

**UMM EL-MARRA AND THE WESTWARD EXPANSION OF THE MITTANI EMPIRE
IN NORTHWESTERN SYRIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Bronze Age occupation of Umm el-Marra, a medium-sized regional center in western Syria, lasted, with varying degrees of intensity, for more than a millennium. During this time, the communities who inhabited the site and the political regimes that ruled them left their unique marks on the built environment and material culture. This dissertation studies these phenomena during the Late Bronze Age occupation of Umm el-Marra in the mid-second millennium through a synthesis of the excavation records of the site, archaeological comparanda, textual evidence, ethnoarchaeology, and applicable theory.

The Mittani Empire was the dominant power in northern Syria during the Late Bronze occupation of Umm el-Marra. Most of what is known about Mittani comes from external sources, many of whom were antagonistic and, thus, provide a biased view of the empire and its inhabitants. Through analysis of the Late Bronze Age levels at Umm el-Marra, this work provides an evaluation and exploration of the nature of everyday life in the Mittani empire. As such, it offers a new resource for understanding Mittani, in particular, and the functioning of imperial regimes in general, from the perspective of daily lived existence in households, neighborhoods, and a specific community.

As communities and their constituent families change over time, they have different needs of the dwellings and landscapes they inhabit. These shifting needs are often reflected in the built environment. In this dissertation, I approach the interpretation of the excavated data through a temporal rubric to create a better understanding of how the members of the Late Bronze Age community of Umm el-Marra experienced their world.

This dissertation suggests that the Late Bronze Age occupation of Umm el-Marra was an attempt by Mittani to create a node of control on the Jabbul Plain to help incorporate the region into the empire. The fortunes of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra rose and fell with those of Mittani. Both waning political fortunes and the community's internal demographic shifts led to the gradual abandonment of much of the site before its destruction. This archaeologically visible process sheds light on the life-cycle of communities and the nature of abandonment.

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Readers: Marian Feldman, Niloofar Haeri, and Jacob Lauinger

For my parents

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Scholarship is often a solitary endeavor but I have been lucky enough to have companions that I consider both colleagues and friends. They have helped to sustain me over the years and will forever have my deepest gratitude. Though there have been more than I can ever name here, I would especially like to thank Lance Allred, Christopher Brinker, Paul Delnero, Alexandra Kleinerman, Jennifer Swerida, Elizabeth Waraksa, and Robert Webber.

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CHAPTER 1.

Introduction.

Tell Umm el-Marra, possibly to be identified as ancient Dub or Tuba,¹ is a site of 20-25 ha and a maximum elevation of 9 meters that lies on the Jabbul Plain about 50 km east of Aleppo.(Fig. 1) Located in northwestern Syria between Aleppo and the Euphrates Valley, the Jabbul is traversed by an important east-west route connecting Mesopotamia (via Emar on the Euphrates, in the Bronze Age, or medieval/modern Meskene) with Aleppo and ultimately, the Mediterranean. Its most prominent feature is the Jabbul Lake, located in the southwest of the plain, which has historically been a source of salt. Receiving 200-400 mm of precipitation annually, the Jabbul supports rainfed agriculture in the rainier western parts of the region. However, moving east, the plain becomes increasingly arid and agriculture becomes less tenable, and this region is probably to be understood as a locus for sheep-goat mobile pastoralism and for the hunting of wild species such as onager and gazelle.²

The recent dissertation by Sarah Yukich³ on the landscape archaeology of the Jabbul Plain has stressed the region's importance as a multifaceted zone of interaction and exchange. To the west, agricultural communities gravitated towards water sources and exploited the region's rich soils. These sedentary communities would have had a reciprocal relationship with

¹ cf. Matthiae, P. "DU-UBki di Mardikh IIB1 = TU-BAki di Alalakh VII," in *Studi Eblaiti, 1* (1979). pp.115-118; Catagnoti, A. "Le royaume de Tubâ et ses cultes," in *Florilegium marianum: recueil d'études en l'honneur de Michel Fleury. Mémoires de N.A.B.U.*, ed. J. Durand. Paris: Société pour l'étude du Proche-Orient ancien, 1991. pp.23-28; Schwartz, Glenn M., *et al.* "From Urban Origins to Imperial Integration in Western Syria: Umm el-Marra 2006, 2008," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 116, no. 1 (January 2012). pp.157-193

² Curvers, H., G. Schwartz, and S. Dunham. "Umm el-Marra, a Bronze Age Urban Center in the Jabbul Plain, Western Syria," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 1997). pp.203-204

³ Yukich, Sarah T.K. *Spatial Dimensions of Social Complexity: Environment, Economy, and Settlement in the Jabbul Plain, 3000-550 BC*. Thesis (Ph.D.) Johns Hopkins University, 2013.

the pastoralists to the east, each group supplementing their respective economies with products from the other. Contextualized within the landscapes of the wider Near East, the Jabbul was a vector of transmission for goods, ideas, and people between Mesopotamia and Syria. These east-west trade routes would have helped the communities of the Jabbul Plain survive as the region became increasingly arid.

Identified as the largest Bronze Age site in the Jabbul, Umm el-Marra has been interpreted as the region's regional economic or political center in that period, with evidence of important ritual functions as well.⁴ Nevertheless, its relatively small size compared to other Bronze Age urban centers like Ebla or Mari has been taken to indicate that Umm el-Marra was a second-tier center and probably dominated politically by more powerful cities such as Ebla in the third millennium or Aleppo in the second. The excavators have proposed that the regional importance of Umm el-Marra is partly attributable to its role as intermediary between the western agricultural and eastern pastoral zone of the Jabbul as well as its strategic location along the east-west route from the Euphrates to Aleppo.⁵

Umm el-Marra has been excavated since 1994 under the auspices of a joint team from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Amsterdam directed by Glenn Schwartz and Hans Curvers.⁶ There were twelve seasons of excavation, conducted in 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010 and an archaeological survey conducted in 1996.

⁴ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012. pp.165-167; Schwartz, Glenn M. "Memory and its Demolition: Ancestors, Animals and Sacrifice at Umm el-Marra, Syria," in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 23 (2013). pp 495-522

⁵ Curvers and Schwartz, 1997. p.202

⁶ Curvers and Schwartz, 1997.; Schwartz, Glenn M., *et al.*, "Excavation and Survey in the Jabbul Plain, Western Syria: The Umm el-Marra Project 1996-1997," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (July 2000), pp.419-462.; Schwartz, Glenn M., *et al.*, "A Third-Millennium B.C. Elite Tomb and Other New Evidence from Tell Umm el-Marra, Syria," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (July 2003), pp.325-361.; Schwartz, Glenn M., *et al.* "A Third-Millennium B.C. Elite Mortuary Complex at Umm El-Marra, Syria: 2002 and 2004 Excavations," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 110, No. 4 (Oct., 2006). pp. 603-641; Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012.

In 1978-1985, a Belgian team under the direction of Roland Tefnin conducted excavations on the site, as part of a project that included excavations at Tell Abou Danne to the west.⁷ The Belgian work represented the first archaeological excavations to be conducted in the Jabbul Plain. In 1939, a British team conducted a survey in the region.⁸

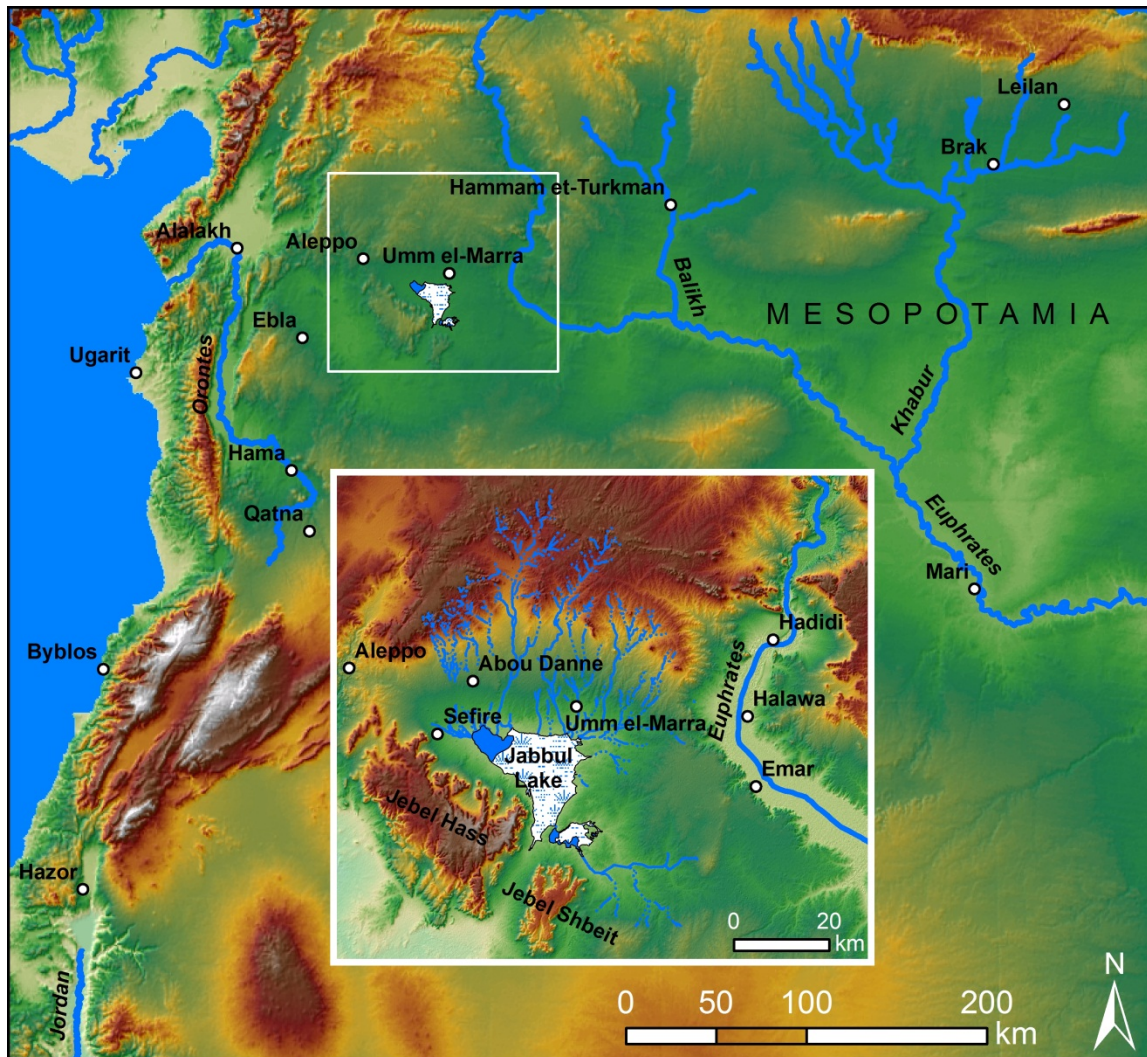


Figure 1: Map of Syro-Mesopotamia with inset of the Jabbul Plain

⁷ Tefnin, Roland. “Exploration archéologique au nord du lac Djabboul (Syrie): Une campagne de sondages sur le site d’Oumm el-Marra, 1978,” in *Annuaire, Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire, Université Libre, Bruxelles* 23 (1980). pp. 71-94; Tefnin, Roland. “Tell Umm al-Marra,” in *Archiv für Orientforschung*, Band 28 (1981-1982). pp. 235-239; Tefnin, Roland. “Aperçu sur Neuf Campagnes de Fouilles Belges aux Tells Abou Danne et Oumm el-Marra (1975-1983),” in *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes*, Vol. 33, No.2 (1983). pp.141-152

⁸ Maxwell Hyslop, R., J. du Plat Taylor, M.V. Seton-Williams, and D.A. Waechter, “An Archaeological Survey of the Plain of Jabbul, 1939,” *Palestinian Excavation Quarterly* 74 (1942-1943). pp. 8-40.

History of Bronze Age Occupation⁹

According to the excavation results, Umm el-Marra was inhabited, with varying degrees of occupational density, from the early third millennium BC until the Roman period. The first phase of occupation is dated to the Early Bronze Age, circa 2800-2100 BC (Umm el-Marra Periods VI-IV). Particularly notable from this period is a complex of monumental elite tombs on the Acropolis which were accompanied by installations for the interment of animals, mostly equids. Small-scale domestic architecture is found elsewhere on the Acropolis, but little evidence of occupation derived from the lower tell. In this period, the site was surrounded by a large earthen rampart, and a pottery kiln was discovered adjacent to this rampart in a sounding conducted on the west.

It appears that the site was abandoned at the end of the Early Bronze Age and remained so for the first century of the second millennium BC.¹⁰ The next phase of occupation occurs in the Middle Bronze Age and dates to ca. 1900-1600 BC (Umm el-Marra Period III). During this period, the two glacis constructions of earth and stones were heaped against the preexisting Early Bronze Age rampart, and a city wall of mudbricks above a stone foundation was constructed above this earthen and stone edifice. A mudbrick enclosure wall four bricks wide was built around the Acropolis at the beginning of the Middle Bronze occupation. On the Acropolis, the remains of the earlier elite tombs were left intact and a massive round stone platform, designated Monument 1, was built on top of them. There appears to be dense occupation of both the Acropolis and the lower tell during this period, and the impression one receives of Umm el-Marra in the Middle Bronze Age is of a thriving and prosperous community. This situation would not last and, as with the preceding period, the site is once again abandoned. At the end of

⁹ For details on the most recent state of research for the site see: Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.174-175

the Middle Bronze occupation, the northwest gate was burned, and selected architecture elsewhere in the site was left with its contents in situ (Northwest Area A, Acropolis Center) and was sometimes burned as well. It is possible that the termination of Middle Bronze occupation was caused by a military attack by the troops of the Hittite Old Kingdom, who are held responsible for the destruction of Ebla (period IIIB) and Alalakh (level VII) at approximately the same time.¹¹

Following the pattern of abandonment, occupational hiatus, and reoccupation established by the transition from the Early to Middle Bronze Age, Umm el-Marra is once again inhabited during the Late Bronze Age, ca. 1600-1200 BC (Umm el-Marra Period II). It is this Late Bronze Age occupation that is the focus of this dissertation. In this period, the Near East saw the emergence of large-scale polities (“empires”), including those of Egypt, to the south, the Hittites, to the north, Babylonia, to the east, and Mittani, in the center, extending from southeast Anatolia to the Zagros foothills of Iran.¹² Syria was an area of interest and competition for Egypt, the Hittites and Mittani. In the earlier part of the Late Bronze Age, Mittani controlled most of Syria, but Mittani disappeared as a viable entity and was replaced by the Hittites in the later part of the Late Bronze era.

Our evidence indicates that Umm el-Marra was mainly occupied in the period of Mittani control. I will argue, in addition, that Umm el-Marra owed its very existence to Mittani during this period of the settlement’s history. The nature of occupation during the Late Bronze is markedly different than the preceding Middle Bronze Age. Settlement density is much lower,

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.180

¹² Wilhelm, Gernot. *The Hurrians*. With a chapter by Diana L. Stein. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1989.; Novák, Mirko. “Upper Mesopotamia in the Mittani Period,” in *Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Band 1,1, ed. W. Orthmann and J.-W. Meyer. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. pp.345-356

and the site's defenses had fallen into ruin and were never repaired. No evidence of large-scale public architecture like Monument 1 or the city wall is apparent in Late Bronze; instead, the community appears to have been composed largely of domestic architecture. Like the Middle Bronze, the end of the main period of Late Bronze occupation was apparently precipitated by a military attack by the Hittites, with a large-scale conflagration evident. If the demise of Late Bronze Umm el-Marra was indeed attributable to a Hittite attack, this event would have been coincident with the Hittite campaigns against Mittani and the subjugation of western Syria in the reign of Suppiluliuma I, the first ruler of the Hittite Empire period. After a brief Late Bronze reoccupation, Umm el-Marra would be sporadically, and sparsely, occupied again during the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, though never again on the scale of the Bronze Age.

Excavation Methodology

Over the course of twelve seasons, sixteen areas of Tell Umm el-Marra were excavated (Fig. 2). Six of the excavation areas were located on the Acropolis and ten areas of excavation were located in the lower town and outer fortifications. These areas, which are of varying size and configuration, are each given a geographic designation based on their location on the tell (i.e. "Acropolis North" or "West Area B"). The ensuing discussion of the Late Bronze Age levels is organized around these excavation areas.

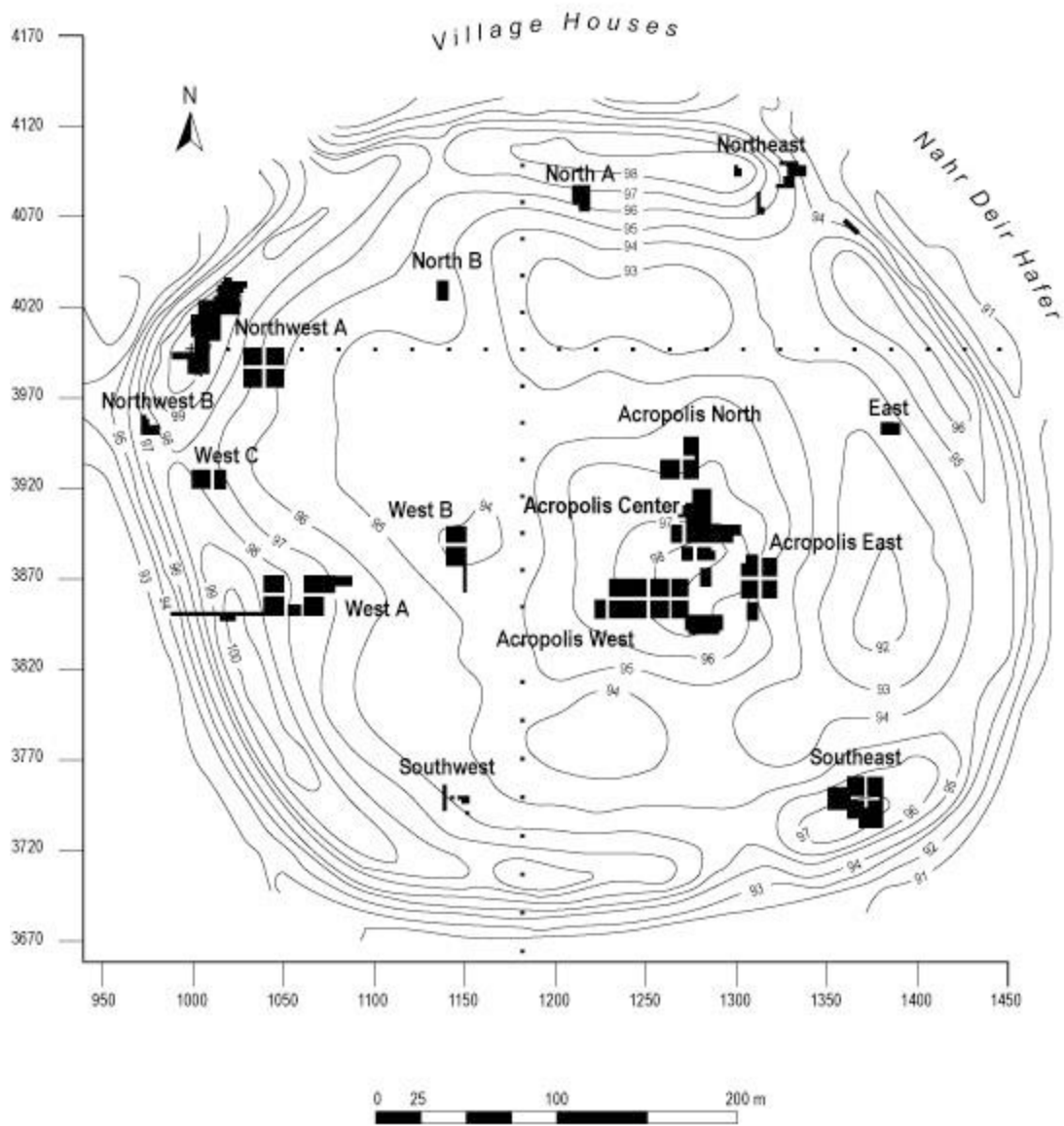


Figure 2: Excavation areas of Umm el-Marra

Within each excavation area, trenches were laid out aligned with a grid that divides the entire site into 2 x 2 m squares. Each 2 m x 2 m square is designated by the grid coordinates of its northwest corner (i.e. “1373/3758”), resulting in a unique identification number for every 4m² of the tell. In this system, the first number indicates the x-axis and the second indicates the y-

axis. Trenches were of varying sizes dictated by the topography of the tell and the exigencies of excavation. Like each 2 x 2 square, each trench was designated by the coordinates of its northwest corner.

Within a trench, each 2 m x 2 m square was excavated and recorded as a discrete unit, analogous to a “locus” in other recording systems. Each 20 cm or discrete stratigraphic unit excavated of these squares and their associated assemblage was given a three digit “archon” number (i.e. “032”), analogous to a “lot” in the “lot and locus” system.¹³ All features, such as wall, pits, and tannurs,¹⁴ were given unique archon numbers. Each 2 x 2 m square had its own unique sequence of archon numbers, such that the designation of a unique context or feature would be recorded as, e.g., 1361/3760-032.

Every 2 m x 2 m square excavated on a given day was recorded independently, receiving its own page in the site supervisor’s notebook. After excavation, the excavated remains in each 2 x 2 m square were drawn to scale (1:20) and relevant information recorded in the site notebook. When a complete phase was exposed in a trench or a portion of a trench, a plan was drawn and photographs taken. Stratigraphic sections were drawn for each trench at the end of the field season or at an appropriate point during the season. These notebooks, plans, section drawings, and photographs, along with the notes taken by Glenn Schwartz, provided the bulk of the raw data for this dissertation.

¹³ The unique systems used at Umm el-Marra was developed by Hans Curvers and based on a system developed while excavating at Tell al-Raqa’i, Syria.

¹⁴ Tannurs are cylindrical ovens, open at the top, that stand perpendicular to the ground. They consist of a fired ceramic core which is covered in a thick layer of mud plaster. This design produces and holds a significant amount of heat with little fuel. To use one, a fire is kindled in the base and, once the tannur is hot enough, disks of wet dough are slapped against the side and quickly bake. Meat is also cooked in a tannur by skewering it and placing it upright in the oven. This type of oven is ubiquitous at archaeological site in the Near East and is still widely used in the region today. Tannurs are the same as the Indian “tandoor” which is well known in the West from South Asian restaurants.

Theoretical Considerations

The goal of this dissertation is the description and interpretation of the Late Bronze Age community at Umm el-Marra. Using the available excavation data, I aim to explore the social organization, economic activities, and everyday experiences of people in this settlement and their relationship to the Mittani Empire.

Territorial expansion is a hallmark of complex societies, and imperialism is the fullest expression of this impulse. Indeed, wherever in the world complex societies have developed, at some point imperialism has followed. Recently, archaeologists have begun to explore the physical dimensions of this phenomenon and how imperialism manifests itself on the landscape, in the built environment, and through material culture.¹⁵

Most of the information from within the borders of Mittani comes from the empire's larger centers such as Ugarit¹⁶ and Alalakh¹⁷ in the west and Tell Brak¹⁸ and Nuzi¹⁹ in the east. However, these centers represent only one facet of sedentary life within Mitanni. Smaller settlements were found throughout the empire and represent the lived reality for much of the population. Numerous texts from the sites named above help to illuminate the relationship

¹⁵ cf. Zimansky, Paul. "Urartian Material Culture As State Assemblage: An Anomaly in the Archaeology of Empire," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 299/300, The Archaeology of Empire in Ancient Anatolia (Aug.- Nov., 1995), pp. 103-115; Alcock, Susan E., ed. *Empires: Perspectives From Archaeology and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.; Smith, Adam T. *The Political Landscape : Constellations of Authority In Early Complex Polities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

¹⁶ Yon, Marguerite. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

¹⁷ Woolley, Leonard. *Alalakh: An Account of the Excavations at Tell Atchana in the Hatay, 1937-1949*. Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London No.18. Oxford: The Oxford University Press for the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1955.

¹⁸ Oates, David, Joan Oates, and Helen McDonald. *Excavations at Tell Brak Volume 1: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian Periods*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq and Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 1997.

¹⁹ Starr, R.S.F. *Nuzi: Report on the Excavation at Yorgan Tepa near Kirkuk, Iraq*, vols.I and II. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937-1939.

between these large centers and Mittani imperial administration. While tablets from smaller centers have certainly been found, they are few in number and, consequently, the understanding of these communities' relationship with the imperium is lacking. Because of this, it falls to archaeology to understand how these smaller communities within the Mitanni Empire, such as Umm el-Marra, functioned.

Historically, it has tended to be larger sites with high tells that attracted the attention of archaeologists. Within the context of empire, these were generally capital cities and regional centers which would have been the purview of elite segments of society. As such, the data they produced yielded insight into only a portion of the imperial population. However, to understand an empire, one must understand the provinces which constituted it.²⁰ Indeed, it is the interaction of the conqueror and the conquered that produces the dynamic which allows empires to thrive when it produces mutual benefit and fall when it does not.²¹ These subjects of empire, the populations removed from the loci of power, are not merely acted on by greater forces. Rather, they actively negotiate their place within the imperium, often resisting the totalizing²² and extractive forces²³ brought to bear on them. The archaeology of empire is the archaeology of the negotiation between the various constituents of the imperium.

In Chapter 2, I present the essential data from the excavations, proceeding from excavation area to excavation area and presenting the architectural and artifactual information

²⁰ Stark, Barbara L. and John K. Chance. "The Strategies of Provincials in Empires," in *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, ed. M.E. Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. pp.225-226

²¹ Hare, Timothy S. "Between the Household and the Empire: Structural Relationships within and Among Aztec Communities and Polities," in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. pp. 78-101

²² *Ibid.* p.205; Khatchadourian, Lori. "Empire in the Everyday: A Preliminary Report on the 2008–2011 Excavations at Tsaghkahovit, Armenia," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 118, No. 1 (Jan. 2014). pp. 137-169

²³ Earle, Timothy and Michael E. Smith. "Household Economies under the Aztec and Inka Empires: A Comparison," in *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, ed. M.E. Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. p.239

from which interpretation can proceed. Although reference will occasionally be made to ceramic finds, a more detailed analysis is not provided, since this body of material was analyzed by Susan McCarter. Similarly, the analysis of small finds is being conducted by Sally Dunham.

Chapter 3 seeks to understand the lived experience of the Late Bronze Age community at Umm el-Marra. By considering the excavated data through a temporal rubric, I attempt to reconstruct the life of the community and those of the families which constituted it on a more human scale than is often found in the interpretation of archaeological data. Human life is dynamic, and changes in the built environment reflect the changes over time in the lives of the people who inhabited them. Renovation of existing dwellings, the construction of new ones, and the abandonment of others are archaeologically visible manifestations of the lifecycle of the community.

Chapter 4 seeks to contextualize Umm el-Marra within the trends of the larger Late Bronze Age world. The history of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra can be understood as a proxy for the history of the polity that produced it. Umm el-Marra was a product of Mittani imperial ambition, and its fortunes rose and fell with those of the empire. The founding of the community was a mark on the landscape of the power of one empire and its destruction signified the rise of another. This chapter also addresses the role of the community within the Mittani Empire in particular and the nature of urbanism in the Late Bronze Age in general.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of this dissertation where the larger trends running through the work are addressed.

In this study, I will focus in particular on three types of human institutions. The conceptual frameworks of human lived experience are the institutions people negotiate to help fulfill their basic needs and create stable social organizations in which they can carry out the

business of daily life. These institutions are experienced on different levels. They range from the most intimate human interactions to fictive identities that create a shared sense of identity among large groups of people, most of whom will never physically interact with each other. While human institutions are as myriad as the societies that create them, three of the most common are households, neighborhoods, and communities. It is the expression of these three types of institutions that will be examined in this dissertation.

Households

As early as the 1960's Robert Braidwood was decrying Near Eastern archaeology's fixation on the large-scale public institutions of past societies and arguing that scholars must take a more holistic view of antiquity with a particular focus on the institutions of daily life such as the household.²⁴ Twenty years later, two New World archaeologists, Richard Wilk and William Rathje, first used the term "household archaeology"²⁵ and by the turn of the current millennium Near Eastern scholars such as Snell,²⁶ Wattenmaker,²⁷ Lamberg-Karlovsky,²⁸ and McCorrison,²⁹ began arguing for putting the study of households at the center of the discipline.

²⁴ Braidwood, Robert J. and Bruce Howard. *Prehistoric Investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations 31. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. p.7

²⁵ Wilk, Richard R. and William L. Rathje. "Household Archaeology," in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 25, No. 6 (July, 1982). pp.617-639

²⁶ Snell, Daniel C. *Life in the Ancient Near East 3100-332 BCE*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

²⁷ Wattenmaker, Patricia. *Household and State in Upper Mesopotamia: Specialized Economy and the Social Uses of Goods in Early Complex Society*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.

²⁸ Lamberg-Karlovsky, C.C. "Households, Land Tenure, and Communication Systems in the 6th-4th Millennia of Greater Mesopotamia," in *Urbanization and Land Ownership in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Hudson and B.A. Levine. Peabody Museum Bulletin 7. Cambridge: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1999. pp.167-201

²⁹ McCorrison, Joy. "Comments on G. Algaze, "Initial Social Complexity in Southwestern Asia: The Mesopotamian Advantage,"" in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April, 2001). pp.221-222

Their call has been heeded, and households are now a critical aspect of Near Eastern archaeology and considerable new scholarship on them continues to be generated.³⁰

What is a household? This is a difficult question to answer because while kin-based relationships are universal, their nature and expression are as varied as the societies they inhabit. Indeed, many scholars in the various disciplines which study households have stressed the elusiveness of a firm definition. For instance, in a discussion of 19th century AD Belgium, the historian René Leboutte states, “the household appears to be a very flexible institution, the limits of which are not always easy to define.”³¹ Similarly, the anthropologist Colin Thor West notes that, “this conceptual and analytical unit cannot be rigidly defined without losing the host of meanings it conveys in multiple scholarly and ethnographic settings,”³² a statement echoed by the historian John Hajnal’s attempt to define households in northwestern Europe in the 17th century AD.³³

Nonetheless, archaeologists who study households have attempted to define the objects of their inquiry. In discussing households in the colonial Yucatan, the archaeologist Rani Alexander, for instance, defines them as “as an activity group whose members share in production, consumption, transmission, distribution, reproduction, and co-residence.”³⁴ More germane to the topic under discussion, David Schloen in his study of households at Ugarit states

³⁰ cf. Parker, Bradley J. and Catherine F. Foster, eds. *New Perspectives on Household Archaeology*. Winona Lakes, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2012.

³¹ Leboutte, René. “Family Economy and Household Dynamics: The Liegeoise Industrial Area During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (84), 20 Jahre: Zentrum für Historische Sozialforschung: Teil III: Demographie und Gesellschaft (1998). pp.165-166

³² West, Colin Thor. “Household Extension and Fragmentation: Investigating the Socio-Environmental Dynamics of Mossi Domestic Transitions,” in *Human Ecology*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (June 2010). p.364

³³ Hajnal, John. “Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System,” in *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 1982). p.481

³⁴ Alexander, Rani M. “Mesoamerican House Lots and Archaeological Site Structure: Problems of Inference in Yaxcaba, Yucatan, Mexico, 1750-1847,” in *The Archaeology of Household Activities*, ed. P.M. Allison. New York: Routledge, 1999. p.81

that a household “typically consists of a conjugal couple and their unmarried children, together with their married sons and their wives and children, as well as other unmarried or dependent paternal kinsfolk and servants,” who engage in the economic life of the household together.³⁵ Both these definitions stress the idea that households are groups of people living together, some kin and some not, who are all engaged in tasks that contribute to the sustenance and economic life of the social unit.

A particularly important aspect of households is shared commensality, since one of the most important roles of the household is the production and processing of food. The national census of India, which enumerates households, defines them as “a group of persons who commonly live together and would take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevented any of them from doing so.”³⁶ This sentiment is echoed by Hajnal who states that “The essential characteristic of a household...has often been taken to be the eating of meals together by all members of the household, or the sharing of meals deriving from a common stock of food.”³⁷

Just as merely defining what constitutes a household can be intellectually fraught, the interpretation of their physical manifestations can be equally challenging. Although archaeologists often assume a one-to-one correspondence between a discrete architectural unit understood as a “house” and the social unit “household,” it is by no means certain that such a

³⁵ Schloen, 2001. p.108

³⁶http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Library/Indian_perceptive_link/Census_Terms_link/censusterm.html
Accessed November 14, 2013

³⁷ Hajnal, 1982. p.481

relationship can be assumed. Indeed, “households” are conceptual and can encompass a variety of non-contiguous areas including dwellings, outbuildings, gardens, and fields.³⁸

In the Near East, archaeologists can attempt to address this problem by using ethnographic analogy and textual evidence to inform how ancient households which inhabited non-contiguous spaces functioned. For instance, informants from a traditional society might explain how the relationship between a household’s primary dwelling and outbuildings, both of which might be visible archaeologically, are negotiated. To try and apply this to antiquity, this information can be used in tandem with texts that deal with issues of ownership and use to create a more accurate interpretation of the spatial dimensions of ancient households.

Further, assigning function to discrete spaces within a dwelling is crucial for the interpretation of household life. Scholars often assume that rooms or other areas within an ancient house were associated with a particular task, since in most cultures, even those whose dwellings are not divided by interior walls; specific spaces are closely associated with certain activities.³⁹ The tasks assigned to these areas are the result of culturally predicated values and behaviors,⁴⁰ and thus the organization of space within a dwelling might be able to shed light on the structure of the society which produced it.⁴¹

However, a major challenge when attempting to assign function to various domestic spaces is the fact that households, and by extension the houses they occupy, are dynamic. Events such as births, deaths, marriages, and the acquisition of slaves would have all affected how space

³⁸ cf. Horne, Lee. *Village Spaces: Settlement and Society in Northeastern Iran*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

³⁹ Nevett, Lisa C. *Domestic Space in Antiquity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. p.17

⁴⁰ Kamp, 1993. pp.293-294; Kent, Susan. *Analyzing Activity Areas: an Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Use of Space*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984.

⁴¹ Heinz, Marlies. “Räumliche Ordnung als Indikator für Formen gesellschaftlicher und wirtschaftlicher Organisation,” in *Fluchtpunkt Uruk: Archäologische Einheit aus methodischer Vielfalt; Schriften für Hans Jörg Nissen*, eds. H. Kühne, et al. Internationale Archäologie. Studia honoraria Band 6. Rahden/Westphalia: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 1999. p.151

was organized and used within a dwelling.⁴² This is seen archaeologically by the constant remodeling and repurposing of space over the use-life of a house.⁴³ The dwelling that is excavated is rarely the same as when it was first constructed, and spatial analysis too often focuses on the final occupation of a house before it was abandoned or destroyed and not the varied scope of its occupation across generations.⁴⁴ Houses change, but their interpretations are too often static.

The use of space within a dwelling changes over relatively short periods of time, as well – often over months, weeks, or even the course of the day.⁴⁵ A good example of this is the seasonal use of space for some of the most ubiquitous domestic activities. As in the modern Near East, cooking and sleeping would have been done indoors during the winter but would shift to exterior spaces during the hotter, drier months.⁴⁶ If a space is going to be classified as being used for primarily for cooking or sleeping it leads to the question of *when* the space was used for these and what would the area be labeled as when these activities were taking place elsewhere. It would be just as valid to refer to a roof as a “bedroom” in the summer as it would an interior space during the winter.

When attempting to reconstruct domestic life through the archaeological record we must keep in mind that there is not a rigid correlation between activities and architecture or

⁴² Nevett, 2010. p.6

⁴³ Kamp, 1993. p.294

⁴⁴ Schmid, Hansjörg. “Vorderasiatische Archäologie und Bauforschung,” in *Fluchtpunkt Uruk: Archäologische Einheit aus methodischer Vielfalt; Schriften für Hans Jörg Nissen*, eds. H. Kühne, et al. Internationale Archäologie. Studia honoraria Band 6. Rahden/Westphalia: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 1999. p.189

⁴⁵ Foxhall, Lin. “The Running Sands of Time: Archaeology and the Short-term,” in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Human Lifecycles (Feb., 2000). p.493

⁴⁶ Hardin, James W. “Understanding Domestic Space: An Example from Iron Age Tel Halif,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Volume 67, Number 2 (June 2004). p.75

installations,⁴⁷ and that there were (and, indeed, are) multiple uses for the same space within a dwelling.⁴⁸ While an area with tannurs, ash, and grinding stones was almost certainly used for cooking it probably had other uses, as well. For instance, tannurs would also have been a source of heat in the winter and so the same area could have been used for socializing on a cold day.⁴⁹ Indeed, even in modern western homes it is rare that a kitchen is used solely for cooking or a dining room solely for eating.

Often, it is the portable contents of a room that are the best indication for the tasks carried out in it. These objects of daily life, however, may or may not be preserved in the archaeological record.⁵⁰ If a house is quickly and violently destroyed, then there is a chance that the objects the residents were using would be preserved *in situ*. However, a house that was purposely abandoned by its occupants is likely to either be empty or contain objects associated with the structure subsequent to its use as a dwelling.⁵¹ Even if a house was destroyed with its contents *in situ*, many of the objects would have been made of perishable materials such as cloth, reed, leather, or wood, and thus would not be preserved in the archaeological record. Moreover, a lot of material culture may have been portable (beds and looms, for instance) and thus will either not show up in the archaeological record or be found in a place where it was not necessarily used. The distribution of loom weights throughout several rooms of a house, for example, does not necessarily mean that weaving was taking place in all of them. It could be that loom weights had multiple functions or that looms were portable.⁵²

⁴⁷ Rapoport, Amos. "Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings," in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study*, ed. S. Kent. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. p.18

⁴⁸ Meskell, 1998. p.217

⁴⁹ Foxhall, 2000. p.493

⁵⁰ Kamp, 1993. p.307

⁵¹ Trebsche, Peter. "Does Form Follow Function? Towards a Methodological Interpretation of Archaeological Building Features," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2009). The Archaeology of Buildings. pp. 513-514

⁵² Foxhall, 2000. pp.493-495

When thinking about domestic space in antiquity, it is crucial to remember that the use and division of space within a dwelling is culturally predicated, and archaeologists must be careful not to project modern ideas about the function of domestic space back into the past. Rather, interpretations involving the use of space must be based on the observable evidence in the archaeological record,⁵³ as well as available texts, and pertinent ethnographic analogy. For instance, the idea of an individual needing, or being entitled to, private space is absent from ancient sources and was probably unknown in antiquity.⁵⁴ While ideas about privacy, even in childhood, are ingrained in modern western culture they are largely absent in contemporary Syrian villages where members of a household are not thought to need or expect privacy from each other.⁵⁵ Thus, it would probably be incorrect when interpreting a dwelling to assign a specific room or area to one member of the household since the ancient inhabitants probably would not have conceptualized it that way themselves.

While the dangers of applying modern ethnographic data to antiquity dictates caution, Schloen has convincingly argued for the conservatism of community organization throughout the Mediterranean, including Syria, stating, “The striking similarities among... [Roman Egypt, Renaissance Tuscany, and Ottoman Syria], so widely separated in space and time, lends support to the notion of a durable “Mediterranean” type of domestic group organization as the product of a self-reinforcing confluence of deeply rooted symbolic traditions and common environmental factors.”⁵⁶ Schwartz and Falconer also defend the use of ethnographic analogy stating that, “the traditional corporate structure of modern village agriculture had ancient roots, suggesting one

⁵³ Trebesche, 2009. p.510

⁵⁴ Nevett, 2010. p.18

⁵⁵ Kamp, 1993. p.294

⁵⁶ Schloen, 2001. p.127

possible analogue for the ancient rural countryside.”⁵⁷ So, while the application of modern ethnography to antiquity must be done carefully, it is still a valuable tool in reconstructing ancient communities.

Moreover, many of the most common elements of material culture in the Near East have remained unchanged since antiquity. Mudbrick architecture is still common in rural Syria and, while the style and configuration of buildings may have changed, the technology to produce them and their physical properties are the same. At Umm el-Marra a mudbrick room was built at the dig house and there was no technology involved in the manufacture of the bricks or the construction of the room itself that would have been out of place in the Late Bronze Age. Similarly, tannurs, one of the most common features on archaeological sites in the Near East, are indistinguishable from those made and used today.⁵⁸

As part of my study, I will often refer to modern ethnographic data in order to better understand the material culture and associated behaviors in this Late Bronze Age community. It is important to emphasize that analogous material culture types in ancient and modern times do not necessarily imply similar behaviors associated with them; ethnographic parallels are useful to form hypotheses to test on the ancient data rather than “solutions” to interpretive problems posed by those data.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Schwartz, Glenn M. and Steven E. Falconer. “Rural Approaches to Social Complexity,” in *Archaeological Views from the Countryside: Village Communities in Early Complex Societies*, ed. G.M. Schwartz and S.E. Falconer. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994. p.5

⁵⁸ Otto, Adelheid. “Defining and Transgressing the Boundaries between Ritual Commensality and Daily Commensal Practices: the Case of Late Bronze Age Tall Bazi,” in *eTopoi: Journal for Ancient Studies, Between Feasts and Daily Meals: Toward an Archaeology of Commensal Spaces*, ed. S. Pollock. Special Vol. 2 (2012). p.181

⁵⁹ cf. David, Nicholas, and Carol Kramer. *Ethnoarchaeology In Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Finally, archaeologists must be wary of being too rigid in their interpretations of the function of domestic space.⁶⁰ Houses are physical manifestations of the relationship between the environment and its constraints on one hand and the social organization of family and society on the other. At the same time, as much as a house is the product of the larger social norms, it is also used by its inhabitants to make a conscious statement about themselves and how they wish to be perceived by the wider community.⁶¹ While there are certainly trends that can be identified in the way a house was built, organized, and used in antiquity, the unique personal preferences of the builder and occupants will also be expressed in the structure.⁶²

Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are larger units of social organization that encompass several households.⁶³ In the ancient Near East, neighborhoods can be understood as small, localized communities within the framework of the larger settlement and are typified by their residents' regular face-to-face interaction⁶⁴ and shared allegiance either to a kin group or to an institution.⁶⁵

Because frequent interaction is one of the most salient aspects of a neighborhood, the households which compose a neighborhood are, by necessity, in close proximity to one another. This spatial aspect of neighborhoods makes them particularly visible archaeologically through bounding by streets or walls in more dense settlements⁶⁶ or by the clustering of structures in low-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Kamp, 1993. p.294

⁶² Meskell, 1998. p.217

⁶³ cf. Smith, Michael E. "The Archaeological Study of Neighborhoods and Districts in Ancient Cities," in *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, Vol. 29 (2010). pp.137-154

⁶⁴ Smith, 2010a. p.137

⁶⁵ Stone, Elizabeth C. *Nippur Neighborhoods*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1987. pp.126-127

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp.2-3

density communities.⁶⁷ The presence of neighborhoods at Umm el-Marra, a low-density site, is indicated by clusters of buildings around the site with little, or no, identified occupation between them. This is supported by the presence of large middens in otherwise empty areas between Umm el-Marra's neighborhoods, such as in West Area B (see below), which diverse ethnographic data suggest are generally located some distance from the households that use them.⁶⁸ This also stands to reason practically when one considers the stench that household waste would produce, particularly during the summer months, and the animals it would attract.

Just as the primary basis for membership in a household was kinship, though not exclusively so, the textual and ethnographic data suggest the same for neighborhoods. Based on his work at Ugarit, Schloen believes that kin-based neighborhoods were the norm in Late Bronze Age cities⁶⁹ and that they functioned "as extended, composite households whose members understand their physical proximity and economic cooperation in terms of common ancestry."⁷⁰ Records of real estate transactions and wills from Emar, for instance, suggest that extended families tended to cluster together in the same area of the city.⁷¹ The importance of kin-based land rights was so important at Emar that when an individual was adopted or married into a family a document was sometimes drawn up to explicitly record the property rights of the new relation.⁷² At Nuzi real estate transactions could only be conducted between members of the same family, at least according to the letter of the law.⁷³ These examples emphasize the

⁶⁷ Smith, 2010a. p.146

⁶⁸ Beck and Hill, 2004. p.314

⁶⁹ Schloen, 2001. p.147

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.317

⁷¹ Mori, 2003. p.37

⁷² Di Filippo, Francesco. "Emar Legal Tablets: Archival Practice and Chronology," in *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History, Landscape, and Society. Proceedings of the Konstanz Emar Conference 25.-26.04. 2006*, ed. L. d'Alfonso, Y. Cohen, and D. Sürenhagen. AOAT Band 349. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. p.55

⁷³ Dosch, Gudrun. "Houses and Households in Nuzi: The Inhabitants, The Family, and Those Dependent on it," in *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia. Papers Read at the 40th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*

importance of familial landholdings during the Late Bronze Age which were expressed in an urban setting by the presence of localized kin-based neighborhoods. It is worth noting that the one tablet recovered from Umm el-Marra dealt with property distribution and ownership rights.

Umm el-Marra lacks the kind of textual evidence to unequivocally state that the neighborhoods spread across the site were kin-based. However, the contemporary textual evidence from other sites can be supplemented by the widespread ethnographic observation of kin-based neighborhoods in urban settings, particularly those which develop organically as opposed to being centrally planned.⁷⁴ In modern Syrian villages patrilocal residence appears to be the norm⁷⁵ and work on informal neighborhoods, often labelled “squatter settlements,” on the outskirts of Mexico City indicates that they are often organized around kinship.⁷⁶ In light of these two lines of evidence it stands to reason that the discrete clusters of structures at Umm el-Marra can be interpreted as kin-based neighborhoods.

Community

Community is the most fluid of these three institutions and, consequently, the most difficult to define. Households, on their most fundamental level, are predicated on kinship and neighborhoods are physically bounded. For the most part, people belong to *a* household and *a* neighborhood. This is not the case with communities; individuals can, and usually do, belong to multiple communities at the same time. While some facets of community can be expressed directly through material culture, others must be inferred from it.

Leiden, July 5-8 1993, ed. Klaas R. Veenhof. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1996. p.302

⁷⁴ Smith, 2010a. p.139

⁷⁵ Kamp, 1987. pp.285-286; Aurenche, *et al.*, 1997. pp.116-117; Schloen, 2001. p.127; Mori, 2008. p.119

⁷⁶ Smith, 2010a. p.135

I have used the term “community” to express the notion the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity.”⁷⁷ This basic, and useful, definition stresses some form of corporate identity within a defined space. Archaeologically, the idea of a “social community” has generally conflated with the physical boundaries of a “site.” With the rise of regional studies and cultural ecology this equation has fallen out of favor.⁷⁸ However, in the case of Umm el-Marra, the site’s relative isolation from other contemporary Late Bronze settlements as well as the physical boundaries imposed by the Early and Middle Bronze fortifications do, in fact, allow us, at least on one level, to understand the Late Bronze community of Umm el-Marra as defined by the boundaries of the physical site.

Households are the basic constituents of a community, and the understanding of how a community functions is, fundamentally, an understanding of how those constituent households interact. The more discrete households there are within a community, the more complex the social interaction is at the “supra-household” level, which is not necessarily visible archaeologically. Too strong a focus on interactions *within* the household can overlook the importance of interaction *between* households within the community.⁷⁹

How a community functions is predicated on the relationship of competition and cooperation between households. On one hand, the interests of individual households may differ from that of the community and it cannot be assumed that a community simply consisted of a

⁷⁷ <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37337?redirectedFrom=community#eid>, def. 2b

⁷⁸ Canuto, Marcello A. and Yaeger, Jason. “Introducing an Archaeology of Communities,” in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. p.4

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.10

number of households acting in concert.⁸⁰ Late Bronze Age households were largely self-sufficient, particularly regarding food production.⁸¹ A shift from communal agricultural production to one based on the household would have produced higher crop yields and given more autonomy to the individual households.⁸² This would, in turn, increase competition among households for resources such as water rights and arable land.

Conversely, even largely self-sufficient households cannot produce everything they need. This leads to the exchange of goods which, in turn, serves to foster a sense of community by creating mutually beneficial economic relationships.⁸³ As will be discussed in Chapter 3, in addition to agriculture, Late Bronze Age households were also loci of craft production making goods both for their own consumption and for trade within the community. Thus, contained within Late Bronze Age households are competing economic impulses and their members had to negotiate between the self-interest of households and the interdependent needs of the community.

Communities operate on different scales and corporate identity is manifested and experienced differently in different contexts. Identity is a multifaceted construct that encompasses inclusion in groups such as family, household, community, and empire.⁸⁴ While “primary communities,” such as Umm el-Marra, involve frequent face-to-face interactions, larger scale communities may share a common sense of identity and purpose but are

⁸⁰ Pauketat, Timothy R. “Politicization and Community in the Pre-Columbian Mississippi Valley,” in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. p.16

⁸¹ Schloen, 2001. p.102

⁸² Mehrer, Mark W. “Heterarchy and Hierarchy: The Community Plan as Institution in Cahokia’s Polity,” in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. pp.52-53

⁸³ Earle and Smith, 2012. p.239

⁸⁴ Varien, Mark D. and James M. Potter. “The Social Production of Communities,” in *The Social Construction of Communities: Agency, Structure, and Identity in the Prehispanic Southwest*, ed. M.D. Varien and J.M. Potter. New York: Altamira Press, 2008. pp.15-16

geographically dispersed and thus have reduced interaction despite a shared conceptual community.⁸⁵ Yaeger refers to the latter “imagined communities” in which individuals do not live together, and may not even know each other, but are bound together by things like a common belief system or creation myth.⁸⁶ Beliefs and myths are rarely discernable in the archaeological record, but shared signifiers of group identity are manifested in material culture. In the “imagined community” of the Mittani Empire these signifiers include shared motifs on cylinder seals and a type of ceramic called Nuzi Ware, which will be discussed below.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.6

⁸⁶ Yaeger, Jason. “The Social Construction of Communities in the Classic Maya Countryside,” in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. pp.125-126

CHAPTER 2.
Excavated Remains from Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra.

1.The Lower Town

West Area A

During the Late Bronze Age, the buildings in West Area A occupied an area adjacent to the now-abandoned Middle Bronze II city wall. Several structures dated ceramically to the Late Bronze Age were found here, but most were badly damaged by Hellenistic and Roman construction.

