Sam'al, which points to the value of Gilibert's spatial-analytical approach. She takes great care to define the "public" who would have taken part in these events and whose solidarity was thereby fostered, arguing that it was the entire urban population, on the basis of the size and configuration of both the squares themselves and the urban residential districts, as well as textual evidence for the kingdom's demography and social structure. Complex debates about the structure of Ugarit's economy and society (including over the existence of a distinct and politically disenfranchised rural sector of both population and economy) and over the nature of social ties among the urban population,[196] are implicated in her discussion. Gilibert's apparent intention in staking these claims is to convince the reader that the urban population was particularly wealthy (i.e., influential) and socially more atomistic and factious (i.e., lacking in solidarity) than the hypothesized rural sector, making them a particularly ripe target for the propagandistic gatherings staged by the palace and temple. However, given that the issue at question in Gilibert's reconstruction is (non)cooperation with the Hittite empire, one could imagine enough difference of opinion and interest on this and other topics even within a city of urban clans with deep ties to the countryside that persuasion from on high would still be required.

It is particularly significant to find evidence of "consensus-seeking politics" at Ugarit, since it is one of the most stratified cities according to Adelheid Otto's comparison of its residential architectural pattern with those of more egalitarian contemporary cities on the middle Euphrates, whose texts also give evidence of weaker kingship and stronger collective institutions.[197] Just as there is room within the basic model of Bronze

[192] Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art* (2011).
[193] See Schloen, *House of the Father* (2001), 255–316, on the patrimonial household model of Near Eastern kingdoms.
[194] Herrmann, "Cosmopolitan Politics" (2018).

[195] Lavan, Payne, and Weisweiler, "Cosmopolitan Politics" (2016).
[196] See Schloen, *House of the Father* (2001), 221–54 and 317–47, for opposing views on these topics.
[197] Otto, "Organisation of Residential Space" (2014).

and Iron Age Near Eastern polities for variation in the degree of centralization and social stratification, evidence for consensus-building activity at Ugarit does not mean that these societies were less hierarchical and stratified than previously believed. Rather, its appearance *even* here supports the thesis of collective action theorists that negotiation plays a role in all power formations.

Valérie Matoïan, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris

Alessandra Gilibert proposes an interpretation of the urban plan of the city of Ugarit from the end of the Bronze Age (13th century) through the prism of the analysis of public space. The author's approach, which is very interesting and stimulating, aims to apply to her object of study the "archaeopolitical" approach, which is still underdeveloped in the field of archaeological studies on the Ancient Near East. The author is following in the footsteps of the groundbreaking work undertaken by (among others) Stefania Mazzoni and Adelheid Otto. The opening of the morphological analysis of this Mediterranean capital to a social, cultural, and political dimension represents indeed one of the challenges of the current research. The issues are numerous; the systematic cross-analysis of the archaeological data and the textual documentation chosen by Gilibert is the approach that seems to be the most instructive and the one I also favor for the current programmes on the social and urban geography of the city of Ugarit carried out within the framework of the Syro-French archaeological mission of Ras Shamra-Ugarit. Furthermore, regional parallels are judiciously proposed, such as with Tell Bazi, Emar, and Hazor, as well as with contemporary texts. At first sight, the situation offered by several decades of exploration seems to be perfectly adequate to such an approach: Ras Shamra have been excavated on a large scale and the plan of Ugarit is indeed exceptional in the field of Near Eastern archaeology.

Gilibert focuses her attention on five larger public squares, the only ones where, according to her, "the Ugarit population could meet at the scale needed to develop a sense of civic community." Thanks to this contextualizing approach, she distinguishes one market place (the "Grand-place" in the "Ville Sud") and four ceremonial spaces, two beside the "Royal sector" and two linked to the main cultic places on the Acropolis. The relevant questions raised concern the role of monarchical power and more generally the elites in the organisation of the city; what were the places that brought the inhabitants together and on what occasions (rituals, festivals, royal ceremonies); and the concept of autonomy of a marketplace (for the trade and circulation of ideas, etc.).