The earliest phase of occupation in West Area A is represented by a fragmentary structure designated House 1 (Fig. 3). This structure consists of three identifiable rooms aligned roughly northwest to southeast. In House 1, the walls are constructed of a stone foundation with a mudbrick superstructure one and one-half bricks wide. This is generally the norm throughout the site in the Late Bronze period, although though both thinner and thicker walls are sometimes found.

The northernmost room, designated Room 1, has an oblong mudbrick bin adjacent to the interior face of the west wall. A grinding stone was found *in situ* on a mudbrick threshold in front of the doorway leading from this room to the room to the south. A basalt pestle was resting on the packed-earth floor nearby. Otherwise, Room 1 was devoid of artifacts.

Though scant, the evidence of a bin, grinding stone, and pestle suggests that Room 1 was used for the processing and short-term storage of foodstuffs, probably grain. The presence of these types of activities in this structure suggests that it was domestic in nature. A better

preserved room with similar installations was found in the second phase of Late Bronze occupation in West Area A (Room 1 of the “Burned House”). The reason for assigning food processing activities to rooms of this type will be examined more fully in the discussion of that structure.

To the south is Room 2, which communicates with Room 1 via a small doorway. Room 2 is the only complete room of this structure and measures approximately 4 meters by 2.5 meters with a total area of 10 meters². A shallow mud-plastered basin was found in the southwest corner of Room 2; the fact that the basin is mud-plastered (as opposed to gypsum or lime plastered) makes it unlikely that it was used for holding liquids. The basin’s function is enigmatic, but it may have been associated with craft production taking place in Room 2, as is seen at other sites.⁸⁷

Next to the plastered basin, two unworked gypsum blocks were recovered. Despite the widespread distribution of locally manufactured gypsum vessels in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, direct evidence of their production is rare.⁸⁸ It has been suggested that the importation of travertine vessels from Egypt spurred local production of similar objects and a lack of travertine in Syria forced craftsmen to use local materials worked in Egyptian styles.⁸⁹ Blocks of gypsum, a stone often used to imitate travertine and widely available in the region,⁹⁰ may suggest this type of production. Moreover, a vessel of this type was found in the Burned House, elsewhere in West Area A.

⁸⁷ Gaber, Pamela, M.E. Morden, and L. Hordynsky. “Recent Excavations at Idalion, Cyprus,” in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (April, 1999). p.329

⁸⁸ Sparks, Rachael. “Stone Vessel Workshops in the Levant: Luxury Products of a Cosmopolitan Age,” in *The Social Context of Technological Change*, ed. A.J. Shortland. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001. p. 98

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.97

⁹⁰ Wright, H.E. “Geological Aspects of the Archaeology of Iraq,” in *Sumer*, No. 11 (1955). p.85

The vestiges of a tannur could be seen in the southeast corner of Room 2, and a large amount of ash was found along the east wall containing numerous pieces of ceramic slag. Fuel ash slag, also referred to as vegetable ash slag, is a type of vitrified clay which can be produced accidentally on the interior surface of pyrotechnic installations. A sintered mass with a spongy structure and a light-grey or green-grey color, this substance is the product of burning highly alkaline plant matter in association siliceous surface.⁹¹ Plants which grow in arid regions of the Near East tend to be high in alkali resulting in slag formation in high temperature environments, such as an oven or tannur.⁹² It is likely that local plants would be used as fuel and thus conducive in the formation of ceramic slag. The slag recovered from Room 2 is probably not indicative of any industry carried out there but rather, along with the ash, the result of cleaning out or removing the tannur.

Two shallow bowls were found *in situ* on the floor in the center of the room, an unfired clay jar stopper was found in the vicinity of the plastered basin, and a basalt pestle was found in the center of the room. In addition, several small artifacts were found clustered around the door leading from Room 2 to Room 1. These small finds included a faience bead, pieces of a bronze rod, several indeterminate fragments of bronze, and a basalt ring.

The fact that many of the small finds (a bead, fragments of copper) were found clustered around the door may suggest that the room was being cleared out when they were dropped. With the possible exception of the gypsum blocks, the other objects that remained (a jar stopper, a basalt pestle, and two bowls) were of little value or were already broken and so may have been

⁹¹ Biek, Leo and Justine Bayley. "Glass and Other Vitreous Materials," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Early Chemical Technology (June 1979). p. 6

⁹² Henderson, Julian. *The Science and Archaeology of Materials: An investigation of Inorganic Materials*. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 25

left behind when the room was abandoned. The removal of the tannur which had stood in the southeast of the room further suggests that it was emptied before its abandonment.

Although the limited number of artifacts recovered from Room 2 make discerning its original function difficult, the tannur, ash, and basin suggest craft production, the precise nature of which cannot be discerned.

To the south is Room 3, whose north wall is built directly against the south wall of Room 2. Room 3 may actually belong to another structure (i.e. it is *not* part of House 1) since it is at a lower elevation than Rooms 1, 2, and 4 does not communicate with any of them. Despite the copious amount of open space available at Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra it would not be surprising to see two discrete houses built directly against each other in this manner. The tendency for members of extended families to build their houses close together is well-documented in the Near East both historically⁹³ and ethnographically.⁹⁴ Moreover, the dwellings may have been built abutting each other because compact architecture helps to ameliorate the effects of strong, direct light by minimizing the amount of the structures' surface area exposed to the sun.⁹⁵

⁹³ Dosch, Gudrun. "Houses and Households in Nuzi: The Inhabitants, The Family, and Those Dependent on it," in *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia. Papers Read at the 40th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, July 5-8 1993*, ed. Klaas R. Veenhof. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1996. p.302; Mori, Lucia. *Reconstructing the Emar Landscape*. Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" Dipartimento de Scienze Storiche, Archeologiche e Antropologiche dell'Antichità Quaderni di Geografia Storica, 6. Rome: Casa Editrice Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, 2003. p.38

⁹⁴ Aurenche, O., M. Bazin, and S. Sadler. *Villages engloutis. Enquête ethnoarchéologique à Cafer Höyük (vallée de l'Euphrate)*. Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient méditerranéen, No. 26. Lyon: Maison de l'Orient méditerranéen, Diffusion de Boccard, 1997. pp.116-117; Kamp, Kathryn A. "Affluence and Image: Ethnoarchaeology in a Syrian Village," in *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987). pp.285-286; Mori, Lucia. "Information on Landscape from the Emar Legal Texts," in *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History, Landscape, and Society. Proceedings of the Konstanz Emar Conference 25.-26.04. 2006*, ed. L. d'Alfonso, Y. Cohen, and D. Sürenhagen. AOAT Band 349. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. p119

⁹⁵ Shepperson, Mary. "Planning for the Sun: Urban Forms as a Mesopotamian Response to the Sun," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 3, The Archaeology of Buildings (2009). p.365

Room 3 contained two thick-walled (6-10cm) tannurs and copious amounts of ash atop a low mudbrick and stone platform running along the east wall. One of the tannurs also contained ceramic slag. No artifacts were recovered from Room 3, and the original purpose of this area is difficult to discern. Like much Late Bronze architecture, it probably had both industrial and domestic functions.

Room 4 is a large area to the west of Rooms 1 and 2. The size of Room 4 and the fact that it is flanked by smaller rooms indicates that House 1 was of the Long-, or Central Room type,⁹⁶ which is in keeping with the architecture seen elsewhere on the site. The Central-Room House is a particularly common form of domestic architecture in Late Bronze Syria and is found at numerous sites including Tell Bazi⁹⁷, Tell Hadidi⁹⁸, el-Qitar, and Munbaqa.⁹⁹ This type of house is characterized, as the name implies, by a single large room flanked by three to six smaller rooms. These ancillary rooms are generally arranged in a single row along one of the long walls of the central room, though houses with rooms flanking both long walls or in an L-shape along one long wall and one short wall are also attested.

Room 4 had ashy fill above a packed-earth floor and, other than a basalt pestle found against the west face of the long wall, was devoid of artifacts. The general lack of material in this phase of House 1 may indicate that it was emptied before being abandoned, as discussed in relation to Room 2. This may have been in anticipation of the construction of a new house

⁹⁶ For a discussion of the Central-Room house see McClellan, Thomas L. "Houses and Households in North Syria During the Late Bronze Age," in *Les Maisons dans la Syrie Antique du IIIe Millénaire aux Début de l'Islam*, eds. C. Castel, M. al-Maqdissi and F. Villeneuve. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 150. Beyrouth: IFAPO, 1997. pp.29-59

⁹⁷ Einwag, Berthold. "New Discoveries at Tall Bazi, Syria," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, Vol. I, eds. P. Matthiae, et al. Rome: Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Archeologiche e Antropologiche dell'Antichità, 2000. p. 401

⁹⁸ Dornemann, Rudolph H. "Tell Hadidi: A Millennium of Bronze Age City Occupation," in *Archaeological Reports from the Tabqa Dam Project Euphrates Valley, Syria*. Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Vol. 44, ed. D.N. Freedman. Cambridge: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979. p.143

⁹⁹ McClellan, 1997. p.43

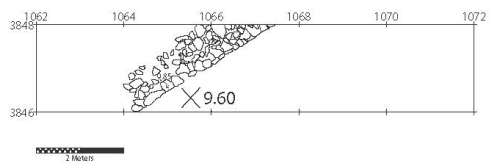
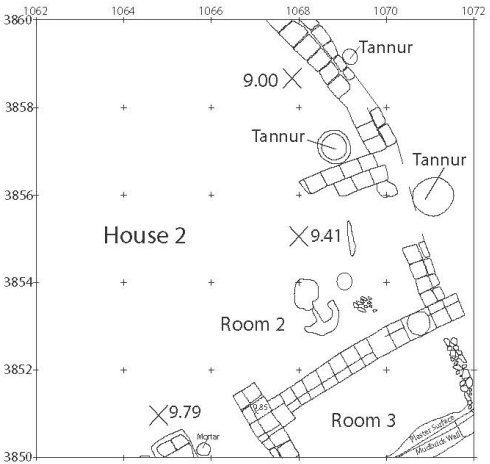
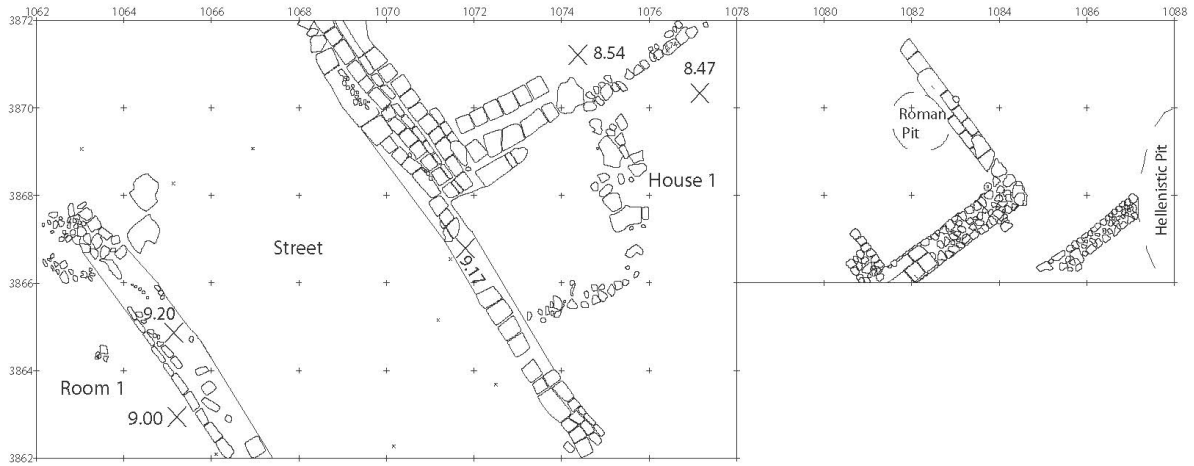
directly above this structure. However, this second phase of occupation, like much of its contemporary architecture in West Area A, is poorly preserved.

Though mostly destroyed by later pitting, what remains of the second phase of House 1 (Fig. 4) is on the same footprint as the earlier one. This suggests that it was built with the same intention as the first structure. One might speculate that it was to meet the needs of a growing family in a growing community.

To the west is a long wall, running northwest to southeast with the same orientation as the architecture belonging to House 1 discussed above. It seems likely that these fragmentary walls comprised a single structure, probably a Central Room House, suggested by the stubs of interior walls. The footprint of this building may indicate the size of the structure in the previous phase since the walls comprising the southeast corner of both the earlier and later phases are almost perfectly aligned.

While largely devoid of artifacts, one intriguing piece did come to light in the northwest area of the second phase of House 1. Three fragments of a flat bronze plate with a rectangular end and two holes at one end measuring 3.2 x 2.3 cm were found (Cat. UMM95 M-27). This object may be a piece of scale armor, a type of military technology generally associated with the spread of the Mittani Empire.¹⁰⁰ The fact that only a single piece of the corselet was found may suggest that either it was simply lost, which seems most probable, or that it was ritually deposited. The phenomenon of including armor scales, either singly or in small numbers, in

¹⁰⁰Moorey, P.R.S. "The Mobility of Artisans and Opportunities for Technology Transfer between Western Asia and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age," in *The Social Context of Technological Change: Egypt and the Near East, 1650-1550 BC*, ed. Andrew H. Shortland. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001. p. 3



Umm el-Marra
 West Area A
 Late Bronze Phase 2

Figure 4: Second phase of Late Bronze Occupation in West Area A

ritual or apotropaic caches has been suggested at Late Bronze sites throughout the Levant and eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰¹

Moving west, there is a broad street, approximately 6 m wide, separating House 1 from House 2 covered in ashy fill (Fig. 4). Numerous small objects were recovered from the soil covering the roadway. A particularly high concentration was found adjacent to the exterior face of the west wall of House 1. These include a bronze arrowhead (UMM97 M-001), the base of a mold-made female figurine with traces of red paint (UMM97 H-10), an awl fashioned from a piece of animal cranium (UMM97 I-2), a piece of a notched ovid or caprid scapula (UMM97 I-2), and a green faience bead (UMM97 B-001). These are all small, easily lost objects and may have been dropped as House 1 was being emptied. This cluster of small finds may suggest the location of the structure's entrance, which would seem logical since it would open onto the street.

Also found further to the north along the exterior face of the west wall of House 1 was a bronze rod with a pointed end (UMM95 M-28), possibly a needle or pin, and a crudely made figurine (UMM95 H-7). The figurine is a simple, globular human head with pinched features. This stands in stark contrast to the ubiquitous flat, mold-made female figurines known throughout Late Bronze Age Syria.

There are several possible explanations for the presence of this seemingly anomalous figurine in a Late Bronze context. First, it may be intrusive. Prior to the Late Bronze Age Syrian figurines were handmade and so the head may simply have been a piece of detritus which found its way into the ashy deposits atop the street. In the same vein, it may, indeed, be an Early or Middle Bronze figurine, but one that was kept as an heirloom and lost as House 1 was being

¹⁰¹ Maran, Joseph. "The Spreading of Objects and Ideas in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean: Two Case Examples from the Argolid of the 13th and 12th Centuries B.C.," in *BASOR*, No. 336 (Nov., 2004). pp.18-24

emptied. Otto has pointed out that it is not uncommon to find objects that are centuries old in Late Bronze domestic contexts and suggests that they were imbued with magical qualities due to their association with the ancestors.¹⁰² However, this figurine bears little resemblance to the other Early or Middle Bronze Age figurines found at Umm el-Marra, making either of these explanations unlikely.

A final possibility is that the figurine found in the street to the west of House 1 was a toy, thus offering one of the few instances where children are visible in the archaeological record. There is ample ethnographic evidence for the use of home-made toys, particularly in domestic contexts, being played in both interior and exterior spaces.¹⁰³ Ochsenschlager has noted that such crudely made figurines with simple, pinched features are a particularly common type of toy in the villages of modern-day southern Iraq.¹⁰⁴



Figure 5: Mittani Common Style Cylinder Seal from West Area A (G. Schwartz)

Other objects found in the street between Houses 1 and 2 include a highly polished bone needle or pin (UMM95 I-7), a flat-pointed bone tool (UMM95 I-8) which may have been used to apply cosmetics, and faience Mittani Common

¹⁰² Otto, Adelheid. “Wohnhäuser als Spiegel sakraler Bauten?” in *Les Espaces Syro-Mesopotamiens: Dimensions de L’Expérience Humaine au Proche-Orient Ancien. Volume D’Hommage Offert à Jean-Claude Margeuron*, ed. P. Butterlin, et al. Subartu XVII. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006. p.488

¹⁰³ Petty, Alice. *Bronze Age Anthropomorphic Figurines from Umm el-Marra, Syria*. BAR International Series 1575. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006. p.49

¹⁰⁴ Ochsenschlager, Edward L. *Iraq’s Marsh Arabs in the Garden of Eden*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004. pp.79-86

Style cylinder seal (UMM95 G-1; Fig. 5).

The seal, which is made of sintered quartz, was most likely originally glazed, although none remains. The scene depicts a man wearing a long robe and round cap whose hands are clasped at his waist facing to the right. Next to him is a so-called “bouquet tree” and to its right are two quadrupeds with long horns facing each other but looking behind them. The seal has its closest parallels with examples from Alalakh and, particularly, Ugarit, with a LB I (circa 1550-1450) date. In fact, Dunham goes so far as to suggest that the seal was actually manufactured in Ugarit.¹⁰⁵

As with the other objects found in the street, these are all quite small and could easily have been lost by their owners, dropped while emptying the houses on either side of the street, or swept out in the course of cleaning.

House 2, which had been partially burned, is located on the western side of the street, and the amount of extant architecture is similar to that of House 1 (Fig. 4). The wall that fronts the street is quite long, measuring approximately 19 m. While unusually large compared to the other Late Bronze houses at Umm el-Marra, the artifacts, installations, and what can be discerned of the floor plan all suggest that the structure was domestic.

While the other structures in West Area A are certainly Central Room houses, it is difficult to say if this is the case for House 2 as well. The extant interior walls in the southern portion of the structure are what one would expect to see in a house of this type – small rooms whose contents suggest domestic activities. However, the northern portion of House 2 was severely damaged by later pitting, obliterating most of the interior architecture. Since the

¹⁰⁵ Dunham, Sally. “Remarks on Some Objects from Umm el-Marra, 1994-1995,” in H. Curvers, G. Schwartz, and S. Dunham. “Umm el-Marra, a Bronze Age Urban Center in the Jabbul Plain, Western Syria,” in *AJA*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), pp. 232-234.

buildings immediately to the east and west of House 2 are both standard Central Room type houses, it is likely that House 2 was as well.

In the southeast corner of House 2 the remaining interior walls suggest at least three rooms. The northernmost room, Room 1, is delineated by very fragmentary walls, but contains a tannur and possibly a doorway, which will be discussed shortly.

To the south of Room 1 is Room 2, whose reconstructed area is approximately 15 m². The south wall of Room 2 (the north wall of Room 3) is the best preserved of the interior walls in House 2. There are two patches of lime plaster on the floor and a charred roof beam indicating that this was certainly an interior space. Two pestles, a tripod mortar, and numerous burned sherds were all found *in situ* on the floor in the center of the room suggesting that food processing or preparation took place here. This is in keeping with the function of similarly located rooms in other houses at Umm el-Marra.

The southernmost of the three identifiable rooms is Room 3 which, unlike the other rooms, was burned. Room 3 appears to have been quite small with a reconstructed area of approximately 7m². The room's small size makes it unlikely that it was used for many household activities, but the walls and floor were plastered. The use of Room 3 as a storeroom seems plausible given its size and location in the house.¹⁰⁶ This might also help to explain why it was burnt while the rest of the structure was not. In modern Syrian villages when a house ceases to be used as a dwelling, parts of it are often used for storage. This is particularly true if the structure is still in relatively good repair.¹⁰⁷ Otto identifies this practice archaeologically in

¹⁰⁶ Einwag, Berthold, Kay Kohlmeyer, and Adelheid Otto. "Tall Bazi – Vorbericht über die Untersuchungen 1993," in *Damaszener Mitteilungen*, Band 8 (1995). p.113

¹⁰⁷ Ziadeh-Seely, Ghada. "Abandonment and Site Formation Processes: An Ethnographic and Archaeological Study," in *Archaeology, History, and Culture in Palestine and the Near East: Essays in Memory of Albert E. Glock*, ed. T. Kapitán. American Schools of Oriental Research Books, Volume 3. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999. p.131 It

House 24 at Tell Bazi which she believes was still being used for storage after being abandoned at the time of the site's destruction.¹⁰⁸ If Room 3 was still in use while the rest of House 2 was empty, then it would be the only one an invader would see fit to put to the torch. The room's presumably flammable contents would have burned and the fire would have spread to anything else combustible, such as wood and reed roofing. This would explain why there was a charred beam in Room 2 when the room itself was not burned.

To the west of Room 3 was an open area that appears to have been spared the later damage suffered by the more northerly areas of House 2. If this structure was a Central-Room House, then this would have been the main room. Going into the south balk of the square is a mudbrick platform measuring approximately 80 cm x 70 cm which was probably a work area. To the east of the platform was an *in situ* basalt mortar and to the north was a pestle.

Three tannurs are associated with House 2. Two, a large and a small one, are situated in the street along the exterior face of the east (long) wall. The larger one, to the south, bulged outward towards the base. The third is located in a corner formed by the long wall and the stub of an interior wall. The presence of a tannur here may indicate that there was also a doorway opening onto the street which would provide ventilation for the copious amount of smoke produced, as has been noted at other sites.¹⁰⁹ It is not uncommon to find a single dwelling with both indoor and outdoor tannurs, the use of which is predicated on the season and the weather.¹¹⁰

is worth noting that of all the rooms excavated, Room 3 is the best preserved. While this may be chance, it may also be somewhat indicative of the state of House 2 at the time of the site's destruction.

¹⁰⁸ Otto, Adelheid. *Alltag und Gesellschaft zur Spätbronzezeit: Eine Fallstudie aus Tall Bazi (Syrien)*. Subartu 19. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007. p.191

¹⁰⁹ Gachet, Jacqueline. "Le "Centre de la Ville" d'Ougarit: La Maison C," in *Syria*, Vol. 73, No. 1/4 (1996). p. 180; Otto, 2007. p.72

¹¹⁰ Crawford, H. "Some Fire Installations from Abu Salabikh, Iraq (Dedicated to the memory of Margaret Munn-Rankin)," in *Paléorient*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1981). p.108; Otto, 2007. p.171

Indeed, interior tannurs would have been an efficient source of heat in the winter besides their use for cooking.¹¹¹

To the west of House 2 is the most notable Late Bronze feature of West Area A: House 3, also referred to as the “Burned House,” because of the conflagration that consumed it (Figs. 6 and 7). The area between the houses was badly damaged by Hellenistic intrusions and so the relationship between the structures is difficult to ascertain.

Like much of the other Late Bronze architecture in West Area A, large portions of House 3 were destroyed or badly damaged subsequent to its abandonment. This includes the entire west wall of the house, a large portion of the north wall, and the east wall. The area where the south wall would be expected to be was not excavated.

House 3 has four identifiable rooms, numbered 1-4. Rooms 1-3 are the smaller side rooms, while Room 4 is the larger, central room. Rooms 1-3 all open onto Room 4, but do not communicate with each other. Room 1 is the northernmost of the three side rooms. It measures approximately 2.9m x 2.2m, with a total area of 4.84m². The main feature of Room 1 is a bipartite mudbrick bin along the north wall. A cluster of three grinding stones were found together on the floor of Room 1, apparently in association with the mudbrick bins. Otherwise, Room 1 was largely devoid of artifacts. Adhering to the north face of the south wall of the room was a patch of lime plaster; it appeared that the wall had been replastered three times, with each layer approximately 2 cm thick.

The presence of the grinding stones might suggest that Room 1 was used for the processing of grain, though this is by no means certain since grinding stones are a ubiquitous

¹¹¹ Foxhall, 2000. p.493

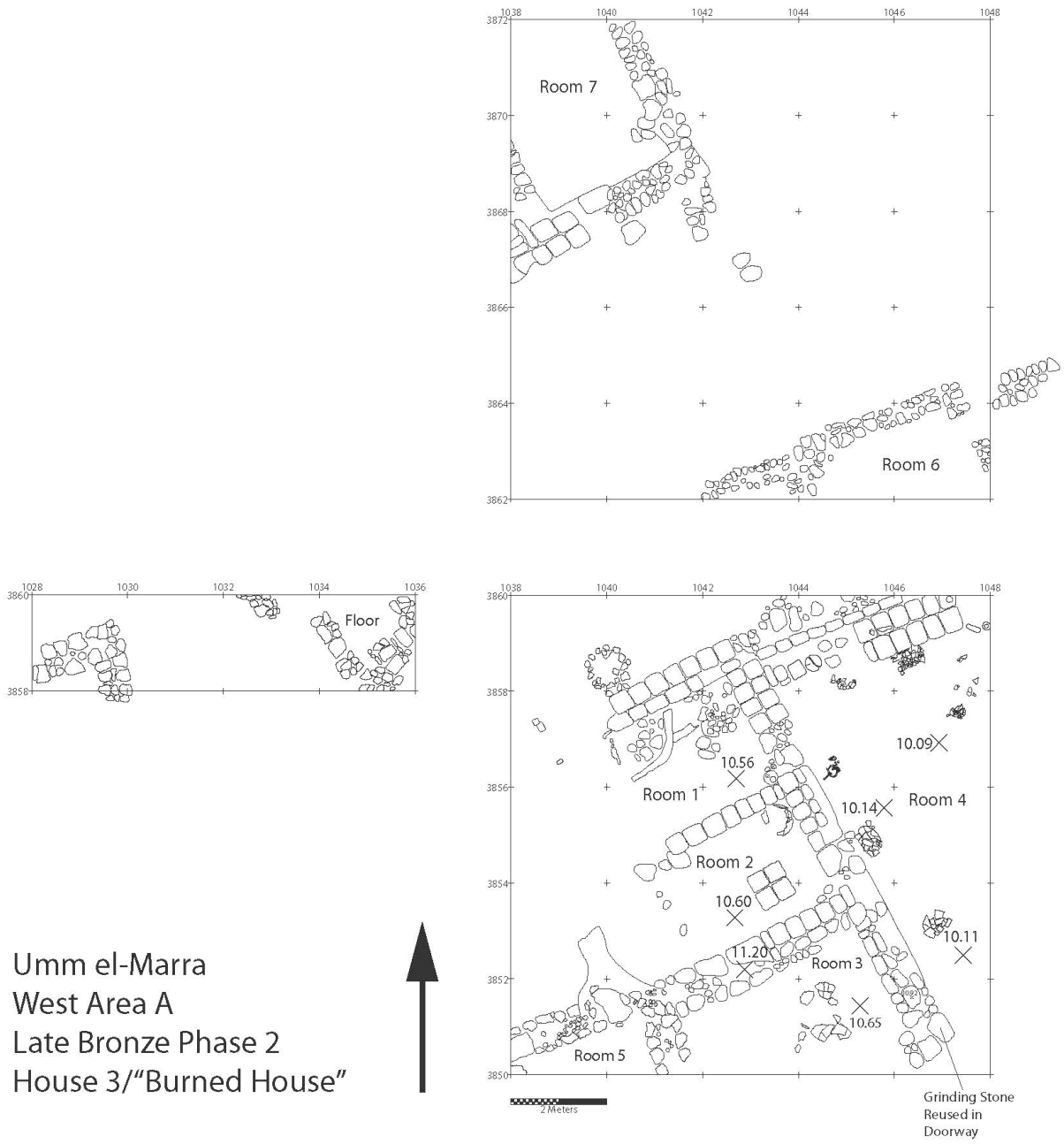


Figure 6: House 3/The "Burned House" from West Area A

artifact found in a variety of contexts. The presence of the mudbrick bins, however, is a more convincing indicator that Room 1 was, indeed, used for food storage and processing. The use of bins of this type for grain storage throughout the Near East is documented ethnographically.¹¹² However, it should be noted that no carbonized grain was found in association with the bins in Room 1.

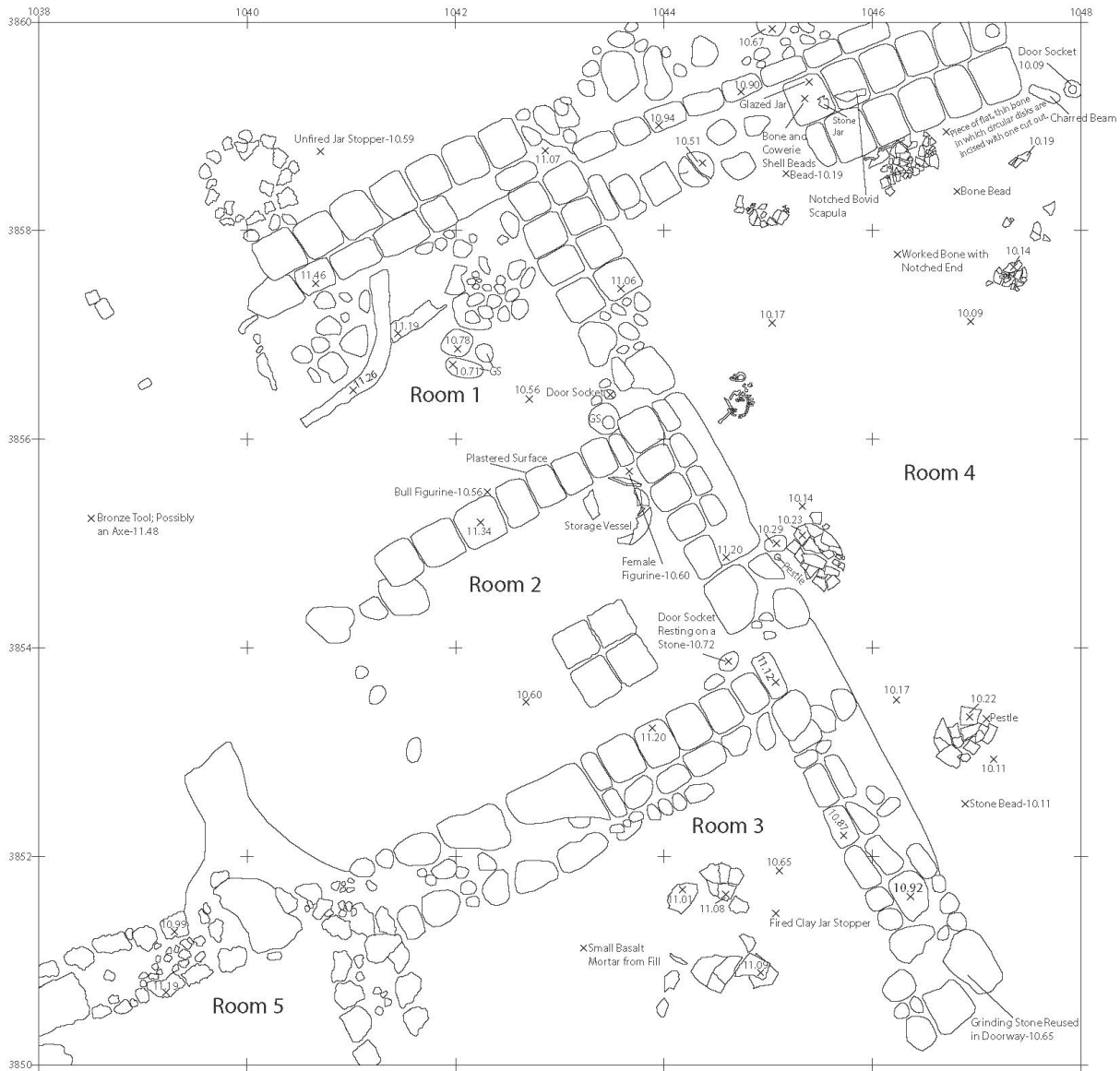
Room 2 is immediately to the south of Room 1 and is approximately 2.5 m x 2.3 m, for a total area of 5.75 m². Four mudbricks, each 36 cm², were found flush with the floor in the center of the room. The remains of a large storage jar were found *in situ* in the northeast corner of the room with a mold-made nude female figurine nearby. A limestone door socket was also found *in situ* against the south face of the doorway communicating with Room 4.

Room 3 is the southernmost of the three side rooms. The dimensions and area of Room 3 are difficult to accurately determine since both the south and west walls were destroyed, but it seems likely that it was roughly the same size as Rooms 1 and 2. Sherds from a large storage jar were found *in situ* in the center of Room 3 and a small mortar and clay jar stoppers were also recovered.

In Otto's recent study of the Late Bronze Age domestic architecture at Tell Bazi, she interprets the smaller side rooms of the Central Room house type to be primarily used for storage.¹¹³ If this is the case, then it is puzzling that Rooms 1-3 of House 3 are largely devoid of artifacts, particularly since numerous objects in both the side rooms (Rooms 1-3) and the Main Room (Room 4) were found *in situ*. There are several possible explanations for this. First, the

¹¹² Weinstein, Matina. "Household Structures and Activities," in *Anatolian Studies*, Volume 23, Aşvan 1968-1972: An Interim Report (1973). p. 272; Kramer, Carol. *Village Ethnoarchaeology: Rural Iran in Archaeological Perspective*. New York: Academic Press, 1982. pp.99-100

¹¹³ Otto, 2007. p.142



Umm el-Marra
 West Area A
 Late Bronze Phase 2
 Detail of House 3/"Burned House"

Figure 7: Detail of the Burned House in West Area A

rooms may have been emptied of most of their contents prior to the destruction of House 3. Alternately, Rooms 1-3 may have been used to store goods that would not survive in the archaeological record, such as textiles or foodstuffs. Finally, Rooms 1-3 may have had primary purposes other than storage, though this was likely one of their functions.

As mentioned above, Room 1 contained mudbrick bins and grinding stones, thus suggesting the room's function involved the storage and processing of grain. In this way, Room 1 would indeed have been used for storage, but it also would have been a locus of daily activity since milled flour was probably produced in relatively small quantities and not stored for long since it could spoil quickly or become infested with insects.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Kramer noted that in rural Iran, kitchen areas were usually carefully plastered¹¹⁵, as is suggested for Room 1 by the patch of plaster on the south wall. While Room 1 was not a kitchen *per se*, it was an area for the storage and preparation of food and so may have been treated with similar care.

Room 2, as noted, was largely devoid of artifacts as well. The only installation was a small mudbrick platform in the floor and a large storage jar in the northeast corner of the room. Again, the function of Room 2 is ambiguous. It seems unlikely that it was an area for food preparation, like Room 1, since no bins or grinding stones were recovered. Its use as a storage space is feasible, but there is no hard evidence for this. A door socket was found *in situ* on the south side of the doorway communicating with Room 4, suggesting that if there was something stored in Room 2 it may have been of some value.

A possible explanation for Room 2's use may be as a dedicated sitting or dining area. A general lack of artifacts in a space that was destroyed with its contents *in situ*, particularly if it

¹¹⁴ Samuel, Delwen. "Bread Making and Social Interactions at the Amarna Workmen's Village, Egypt," in *World Archaeology*, Volume 31, Number 1, Food Technology in Its Social Context: Production, Processing, and Storage (June 1999). p. 137

¹¹⁵ Kramer, 1982. p.102

has a well-finished floor, may correspond to a sitting and/or dining area of the type common in modern Middle Eastern houses which tend to be devoid of objects. Any ceramics found here tend to be associated with serving food, which also suggests the use of the space for eating and entertaining.¹¹⁶ While no ceramics associated with dining were recovered from Room 2, the large vessel in the northeast corner may have been used for brewing and storing beer, a function which Otto has ascribed similarly situated vessels in the houses at Tell Bazi.¹¹⁷ This would be in accord with the use of Room 2 as a living or dining area.

In Central Room houses it is the main room (Room 4 in House 3) that is often designated public space, and here social and commensal activities are believed to have taken place. While this is probably true, these activities do not have to take place exclusively in the main room. Throughout the Near East it is common to have a living room in which socializing and dining take place¹¹⁸, and it is entirely possible the Room 2 represents such a space. The presence of a door, as evidenced by the *in situ* socket, may serve to reinforce the function of Room 2 as a private area. Alternately, Kramer has noted that a family's most prestigious possessions are often kept in the living room¹¹⁹ and so a door would have served to secure any valuable objects as well.

Further supporting the hypothesis that Room 2 was used for activities such as socializing and dining is the fact that Room 2 (as well as Rooms 1 and 3) is elevated approximately 0.45cm above the floor of the main room, Room 4. As will be discussed below, Room 4 was the primary locus of domestic activity in House 3. Ziadeh-Seely has noted that dwellings in both the Early

¹¹⁶ Hardin, June 2004. p.77

¹¹⁷ Otto, 2006. p.278

¹¹⁸ Kamp, Kathryn. "From Village to Tell: Household Ethnoarchaeology in Syria," in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Volume 63, Number 2, Ethnoarchaeology II (June 2000). p.85; Kramer, 1982. pp.103-105

¹¹⁹ Kramer, 1982. p.104

Ottoman and modern village of Ti'innik, in Palestine, have two distinct living surfaces; one approximately 0.50 cm higher than the other. In the modern houses, and presumably the older ones as well, the lower surface, generally the area closest to the door, was used for domestic activities and occasionally for sheltering animals. The upper surface, on the other hand, was used for sleeping and socializing.¹²⁰ This fits well with what is seen in House 3. Further, in the houses Kramer studied in Iran, the floors or rooms opening onto a courtyard are sometimes higher than the surface of the courtyard itself.¹²¹ Courtyards are generally used for the same types of activities as the lower floors in the houses at Ti'innik and the main room of Central Room houses. Thus, this difference in the elevation of the living surfaces seems to reflect different uses of space within domestic architecture particularly separating areas of more heavy use from those used for more social activities. While using ethnographic analogy to make a statement like this must be done with caution, as discussed in the previous chapter, the conservatism of architecture and use of space in the eastern Mediterranean makes such analogies useful in trying to interpret functional space in ancient dwellings.

The function of Room 3 is more difficult to ascertain. If Rooms 1 and 2 were not used primarily for storage, then it stands to reason that Room 3 was (unless there were other rooms on the west side of Room 4, which seems unlikely). Supporting this hypothesis is the presence of a large storage jar *in situ* in the center of the room. If this was the jar's original location, then it would have been an impediment to movement in the room and a poor use of space. In contrast, if Room 2 was, in fact, used for social activities rather than storage, it stands to reason that the large jar was placed in a corner allowing for ease of movement and a more efficient use of space.

¹²⁰ Ziadeh-Seely, 1999. p. 128

¹²¹ Kramer, 1982. p.95 Figure 4.6

Moreover, jar stoppers were recovered from Room 3 supporting the idea that the room's primary function was storage.

Room 4 is the largest room of House 3. Its greatest extant length is approximately 9m. The room's width is difficult to determine since the east wall has been totally destroyed by later pitting. As evidenced by the charred pine beams and mud that was impressed with sticks and straw, suggesting roofing techniques practiced in the Near East to the present day, Room 4 was a roofed interior space.¹²² The general method is to span the area to be enclosed with logs, which are then covered with bundles of reeds laid perpendicular to the roof beams. The reeds are then sealed with a layer of mud which creates the roof's upper surface.

Pine was a popular, if costly, roofing material in the Late Bronze Age as suggested by its presence almost exclusively in mid-second millennium levels at Tell Bazi,¹²³ Tell Brak¹²⁴ and Emar.¹²⁵ Deckers' anthracological research at Emar has indicated that pine did not grow in the region during the period in question and was thus likely imported from the northeast.¹²⁶ Pine also does not grow on the Jabbul Plain, so it is quite likely that Umm el-Marra was part of the same trade network that supplied structural wood to sites throughout northern Syria during the Late Bronze Age, perhaps forming an important part of the regional economy.

At sites along the Euphrates, where wood was more readily available than on the Jabbul due to its riverine environment, the most common trees used in construction were from the alluvial forests of the Euphrates Valley such as Euphrates Poplar, Ash, Plane/Sycamore,

¹²² *Ibid.* p.93

¹²³ Otto, 2007. p.168

¹²⁴ Mallowan, M.E.L. "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar," in *Iraq* Number 9 (1947).

¹²⁵ Deckers, K. "Anthracological Research at the Archaeological Site of Emar on the Middle Euphrates, Syria," in *Paléorient* Volume 31/2 (2005). pp. 161-162

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p.165

Tamarisk and Elm.¹²⁷ While Miller suggests that the Jabbul Plain was largely deforested by the end of the Bronze Age, she does not rule out the possibility that small copses of trees could have been cultivated for timber.¹²⁸ Similar deforestation was also seen in Anatolia during the 1st millennium B.C. and there is evidence of small-scale cultivation of poplar and willow for construction, a practice also attested in modern Turkey.¹²⁹ Poplar is especially favored for buildings because it tends to grow straight,¹³⁰ and it may have been the most prevalent wood used at Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra, too, as was the case at Shiukh Fawqani.¹³¹

The presence of pine beams may thus be an indication of the affluence of the household whose roof they supported. The fact that the pine had to be imported means that it would have been a more costly option for a home builder than locally available timber. This would be particularly true at Umm el-Marra because the lumber would have had to be transported overland while at sites along the Euphrates it could be floated down river. In modern Syria, one of the most expensive elements of traditional dwellings is the roof beam, and how a house's roof is constructed is often considered an indication of a family's wealth.¹³² Roof beams are so valuable that they are removed and reused when a structure is abandoned.¹³³ Using pine roof beams would mean that larger areas could be spanned creating more interior space. Moreover, with stronger roofing material more of the roof could be used as living and working space and a wider

¹²⁷ Otto, 2007. p.16

¹²⁸ Schwartz, 2000). pp. 446-447

¹²⁹ Willcox, G.H. "A History of Deforestation as Indicated by Charcoal Analysis of Four Sites in Eastern Anatolia," in *Anatolian Studies*, Vol. 24 (1974). p.130

¹³⁰ Miller, Robert. "Elephants, Ivory, and Charcoal: An Ecological Perspective," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 264 (Nov., 1986). p.35

¹³¹ Bachelot, Luc. "Chantier E: Le Quartier d'Habitations de L'Âge du Bronze Récent," in Bachelot, Luc and Frederick Mario Fales. *Tell Shiukh Fawqani 1994-1998*, Volume I. History of the Ancient Near East Monographs VI. Padova: Sargon, 2005. p.314

¹³² Kamp, 1987. p.291

¹³³ Kamp, Kathryn A. "Waste Disposal in a Syrian Village," in *The Ethnoarchaeology of Refuse Disposal*, ed. E. Staski and L.D. Sutro. Arizona State University Anthropological Research Papers No. 42. Phoenix: Arizona State University, 1991. p.29

variety of activities could be carried out there. The use of pine beams, then, significantly enlarges the usable size of the house which has been ethnographically observed to correlate well to the overall wealth of a family.¹³⁴

Two installations were situated along the north wall of Room 4 (Fig. 10). To the west were three stacks of mudbricks approximately 35 cm tall. On top of the easternmost stack was a large tripod basalt mortar. The wall behind the pedestals was covered in a thick layer of white



Figure 8: Alabaster jar from the Burned House (G. Schwartz)

plaster which sloped down towards the floor. The presence of the mortar as well as the plaster surface indicates that this area may have been used in food preparation, likely in conjunction with Room 1.

To the west was a low mudbrick bench, approximately 80cm wide and 14cm high, which ran the length of the extant portion of the north wall. Three objects of particular note were found on top of this bench (see below).

Of all the rooms in House 3, Room 4 produced the largest amount

¹³⁴ Kamp, 2000. p.89

of material *in situ*. Indeed, the artifacts recovered from Room 4 were among the finer objects recovered from all of Late Bronze Umm el-Marra. From the bench along the north wall came an Egyptian or Egyptianizing alabaster jar with duck-head handles (Fig. 8), a fragmentary green-glazed ceramic jar with a rounded base (Fig. 9), and an incised bovid scapula.

The duck-handled alabaster vase¹³⁵ from the Burned House is of a type popular from Nuzi to the Levantine Coast which was probably used both to hold unguents and for display.¹³⁶



Figure 9: Glazed jar from the Burned House (G. Schwartz)

Like the alabaster vases, glazed ceramics are another material hallmark of the Late Bronze Age in general, and the Mittani Empire in particular. While vitreous technologies, especially glass making, were already being developed during Middle Bronze II,¹³⁷ the ability to produce glazed ceramics was a Late Bronze innovation.¹³⁸ The technological expertise required to glaze ceramics is

¹³⁵ For more on this object see Sally Dunham's contribution in Curvers, *et al.*, 1997, "Remarks on Some Objects from Umm el-Marra, 1994-1995," pp.235-236

¹³⁶ McDonald, H. "Stone Objects," in *Excavations at Tell Brak Volume 1: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian Periods*, eds. D. Oates, J. Oates, and H. McDonald London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq and Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 1997. p. 107

¹³⁷ Moorey, 1999. p.193; Peltenburg, Edgar, "Some Early Developments of Vitreous Materials," in *World Archaeology*, Volume 3, Number 1, "Technological Innovations" (June, 1971), pp.6-7

¹³⁸ Wilhelm, G. *The Hurrians*. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1989. p.89; Both Oppenheim and Lichte maintained that Mittani was responsible for the technological breakthroughs (such as core-formed glass and glazed ceramics) at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. Moorey disagrees, however, seeing the genesis of these innovations in the first, rather than second, quarter of the second millennium. Instead, Moorey sees Mittani's main contribution as having "stimulated and facilitated" the production and distribution of these goods throughout the Near East. (Moorey, P.R.S. "The Hurrians, the Mitanni and Technological Innovation," in *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis : miscellanea in honorem Louis Vanden Berghe*, ed. L. de Meyer and E. Haerinck. Gent: Peeters, 1989, p.273; Moorey, P.R.S. "The Mobility of Artisans and Opportunities for Technology Transfer between Western Asia and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age," in *The Social Context of Technological Change: Egypt and the Near East, 1650-1550 BC*, ed. Andrew H. Shortland. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001. p.4; Moorey, 1999. p.178)

significantly greater than that needed for the production of glass,¹³⁹ and as such glazed ceramics were a rare and highly valued commodity which are generally recovered from elite contexts.¹⁴⁰ A piece of a glazed bowl was found at Tell Mardikh/Ebla with Nuzi Ware decorations, further reinforcing the elite connotations of these objects, since Nuzi Ware itself was a prestige good in Late Bronze Syria.¹⁴¹

Both the alabaster vase and the glazed jar were probably among the more valued possessions of the inhabitants of House 3. If their find-spots on the bench at the end of the most public room in the house were where they were generally kept, then these objects were meant to be seen. Their presence in such a public spot would serve to advertise the status of the occupants to all who entered the house. Of course, it cannot be forgotten that these objects are also just aesthetically pleasing, and so their location also served as a convenient and accessible spot to enjoy them.

The third object found on the bench at the north end of Room 4 is a bovid scapula with a row of incised notches. Objects of this type have been found in various Late Bronze contexts across the site, including the Acropolis West, Acropolis East, and the Southeast Area. It has been suggested by the excavators that these objects were used as musical instruments.¹⁴² An alternate hypotheses, put forward to explain the notched scapulae found in the Levant and Cyprus include cultic objects, tally sticks, and a weaving tool.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.72

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Mazzoni, S. "Late Bronze Age Pottery Production in North-Western Central Syria," in *Céramique de l'Âge du Bronze en Syrie I: La Syrie du sud et la vallée de l'Oronte*, eds. M. al- Maqdissi, V. Matoian, and C. Nicolle. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 161. Beirut: Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, 2002. p. 132

¹⁴² Curvers and Schwartz, 1997. p.214

¹⁴³ Zukerman, A., *et al.* "A Bone of Contention? Iron Age IIA Notched Scapulae from Tell eṣ-Şâfi/Gath, Israel," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* Number 347 (August 2007). pp.69-71

There are two possible suggestions for the function of the mudbrick bench. The first, rather prosaically, is as an area for sitting, working, and storage. Installations of this type are well attested ethnographically and archaeologically. Adding to this possible explanation is the fact that a piece of bone with one bead already removed and three others started was found next to the bench. This would add credence to the idea that this area of the house was used for small-scale craft production.



Figure 10: Northern end of Room 4 in the Burned House with mudbrick pedestal and bench (G. Schwartz)

The other interpretation of the mudbrick bench is as a household altar. Otto notes that in the houses at Tell Bazi there is often a bench, usually made of stone, which has valuable or unusual objects associated with it, which sometimes include particularly fine ceramics.¹⁴⁴ Though the bench in House 3 is mudbrick, it is still quite similar to the installations to which she ascribes a cultic function at Tell Bazi. Otto's household altars are generally located in the center

¹⁴⁴ Otto, 2007. pp. 67-71; 241-244 This is Otto's "Zone 2"

of the short wall opposite the main doorway of the house. Though we do not have the entrance to House 3, the mudbrick bench is situated along a short wall and the main doorway may well have been in the opposite wall. Moreover, if the interpretation of the notched scapula as a ritual object is correct, then this would lend credence to the idea that the mudbrick bench was a household altar.

The designation of an object, installation, or whole structure as “ritual” is too often a facile and overused trope in archaeology, turned to when no other evident purpose can be gleaned but an explanation is needed. Of course, this obviously does not mean that there were not ritual installations or that archaeologists should not interpret something as ritualistic when the evidence warrants it.¹⁴⁵ An important distinction to make archaeologically is the difference between evidence for ritual in general and evidence for specific ritual practices of the type Otto suggests.¹⁴⁶ While, as Otto points out, there is evidence for ritual activity in Late Bronze Age households, identifying the material correlates of those activities is much more problematic. Otto may, indeed, be correct that the bench-like installations at Tell Bazi are household altars, and her evidence is quite convincing. That being said, despite the similarities between her altars and the mudbrick bench in House 3, I am still hesitant to ascribe it a specifically cultic function when no unambiguously ritual or cultic artifacts, such as figurines, were found in association with it. Thus, I am inclined towards the explanation of the bench as an area whose primary function was for various more profane household activities and a place to display valued objects akin to a china cabinet in a modern dwelling. That being said, as Otto has demonstrated, one of

¹⁴⁵ Bell, Catherine. “Response: Defining the Need for a Definition,” in *The Archaeology of Ritual*,” ed E. Kyriakidis. Costen Advanced Seminars 3. Los Angeles: The University of California, Los Angeles Costen Institute of Archaeology, 2007. p.283

¹⁴⁶ Renfrew, Colin. “The Archaeology of Ritual, of Cult, and of Religion,” in *The Archaeology of Ritual*,” ed E. Kyriakidis. Costen Advanced Seminars 3. Los Angeles: The University of California, Los Angeles Costen Institute of Archaeology, 2007. p.114

the many functions of Late Bronze Age dwellings was as a locus for domestic cultic activities.¹⁴⁷ As a focal point of the main room of House 3, the mudbrick bench may also, on occasion, have served as the focal point of ritual activity. While Otto may well be correct in assigning cultic activity as one of the activities associated with these benches, it is unlikely that it was the sole, or even primary, function associated with such installations. This is in keeping with the multivalent use of domestic space seen in numerous cultures¹⁴⁸ and is particularly in keeping with the multifaceted uses of architecture in Late Bronze Age Syria.¹⁴⁹

That the three mudbrick pedestals to the west of the bench probably served as short tables or work surfaces is suggested by the basalt mortar found on top of the easternmost pedestal. The mortar suggests that this area of the house was used for food preparation, although there are no installations or artifacts in the immediate vicinity to confirm this. Instead of having a specific function, it seems that these pedestals were multifunctional platforms for various activities including food preparation. In this regard, their function is probably similar to that of the bench to the east.

The pieces of two large storage jars were found *in situ* on the floor of Room 4. The northernmost of the two was found in front of the door leading into Room 2. As such, this was probably not the spot where the vessel was normally kept since it would have impeded communication between Room 2 and Room 4. Rather, it may have either been in the process of either being brought into, or out of, Room 2 immediately before the structure was abandoned and

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.58; Otto 2006. pp.489-491

¹⁴⁸ Kamp, Kathryn A. "Towards an Archaeology of Architecture: Clues from a Modern Syrian Village," in *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1993). p.306; Meskell, Lynn. "An Archaeology of Social Relations in an Egyptian Village," in *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1998). p.217; Foxhall, 2000. pp.485-488

¹⁴⁹ McClellan, 1997. p.43; Einwag, 2000. p.402

burned. The southernmost of the two vessels could either have been used in that spot or was in transit when House 3 was abandoned.

An unusual phenomenon noted in several of several of the reconstructable vessels from the Burned House, as well as ones from the Southeast Area, is that they were missing their rims and bases. The reuse and repurposing of broken ceramics is quite common, and this is especially true for the aforementioned parts of the vessels. Breakage does not necessarily mean that an object's use-life is over; chipped rims or broken handles do not greatly diminish a vessel's utility, and necks of vessels can be repurposed as pot stands while the sherds themselves can be turned into lids.¹⁵⁰ Crawford notes that at Early Dynastic Abu Salabikh the inverted rims of several jars were found near the mouths of ovens. Noting that they were burned on the interior surface, she suggests that these were used to hold coals, which would then be used to rekindle the fire the next morning.¹⁵¹ At Tell Razuk, also dating to the Early Bronze Age, Gibson identified the inverted and burned upper portions of several jars as "jar-hearths," which would have had a similar function as tannurs.¹⁵² The closest analogy, however, is from the Late Bronze Age "Tablet Building" at Tell Hadidi. Here Dornemann notes the reuse of parts from various large storage jars including a rim and neck reused as a pot stand and a base and body used to hold tablets.¹⁵³ Ethnographically, Kramer has noted numerous functions for rims and bases in

¹⁵⁰ Otto, 2007. p.27

¹⁵¹ Crawford, H.E.W.. "More Fire Installations from Abu Salabikh," in *Iraq*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Papers of the 29 Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, London, 5-9 July 1982 (Spring, 1983). p.33

¹⁵² Gibson, McGuire, *et al.* "Tell Razuk: Stratigraphy, Architecture, Finds," in *Uch Tepe I: Tell Razuk, Tell Ahmed Al-Mughir, Tell Ajamat*, ed. McG. Gibson. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1981. p.57

¹⁵³ Dornemann, Rudolph H. "The Late Bronze Age Pottery Tradition at Tell Hadidi, Syria," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 241 (Winter, 1981). pp.32-33

modern Rajasthan, primarily in the production of pottery.¹⁵⁴ However, she also observed sherds being reused as ladles, scoops, paint holders,¹⁵⁵ birdbaths, and portable hearths.¹⁵⁶

A possible scenario to explain the removal of rims and bases from pottery in the Burned House is that its occupants broke the pots open, most of which were large, unwieldy storage vessels, in order to quickly empty their contents before the violent destruction of the site. This may have been done with the pestles that were found next to the two smashed vessels in Room 4. As they departed they took rims and bases with them, which were portable and useful in flight for the numerous activities discussed above. The other objects found in Room 4 of the Burned House such as the alabaster vase and the glazed jar had considerably less utilitarian value.

Another interesting feature of Room 4 is the articulated skeleton of a pig that was found on the floor beneath the roof collapse. The practice of keeping animals in the same dwelling as humans is well known in the present-day Near East, particularly in the wet winter months.¹⁵⁷ It may be that the pig was kept in the house and died there or that it sought shelter inside the structure in the last, chaotic moments before the conflagration and was subsequently crushed.

Though taboo throughout the Near East today, pigs were widely consumed in antiquity. Zeder has pointed out that they are an excellent candidate for small-scale, household rearing since they require relatively little care and space¹⁵⁸ and can be fed on household refuse¹⁵⁹. Given

¹⁵⁴ Kramer, Carol. *Pottery in Rajasthan: Ethnoarchaeology in Two Indian Cities*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. pp.65-66

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp.42-43

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.73

¹⁵⁷ Ziadeh-Seely, 1999. p.128

¹⁵⁸ Zeder, Melinda A. "Food Provisioning in Urban Societies: A View from Northern Mesopotamia," in *The Social Construct of Ancient Cities*, ed. Monica L. Smith. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2003. p. 166

¹⁵⁹ Zeder, Melinda A. *Feeding the Cities: Specialized Animal Economy in the Ancient Near East*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. p. 31

the minimal amount of work needed to tend them, even small children can participate¹⁶⁰, thereby contributing productively to the household economy. Lastly, pigs have a high reproductive rate and a greater meat yield than any other type of livestock utilized in the ancient Near East.¹⁶¹

Fragmentary walls forming a right angle were found to the west of Room 3 and the space the walls delineate are designated Room 5. While not fitting into the classic central-room house plan, they correspond well to Late Bronze domestic architecture from Tell Bazi where small rooms were constructed to add additional space to a building with a very similar floor plan as that of the Burned House (House 47). Otto has interpreted this as a work space, and this seems like a plausible explanation for the additions to the Burned House as well.¹⁶²

Well-built, though poorly preserved, architecture, designated Room 6, was also found to the north of the Burned House. Though given a single room number, it appears that there were actually at least three separate areas. The orientation of the fragmentary walls in the south of the square, approximately 2m to the north of the Burned House, suggest that they may have constituted an annex similar to the one which comprises Room 5. This process of adding rooms to an existing structure is well attested both archaeologically and ethnographically. The practice is especially evident elsewhere in West Area A (see below). Ethnographic work done in Iraq has demonstrated that the construction of new rooms is a relatively easy and inexpensive undertaking. As such, building and remodeling is a common activity; rooms are added or renovated as the need arises.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Redding, Richard W. and Michael Rosenberg. "Ancestral Pigs: A New (Guinea) Model for Pig Domestication in the Middle East," in *Ancestors for the Pigs: Pigs in Prehistory*, ed. Sarah M. Nelson. MASCA Research Papers in Science and Archaeology 15. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1998. p. 73

¹⁶¹ Zeder, 2003. p. 166

¹⁶² Otto, 2006. pp.224-227

¹⁶³ Kamp, 2000. p. 84

The function of Room 6 difficult to ascertain since not material was found *in situ*. However, it seems probable that, like Room 5, it was used for craft production or storage.

Two tannurs and a circular stone feature were found adjacent to the exterior face of the Burned House's north wall.

Like Houses 1 and 2, the Burned House was a Central-Room House. Thomas McClellan has suggested that the Central-Room houses found at sites along the Middle Euphrates might be a manifestation of Hurrian socio-cultural influence, associated particularly with the *maryannu*, an elite segment of Mittani society.¹⁶⁴ This, however, seems unlikely since recent work at sites like Tell Bazi¹⁶⁵ and Munbaqa¹⁶⁶ has shown that large segments of the population resided in dwellings built on a Central-Room plan, and thus these houses were not restricted to any particular group.

Schloen has suggested that the appearance of the Central Room house in the mid-2nd millennium is be linked to the rise of the household as the dominant economic paradigm.¹⁶⁷ One of the hallmarks of this type of house is that it is almost invariably used for both domestic and industrial activities, as is amply demonstrated at numerous Late Bronze Age sites.¹⁶⁸

The agglutinative layout of the Burned House, also seen elsewhere at Umm el-Marra, may be indicative of the natural growth of the settlement over time and the attendant need for more space. Evidence from both Emar¹⁶⁹ and Nuzi¹⁷⁰ indicates the during the Late Bronze Age

¹⁶⁴ McClellan, 1997. p.37

¹⁶⁵ Einwag, 2000. p.401

¹⁶⁶ Werner, Peter, *et al.* *Tall Munbāqa: Bronzezeit in Syrien*. Veröffentlichung des Hamburger Museums für Archäologie und die Geschichte Harburgs, No. 80. Neumünster: Wachholtz Verlag, 1998. pp.49-55

¹⁶⁷ Schloen, J. David. *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East*. Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant 2. Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, Indiana, 2001.

¹⁶⁸ Einwag, 2000. p.402; McClellan, 1997. p.43; Einwag, Kohlmeyer, and Otto, 1995. pp.113-115

¹⁶⁹ Mori, 2003. p.37

¹⁷⁰ Dosch, 1996. p.302

people tended to live in extended family groups which would necessitate the continual need for more living area as wives were brought into the family and babies were born.

In the northwest two more rooms, designated Rooms 7 and 8, were found. The walls are approximately 65 cm thick and constructed with the normal stone foundation and mudbrick superstructure. This structure was separated from the Burned House by an open area approximately 5.5 m wide. The entire south wall and portions of the east and west wall of Room 7 are preserved and enclose an area of approximately 8.11 m². Only the very southeast corner of Room 8 was exposed. Mudbrick collapse associated with the extant remains of the walls suggests that the building was still largely intact when it was abandoned.

A mortar was found *in situ* on the floor along the East Wall of Room 7 near the room's southeast corner. No other objects or whole vessels were recorded from this structure. The function of this building is difficult to ascertain. Its distance from the Burned House suggests that it was another structure, as opposed to a later addition to the architecture farther to the south. The question is whether this was a house or an ancillary structure associated with another dwelling, probably the Burned House.

While the presence of the mortar may indicate a domestic structure, it is scant evidence on which to base a conclusion. Moreover, there is evidence, both textual and ethnographic, for the presence of outbuildings associated with the main house in the Near East. At Emar, for instance, there is a text that mentions a *hablu*, or “outbuilding” in conjunction with house whose primary purpose was baking.¹⁷¹

Structures can also be repurposed even if their original function had been for a dwelling. Within a still occupied settlement, buildings are rarely totally abandoned, but are reused for

¹⁷¹ The text is HCCT-E.22. Mori, 2003. p.71

various purposes. Many “abandoned” buildings in Near Eastern communities are actually located in the center of a settlement and the previous occupants usually still live elsewhere in the village. After a house is abandoned its reuse depends on several factors including the condition of the structure when its original inhabitants left, whether the former inhabitants still lived in the village, and the need of the former inhabitants for an auxiliary structure. If the previous inhabitants of a house still live in the village, the house can be used for activities such as storage or to shelter animals.¹⁷²

Although the excavated area of this structure is relatively small, the paucity of artifacts, especially in comparison to the Burned House just to the south, suggests that it may have been largely empty while still in use. The closer an abandoned house is to a family’s new dwelling often determines how well the abandoned structure is maintained.¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier, the amount of mudbrick collapse associated with this structure indicates that its walls were still quite high at the time of abandonment. Thus, this building may have been an ancillary structure associated with the occupants of the Burned House less than 10 meters away.

Adding to this hypothesis is the fact that this structure was not burned. If it was simply an outbuilding, than there would have been little need for an enemy to take the time and effort to destroy it, as opposed to a family’s primary residence such as the Burned House.

West Area B

East of West Area A is West Area B, characterized by a very large Late Bronze Age trash pit, at least 8 m x 10 m, dug into earlier Middle Bronze Age architecture. In this pit was very ashy soil containing numerous sherds and animal bones. Ethnographic work in Syria indicates

¹⁷² Ziadeh-Seely, 1999. pp.128-131

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* p.131

that middens are most often used to dispose of small-scale debris from regular housekeeping and ash from ovens and tannurs,¹⁷⁴ and this seems to be the case in West Area B, given the remains found inside.

Pitting is a common feature across the site in all periods and is often associated with the very earliest stages of occupation during any given phase.¹⁷⁵ These pits likely served a dual purpose; initially as a source of raw materials for construction projects during (re)settlement and later as convenient areas to dispose of household waste. Often pits are found dug into earlier architecture; the earlier structures would have provided a readily available source of stone already broken into a manageable size and not requiring transport to the site.

The soil excavated from these pits would have been equally valuable as a source of construction material, i.e. mudbricks. In addition to their proximity to construction areas, which would reduce the time and effort needed for transport of the soil,¹⁷⁶ soil from tells is believed to produce better bricks than those made from “clean” or “new” soil.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, in his description of Uruk, Gilgamesh boasts that “one *šār* is city, one *šār* date-grove, one *šār* is clay pit.”¹⁷⁸ When no longer needed for building materials, pits would then be used for their most archaeologically visible function, loci of waste disposal.

Among the objects that were recovered from the trash pit in West Area B were a sealing made by a Mittani Common Style seal (UMM94.G001) and a body sherd of Nuzi Ware,¹⁷⁹ the light-on-dark painted variety characteristic of elite contexts in the Mittani Empire. The lightly

¹⁷⁴ Kamp, 1991. pp. 25-27

¹⁷⁵ Wilkinson, T.J. *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. p.109

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.110

¹⁷⁷ Oates, David. “Innovations in Mud-Brick: Decorative and Structural Techniques in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Architectural Innovation (Feb., 1990). p.389

¹⁷⁸ Gilgamesh 1 22-23, XI 327-328; from George, A.R. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. pp. 539, 725

¹⁷⁹ Curvers and Schwartz, 1997. p.222, fig. 19:4

baked sealing was impressed with “a row of schematically rendered people linked at their shoulders by horizontal lines, presumably representing arms,” a motif also found at Ugarit and Nuzi.¹⁸⁰

The Nuzi Ware sherd is quite small (approx. 4 cm x 3.5 cm) and decorated with a sinuous white on black design. Remarkably, the sherd joined with another from the North Area, suggesting that the household residing there used the trash pit in West Area B to dispose of their refuse.

The worn upper torso of a mold-made female figurine (UMM.94.H.011), a broken egg-shaped bead, 10 sheep/goat bones, 1 pig bone, 1 bovid bone, 4 equid bones, and 45 unidentified bones were also recovered from the trash pit.

Most interesting, however, are two burials dug into the trash pit. The older of the two was at the bottom of the pit and dug into the uppermost layers of Middle Bronze Age architecture. In this grave were the remains of an adult male in a tightly flexed position facing south, his head towards the east. The dating of this grave is difficult to ascertain due to the lack of associated artifacts, although the excavator notes that the surrounding matrix is quite ashy, suggesting that the grave was dug into the existing trash pit and is thus Late Bronze.

The second grave is approximately 40 cm higher and contained the flexed remains of an adult female interred with a small jar, a pierced shell, and animal bones. The jar is similar to examples found at Tell Hadidi¹⁸¹ and al-Qitar¹⁸² dated to the second half of the 16th and early

¹⁸⁰ Dunham, Sally. “Remarks on Some Objects from Umm el-Marra, 1994-1995,” in Curvers, Hans H., Glenn M. Schwartz, and Sally Dunham. “Umm el-Marra, a Bronze Age Urban Center in the Jabbul Plain, Western Syria,” in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 1997). p. 234

¹⁸¹ Dornemann, Rudolph H. “The Late Bronze Age Pottery Tradition at Tell Hadidi, Syria,” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 241 (Winter 1981). p.42, fig:15:13, 19

¹⁸² McClellan, Thomas L. “El-Qitar: Third Season of Excavation, 1984-85,” in *Abr-Nahrain*, Vol. XXIV (1986). p. 91; p. 101 fig. 10:7

15th centuries respectively. The body had the same orientation as the earlier burial, presumably indicating shared beliefs relating to the afterlife as well as standardized mortuary practices.

The use of uninhabited parts of a site, and even refuse pits, for burying the dead is a relatively common practice throughout the ancient Near East. At Old Babylonian period Nippur in southern Mesopotamia, for instance, graves have been found in areas believed to have been abandoned at the time.¹⁸³ At Early Dynastic period Abu Salabikh, the excavators note that graves were dug into the 6G Ash-Tip and were purposely placed there as opposed to another part of the site.¹⁸⁴

This practice seems to have been particularly prevalent in Late Bronze Age Syria. At Tell Afis, south of Aleppo, the Acropolis was abandoned during the 15th century and used only for occasional burials.¹⁸⁵ At Tell Arbid in the upper Khabur plains, the situation is even closer to that at Umm el-Marra, with Mittani burials dug into trash pits that had themselves had been dug into earlier strata.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, it has been noted that at Mittani sites in general, graves tend to be situated in abandoned or unused areas of a settlement.¹⁸⁷

While interment of the dead in trash pits may seem anathema to more modern sensibilities, there is no indication that it was intended as a disrespectful act. Rather, the domestic associations of middens may have meant that they were considered a convenient place to bury the dead while still conceptually keeping them within the household.

¹⁸³ Gibson, M. and A. McMahon. "Investigation of the Early Dynastic-Akkadian Transition: Report of the 18th and 19th Seasons of Excavation in Area WF, Nippur," in *Iraq*, Vol. 57 (1995). p.10 n.5

¹⁸⁴ Baker, H.D., *et al.* *The 6g Ash-Tip and its Contents: Cultic and Administrative Discard from the Temple?* Abu Salabikh Excavations Volume 4. London: The British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1993. p.11

¹⁸⁵ Mazzoni, Stephania. *The Italian Excavations of Tell Afis (Syria): From Chieftdom to an Aramaean State*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998. p.15

¹⁸⁶ Bieliński, Piotr. "Tell Arbid, The Sixth Campaign of Excavations Preliminary Report," in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean XIII, Reports 2001* (2002). p.281

¹⁸⁷ Smogorzewska, Anna. "Mittani Grave at Tell Arbid," in *Damaszener Mitteilungen* Band 15 (2006). p.67

Ethnographic work in places as diverse as Syria¹⁸⁸ and the Philippines¹⁸⁹ indicate that middens contain mostly household waste (as opposed to agricultural or industrial), and each family tends to use only one as its primary locus of disposal.¹⁹⁰ In Syria, the bulk of the waste was ash from cleaning tannurs and ovens,¹⁹¹ installations closely associated with the daily life of a household. Moreover, most middens are associated with a single extended family because their houses tend to cluster together in a village and thus use the same area for waste disposal.¹⁹² Whether this was the case at Umm el-Marra West Area B remains to be confirmed but is probable.

A link between the domestic sphere and middens is further suggested by Alice Petty's observation that in all phases of occupation at Umm el-Marra, female figurines are found primarily in domestic contexts, particularly those associated with food production,¹⁹³ and that during the Late Bronze Age they are often found discarded in household middens or trash pits,¹⁹⁴ as is the case here. If the midden is understood to be a fitting place for disposal of a ritual object, then it might be considered a fitting resting place for a family member as well.

Since middens were generally located in unoccupied areas of a site, they would be convenient places for disposal of the dead.¹⁹⁵ At the same time, their close association with daily life may have led them to be viewed as a part of domestic space - akin to the way a garden is not physically part of a house but might be considered an extension of it.¹⁹⁶ With their connotation

¹⁸⁸ Kamp 1991.

¹⁸⁹ Beck, Margaret E. and Matthew E. Hill Jr. "Rubbish, Relatives, and Residence: The Family Use of Middens," in *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Sep., 2004). pp.297-333

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.306-308.

¹⁹¹ Kamp 1991, pp.25-27.

¹⁹² Beck and Hill, p.298.

¹⁹³ Petty, 2006. p.61

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.58

¹⁹⁵ Beck and Hill, p. 314; Smogorzewska, p. 67

¹⁹⁶ Alexander, 1999. p. 83

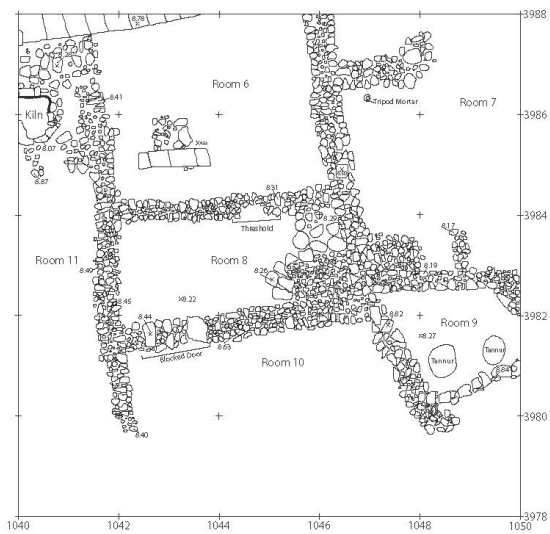
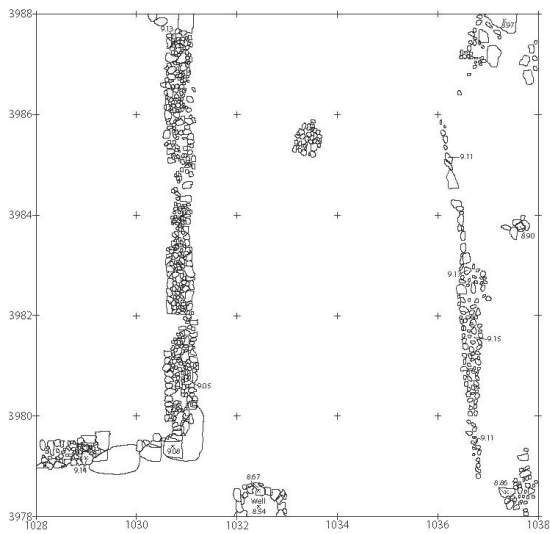
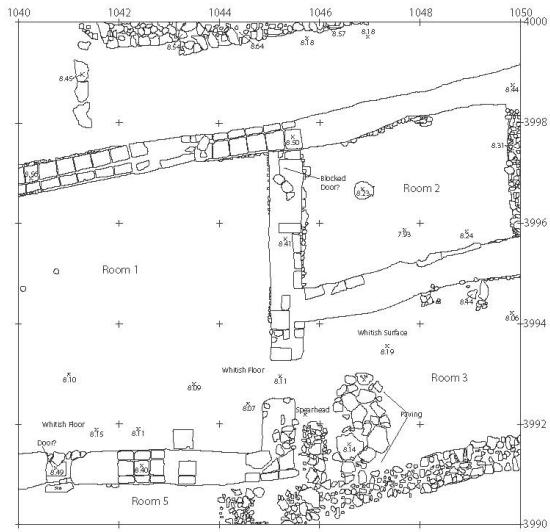
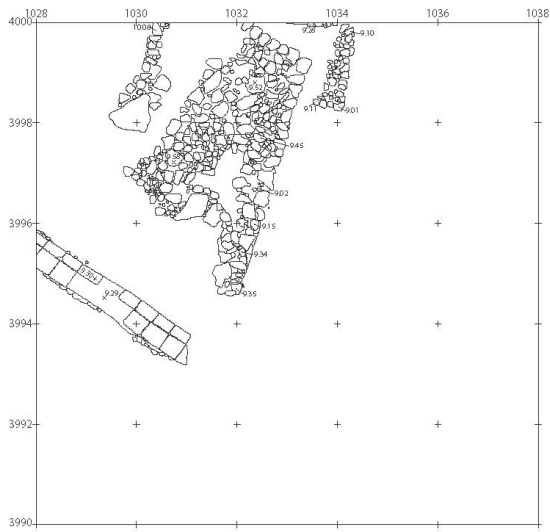
of domestic space, interring the dead in middens or trash pits could have been a way of keeping them within the sphere of the household and the rhythms of daily life.

Northwest Area

The Northwest Area occupies the highest point of the tell and includes part of the Middle Bronze II city wall (Fig. 11). In this area, the Late Bronze architecture is built mostly at the base of the city wall, although some is terraced up part of its interior face. Unlike many excavated parts of the site, the Northwest Area was not burned in the Late Bronze period.

A total of five trenches in the Northwest Area contained Late Bronze occupation: four 10 m x 10 m trenches grouped together and one smaller trench to the west next to the Middle Bronze city wall. Of the four large trenches, the two eastern examples contained an enigmatic series of rooms constructed in an agglutinative pattern from north to south designated the Northwest Building (Fig. 12). Most of these rooms consisted of only stone substructures, although parts of the mudbrick superstructures were preserved in Rooms 1, 2, 3, and 5.

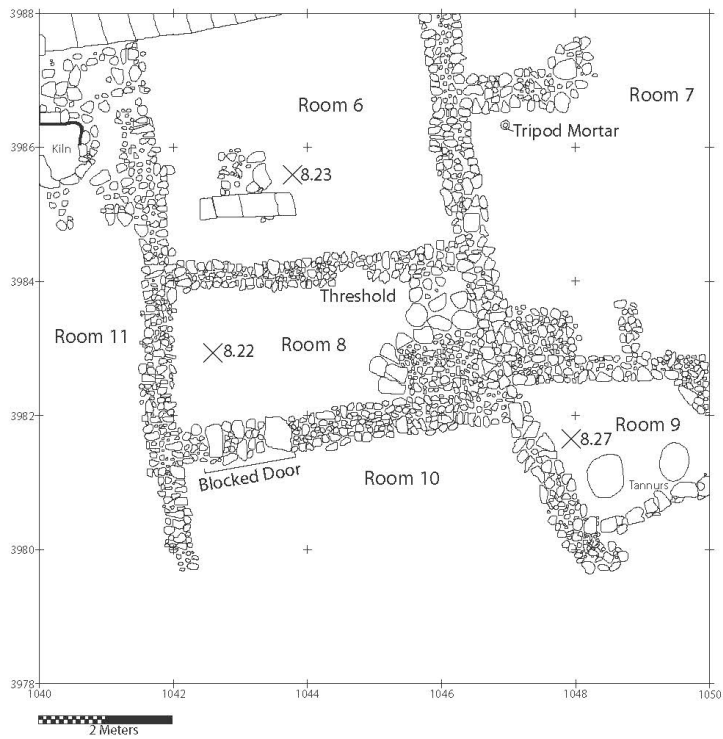
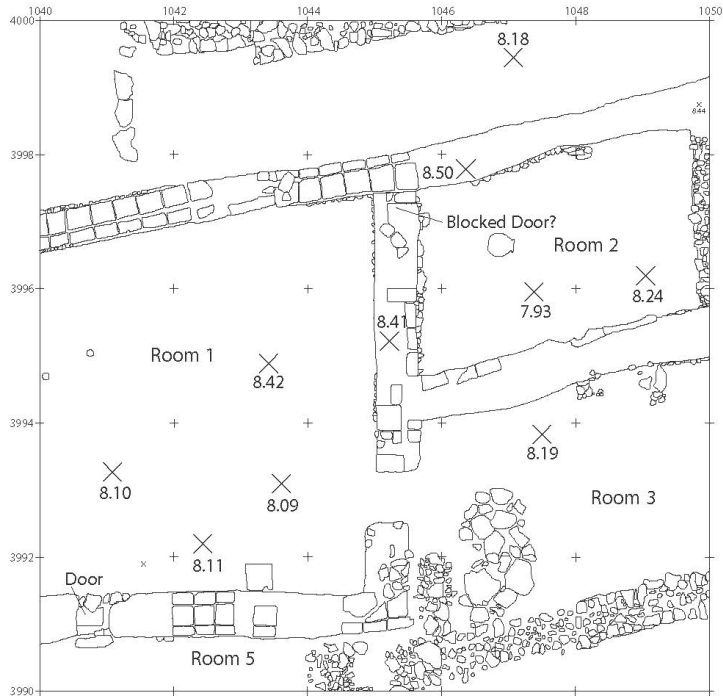
The original structure seems to have consisted of at least two rooms (Rooms 1 and 2). Room 1, whose extant area is approximately 37 m², is cut by the west balk. However, the entire



Umm el-Marra
 Northwest Area
 Late Bronze Age



Figure 11: Plan of the agglutinative building, terrace, and ancillary architecture in the Northwest Area



Umm el-Marra
 Northwest Area
 Late Bronze Age
 Detail of Eastern
 Trenches

Figure 12: Detail of the agglutinative building in the Northwest Area

length of the east wall is preserved and measures 6.9 m. At the northern end of the east wall is a doorway blocked with mudbricks that would have communicated with Room 2. At the southern end of the same wall is another doorway which communicates with Room 3, which is either a later addition to the structure or an exterior space. This doorway is the only unambiguous means of access to Room 1. Another possible doorway could be reconstructed in the south wall that would have communicated with Room 5. A curious feature of the latter feature is a 67 cm high stone slab which was found upright in front of the south side of the passage.

Room 1 has traces of a lime plaster floor and is largely devoid of artifacts. The only recorded object is the head of a clay animal figurine found on the floor (UMM94 A-014). Otherwise, the excavator reported finding a “red bead” in the room fill but this was lost subsequently.

East of Room 1 and apparently constructed at the same time is Room 2. The entire room is preserved and measures approximately 4.3 m by 2.7 m with an area of 11.61 m². It is unclear how Room 2 communicates with the other rooms in the structure; there may have been a blocked door in the room’s west wall, which would have provided access to Room 1. Another possibility is that the door of Room 2 was located in the east wall, where none of the mudbrick superstructure is preserved, and so the presence of a doorway would not be evident.

Like Room 1, Room 2 was largely empty except for a bone needle on the floor (UMM 94 I-007). A large jar was found in the northwest quadrant of the room, but it is unclear if it was associated with the original occupation of Room 2 or if it was found in an intrusive pit. Based on the excavator’s notes it appears to be the latter, indicating that the jar was deposited subsequent to the room’s abandonment. While the Acropolis was briefly reoccupied after the site’s

destruction, this is not the case for the Northwest Area, suggesting that the vessel is a later intrusion into the Late Bronze strata.

Room 3 is located to the east of Room 1 and the South of Room 2. The entire length of the west wall is preserved, but the north and south walls extend into the east balk. Despite this incomplete evidence, it seems likely that the east wall of Room 3 followed the same axis as that of Room 2, suggesting that the majority of Room 3 was exposed and that the room was approximately the same size as Room 2. A door located in the west wall of Room 3 communicates with Room 1.

While Rooms 1 and 2 were part of the original structure, Room 3 seems to have been a later addition - the first of several - since portions of its walls were built abutting the exterior face of the east and south walls of Room 1. It appears that Room 3 and the other rooms to the south (Rooms 6-11) were additions to the original building rather than a separate structure abutting Rooms 1 and 2. All of the rooms are oriented similarly and appear to form a single cohesive structure. Moreover, there are several additional examples of this type of agglutinative architecture elsewhere at the site.

An unusual feature of Room 3 is an area of large paving stones in the southwest near the door that communicates with Room 1. Only a small area is paved, and the remainder of the floor has traces of lime plaster as in the two rooms previously discussed. Oven fragments found in association with the paving may indicate one of the functions of this area.

Although paved interior spaces are common in Middle Bronze period domestic architecture at Umm el-Marra, they are often associated with public buildings like palaces and temples in Late Bronze Age Syria. Examples that are contemporaneous with the Late Bronze

occupation at Umm el-Marra include the Citadel at Tell Bazi¹⁹⁷ and the workshops of the Mittani Palace at Tell Brak,¹⁹⁸ although the latter pavement is brick, not stone. In smaller-scale domestic architecture, stone paving is often associated with exterior spaces because it is durable and would not become muddy in the wet Syrian winter.¹⁹⁹ At Tell Bazi, Otto notes that paving is often found near the main of entrance of a house and speculates that vessels containing water for washing and drinking were kept there.²⁰⁰

Tannur fragments found in association with the paving suggest that the area may have been used for cooking. Moreover, tannurs are often located near doorways, as is the case here, in order to allow smoke to escape from an enclosed space.²⁰¹ If this is the case, then it suggests that Room 1 was open to the air and thus may be a courtyard. Given the size of Room 1 in comparison to the other rooms in the structure, this is not inconceivable. Alternately, Room 3 could have been an open area either before or during its incorporation into the structure and the paving is, indeed, indicative of an exterior space.

Like Rooms 1 and 2, Room 3 was largely devoid of artifacts with the notable exception of a bronze object identified as a complete spearhead (UMM94 M-023). The spearhead was found resting on the “whitish surface” near the doorway that communicates with Room 1. The lack of any signs of violent destruction for this structure, or, indeed, any of the architecture in the Northwest Area, and the fact that the spearhead was found in isolation, suggest that it belonged to the occupants of the structure rather than an attacker. Like the small artifacts found clustered

¹⁹⁷ Einwag, *et al.*, 1995. p.110

¹⁹⁸ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.6

¹⁹⁹ Reade, Julian E. “Tell Taya (1972-73): Summary Report,” in *Iraq*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Autumn, 1973). p. 163

²⁰⁰ Otto, 2007. p.239

²⁰¹ Gachet, 1996. p.180; Badre, Leila, *et al.* “Tell Kazel (Syrie), Rapport Préliminaire sur les 4e-8e Campagnes de Fouilles (1988-1992),” in *Syria*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (1994). p.298

in streets and near passageways in West Area A, the find spot of the spearhead may indicate that it was dropped while the structure was being emptied.

Immediately to the south of Room 1 is Room 5, of which very little has been excavated – less than 4 m². If this is an interior space, it is a later addition to the structure, as are all the areas south of Rooms 1 and 2. While it is not certain that Room 5 was an enclosed space, its size and position within the overall layout of the structure make this likely.

As mentioned above, there is a possible door in the north wall that communicates with Room 1, but it is partially obstructed by an upright stone slab. It is unclear whether the slab was put in front of the doorway while the structure was still occupied or if is the result of post-abandonment processes. It is possible that it was originally part of the passage as a step or threshold, and it is worth noting that the slab is similar to those used for paving in Room 3, possibly indicating that it had a similar function and is thus not in its original position.

Not surprisingly, Room 5 is largely devoid of artifacts. An exception is a fragment of a basalt grinding stone which was not found *in situ*.

To the south is Room 6, which is the second largest room in the structure and has an area of approximately 17.15 m². The north wall of the room is constructed of intact mudbricks on top of a stone foundation, as opposed to the other walls in which only the stones were preserved. Like all of the enclosed areas south of Rooms 1 and 2, Room 6 appears to be a later addition to the structure built subsequent to Room 5 and probably Room 7, which will be discussed shortly.

The only artifact recovered from Room 6 was a complete grinding stone (UMM95 S-43) which was “upside down, placed alongside [the] mudbrick wall” – though whether it was the south or east wall is not specified. The fact that the grinding stone was found approximately 60 cm above the floor indicates that it was not *in situ*.

Room 6 had a mudbrick feature in the southwest consisting of a rectangular line of bricks running east/west resting directly on the floor. This small platform could have served any number of purposes and is reminiscent of those found in Rooms 2 and 4 of the Burned House.

Room 7 is a large area to the south of Room 3 and the east of Rooms 5, 6, and 8. The east wall was not excavated and only portions of the north and south walls were exposed, but the entire 7.70m length of the west wall can be discerned. Approximately midway along the length of the west wall is a 1.5m long buttress or dividing wall; adjacent to this feature was the only artifact found in Room 7, a complete tripod mortar (UMM95 S-126) found *in situ* on the room floor. The room was damaged in antiquity, probably during the Hellenistic period, with intrusive pits, walls, and an oven.

Like Room 3, the southwest corner of Room 7 is paved, but in this case with cobbles as opposed to flat slabs. It appears that the paving was intentionally restricted to this corner because the rest of the room has the same whitish surface found elsewhere in the structure, and the tripod mortar mentioned above was found *in situ* on it. Moreover, the cobble paving is neatly laid – the outer edges are straight and form a right angle. If the rest of the room had originally been paved and the stones robbed out in antiquity, it is unlikely that the remnants would be as orderly. To the east of the paving is another short dividing wall or buttress, approximately 1m long, perpendicular to the room's south wall. These short walls, in addition to providing structural stability, could also have served to help separate the paved area from the rest of Room 7.

The floor plan of Room 8, the space immediately south of Room 6, is completely preserved and encloses an area of approximately 10.5 m². A doorway blocked with mudbricks is visible in the south wall. The south wall itself may have been added later than the east and west

walls in order to create an enclosed space, which is suggested by the fact that it does not appear that the south wall bonds with the east and west walls, but only abuts them. If this is, indeed, the case, then Room 8 was originally an open area or courtyard bounded by walls on three sides.

The southeast corner of Room 8 is paved with cobbles and small boulders in a similar fashion as Room 7. However, in Room 8, the cobble paving is surrounded on the north and west sides with large, flat stones similar to those used in Room 3. Again, it seems likely that this was the only area of the room that was paved in antiquity, since the rest of the floor is the same compact whitish surface.

The only recorded artifact from Room 8 was a complete basalt grinding stone (UMM95 S-95) set lengthwise at floor-level in the north wall of the room. Installing the grinding stone here would make it impossible to use for milling grain. The reuse of grinding stones as architectural elements, however, is not unusual and is seen often in all periods of occupation at Umm el-Marra. In the Burned House, a grinding stone was reused as a threshold between Rooms 3 and 4, and it appears that the practice is employed in Room 8. Thus, the presence of the grinding stone indicates that there was a doorway which communicates between Room 6 and 8. Otherwise, artifacts were particularly scarce in Room 8; even ceramics were rarely encountered.

Room 9, a roughly trapezoidal space south of Room 7 and southeast of Room 8, is approximately 5.0 m² in area. Its shape and odd angle in relationship to the other rooms indicate that it is a later addition, probably the last added to the structure before its final abandonment. The room's main features are two large tannurs and copious amounts of associated ash along the south wall.

It is likely that food processing and preparation took place here. In addition to the tannurs, there were three pieces of grinding stones and a pestle recovered. While these objects are found in various contexts throughout the site, their association with the tannurs implies food preparation. Indeed, there is a Sumerian proverb that states the mill must be near the oven.²⁰² Otherwise, like the rest of the structure, Room 9 had no artifacts.

To the south of Room 8 and west of Room 9 is Room 10. It is unclear if this area was a roofed room or an exterior space bounded by walls on three sides, as seems to have been the case for Room 8 before it was enclosed. The room's western wall is approximately 1.5 m long and is a later addition to the older, more substantial wall immediately to its north. The east wall of Room 10 is shared with Room 9 – itself another later addition. If there was a southern wall, there are no remnants of it. Therefore, it is likely that Room 10 was an open space similar to the initial phase of Room 8.

Room 11 abuts Rooms 6, 8, and 10. The size of the room suggests it was probably not a roofed space but an open area. In Room 11, the most prominent feature is a partially excavated pyrotechnic installation that consists of an incompletely preserved mudbrick dome above a stone substructure. Inside the installation, whose interior was coated with a thick vitrified layer of mud plaster, were sherds of a large vessel.

The form and vitrified interior of the structure suggest its identification as a kiln, although the lack of slag, wasters, or copious amounts of ash make a definitive identification difficult. Though kilns, as opposed to ovens, are generally not built abutting walls, there are texts from Emar which identify them associated with houses.²⁰³ Furthermore, in Room 7 of the Mittani Palace at Tell Brak, numerous “ovens” inspired the initial identification of the area as a

²⁰² Limet, Henri. “Pains et Fours dans Le Proche Orient Ancien,” in *Civilisations*, Vol. 49, No. 1/2 (2002). p.42

²⁰³ Mori, 2003. p. 48; The texts are TSB 33 and TSB 37.

kitchen, but the presence of industrial materials indicated that it was a workshop.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the industrial ovens at Brak had been cleaned out and “were visually not revealing,” with “no direct evidence for the kinds of objects and materials that were manufactured.”²⁰⁵ This is the case for virtually all of the kilns and ovens identified at Umm el-Marra.

Reviewing the general lack of artifacts in this structure, it is possible that the building was emptied before its final abandonment, a procedure indicative of a gradual, planned abandonment as opposed to an abrupt one.²⁰⁶ The blockage of the only door that clearly gave access to the interior of the structure from the outside suggests that the building was not being used on a regular basis and supports such an interpretation.²⁰⁷

The absence of artifactual materials could also be linked to the building having been used primarily for the storage of perishable goods such as textiles or grain that would not be evident archaeologically. This, however, seems improbable considering the presence of the tannurs and the kiln. It is more likely that the building was a mixed-use structure where both domestic and industrial activities took place - as is common for Late Bronze Age Syria.

Unlike the houses in West Area A, this structure does not conform to the standard Central Room house plan. The oldest part of the structure, Rooms 1, 2 and 3, is similar to the Late Bronze Front Room houses known from Emar.²⁰⁸ In the Emar houses, however, Room 3 would have been part of the original structure, not a later addition. Otherwise, the plan of this building is somewhat reminiscent of the domestic structures in the Lower Settlement (Area X) at el-

²⁰⁴ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.5

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 28

²⁰⁶ Ziadeh-Seely, 1999. p. 133

²⁰⁷ Pfälzner, Peter. *Haus und Haushalt: Wohnformen des dritten Jahrtausends vor Christus in Nordmesopotamien*. Damaszener Forschungen 9. Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001. pp.176-179; Otto, 2006. p.258

²⁰⁸ Beyer, Dominique, ed. *Meskéné-Emar: Dix ans de travaux 1972-1982*. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982. pp.35-37

Qitar.²⁰⁹ These differences may be the result of the inhabitants drawing on different building traditions or of having different spatial needs.

Immediately to the north of the Northwest Building is an approximately 1.7 meter wide street bounded on the north by an incompletely excavated stone wall (Fig. 11). The surface of the street is compact grey, clayey soil with ash lenses and pebble inclusions. In this location, ceramics recovered were worn and weathered, as would be expected from a well-trodden exterior area.

An unusual feature consists of a line of three oblong boulders that appears to block the street. This “structure” consists of only one course of stones, so it is possible that represents collapsed elements from the surrounding structures. However, the stones used in the construction of the walls flanking the road are smaller and, thus, it is unlikely that the oblong boulders were originally part of either structure. A similar feature from House 35 at Tell Bazi is interpreted by Otto as a *sikkanu*, or “sacred boulder,” used as a curse on the residents for whatever transgressions forced them to abandon the house.²¹⁰ While this interpretation is a possibility, it is more likely that the wall was constructed to limit or impede access to the street. Again at Tell Bazi, the excavators note that controlling the access to and circulation around the site’s streets was one of the concerns of the ancient inhabitants²¹¹ and this may well be the explanation for the crude wall here. In this regard, the stones could be understood as analogous to the blocked exterior doorways of the abandonment of the structure to the south.

²⁰⁹ McClellan, Thomas. “A Syrian Fortress of the Bronze Age: el-Qitar,” in *National Geographic Research* Vol. 2, No. 4 (1986). p. 426

²¹⁰ Otto, 2007. p.244

²¹¹ Einwag, Berthold and Adelheid Otto. “Tell Bazi – Vorbericht über die Untersuchungen 1994 und 1995,” in *Damaszener Mitteilungen*, Band 9 (1996). p.25

The incompletely excavated wall bordering the street to its north could belong to another structure or comprise part of a terrace (Fig. 13). In this area, a series of stone substructures with mudbrick superstructures sloped up gently from east to west towards the site's fortifications. These appear to have been built to terrace the slope since their top surfaces are covered in stone slabs to make them level.

Terracing is very common on sites of this period, with examples from el-Qitar,²¹² Tell Bazi,²¹³ Tell Bderi,²¹⁴ Tell Arbid,²¹⁵ Emar²¹⁶ and Tell al-Hamidiya.²¹⁷ Most of these terraces were built in order to create more useable space on which to build. However, with one exception, the terracing has no evidence of structures built above it. It may be that the terrace was built in anticipation of the need for more space, but the site was abandoned before new features were built.

Throughout the site, it is evident that houses were being rebuilt and enlarged as the community grew. With this in mind, it seems logical that the residents would anticipate the need for more building space and construct the terraces accordingly. While there was ample open land on which to build elsewhere on the site, the tendency of extended families to live in close proximity to each other²¹⁸ would mean that the inhabitants of the Northwest Area would seek to maximize usable land in their immediate vicinity instead of building new homes on otherwise

²¹² McClellan, Thomas L. "El-Qitar: Second Season of Excavations, 1983-84," in *Abr-Nahrain* Volume XXIII (1984-1985). p.43

²¹³ Sallaberger, W., *et al.* "Schenkungen von Mittani-Königen an die Einwohner von Basiru. Die zwei Urkunden aus Tall Bazi am Mittleren Euphrat," in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie*, Band 96 (2006). p.72

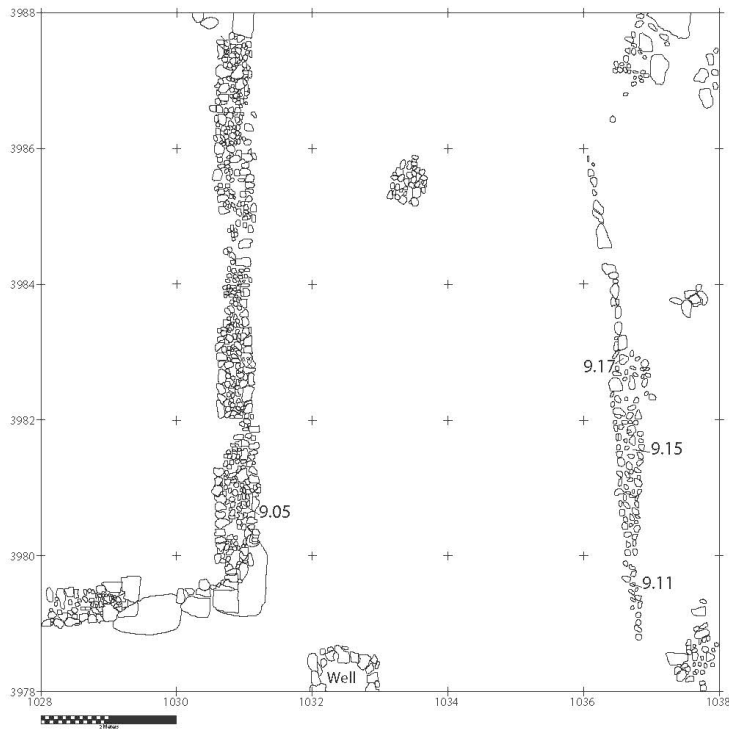
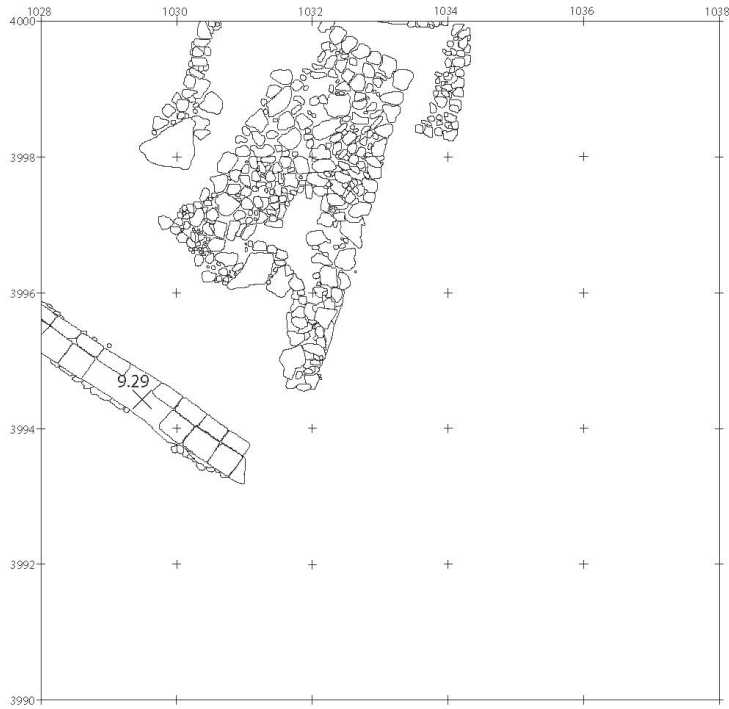
²¹⁴ Pfälzner, Peter. "The Excavations at Tell Bderi 1986," in *Les Annales Archeologiques Arabes Syriennes*, No. XXXVI-XXXVII (1986-1987). p.295

²¹⁵ Bieliński, Piotr. "Tell Arbid, The Seventh Season of Excavations Preliminary Report," in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean XIV*, Reports 2002 (2003). p.310

²¹⁶ Beyer, 1982. pp.37-39

²¹⁷ Wäfler, Marcus, "Tell al-Hamidiya," in *Les Dossiers d'Archeologie*, No. 155 (Dec. 1990). p.80

²¹⁸ For example, records of real estate transactions and wills from Emar suggest that extended families tended to cluster together in the same area of the city. (Mori, 2003. p.37)



Umm el-Marra
 Northwest Area
 Late Bronze Age
 Detail of Western
 Trenches

Figure 13: Detail of terrace and ancillary architecture in the Northwest Area

unused space elsewhere. Building higher up might also have allowed smoke to escape without blowing into the large nearby structure.

For the most part, the objects recovered from the area of the terrace were basalt grinding stones and pestles whose lack of primary context and multiple uses make it difficult to determine what type of tasks were carried out in this area.

South of the terrace is the southeastern section of a very large, partially excavated room whose exposed area measures 8.9 m x 2.80 m (Fig. 13). No floors were found, but this may be due, in part, to the numerous Hellenistic pits dug into the structure. In the south wall of this structure is a break, but it is unclear if this was a doorway or the result of damage to the wall caused by a later burial. If it was a doorway, its location at a corner of the structure would be highly unusual.

It is clear, despite its partial exposure, that this room was unusually large, which elicits the question of function. It may be that the walls were part of the terrace system seen to the north, but the walls in this trench are aligned differently than those to the north. One indication of the function of the structure may be the size of the area enclosed. Its interior area and lack of any interior cross walls would make roofing this area difficult, and it is possible that the walls served to enclose an open area rather than a roofed space. Such an area could have been a courtyard belonging to an unexcavated structure farther to the west or an animal pen. The latter interpretation seems more likely, and this interpretation is supported by texts from Emar which include animal pens as part of real estate transactions.²¹⁹ This interpretation is also supported by the fact that no floors were found within the enclosure, while they were encountered in the other structures excavated in the Northwest Area.