The undertaking is a challenge, given the state of research and the gaps in the available documentation. Not all the earlier excavations were published in detail, which limits the architectural studies (e.g., the only available general plan of the Acropolis is schematic) and the contextualization of the material. Furthermore, the analysis proposed is based on a certain number of chrono-stratigraphical, functional, or architectural restitutions made by other scholars (e.g., the earthquake dated around 1250 BC and the reconstruction of part of the settlement thereafter; the establishment of a cult platform on the "Acropolis"; the entrance porch of the building of the block VIII in the "Ville Sud"; etc.) or proposed but not demonstrated by Gilibert: e.g., a socially tense atmosphere in the city; the fact that the "Grand-place" was "a centuries-old feature"; the restitution of the western part of this square not conformed to the results of the geophysical survey; the entrance at the northeast corner of the Royal Palace; the presence of an open space with two public wells south of the "Résidence Nord"; the limits of the two larger squares of the Acropolis. Further investigations and methodological discussions are needed.

The arguments to support the proposed interpretation of the square in the "Ville Sud" as being completely independent of royal power do not seem to me to be strong enough: the "Urtenu house" (whose archive provides information on a notable person close to the royal family) and "building B" (another elite building) in the area "Grand-rue" are close by. On the other hand, assigning a ceremonial function to the other public spaces is very likely; I adhere to the idea of places intended to promote the cultural unity of society. While there is no doubt that an urban plan is the expression of the history of an agglomeration and considering that defining the position of Ugarit with regard to Egypt and Hatti is one of the challenges of research, I am less convinced by the demonstration aiming to favor the idea that the reorganization of urban public space was the expression of a policy of the elites to counteract Hittite imperialism.

The approach proposed by Gilibert gives a living picture of a Mediterranean city and deserves to be developed. Other questions should be addressed, such as the possible multi-functionality of spaces, traffic flows and gatherings, the notions of public space and private

habitat, and the search for possible architectural formulas which could correspond to a functional model. Surely this search for the materiality of "knowing how to live together" echoes some concerns of our contemporary societies.

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Alessandra Gilibert's main aim is to "look at squares as political spaces" and insert them into the dynamic and multi-scalar system of intersecting interactions, by means of space-configuration studies (topography), contextual analysis (archaeology) and textual studies (city archives). T. Hölscher, among others, has clearly shown that urban squares are always political spaces that act independently from a specific culture;[198] they are "breaks" in the urban texture, where citizens (intended here as members of the civic community) have the physical space to meet, gather, and perform communal activities, thus making them political spaces. The history of public spaces and, most importantly, the attention paid to the urban planning of squares as a political act has seldom been investigated in the archaeology of preclassical Western Asia, both due to the lack of extensive excavations in the towns and to the difficulty in understanding urban planning based on surviving archaeological evidence. Ugarit, however, presents a great opportunity as the site provides rich archaeological evidence. Here, the use of PGIs-T analysis (as Scott Branting has done for Kerkenes),[199] in addition to the inter-visibility analysis used in the article, could potentially contribute to the reconstruction of traffic volume and density of social interactions. Street gradients and elevations may change the accessibility and the visibility of specific buildings (such as the Baal temple) and consequently change the impact of specific structures in the overall image of the town.

The article focuses on the study of squares as a political act of urban planning and on the "new" urban setting of Ugarit after the event of the earthquake (dated by Callot to LBAIII). Even assuming that all destruction levels may be referring to one single event (see discussions on the southern city sector), archaeologists are sometimes unable to determine with any certainty the reconstruction period of specific, and sometimes crucial, buildings. For example, the building with the stone vase was probably planned and erected before the

earthquake, while the house of the priest on the acropolis was reconstructed after a fire, not an earthquake, and maintained the same layout and function as the previous structure. Moreover, are the squares in front of the platform of the Dagan temple, or the space to the west of the Baal temple, "new" (i.e., post-earthquake)? It is difficult to say, since most of the buildings rest directly on the MBA levels and, when reconstructed, follow the same layout of the previous ones. Thus, the reconstruction processes started in different areas of the city at different times[200] and did not follow a comprehensive urban re-planning for the entire city. Nevertheless, we know for certain that a single project for the reconstruction of the royal palace and the two main temples existed but was never completed. According to this project, the reconstructed Baal temple remained the most visible element in the urban landscape, but the existence of a street directly connecting the square in front with the square with the stone vase has been postulated.[201] The royal palace became a controlled space with access points, the adjoining squares became "staged" and the erection of a tower emphasized the king's role. This role as the representative of the city and the focal element in the urban identity seems to have been typical of several LBA cities, such as in LBA I Qatna or LBII Alalakh, without the need of a postulated anti-Hittite stance.