²¹⁹ Mori, 2008. p.114

To the south of the partially excavated enclosure, a circular stone feature was encountered that was initially interpreted as a well. After removing approximately 10 cm of soil from the feature's interior, a compact grey surface was encountered suggesting that it was a shallow basin or trough. If the structure to the north is a pen, then the circular feature may have been used to hold water or fodder for the animals.

Eighteen meters to the west was a Late Bronze structure built along the sloping east face of the site's Middle Bronze Age defenses (Fig. 14). By this period the walls had been abandoned and fallen into disrepair. Two rooms of the Late Bronze structure were exposed with white (lime) plastered walls and floors, one partially excavated (Room 1, 3.72 m²) and one completely (Room 2, 6.44 m²). The walls were constructed solely of red mudbricks, without a stone substructure, and were one and a half bricks wide. Doorways were identified in the East Walls of both rooms, and, a door socket was found *in situ* on the south side of the Room 2 doorway, indicating access to the space could be controlled. No artifacts were recovered from the building.

The excavated portion of this structure resembles the small side rooms of the Central Room houses in West Area A and is thus likely of the same design. The location of the building on the western edge of the site on the inner side of the city wall would have made it an attractive place to live. On the Jabbul plain, the prevailing winds are often from the west, so this house would have been upwind of the rest of the settlement and been spared the numerous odors associated with human habitation. At the same time, the house's location next to the wall would have shielded it from the winds themselves, which can be quite fierce. This feature would be particularly important, since it is likely that much of domestic life, including sleeping, took place on the roof.

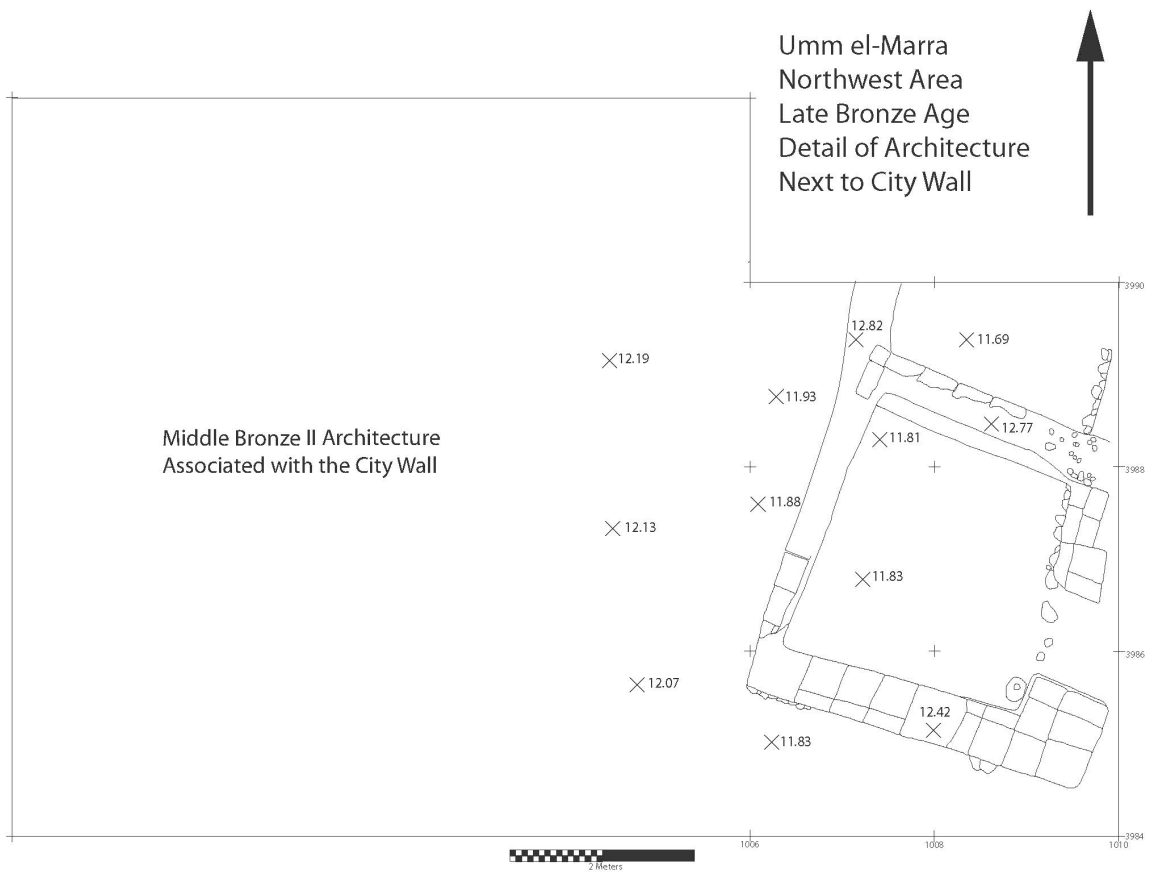


Figure 14: Central Room House next to the Middle Bronze wall in the Northwest Area

The Central Room House next to the wall may have been abandoned at the time of the conflagration that destroyed many of the buildings elsewhere at Umm el-Marra. This conclusion is not based on the fact that the rooms were empty, like the agglutinative building to the east, since the small side rooms of the Burned House in West Area A were also devoid of artifacts, yet the house was still occupied at the time of its destruction. Instead, it is the lack of burning that suggests abandonment. Throughout the site, buildings that were burned have evidence that they were in active use at the time of their destruction. The lack of burning suggests that, like the other structures in the Northwest Area discussed above, the Central Room house was not

occupied on a regular basis when other parts of the site were set on fire. Indeed, one of the defining features of the Northwest Area is the careful emptying and sealing of the main buildings, indicative of a planned abandonment.

North Area A

North Area A, located immediately west of the present-day cemetery of the village of Umm el-Marra, was excavated over the course of three seasons; 1999, 2000, and 2004. The initial excavation area in 1999 was a rectangular 6 x 10 m trench (Trench 1214/4084). In 2000, it was decided to expand the excavation area to the northwest and an L-shaped 10m x 10m trench (Trench 1210/4088) was opened along the north and west sides of Trench 1214/4084. Deeper excavations in the same area were conducted in 2004.

The earliest phase (Phase 1) of Late Bronze occupation in North Area A is an industrial installation attested by an area of approximately 48m² covered with up to 50 cm of white lime, numerous partially burned limestone cobbles, and a thick layer of ash (40-50cm). These materials suggest that activities taking place here included the burning of limestone to make quicklime which, in turn, would be used to make lime plaster.

To transform limestone (CaCO₃) to quicklime (CaO), a long-burning fire with temperatures between 800-900°C is required. Kingery, Vandiver, and Prickett's oft-cited 1988 article makes the case that the production of quicklime was an "energy-intensive, labor-intensive, skilled activity."²²⁰ However, more recent research suggests that the opposite is, in fact, the case. Ethnographic and experimental data indicate that the production of lime plaster is

²²⁰ Kingery, W.D., P. Vandiver, and M. Prickett. "The Beginnings of Pyrotechnology, Part II: Production and Use of Lime and Gypsum Plaster in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Near East," in *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer, 1988). p.236

relatively modest in terms of time and labor.²²¹ Moreover, from a technological standpoint, it is relatively simple to make; no kilns, ovens, or other specialized pyrotechnic installations are required, and the temperatures needed can be achieved with a wind-blown campfire.²²²

Other than procuring the limestone itself, the largest investment in the production of quicklime is the acquisition of fuel for the fire, of which two to five times more is needed than the amount of stone to be burned.²²³ Indeed, it has been hypothesized that the deforestation seen at the end of the Neolithic was a result of the widespread use of lime plaster.²²⁴ This conclusion is unlikely, however; while large quantities of fuel are required, a fire composed of readily available materials such as agricultural waste,²²⁵ shrubs,²²⁶ brush, and animal dung can easily achieve and maintain the heat needed for the task.²²⁷

The quantities of quicklime needed for construction in a 20 hectare community like Umm el-Marra would be prodigious. Citing the plastered surfaces in Neolithic houses at Çayönü Tepesi and Jericho, Gourdin and Kingery propose that a conservative estimate for the amount of limestone needed to make the plaster is over 450 kg per structure, with at least several hundred

²²¹ Goren, Y. and A.N. Goring-Morris. "Early Pyrotechnology in the Near East: Experimental Lime-Plaster Production at the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Site of Kfar HaHoresh, Israel," in *Geoarchaeology*, Vol 23, No. 6 (2008). p.795

²²² Hauptman, A. and Ü. Yalcın. "Lime Plaster, Cement and the First Puzzolanic Reaction," in *Paléorient*, Vol. 26/2 (2001). pp.62-63

²²³ *Ibid.* p.63; Kingery, *et al.* p.221

²²⁴ *cf.* Garfinkel, Yosef. "Burnt Lime Products and Social Implications in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Villages of the Near East," in *Paléorient* 13/1 (1987). pp. 68–75; Rollefson, Gary O. "The Neolithic Devolution: Ecological Impact and Cultural Compensation at 'Ain Ghazal, Jordan," in *Retrieving the Past: Essays on Archaeological Research and Methodology in Honor of Gus W. Van Beek*, ed. J.D. Seger. Winona Lake, Ind.: Published for the Cobb Institute of Archaeology by Eisenbrauns, 1996. pp. 219-230

²²⁵ Gourdin, W.H. and W.D. Kingery. "The Beginnings of Pyrotechnology: Neolithic and Egyptian Lime Plaster," in *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Vol 2, No. 1/2 (1975). p.149

²²⁶ Geraty, Lawrence T., *et al.* "Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report of the 1987 Season at Tell El-'Umeiri and Vicinity," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Supplementary Studies*, No. 26, Preliminary Reports of ASOR-Sponsored Excavations 1983-87 (1990). p.66

²²⁷ Hauptman and Yalcın. p.63

pounds needed for each floor.²²⁸ This amount becomes significantly larger when the fact that surfaces must be occasionally replastered is taken into account. Despite this logistical challenge, the quicklime production area at Umm el-Marra would probably have been able to easily meet the demand. Based on experiments done by Goren and Goring-Morris it is evident that large quantities of quicklime could be produced in a relatively small pit-kiln.²²⁹ For instance, a simple kiln 2.5 m wide and 75 cm deep held approximately half a ton of limestone that produced about 250 kg of quicklime which, in turn, yielded approximately a ton of plaster.²³⁰

The presence of a facility for the production of quicklime in the earliest phase of Late Bronze occupation at Umm el-Marra is indicative of the extensive construction that would have been predicated by the reoccupation of the site. Like the digging of pits to obtain stone for foundations and soil for bricks, making plaster was a vital task that would have been a high priority for the first Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the site.

The next phase of Late Bronze occupation (Phase 2) illustrates a marked shift in the types of activities being carried out there (Fig. 15). This second phase consists primarily of a large plastered surface with several enigmatic depressions and fragmentary walls. There is no longer any indication that the area was used for the production of quicklime.

The architecture associated with Phase 2 is meager. Abutting the north balk is a small wall, or bench, a single brick wide. This brick feature, which is approximately 2.25 m long, was cut by a later intrusive pit at its southern end, so its relationship to the surrounding architecture is somewhat ambiguous. A feature consisting of angular cobbles and boulders, approximately 1.10

²²⁸ Gourdin and Kingery. p.149

²²⁹ Goren and Goring-Morris. p.794

²³⁰ *Ibid.* pp.785-794; Though most of the data discussed pertains to the late Neolithic, there is no evidence for any great technological change in the production of quicklime between then and the Late Bronze Age. Indeed, a comparison of ethnographic and archaeological data from the Levant indicates that the technology for making quicklime has remained largely unchanged for millennia (Geraty, *et al.* p.66).

m long, was built against the east face of the wall or bench level with its stone foundation but evidently postdating its construction. The purpose of this later addition is unclear, but it may have served as a bench or shelf itself or was meant to buttress the wall.

A second brick feature 1 ½ bricks wide and approximately 2 m long, again either a wall or bench, ran north-south along the east balk. At its northern end, this feature abuts a rectangular “box” composed of stone boulders. The box, whose exposed area measures approximately 1 m x 0.5 m, is lined with a single course of angular boulders and covered in red plaster applied to a grey-brown plaster floor. Immediately to the north of the box, the legs and pubis of a mold-made female figurine (UMM.99 H.044) were found on the floor, as well as two sheep/goat bones, two gazelle bones, and one equid bone.

At contemporaneous sites, similar features tend to be located in courtyards or outdoor areas, suggesting that during Phase 2 this zone was an open area. The closest parallel comes from Old Babylonian Nippur, where the so-called “Tablet House” had a plastered box adjacent to the end of a bench. The contents of this installation suggest that it was used for recycling tablets.²³¹ Serving a similar function, a rectangular feature at Qatna made of fired bricks is interpreted as a settlement basin for preparing clay.²³² Kramer has noted that small rectilinear basins are used by potters to levigate clay in modern Rajasthan, India, and the feature in North Area A may have had a similar function.²³³

²³¹ Robson, Eleanor. “The Tablet House: A Scribal School in Old Babylonian Nippur,” in *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale*, Vol. 93 (2001). p.44 Unlike the feature from Umm el-Marra, however, the rectangular box from Nippur was constructed out of tablets.

²³² al-Maqdissi, Michel and Massoud Badawi. “Rapport Préliminaire sur la Sizième Campagne des Fouilles Syriennes à Mishrifeh/Qatna,” in *Excavating Qatna I. Preliminary Report on the 1999 and 2000 Campaigns of the Joint Syrian-Italian-German Archaeological Research Project at Tell Mishrifeh*, eds. al-Maqdissi, et al. Documents D’Archéologie Syrienne IV. Damascus: Direction Général des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie; Udine: University of Udine; Tübingen: University of Tübingen, 2002. p.40

²³³ Kramer, Carol. *Pottery in Rajasthan: Ethnoarchaeology in Two Indian Cities*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. pp.59, fig.48; p.110

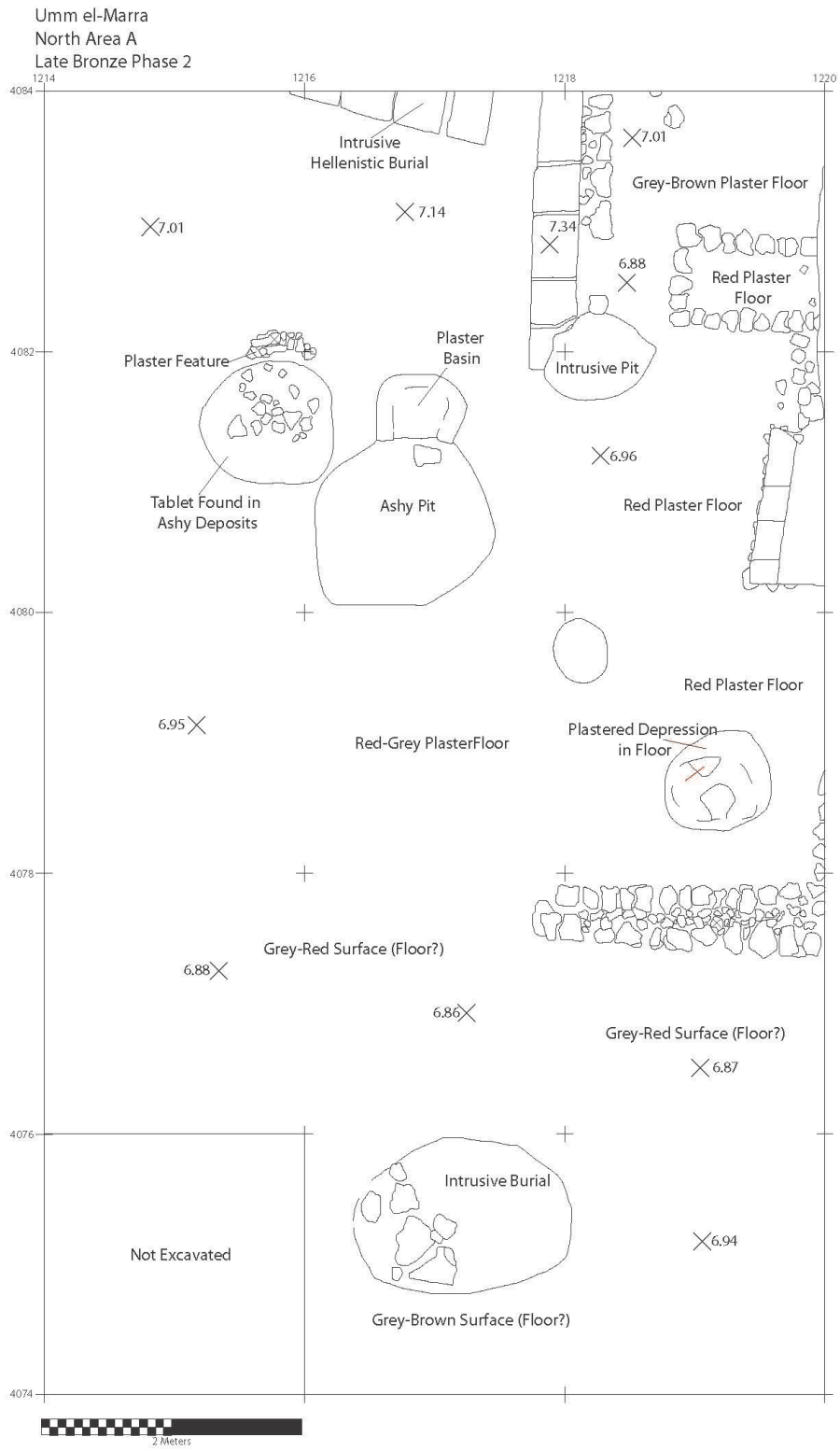


Figure 15: Second Late Bronze phase in North Area A

Phase 2 in North Area A had a plaster floor in shades of red and white which was particularly well preserved in the northern half of the trench. To the east, a plastered depression approximately 0.75 m in diameter with two mudbrick pieces at the bottom had been sunk into the floor. This feature probably held a large jar which was subsequently removed, as has also been seen at Tell Bazi.²³⁴

The configuration of the few walls in relation to the size of the extant plastered surface (approximately 36m²) make it unlikely that this area was roofed, indicating that this was a courtyard or plaza of some sort. However, considering their near ubiquity elsewhere on the site or, indeed, in other Late Bronze phases in North Area A, it is curious that no pyrotechnic installations, such as tannurs or ovens, were found associated with Phase 2 (in an excavation area of 58m²) as would be expected in an outdoor area.

The minimal architectural remains make a functional interpretation of this area during Phase 2 difficult. One possibility is that it was part of a potter's workshop. Kramer's description of traditional ceramic production in modern India has several correlates to the features observed in Phase 2 of North Area A. For instance, potters' compounds in Rajasthan have large courtyards for preparing and storing clay.²³⁵ Courtyards are unusual features of Late Bronze Age architecture,²³⁶ but this is a plausible interpretation of the open area observed in Phase 2. Moreover, as discussed above, there is both archaeological and ethnographic comparanda suggesting that the rectangular feature along the east balk was used for preparing clay. Finally,

²³⁴ Otto, 2007. p.80

²³⁵ Kramer, 1997. p.74

²³⁶ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.352

Kramer notes that potters often have large pots set into the ground used to hold water or excess prepared clay,²³⁷ and the plastered depression may well have held such a vessel.

The lack of a kiln makes an interpretation of this area as a ceramic production zone



Figure 16: Obverse of the tablet from North Area A (G. Schwartz)

problematic, but it may simply have been located in an area that has not been excavated. Since the North Area A had an industrial character during Phase 1, the same may have applied in Phase 2. Firing ceramics is a dirty, smoky process, just like making lime, and so both activities would be carried out at a remove from the more residential areas of the site if possible, as has also been suggested for Tell

Bazi²³⁸ and Qatna²³⁹. In the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2, it may be possible to observe the shift from the manufacture of lime produced in response to the immediate need for housing to the production of ceramics to fill the quotidian needs of daily life in a more established community.

With one very notable exception, the artifacts found in this context were few in number and prosaic in nature. Aside from the portion of a female figurine mentioned above, another broken mold-made female figurine (UMM.99.H.036), seven pestles (used for crushing

²³⁷ Kramer, 1997. p.74

²³⁸ Otto, 2007. p.248

²³⁹ Bonacossi, Daniele Morandi. "Operation J," in *Excavating Qatna I. Preliminary Report on the 1999 and 2000 Campaigns of the Joint Syrian-Italian-German Archaeological Research Project at Tell Mishrife*, eds. al-Maqdissi, et al. Damascus: Direction Général des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie; Udine: University of Udine; Tübingen: University of Tübingen, 2002. p.129

temper?²⁴⁰), a jar stopper, and a spindle whorl or loom weight made of highly polished black stone were recovered.



Figure 17: Reverse of the tablet with seal impression from North Area A (G. Schwartz)

However, on or near the plaster floor a single cuneiform tablet (UMM97 T-001) was found in an ashy deposit (Figs 16 and 17). The tablet, which has been discussed at length elsewhere,²⁴¹ dates to the reign of the Mittani king Šuttarna II in the early 14th century B.C. Its contents deal with the

manumission of a female slave and her children, their new status as subjects of the Mittani king, and the dispersal of property to them. The tablet is impressed with a dynastic seal that originally belonged to Sauštatar, an earlier king of Mittani.

Why this single cuneiform tablet, an important legal document for those named, was lying on the floor in an ashy deposit is unknown. The random, scattered nature of the other artifacts in the area suggests that these items were dropped or discarded, and this is likely the case for the tablet as well. In the text of the tablet, the property being assigned to the named

²⁴⁰ Lancaster, William and Fidelity Lancaster. "Pottery Makers and Pottery Users in Ras al-Khaimah Emirate and Musandam Wilayat of Oman, and Around Ra's al-Junayz in the South-east of Ja'alan Wilayat, Oman," in *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, Vol. 21 (2010). p.231

²⁴¹ cf. Cooper, J., G. Schwartz, and R. Westbrook. "A Mittani-Era Tablet from Umm el-Marra," in *General Studies and Excavations at Nuzi 11/1*, ed. D.I. Owen and G. Wilhelm. Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 15. Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2005. pp. 41-56; Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003, pp. 348-351.

individuals includes at least two pieces of real estate (É.MEŠ; 1.7), and it is possible that the structure in which the tablet was found is one of them.

After Phase 2 but before the architectural occupation of Phase 3 was an “intermediate” period of use whose only features were two plaster basins, an associated pit, burned bones, and copious amounts of ash. A mud plaster basin approximately 70 cm in diameter rested on an ashy surface between the plaster floors of Phases 2 and 3. Adjacent to the southern edge of the basin was an ashy pit approximately 1.35 m in diameter and 30 cm deep. Just to the west were fragments of another plaster feature which was more poorly preserved. Associated with these features were large amounts of ash and burnt bone, the species of which is predominantly equid and, according to project zooarchaeologist Jill Weber, probably onager.

While bone and ash are ubiquitous on archaeological sites, the localized presence of large amounts of intentionally burnt bone from a single type of animal is puzzling. There are several ethnographically observed reasons for burning bone which include roasting, a means of discard, use as fuel, and to prevent them from being eaten by dogs.²⁴² Burning the bones as a means of disposal would be a waste of other fuel, however, since bones require a large amount of kindling to catch fire. Moreover, there are contemporaneous trash pits on the site that contained bones, including equid, and these could have been used for disposal. Therefore, the most likely explanation for the burnt equid bones in North Area A is that they were used as fuel. Once bones

²⁴² Whyte, Thomas R. “Distinguishing Remains of Human Cremations from Burned Animal Bones,” in *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Vol. 28, No. 3/4 (Autumn-Winter 2001). p. 438

catch fire, they burn at a very high temperature²⁴³ and are especially useful as fuel for industrial installations such as kilns, furnaces, and ovens.²⁴⁴

The hunting of wild equids, or onagers, was a major aspect of the economy at Umm el-Marra during the Middle Bronze occupation at the site. Though onager hunting decreased in importance in the Late Bronze Age, it was still practiced, and the animals were valued both for their meat and their hides.²⁴⁵ Jill Weber has suggested that the localized economies of the Late Bronze Age may have lacked the markets for such goods and, consequently, there was less of an incentive to hunt onagers in large numbers.²⁴⁶ Interestingly, though the overall ratio of onagers to domestic equids (horse and donkey) decreases from MB II to LB,²⁴⁷ the burnt bones from North Area A are almost exclusively onager, indicating that hunting continued to be practiced during this period and may even have still been an important part of the site's economy.²⁴⁸

In addition to being a source of meat, onagers would have provided other valuable resources to the inhabitants of Umm el-Marra. In her study of the faunal remains from the site, Although there is no direct evidence from the Late Bronze Age at the site for hide processing, such evidence does derive from the Middle Bronze Age levels. Equids were one of the major sources of leather in the ancient Near East²⁴⁹ and it stands to reason that if equid hides were

²⁴³ Loyet, Michelle A. "Small Ungulate Butchery in the Islamic Period (A.D. 632-1260) at Tell Tuneinir, Syria," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan., 1999). p.34 n.12

²⁴⁴ Loyet, Michelle A. "The Potential for Within-Site Variation of Faunal Remains: A Case Study from the Islamic Period Urban Center of Tell Tuneinir, Syria," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 320 (Nov., 2000). p.33; Whigham, Thomas. "Cattle Raising in the Argentine Northeast: Corrientes, c. 1750-1870," in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Nov., 1988). p. 326

²⁴⁵ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2000. pp.435-437

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.437

²⁴⁸ Schwartz, Glenn M. and Naomi Miller. "The "Crisis" of the Late Third Millennium B.C: Ecofactual and Artifactual Evidence from the Jabbul Plain," in *Sociétés humaines et changement climatique à la fin du troisième millénaire: une crise a-t-elle eu lieu en Haute Mésopotamie?* (Varia Anatolica XIX), ed. C. Kuzucuoglu and C. Marro. Paris: De Boccard/Institut français d'études anatoliennes Georges-Dumézil – Istanbul, 2007. p.198

²⁴⁹ Potts, Daniel T. *Mesopotamian Civilization: The Material Foundations*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. p.95

being processed at the site during the Middle Bronze Age, then they would during the Late Bronze as well.

Butchering and tanning, however, do not require a heat source, and the equid bones were probably not burned in the course of these activities. Thus, the question becomes: what were the equid bones being used as fuel for? At present, all that can be suggested is that they were probably used for industrial activity. At the Islamic period site of Tuneinir on the Khabur river, bones from butchers were being used as fuel for a nearby kiln and the furnace in a bath house,²⁵⁰ a practice also observed in modern Iran when particularly high heat is needed.²⁵¹ A similar function here may have applied.

The plastered basins and pits in North Area A provide little indication of the kind of activities carried out there, and the assemblage is largely limited to the burned equid bones and several pestles found in secondary context. A similar feature was found on the acropolis at Tell Afis, also dating to the Late Bronze Age and filled with ash. Interestingly, the pit at Tell Afis contained an oblong piece of basalt with a hole at one end much like an object found in association with the plastered basin in North Area A (UMM99 S-116).²⁵²

If the bones were being used to fuel fires as part of the processing of the carcasses, then the activity may have involved tasks such as dyeing hides or boiling the bones, cartilage, and skins for glue.²⁵³ A source of possible relevance is an archive from Old Babylonian Isin in southern Mesopotamia that deals with leather-working; these texts mention the production of

²⁵⁰ Loyet, 1999. p.34; Loyet, 2000. p.33

²⁵¹ Majidzadeh, Y. "The Development of the Pottery Kiln in Iran from Prehistoric to Historical Periods," in *Paléorient*, Vol. 3 (1975). p.216

²⁵² Venturi, Fabrizio. "The Late Bronze and Early Iron I Levels," in *Tell Afis (Siria): Scavi sull'acropoli 1988-1992 = The 1988-1992 Excavations on the Acropolis*, eds. S.M. Cecchini and S. Mazzoni. *Ricerche di Archeologia del Vicino Oriente 1/Tel Afis 1*. Pisa: ETS, 1998. p.124

²⁵³ Kite, Marion and Roy Thomson. *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials*. New York: Butterworth – Heinemann, 2006. pp.192-193; Even today it is often said of old horses, particularly race horses, that they are being "sent to the glue factory."

glue for the manufacture of bows, indicating that all of these tasks were bound up with the butchering and processing of carcasses,²⁵⁴ both of which are seen at Umm el-Marra.²⁵⁵

If the processing of hides and manufacture of glue were taking place in the North Area A and were associated with the production of bows, one may recall the importance of the composite bow in the Mittani realm. The composite bow is closely associated with Mittani military might,²⁵⁶ and a major feature of its construction was the gluing together of the various materials, such as wood, sinew, and horn, of which it was constituted.²⁵⁷ Texts from 18th century Mari state that composite bows were part of the equipment issued in association with a chariot,²⁵⁸ and we know from Nuzi that certain villages were responsible for the manufacture of chariots and their accoutrements.²⁵⁹ Moreover, at Alalakh both leatherworkers and bow makers are known to have been in the service of the palace, possibly as part of their labor obligation to the state.²⁶⁰ Though the evidence is tenuous, one might hypothesize that the processing of equid carcasses seen during this phase is related to such state-imposed obligations at Umm el-Marra. It is worth noting that the tablet found in the phase immediately preceding this one involves an interaction between the Late Bronze inhabitants of the site and the Mittani state.

²⁵⁴ Civil, Miguel. "Of Bows and Arrows," in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 55 (2003). p.53

²⁵⁵ There is also evidence for processing hides from Late Bronze Age Tell Bazi. (Otto, 2007. p.238)

²⁵⁶ Rausing, Gad. *The Bow: Some Notes on its Origin and Development*. Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerups Förlag, 1967. pp.93-94

²⁵⁷ Miller, R., E. McEwen, and C. Bergman. "Experimental Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Archery," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Weaponry and Warfare (Oct., 1986). p.183

²⁵⁸ Moorey, P.R.S. "The Emergence of the Light, Horse-Drawn Chariot in the Near-East c.2000-1500 B.C.," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Weaponry and Warfare (Oct., 1986). p.210

²⁵⁹ Moorey, P.R.S. "The Hurrians, the Mittani and Technological Innovation," in *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis : miscellanea in honorem Louis Vanden Berghe*, ed. L. de Meyer and E. Haerinck. Gent: Peeters, 1989. p.276

²⁶⁰ Von Dassow, Eva. *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age: Alalah Under the Mittani Empire*. Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians, Vol. 17. Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2008. pp.328-331



Figure 18: Third Late Bronze Phase in North Area A

The next main phase of occupation (Phase 3) contained much more substantial architecture than preceding layers, although it was badly damaged by at least six intrusive Hellenistic pits and four graves dating to the same period (Fig. 18).²⁶¹ Phase 3 sees a shift from industrial installations to architecture that is more domestic in nature, indicative of the site's growth over the course of its settlement history. Lime burning and carcass processing are dirty, foul-smelling activities that would have been carried out at a remove from the areas of the site that were used primarily for dwellings. As the community grew, more space would have been needed for housing, and areas that had previously been far enough away to be suitable for industrial activities were now devoted to living space.

The remains of at least one large structure can be seen in Phase 3. The north, south, and west walls of the building are evident despite the extensive Hellenistic disturbances. Abutting the interior face of the north wall is a mudbrick bench built atop a stone foundation. Its construction and location are similar to the bench in the "Burned House" in West Area A.

The interior of the structure is divided into two distinct areas (designated Rooms 1 and 2), each approximately 3.5 m long. Room 1, which comprises the northern half of the structure, has a reddish lime plaster floor. Next to the mudbrick bench was a tannur installed on a basalt and plaster base, with a small area of ash immediately in front of it and a basalt grinding stone on the floor nearby. To the west of the tannur, fragments of a plaster feature, possibly a basin, were found which appear to slope up towards the northwest corner.

The floor of Room 2, which comprises the southern half of the structure, is about 10 cm higher than the north and was constructed of large slabs of stone overlain by white plaster. To the east are apparent remnants of an internal cross-wall with a well-defined north face that would

²⁶¹ It is interesting to note that the same area of the tell was used for burials two and a half millennia ago as is used today.

have divided the two areas of the structure, although the nature and function of this structure are obscured by the intrusion of a Hellenistic pit 2 m in diameter. Nevertheless, the remnants abutting the east balk seem to line up with stones perpendicular to the east face of the long north-south wall, suggesting that the spaces had been separated. What remains of the wall next to the east balk is constructed of a foundation of cobbles and boulders topped by a large squarish stone measuring approximately 70 cm x 75 cm, which may have been part of the room's paving.

The layout of the structure with rooms 1 and 2 on two different levels and separated by an interior wall is, once again, reminiscent of the "Burned House" in West Area A.²⁶² The assemblage is likewise indicative of a domestic context with mortars, grinding stones, and pounders in the room debris and atop the floors. Considering the similar plans and assemblages, it seems likely that this structure was a Central Room House.

Abutting the house to the north are at least two additional rooms (designated Rooms 3 and 4) which were probably added subsequent to the construction of Rooms 1 and 2. Room 3 is immediately to the north of Room 1 and measures approximately 3.25m x 2.25m with an internal area of 7.31m². Although most of the room was disturbed by a Hellenistic tomb, a tannur was found against the interior face of the east wall that contained large pieces of a cooking pot.

Room 4 is also heavily damaged, and it is unclear if it was roofed or open to the sky. The only feature was a lime plaster basin located in the southwest corner of the room similar to that found in the northwest corner of Room 1.

²⁶² However, unlike in the "Burned House," in this structure the interior mudbrick bench is located opposite the side rooms, not perpendicular to them. This is not surprising since numerous variations of the arrangement of side rooms in relation to the central room are seen in houses of this type. cf. McClellan, 1997.

To the west of the complex of rooms are the remnants of a cobble pavement approximately 5 m long and 0.5 m wide badly damaged by Hellenistic activity. Since this type of paving is indicative of an outdoor space, it suggests that Rooms 3 and 4 were roofed.

The architecture of Phase 3 in North Area A is in keeping with domestic architecture elsewhere on the site, particularly West Area A and the Northwest Area. An initial structure, in this case a Central Room House, was built and later had rooms added on in an agglutinative pattern as families grew and their needs changed.

Unlike other areas of the site, the final phase of Late Bronze occupation in North Area A was not burned, indicating that it had been abandoned prior to the site's final destruction. This is borne out by the paucity of artifacts, recovered since any items of use or value would have been removed if the area had been abandoned before the disaster. One of the few artifacts found was a piece of a mold-made female figurine (UMM00 H-59) which was identical to one from Phase 2 (UMM99 H-36).

North Area A illustrates the changing nature of the site during the span of its Late Bronze Age occupation. In Phase 1, the area was used for the production of lime plaster, an integral building component which would have been in great demand as families resettled the site and built their houses. Phase 2 sees a shift from the immediate needs of the community for shelter to craft or industrial activities that would have tied the site into the larger economy of the Mittani Empire. Finally, in Phase 3, North Area A shifted to a fully domestic space, indicative of the community's growth and need for additional space.

The Southeast Area

The Southeast Area was excavated over the course of four seasons, 1997, 1999, 2000, and 2002, revealing at least three phases of Late Bronze occupation. The earliest phase was reached in the northwest of the excavation area. The architecture was very fragmentary, and it is difficult to make any substantive comments about the nature of the structure or its function. All of the walls encountered had stone foundations with mudbrick superstructures. In the northwest of the trench a small section of fragmentary architecture was found, most of whose walls are cut by subsequent building phases. The longest wall runs from the northwest to the southeast. At its northern end is a perpendicular wall. The wall's eastern end runs into the balk, but its western end appears to be faced with a large, flat stone suggesting the presence of a doorway, though no corresponding wall was found to the west. Small sections of three cross walls are roughly perpendicular to the northwest-southeast wall. Two are on the east side. Both of these walls run into the east balk. Another fragmentary crosswall is on the west face and only a small portion is preserved. Together, the walls appear to delineate at least three discrete areas; two small areas to the east and a larger one to the west.

Another small section of architecture is preserved in the southwest corner of the trench. This consists of a long section of wall running northwest-southeast with a short section of wall perpendicular to it at its northern end. To the north and east of this shorter wall is a patch of preserved cobble paving. A small area of flooring was preserved which consisted of white plaster over a cobble paving.

No features were encountered and, other than sherds, no artifacts were recovered. The architecture does not appear to align with the much better preserved architecture of the later phases of occupation. At least part of the excavated architecture was probably roofed, given the



Figure 19: Plan of the Complex in the Southeast Area

floor was plastered, a surface treatment that is usually found in interior spaces since it tends to weather more rapidly than stone paving and needs more upkeep than compact earth.

The main phase of Late Bronze occupation in the Southeast Area is characterized by a large building complex composed of at least seventeen rooms surrounding a large courtyard containing several stone-lined silos (Figs. 19 and 21). To the north of the complex is a broad street paved with cobbles. The complex has at least two, and possibly three, phases of construction, the final one of which was destroyed by an intense fire.

Room 1 is the most poorly-preserved room in the building complex. Both the North and West Walls are robbed out, with only wall stubs remaining. However, the outline of the full length of both walls was evident in the limit of excavation. The room is rectangular with a total area of approximately 29m².

Two phases of construction are discernable in Room 1, particularly in the superimposed floors both of which are hard grey clay. No objects were found in association with the earlier floor, suggesting that it was cleared in anticipation of its resurfacing. The later floor was not as well preserved and had been heavily damaged by the massive conflagration which destroyed much of the structure.

Roughly in the middle of Room 1 is a rectangular stone platform approximately 1.0m long, 0.75m wide, and 65cm higher than the surrounding grey clay floor. Based on its size and location, the platform may have served as the foot of a wooden column. At 8.75 m, Room 1 is a relatively long space and a column may have been necessary to support such a large roof,²⁶³ particularly if it was also used for living and working.

²⁶³ The assumption that Room 1 was roofed is based on the fact that it was burned. Within the complex it is clear from charred roof beams and impressions of roofing material on mud plaster that many, if not all, of the rooms had roofs. The area identified as the courtyard (=Room 9), however, was not burned. While no unambiguous evidence

The south wall of Room 1 appears to belong to the second phase of construction. Similarly, the wall dividing Rooms 7 and 8, immediately to the south, also appears to date to this second phase. Both walls are assigned to the second architectural phase because they are associated with the later floor in Room 1. Rooms 1, 7, 8, and probably 17²⁶⁴ would have been a single discrete space during the earlier phase of occupation measuring approximately 9.25m long and 10.50m wide. The large area and fact that there are zones of paving belonging to the earlier phase in Rooms 7, 8, and 17 suggests that this may have been an open space or courtyard during the first phase of the complex's occupation.

The lack of any artifacts or features other than the stone platform makes it difficult to determine a function for Room 1. Further, the fact that the north and west walls were totally destroyed and the poor state of preservation of the South Wall make it impossible to determine if Room 1 opened onto the street to the north or communicated internally with other rooms.

The shift from an open courtyard during the earlier phase of occupation to a group of smaller, roofed rooms in the later phase illustrates the changing use of Room 1 over the course of occupation, a phenomenon seen elsewhere in the Complex, particularly in the rooms to the north (see Room 3 below).

Room 2 is immediately to the east of Room 1. It is roughly square and measures approximately 3.0 m wide and 3.25m long with a total area of approximately 9.75m². As in the previous room, two occupational phases are clearly discernable both in the floor and walls. The second phase of Room 2 is also burned.

for roofing was found in Room 1 the intensity of the conflagration means that there had to be copious amounts of combustible material. This would include any flammable material stored there and the wood and reeds which composed the roof.

²⁶⁴ Though it is not possible to tell from the excavation records, it seems likely that Room 17, to the south of Room 1 and the west of Room 7, would also have been part of the earlier courtyard (see below).

Like Room 1, the earlier floor of Room 2 is made of grey clay. Other than small areas of carbonized seeds found just above it, the floor was otherwise devoid of artifacts. The later floor was more difficult to discern, though traces of it could be reconstructed by the line of burning seen on the walls and the ash layer in the west balk.

The east wall of Room 2 is the best preserved, and there is a clear line between the earlier building phase and the later burned phase. The mudbricks of the wall, which was two courses wide, were clearly delineated. The west wall could not be clearly defined, but its general footprint was evident from the floors interrupted by the wall. The south wall of Room 2 was also well-preserved and had a doorway which opened onto the courtyard (=Room 9) and which was subsequently blocked. The doorway has a stone threshold that was built in the earlier phase. A tripod mortar was found against the south wall, just west of the doorway, sitting on the later floor. The mortar appeared to be plastered in place by hard red clay.

The carbonized seeds above the earlier floor of Room 2 hint at the space being used for either grain storage or food production, and the mortar from the later phase might suggest a similar function. More interesting is the fact that the doorway which communicates with the courtyard (=Room 9) was blocked during the second phase of occupation. It is possible that access to Room 2 was reoriented towards the street immediately to the north of the Complex, although this is, again, speculative due to the poor condition of the north wall of Room 2. Alternately, the door to Room 2 could have been blocked to secure commodities²⁶⁵ such as grain, wood, or cloth that would have been destroyed in the final conflagration and, thus, invisible in the archaeological record. Finally, Room 2 could have fallen out of use by the time of the

²⁶⁵ I have observed this practice today while engaged in fieldwork in Egypt.

destruction of the Complex, which would explain why it was empty and the door was blocked. A similar explanation is offered for the same phenomenon in the Northwest Area (see above).

Room 3, to the west, and Room 4, to the east, are two discrete areas divided by a partition wall approximately 3m long. Only the northern half of the partition wall is preserved; the southern half is evidenced by several stones and an outline visible in the floor. It is possible that the southern 1.5m of the partition wall was intentionally dismantled in order to open up the space and facilitate communication between Rooms 3 and 4. At the fullest extent of the wall, only a ca. 50 cm gap between it and the south wall would have existed.

Room 3 is approximately 3.25m long and 1.75m wide for a total area of 5.70m². Again, two floors are visible, both made of hard grey clay. The later floor slopes sharply upward from south to north, eventually becoming a reddish color which is probably the result of the intense heat of the fire that destroyed the Complex. This slope was caused by plastering over an earlier feature that was in the northern part of the room, evidenced by parts of a tannur visible in the northwest corner of the room at the same point where the floor began to slope up. A circular depression to the east may represent another tannur belonging to the earlier phase. The paving over of the tannurs may suggest that the function of Room 3 changed over the course of the occupation of the Complex. A similar shift is seen in Room 1 (see above).

Room 4, to the east, is approximately 3.50m long and 4.50m wide for a total area of approximately 15.75m². As elsewhere, two phases of hard grey clay floors are evident, the later one destroyed by an intense fire. A tannur found near the center of the south wall was probably built during the earlier phase and then paved over, though later disturbances make it difficult to determine definitively. A larger tannur built on a brick platform belonging to the second phase

was found in the southeast corner of Room 4,²⁶⁶ suggesting that the function of the room remained large unchanged despite the reconfiguration of the space.

There is a cut approximately 25cm wide in the north wall of Room 4 which opens directly onto the cobble street. Although the excavator suggested that this was a doorway, its narrow dimensions makes this unlikely. Indeed, it is unclear whether the wall was cut while the Complex was still in use, in the course of its destruction, or after its abandonment.

Though separated by the dividing wall, Rooms 3 and 4 appear to have comprised a single unit probably involved in cooking, based on the presence of tannurs in both phases. Beyond this, the lack of artifacts or other installations make assigning the room's specific functions difficult.

The exterior face of the north wall of Rooms 2, 3, and 4 was buttressed by a small stone wall at the level of the first course of mudbricks (that is, above the stone foundation). This was added during the second phase of the occupation of the Complex to reinforce the wall as part of what appears to have been a general renovation of the structure that included buttressing other walls, replastering floors, and repaving the courtyard (=Room 9, see below).

Comprising the most enigmatic feature of the Complex, and, indeed, of all the Late Bronze architecture at Umm el-Marra, are Rooms 5 and 6. Room 5 is the northern of the two rooms and is approximately 2.25m long and 2.80m wide with a total area of 6.30m². It consists of four cubicles divided by a cruciform channel embedded with pebbles. The cubicles are constructed with a cobble foundation, on top of which are mudbricks covered in pebbles.

²⁶⁶ A similar pyrotechnic installation on a mudbrick platform was found in a Mittani house at Tell Arbid which the excavators identified as a "heating stove." While the installation in Room 4 appears to be a tannur, there is little reason to doubt that it could have been used for multiple functions which include both cooking and heating. (see Bieliński, 2003. p.307)

Room 6, to the south, is approximately 2.50m long and 3m wide with a total area of 7.50m². The floor is paved with pebbles in a similar fashion to the cubicles in Room 5. This floor and part of the north wall were damaged by an intrusive Hellenistic burial.

Citing examples from modern Iran where bread is baked by laying it on heated pebbles, the preliminary report suggests that Rooms 5 and 6 were functionally related and used as a bakery.²⁶⁷ An interesting feature of these rooms is that they were probably either unroofed or covered with something perishable like an awning. The reasoning for this conclusion is as follows. Both Rooms 5 and 6 are described as being covered in a “thin deposit of fine black ash,”²⁶⁸ though there is no evidence of burning in either room. All of the other rooms of the Complex, with the exception of the Courtyard (=Room 9), exhibit both heavy burning and a thick layer of ash associated with the second phase of occupation, and roofing material in the form of plaster with reed impressions and pieces of carbonized logs was found amidst the ashy fill in many of them. Thus, either the roofing material and contents of Rooms 5 and 6 did not provide enough fuel for a major conflagration or, more likely, they were unroofed and the ash found in them was wind-blown. The fact that the ash is specifically described as “fine” reinforces this hypothesis.

To explain the lack of a roof in Rooms 5 and 6, we might propose that it had been dismantled either when the rooms fell out of use or in anticipation of part, or all, of the abandonment of the Complex. Roof beams, both in antiquity and today, are one of the costliest elements of a structure, due to the scarcity of timber suitable for construction in many parts of

²⁶⁷ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2000. p.430

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the Near East. Thus, when a building is abandoned, the roof is often dismantled and the beams reused.²⁶⁹

That the northern rooms of the Complex (Rooms 1-6) were in the process of being abandoned at the time of the building's destruction is supported by the lack of artifacts in the rooms as opposed to those to the south (particularly Rooms 12, 14, and 15) and the fact that the



Figure 20: Figurine of a seated deity from the Southeast Area (G. Schwartz)

only apparent doorway in Room 2 had been blocked (see discussion of the Northwest Area above). An analogous situation is seen at Tell Bderi where, later in its use-life, parts of the Late Bronze building on the Northern Plateau were abandoned while other rooms were simultaneously given new floors.²⁷⁰

One of the few objects recovered from the northern portion of the Complex was a mold-made terra cotta figurine of a seated god (UMM97 H-15; Fig. 20).²⁷¹ The figurine was found just outside the northeast corner of the stone foundation of Room 5. In the preliminary report, the god is described as having “a long beard and wear[ing] a multi-horned crown surmounted by a crescent enfolding a disc probably representing the sun and moon; his hands rest on his knees, and his garment includes two long

²⁶⁹ Kamp, 1991. p.29

²⁷⁰ Pfälzner, 1986-1987. p.295

²⁷¹ This object was originally published in Schwartz, *et al.*, 2000 and treated more fully by Alice Petty (Petty, 2006).

straps across the shoulders. The crown is reminiscent of that worn by the figure of the “Jabbul Head” now in the Louvre.”²⁷² Another object housed in the Louvre is a bronze statuette (AO 3992) depicting a seated deity with a headdress very similar to the one on the Umm el-Marra figurine. Like the Jabbul head, the statuette is dated to Middle Bronze, but since it was acquired on the antiquities market this cannot be confirmed.²⁷³

Statuettes and figurines in various media that are highly reminiscent of the one from the Southeast Area at Umm el-Marra have been found from the Euphrates to the Coast, often in association with cultic installations.²⁷⁴ They may date back as far as the Middle Bronze Age but are particularly common during the Late Bronze. Ceramic examples are found at Munbaqa²⁷⁵ and Emar, one of which is an exact parallel of the figurine from Umm el-Marra,²⁷⁶ while statuettes in both stone and bronze were found at Ugarit.²⁷⁷ Thus, the figurine of a seated male deity from Umm el-Marra fits in well with wider regional traditions depicting gods.

At the same time, the fact that it is a ceramic figurine of a seated male deity makes it unusual within the Late Bronze Age corpus. During this period, ceramic figurines most often depict standing nude females, several of which were also found at Umm el-Marra. The diminutive size of the figurine (6 x 2 x 2 cm) also sets it apart from other contemporary comparanda.

²⁷² Schwartz, *et al.*, 2000. p.430

²⁷³ Spycket Agnès. *La Statuaire du Proche-Orient ancien*. Handbuch der Orientalistik, Kunst und Archäologie, Band 1. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981. p.285, no.272, pl.182.; Amiet, Pierre, ed. *Au Pays de Baal et d'Astarté : 10 000 ans d'art en Syrie, Exposition, Paris, musée du Petit Palais, 26 octobre 1983-8 janvier 1984*. Paris: Éditions du musée du Petit Palais, 1983. p. 131, no. 165.

²⁷⁴ cf. Negbi, Ora. *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Institute of Archaeology, 1976. pp. 46-59; Ornan, Orly. ““Let Ba'al be Enthroned”: The Date, Identification, and Function of a Bronze Statue from Hazor,” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (October 2011). pp.253-280

²⁷⁵ Blocher, F., D. Machule, and P. Werner, “Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Tall Munbäqa/Ekalte 1999,” in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, No. 132 (2000). pp.129-130

²⁷⁶ Personal communication with Glenn Schwartz in February, 2012 citing a conversation with Ferhan Sakal in February, 2003; Badre, Leila. *Les figurines anthropomorphes en terre cuite à l'âge du Bronze en Syrie*. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique, t. 103. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1980. p.302; pl. XXXVI, 8 (Though this is only the head of the figurine it is very similar to the one from Umm el-Marra)

²⁷⁷ Yon, Marguerite. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006. pp.130-133

Based on the figurine's pose, crown, and adornment, Otto has suggested that it is a representation of the god Dagan, whose cult was centered on the middle Euphrates. She also notes that Dagan is comparable to the Hurrian god Kumarbi, both having similar attributes and considered to be the fathers of their respective pantheons.²⁷⁸ It would be unsurprising to see either a native Syrian or a Hurrian deity venerated at Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra and, so, Otto's hypothesis is certainly plausible. Indeed, given the syncretisms between many gods from the various Near Eastern pantheons, the figurine could have represented Dagan to one person and Kumarbi to another with no contradiction.

The practice of associating ritually charged objects, such as figurines, with the foundation of a building is a widespread phenomenon.²⁷⁹ At Tell Sabi Abyad in northern Syria, for instance, there is evidence for this practice as far back as the Early Ceramic Neolithic.²⁸⁰ The practice is well attested in Mesopotamia, with abundant evidence from the third millennium to the Neo-Assyrian period.²⁸¹ Among the most common objects to be included in these "foundation deposits" are figurines believed to be invested with magical qualities. This may be because placing figurines underground would have connected them to the watery netherworld where the gods were believed to have dwelled. Alternately, the subterranean realm might have been understood as a liminal space where the protective qualities of the figurines could have transgressed the boundary between the realms of the sacred and the profane to realize its

²⁷⁸ Otto, Adelheid. "Dagan," in *Iconographie of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, ed. C. Uehlinger and J. Egger. Internet publication: <http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/prepublication.php>. 2008. p.2

²⁷⁹ cf. Osborne, Robin. "Hoards, Votives, Offerings: The Archaeology of the Dedicated Object," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, The Object of Dedication (March, 2004). pp. 1-10

²⁸⁰ Akkermans, Peter M. M. G., et al. "Investigating the Early Pottery Neolithic of Northern Syria: New Evidence from Tell Sabi Abyad," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (Jan., 2006). p.129

²⁸¹ For a comprehensive, if somewhat dated, study of the practice cf. Ellis, Richard F. *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

apotropaic function.²⁸² The importance of subterranean deposits with ritual significance is seen elsewhere at Umm el-Marra with the placement of graves in a midden in West Area B (see above) and the small cache of objects in a pit on Acropolis North (see below). The fact that the figurine was found next to the corner of the foundation further suggests that it was intentionally placed there with ritual intent, since the corners of buildings are often imbued with supernatural qualities.²⁸³

The unusual nature of Rooms 5 and 6, coupled with a lack of associated artifacts apart from the figurine of the seated deity, makes assessing their function difficult. There are no obvious comparanda for the cruciform channel in Room 5 other than what appears to be a similar installation on the Acropolis Center (see below). Such a situation is especially frustrating because the unique nature of Room 5 suggests a specific function, unlike the other rooms in the Complex. The initial interpretation of Rooms 5 and 6 was partially predicated on the presence of the fine black ash, but as discussed above, this seems more likely to have been deposited by the wind. While this does not wholly discredit the hypothesis that the rooms were part of a bakery, it makes the interpretation more problematic.

Room 7 is to the south of Room 1, east of Room 17, and west of Room 8. As noted above, the room was probably part of a paved courtyard comprising Rooms 1, 7, 8, and 17 during the earliest occupation phase of the Complex. The room is a rectangle approximately 5.25m long by 3m wide with a total area of 15.75m². The east wall of Room 7 (=west wall of Room 8) was built on top of the earlier stone pavement which covered Rooms 7 and 8 and was, thus, constructed during the later phase of occupation. The same is true of the north wall of the

²⁸² Nakamura, Carolyn. "Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, The Object of Dedication (March, 2004). pp. 18-19

²⁸³ Pickworth, Diana. "Excavations at Nineveh: The Halzi Gate," in *Iraq*, Vol. 67, No. 1, Nineveh. Papers of the 49th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Part Two (Spring, 2005). p.295

room. Like most of the other rooms in the Complex, Room 7 was heavily burned during the later phase of occupation and contained large pieces of carbonized wood indicating that the area was roofed.

The center of Room 7 was paved with boulders and the entire floor was covered in white plaster. There is also a posthole next to the east wall. Though heavily disturbed, a possible threshold and socket suggest a doorway at the east end of the south wall of Room 7 (i.e. in the southeast corner of the room), but significant disturbance makes it difficult to be certain.

While there were no features or installations in Room 7, there were more objects recovered from this room than the others in the northern portion of the Complex, indicating that it was actively in use at the time of its destruction. Numerous sherds from large storage vessels were found in the ash layer just above the floor, and a basalt grinding stone was found in situ on the floor in the southwest corner of the room. A very well-made perforated biconical weight (UMM02 S-055) with holes in the top for suspension was also recovered.

The presence of large jars in Room 7 indicates that the room was used for storage, and the grinding stone suggests that the commodity may have been grain. Other commodities which would have been disbursed in quantities significantly smaller than grain may have been stored in Room 7 as well, as suggested by the presence of the weight.

To the east of Room 7 is Room 8, which is also south of Room 1 and west of Room 9 (=the Courtyard). Room 8 is approximately 4.75m long and 2.75m wide with an area of 13m². The eastern third of the room was destroyed by a massive intrusion which cut through the ash, plaster, and paving, cutting part of the East Wall in the process. Fragments of a human skull suggest that the intrusion was an inhumation.

The remaining portion of the east wall of Room 8 has an earlier stone foundation with one (and possibly two) courses of red mudbricks below a second, later stone foundation whose mudbrick superstructure is poorly preserved. The wall is two mudbricks wide. Like Room 7, Room 8 was paved with large, flat stones covered in plaster. At least during the room's earlier phase of occupation, the walls were plastered as well, since a patch of white plaster is still visible on the interior face of the earlier phase of the east wall. Like adjacent rooms, Room 8 was badly burned in the later phase of its occupation with thick black ash covering the entire floor. Room 8, like Room 7, contained copious amounts of sherds belonging to large storage vessels, which suggests that both rooms had a similar function.

Room 17 is located to the south of Room 1 and the west of Room 7 and, like most of the other rooms, was badly burned. The southern ends of the East and West Walls have been robbed out and the South Wall was totally missing. However, the footprints of the walls were visible and Room 16 measures approximately 5.75m long by 2m wide with an area of 11.5m². It appears that the Room's West Wall represents the Western edge of the Complex.

As mentioned above, Room 17, which is paved with flat boulders, was probably part of a courtyard during the Complex's earliest phase of occupation along with Rooms 1 and 7. Other than a few sherds, no artifacts were recovered, making the room's interpretation problematic.

Room 9 and Room 11 (Fig. 21) are the largest discrete areas in the Complex and the focal points of the structure around which the rooms were organized. Both are probably courtyards and communicate via a gap in the partition wall which divides them immediately to the north of Room 12. At its greatest extent, Room 9 is approximately 8.75m long. There is no clear eastern edge, but at its widest point it is approximately 15.25m. Unlike the rest of the structure, Room 9 was not burned, though this is probably because it was unroofed and had nothing to fuel a fire.

The excavators note ashy patches that may have been the remnants of combustible objects kept in Room 9 or ash blown in from the burned rooms.

Two superimposed cobble surfaces in the eastern portion of Room 9 indicate that, like elsewhere in the structure, the room had two occupational phases. There is no indication of the cobble surface in the southwest of Room 9 during the earlier phase. Instead, there was a pavement made of large, flat stones which led up to the northern stone-lined feature, which will be discussed below. The later phase of the cobble surface was bordered by large rectilinear stones to the east which seem to form a corner, though this is unclear. A Nuzi Ware sherd was found between the two pavements. The western portion of Room 9 was covered in a hard grey surface similar to the one found in the rooms to the north.

Rooms 4 and 12 appear to be associated with paved areas of the courtyard. Outside of Room 4 is an area of rectangular pavement made of large, flat boulders approximately 2m long and 3.7m wide. The pavement abuts the exterior face of the south wall of Room 4. Similarly, there is a pavement of flat stones immediately outside Room 12, approximately 2.6m long and 3.5m wide, roughly rectangular in shape. Neither pavement had associated artifacts or features to suggest a specific function.

Two circular stone-lined features, identified as ‘silos’ by the excavator and as possible ‘wells’ in the initial publication,²⁸⁴ dominate the northwestern part of Room 9, both of which were probably used in both phases of occupation with only minor modifications (Fig. 21). Half a meter deep, the northern feature is contemporary with the later cobble surface. The southern example was excavated to a depth of 1.29 m, but its bottom was not reached. Both features were

²⁸⁴ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.349, fig. 31



Umm el-Marra
Late Bronze Age
Southeast Area
Rooms 9-15

Figure 21: Rooms 9-15 of the Complex in the Southeast Area

approximately 75cm in diameter. In both phases, irregular lines of stones radiated out from the features, perhaps to be understood as raised walkways.

Stone-lined pits are common features on archaeological sites, and numerous functions have been assigned to them. Similar features from Tel Dan dated to the early Iron Age are interpreted as ‘silos’²⁸⁵ but, unlike the examples in Room 9, these were full of ceramic vessels of various types.²⁸⁶

It is probably incorrect to interpret these features as ‘silos.’ The stone-lined pits under discussion are unsuited for storing grain, since they are unplastered and have open areas between the stones that would allow grain to escape and allow vermin to enter.²⁸⁷ Indeed, an experiment comparing the suitability of various types of pits for long-term grain storage found that the stone-lined pit performed the worst.²⁸⁸ Likewise, ethnographic work in Anatolia suggests that grain for domestic consumption is kept in pots or bags in the house²⁸⁹ while seed grain is stored underground in sealed, plastered pits.²⁹⁰

Suggested uses of similar stone-lined pits include cess pits,²⁹¹ metal working,²⁹² salting meat, and manufacturing silage.²⁹³ While the last two interpretations are possible, if wholly conjectural, uses for the pits in Room 9, the first two are highly unlikely because of the porous nature of the dry-lain stone and the absence of ash or slag. As with many enigmatic

²⁸⁵ Biran, Avraham. “Tel Dan: Five Years Later,” in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer, 1980). p.173

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Fairbairn, Andrew and Sachihiro Omura. “Archaeological Identification and Significance of ÉSAG (Agricultural Storage Pits) at Kaman-Kalehöyük, Central Anatolia,” in *Anatolian Studies*, Vol. 55 (2005). p.20

²⁸⁸ Currid, John D. and Avi Navon. “Iron Age Pits and the Lahav (Tell Halif) Grain Storage Project,” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 273 (Feb., 1989). p.74

²⁸⁹ Fairburn and Omura, 2005. p.17

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.20

²⁹¹ Camp II, John McKesson, “Excavations in the Athenian Agora: 2002-2007,” in *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 2007). p. 633

²⁹² Knapp, A.B., V. Kassianidou, and M. Donnelly, “Copper Smelting in Late Bronze Age Cyprus: The Excavations at Politiko Phorades,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 2001). p. 206

²⁹³ Currid and Navon, 1989. p.71

archaeological features, stone-lined pits are also often assigned ritual functions, some of which are more plausible than others.²⁹⁴ Again, this is certainly a possible function for the pits in Room 9, but there is no other evidence to suggest it. Thus, the most that can be said about the stone-lined pits in the Courtyard is that they were probably *not* used to store grain.

Room 10, which was badly damaged by later burials, refers to the part of the courtyard immediately to the south of the stone-lined pits and pebble pavement (Fig. 21). It has a brickly surface with ashy lenses resting on it. In the earlier phase of occupation there was a stone feature abutting the exterior face of the north wall of Room 14 which may have been a pavement similar to the ones outside of Rooms 4 and 12. Tannurs were identified in both phases, which may be related to the activities carried out in Room 14 (discussed below).

Room 11 is relatively large and probably consisted of two discrete spaces divided by a partition wall (Fig. 21). Like Room 9, it is not burned and probably served as a courtyard as well, given its large size and unburned state. The western extent of Room 11 was not excavated, and numerous large, intrusive pits make interpretation of this area difficult. Room 11 communicates with the other courtyard, Room 9, via an approximately 1.4 m gap in its east wall.

Room 11 probably consisted of two discrete spaces, designated here as Room 11 North and Room 11 South. Room 11 North measures approximately 3.75m long and is at least 7 m wide, though the western extent is unknown. The large area of Room 11 North, coupled with its lack of burning, strongly supports its interpretation as a courtyard or open area. Sloping downward from the exterior of the east wall were patches of cobble paving set into a hard grey

²⁹⁴ cf. Artzy, Michal. "On Boats and Sea Peoples," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 266 (May, 1987). p. 75; Fairbairn and Omura, 2005. p.20; Prent, Mieke. "Cretan Early Iron Age Hearth Temples and the Articulation of Sacred Space," in *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 15, Building Communities: House, Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond (2007). p. 146

surface upon which a basalt grinding stone and a circular mortar were found in situ, possibly indicating the types of activities Room 11 North was used for.

Room 11 South is separated from Room 11 North by a short partition wall approximately one meter in length. The room itself is approximately 6.75 m long and at least 3.5 m wide with a dense cobble paving and a doorway that communicates with Room 16 to the south. There were no artifacts or installations in Room 11 South to give any indication of its function.

The partition wall separating Rooms 11 North and South may have originally been used to buttress the room's East Wall. However, the difference between the hard grey surface in the north and the cobble pavement in the south suggests that it came to serve as a demarcation between the two areas. Another buttress, badly damaged by an intrusive burial, was also identified farther to the south.

With walls preserved as high as 75 cm, Room 12 was both the most heavily burned and best preserved room in the Complex (fig. 21). Of note is the fact that it was filled with deposits of carbonized grain as high as 15-20cm. The room measures approximately 2.30m long by 4.60m wide, with a total interior area of 10.58m². Like other rooms in the Complex, Room 12 had at least two occupation phases, the latter of which is characterized by exterior buttresses against the North, South, and East Walls.

There is a doorway at the western end of the south wall of Room 12 (i.e. in the southwest corner of the room) with a threshold across its northern edge consisting of three stones approximately 10-15cm above the hard, grey surface of the room. The doorway has a basalt door socket covered in white plaster immediately to its west and a posthole immediately to its east, possibly for a post to secure the door.

The interior wall faces of Room 12 were covered in yellow and red plaster, the latter color likely the result of exposure to intense heat. Numerous pieces of carbonized wood, including a large log found parallel to the south wall, and clay with impressions of roofing material testify to the fact that Room 12 was a covered space. The floor of hard grey clay was covered with a thick layer of black ash and sloped up towards the middle of the room where a shallow bowl and small vessels were found. This uneven surface may have been the result of frequent sweeping,²⁹⁵ which would have been necessary to remove the waste and dust produced by grain processing.

Of note in Room 12 are the number of installations and objects recovered - significantly more than in any other rooms of the Complex. Against the west wall of the room was a bin made of three upright mudbricks. The bin was 40cm tall and plastered on the exterior. It may have been used to store cleaned grain after it had been processed, a practice which is seen at other sites,²⁹⁶ and accords with the idea that the room was used to process barley (see below).

In the northwest corner was the most enigmatic feature of Room 12, a cylindrical tube made of fired ceramic approximately 45 cm in diameter, with slight horizontal ridging across its surface. The feature was set approximately 50 cm distant from the north and west walls and set lengthwise on several smooth, polished stones resting on the floor of the room. At one end, the cylinder was sealed by a plastered brick set upright, while the other end was left open. The arched top of the cylinder had collapsed in on itself, and soft fill containing numerous carbonized seeds was found inside. Wedged between the installation and the North Wall was a small intact jug.

²⁹⁵ Weinstein, 1973. p.274

²⁹⁶ Chernoff, Miriam C. and Samuel M. Paley. "Dynamics of Cereal Production at Tell Ifshar, Israel during the Middle Bronze Age," in *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Winter, 1998). pp.408-409

The closest parallel to this unusual feature is from Tell Arbid, where the excavators describe a “heating stove mounted on a low podium of mud brick” in the “Mittanian Northern House.”²⁹⁷ The main difference, of course, is that the feature in Room 12 is on its side as opposed to upright. Otherwise, both features are very similar- ceramic cylinders sealed at one end with mudbrick and open at the other- and may have had the same function. Both features are even located in the corner of the room at a slight remove from the wall. Placing the cylinder in Room 12 on its side would have meant that its heated surface could have been utilized, possibly for baking bread. Alternately, this cylindrical feature may have been used to parch barley, which constituted the majority of the carbonized grain found in Room 12.²⁹⁸ Before it can be used, barley must be parched and pounded,²⁹⁹ and the grain found inside the feature lends credence to this hypothesis. Pestles found in Room 12 also suggest that the grain was being processed there.³⁰⁰

Two oblong depressions plastered with straw-tempered clay were dug into the floor against the north and south walls. The northern basin measured approximately 1.75m long, 60 cm wide, and 8-10 cm deep. A 24 cm long piece of a fallow deer antler beneath a large stone pounding tool was found against the north wall. Just south of the depression a globular jug, intact except for its handle, was found upright on the floor. There were dark circular markings on the shoulder from a container of organic materials that probably protected the jug when the roof collapsed and led to its preservation. The southern depression was approximately 1.10m long, 50 cm wide, and 10 cm deep. Both depressions are gourd-shaped with a smaller, higher depression separated from the main, deeper basin by a constricted neck.

²⁹⁷ Bieliński, 2003. p.307

²⁹⁸ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.348

²⁹⁹ Potts, 1997. p.57

³⁰⁰ Samuel, 1999. p.131; Gates, 1988. p.68

The shape of these depressions also suggests that barley was being processed in Room 12. A manageable amount of grain would be placed in the smaller, higher depression where it would be worked, probably by being pounded with the pestles found in the room. Once the grain was sufficiently processed it would be collected in the larger, lower depression and more grain would be added to the higher one.

In the east-central part of Room 12 were the remnants of three large storage vessels set into depressions in the floor and propped up by mudbricks, stones, and orange clay.

At the far eastern end of Room 12, rims and parts of the upper bodies of two large, closed shape vessels were placed face down on mudbrick bases, with carbonized seeds inside. In the “Tablet Building” at Tell Hadidi, the rim and neck of a large storage jar were reused as a pot stand, and this is a likely interpretation for the feature in Room 12, as well. The carbonized seeds were probably not actually stored in the feature but rather fell in during the room’s destruction. It is notable that large quantities of carbonized grain were also found in association with the repurposed jar neck from Tell Hadidi.³⁰¹

In addition to the features, Room 12 contained numerous vessels of various sizes which were filled with carbonized seeds. These included a shallow bowl and a cooking pot which was found next to the South Wall. In addition, five small jars, all with broken rims, were also recovered. Three of these small jars were clustered together by a rectangular grinding stone. Pieces of a pie crust pot stand and two unfired clay jar stoppers were also recovered. One of the jar stoppers (UMM00 O-015) was found upside down on the floor near a broken vessel full of carbonized seeds and had an impression of crossed cords on the top.

³⁰¹ Dornemann, 1981. p. 33

Three bronze objects were also recovered from Room 12. A curving flat strip which tapers at one end found in the northeast corner of the room (UMM00 M-063) which could have been a spatula or piece of a bracelet. A poorly preserved knife was found nestled just south of two stones that supported a large storage jar in the southeast corner of the room (UMM00 M-065). The knife was too badly corroded to conserve but apparently consisted of a blade with a long tang. Finally, a complete leaf-shaped arrowhead was found (UMM00 M-057) which may be associated with the final destruction of the Complex.

It is clear from the contents of Room 12 that the area was used for the storage and processing of grain. There are numerous similarities between the “Tablet Building” at Tell Hadidi and Room 12 which include similar assemblages and installations and copious amounts of carbonized grain.³⁰² Both the Tablet House and the Complex are also arranged around large courtyards. These similarities make it likely that the two buildings had similar functions. Marie-Henriette Gates suggests that the “Tablet Building” was used for large-scale brewing, based on the presence of copious amounts of grain, large storage vessels, numerous grinding stones and pestles, and ceramics with perforated bases understood to be associated with brewing.³⁰³ The similarities between the Complex in the Southeast area and the Tablet House at Tell Hadidi make it likely that they had similar functions, and Gates’ convincing interpretation of the Tablet House is also valid for Room 12 specifically and the Complex in general.

Immediately to the south of Room 12, Room 13 has a doorway that connects the two rooms (fig. 21). The room’s southern extent was not excavated. Room 13 measures at least

³⁰² cf. Dornemann, 1979; Dornemann, Rudolph H. “Tell Hadidi: An Important Center of the Mittanian Period and Earlier,” in *Le Moyen Euphrate, Zone de Contacts et d’Échanges*, ed. J.-Cl. Margueron. Strasbourg: Université de Sciences Humaines, 1980. pp. 217-232; Dornemann, 1981; Dornemann, 1986.

³⁰³ Gates, Marie-Henriette. “Dialogues Between Ancient Near Eastern Texts and the Archaeological Record: Test Cases from Bronze Age Syria,” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Archaeological Research*, No. 270, Ancient Syria (May, 1988). pp.66-68

7.5m long by approximately 4.5m wide for a minimum area of 33.75m². Like elsewhere in the Complex, Room 13 has two occupational phases. These phases are seen in its two superimposed red plaster floors and the buttressing added to the exterior of the west wall. There was little indication of fire in the northwestern part of the room; a possible explanation for this will be discussed below. The southeast, however, was badly burned and contained numerous carbonized logs.

At least three medium sized vessels were found in the northern and northwestern parts of Room 13. Like Room 12, the vessels appeared to be propped up by stones and red clay and left a depression in the floor. Otherwise, besides three pestles, few sherds or artifacts were recovered. The fixtures in the floor intended for jars suggest that the room was used for storage at some point.

Located east of Room 13 is Room 14, whose east wall appears to serve as the eastern edge of the Complex (Fig. 21). Room 14 is approximately 2.55m long and 5m wide with an interior area of 12.75m². There is a doorway at the western extent of the south wall which communicates with Room 15. The floor of Room 14 was uneven and made of grey clay. The exterior face of the north wall was buttressed during the second phase of occupation by piling stones against it.

Somewhat unusually, Room 14 showed little indication of burning. While it is possible that the room was open to the sky, this is unlikely since its size, location, and installations are similar to those of other rooms in the Complex which were clearly roofed. Nor is the portion of Room 13 immediately west of Room 14 burned. Room 15, immediately to the south, was burned, but without the apparent ferocity of other areas of the Complex. The portion of Room 13 which was badly burned is immediately to the west of Room 15. Thus, it appears that, for

whatever reason, when the Complex was put to the torch, the fire did not spread to Room 14 and the northern portion of Room 13 and was already dying as it reached Room 15.

In the eastern corner of Room 14, a small cubicle was created by extending two short interior walls from the north and south walls of the room. The southern interior wall was just two bricks long and two bricks wide, while the northern interior wall was made of stones and mudbricks covered in mud plaster and was rounded on the end. These two walls were slightly out of line with each other. The northern wall may have been constructed first as an interior buttress and the southern wall added later to create a discrete space. The eastern end of this feature was disturbed by an Islamic burial.

A basin consisting of stones covered in red mud plaster was located at the northern end of the cubicle. Embedded in the plaster of the feature were inverted rim sherds from very large vessels, forming a semicircle along the southern edge. Schwartz has identified the rim sherds as belonging to the type of vessel identified as “*Wannen*,” or tubs, at Munbaqa.³⁰⁴ The small area to the south contained several pestles and ashy lenses.

Another small space was created just to the west of the cubicle by two more walls projecting perpendicularly from Room 14’s north and south walls. The northern wall was slightly longer than the southern one. Inside this space, between the northern wall and the rounded wall to its east, were three individual mudbricks roughly aligned but not mortared together. Each mudbrick sat directly on the floor. Since Room 14 may have been used for storage (see below) the mudbricks could have been used to keep goods off of the floor to protect them from moisture and vermin. A course of stones extended west from the northern partition

³⁰⁴ Czichon, R.M. and P. Werner. *Die bronzezeitliche Keramik. Ausgrabungen in Tall Munbaqa-Ekalte IV*. Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft 118. Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, 2008. p.142

wall, the last of which appeared to be a door socket. These walls created a discrete space 40cm x 40cm access to which could have been controlled by a door set in the socket. The secured area is not very large and so only small quantities of goods or a few objects could be stored in it. Since access to this 'closet' was restricted by a door, it may have been intended for storage of goods or objects more valuable than the grain stored elsewhere in the Complex.

Like Room 13, very few sherds or objects were found in Room 14, possibly suggesting that they had been largely emptied of their contents prior to the destruction of the Complex. The function of Room 14 is difficult to immediately discern. The division of the room into three discrete sections, including one with a possible closet, suggests an attempt to restrict access. The cubicle with the three mudbricks is only 75cm wide and the example with the plastered basin is only 1m wide, making both too small and awkward to use for any physical activities such as grinding, pounding, or kneading. The small areas, in conjunction with restricted access to them, indicates that Room 14 was used for storage, possibly of more valuable goods than just grain, which would have been stored in Room 12.

Room 15 is located to the south of Room 14, with which it communicates, and to the east of Room 13 (Fig. 21). All but the southwestern corner of Room 15 was excavated and it appears that the room's East Wall is also the eastern limit of the Complex. The room is approximately 4.70m wide by 4.10m long with a total interior area of 19.27m². As discussed above, Room 15 was burned but without the intensity which characterizes the destruction of other parts of the Complex.

At least three occupational phases are apparent in Room 15. Two tannurs were clearly associated with an earlier phase of occupation; one against the North Wall and one against the South Wall. Also belonging to this earlier phase were two large rim sherds that join with those

of the basin installation in Room 14. An earlier floor was made of grey clay and was visible throughout the western part of the room. There are two patches of pavement in the southern portion of Room 15 made of flat boulders set in greenish-grey plaster. This pavement dates to the later phase of occupation since one of the paving stones overlaps an earlier tannur. The South Wall of Room 15 was built over the pavement, and thus postdates it, making it the latest phase of construction evident in the room. It appears that over the Complex's use-life it was necessary to buttress numerous walls to maintain their structural integrity. While it is possible that in the earlier phases of occupation Room 15 lacked a South Wall, it seems more likely that its complete reconstruction was part of the Complex's renovation and maintenance evident in so many of its rooms.

During the later phase of occupation, Room 15 had three tannurs of different sizes located in a row along its northern wall. The largest was in the northeast corner of the room and had a square opening above a mudbrick hearth. Immediately to the west of this was the smallest tannur which had several rim sherds packed against its exterior. The easternmost tannur was medium-sized and had a circular aperture above a triangular opening at the base. All three tannurs had a thick exterior coating of clay which would have helped to retain heat and thus lessen the amount of fuel needed to maintain the desired temperature.

The fact that tannurs are present in both the earlier and later phases of occupation indicates that the function of Room 15 remained largely the same throughout its use-life.

While the presence of multiple tannurs in Room 15 throughout its use-life might naturally lead to the conclusion that it was used for food production, this is not necessarily the case. In the Mittani Palace at Tell Brak, for instance, the presence of numerous ovens in Room 7 led to its initial identification and publication as a kitchen, though this later proved not to be the case.

Instead, they were more effectively interpreted as pyrotechnic installations in the palace workshop.³⁰⁵ While pyrotechnic installations were almost certainly used for cooking, this is by no means their only function,³⁰⁶ and thus their presence in Room 15 does not necessarily signify that the space was used for food production. If Rooms 14 and 15 were used in tandem, as seems to have been the case, then whatever was stored in Room 14, be it costly foodstuffs or valuable raw materials, may have been processed in Room 15.

Rooms 13, 14, and 15 appear to be slightly terraced, sloping upward from the south. Room 13 is approximately 33cm higher than Room 12 and Room 15 is approximately 25cm higher than Room 14. This is likely the result of a combination of repeated renovation and rebuilding coupled with the natural topography of the site.

Room 16 is located to the south of Room 11 and the west of Room 13. Only the northeast corner of the room was excavated and an area 3.25m wide by 1.25m long was exposed. While Room 16's East Wall was largely destroyed by an intrusive burial, the North Wall is intact and contains a doorway that communicates with Room 11 South. Like much of the rest of the Complex, Room 16 was burned.

Red plaster covers both the interior faces of the walls and the floor of Room 16, though the color is probably the result of the heat of the fire as opposed to the plaster's original color. While only a few sherds were found in the ashy fill just above the floor, higher up in the fill, near the West Balk, sherds belonging to a single vessel were found, suggesting that it fell from above.

To the north of the Complex is a cobble-paved street. It appears that the installation of the street and the earliest phase of the occupation of the Complex are contemporaneous, since the street is at the same elevation as the earliest floors. Large quantities of animal bones were found

³⁰⁵ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.5

³⁰⁶ Crawford, 1981. p.105

in the street, probably as the result of discard, and there is a depression along the northern edge that may have functioned as a drain or a channel.

Among the buildings thus far excavated at Umm el-Marra dating to the Late Bronze Age, most of which appear to have been primarily domestic, the Complex in the Southeast Area is unique. The most distinctive feature of the Complex is the courtyard surrounded on at least three sides by rooms. In general, courtyards are rare in domestic architecture during this period³⁰⁷ but when found tend to be associated with either public buildings, such as the palaces at Tell Brak,³⁰⁸ Nuzi,³⁰⁹ and Qatna³¹⁰ or substantial, though ostensibly private, dwellings at sites such as Tell Hadidi,³¹¹ Tell Bderi,³¹² and Tell Frey.³¹³

The primary activities carried out in the Complex, at least at the time of its destruction, were the processing and preparation of barley. The presence of several tannurs indicates that bread was being baked in the Complex, and sherds from large vessels might suggest brewing or large-scale grain storage.³¹⁴ It stands to reason that baking and brewing were being done under the same roof since both tasks are closely intertwined. These activities are similar to those carried out in the “Tablet House” at Tell Hadidi and House 2 at Tell Bazi. In both cases it has been suggested that the beer brewed was intended for large-scale public consumption. This is

³⁰⁷ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.352

³⁰⁸ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.4, fig. 12

³⁰⁹ Starr, Richard F. S. *Nuzi: Report On the Excavation At Yorgan Tepa Near Kirkuk, Iraq*, Vol. II. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937. Plan No. 13

³¹⁰ cf. Luciani, Marta. “Operation K,” in *Excavating Qatna I. Preliminary Report on the 1999 and 2000 Campaigns of the Joint Syrian-Italian-German Archaeological Research Project at Tell Mishrife*, eds. al-Maqdissi, *et al.* Damascus: Direction Général des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie, 2002. pp. 145-168

³¹¹ The so-called “Tablet Building” in Area H (Dornemann, 1980. p.224)

³¹² Pfälzner, 1986-1987. p.296

³¹³ House 5, referred to in the publication as the “Palazzetto” (Baffi Guardata, Francesca. “Osservazioni sulla Architettura Domestica Lungo il Corso del Medio Eufrate nell’Età del Bronzo Tardo il Caso di Tell Fray,” in *Da Pyrgia Mozia: Studi sull’Archeologia del Mediterraneo in Memoria di Antonia Ciasca*, ed. M.G. Amadasi Guzzo, *et al.* Rome: Università di Roma, Istituto di studi del Vicino oriente, 2002. pp. 42, fig. 1:45-47)

³¹⁴ cf. Otto, 2007. pp.86-93; Fig. 44

despite the fact that the “Tablet House” was identified textually as a private dwelling.³¹⁵ The similarities in the installations, assemblages, and, to a lesser extent, the layout between the “Tablet House,” House 2, and the Complex suggest that they had similar roles in their respective communities.

In the Late Bronze Age and, indeed, throughout much of antiquity, the line between the public and private domains was fluid.³¹⁶ In archives found at sites such as Alalakh³¹⁷ and Nuzi,³¹⁸ for instance, documents concerning both public and private matters are found together. This phenomenon indicates that even in a public space like a palace private business was being transacted by people carrying out their public duties.

This lack of distinction between the public and private spheres is also evident architecturally. For instance, Otto notes that large public buildings are conspicuously absent from sites along the Middle Euphrates during the Late Bronze Age despite the fact that there is ample textual evidence for various types of public institutions.³¹⁹ McClellan explains this phenomenon by stating that, “there was a low degree of functional differentiation in the use of buildings...[and] an absence of specifically public or special-function buildings.”³²⁰

During the Late Bronze Age, large buildings such as the Complex in the Southeast Area probably had multiple functions that included private domestic activities and large-scale food production for public consumption possibly connected with a public institution, which will be discussed in the next chapters.

³¹⁵ Gates, 1988. p.66; Otto, 2007. p.151

³¹⁶ Hendon, Julia A. “Archaeological Approaches to the Organization of Domestic Labor: Household Practice and Domestic Relations,” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Volume 25 (1996). p.47; Nevett, 2010. p.6

³¹⁷ von Dassow, Eva. “What did Archives Mean in Mittani?: The Case of 15th-century BCE Alalah,” in *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*, Vol. 5 (Fall 2010). p.45

³¹⁸ Pedersén, Olaf. *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500-300 B.C.* Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1998. pp.19-20

³¹⁹ Otto, 2006. p.491

³²⁰ McClellan, 1997. p.43

As in many other structures at Umm el-Marra, the dynamic nature of the site's occupation is reflected in the changes that took place in the Complex over the life of its use. Areas that had previously been open in the north of the building, such as Rooms 1, 7, 8, and 17, were partitioned and enclosed as the needs of the Complex's occupants changed with time.

The longevity of the occupation of the Complex is evinced by several episodes of restoration over its use-life which included reinforcing walls with buttressing additions and replastering floors. The fact that when the floors were replastered new tannurs were placed in the same locations as they had been in the previous occupational phase suggests a continuity in the Complex's function over time.

Towards the end of its use-life, the rooms along the north side of the Complex appear to have been emptied, and their roofing was in the process of being dismantled (see above). This may have been the case because the rooms were no longer needed or because the Complex was being emptied and dismantled in anticipation of the events that would eventually lead to its destruction. In either case, the rooms to the south continued to be used in the same way they had been used for much, if not all, of the Complex's occupation – the processing of barley and the production of bread and beer.

The fire which finally ended the occupation of the Complex was severe, though it appears to have lost some of its intensity in parts of Rooms 13, 14, and 15. Nonetheless, after its destruction, the Complex was not rebuilt.

The last phase of Late Bronze occupation in the Southeast Area consists of the northwest corner of a small room constructed of large boulders. Only the North Wall, measuring approximately 3.70 m long, and a small portion of the West Wall, approximately 1.0m long,

were excavated. A large rim sherd was found between the stones of the exterior face of the room's North Wall.

While the remains of the room itself offer little insight into its function, the room's presence in the Southeast Area after the episode of destruction sheds light on the significance of the Complex in the previous occupational phase. While several areas of the site were destroyed by fire at the same time, only the Acropolis and the Southeast Area have any evidence for rebuilding subsequent to the inferno. Thus, they must have held particular significance for the inhabitants of the site since these were the only areas where an attempt was made to reestablish the community after its devastation.

2. The Acropolis

In the center of Umm el-Marra is a raised zone ("Acropolis") that appears to have witnessed the earliest occupation at the site in the early third millennium BC. Late Bronze occupation was identified in four excavation areas on the acropolis.

Acropolis Center

The Acropolis Center was the site of an elite mortuary complex in the Early Bronze Age and a round monumental platform (Monument 1) in the Middle Bronze Age. In the Late Bronze, four phases of occupation have been identified, extending from the site's earliest reoccupation to its destruction. The Belgian excavations of the late 1970's and early 1980's first exposed Late Bronze levels in this area.³²¹ The Dutch-American excavations were situated to the north and west of the Belgian trenches.

³²¹ Tefnin, 1980. pp.77-79; Tefnin, 1982. p.235; Tefnin, 1983. pp.143-144

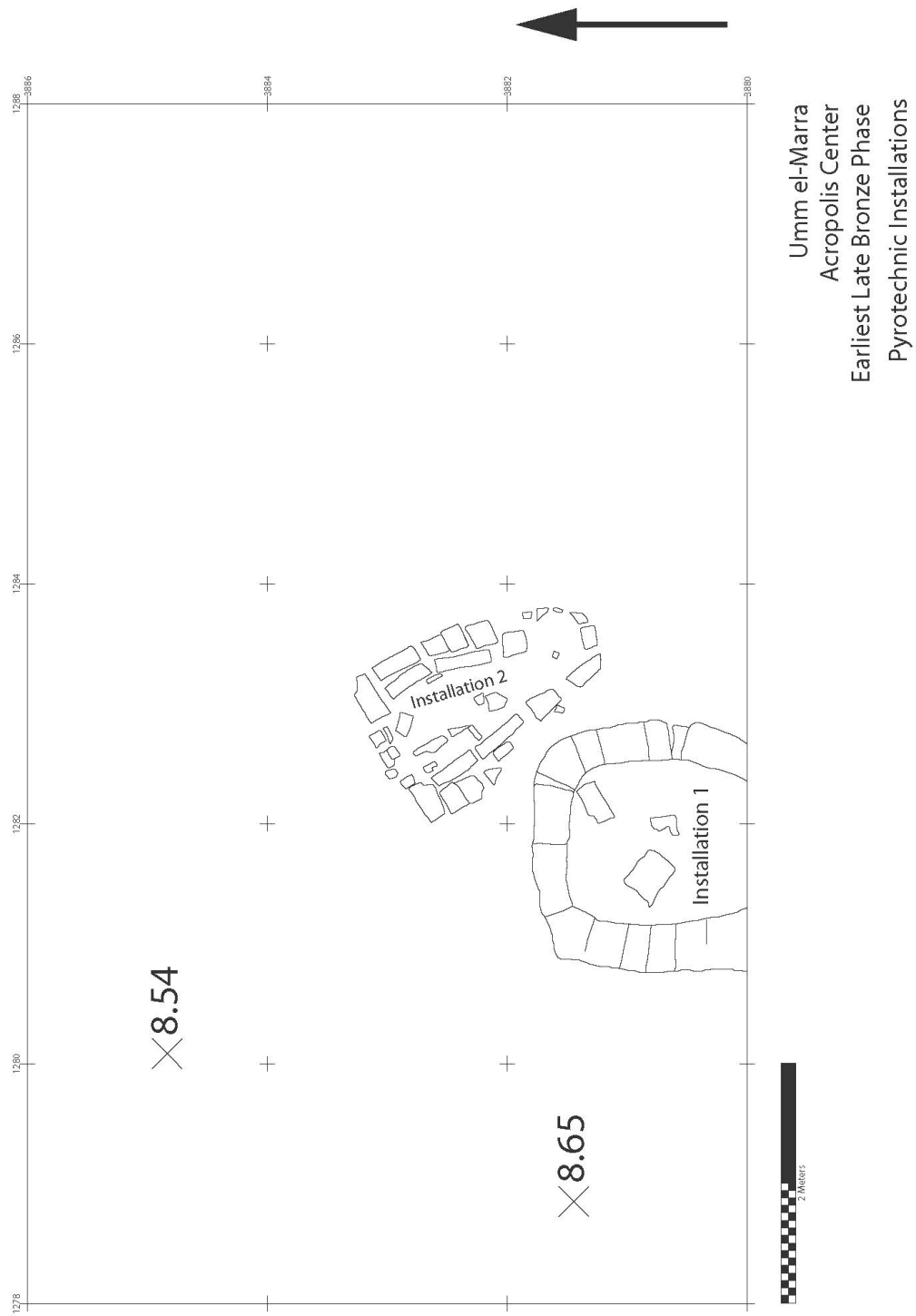


Figure 22: Pyrotechnic installations from the earliest Late Bronze Phase on the Acropolis Center

The earliest indication of Late Bronze activity on the Acropolis Center consists of a large pit, at least 20 m x 11 m, dug into earlier levels.³²² As has been discussed above (see West Area B), such pits were probably dug to provide soil for mudbricks or stones for wall foundations and were later repurposed after they were no longer needed for this task.

After the pit was emptied and ashy layers began to accumulate, at least three large pyrotechnic installations were built inside the pit area Fig. 22; Installation 3 is not pictured). These installations (designated 1-3) were initially identified as kilns. This interpretation is problematic, however; although copious amounts of ash were found in association with the features, in some places as thick as two meters, no slag or wasters were recovered, as would be expected for kilns.

Installation 1 had a roughly square superstructure above a narrow rectangular pit lined with mudbricks and measures 2.1 m at its widest point. Installation 2, which almost touches the northeast corner of Installation 1, is smaller, with a horseshoe-shaped superstructure above a narrower oval brick-lined pit 1.6 m long and 0.75 m at its widest point. This is the only one of the three installations which was fully excavated and measures 2 m x 1.5 m at its widest point. Installation 3 appears to be similar in size, shape, and construction to Installation 2. Most of Installation 3 remained unexcavated in a balk, although it appears that its entire 2m length was exposed. Of note is that only the interior of Installation 3 is vitrified, indicating that it had been exposed to higher temperatures than either of the other installations. This may suggest that it had a different function than Installations 1 and 2 despite its structural similarity to them.

³²² Schwartz, *et al.*, 2006. p.635, fig. 31

One explanation for the lack of slag or wasters could be that the kilns were cleaned out after each use, as Majidzadeh has suggested based on his study of kilns in Iran.³²³ Thus, kilns found without associated waste were simply awaiting the next use before they were abandoned. It is puzzling, however, that such care would be taken to remove slag and wasters but leave so much ash behind, suggesting that this is not the best interpretation of the installations on the Acropolis Center.

Several instances of pyrotechnic installations similar to those at Umm el-Marra, resembling kilns but lacking any associated wasters or slag, have been noted at various sites throughout the Near East. These include at Early Dynastic Umm el-Jir, Ur, Kish,³²⁴ Khafaje, and Abu Salabikh³²⁵ in southern Mesopotamia and at Late Bronze sites in Syria such as Tell Bazi³²⁶ and Munbaqa.³²⁷ Gibson, Moorey,³²⁸ Crawford,³²⁹ and Otto³³⁰ have all suggested that these are actually communal ovens used for tasks such as baking large quantities of bread, roasting meat, or in the brewing process. Moreover, it has been suggested that these large ovens were associated with public institutions³³¹ and used to feed a large number of people who were either attached to the institution or participating in a festival sponsored by it.³³² Lacking evidence for industrial activity, it is possible that the pyrotechnic installations at Umm el-Marra had a similar function and should be interpreted as ovens as opposed to kilns.

³²³ Majidzadeh, 1975. p.231

³²⁴ Gibson, McGuire. "Umm el-Jir, a Town in Akkad," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct., 1972). p.253

³²⁵ Crawford, 1981. pp.110-111

³²⁶ Otto, 2007. p.263

³²⁷ Werner, *et al.*, 1998. p.108

³²⁸ Gibson, 1972. p.253

³²⁹ Crawford, 1981. pp.110-111

³³⁰ Otto, 2007. p.263

³³¹ Crawford, 1981. pp.110-111

³³² Otto, Adelheid. "Defining and Transgressing the Boundaries between Ritual Commensality and Daily Commensal Practices: the Case of Late Bronze Age Tall Bazi," in *eTopoi: Journal for Ancient Studies, Between Feasts and Daily Meals: Toward an Archaeology of Commensal Spaces*, ed. S. Pollock. Special Vol. 2 (2012). p.186

Few artifacts were recovered from this phase, but a notable exception is a Mittani Common Style cylinder seal, probably of faience. It is made of a soft, dark material and depicts “two stick-figure humans who are mostly legs and a long-horned “goat” in an awkward diagonal position.”³³³

The second phase of occupation on the Acropolis Center consists of architecture built above the ashy debris that accumulated in the kiln area. The extant remains are relatively insubstantial, but it appears that there is at least one, and possibly two, rooms to either side of a wall running north-south. This wall, constructed of mudbricks atop a stone foundation, is approximately 6.5 m long and has a blocked doorway towards its northern end. It appears that the wall was rebuilt twice during the occupation of the structure. A short section of an east-west wall was uncovered which, along with the north-south Wall, delineates the only clear room. No floor was identified. A wall stub abuts the western face of the north-south Wall and may indicate the presence of a second room.

The architecture in the third phase of occupation on the Acropolis Center is more substantial and better preserved, comprising at least two discrete rooms and several tannurs arranged around a central courtyard (Fig. 23). Room 1, the largest, is bordered on the west by Rooms 2 North and 2 South and on the north by Room 3. Its extant north, south, and west walls indicate that it was at least 3.6m in width. Two tannurs were found in the northeast corner of Room 1 next to the East Wall of Room 3.

Room 2 is immediately to the west of Room 1. It is divided into two areas (Room 2 North and Room 2 South). Room 2 North and Room 2 South are divided by a 1.2m long internal wall, and the floor of both areas has a layer of lime plaster atop a cobble paving. Room 2 North

³³³ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.353

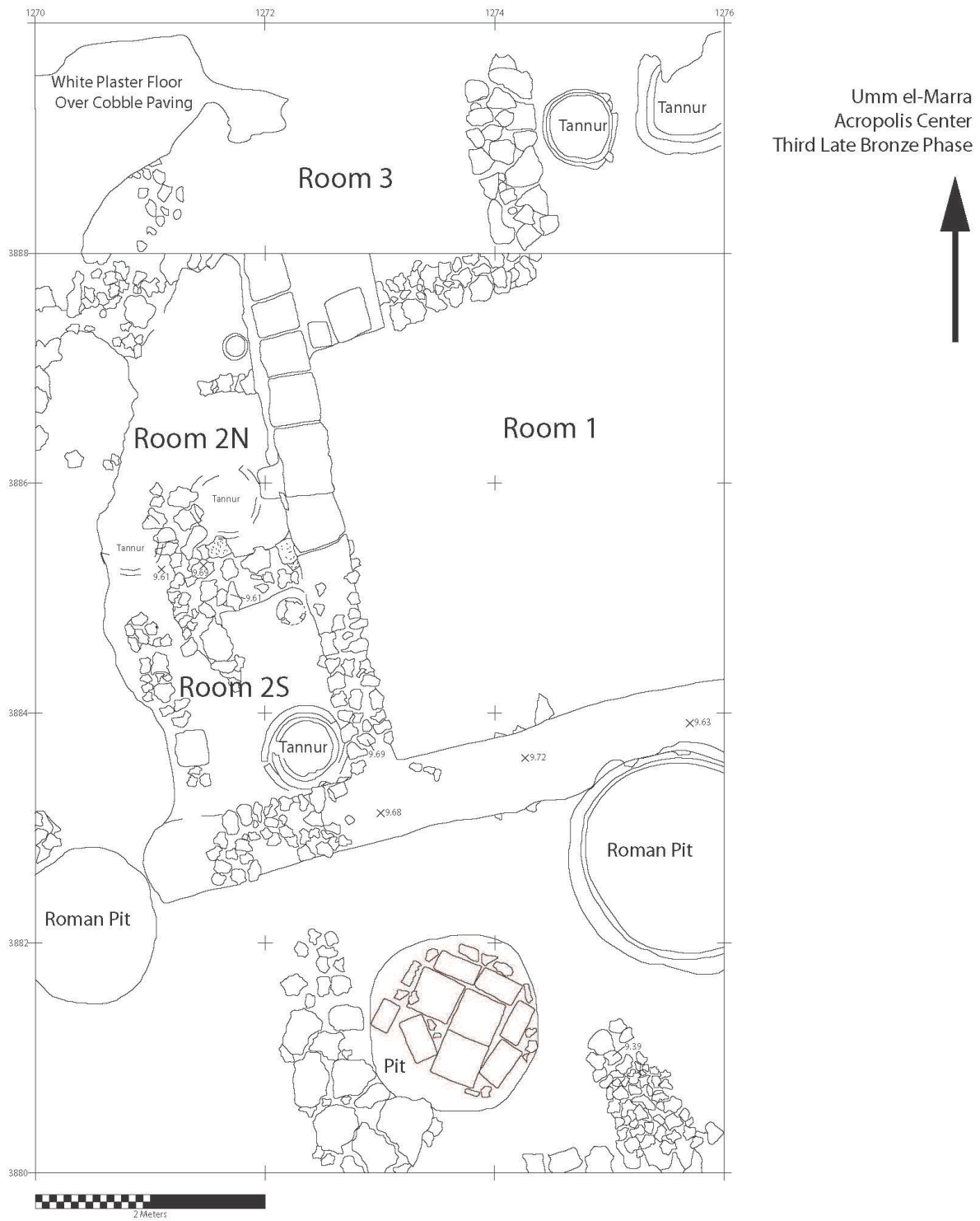


Figure 23: Architecture from the third Late Bronze phase on the Acropolis Center

had two tannurs against the north face of the internal dividing wall, only very fragmentary remains of which were visible. To the north, a 25cm diameter pot was found *in situ* wedged in a corner formed by the east wall and a small line of angular cobbles. Room 2 South has a similar layout to its northern counterpart and is 1.75 m long. A tannur was situated against the south wall and another 25cm diameter pot was found *in situ* wedged into a corner formed by the east wall and the internal dividing wall. Given their similar layout, Rooms 2 North and 2 South probably had similar functions, possibly involving food preparation.

Room 3 is located to the north of both Rooms 1 and 2. Like those rooms, it has a floor covered in white plaster on top of a cobble paving. No features were found in Room 3, making its function ambiguous.

To the south of the structure is a pit bordered on its western edge by a cobble pavement. The pit is approximately 1.3 m wide and at least 40cm deep with a mudbrick-lined bottom. The care taken to line the pit with mudbricks and surround it with a pavement suggests that it was used for storage, possibly of grain,³³⁴ as opposed to trash disposal.

The fourth phase of occupation on the Acropolis Center is the most extensively documented (Figs 24-26, 28). Belgian excavations led by Roland Tefnin in the late 1970's and early 1980's were the first to expose the architecture belonging to this phase. Tefnin describes a "palatial"³³⁵ structure composed of rooms arranged around a central courtyard. It appears that various parts of the building were constructed at different times, though all with the same orientation and all arranged around the same courtyard. Numerous large sherds with oily residue were recovered, leading the excavators to hypothesize that some of the rooms had been used as

³³⁴ Fairbairn and Omura, 2005. p.20

³³⁵ Tefnin, 1983. p.143

storage, possibly of oil.³³⁶ Several episodes of rebuilding or restoration are apparent before the structure was destroyed in a massive fire.³³⁷ After the destruction, the contents of the structure's rooms were left in place and the rooms themselves were filled with mudbricks to create a terrace or platform.³³⁸ This final phase was quickly abandoned ending the Late Bronze occupation of the Acropolis Center.

The architecture excavated by the Johns Hopkins/University of Amsterdam team on the Acropolis Center belonging to the fourth phase of occupation is much more fragmentary than that found by the Belgians and was not considered "palatial" by the excavators. However, similar to the results of the Belgian team, several rooms bordering large open areas, probably courtyards, were uncovered by the later excavations. At least two occupational phases were apparent. The arrangement of interconnected rooms around a courtyard or courtyards suggests that the architecture on the Acropolis Center was a complex similar to the structure in the Southeast Area.

Room 3 is the easternmost room on the Acropolis Center belonging to the initial construction of Phase 4 (Fig. 25). Its north wall was not excavated, but the south, east and west walls were, making Room 3 approximately 4m wide and at least 3.5m long. Though the northern end of the room's east wall was robbed out, the portion that remains suggests that it was braced by an internal buttress.