As Liverani and Schloen have shown,[202] reconstructing microhistories of urban neighbourhoods in an urban, economic, and social model that is both general and coherent is always challenging. In Ugarit's urban landscape, "wealthy" buildings were distributed next to smaller houses, and evidence for activities related to agriculture and herding have been found inside the city (oil mills in three different blocks of the city, troughs and agricultural tools in the great residence; cf. Coqueugniot 2013).[203] The LBAIII reconstructions point towards the division of larger houses into smaller dwellings (block XIII and in the northern part of the city centre) and the transformation of public spaces into semi-private courtyards (blocks XIII and XIV). All these elements support Marguerite Yon's thesis of a growing urban population, confirm the existence of agricultural activities inside the town, and suggest, in

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[198] Hölscher, *Öffentliche Räume* (1998).
[199] Branting, "Using an Urban Street Network" (2007).

[200] Callot and Calvet, "Le 'Bâtiment au Vase de Pierre'" (2001), 66–68.
[201] Yon, *City of Ugarit* (2006), Fig. 13, reconstructs it differently.
[202] See Gilibert's bibliography for relevant sources.
[203] Coqueugniot, "Un atelier de travail" (2013).

my opinion, that the rearrangement of the dwelling, market, and production areas may be linked to changes in the countryside (political instability and an arid climate), which led to the rural inhabitants moving to the city. How this postulated movement impacted the arrangement of the religious and royal spaces remains speculative.

The consideration of Ugarit as one of the first Mediterranean cities fits well into the cited studies, but it would be interesting to investigate the other models or, to quote J. Rykwert (*The Idea of a Town* [1976]), "ideas of city" ("oriental," following Wirth, "Kontinuität und Wandel" [2000], Mesopotamian, or continental cities) that the Mediterranean one is confronted with in the given period. How does the shaping of the public space play a significant role in this difference?

Author Response

I am grateful to the four respondents for their insightful comments on the paper and to *JNES* for providing a forum to address them. I am pleased that, for the most part, the respondents welcome my attempt to decode Ugarit's urban space in terms of governance. In particular, we are united in recognizing squares as significant and intrinsically political features of ancient Near Eastern cities. However, the respondents also raise important issues about several aspects of my analysis. I will limit this reply to three critical points. They include the economic and social differences within Ugarit's urban population; the long-term existence of some urban features and their relationship to the political discourse of Ugarit's ruling elite in the 13th century BC; and the possibility that squares may have had multiple functions.

In the paper, I argue that Ugarit's urban population was consistently wealthy and did not include small-plot peasants. Herrmann and particularly Pucci are not convinced and favor models previously advanced by David Schloen and Marguerite Yon. Herrmann highlights the population's "deep ties to the countryside," and Pucci specifically advocates for increased population density due to rural flight. This contested point is essential to understand Ugarit's urban community: was it a predominantly affluent and influential business crowd? Or did it bring together people of enormously different economic backgrounds, including destitute peasants? Agricultural installations and impromptu modifications of older buildings are indeed recurring features of