Room 3 had a hard gray floor which appears to have covered all of Trench 1292/3900. To the south of Room 3, Rooms 1 and 2 were built on top of the earlier hard gray floor. In this

³³⁶ Tefnin, 1980. p.77

³³⁷ *Ibid.* p.78

³³⁸ *Ibid.* p.79

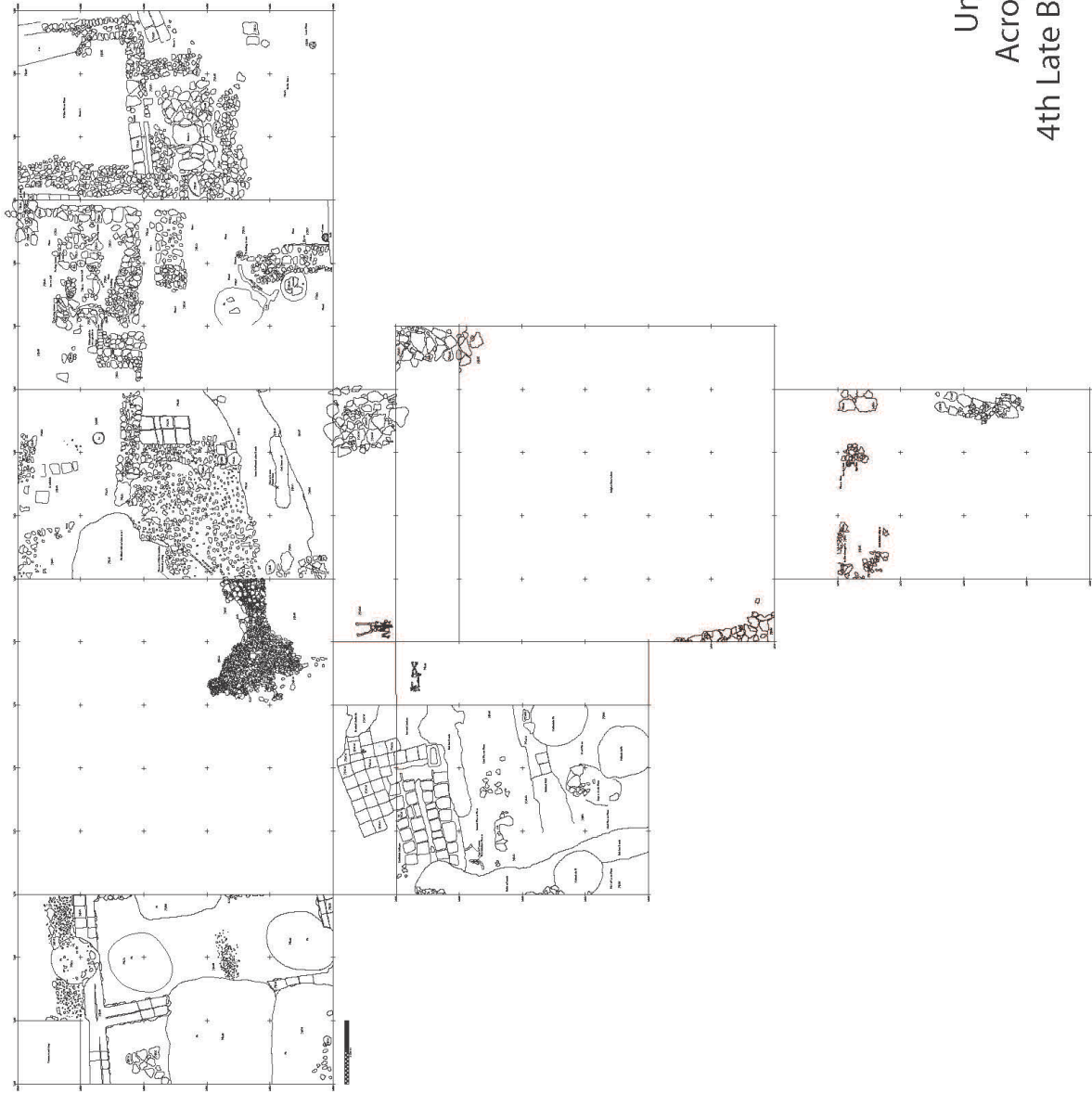
second phase of occupation, Rooms 1 and 3 had white plaster floors, while Room 2 was paved with large stone slabs.

Room 1 is the eastern of the two later rooms (Fig. 25). Its east wall was not excavated, but the north and south walls were, making Room 1 approximately 1.3m long and at least 1.5m wide. There is a doorway in the south wall of the room which communicates with Room 4 to the South.

A unique feature of Room 1 consists of a row of red mudbricks resting on the earlier gray floor. The function of this feature is unclear, though it may have involved storage given the room's small size and the findings of the earlier Belgian excavations of rooms with large storage jars.

Room 2 is to the south of Room 3 and to the west of Room 1 (Fig. 25). It is the only of the rooms that is largely intact and is approximately 3m long and 1.5m wide with an internal area of 4.5m². The room does not share a north wall with Room 3, as Room 1 does. Instead, the north wall of Room 2 was built abutting the southern face of the south wall of Room 3. In the middle of the stone paved floor of Room 2 was a pit with a stone-lined bottom. The pit was filled with sherds from several large storage jars, again suggesting the main purpose of this particular suite of rooms.

Room 4 is the southernmost of the four rooms and was most likely a courtyard. It was not covered in white plaster, like Rooms 1 and 3 to the north, but retained the original hard gray surface throughout its use life (Fig. 25). It appears that Room 4 originally abutted Room 3 before Rooms 1 and 2 were built during the second phase of occupation in the Complex. Evidently Room 4 communicated with both Rooms 1 and 2. A notable feature in Room 4 is a



Umm el-Marra
Acropolis Center
4th Late Bronze Phase

Figure 24: Architecture of the fourth Late Bronze Phase on the Acropolis Center

basalt tripod mortar resting on a mudbrick which, in turn, was found *in situ* on the gray surface. Otherwise, the Courtyard/Room 4 is devoid of features.

Room 5 is immediately to the west of Room 3 (Fig. 25). Like the rooms to the east, Room 5 had at least two occupational phases. The east and south walls of Room 5 are preserved to their entire lengths, while the west and north walls are only partially preserved. The room is square shaped, approximately 2.5 m in length and width, with an internal area of 6.25m². The middle of Room 5 is paved with flat stone slabs which are surrounded by white plaster. This phenomenon of part of a room paved with stones and the remainder with plaster is seen elsewhere on the site, particularly the Northwest Area

The second phase of occupation in Room 5 is evident from the small internal buttress (or dividing wall per the excavator) at the northern end of the west wall and an addition or repair done to the west end of the south wall.

To the south of Rooms 5 and 8 is an open area designated Room 6 (Fig. 25). It may have been part of a larger courtyard in the initial phase of construction of the Complex and, thus, included with Room 4 to the east. During the later occupation, however, Room 4 and Room 6 appear to have had different types of flooring and so can be considered discrete areas. The surface of Room 6 is plastered, often very thinly, and there is a low rectangular platform or bench without any other associated architecture running parallel to Room 5's South Wall. There is another bench, this one mudbrick, in the northwest corner abutting the north and west walls of Room 6.

At the southern end of Room 6 are two more poorly defined areas identified as discrete rooms by the excavator and designated Rooms 7 and 8 (Fig. 25). The rooms are divided from

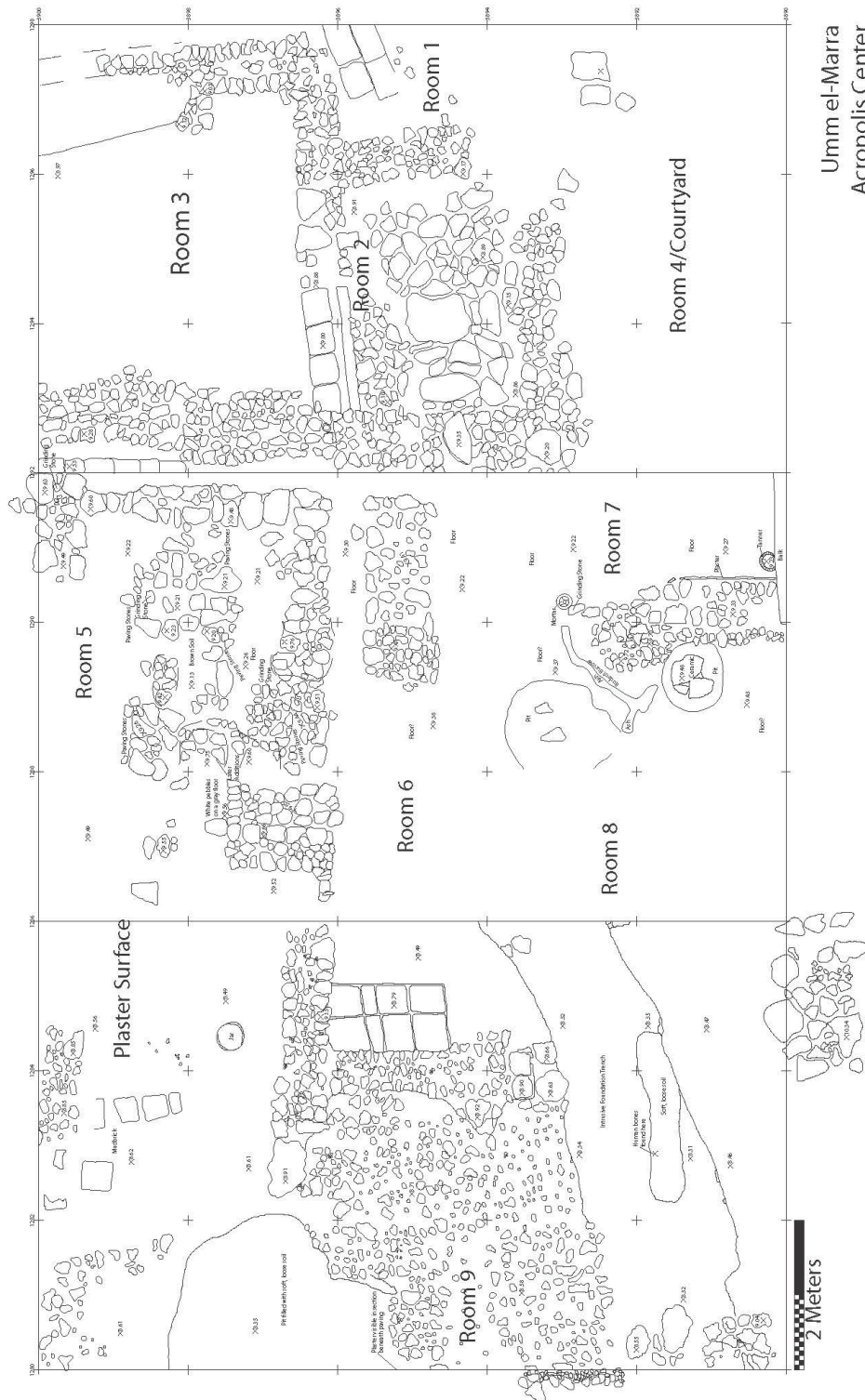


Figure 25: Rooms 1-9 of the fourth phase of Late Bronze Age occupation on the Acropolis Center

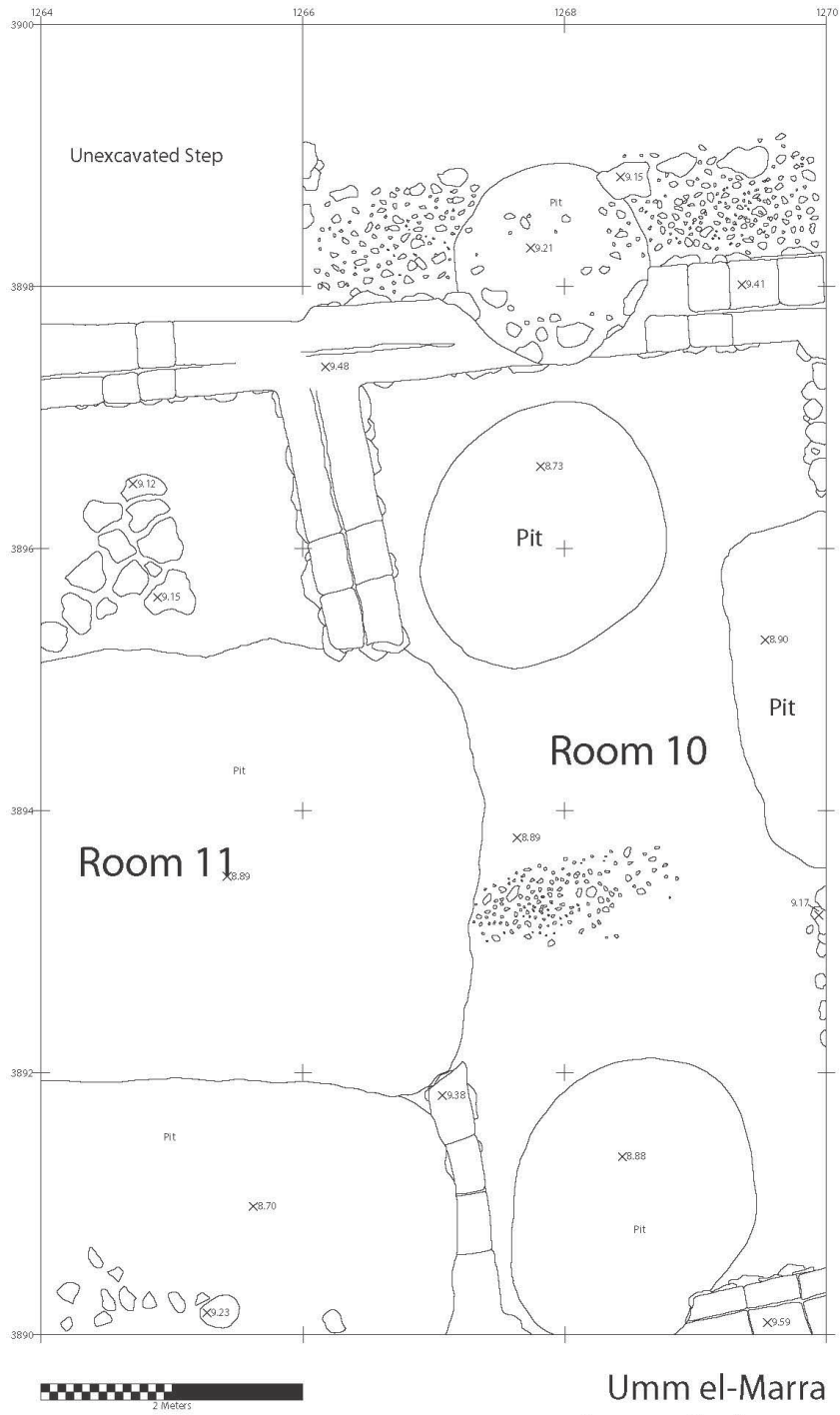
each other by a 3 m long masonry wall running north-south and may have been simply been subdivisions of the Courtyard/Room 6 as opposed to actual, enclosed rooms.

Room 7, the eastern of the two, has a white plastered floor that slopes down from south to north. The face of the dividing wall is plastered as well. A mortar, grinding stone, and tannur suggest that this area may have been used for food preparation.

Room 8, to the west, also has a plaster floor. The only feature in the room is a shallow pit, approximately 90 cm in diameter, with the base of a large ceramic vessel set into the bottom. This unusual feature would have made the pit waterproof and, thus, suitable for storing either liquids or foodstuffs, possibly in association with the food preparation installations in Room 7.

To the north of Room 6 and the west of Room 5 is a badly disturbed area with small sections of masonry running into the North Balk and the possible remnants of a north-south mudbrick wall designated Room 8. The Room has a badly eroded white plaster floor, indicating that it was part of the Complex, probably an interior space based on its location. A jar was found *in situ* on the floor and copious amounts of sherds were recovered from the fill.

Room 9 is to the west of Room 6 and south of Room 8 (Fig. 25). Its floor consists of cobbles, with occasional sherds and bones, set into a plaster surface. Though cut on the north by a large pit and on the south by an intrusive trench, the cobble and plaster surface is still quite extensive, measuring approximately 6.5 m at its widest point and 3.5 m at its longest. While the underlying plaster matrix is unusual, the cobble paving with ceramic and bone inclusions is similar to streets identified elsewhere at Umm el-Marra such as West Area A, the Northwest Area, and the Southeast Area and, so, may be a street or open area. Thus, this surface may indicate the westernmost extent of the Complex comprised of Rooms 1-8. These rooms were not burned, and so may have been unoccupied at the time of the site's destruction.



Umm el-Marra
Acropolis Center
4th Late Bronze Phase
Rooms 10 and 11

Figure 26: Rooms 10 and 11 of the fourth phase of Late Bronze Age occupation on the Acropolis Center

To the South of the Complex are two patches of paving comprised of large stone slabs. The paving likely extended over a wider area originally, but it was badly damaged by later LB construction and Hellenistic and Roman pitting (Fig. 24). Two fragments of female figurines were found in association with the paving (UMM99 H-031 and UMM99 H-048; Fig. 27). Both are mold made with the common LB motif of a nude woman holding her breasts.

At the westernmost end of the Acropolis Center are two large rooms, designated Rooms 10 and 11, which were badly damaged by Hellenistic pitting (Fig. 26). Like the Complex to the east, it appears that Rooms 10 and 11 were situated off an open area (a road or courtyard) portions of whose paving were designated Room 9. Unlike other areas of the Acropolis Center, these rooms were not burned and had no artifacts *in situ* suggesting that they were unoccupied at the time of the site's destruction.

Room 10, the eastern of the two, is approximately 7 m long and 3.3 m wide with an internal area of 23.1m². There is a small patch of pebble paving in the center of the room.

The South and West Walls of Room 11 were not excavated so it is impossible to determine the room's dimensions, though it is likely that it was roughly the same size as Room 10. There is a small area paved with stone slabs at the northern end of the room similar to those found elsewhere on the site.

Extending approximately 80 cm from the northern face of the north wall of Room 10 is an area of pebble paving edged with larger stones interpreted as a bench by the excavators. The northern face of the north wall of Room 11 is beneath the trench's step, though the stone feature is visible in the balk and it is clear that it extends westward. The lack of installations or artifacts make any functional interpretation of Rooms 10 and 11 impossible.

Just to the southeast of Rooms 10 and 11 is another badly damaged suite of rooms designated Rooms 12, 13, 14, and 15, all of which were burned. The walls of most of the rooms were robbed out in antiquity and are only delineated by the robber trenches (Fig. 28).

The northernmost of the rooms, Room 12, is the best preserved of the four. The main feature of Room 12 is a mudbrick platform of which approximately 15m² is preserved. At the



Figure 27: Mold made female figurine from the Acropolis Center (G. Schwartz)

platform's eastern extent there is a low ledge and an oblong mudbrick basin approximately 50 cm long and 25 cm wide. Roughly in the center of the platform is a 2.5 m long portion of a mud plastered channel. A very similar mudbrick platform with a narrow channel was found in Room 5 of the Complex in the Southeast Area and it is likely that both structures had similar functions, though at the present time it is unclear what those functions were.

To the south of Room 12 is Room 13. Though a large portion of the south wall was robbed out, the remaining section of the wall along with the robber trench indicates that the room was approximately 2.5 m wide and, though the east wall was not excavated, at least 5 m long. Thus, Room 13 was quite long and narrow. Room 13 has a mud plaster floor with the bases of two tannurs from an earlier phase of occupation just visible, one of which runs under the mudbrick platform in Room 12.

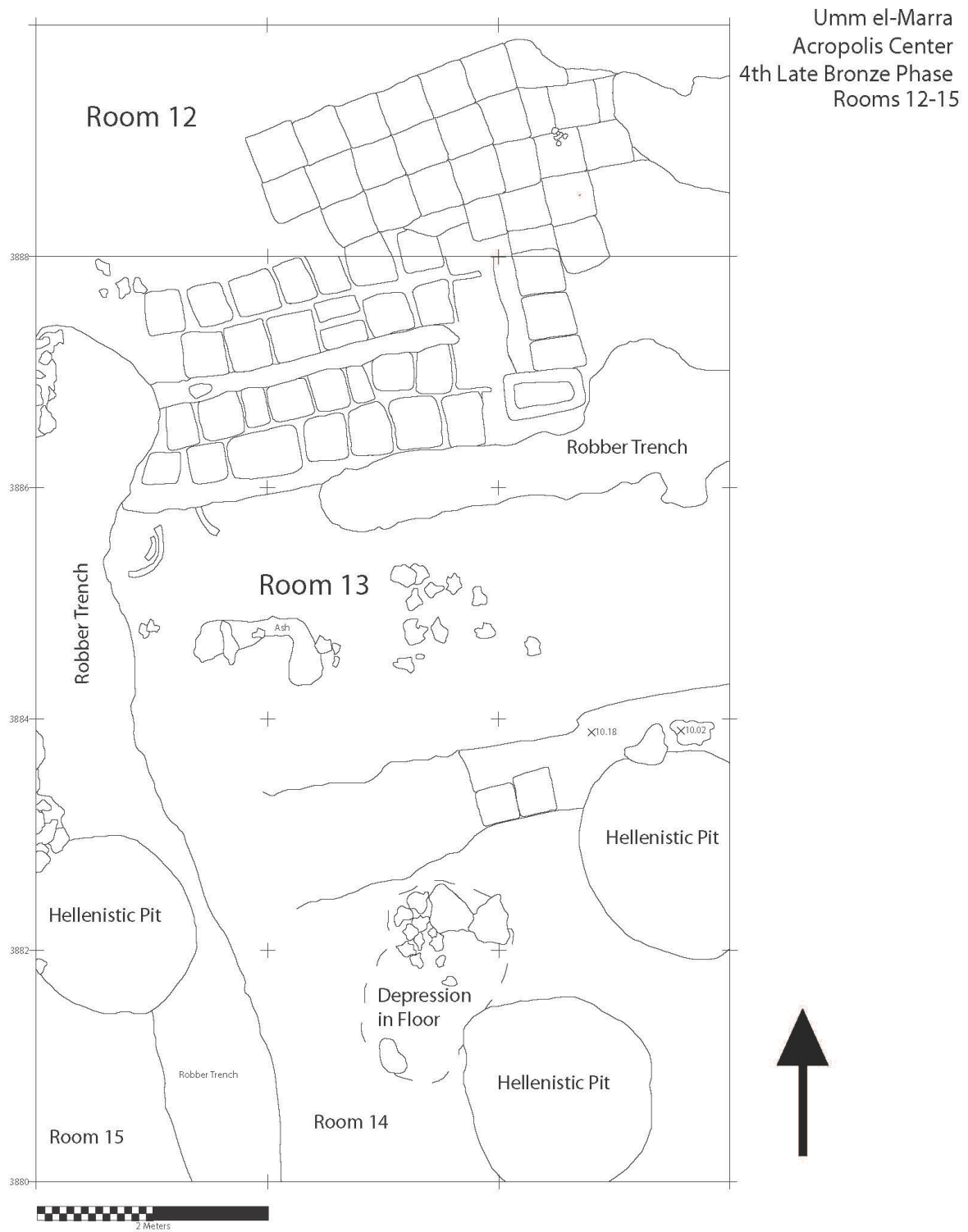


Figure 28: Rooms 12-15 of the fourth phase of Late Bronze Age occupation on the Acropolis Center

The tannurs suggest that the earlier phase of occupation involved food preparation.

Room 14 is to the south of Room 13 and to the west of Room 15. Though the rooms's full extent was not exposed (the east and south walls were not excavated) 11m² of it were uncovered. Like Room 13, Room 14 has a mud plaster floor. The only feature in the room is a large oval depression 1.75 m long and 1 m wide next to the north wall which is also similar to those found in the Southeast Area Complex.

Room 15 is to the west of Room 14. Only a small area, approximately 3m², was excavated. Unlike Rooms 13 and 14, which have mud plaster floors, Room 15 has a white lime plaster floor.

Only fragmentary architecture was encountered in the southernmost extent of the Acropolis Center, much of which was disturbed by the Belgian excavations. This area had been burned and several objects were found *in situ* on the plaster floor. Next to the West Face of a circa 75 cm wall fragment running north-south, a basalt ring and a female figurine were recovered. While common on the site, the function of the basalt rings remains enigmatic and open to conjecture. The figurine is the common mold-made LB type depicting a nude woman holding here breasts. Further to the west, the pieces of a large comb incised jar were found, crushed by the mudbrick collapse that covered much of the area.

To the east of the wall fragment was a small area paved with flat slabs. The extent of the paving is unknown since only a small area was excavated. To the south is another section of wall approximately 2.5 m long. No artifacts were associated with either the paving or the wall.

Also found in this burned phase were two human skeletons, both face down and without associated grave shafts suggesting they lay where they fell. One was of an adolescent and the other was of a small child 3-5 years of age. The sex of neither skeleton could be determined.

These skeletons are in stark contrast to the other Late Bronze ones found in West Area B, both of which had been carefully interred. The association of these individuals with the destruction level, the position of their bodies, and the lack of any burial suggest that they were casualties of the event that led to Late Bronze Umm el-Marra's destruction. They probably died violently and their last moments were filled with fear.

After the Complex on the Acropolis Center was destroyed, its contents were left in situ and the rooms were filled with mudbricks to make a platform,³³⁹ a practice also seen on the Acropolis East and the Acropolis West. However, nothing was built on the platform and there is no other evidence for occupation on the Acropolis Center after the conflagration.³⁴⁰ It is possible that the platform was constructed in preparation for a building project which never came to pass before Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra was abandoned permanently.

Though the architecture excavated by the Johns Hopkins/University of Amsterdam team was scant, in conjunction with the results of the earlier Belgian excavations it appears that the Acropolis Center contained relatively large-scale architecture during the Late Bronze occupation, at least in comparison to the rest of the site. This is unsurprising since the largest architecture and densest occupation of tell sites is often the highest and/or most centrally located area of the settlement and (excluding the remains of the site's fortifications) this is the case for the Acropolis Center.

Acropolis North

Unusually for Umm el-Marra, there is only one phase of Late Bronze occupation on the Acropolis North. The architecture consists primarily of fragmentary domestic structures with associated cobble or pebble paving. Acropolis North was not burned.

³³⁹ Tefnin, 1980. p.79

³⁴⁰ Tefnin, 1983. p.144

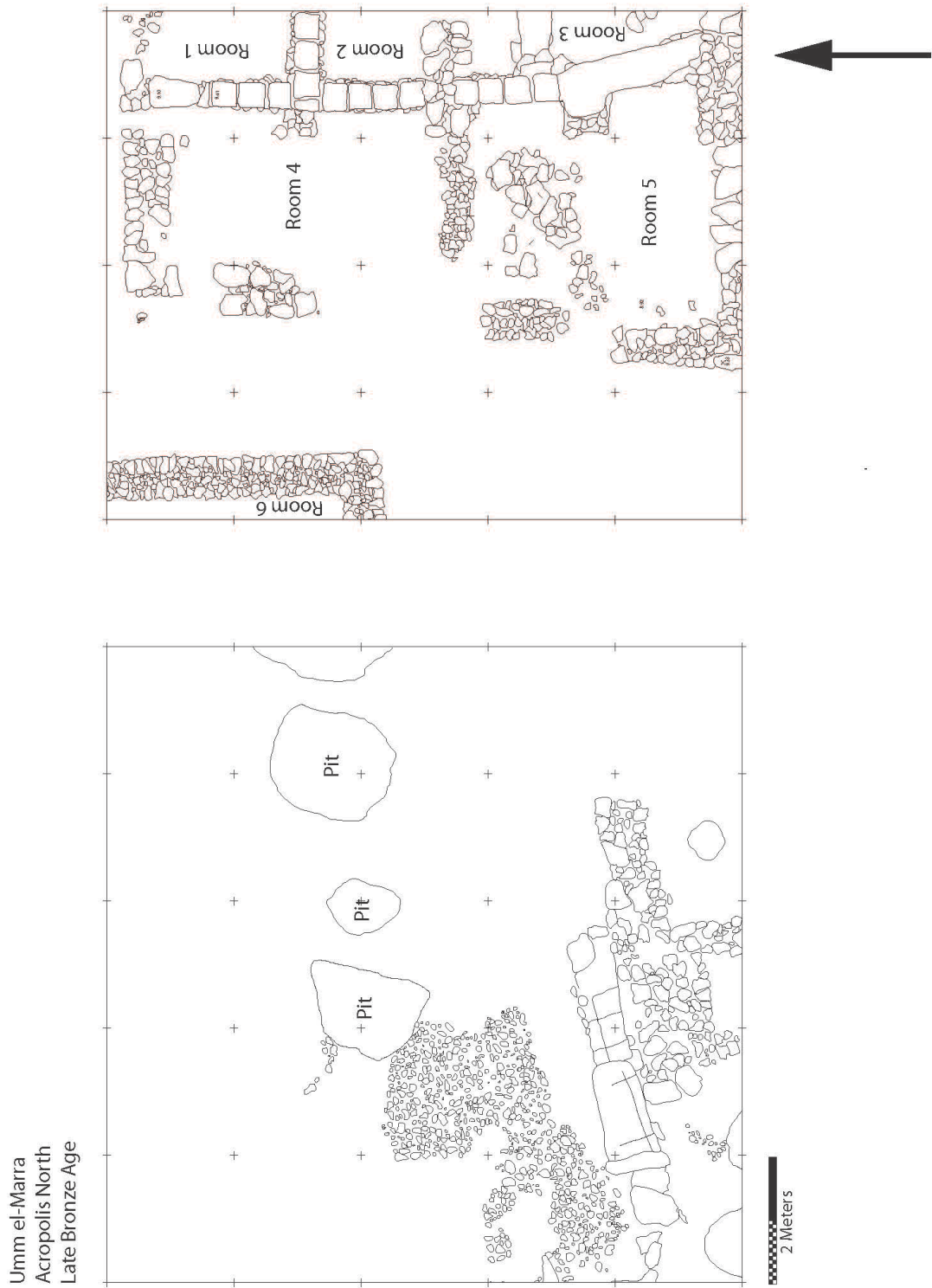


Figure 29: Late Bronze Age architecture on the Acropolis North

The best preserved architecture is in the southeast where the remains of a structure with at least five rooms, three smaller ones to the east and 2 larger ones to the west, was uncovered (Fig. 29). The entirety of the two western rooms was excavated while only the western ends of the three smaller rooms were exposed. All of the rooms were devoid of associated artifacts. To the north of the structure was a pebble paved surface. The layout of the rooms indicates that this structure was a Central Room House similar to the type seen in West Area A, the western section of the Northwest Area, and in North Area A, and Acropolis West. If this is the case it stands in contrast to the architecture elsewhere on the Acropolis which is significantly larger and organized around courtyards.

Room 1, in the northeast of the structure, is approximately 2.25 m long. It borders Room 2 to the south and Room 4 to the west. Towards the northern end of the west wall is a large stone which appears to have been used to block a doorway which communicates with Room 4. This blocked doorway suggests that the building was unoccupied at the time of the site's destruction which also explains why it was not burned. A similar situation can be seen elsewhere at Umm el-Marra in the Northwest Area.

Room 2 is to the south of Room 1, the north of Room 3, and the east of Rooms 4 and 5. It is approximately 3 m long with an internal buttress against the West Wall.

Room 3, in the southeast corner, is approximately 2.5 m long. It borders Room 2 to the north and Room 5 to the west. Of note is that there are fragments of basalt mortars embedded in the floor, possibly a work surface. Small areas of stone paving are a common feature in rooms throughout the site, but the reuse of mortars as pavement is unusual.

Room 4 is in the northwest corner of the structure and is approximately 4.25 m long and 2.5 m wide with an internal area of 10.63m². It is bordered by Rooms 1 and 2 to the east and

Room 5 to the south. There is a small internal buttress against the east wall which aligns with the wall separating Rooms 1 and 2. The eastern end of Room 4's north wall is separated from the east wall by a gap of approximately 50 cm. Though small, this may have been a doorway communicating with the cobble paving immediately to the north. The blocked doorway between this room and Room 1 is just to the south of this gap and would have allowed east access between Room 1 and the exterior.

Room 5 is to the south of Room 1 and is approximately 3.8 m long and 3.25 m wide with an internal area of 12.35m². It is bordered by Rooms 2 and 3 to the east. The wall which separates Rooms 4 and 5 is aligned with the internal buttress in Room 2. Roughly in the center of the room is a patch of paving set into the floor similar to that in Room 3 but made with stone slabs as opposed to reused mortars.

The lack of artifacts, features, or installations makes any functional interpretation of this structure impossible. However, the fact that all of the rooms were empty, at least one doorway was blocked, and that the structure was not put to the torch, suggest that it was unoccupied at the time of the site's destruction.

To the northwest of the five-roomed structure are part of the east and south walls of another building, designated Room 6. Though only approximately 1 m of the south wall was exposed, 7.5 m of the east wall was. The construction appears similar to that of the structure to the southeast and this building may have had a similar layout. However, the minimal exposure and lack of associated artifacts makes any further interpretation of this structure impossible.

The only other architecture exposed on the Acropolis North was badly damaged by Hellenistic intrusions. It consisted of a small complex of walls next to the South Balk which

enclosed a pavement of thick stone slabs. To the south was a plaster floor on which a large storage jar was found *in situ*.

The scant evidence makes a functional interpretation of this structure difficult. While the *in situ* ceramic was described as a “storage jar” in actuality it could have had an number of functions and, thus, it would be imprudent to ascribe a storage function to the room. The jar’s



Figure 30: Charioteer plaque from the Acropolis North (G. Schwartz)

presence also does not necessarily imply that the structure was occupied at the time of the site’s destruction thus negating the idea that the areas of the site that were not burned were unoccupied. Rather, since the vessel was actually set into the plaster floor it became a fixture of the building as opposed to a mobile furnishing, a phenomenon noted in the ethnographic literature.³⁴¹ On a

³⁴¹ Lancaster and Lancaster. 2010. p.217

practical level, a large storage jar would also have been difficult to transport and so may well have simply been left in place when the rest of the structure was emptied.

To the North is an area of cobble paving approximately 4.5 m long and 2.5 m wide. It appears that it originally covered most of the trench, but the Hellenistic disturbances destroyed most of it (Fig. 29). Four Late Bronze pits were cut in the pavement running in a rough east-west line and ranged in depth from 80 cm to 1 m. One of the pits is largely under the East Balk and as a result an area only about 50 cm wide was excavated. The other three pits were exposed in their entirety. The easternmost and westernmost pits were the largest with diameters of approximately 1.6m and 1.5m respectively. The larger pits were filled with an ashy deposit with occasional pieces of bone and ceramic.

The middle pit, though the smallest of the three with a diameter of approximately 1 m, contained the most interesting assemblage. It was approximately 1 m deep and was filled with a large amount of ceramic and bone as well as a spindle whorl or model chariot wheel. Most notable, however, were a molded plaque depicting a charioteer (UMM99 O-006; Fig. 30)³⁴² and a zoomorphic ceramic vessel.

The charioteer plaque, which is 8.6cm long, 8.1cm wide, and 1.8 cm thick depicts a single driver equipped with a bow on “a small, light vehicle that has an axle with large spoked wheels near the rear of its body and is drawn by a team of horses.”³⁴³ The light, two-wheeled chariot the plaque depicts was one of the technological hallmarks of the Late Bronze Age³⁴⁴ and is widely credited as one of the factors in Mittani’s swift rise.³⁴⁵ In a social context, chariotry was associated with the *mariyannu* class within the Mittani Empire, the uppermost echelon of

³⁴² Originally published in Schwartz, *et al*, 2003.

³⁴³ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.351

³⁴⁴ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.353

³⁴⁵ Moorey, 2001. p.3

society.³⁴⁶ Moreover, it was mentioned in the standard greeting formula between Great Kings in the Amarna Letters where the rulers would extend good wishes towards their counterparts' horses and chariots in addition to the various members of their family and court. As both an object and an idea the chariot/charioteer loomed large among the empires of the Late Bronze Age, particularly Mittani, and this fascination is reflected in the plaque from the Acropolis North.

Though fragmentary, only a portion of the hind quarters was preserved, the zoomorphic vessel is of a type found at numerous Mittani sites including from the courtyard of the palace at Brak,³⁴⁷ and the temples at Rimah³⁴⁸ and Nuzi.³⁴⁹ These vessels are often referred to as “pig pots” though Starr maintained that the ones from Nuzi actually represented lions despite their porcine appearance.³⁵⁰ Their unusual shape, the bodies are cylinders mounted horizontally on short legs, makes it difficult to assign any practical use to these zoomorphic vessels.

The location of these pits so close to other buildings is unusual. Trash pits are generally located well away from inhabited areas, a practice seen elsewhere at Umm el-Marra. Since Acropolis North was not burned, it was likely unoccupied when other areas of the site were destroyed. The excavator notes that the pits appeared to be cut into the pebble paving and thus may have been dug after Acropolis North ceased to be inhabited, possibly for use by the occupants of Acropolis Center.

The contents of the smallest pit are particularly intriguing. Contemporary zoomorphic vessels are often found in cultic contexts and chariotry played an important role in both the

³⁴⁶ While much ink has been spilled on this topic, cf. Wilhelm, 1989 and Von Dassow, 2008.

³⁴⁷ Oates *et al.*, 1997. pp.68; 220-221 fig. 210

³⁴⁸ Postgate, Carolyn, D. Oates, and J. Oates. *The Excavations At Tell Al Rimah: The Pottery*. Warminster, England: Published for the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and the Directorate of Antiquities by Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1997. pp.75; 248-249 pl. 99

³⁴⁹ Starr, 1939. Vol. I pp.99-101; vol. II pl.103L; 104; 105A,B; 106A; 107D

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

society and religion of northern Syria, especially in association with the storm god, the region's primary deity.³⁵¹ While it is certainly possible, even likely, that this pit is simply a receptacle for rubbish, its uniqueness among the four others coupled with its contents may suggest a ritual deposit, possibly in association with closing the nearby structures at the end of their occupation. Supporting this hypothesis are Hurrian ritual texts from Hattušaš in which pits are dug and offerings placed in them as a way of communing with chthonic deities.³⁵² Though significantly older, the *āpi* at Tell Mozan/Urkish, a site with deep Hurrian roots, also contained a ceramic vessel depicting a pig as well as ashy deposits.³⁵³ Furthermore, the texts from Hattušaš specifically mention piglets as a common offering in these rituals³⁵⁴ and the zoomorphic vessel may well be part of this tradition. Thus, this pit may represent a physical manifestation of the spiritual life of the Late Bronze inhabitants of Umm el-Marra, possibly in the Hurrian tradition. This may also help explain why the burials in West Area B were placed in a trash pit.

Compared with other areas of Umm el-Marra in general, and the Acropolis in particular, the Late Bronze settlement of Acropolis North was both small-scale and short-lived, comprising only a single occupational phase and was probably unoccupied when other areas of the site were burned. It's most interesting feature is the small pit whose contents suggest ritual deposition consistent with what is known about Hurrian beliefs.

³⁵¹ Black, Jeremy and Anthony Green. *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. p.52

³⁵² Collins, Billie Jean. "Necromancy, Fertility, and the Dark Earth: The Use of Ritual Pits in Hittite Cult," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer. Boston: Brill, 2002. p.225

³⁵³ Collins, Billie Jean. "A Channel to the Underworld in Syria," in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Mar. 2004). pp.54-55

³⁵⁴ Collins, 2002. p.226

Acropolis East

The Acropolis East was first excavated by the Belgians who then used it to deposit their back dirt. This meant that before this area could be further investigated a significant amount of disturbed soil had to be removed. As in other areas of the site, the earliest evidence for Late Bronze activity on Acropolis East are pits, likely dug as a source of soil to make mudbricks for the initial phase of reoccupation. Of note are five Cypriot sherds that were found in one of the pits.³⁵⁵ As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4, Cypriot White Slip II sherds do not appear in the region until the mid-15th century,³⁵⁶ thus establishing a *terminus post quem* for the reoccupation of the Acropolis East,³⁵⁷ and likely the entire Late Bronze Age settlement. Similar to the Acropolis Center, a pyrotechnic installation, identified as a keyhole kiln, was built in one of the pits. After the kiln fell out of use, the pit was filled with ashy soil.

The second phase of occupation on the Acropolis East belongs to the destruction level also seen on the Acropolis Center. Unlike the Acropolis Center, the Acropolis East does not have an occupational phase before the destruction level. This may be because the pits were used for waste disposal by residents of the Acropolis and the area was not developed until the pits had been filled.

The extant architecture is poorly preserved and no discrete rooms or buildings can be discerned. What remains seems to have been primarily domestic, which is suggested by the presence of tannurs and storage jars as well as mortars and pestles. Towards the southern end of the Acropolis Center are two small surfaces. A small patch of cobble paving next to the North Balk is separated from a plaster floor to the south by a short length of wall. To the north of the

³⁵⁵ Cuervers, *et al.*, 1997. p.213, fig. 20:5, 7-8

³⁵⁶ Gittlen, Barry M. "The Cultural and Chronological Implications of the Cypro-Palestinian Trade during the Late Bronze Age," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 241. (Winter, 1981). p. 50

³⁵⁷ I thank Glenn Schwartz for pointing this out.

pavement is a relatively long fragment of wall which was associated with charred wooden beams suggesting the structure it belonged to was roofed. To the east are fragmentary walls, a tannur, and what appears to be a square bin made of mudbricks which runs into the East Balk.

Like the Acropolis Center, the Acropolis East was burned, indicating that it was occupied at the time of the site's destruction.

Acropolis West

The Late Bronze occupation of the Acropolis West has already been published³⁵⁸ so my remarks on this area will be brief. Interestingly, the Acropolis West appears to have both a Central Room House (House 2), similar to the Acropolis North, but also an interconnected suite of rooms like the Acropolis Center (Complex 1). House 2 was constructed after Complex 1 and it may be that this structure, and possibly the Central Room House on the Acropolis North, was built to house members of a growing extended family who resided on the Acropolis. Kamp has noted that a new house is usually built when a new family is established.³⁵⁹ The assemblage from both structures includes mortars, pestles, grinding stones, and storage jars, indicating that the buildings were used for domestic activities.

A unique aspect of the Acropolis West is that although it was not burned, it has architecture that postdates the conflagration which destroyed the Acropolis Center and the Acropolis East. Like the post destruction architecture in the Southeast Area, [the] architecture here is small-scale and ephemeral, with only a few walls and a tannur preserved. It appears that a larger building project was begun, though never completed, on the Acropolis Center as the burned buildings were filled with mudbricks, probably to make a foundation for new buildings.

³⁵⁸ Curvers and Schwartz, 1997. pp.201-212

³⁵⁹ Kamp, 1993. p.309

The Acropolis West would have been a convenient place to live while working on the Acropolis Center, which may explain this second phase of occupation.

The post destruction architecture on the Acropolis West was built on top on layers of fallen mudbrick. The excavators suggest that earlier architecture was purposely demolished to create a sort of foundation for subsequent structures, a practice also noted on the Acropolis East.³⁶⁰ If there were still standing mudbrick walls on the Acropolis West, then it would have been easier to simply topple them to create a building surface than make new mudbricks for the same purpose. Using the standing walls would also have expedited the construction process, which would have been especially important if the site's housing stock was destroyed and dwellings needed to be built quickly. The use of mudbrick building platforms during the same time period has also been noted at Tell Bderi³⁶¹ and Tell Arbid,³⁶² the latter identical to Umm el-Marra.

³⁶⁰ Curvers, *et al.*, 1997. p.213

³⁶¹ Pfälzner, 1986-1987. p.295

³⁶² Bieliński, 2003. p.310

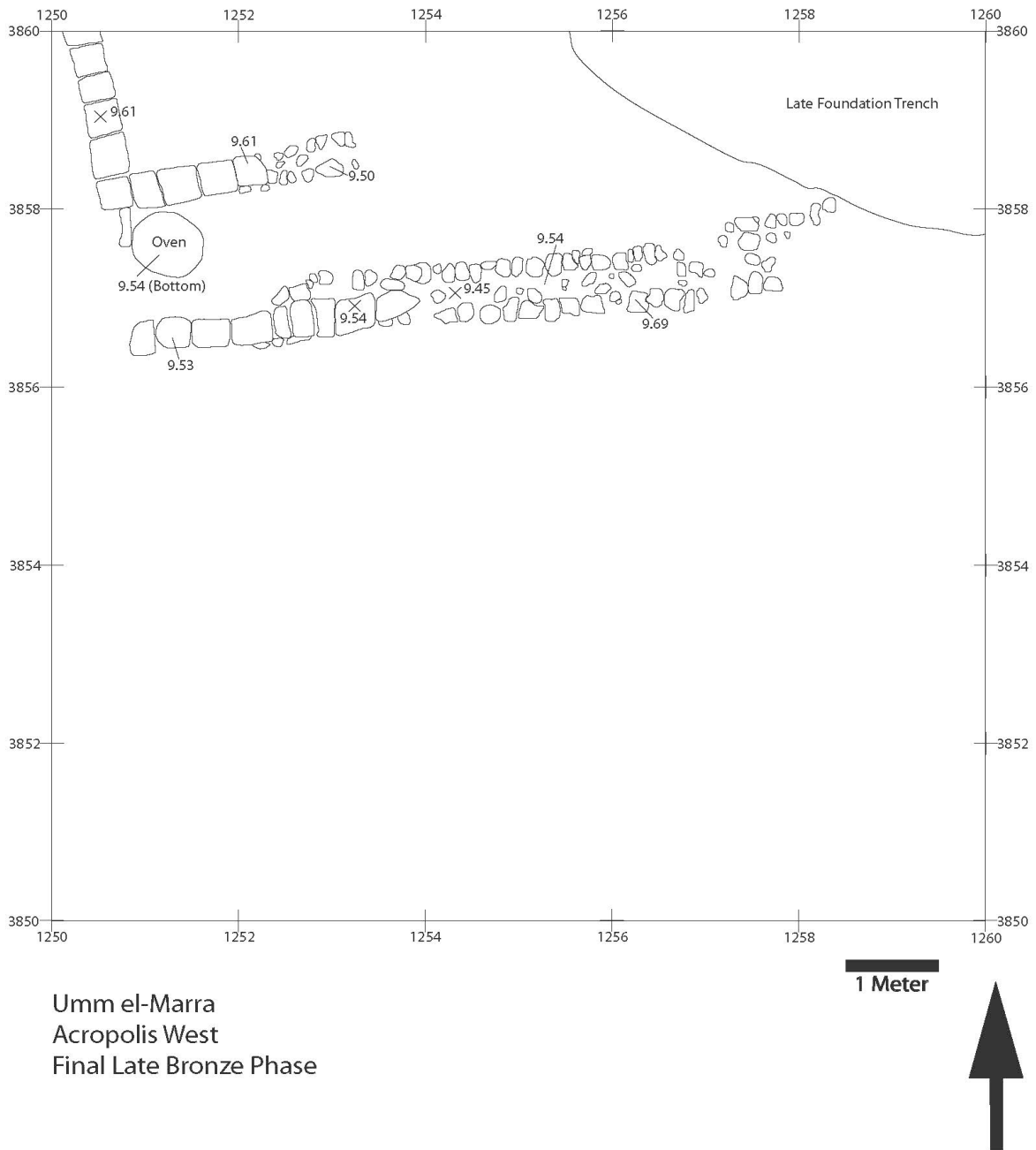


Figure 31: Final phase of occupation on the Acropolis West

CHAPTER 3.

Community, Household, and Settlement History in the Late Bronze Age.

Introduction

Life in Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra was ultimately shaped on all levels by members of the community itself. They inhabited the settlement, they constructed the architecture, they grew the food, and, ultimately, they lived and died there. By looking at various social constructs within Umm el-Marra, such as household and community, I hope to illuminate the internal dynamics of the settlement.

Much attention has been paid to the conceptual dimensions of households and communities in antiquity and, indeed, this is a crucial dimension of inquiry. However, the physical attributes of these institutions must also be taken into account for their interpretation. While both “household” and “community” were certainly intellectual constructs, they also occupied physical spaces. Just as the individuals who constituted them changed over time, the buildings they constructed changed with them. By examining how the physical loci of these institutions at Umm el-Marra changed over the course of their occupation a more dynamic understanding of their occupants can be developed. This chapter is intended to be a history of the site from the perspective of the Late Bronze Age community’s inhabitants. As such, it is the history of the houses they built and the landscape they inhabited.

One of the overarching critiques of household archaeology is often the absence of temporality from the interpretation of the excavated data.³⁶³ In my discussion of the Umm el-Marra data, I attempt to remedy this by making temporality a key factor in understanding the

³⁶³ Kamp, 1993. p.294; Schmid, 1999. p.189; Nevett, 2010. p.6

internal dynamics of the Late Bronze Age community. While it is impossible to reliably use the available data to reconstruct life minute-by-minute or hour-by-hour, the rhythms of life day-by-day, season-by-season, and generation-by-generation can be examined using a combination of archaeological, textual, and ethnographic data. In interpreting the data through a temporal rubric, I hope to investigate the Late Bronze Age households on a more human scale than is often done in archaeology.

Creating Community: The Initial Resettlement of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra

The first areas of the tell occupied during the Late Bronze Age were the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A and West Area B. Rather than architecture, it is pitting on the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, and in West Area B which characterizes this earliest Late Bronze Age reoccupation of the site. As I have discussed above, I believe that the reason the first Late Bronze occupants of Umm el-Marra excavated massive pits was to obtain stone for foundations and, more importantly, the optimal soil for making mudbricks. The production of mudbricks and the construction of mudbrick architecture is a seasonally predicated task. Sufficient heat is required to dry and harden the bricks, and so this is a task which is carried out in the summer months.³⁶⁴ Construction in general probably took place at this time of year as well. Just as the bricks need the hot, dry summer sun to cure, the rainy Syrian winter would have hampered building.

Elsewhere at Umm el-Marra, in North Area A, the production of quicklime would have provided another material essential in the construction of houses. The architecture belonging to

³⁶⁴ Oates, 1990. p.389

this earliest phase (which has been elaborated on elsewhere), from West Area A, the Southeast Area, and possibly the Northwest Area, is small-scale and utilitarian.

After soil had been removed from the pits on the Acropolis Center and in West Area B but before they were used as middens, the pits were utilized for very different purposes. On the Acropolis Center, pyrotechnic installations I interpret as communal ovens were built in the pits, without any other associated architecture. In West Area B, graves were dug into the large pit located in that zone, possibly because of the domestic associations of the pit and the role subterranean spaces played in Late Bronze Age ritual. In contrast, the pits on the Acropolis East were employed as middens from the time they were excavated, a situation made clear from the exclusively ashy deposits found in them.

Communal ovens such as those in the Acropolis Center are unusual at Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra. Tannurs are, by far, the most common type of pyrotechnic installation and all houses have at least one. The only other “communal” oven was found in the Northwest Area and is clearly associated with the agglutinative structure.

The singularity of these ovens offers an insight into the social dynamics of the first Late Bronze Age settlers at Umm el-Marra. Not only were they facilities to prepare food, these early ovens on the Acropolis Center are manifestations of a community trying to establish itself. Facilities for communal ovens have been noted at various Late Bronze sites in Syria such as Munbaqa and Tell Bazi,³⁶⁵ and Akkermans and Schwartz have noted that one of the hallmarks of Late Bronze Age Syrian society is a shift from domestic activities largely carried out in private to the public sphere.³⁶⁶ The use of communal ovens in early Late Bronze Umm el-Marra

³⁶⁵ Otto, 2012. p.185

³⁶⁶ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.352

would have brought the inhabitants of the community together and helped to create a sense of common purpose.³⁶⁷

The creation of a sense of shared identity would have been especially important in the earliest stages of Umm el-Marra's resettlement. Unlike the transition between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, there is no manifestation of the sense of community identity typified by Monument 1 being built over the Early Bronze mortuary complex. Rather, the Late Bronze inhabitants of the site would be forced to create their own sense of place and belonging from scratch. One of the basic constituents of a community's identity is the daily tasks required of its members for survival and how the community acts in concert to carry out these tasks. In short, it is the banal minutia of daily life that is the fundamental constituent of community identity. This is what shapes the perceptions of the community members' world and their place in it.³⁶⁸ The shared labor of constructing the ovens and producing food for the community would have helped to accomplish this task at Umm el-Marra. This is especially true in the case of food preparation and consumption, which is a highly charged social act.

After the ovens fell out of use, small-scale architecture, small at least when compared to the architecture of later phases, was built on the Acropolis Center. The Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A and Southeast Area formed the nucleus of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra, as evidenced by the longevity of their domestic occupation, with multiple phases of construction. While the agglutinative building in the Northwest Area had several occupational phases, with rooms were added throughout the structure's use-life, this procedure involved altering an existing structure, not leveling it and building an entirely new one as we see on the

³⁶⁷ Wilhem, 1989. p.42

³⁶⁸ Yaeger, Jason. "The Social Construction of Communities in the Classic Maya Countryside," in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. p.125

Acropolis Center, West Area A, and the Southeast Area. Indeed, in the Northwest Area, Acropolis North, and Acropolis West there is only a single Late Bronze building phase. While a lengthier occupation can be reconstructed for the Acropolis East, most of it consisted of pits used for waste disposal, probably on the part of inhabitants of the Acropolis Center. Only after the pits were full was a single phase of buildings erected there. Moreover, the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A, and the Southeast Area were all burned, indicating that they were occupied at the time of the site's destruction, as opposed to the other areas that I have argued were abandoned. Further, only the Acropolis Center and the Southeast Area have any post-destruction occupation, demonstrating the tenacity of the occupants of those areas.

While North Area A has multiple Late Bronze Age phases, all but one are industrial in nature. The final phase, which consisted of domestic architecture, was not burned, probably indicating that it was not occupied when the other areas of the site were burned.

When considering the distribution of this earliest period of residential settlement, it is clear that the main locus was the southern half of the tell. North Area A was also utilized during this first phase but, unlike the other three, is devoid of residential architecture. Instead, it was used to slake limestone, which explains why it is located as far from the other three areas as possible while still being on the tell. As I have discussed in section on North Area A, burning limestone is a smoky, acrid process and one which the first residents of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra would have wanted to do as far a remove as possible from their homes.

Compared to later phases of occupation, these earliest buildings were of a more modest scale. This is seen in the first phase of occupation in West Area A, the Southeast Area, and on the Acropolis Center. It is impossible to determine how long these structures were occupied before they were levelled and new buildings constructed on top of them. This speaks to a larger

issue in attempting to approach the site's interpretation through a temporal rubric. It is impossible to refine archaeological chronology of this period enough to be measured in the span of days, months, and years in which people live their lives. However, by examining the physical properties of the buildings themselves and the demographic patterns of their inhabitants it is possible to reconstruct their use-life within a timeframe of human lived experience, not centuries.

At Umm el-Marra, in all periods of the site's occupation, buildings had a stone foundation and a mudbrick superstructure. While the stone foundations were durable, the mudbrick superstructures needed annual upkeep and survived for only a limited amount of time before they had to be completely rebuilt.³⁶⁹ In addition to this, the changing composition of families throughout their lifecycles would have necessitated renovation and remodeling of their dwellings as new circumstances demanded different uses of space.

The average use-life of a mudbrick structure is between 30 to 50 years before it must be rebuilt.³⁷⁰ Since the structures in the first building phases on the Acropolis Center, West Area A, and the Southeast Area were all intentionally emptied, levelled, and replaced, it is reasonable to think that they had been occupied for ca. 30-50 years before their occupants constructed new dwellings. Of course, over this period of time they would have changed with the needs of their occupants, but in all three areas the remains of the earliest phase of occupation are so minimal that it is difficult to discern what these changes were.

The use of a building over time is not just predicated by the materials from which it is constructed, of course, but also by the changing needs of its inhabitants. In his study of households in Ugarit, Schloen provides an extensive review of the literature concerning household size and demographic trends in the Mediterranean. He concludes that while three

³⁶⁹ Kamp, 1991. p.29

³⁷⁰ Kamp, 1993. p.309

generation extended families were the ideal, it was rare for a full three generation extended family to be living together at any given time because “few married men had a living father and few children had a living grandfather; hence the three-generation joint family represents a relatively brief phase of the household lifecycle, when it occurs at all.”³⁷¹ The archaeological and textual data from Ugarit, for instance, suggest that most dwellings were occupied by nuclear, not extended, families.³⁷² That nuclear families tended to be more common is supported by Sallaberger who, based on textual evidence, suggests that at Emar each house was generally occupied by a nuclear family and a few dependents.³⁷³

In the ancient Near East, the evidence indicates that extended families gave way to nuclear families and vice-versa, depending on familial demographics.³⁷⁴ However, nuclear families would have outnumbered extended families by a ratio of about 2:1, because of the issues mentioned above. Schloen posits that nuclear families included ca. 5 persons, while extended households had between 7 and 10 individuals including servants, slaves, more distant relatives, and other dependents.³⁷⁵ In any community one would expect a mix of nuclear and extended families living side by side and an attendant mix of architecture predicated on the needs of each family.

As families at Umm el-Marra changed over time, they would have altered the spaces they inhabited to fit their new needs. Both the construction of a new dwelling and alterations to existing ones are physical manifestations of these temporal demographic changes which are

³⁷¹ Schloen, 2001. p.125

³⁷² *Ibid.* p.108

³⁷³ Sallaberger, Walther. “Home-made Bread, Municipal Mutton, Royal Wine. Establishing Social Relations during the Preparation and Consumption of Food in Religious Festivals at Late Bronze Age Emar,” in *eTopoi: Journal for Ancient Studies*, Between Feasts and Daily Meals: Toward an Archaeology of Commensal Spaces, ed. S. Pollock. Special Vol. 2 (2012). p.158

³⁷⁴ Schloen, 2001. p.108

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* pp.125-126

visible archaeologically.³⁷⁶ In traditional Syrian villages, a house is built when a new family is established, and rooms are often added to existing spaces when new individuals enter an already established family.³⁷⁷ It stands to reason that this would also have been the practice in antiquity, since the same basic materials and construction techniques were utilized. The ubiquity of the main building material, soil, means that the construction of new rooms is a relatively easy and inexpensive undertaking. This, in conjunction with the fact that family size was frequently changing, suggests that building and remodeling would be a regular activity as rooms are added or renovated as the need arises and houses are built for new families.³⁷⁸ The copious renovations evident in the Southeast Area where once open areas are converted to covered space and walls are reinforced as they age is one manifestation of this process. The addition of rooms to the agglutinative structure in the Northwest Area and the Burned House in West Area A is another.

The Mature Phase of Occupation at Umm el-Marra (1): Private Households

The most abundant evidence for the nature of lived experiences in Late Bronze Umm el-Marra comes from the next phase of occupation, which has both more extensive and better preserved architecture.

Both the renovation of existing structures and the construction of new ones are seen at Umm el-Marra. After the earliest buildings on the Acropolis Center, West Area A, and the Southeast Area were leveled, a new phase was inaugurated that included larger buildings. This development is most likely a result of the community's growth as its population or households grew and became wealthier over the first decades of its Late Bronze Age settlement.

³⁷⁶ Normark, Johan. "The Making of a Home: Assembling Houses at Nohcacab, Mexico," in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 3, The Archaeology of Buildings (2009). p.438

³⁷⁷ Kamp, 1993. p.309

³⁷⁸ Kamp, 2000. p.84

Elsewhere on the site, Acropolis North, Acropolis West, and the Northwest Area all have a single building phase, none of which were burned. There is no stratigraphic link between these areas of the site, which makes it difficult to synchronize these occupations with those of the longer-lived habitation of the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A, and the Southeast Area. Nevertheless, I propose to assign the occupations on the Acropolis North, Acropolis West, and the Northwest Area to a period contemporaneous with the second, burned building phase of the other areas, a phase I would likewise assign to the final, domestic level of North Area A. My reasoning is two-fold. First, if the construction of the buildings was contemporary with the pre-burning phase in the southern parts of the site, then they would have been abandoned at the same time that larger structures were being built in the southern zones (e.g. Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A, and Southeast Area). While this is not impossible, it seems unlikely some parts of the site grew while others were abandoned. One might suggest that the growth of the community and the consequent construction of new housing was concurrent with the peak of Mittani imperial power, when northwestern Syria had been fully integrated into the empire.

Furthermore, it is not likely that the buildings on the Acropolis North, Acropolis West, and the Northwest Area postdate the burning of the other areas of the site, since the architecture that is clearly post-conflagration is on a notably smaller scale than the structures in these areas. As discussed below, it would be incongruous for a spate of substantial new buildings to be erected at the time as Mittani imperial control disintegrated.

With the growth of the community and the families which constituted it, occupation of the site spread across the northern half of the tell, coincident with the shift of North Area A from a stench-inducing industrial zone to a residential area.

In this phase of occupation, we can observe three types of houses at Umm el-Marra: those organized around a courtyard, Central Room Houses, and the unique structure in the Northwest Area which appears to have grown agglutinatively, presumably as its occupants required more space.³⁷⁹ This mix of Central Room Houses and buildings arranged around courtyards is similar to the situation at Nuzi as well.³⁸⁰ Houses organized around a courtyard are found on the Acropolis Center, the Acropolis West, and the Southeast Area. Central Room Houses are found in the Acropolis North, Acropolis West, the Northwest Area, and in West Area A and are thus the most common house type and the most widely dispersed. The architecture on the Acropolis East is too fragmentary to make any judgment about the nature of the structures. However, since both the Acropolis Center to the north and the Belgian excavations to the east revealed courtyard buildings, they may also have been present on the Acropolis East.

While the house in the Northwest Area probably incorporated an open area, if not a formal courtyard, it is distinct from the type of courtyard structures found on the Acropolis and in the Southeast Area. The house in the Northwest Area was smaller than these other structures and also differed from them because it had not been built around a courtyard (or courtyards) at its inception and, as a result, had a different arrangement of rooms. The other courtyard buildings are also larger than the structure in the Northwest Area. Because of these differences, the house in the Northwest Area is not grouped with the structures on the Acropolis or the Southeast Area for the interpretation of the site. The fact that the house in the Northwest Area is anomalous is puzzling given the otherwise relatively uniform nature of the site's architecture. But, as I discussed above, houses are expressions of their occupants and are built to suit their

³⁷⁹ See above Chapter 2 p. 58; p. 65; Figs 6 and 11

³⁸⁰ Battini, Laura. "Le tissu urbain de Nuzi: Nouvelles perspectives," in *Studies on the Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, vol. 18, ed. G. Wilhelm. Bethesda, Maryland, 2009. p.640

needs and, for whatever reason, the people who built and lived in this house chose an architecturally unique way of doing so.

All of the houses excavated outside the acropolis are built next to the remnants of the Middle Bronze fortifications on the edge of the site. If, indeed, large parts of the site were under cultivation during this period, as I suggest below, then locating domestic architecture next to the city walls would have left the flatter, more open areas of the site available for horticulture. Moreover, the presence of large middens in West Area B supports the hypothesis that the flatland around the Acropolis was not used for domestic occupation during the Late Bronze Age (see the discussion of West Area B above).

Just as the spread of occupation across the tell is indicative of the growth of the community as a whole over the course of time, changes evident in individual dwellings are indicative of the shifts in the families which occupied them. As households change, space is rearranged to create new, discrete family homes. This is visible archaeologically by blocked doorways, for instance, a practice that has been seen at Late Bronze Ugarit.³⁸¹ This practice is most apparent in the Northwest Area, where the house which had been built with only two or three rooms covering at least 51m² eventually expands to at least eleven rooms covering at least 135m².³⁸² A similar pattern of adding rooms can be seen in both the Burned House in West Area A and the domestic architecture in North Area A, though the fragmentary nature of the remains makes quantifying the amount of area added impossible.

³⁸¹ Schloen, 2001. pp.125-126

³⁸² Due to the fragmentary nature of several of the rooms this number is certainly low and it is likely that in total all of the additions tripled the amount of the building's space.

The Mature Phase of Occupation at Umm el-Marra (2): Institutional Households

The relationship between public and private space is highly fluid, with structures rarely falling wholly into one sphere or the other.³⁸³ Textual evidence from across the Mittani Empire indicates that this was certainly the case in Late Bronze Age Syria. At Alalakh, while the majority of the tablets from the Level IV Palace dealt with official business, numerous documents dealing with private transactions were also found.³⁸⁴ Similarly, at Nuzi, the personal dossier of a woman named Tulpun-naya was found mixed in with otherwise official public documents in the palace archive.³⁸⁵ Even at Tell Hadidi the small group of texts from the Tablet House contained both personal and administrative documents, though there significantly more of the former than the latter.³⁸⁶ Indeed, the notion that there is a dichotomy between private households and public institutions is a false one. Palaces and temples were as much households as ostensibly “private” dwellings. The main difference is that a palace was the household of a ruler, and the temple one of a god, instead of simply being the abode of an ordinary family without any apparent public capacity.

The Late Bronze Age settlement at Umm el-Marra can be divided into two areas which are divided by a line running northeast to southwest. To the southeast of the line, the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, Acropolis West, and the Southeast Area comprise to areas of architecture arranged around courtyards, most of which was burned. To the northeast of the line Acropolis North, West Area A, the Northwest Area, and North Area A have smaller-scale architecture,

³⁸³ Hendon, 1996. p.47; Kowalewski, Stephen A. “The Work of Making Community,” in *From Prehistoric Villages to Cities: Settlement Aggregation and Community Transformation*, ed. J. Birch. New York: Routledge, 2013. p.210

³⁸⁴ von Dassow, 2010. p.45

³⁸⁵ Pedersén, 1998. pp.19-20

³⁸⁶ Dornemann, 1979. p.144

mostly Central Room Houses and with the exception of West Area A was abandoned at the time of the site's destruction.

On the Acropolis, during this most extensive phase of occupation, architecture is no longer confined to the Acropolis Center but spreads to the Acropolis North, Acropolis East, and Acropolis West. Though not part of a single, discrete structure, the buildings of the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, and Acropolis West all consist of a dense warren of rooms arranged around courtyards. While the Acropolis West also has a Central Room House (House 2), it appears to have been constructed later than the other architecture in the area (Complex 1). The Late Bronze architecture the Belgian excavations uncovered to the south of the Acropolis Center has a similar layout. All of these areas also have similar assemblages consisting mainly of tools for food preparation, such as mortars and grinding stones, as well as fragments of large storage jars.

The main feature of the architecture on the Acropolis North is a Central Room House, unusual for the Acropolis but similar to those found in West Area A, the Northwest Area, and North Area A.

The second building phase in the Southeast Area is much more similar to that of the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, and Acropolis West than it is to the other buildings off the high tell. Like the architecture on most of the Acropolis, the Southeast Area has a series of rooms arranged around a courtyard whose assemblage suggests that one of its main functions was the storage and processing of foodstuffs, in this case barley. It is worth noting that Tefnin believed that large quantities of oil were being stored in the courtyard building on the Acropolis.³⁸⁷ The Southeast Area and the Acropolis Center and the Acropolis East, as well as

³⁸⁷ Tefnin, 1980. p.77

the structure the Belgians excavated, were also burned and on the entire site only the Southeast Area, the Acropolis Center, and the Acropolis West have evidence of post-destruction occupation.

The Southeast Area also has an advantageous location. It is situated on the opposite side of the site from North Area A and would not have been subjected to the noxious odors from burning lime and processing equid carcasses.

Their similar architectural arrangement, assemblages, and occupational histories suggest that the buildings on the Acropolis (with the exception of the Acropolis North) and the Southeast Area had similar functions. As I will argue in the next chapter, the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, and Acropolis West likely served as loci of economic and political control, and I posit a similar function for the Complex in the Southeast Area. In this sense the Complex in the Southeast Area can be understood as a satellite of the institution housed in the larger architecture on the Acropolis.

There are numerous similarities between the Complex in the Southeast Area and the Tablet Building at Tell Hadidi. I have discussed some of them in the section on the Southeast Area, but to understand the role this area of the site and, by extension, most of the Acropolis played in Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra it deserves further elaboration. Like the Complex in the Southeast Area, the Tablet Building was preceded by a small scale structure earlier in the Late Bronze Age³⁸⁸ and was succeeded by small-scale ephemeral architecture after its destruction.³⁸⁹ Both structures are also arranged around courtyards and contained assemblages consistent with food production such as ovens, grinding stones, and pestles. Moreover, both

³⁸⁸ Dornemann, 1981. p.42

³⁸⁹ Dornemann, 1985. p.57

buildings had ovens built on low platforms.³⁹⁰ These numerous similarities suggest that both buildings had similar functions.

Gates has suggested that the Tablet Building at Tell Hadidi was used for the large-scale production of beer - more than could be consumed by the occupants of the structure.³⁹¹ Indeed, large-scale production of foodstuffs, particularly bread and beer, seems to be a common feature at other Late Bronze Age sites in Syria. At Tell Bazi, for instance, Otto proposes that House 2 was used to produce bread and beer for a public institution, possibly for festivals or to feed travelers.³⁹² The copious amount of barley from the Tablet Building along with ovens and grindings stones certainly suggests that the Complex in the Southeast Area may have served a similar function.

Thus, the southeastern half of the Umm el-Marra tell, comprising the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, Acropolis West, and the Southeast Area, may have contained households which also had a more public, institutional role than those elsewhere on the site. This may reflect Mittani imperial administration for this community and for the Jabbul Plain as a whole. The large-scale collection and storage of foodstuffs, either for redistribution or as taxation, would fit well with the idea of these areas playing an administrative role.³⁹³

Empires utilize a variety of diverse strategies, some involving direct imperial control and others not, to administer the territories of which they are comprised. These administrative strategies are a combination of conscious planning and organic responses to situations which

³⁹⁰ Dornemann, 1981. p.33

³⁹¹ Gates, 1988. p.66

³⁹² Otto, 2007. pp.151, 283

³⁹³ Fairburn and Omura, 2005. p.21

arise.³⁹⁴ Often, imperial systems adjusted their political economies to fit existing conditions rather than imposing new ones.³⁹⁵ Since the household was the primary organizational and economic unit during the Late Bronze Age,³⁹⁶ it stands to reason that the Mittani state would attempt to co-opt the most powerful as organs of imperial control. These co-opted households would have been responsible for extracting both the labor and goods owed to the state. The copious amounts of oil³⁹⁷ apparently stored on the Acropolis and the grain in the Southeast Area may be artifacts of this imperial extractive apparatus.

The utility of co-opting households as apparatuses of control may have been facilitated by economic trends of the Late Bronze Age. Data from Ugarit and Nuzi suggest a trend from corporate land holdings towards a concentration of land in the hands of a few large individual holders during this period.³⁹⁸ As Marfoe observes, “the textual evidence of the second millennium B.C. suggests...an erosional process of land tenure and the polarisation of wealth in which the communal and private rural holdings gradually came under the control of the palace or urban notables (who were probably one and the same).”³⁹⁹ Just as the architecture of the Acropolis physically dominated the site, so its inhabitants, along with those of the Southeast Area, may have also economically and politically dominated the community.

³⁹⁴ Stark, Barbara L. and John K. Chance. “The Strategies of Provincials in Empires,” in *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, ed. M.E. Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. pp.196-197

³⁹⁵ Earle and Smith, 2012. p.239

³⁹⁶ Schloen, 2001. p.108; von Dassow, 2008. p.321

³⁹⁷ The oil may have been another product of the community since carbonized wood from both an MB II and an LB context at Umm el-Marra was identified as *Olea europaea*, or olive. (Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.348, note 92)

³⁹⁸ Marfoe, 1998. pp.205-206

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p.216

The Mature Phase of Occupation at Umm el-Marra (3): Economy

Throughout their occupational histories, the dwellings in the mature occupational phase at Late Bronze Umm el-Marra would have witnessed the full range of activities which their occupants engaged in and would have served as loci of both domestic and economic activities. Indeed, McClellan observes that “virtually every economic activity that we associate with complex societies of Late Bronze Age Syria may occur in houses.”⁴⁰⁰ Reinforcing this idea are cross-cultural studies have suggested that there is no strict dichotomy between the public and private (domestic) spheres and that wealth may be produced and accumulated in the private as well as the public sphere.⁴⁰¹

There is a wide range of crafts carried out in architecture that can otherwise be considered domestic based on the presence of artifacts and installations such as grinding stones, cooking pots, and tannurs. Building 11 in the Lower Settlement at el-Qitar, for instance, was identified as a dwelling,⁴⁰² but it was clear that one of the rooms of the structure was used for bronze casting, given the recovery of pieces of bronze, prill, crude crucibles, and a broken mold.⁴⁰³ In House G from the *Aussenstadt* at Munbaqa a mold was found that was used to produce clay figurines of a nude woman, with such figurines found in 18 other places in the city.⁴⁰⁴ Evidence for crafts as diverse as metal working, stone carving, and carpentry has been found in houses from the *Weststadt* at Tell Bazi.⁴⁰⁵ At Umm el-Marra, the best evidence for domestic craft production comes from the first phase of occupation in West Area A. Here, two

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Hendon, 1996. p.47

⁴⁰² McClellan 1984-1985. p.40

⁴⁰³ McClellan, 1986. p.435

⁴⁰⁴ Werner, *et al.*, 1998. pp.103-106

⁴⁰⁵ Otto, 2007. pp.246-248

large blocks of gypsum were found near a mud plastered basin, suggesting a stone working industry on the site.

Staple Cereal Production

Despite household-based craft production, the Late Bronze Age economy of Umm el-Marra would have been primarily agricultural.⁴⁰⁶ There would not have been a dichotomy between craftsmen and farmers but, rather, members of a household would be engaged in both types of activities. As Schloen observes, “In premodern urban societies professional specialization does not preclude agriculture.”⁴⁰⁷ Even in the modern village of Umm el-Marra many inhabitants practice a trade and work the land simultaneously.

In the ancient Near East, the bulk of the diet consisted of various products derived from grain; primarily bread and beer.⁴⁰⁸ In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the prostitute Shamhat civilizes the wild man Enkidu by exhorting him to eat bread and drink beer, neither of which he was familiar with, before they proceeded to copulate. While other types of grain were grown, such as wheat and emmer, barley was the dominant starchy staple throughout the Near East.⁴⁰⁹ In Middle and Late Bronze Age, Umm el-Marra barley comprised 85% of the identified cereal remains.⁴¹⁰ Barley, especially two-row barley, is highly resistant to both drought and salinity⁴¹¹ and matures quickly⁴¹² making it well suited for the climate of the Jabbul Plain.

⁴⁰⁶ For a recent discussion of agriculture at Umm el-Marra cf. Schwartz and Miller, 2007.

⁴⁰⁷ Schloen, 2001. p.335

⁴⁰⁸ Otto, 2012. p.190

⁴⁰⁹ Riehl, Simone. “Archaeobotanical Evidence for the Interrelationship of Agricultural Decision-making and Climate Change in the Ancient Near East,” in *Quaternary International*, Vol. 197 (2009). p.100

⁴¹⁰ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2000. p.439

⁴¹¹ Riehl, 2009. p.100

⁴¹² Sallaberger, 2012. p.160

The rhythms of life in Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra would have been predicated by the agricultural cycle, particularly that of the barley crop. The agricultural year began in the autumn when the first rains softened the ground enough to be able to work the soil. The actual planting of crops was dependent on when the rains finally arrived and would often be done in November or December.⁴¹³ The harvest would take place in the spring, usually April or May depending on when the rains had arrived. This would have been the busiest time of the community's year and all available labor would have been mobilized to bring the harvest in.⁴¹⁴ Legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas would be harvested in late spring or early summer. Fruits, which require warmer temperatures to ripen, such as grapes, figs, and pomegranates, would be harvested throughout the summer.⁴¹⁵

It is the period after the harvest that is preserved in Umm el-Marra's destruction level. As I discussed below, summer was the fighting season in the ancient Near East; since Umm el-Marra's destruction was probably part of a Hittite military campaign, it was most likely destroyed at this time of year. The copious amount of grain from the Complex in the Southeast Area would have been from the recent harvest and was probably being processed for storage. This would have involved parching the barley and then pounding it with mortars and pestles to remove the glume.⁴¹⁶ These activities are reflected in the ovens and numerous pestles found in the Southeast Complex.

⁴¹³ Eyre, Christopher J. "The Agricultural Cycle, Farming, and Water Management in the Ancient Near East," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* vol. I, ed. J.M. Sasson. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2000. p.177

⁴¹⁴ Postgate, J.N. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. p.169

⁴¹⁵ Eyre, 2000. pp.177-178

⁴¹⁶ Potts, 1997. p.57

Bread, Space, and Time

The main goal of a household's agricultural activity would have been to feed itself. Most Late Bronze Age households were economically self-sufficient,⁴¹⁷ and producing enough food would have been of primary concern. The household's most important activities would have involved the daily preparation and consumption of food, the evidence of which is often visible archaeologically. It is around the installations involved in these tasks that much of life would have revolved.

Making bread would have been a daily task in each household. Archaeologically this is seen in the prevalence of grinding stones for making flour and the ubiquity of tannurs from buildings across the site. Preference in pyrotechnic installations for cooking bread is predicated on social factors regarding the production of food as well as physical properties of the most commonly used starchy staples.⁴¹⁸ Dietary and culinary habits tend to be highly conservative,⁴¹⁹ which is evidenced by the continued use of tannurs in the Near East today. This may imply that the residents of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra were producing the same type of flat breads that are baked today and that these types of bread constituted a significant portion of the people's diet.

In numerous cultures, domestic food production was and is a gendered activity falling squarely within the female sphere.⁴²⁰ The women of a household would have been responsible for grinding grain, preparing the dough, and baking the bread.⁴²¹ The objects these activities

⁴¹⁷ Schloen, 2001. p.102

⁴¹⁸ Lyons, Diane and A. Catherine D'Andrea. "Griddles, Ovens, and Agricultural Origins: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Bread Baking in Highland Ethiopia," in *American Anthropologist*, Volume 105, Number 3 (2003). p.515

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.517

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ Limet, Henri. "Pains et Fours dans Le Proche Orient Ancien," in *Civilisations*, Vol. 49, No. 1/2 (2002). p.41

were associated with would have had strong gender associations as well. Textually, this is suggested by the presence of grinding stones in lists of objects included in dowries.⁴²²

Tannurs would also have had gendered associations because of their use in cooking, but these associations would have had a temporal dimension as well.⁴²³ While cooking probably took place throughout the day, baking bread was an activity carried out early in the morning. Traditionally in the Near East, the women of the household bake bread when they get up in the morning,⁴²⁴ and this was likely to be the case in antiquity, too. At Ur, installations associated with baking such as grinding stones and ovens are generally located in areas that would be in shade throughout the morning.⁴²⁵ These data suggest that morning is when these types of tasks were carried out, since the spaces would have been in full sun and very uncomfortable by afternoon, particularly during the summer.⁴²⁶ However, tannurs could be used for more than just cooking. For example, tannurs can be employed for metallurgy,⁴²⁷ a craft usually practiced by men, for firing small ceramic vessels,⁴²⁸ a task performed by both men and women,⁴²⁹ and for keeping the members of a household warm in winter.⁴³⁰ While a tannur might be considered feminine space in the morning, it could have shifted to male space later in the day and lost much of its gendered association at a particular time of the year.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ cf. Parker, Bradley J. "Bread Ovens, Social Networks, and Gendered Space: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Tandır Ovens in Southeastern Anatolia," in *American Antiquity*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Oct. 2011). pp.603-627

⁴²⁴ Otto, 2007. p.74

⁴²⁵ Shepperson, 2009. pp.369-370

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Badre, 1994. p.324

⁴²⁸ Lancaster and Lancaster, 2010. p.245

⁴²⁹ Ochsenschlager, Edward L. *Iraq's Marsh Arabs in the Garden of Eden*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004. p.113

⁴³⁰ Foxhall, 2000. p.493

The location of tannurs within a building tends to be constant through the use-life of the structure and numerous renovations. At Umm el-Jir, a site in southern Iraq, a tannur had been repeatedly rebuilt in the same spot over the course of 6 identified occupational levels.⁴³¹ A similar practice has also been identified at Abu Salabikh.⁴³² This practice is clearly seen in Room 15 of the Complex in the Southeast Area. Here two tannurs were built directly above two earlier ones which had been leveled and plastered over. On one level, this phenomenon might be the case because the particular location where the tannurs were situated was simply convenient. On another level, tannurs are fixtures around which daily life revolves. They are literally the places where daily bread is made and the day begins. In winter they are places that provide respite from the cold and venues where members of a household could interact as they warmed themselves. In this regard, tannurs represent an axis around which household life takes place, which may explain the conservatism of their location through the use-life of a dwelling.

Seasonality, Obligation, and Demographics in an Agricultural Community

In antiquity the demands of staple crop production meant that society, at all levels, revolved around the agricultural cycle. A major factor in demographic patterns is birth seasonality, particularly in agricultural communities.⁴³³ In these types of communities, there is usually a reduction in the number of conceptions during harvest time, while periods of heavy rainfall can be correlated to an increase in the number of conceptions, particularly in agriculturally marginal areas like Umm el-Marra.⁴³⁴ Contributing to this pattern would be the

⁴³¹ Gibson, 1972. p.245

⁴³² Crawford, 1981. p.107

⁴³³ García-Moro, C., *et al.* "Birth Seasonality in the Early Spanish-Mexican Colonists of California (1769-1898), in *Human Biology*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (August 2000). p.655

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* pp.660-661

fact that many men of prime reproductive age may have been absent during the summer months while fulfilling labor obligations imposed by the state, as I discuss below. If Umm el-Marra followed this pattern, then the community would have seen a birth spike in the autumn.

This pattern of autumn births would have given Umm el-Marra's inhabitants the chance to prepare for new family members over the summer months, which require relatively little agricultural labor. As new families are established, new houses are built; as established families grow, new rooms are added to existing ones. Having this time to prepare for autumn births would also have been a logistical necessity, since the manufacture of mudbricks and the building of mudbrick architecture is conducted in summer.⁴³⁵

The demands of the soil would also have had implications for the machinations of the state. In agrarian societies, much of the year is devoted to tending crops, thus removing a large portion of the population from availability to the state. As such, large-scale mobilizations, often for warfare, were conducted in late spring and early summer after the harvest had been brought in.⁴³⁶ It was at this time that kings could impose labor obligations on the population, *unuššu* in Hurrian and *ilku* in Akkadian.⁴³⁷ Indeed, the bulk of the army would have consisted of men fulfilling this type of duty.⁴³⁸

These labor obligations were not imposed on the individual or the community but on the household, which was the basic level of organization in the Mitanni Empire.⁴³⁹ Such impositions on the household are clearly reflected in the census lists from Alalakh, several of which

⁴³⁵ Oates, 1990. p.389

⁴³⁶ Dalley, Stephanie. "Ancient Mesopotamian Military Organization," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* vol. I, ed. J.M. Sasson. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2000. p.415

⁴³⁷ Von Dassow, 2008. p.300

⁴³⁸ Dalley, 2000. p.417

⁴³⁹ Von Dassow, 2008. p.321; Yakar, 2000. p.471

enumerate the households in various villages.⁴⁴⁰ The empire's administration was organized on the household level, not through a conscious decision on the part of Waššukani, but because it was the most efficient way of tapping into the preexisting social order of the societies which were incorporated into Mitanni. Such practice would have created an inherent tension between the socio-economic priorities of individual households and the desire of the imperium to extract as much as they could from them.⁴⁴¹

The effect of these seasonal obligations on the community may be reflected in the two skeletons from the Acropolis Center who appear to have been killed during the episode which culminated in the site's burning. For several months of the year, the demographic profile of the community would differ from that of the rest of the year, with most, if not all, of the able-bodied men away on campaign or other public projects. The two skeletons from the Acropolis are both young; one is a child between three and five years old and the other is an adolescent. These are exactly the type of people one would expect to find in the community at this time of year. Admittedly, they constitute a tiny sample of two, but their ages are consistent with seasonal expectations.

The End of the Mature Phase

The ultimate fate of most inhabited sites throughout the Near East, from urban centers to rural villages, was abandonment. Rarely, however, was this abandonment swift and total. Within the lifespan of a single site, it is not uncommon to see cycles of occupation alternating

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.229. The texts are AIT 185, 186, and 187

⁴⁴¹ Earle and Smith, 2012. p.239

between intense and sparse habitation.⁴⁴² Even when the vast majority of a site lay empty, there was still often a core of settlement remaining. When the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A, and the Southeast Area were burned, much of Umm el-Marra had already been abandoned. By the time the site was put to the torch, probably by the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma, occupation had shrunk back to the same areas that had been first occupied.

The strongest evidence that the Acropolis North, Acropolis West, the Northwest Area, and North Area A were abandoned at the time of the destruction of the rest of the site is the fact that they were not burned. While stone and mudbrick made up the bulk of the construction material in the buildings at Umm el-Marra, wood would still be necessary for roofing and fixtures such as doors and windows. The charred beams found in West Area A and the Southeast Area confirm this. Wood is a precious commodity in arid environments and is often the most valuable part of a structure.⁴⁴³ In regions where mudbrick architecture is still used, when a building is abandoned, the roof is dismantled and any other wooden fixtures removed for reuse.⁴⁴⁴ At least one of the structures on the site, the Burned House in West Area A, was roofed with pine beams which do not grow on the Jabbul Plain and would have had to be imported, making them a costly commodity and one which would not be simply left to rot after a structure fell out of use. Even more common woods, such as poplar,⁴⁴⁵ would have been considered a valuable material and recycled when a house was abandoned. If all that was left of a building after its occupants vacated it was the stone foundation and mudbrick superstructure, then there would not be anything extant that could catch fire. Moreover, there is little point in burning a

⁴⁴² Smith, Michael E. "Sprawl, Squatters, and Sustainable Cities: Can Archaeological Data Shed Light on Modern Urban Issues?" in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2010). p.239

⁴⁴³ Kamp, 1987. p.288

⁴⁴⁴ Kamp, 1991. p.29; When ethnic tensions led to looting in Timbuktu, Mali one of the things that was taken from homes and shops were the wooden door frames. (Polgreen, Lydia. "Islamists' Harsh Rule Awakened Ethnic Tensions in Timbuktu," in *The New York Times* 2 February 2013: A10)

⁴⁴⁵ Bachelot, 2005. p.314; Otto, 2007. p.7

structure that is already abandoned. Most of the structures would probably have already begun to fall into ruin, since mudbrick architecture requires regular maintenance. Thus, the unburned areas of Umm el-Marra were probably unoccupied when the others were set ablaze.

The process of abandonment is rarely swift and, instead, is usually a protracted process.⁴⁴⁶ Gradual, intra-site abandonment of individual structures or areas is much more common than the total abandonment of a settlement and does not necessarily mean the end of human use and occupation.⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, besides Umm el-Marra, structures in Late Bronze Age Tell Bazi,⁴⁴⁸ Tell Bderi,⁴⁴⁹ and Tell Arbid⁴⁵⁰ are all believed to have been abandoned while the rest of the site was still occupied.

Just as the construction of larger buildings, or the addition of rooms to existing ones, reflects a growing community, the abandonment of those same structures reflects a shrinking one. Why were these areas of the site abandoned? It may have been that the families who occupied them reached a demographic nadir and it became impractical to maintain buildings that were intended for significantly more people than occupied them. If the residents of the abandoned areas were related to those in parts of the site that were still inhabited, then the families may have consolidated their residences to more efficiently pool labor, which is one of the hallmarks of societies where extended families are the ideal.⁴⁵¹

Alternatively, the precipitous decline of Mittani under pressure from the reascendant Hittite state may have prompted some residents of Umm el-Marra to seek their fortunes elsewhere. If Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra was a product of imperial expansion, as I argue in

⁴⁴⁶ Fletcher, 2012. p.310

⁴⁴⁷ Ziadeh-Seely, 1999. p.128

⁴⁴⁸ Otto, 2007. p.211

⁴⁴⁹ Pfälzner, 1986-1987. p.295

⁴⁵⁰ Bieliński, 2000. p.281

⁴⁵¹ Schloen, 2001. p.109

the next chapter, then warfare and economic disruption would have deeply affected the community. It is worth noting that the areas which were burned were the longest occupied areas of the site, suggesting that they represented a greater investment in the community's fortunes than those who came later. Moreover, only the Acropolis Center, Acropolis West, and the Southeast Area, the parts of the site which were occupied by households with a public role, made any attempt to recover after the conflagration. If the families who occupied these areas did have stronger ties to the Mittani state then they would have had a stronger incentive to try and maintain their status and lands than those who were merely tributary.

Whatever the reason that parts of the site were abandoned, by the time Šuppiluliuma or his minions set fire to the remainder of the settlement, the diminished community had been living amidst a landscape of ruins. While this sounds dire, it is, in fact, a natural part of the life-cycle of cities, and it is crucial to note that the abandonment of parts of a settlement does not mean that the rest is not occupied, or even thriving. A modern example of this is the city of Baltimore, where this dissertation was written. By 2011, 16% of the city's houses were abandoned.⁴⁵² Archaeological investigation of the site three and a half millennia in the future might well lead to the conclusion that at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries AD the city of Baltimore was largely abandoned or consisted of what are usually referred to as "squatter settlements." This is particularly true since many of the stretches of abandoned housing are centrally located; Baltimore's "high tell," as it were. Of course, despite large swathes of the urban landscape being abandoned, most residents of the city would not consider

⁴⁵² Kilar, Steve and Jamie Smith Hopkins. "Shore Housing Vacancy Rate Grows: Census Shows Situation Stabilizing in Baltimore," in *The Baltimore Sun* 7 October 2011: A1

themselves “living among the ruins.” Abandonment, like urbanism, as I argue in the next chapter, is in many ways about perception.

That the Late Bronze community at Umm el-Marra continued to exist and function despite its greatly reduced occupation is particularly evidenced by the contents of the Burned House in West Area A and the Complex in the Southeast Area. Before it was destroyed, the occupants of the Burned House enjoyed a comfortable, if not lavish, life. They had a well-built house which incorporated expensive pine beams and was furnished with luxury objects like a glazed vase and an alabaster jar. Copious amounts of oil were stored on the Acropolis and large quantities of barley were found in the Southeast Area indicating robust agricultural activity. Despite its reduced size, the evidence at the time of the destruction indicates a prosperous, if small, community.

Coda: Destruction, Resettlement, and Abandonment

Summer is the season when kings make war,⁴⁵³ and this is most probably the season when Umm el-Marra was burned. Since it had no fortifications in the Late Bronze Age, and many of the men were probably off fighting, the community had little ability to resist. All of the occupied buildings were put to the torch; on the Acropolis Center, at least two people were killed and their bodies left without a proper burial.

The only attempt to reestablish the community at Umm el-Marra after its destruction was on the Acropolis Center, Acropolis West and the Southeast Area. Ultimately, however, this was a project doomed to failure and the final abandonment of the Late Bronze Age community would

⁴⁵³ Beal, Richard H. “Hittite Military Organization,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* vol. I, ed. J.M. Sasson. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2000. p.547

soon be complete. This was probably due to the declining fortunes of the Mittani Empire as northwestern Syria came under Hittite domination.

After it was burned, the contents of certain buildings on the Acropolis Center were left in place, and the remnants of the structures were filled with mudbricks to create a terrace or platform, presumably as a foundation for a new structure. In addition to Umm el-Marra, using mudbricks to create a building surface is also seen at Tell Bderi⁴⁵⁴ and Tell Arbid.⁴⁵⁵ It is interesting that both these sites are in the Khabur; the Hurrian heartland and center of Mittani power. This might suggest that individuals with ties to this region were responsible for trying to reestablish a presence on the site. Despite this preparation, there is no evidence of anything built on top of the terrace, and the only occupation is small-scale ephemeral architecture on the Acropolis West. There was also standing architecture in the Southeast Area after the destruction. However, the remains are scant and the structure was small compared to the architecture of the previous phase.

Why was there an attempt to rebuild on the Acropolis Center and the Southeast Area but not West Area A? All three areas were occupied and thriving at the time of the site's destruction. As discussed above, I propose that the structures on the Acropolis Center and in the Southeast Area belonged to institutional households that played a role in the administration of the region on behalf of the Mittani state. The Burned House in West Area A, on the other hand, belonged to a private household, probably without any administrative capacity beyond its own affairs. It is possible that the occupants of the Burned House lacked the support or means to rebuild. The reestablishment of the institutional households, and their administrative capacities, may have also have been prioritized. Another possibility is that the occupants of the Burned

⁴⁵⁴ Pfälzner, 1989-1990. p.216

⁴⁵⁵ Bieliński, 2003. p.310

House were killed by the invaders. While parts of the Complex in the Southeast Area were already abandoned, suggesting its occupants may not have been present, the Burned House was still full of valuables which its occupants probably would have taken if they fled.

If the rebuilding was predicated by the remnants of the Mittani state, then it might be understood as an attempt to maintain a presence on the Jabbul Plain in the face of Hittite incursions. Alternatively, because of the Hittite incursions, by this point the Mittani state may have been too weak to facilitate a project like this. If this was the case, then the households who originally resided in these areas may have been attempting to maintain their presence on the site. Moreover, the members of these institutional households may have held a privileged place in society and had extensive landholdings in the area, as was the case for elite households,⁴⁵⁶ and, thus, the impetus for staying at the site and trying to maintain their positions would have been strong.

Conclusions

Human lives are short, but archaeological periodizations are not. While necessarily referring to the “Late Bronze Age” in the discussion of the data, it must be kept in mind that this is a period of 400 years, a time span in which numerous generations were born, lived, and died. Even the more refined periodizations of LB I and LB II are two centuries each, time periods far beyond the scope of human lived experience. Taking human temporality into account in the discussion of archaeological data more accurately reflects how the architecture and landscape under discussion was experienced and understood by the individuals who inhabited them.

⁴⁵⁶ Casana, Jesse. “Alalakh and the Archaeological Landscape of Mukish: The Political Geography and Population of a Late Bronze Age Kingdom,” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 353 (Feb., 2009). p.28

By focusing on the physical manifestations of change it is possible to better understand the nature of a past society. For instance, the addition of rooms to a building indicates the need for more space by the occupants. If the building is domestic, then this probably represents a growing family indicative of marriage and birth. Alternatively, if rooms fall out of use or a building is abandoned, it suggests a dwindling family and may represent life events such as death or daughters being married off.

Considering patterns in architecture and the use of space across a site can also shed light on the social organization of the community. Since the situation and construction of buildings is predicated both by their intended use and ideas about social norms and ideals,⁴⁵⁷ they are expressions of the communities which made them. The dichotomy in architecture at Umm el-Marra is a reflection of the dichotomy in the Late Bronze Age society between private and institutional households. The architecture of the private households, mostly Central Room Houses, is dispersed around the site and is smaller without any large-scale storage capacity. Conversely, the institutional households are either situated on the focal point of the tell or set well away from any other occupied areas. The buildings themselves are also larger and organized around courtyards, suggesting that they had a more public role. Moreover they stored, and consequently had control over, large amounts of oil and grain.

If it can be determined when a site was abandoned or destroyed, then the archaeological record might reflect the nature of the community at a specific point in time, as is the case at Umm el-Marra. Destruction as part of a military campaign almost certainly took place in the summer. As such, the remains of the parts of the site that were occupied are indicative of the activities that would have taken place at this time of year. The Southeast Area is an example of

⁴⁵⁷ Schmid, 1990. p.188

this; the copious amounts of grain are the result of the harvest which would have recently been brought in and was being processed and stored.

Humans both react to, and act on, the environment they find themselves in. This creates a sense of place which, in turn, is a large component of identity. These attachments to specific places can have a profound effect on people, and this was undoubtedly true for the Late Bronze Age inhabitants of Umm el-Marra. Memory is a powerful force embedded in the landscape and can hold people fast to a particular place despite the system which predicated its creation collapsing.⁴⁵⁸ They reinhabited the tell, they built their homes, and they planted crops there. Ethnographic studies have shown that people express attachment to villages that they abandoned a half-century earlier⁴⁵⁹ and that land rights might be retained by various groups even after an area has been emptied of population.⁴⁶⁰ A sense of place was so important to some Maya groups that even after being forcibly relocated from their traditional villages by the Spaniards, they would often return to furtively rebuild their settlements.⁴⁶¹ At its heart, this is the root cause for much of the conflict in the modern Middle East. On a very basic level, this is an expression of human attachment to place and home and, despite other factors which may have influenced it as well, is reflected in the last, futile attempt to rebuild the site after its destruction.

⁴⁵⁸ Ryan, Susan C. "Constructing Community and Transforming Identity at Albert Porter Pueblo," in *The Social Construction of Communities: Agency, Structure, and Identity in the Prehispanic Southwest*, ed. M.D. Varien and J.M. Potter. New York: Altamira Press, 2008. p.82

⁴⁵⁹ Rothschild, Nan A., *et al.* "Abandonment at Zuni Farming Villages," in *Abandonments of Settlements and Regions: Ethnoarchaeological and Archaeological Approaches*, ed. C. Cameron and S. Tomka. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. pp.124-125

⁴⁶⁰ Fish, Suzanne K. and Paul R. Fish. "An Assessment of Abandonment Processes in the Hohokam Classic Period of the Tucson Basin," in *Abandonments of Settlements and Regions: Ethnoarchaeological and Archaeological Approaches*, ed. C. Cameron and S. Tomka. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. p. 102

⁴⁶¹ Bartlett, Mary Lee and Patricia A. McAnany. "'Crafting' Communities: The Materialization of Formative Maya Identities," in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, eds. M. Canuto and J. Yaeger. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 102

I would suggest that, for its Late Bronze Age inhabitants, the tell at Umm el-Marra was home and worth trying to hold on to.

Chapter 4.

Contextualizing Umm el-Marra in the Late Bronze Age World.

Introduction

It is my contention, to be discussed below, that the existence of the Late Bronze Age community of Umm el-Marra is largely predicated by external forces, both political and temporal. Politically, I argue, Late Bronze Umm el-Marra was a product of Mittani imperial ambition and the spread of the empire westward. This expansion created the need to administer and defend the newly acquired territories and establish points of control across the landscape, and Umm el-Marra, I propose, was one such node of control. Subsequently, the failure, or inability, of the Mittani imperium to meet the challenges posed by the reascendant Hittites ultimately led to the community's destruction.

The establishment, florescence, and collapse of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra coincide with the westward expansion of Mittani, the apogee of Mittani power, and Mittani decline, respectively. The chronological basis for this contention derives from two anchor points. The first derives from the beginning of Late Bronze occupation at Umm el-Marra. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the earliest evidence of Late Bronze activity on the site consists of massive pits dug on the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, and in West Area B. Pits in the Acropolis East and Acropolis Center produced occasional examples of Cypriot White Slip II sherds. Gittlen has demonstrated that this type of ceramic does not appear in the Levant until LB IB, which corresponds to the mid-15th century.⁴⁶² This establishes a *terminus post quem* for the

⁴⁶² Gittlen, 1981. p. 50

reoccupation of the Acropolis East⁴⁶³ and probably the entire Late Bronze settlement. It is precisely at this time when the kings of Mittani are believed to have been expanding the boundaries of their empire east to the foothills of the Zagros and west to the Mediterranean coast.⁴⁶⁴

The second anchor point is derived from the date of the conflagration that put an end to major occupation at Umm el-Marra in the Late Bronze Age. This destruction is dated by carbonized grain from the Southeast Area, which, along with the Acropolis Center and West Area A, was burned at or near the end of the Late Bronze occupation of the site. The C-14 dates from these samples suggest the site was burned in the 14th century.⁴⁶⁵ The three areas that were burned were located a significant distance from each other, suggesting that their destruction was not the result of a fire that accidentally spread across the site. Rather, it appears that the structures were intentionally put to the torch. The Hittite king Šuppiluliuma began his incursions into northern Syria in the mid-14th century,⁴⁶⁶ and it is likely that one of his campaigns resulted in the site's destruction.

Thus, the reoccupation of Umm el-Marra in the Late Bronze Age is concurrent with the spread of the Mittani Empire, and its destruction is concurrent with the fall of that empire. Material culture from the site is also consistent with the period of Mittani hegemony. Ceramic types from Umm el-Marra include Nuzi Ware, red-rimmed bowls, and piecrust potstands, all of

⁴⁶³ I thank Glenn Schwartz for pointing this out.

⁴⁶⁴ Novák, Mirko. "Upper Mesopotamia in the Mittani Period," in *Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Band 1,1, ed. W. Orthmann and J.-W. Meyer. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. p.348

⁴⁶⁵ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2003. p.348. Recently processed radiocarbon samples from the West Area A "Burned House" yielded similar dates (Glenn Schwartz, personal communication).

⁴⁶⁶ Novák, 2013. p.348

which are specifically associated with sites under Mittani rule.⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, the only text from Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra explicitly refers to individuals becoming subjects of the king of Mittani.⁴⁶⁸

It is likely that the re-occupation of Umm el-Marra's abandoned tell, among others, was a deliberate attempt on the part of Mittani to establish a foothold in western Syria. The re-occupation of abandoned sites as part of an imperial enterprise would become a standard practice in Late Bronze Syria as evidenced by the Middle Assyrian occupation at sites like Tell Chuera and Tell Sabi Abyad⁴⁶⁹. The Mittani use of Umm el-Marra for this end would be one of the earliest instances of this phenomenon.