Ugarit's urban fabric. However, I would argue that the scale of both is limited. In my opinion, the installations for the processing of agricultural produce, including most oil mills, are best explained assuming that the owner was a landlord who oversaw the delivery of agricultural produce *in loco* for the household's necessities, rather than a peasant. Also, while larger properties were indeed split up into smaller ones and communal space sometimes shrank, I do not see convincing evidence that this was a generalized trend. In other cases, properties expanded (e.g., the *Maison aux Albâtres*, or Agaptarri's House) and public space was enlarged by dismantling living quarters, as in the case of the Square with the Vase. Furthermore, the ubiquitous presence of luxury items throughout the city implies a generally high level of income. As a corollary issue, Fleming, Matoïan, and Herrmann also question my argument that relationships between urban residents were competitive and lacked solidarity. I agree that this aspect needs further elucidation, perhaps through a targeted analysis of the textual evidence. Preliminarily, while I see that in many cases there may be strong loyalty between unequal partners, I contend that the unusually high degree of difference in size, infrastructures, and inventory between single properties likely generated contrasting interests and competitive aspirations, which texts (e.g., the "ritual for national atonement") identify as a relevant social issue within the walls of Ugarit.

A second important point raised by the respondents concerns the long-term history of urban squares. In the paper, I deliberately focus on a specific and relatively short period, the second half of the 13th century BC. My choice is based on two considerations. First, monumental urban features were replanned or built anew in this period, including the royal palace and its squares. Second, while we have a reasonably good idea of how the city looked like in this period, we currently lack sufficient elements to reconstruct Ugarit's urban development in the previous centuries. However, as Fleming and Pucci underscore, the role played by urban squares in Ugarit's collective framework probably has older roots. This is confirmed by the fact that the 13th-century urban redesign integrated existing elements (e.g., the Building with the Vase). In the paper, I argue that the building activities of this period, including the focus, enlargement, and redecoration of ceremonial squares, were part of a specific political discourse which included (among other elements) an anti-Hittite stance and the promotion of local culture. However, I agree that, in general, the political meaning

of squares is much older than this discourse and is linked to long-lived urban habits. The time window I give at the beginning of my contribution (13th–9th centuries BC) merely indicates the periods in which research on urban squares has focused so far, leaving a vast urban heritage still to be explored. If I am allowed a brief digression from Ugarit, I may add that any survey of urban squares in the ancient Near East will conclude that squares—ceremonial squares in particular—are inextricably related to the political developments of cities from their very beginnings. Concerning Northern Mesopotamia, I may mention in passing significant second-millennium examples (Mari, Ebla) as well as the central squares of the circular cities of the early third millennium (Tell Mozan, Tell Chuera, Byblos). One may even venture to ponder that squares might be older than cities themselves (e.g., the eighth millennium plaza at Çayönü). However, identifying urban squares is just a first step. As Ugarit shows, we need to approach urban design with a contextual and historical approach to fully appreciate its varying political connotations and implications.

Finally, I wish to discuss Matoïan and Fleming's pertinent observation that urban squares may have, and indeed almost inevitably did have, multiple functions. At Ugarit, I stopped short of imagining alternative and supplementary activities, and discussed only those I could retrace from the evidence in the extant sources. However, I concede that this choice may unnecessarily narrow our scope. For example, squares may combine ceremonial with market functions. At Ekalte, as discussed by Adelheid Otto, both legal and economic activities were carried out in a square sandwiched between a temple and the city gate.[204] Likewise, Carlo Zaccagnini has recently demonstrated that the central square of Nuzi, which we may reasonably identify with the "main market" mentioned in texts, was also regularly used for royal chariot parades.[205] Accordingly, Fleming might be right in envisioning "ritual, judicial, or collective political gatherings" at Ugarit's Central Square, perhaps linked to the poorly-known Building with a Portico. I also agree with Fleming that open-air gathering places may also be found outside the urban gates, as seems to have been the case at Emar and Ebla (I thank Davide Nadali for the Ebla reference). Further explorations will undoubtedly teach us how to better detect the nuances of ancient squares. Concerning Ugarit,

I am confident that the ongoing excavations will sooner or later clarify most aspects discussed above, including the long-term history of squares and their multiple uses.

I consider this paper a contribution to the political history of urban design in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world. Clearly, much theoretical and empirical research remains to be done, but I hope that the distinguished commentators for this paper as well as other scholars will find my critical feedback useful to pursue this endeavour further.

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[204] Otto, *Marketplaces* (2019), 211.
[205] Zaccagnini, "Pomp and circumstance" (2020).

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