The history of the Mittani Empire parallels the history of Umm el-Marra, and the two must be discussed in tandem. According to my interpretation of the evidence, the spread of the Mittani empire is reflected in the reoccupation of Umm el-Marra, and the florescence of its mature phase is concurrent with the apogee of Mittani power. Similarly, Umm el-Marra's destruction reflects the empire's decline and fall. Since many aspects of Mittani remain poorly understood,⁴⁷⁰ we may hope that the history of Umm el-Marra can help to illuminate some aspects of the internal workings of the empire.

Umm el-Marra is the largest Bronze Age tell on the Jabbul and the only site with any extensive Late Bronze Age occupation.⁴⁷¹ As such, it would have dominated the small settlements scattered across the plain and would have been useful as a point of control. In

⁴⁶⁷ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. pp.67, 147

⁴⁶⁸ Cooper, *et al.*, 2005. p.50

⁴⁶⁹ Brown, Brian. "The Structure and Decline of the Middle Assyrian State: The Role of Autonomous and Nonstate Actors," in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 65, (2013). p.100

⁴⁷⁰ Novák, 2013. p.345

⁴⁷¹ Yukich, 2013. pp.211-214

previous discussions of the site's occupation during this period, its "rural" character has been emphasized, i.e. as a community primarily consisting of non-elite households without evidence of central administration or elite institutions.⁴⁷² In the following discussion, I propose to reevaluate this interpretation by considering Umm el-Marra's relationship with the surrounding countryside, and I will also reconsider the nature of urbanism in the Late Bronze Age in general.

I turn first to a consideration of Mittani as an empire, and how an empire can be studied archaeologically. Numerous scholars have attempted to articulate what defines an empire, with little consensus available. Taagepera offers a definition of empire as "any large sovereign political entity whose components are not sovereign, irrespective of this entity's internal structure or official designation."⁴⁷³ This definition draws on Taagepera's own experiences in Eastern Europe during the course mid-20th century to stress the subservience of subject states to the imperium.

Sinopoli, drawing initially from her work in South Asia, defines empires as "geographically and politically expansive polities, composed of a diversity of localized communities and ethnic groups, each contributing its unique history and social, economic, religious, and political traditions" to the fabric of the empire,⁴⁷⁴ stressing their size and inclusivity.

⁴⁷² Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012. p.185

⁴⁷³ Taagepera, Rein. "Size and Duration of Empires: Systematics of Size," in *Social Science Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (June, 1978). p.113

⁴⁷⁴ Sinopoli, Carla. "The Archaeology of Empires," in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 23 (1994). p.159

In his discussion of Near Eastern empires, Larsen says simply that they are “a supernational system of political control,”⁴⁷⁵ emphasizing their administrative cohesion and ability to bind far-flung polities into a single imperial administration. Obviously, there are many more extensive attempts to define this phenomenon.

Thus, there are numerous components which might constitute an empire, and defining what they are is often difficult because of the varied nature of empires both chronologically and geographically. Broadly, I suggest, an empire can be characterized as a multi-cultural, multi-regional, expansionistic entity whose purpose is widespread political and economic control. Mittani, which at its height stretched from the foothills of the Zagros to the Mediterranean, certainly fits under this rubric.

While the effects of imperialism have been justifiably maligned in the later 20th century A.D., as a human endeavor empires are an impressive achievement. The marshaling of resources, military and administrative apparatuses, and integrative mechanisms required to create and maintain an empire are both a notable logistical and intellectual feat. Moreover, for all of the damage wrought by imperialism, the supranational integrative mechanisms used to forge imperial unity have continued to serve a similar purpose after their inevitable fall, be it through sprawling road networks or the widespread adoption of a lingua franca. Imperialism, like all human endeavors, is a complicated, multifaceted phenomenon.

By examining some of the various forces which shaped Umm el-Marra, I will attempt to contextualize the site’s Late Bronze Age occupation by situating it within a larger historical framework, both of the site itself and of the Late Bronze Age in general. Looking at Late Bronze

⁴⁷⁵ Larsen, Mogens Trolle. “The Tradition of Empire in Mesopotamia,” in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. M.T. Larsen. Mesopotamia 7. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979. p.91

Age Umm el-Marra through this lens, I hope to illuminate the unique nature of the community that existed at this time and in this place.

One of the challenges of approaching the history of Umm el-Marra and the history of the Mittani Empire in tandem is integrating the data on both within the framework of the discussion at hand. In an attempt to present my hypotheses and supporting data in a coherent manner, this chapter will be divided into three parts reflecting the main phases of Umm el-Marra's Late Bronze Age occupation: resettlement, maturity, and decline. Within each of these sections I will discuss the relevant history of the Mittani Empire to contextualize Umm el-Marra within contemporary events that helped determine the community's trajectory. I will then present any relevant regional data on Late Bronze Age Syria and finally present the data from Umm el-Marra and discuss how it informs our understanding of the previous two.

Resettlement

Central to the understanding of Umm el-Marra's broader context in the Late Bronze Age is the appearance and early development of the Mittani empire. At the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, centers of power on a scale not previously seen began to coalesce throughout the Near East. One of these polities, which emerged along the headwaters of the Khabur, came to encompass an area stretching from the Zagros to Cilicia.⁴⁷⁶ This was Mittani, which would prove to be the preeminent power in northern Syria and Iraq for well over a century and one of the major players in the international politicking of the so-called Amarna Age.

⁴⁷⁶ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p. 327

Both archaeologically and textually, relatively little is known about the Mittani Empire, compared with its contemporary polities. Its capital, Wašukanni, has never been conclusively located, although recent developments strongly suggest that Tell Fekheriye near the sources of the Khabur is a serious contender,⁴⁷⁷ and many of the texts which deal with Mittani are from external sources. Most of the excavated sites from this period are clustered in a few areas; mainly along either the Mediterranean coast, the Orontes Valley, the middle Euphrates, the Syrian Jezirah, and Transtigridian northern Iraq.⁴⁷⁸ There is only one site, Umm el-Marra, in the whole span between the middle Euphrates and the Orontes Valley that has produced evidence of significant early Late Bronze Age occupation and as such is important for our understanding of the Mittani Empire.

Like the rest of its history, Mittani's origins are elusive. Individuals with Hurrian names, reflecting the dominant ethnic group of what would become the Mittani Empire, are attested as early as the third millennium, mostly concentrated in the Khabur.⁴⁷⁹ The evidence for the earliest Hurrian polities comes primarily from the site of Tell Mozan, ancient Urkesh.⁴⁸⁰ After clashing with the rulers of the Ur III Dynasty⁴⁸¹ nascent Hurrian polities seems to have been coming to power and by the end of the third millennium Nineveh was under Hurrian rule.⁴⁸² In the early second millennium (Middle Bronze Age), individuals with Hurrian names become ever

⁴⁷⁷ Bonatz, Dominik and Peter Bartl. "Preliminary Report on the Excavations at Tell Fekheriye in 2006 and 2007," in *Chronique Archéologique en Syrie*, Vol. III (2008) . p.180

⁴⁷⁸ Curvers, *et al.*, 1997. p. 224

⁴⁷⁹ Wilhelm, Gernot. "The Kingdom of Mittani in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* vol. II, ed. J.M. Sasson. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2000. p.1244

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Buccellati, Giorgio and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati. "The Royal Palace of Urkesh. Report on the 12th Season at Tell Mozan/Urkesh: Excavations in Area AA, June-October 1999," in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 132 (2000). pp.133-183

⁴⁸¹ Wilhelm, 2000. p.1245

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

more common in the texts of the Jezirah and western Syria, until an apogee of “Hurrianization” is reached in the Late Bronze Age and the period of the Mittani empire.

One of the defining characteristics of the Mittani Empire is the spread of Hurrian culture throughout the empire, though not necessarily ethnic Hurrians per se.⁴⁸³ The influence of Hurrian culture in northern Syria is clearly manifested in the region’s onomastica, which reflect the shifting influence of Hurrian culture over time. While individuals with Hurrian names were attested as early as the third millennium, they begin to increase in number until they reach their peak in the mid-second millennium with Mittani’s ascendance and then begin to steeply decline concurrent with the fall of the empire.⁴⁸⁴ The prevalence of Hurrian personal names during this period is attested at Umm el-Marra by individuals named on the tablet from North Area A.⁴⁸⁵

In addition to Hurrian personal names, the spread of Mittani power is evidenced in material culture as well. There is a group of ceramic styles whose production appears to be limited to the period of Mittani’s hegemony. These include Nuzi Ware,⁴⁸⁶ red-rimmed Bowls, and piecrust potstands,⁴⁸⁷ all of which are found at Umm el-Marra. Nuzi Ware is a luxury product associated with the upper echelons of Mittani society, so its adoption by subject peoples can be understood as an emulation of those who were in possession of wealth and power.⁴⁸⁸ Conversely, red-rimmed bowls and piecrust potstands are quotidian wares and the reason for their ubiquity within the empire is more difficult to discern. It may be that the spread of Hurrian

⁴⁸³ Na’aman, 1974. p.272

⁴⁸⁴ Wilhelm, 2000. pp.1247-1248; Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.327

⁴⁸⁵ cf. Cooper, Schwartz, and Westbrook, 2005.

⁴⁸⁶ Stein, Diana L. *Khabur Ware and Nuzi Ware: Their Origin, Relationship, and Significance*. Monographic Journals of the Near East. *Assur*; Volume 4, Issue 1. Malibu: Undena Publications, March 1984. p.30

⁴⁸⁷ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. pp.67, 147

⁴⁸⁸ Erb-Satullo, N.L., A.J. Shortland, and K. Eremin. “Chemical and Minerological Approaches to the Organization of Late Bronze Age Nuzi Ware Production,” in *Archaeometry*, Vol. 53, Issue 6 (Dec. 2011). p.30

culture was accompanied by the spread of Hurrian fashions and practices that are not readily visible archaeologically. If Hurrian cuisine became popular as the Mittani Empire spread, then red-rimmed bowls and piecrust potstands may be manifestations of the culinary practices associated with it, much like how chopsticks are still used to eat certain Asian cuisines in the West.

Another manifestation of Mittani imperial culture is a widespread glyptic style developed to adorn seals. Most of these belonged to the Mittani Common Style and were produced on a vast scale found throughout the Near East and in places as diverse as Cyprus, the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf. These Mittani Common Style seals were generally made of frit, and the decoration was crude consisting mostly of stick figures and employing heavy use of the drill. These seals are found in contexts associated with all levels of society and were probably not used for sealing but instead served as personal adornment.⁴⁸⁹

Higher quality seals of the Mittani Elaborate Style are only known from seal impressions and reflect a much higher quality of craftsmanship.⁴⁹⁰ Unlike Common Style seals, Elaborate Style examples were probably limited to the upper echelons of society and were used for administrative purposes. At Umm el-Marra, Common Style Seals were found throughout the site (see Fig. 5 for an example) and an Elaborate Style bulla was recovered from the Acropolis (Fig. 32).⁴⁹¹ The tablet from North Area A was also impressed with an Elaborate Style seal (Fig. 17).

⁴⁸⁹ cf. Salje, Beate. *Der 'Common Style' der Mitanni-Glyptik und die Glyptik der Levante und Zyperns in der Späten Bronzezeit*. Baghdader Forschungen Bd. 11. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1990.

⁴⁹⁰ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.47

⁴⁹¹ For a discussion of this object see Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012. pp.186-187



Figure 32: Bulla with an impression of a Mittani Elaborate Style cylinder seal (G. Schwartz)

The adoption of Hurrian names, unique ceramic styles, and glyptic, however, does not signify a sudden surge, and then decline, in the number of individuals belonging to a Hurrian ethnic group in northern Syria. Indeed, what even constitutes Hurrian ethnicity is debatable and difficult to define, although such an ethnicity certainly existed, since people are identified, and identify, as such. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the fall of a polity would lead to the

wholesale disappearance of Hurrians and their attendant material culture.

The spread of material culture associated with Mittani is indicative of the spread of its political and economic influence.⁴⁹² The diffusion of markers of imperial culture, in turn, led to populations within the empire adopting and emulating signifiers originally belonging to the empire's elite who were often Hurrian. The use of these particular names, ceramic styles, and glyptic would also serve to create a shared imperial culture that would help to unite the disparate, far flung groups which composed Mittani. Nuzi Ware, for instance, was made locally on opposite sides of the empire at Alalakh and Nuzi. However, vessels made in both places shared

⁴⁹² Wilhelm, 1989. p.80; Stein, Diana L. "Khabur Ware and Nuzi Ware: Their Origin, Relationship, and Significance," in *Assur*, Monographic Journals of the Near East, Vol. 4, Issue 1. Malibu: Undena Publications, March 1984. p.31

a common repertory of forms and designs despite the long distance and possible differences that characterized the populations which were consuming this particular ceramic type.⁴⁹³

Conversely, while Hurrian was the mother tongue of the rulers of the empire, Akkadian was the language of its administration. This phenomenon is again evidenced at Umm el-Marra by the legal document from North Area A which is written in Akkadian but sealed by the presumably Hurrian king of Mittani. Just as Akkadian bound the larger Late Bronze Age world together, so it served as a language of business and administration in the empire facilitating interaction between Mitanni's far-flung subjects.

Periods of instability and flux are often when new communities are created and when new identities are forged⁴⁹⁴ and this was the situation in Syria as the Mittani polity coalesced. Prior to the emergence of the Mittani state, the evidence paints a picture of fractious Hurrian polities jockeying for power in eastern Syria. Texts from the Hittite Old Kingdom⁴⁹⁵ suggest a politically fragmented situation in the Mittani heartland, with several rulers bearing the title "King of the Hurrian People." One text referring to the Hittite siege of Uršu⁴⁹⁶ notably describes this Hurrian internecine warfare with the phrase "The sons of the 'Son of the Storm-God' are fighting one another over kingship." The Hittite rulers of the Old Kingdom may well have stoked these feuds in order to help further their ambitions in northern Syria.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ Erb-Satullo, *et al.*, 2011. p. 1190

⁴⁹⁴ Schachner, Gregson. "Imagining Communities in the Cibola Past," in *The Social Construction of Communities: Agency, Structure, and Identity in the Prehispanic Southwest*, ed. M.D. Varien and J.M. Potter. New York: Altamira Press, 2008. p.189

⁴⁹⁵ cf. KBo III 60 and KBo III 46 + II 54

⁴⁹⁶ Klengel, 1992. p.86; the text is KBo I 11

⁴⁹⁷ de Martino, 2004. p.36;

The apparent weakness of the Hurrian states in northern Syria made them attractive targets for the expansionist rulers of the Hittite Old Kingdom. The initial wave of Hittite military activity in northern Syria encountered disparate Hurrian principalities that tended to be concentrated in the east. With the reign of Hattušili I came the first incursions into northern Syria, and his successor Muršili I conquered Aleppo. Muršili I's successor, Hantili, also campaigned in the region, though with decidedly less success.⁴⁹⁸ If we consider the entities where Hattušili I and Muršili I engaged in conflicts with Hurrians in Syria (Alalakh, Aleppo, Uršum, Haššum, and Hahhum), these correspond to the extent of Mittani in later periods.⁴⁹⁹

By the middle of the 16th century, Hurrian armies were able to directly confront and defeat the Hittite invaders, ending their foray into northern Syria.⁵⁰⁰ This development, coupled with the fact that the Hittite royal family was consumed by internal strife,⁵⁰¹ led to the Hittites' withdrawal from the region after the reign of Muršili I, probably during that of his successor, Hantili.⁵⁰² The fact that the diverse Hurrian polities were forced to suddenly confront the might of the Hittite army may have been the catalyst that forced them to finally coalesce into what would be known as the Mittani Empire.⁵⁰³ The power vacuum caused by Hatti's rapid disengagement from Syria allowed the nascent Mittani state to quickly spread from the Hurrian homeland in the Khabur west to the Mediterranean coast and east to the Zagros.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁸ Klengel, 1992. pp.85-86

⁴⁹⁹ de Martino, 2004. p.35

⁵⁰⁰ Wilhelm, 1989. pp.20-21

⁵⁰¹ Wilhelm, 2000. P.1247

⁵⁰² Klengel, 1992. P.86

⁵⁰³ Na'aman, Nadav. "Syria at the Transition from the Old Babylonian Period to the Middle Babylonian Period," in *Ugarit-Forschungen*, Band 6 (1974). p.268; McClellan, 1986. p.418

⁵⁰⁴ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. P.145

While the Hittites were the main external factor in the creation of the Mittani state, Egyptian activity to the southwest also played a role as pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty began to move up the Levantine Coast and campaign as far inland as the Euphrates. However, the kings of the newly established Mittani polity were able to check this threat, likely due to Mittani's superior military technology,⁵⁰⁵ and Egyptian imperial ambitions remained confined to the coast. These technologies, such as the light, two-wheeled chariot, the composite bow, and scale armor, are all echoed in Late Bronze Umm el-Marra either in art (the charioteer plaque from the Acropolis North Fig. 30), production (the processing of carcasses for bow components in North Area A), or their actual presence (the piece of scale armor from West Area A).

It is Egypt, not Syria, provides the earliest written reference to Mittani thus far identified. A fragmentary inscription in the tomb of Amenemhet, who served under the pharaohs Ahmose I, Amenhotep I, and Thutmose I, describes campaigning in Syria, probably during the reign of Thutmose I, and mentions the land of *Mtn*. Thutmose I's ascension to the throne is variously dated to the end of the 16th or beginning of the 15th century, by which time the Mittani state had apparently coalesced.⁵⁰⁶

The first attestation of a Mittani ruler derives from an impression made by the seal of Šuttarna, son of Kirta. While the seal impressions date to the second half of the 15th century, the seal itself is older and was reused later by Sauštatar.⁵⁰⁷ One of Sauštatar's successors, Parattarna, is the first Mittani ruler about whom we have any substantial information. Based on

⁵⁰⁵ Bryan, Betsy M. "The Egyptian Perspective on Mittani," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*, ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. p.73

⁵⁰⁶ de Martino, Stefano. "A Tentative Chronology of the Kingdom of Mittani from its Rise to the Reign of Tušratta," in *Mesopotamian Dark Age Revisited*, eds. H. Hunger and R. Pruzsinszky. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004. p. 35

⁵⁰⁷ Wilhelm, 2000. p.1247

the famous inscription of Idrimi of Alalakh, we know that Idrimi and Parattarna were contemporaries. Idrimi also concluded a treaty⁵⁰⁸ with Pilliya, king of Kizzuwatna, who we know from elsewhere was a contemporary of Šuttarna I, predecessor of Parattarna. Pilliya of Kizzuwatna also concluded a treaty⁵⁰⁹ with the Hittite king Zidanza, thus establishing a synchronism between Mittani and Hatti. From other sources, we also know that Qiš-Addu of Terqa was a contemporary of Parattarna.⁵¹⁰

The king most responsible for Mittani's westward expansion (and, I would infer, Umm el-Marra's resettlement) after checking the Hittite and Egyptian threats was Parrattarna.⁵¹¹ It was under his reign that the borders of the empire first stretched to the Mediterranean⁵¹² and Syrian cities like Halab (Aleppo) were brought into the Mittani fold.⁵¹³

The instability of the period leading up to the establishment of the Mittani Empire is reflected by changing settlement patterns in Syria at the end of MB II. Sites such as Tell Bderi,⁵¹⁴ Tell Hadidi, al-Qitar,⁵¹⁵ Lidar Höyük,⁵¹⁶ Tell Afis,⁵¹⁷ Tell Nebi Mend, Tell Bi'a/Tuttul, Tell Leilan, and Mari,⁵¹⁸ are almost completely abandoned, and the settlement at Ebla/Tell Mardikh is radically reduced.⁵¹⁹ Moreover, archaeological surveys along the Khabur, the middle

⁵⁰⁸ AIT 3

⁵⁰⁹ KUB XXXVI 108

⁵¹⁰ de Martino, 2004. p.36

⁵¹¹ Klengel, 1992. p.87

⁵¹² Wilhelm, 1989. p.25

⁵¹³ Klengel, 1992. p.88

⁵¹⁴ Pfälzner, Peter. "Tall Bdēri: 1985-1987," in *Archiv für Orientforschung*, Vol. 36/37 (1989/1990). p.214

⁵¹⁵ McClellan, 1984-1985. p.53

⁵¹⁶ Yakar, Jak. *Ethnoarchaeology of Anatolia: Rural Socio-Economy in the Bronze and Iron Ages*. Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series No. 17. Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, 2000. p.456

⁵¹⁷ Cecchini and Mazzoni, 1998.

⁵¹⁸ Schwartz, 2007. pp.51-57

⁵¹⁹ Mazzoni, 2002. p. 131

Euphrates,⁵²⁰ the lower Euphrates basin,⁵²¹ the Biqā',⁵²² the Balikh,⁵²³ the northern Jazireh,⁵²⁴ and in the Akkar⁵²⁵ have noted that the end of the Middle Bronze Age in Syria coincided with a decline in the size and number of inhabited settlements. A 1996 surface survey carried out in the Jabbul Plain in conjunction with the excavations at Umm el-Marra found that of 33 sites occupied during MB II only 11 were still inhabited by the Late Bronze Age; a 66% reduction in the number of settlements in the region.⁵²⁶

Oates *et al.*,⁵²⁷ Mazzoni,⁵²⁸ and Wilhelm⁵²⁹ all see the decreased settlement in Syria by the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, as the result of the constant state of political flux brought about by a combination of factors including Samsu-iluna's earlier incursions into Syria and the expansionist campaigns of the kings of the Hittite Old Kingdom whose ambitions Mittani finally checked. In addition, there was a prolonged period of desiccation over the course of MB II,

⁵²⁰ McClellan, Thomas L. "Twelfth Century B.C. Syria: Comments on H. Sader's Paper," in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C.*, ed. W.A. Ward and M.S. Joukowsky. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1992. p. 168

⁵²¹ Yakar, 2000. p.470

⁵²² Marfoe, Leon. Revised by Rolf Hachmann and prepared for publication by Christine Misamer and Michelle Froese. *Kāmid el-Lōz 14. Settlement history of the Biqā' up to the Iron Age*. Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, Band 53. Bonn: Dr. Rudolph Habelt GMBH, 1998.

⁵²³ Lyon, Jerry D. "Middle Assyrian Expansion and Settlement Development in the Syrian Jazira: The View from the Balikh Valley," in *Rainfall and Agriculture in Northern Mesopotamia*, ed. R.M. Jas. (MOS Studies 3). Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul LXXXVIII. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 2000. p. 101

⁵²⁴ Wilkinson, 2003. p.126

⁵²⁵ Thalmann, Jean-Paul, *et al.* Tell Arqa - I : Les Niveaux De L'âge Du Bronze. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique T. 177. Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2006. p.V

⁵²⁶ For a recent treatment of this issue see Yukich, 2013. pp.211-214

⁵²⁷ Oates, David, *et al.*, 1997. p.145

⁵²⁸ Mazzoni, 2002. p.130

⁵²⁹ Wilhelm, 1989. pp.25ff

culminating in the Late Bronze Age when the region was significantly drier than in earlier periods.⁵³⁰

While never reaching the settlement density seen in MB II, the collapse of Hittite power, the failure of Egypt to hold onto any territory in inland Syria, and the expansion of the Mittani state under Parrattarna created an atmosphere of relative peace and stability that facilitated the Late Bronze Age resettlement of sites that had been abandoned or saw severe population decline. Besides Umm el-Marra, other sites that were resettled or significantly enlarged concurrent with the spread of the Mittani Empire include Tell Bderi,⁵³¹ Tell Hadidi, el-Qitar,⁵³² and Tell Nebi Mend,⁵³³ with survey data from the Biqā' Valley in the west⁵³⁴ and the eastern Khabur⁵³⁵ reinforcing this trend.

The reoccupation of Umm el-Marra during the Late Bronze Age created a community that was very different from the one that had preceded it. During MB II, Umm el-Marra was densely settled and protected by both an outer and inner wall. Occupation density was highest on the Acropolis, which was dominated by the circular stone platform Monument 1.⁵³⁶ At the end of MB II there is evidence of violent destruction of some parts of the site as well as a clear

⁵³⁰ Deckers, Katleen and Hugues Pessin. "Vegetation Development in the Middle Euphrates and Upper Jazirah (Syria/Turkey) during the Bronze Age," in *Quaternary Research*, Vol. 74 (2010). p.216; Oates, David, *et al.*, 1997. p.145

⁵³¹ Pfälzner, Peter. "Tell Bderi – The Development of a Bronze Age Town," in *The Near East in Antiquity: German Contributions to the Archaeology of Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Labanon, and Egypt*, Volume 1, ed. S. Kerner. Amman: Goethe-Institut/Al Kutba: 1990. p.66

⁵³² McClellan, 1984-1985. p.53

⁵³³ Bourke, Stephan J. "The Transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age in Syria: The Evidence from Tell Nebi Mend," in *Levant*, Volume 25 (1993). p.189

⁵³⁴ Marfoe, 1998. p.162

⁵³⁵ Wilkinson, Tony J. "Tell Beydar Survey," in *Oriental Institute 1998-99 Annual Report*. <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/ar/98-99/beydar.html>. Accessed November 12, 2010.

⁵³⁶ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012. p.175

break in the orientation and nature of the architecture and the use of space between Middle Bronze II and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

One of the most striking changes of the Late Bronze resettlement of Umm el-Marra concerns the use of space, particularly on the Acropolis. During the site's Early Bronze occupation, large elite tombs and installations for the burial of equids had been built in this locality to the exclusion of other types of architecture. After the settlement hiatus between the Early and Middle Bronze, when the site was reoccupied for the first time, a massive circular platform designated Monument 1 was built over the tombs, and no domestic architecture or industrial installations were built on top of it for the duration of this occupational phase. However, after the second settlement hiatus, among the earliest activities on the Acropolis during the Late Bronze were the digging of huge pits which cut deeply into Monument 1, even reaching the uppermost levels of the Early Bronze tombs. As has been discussed in the analysis of West Area B, digging pits would have provided the necessary raw materials for the construction of the new settlement. More importantly, however, these pits represent a break in the remarkable continuity of the Acropolis as a "space apart" for the centuries spanning the Early and Middle Bronze Age. Now, instead of a place reserved for monumental public works, the Acropolis was first to serve as an area to be exploited for raw materials and then as an area for the construction of pyrotechnic installations. This may suggest that the Late Bronze inhabitants of the site were distinct from its earlier inhabitants in matters of identity or ritual practice and, consequently, lacked the same reverence for the Acropolis that the earlier inhabitants had. Alternately, the abandonment of the Middle Bronze city may have been more disruptive than the earlier abandonment and led to a loss of historical memory regarding the traditional use of the

Acropolis. In either case, the evidence from the Acropolis represents a firm break with the earlier occupational patterns.

Both practical and symbolic factors contributed to the reinhabitation of Umm el-Marra under the Mittani Empire. For much of ancient Syrian and Mesopotamian history, tells were the focal point of human habitation. The original settlement of a site was often predicated on factors such as proximity to potable water or location on a trade route, factors which would continue to attract later settlers to the same spot. Abandoned tells also offered easily defensible locations and an abundance of raw materials for building. Thus, reoccupying an old tell would have required a much more modest investment in resources than building a new settlement from scratch on virgin soil.

On a perceptual level, when travelling on the plains of northern Syria, tells catch the eye and signify a human presence in otherwise featureless landscapes. Wilkinson has pointed out that because tells are such dominant fixtures they serve as focal points and continually draw people to them.⁵³⁷ Because of this they are often reoccupied after abandonments; a phenomenon seen throughout the Near East for millennia.

Even when not reoccupied by the living, tells are commonly reused as cemeteries. This is a widespread phenomenon seen in settings as diverse as the Middle Bronze Age Levant,⁵³⁸ the medieval Negev,⁵³⁹ and modern Syria (Umm el-Marra being one example of this). Tells have a

⁵³⁷ Wilkinson, T.J. *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. p.108

⁵³⁸ Dever, William G. "The Peoples of Palestine in the Middle Bronze I Period," in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2/3 (Apr. - Jul., 1971). p.220

⁵³⁹ Schaefer, Jerry. "Archaeological Remains from the Medieval Islamic Occupation of the Northwest Negev Desert," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 274 (May, 1989). p.52

hold on both the living and the dead, anchoring them on the landscape and creating a sense of place.

This enduring sense of place would have made tells attractive venues for newly ascendant polities, such as Mittani and, later, the Middle Assyrians, to make statements about power and ownership over the landscape. Traditionally, monumental public architecture such as temples, palaces, and city walls have been understood, on some level, as the physical manifestations of political authority on the landscape. Late Bronze Umm el-Marra has none of these, but the site can still be understood as part of this phenomenon. Just as the construction of a palace is an imposition of political will on the urban landscape, so the resettlement of Umm el-Marra is the imposition of Mittani political will upon the rural landscape. The mere presence of an occupied settlement, that was part of the political and economic fabric of the empire, marked the land as now belonging to the new Mittani state.

Opening up land for settlement would also have been politically expedient for Mittani. As new polities rise to prominence, they often seek to consolidate their territorial gains through the establishment of new settlements in previously marginal areas⁵⁴⁰ such as the Jabbul Plain, an archeologically visible practice that could be considered a hallmark of territorial empires.⁵⁴¹ Often, the new settlers are elite individuals granted land as a reward for, or in exchange for, loyalty to the crown.⁵⁴² By settling these loyal elites in marginal areas, the central government is then able to secure its position both politically and territorially, and this is the reason for Umm el-Marra's resettlement in the Late Bronze Age according to my hypothesis.

⁵⁴⁰ Matthews, Roger. *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia: Theories and Approaches*. New York: Routledge, 2003. p.144

⁵⁴¹ Wilkinson, 2003. p.213

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*; Patterson, T.C. *The Inca Empire: The Formation and Disintegration of a Pre-Capitalist State*. Worcester: Berg, 1991. p.78

There is strong evidence for the practice of the crown granting land to the nobility in the Mittani Empire. Texts from Ugarit⁵⁴³ to the west and Tell Brak⁵⁴⁴ to the east state that the *maryannu*, the chariot warriors of the Mittani Empire, were often awarded land grants by the crown. This is especially the case when an individual of lower social standing is elevated to the status of *maryannu*. Interestingly, the same tablet from Tell Brak that mentions land associated with a *maryannu* also has one of the very few attestations of the word *hanigalbatutu*,⁵⁴⁵ or Mittani citizenship, another attestation of which is from the Late Bronze Umm el-Marra tablet. Further evidence for the practice of the crown giving land to elites comes from the Išmeriga Treaty, where Mittani nobles from Waššukani are granted lands by the crown in Išmeriga and Kizzuwatna. One of the Nuzi letters⁵⁴⁶ also mentions that Sauštatar granted a noble from Waššukani lands in Arrapha.⁵⁴⁷ This evidence suggests that crown land grants to the elite were a central part of Mittani imperial administration and it is possible that Umm el-Marra's resettlement was the result of one of these grants. More than just incorporating territory into the empire, the distribution of land among the Mittani elite would have served to bind the nobility to the crown and create political cohesiveness.

Towns, villages, and cities in Late Bronze Syria were conceived of not as independent communities, but as highly valuable commodities to be bought, sold, traded and gifted both by the king to his nobles and amongst the nobility themselves.⁵⁴⁸ The value in owning these communities derived not so much from the land itself as from its agricultural output and the

⁵⁴³ RS 16.132; RS 16.239

⁵⁴⁴ In TB 8001 it states: KI^{meš} ša DIŠ *ma-ri-an-ni*,” or, “the parcels of land of one *maryannu*.” Illingworth, N.J.J. “Inscriptions from Tell Brak 1996,” in *Iraq* Volume 50 (1998). p.99

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ HSS IX No.1

⁵⁴⁷ Na'aman, Nadav. “Yeno'am,” in *Ancient Israel and its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction: Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E. Winona Lakes, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005. p.200

⁵⁴⁸ Wilhelm, 1989. pp.42-43

labor owed by its occupants to the community's immediate owner and the Mittani crown. Evidence of these obligations at Umm el-Marra may be seen in North Area A, where the processing of equid carcasses would have provided materials for both the production of composite bows and equipping chariots, both of which were required by the crown.

Taken together, these various pieces of evidence suggest that the reoccupation of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra was probably a deliberate attempt on the part of the Mittani crown to establish a node of control in the Jabbul Plain. The site's initial resettlement can be dated to the mid-15th century, precisely the period that the empire begins its westward expansion. The settlement of marginal lands, particularly by elites, is a well-established practice that empires use to consolidate their holdings. Textual evidence from the Mittani Empire makes it clear that the crown did, indeed, grant land to the nobility, particularly the *mariyannu* and it may well be the case that Umm el-Marra is an example of one of these grants.

Over the course of the second half of the 15th and beginning of the 14th centuries Mittani prospered and its position as the primary power in northern Syria and Iraq was secure. During this period the occupation of Umm el-Marra, which was initially restricted to parts of the Acropolis, West Area A, and the Southeast Area, grew. New houses were built and the settlement occupied more of the tell indicating a growing community ushering the mature phase of Umm el-Marra's Late Bronze Age history.

Mature Phase

After the reign of Parattarna, the next documented Mittani king is Sauštatar. However, from Sauštatar's oft-reused seal, we know that his father, and apparent predecessor on the throne,

was Parastatar.⁵⁴⁹ Sauštatar was followed on the throne of Mittani by Artatama I, although the relationship between the two is uncertain, and there may have even been a ruler between them, Parattarna II, a king whose existence is inferred from a Nuzi text. Starting with Artatama I's reign, there are clear synchronisms with Egypt, thanks to interdynastic marriages between the two countries. These synchronisms include Artatama I and Thutmose IV, Šuttarna II and Amenhotep III, and Tušratta and Amenhotep IV, respectively, though there is obviously overlap between the reigns of the rulers of both countries.⁵⁵⁰ Though kept in check by Sauštatar, Egypt seems to have taken a more aggressive stance in Syria after his reign ended. To cement the relationship between Egypt and Mittani and to foil any plans Pharaoh might have had to expand his holdings beyond the Levantine coast, Artatama I gave his daughter to Thutmose IV as a wife sometime in the 1390's. This act seems to have stabilized the situation and allowed Mittani to fully exert its influence in Syria without threat of war with Egypt.⁵⁵¹

Relatively little is known about the reigns of Artatama I and his successor, Šuttarna II. Artatama I's practice of using Mittani royal women for diplomatic marriages continues during the reign of his successor when Gilu-Hepa, Šuttarna II's sister, weds Amenhotep III.⁵⁵² Of note is the fact that the only tablet from Umm el-Marra was written during Šuttarna II's reign. The presence of a legal document written in the presence of the Mittani kings means that the empire still held firm sway over the Jabbul at this point.

The reign of Šuttarna II ended with the murder of the king and his heir, Artušumara. This act set off infighting among his successors, precipitating internal weakness within the Mittani

⁵⁴⁹ de Martino, 2004. p.37

⁵⁵⁰ de Martino, 2004. p.39

⁵⁵¹ Kühne, 1999. p.218

⁵⁵² Bryan, 2000. p.79

court which would eventually lead to the fall of the empire. Ironically, this situation is analogous to the fratricidal struggle among the Hittite princes at the end of the Old Kingdom which created the political environment in which Mittani could rise to power. The imperial courts of the Late Bronze Age were apparently dangerous places for those with royal blood.

The mechanisms by which the Mittani kings forged an empire and created the conditions for it to flourish are poorly understood. At the apex of imperial power was the king himself exercising control from his capital, Waššukani, in the Khabur. However, the actual extent to which that power was exercised is ambiguous. The very nature of Mittani's expansion may, in part, help to explain this situation. As opposed to the outright conquest of a city or principality and the installation of a Mittani governor to administer it, it seems the expansion of the empire was predicated on the submission of vassal states to the crown which were allowed a high degree of autonomy in the conduct of their own affairs.⁵⁵³ Texts from Alalakh, for instance, indicate that the rulers of that city submitted to Mittani suzerainty by swearing an oath to the king who, in turn, allowed them to retain their positions.⁵⁵⁴

These vassal kings had considerable autonomy in not only running the affairs of their own realms, but also in their interactions with other polities, as long, of course, as this did not conflict with the interests of the Mittani state. The level of autonomy granted to Mittani vassals was so great that in the Išmeriga Treaty⁵⁵⁵ the local aristocracy, though vassals of the Mittani king, make their own negotiations with the Hittite ruler Arnuwanda I. This is indicative of the laissez-faire attitude of the Mittani administration, since the Mittani king is not even mentioned

⁵⁵³ Klengel, 1992. p.87; Na'aman, 1974. p.272

⁵⁵⁴ Klengel, 1992. p.98

⁵⁵⁵ KUB XXVI 41

in the treaty and the nobles of Išmeriga are making a treaty with a polity outside the Mittani realm. In some cases vassals who were engaged in negotiations of their own turned to the Mittani king for final arbitration of disputes amongst themselves.⁵⁵⁶

In addition to allowing vassal kings to remain on their thrones, Mittani rule also allowed other traditional Syrian systems of corporate governance to thrive. Texts in the older “Syrian” style (as opposed to the later “Hittite” style) from Emar, for instance, refer to the king, the palace, and a group of “elders” who are involved in real estate transactions concerning land held in the name of the god ^dNIN.URTA.⁵⁵⁷ Indeed, one of these transactions involves the sale of land in order to pay the *arana* tax imposed by the Mittani crown.⁵⁵⁸ Similar systems also appear to have been in place at Tell Hadidi/Azu and Nuzi.⁵⁵⁹ While there is evidence for the survival of these institutions during the period of Hittite domination, at least at Emar, they appear to have been particularly robust under Mittani hegemony.⁵⁶⁰

Despite this seemingly hands-off approach to imperial administration, it was still necessary for the Mittani crown to maintain control over its territory whether it was incorporated into the Empire by the sword or by treaty. One of the factors that mediates any relationship between an imperial core and its conquests is the ability of the central authority to mobilize

⁵⁵⁶ Na’aman, 1974. pp.269-273; cf. AT 13, 14, 112 and Kbo I, 6: 20-26)

⁵⁵⁷ Fleming, Daniel E. “Reading Emar’s Scribal Traditions Against the Chronology of Late Bronze History,” in *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History, Landscape, and Society. Proceedings of the Konstanz Emar Conference 25.-26.04. 2006*, ed. L. d’Alfonso, Y. Cohen, and D. Sürenhagen. AOAT Band 349. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. p.29

⁵⁵⁸ cf. Cohen, Yoram and Lorenzo d’Alfonso. “The Duration of the Emar Archives and the Relative and Absolute Chronology of the City,” in *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History, Landscape, and Society. Proceedings of the Konstanz Emar Conference 25.-26.04. 2006*, ed. L. d’Alfonso, Y. Cohen, and D. Sürenhagen. AOAT Band 349. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. pp. 3-25.

⁵⁵⁹ Dornemann, 1980. p.220

⁵⁶⁰ Fleming, 2008. p.41

troops in order to suppress rebellions and other internal dissent.⁵⁶¹ This, of course, is a major burden for the crown, which must raise, equip, and provision an army for however long it takes to reassert control over the rebellious population. Taagepera has noted that the farthest extent of any pre-Achaemenid empire in the Near East was approximately 650km from the imperial core, which would be about one week's travel.⁵⁶² Umm el-Marra is located 250-300km from the Khabur and the center of Mittani power, so while it is not on the farthest reaches of the empire it is still far enough away to be a logistical challenge. Of course, loyal vassals closer to Umm el-Marra could have supplemented royal troops, but rebellions in the provinces are rarely isolated incidents, a situation which would have been exacerbated by the loose-knit nature of Mittani administration.

One intriguing factor about Late Bronze Umm el-Marra might help to illuminate the Mittani crown's strategy for maintaining control over its territories and minimize the chance of rebellion. The lack of fortifications at Late Bronze Umm el-Marra is perplexing, since defensive architecture is almost ubiquitous at Syrian sites during this period, and city walls are prominent features at Umm el-Marra in earlier periods. While the site was still ringed by the remnants of the Middle Bronze ramparts, they had fallen into disrepair by the Late Bronze Age and were not refurbished during this period of occupation. Petty has suggested that the absence of defensive architecture at Late Bronze Umm el-Marra reflects that fact that the community's defense was now an imperial, as opposed to local, concern.⁵⁶³ If this is the case, though, why are other cities in the Empire fortified when they were under Mittani's sway?

⁵⁶¹ Matthews, 2003. p.143

⁵⁶² Taagepera, 1978. p.121

⁵⁶³ Petty, 2006. p.40

For another possible explanation we can look east to Tell Bazi along the Middle Euphrates. While Tell Bazi's acropolis is heavily fortified, the West town, an extension of the town off the acropolis, is not.⁵⁶⁴ According to the excavators, the West town was built and occupied only during the Late Bronze Age, when the site was ruled by Mittani. Like much of Umm el-Marra, the architecture in the West town is dual-purpose, used for both domestic and craft activities. Also, like Umm el-Marra, Tell Bazi has legal tablets written "in the presence of" the Mittani king and impressed with the royal seal, thus suggesting that the crown had a direct hand in local affairs. A lack of fortification may have been the result of the community's status as a direct vassal of the Mittani crown – existing walls, such as the one around Tell Bazi's acropolis, were allowed to be kept, but new settlements such as Umm el-Marra or the Bazi West town had to be unfortified.

Several other sites in Syria and northern Iraq also have a marked lack of defensive architecture during the period under discussion. At Tell al-Rimah, in Iraq, for example, the excavators noted that the city's wall had fallen into disrepair during the Mittani period,⁵⁶⁵ a situation similar to the one noted at Tell Nebi Mend on the other side of the Empire.⁵⁶⁶ At el-Qitar the community continued to use a defensive wall built during the Middle Bronze Age⁵⁶⁷ already centuries old by this point. At Ebla, the Middle Bronze fortifications were destroyed, leaving the small Late Bronze community defenseless.⁵⁶⁸ It was a common practice throughout Near Eastern history to destroy the ramparts of a defeated city to ensure submission, and a lack of defensive architecture would certainly make any subject hesitant to rebel.

⁵⁶⁴ Einwag, 2000. p.399

⁵⁶⁵ Postgate, *et al.*, 1997. p.43

⁵⁶⁶ Bourke, 1993. p.189

⁵⁶⁷ McClellan, 1986. p.105

⁵⁶⁸ Mazzoni, 2002. p.131

Rivka Gonen has noted a similar situation in coastal Palestine where cities that had been previously fortified during the Middle Bronze Age were unfortified during the Late Bronze Age. Even at sites where the Middle Bronze Age fortifications would have still loomed large, the walls would have been in such a state of disrepair as to have been useless as defenses. Similar to the hypothesis that the lack of fortifications at Late Bronze sites in Syria was a result of Mittani imperial policy, Gonen believes that the Egyptians forbade vassals in Palestine from building fortifications to make resistance to their rule more difficult.⁵⁶⁹

An interesting, though much later, correlate can be seen in early modern Poland. After a period of prolonged turmoil in the 18th century AD, Polish nobles often financed the reconstruction of towns that had been destroyed or underwrote the construction of new towns to replace them. However, these nobles also often refused to pay for the construction of fortifications in an attempt to keep the burghers from becoming too independent.⁵⁷⁰ A defenseless population, regardless of the historical context, is more likely to be a pliant one.

Firmly under the sway of the Mittani, the apex of Umm el-Marra's Late Bronze Age occupation coincides with the height of the empire's power. Just as the site was resettled as part of the drive to the west, the greatest extent of the site's occupation coincides with the greatest extent of Mittani's power when Hatti and Egypt's Syrian ambitions were kept in check and Assyria remained firmly subordinate to Waššukani.

⁵⁶⁹ Gonen, Rivka. "Urban Canaan in the Late Bronze Period," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 253 (Winter, 1984). pp.61-73

⁵⁷⁰ Bogucka, Maria. "Polish Towns' Destruction by Wars in the 17th and 18th Centuries and the Problem of Reconstruction," in *Stadtzerstörung und Wiederaufbau*, Band 2: Zerstörung durch die Stadtherrschaft, innere Unruhen und Kriege, ed. M. Körner. Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 2000. pp.235-247

After the initial phase of resettlement, the Late Bronze Age community of Umm el-Marra continued to grow and flourish under Mittani hegemony. Areas of the site that had previously been used for craft or food production were taken over by residential architecture as the population grew and the need for more housing increased. Ethnographic studies in modern Syrian villages have indicated that there is a correlation between roofed area and household size; the more space a house has the more people are living in it.⁵⁷¹ The increase in both the number of discrete structures, likely predicated by the establishment of new families,⁵⁷² and the size of the structures is thus may be indicative of the Late Bronze Age community's growth.

The occupational narrative of Late Bronze Umm el-Marra helps to illuminate larger trends in the settlement history of the region and the nature of community life during this period. The severe reduction in both the number and size of settlements from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age throughout the region has already been noted. Virtually all the sites that were occupied during this period were tells with long settlement histories, although the populations of these reestablished communities were significantly smaller than in earlier periods.⁵⁷³

The reoccupation of large tells by much smaller populations, such as at Umm el-Marra, resulted in markedly different occupational patterns within the sites themselves when compared to earlier periods. The very nature of tells, often, as at Umm el-Marra, with a prominent central mound and low lying areas bounded by the remains of a city wall, is a ready-made template for human occupation creating both a palimpsest on which to build while simultaneously

⁵⁷¹ Kamp, 1993. p.298

⁵⁷² *Ibid.* p.309

⁵⁷³ Casana, 2009. pp.30-31

circumscribing the area in which to do so. While the Middle, and even Early, Bronze Age occupation of sites appears to have been quite dense, this is emphatically not the case in the Late Bronze Age. Consequently, the communities that developed during the Late Bronze Age tended to have a much more dispersed, lower density settlement pattern than in earlier periods.

This patterns stands in contrast to settlement characteristics at sites on the middle Euphrates like Emar, Tell Bazi, Munbaqa, and Tell Hadidi, where the urban landscape was more densely settled during the Late Bronze Age. Moreover, unlike many other sites during this period, the cities of the Middle Euphrates were often surrounded by formidable defensive architecture.⁵⁷⁴ These features might be attributed to the importance of the Middle Euphrates towns in riverine trade and their access to water in an increasingly arid environment, giving them greater access to resources and the ability to sustain larger populations and, consequently, greater autonomy.

High tells tend to be occupied for longer periods and are typically more densely built up than other parts of a site in the Late Bronze Age.⁵⁷⁵ Thus, on Late Bronze Age sites the densest conglomeration of architecture is usually on the highest part of the site with much more dispersed occupation in the lower town. In fact, there are usually large areas of unoccupied land in the lower town between houses or groups of houses. Besides Umm el-Marra, this Late Bronze Age settlement pattern is seen at numerous other sites including Nuzi, Tell Brak,⁵⁷⁶ Tell Arbid,⁵⁷⁷ and Tell Beydar.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003. p.341

⁵⁷⁵ Dornemann, 1979. p.132; Gonen, 1984. p.65

⁵⁷⁶ Oates, *et al.*, 1997. p.141

⁵⁷⁷ Smogorzewska, 2006. p.69

In the first phase of Umm el-Marra's reoccupation, the Acropolis center had been used as a source of raw materials and communal food production. As the settlement grew, the nature of the Acropolis Center changed. Now, small scale domestic architecture replaced the ovens and the area took on a residential cast. Little is left of this residential phase, but it appears that the buildings were emptied and their doors blocked in preparation for the next phase of occupation which was more substantial.

The next phase of occupation on the Acropolis Center was also domestic and contained several tannurs. Here we might see a shift in the nature of the settlement away from a more public, community oriented social structure typified by the communal ovens to the private sphere where activities like baking and cooking took place in the home out of the public eye. This also reflects the community's growth. While the small initial population would have had to pool resources such as food and fuel to survive, as families grew they would become more self-sufficient and the primary locus of daily life would have shifted to the private architecture that formed the primary locus of family life.

By the mature phase, the architecture of the Acropolis, while not particularly large or dense per se, was *larger* and *denser* than elsewhere on the site. In their discussion of the architecture from the Acropolis West, Curvers and Schwartz dismiss Tefnin's characterization of the Acropolis architecture as palatial, citing the thinness of the walls and the lack of elite goods. The latter is also a concern expressed by Tefnin.⁵⁷⁹ However, the scale and plan of the architecture on the Umm el-Marra Acropolis, while not grand by the standards of some other

⁵⁷⁸ Bretschneider, Joachim. "Die Unterstadt (Feld J)," in *Tell Beydar, Three Seasons of Excavations (1992-1994): A Preliminary Report = Trois Campagnes de Fouilles à Tell Beydar (1992-1994): Rapport Préliminaire*, ed. M. Lebeau and A. Suleiman. Subartu III. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1997. p.209

⁵⁷⁹ Curvers, *et al.*, 1997. p.208; Tefnin, 1983. p.143

sites, nevertheless sets the area apart from the rest of the site. The buildings, particularly those described in the discussion of the Acropolis West, are larger and have more rooms than the domestic architecture found elsewhere on the site. Moreover, with the exception of the Complex in the Southeast Area, the buildings exposed by both the Belgian and Johns Hopkins/University of Amsterdam excavations are organized around courtyards, a feature often associated with palaces or other public buildings during the Late Bronze Age. Further, there are any number of reasons for the excavators' failure to recover unambiguously elite goods in the structures on the Acropolis – the buildings could have been emptied of their valuables in anticipation of the attack that burned much of the Acropolis or they could have been looted by the invading army.

In a sense, Schwartz and Curvers' problem with the designation of the architecture on the Acropolis as "palatial" is semantic. While the architecture is certainly not monumental, monumentality is only one physical attribute associated with palatial architecture. In a more theoretical sense, a "palace" can be defined, both literally and figuratively, as a locus of political and economic power. While there is no unambiguous evidence for this function in the buildings on the Acropolis, an argument can still be made that the buildings served as centers of such power. Even if much of the architecture on the Acropolis did not constitute a palace per se, it would have fulfilled many of the roles a palace would have.

The architecture on the Acropolis *is* different; it is larger, denser, and (with the exception of the Southeast Area) organized differently than the rest of the site. The architecture on the acropolises of other sites with settlement patterns similar to Umm el-Marra, such as Tell Brak and Nuzi, clearly served as loci of political and economic power, and so it stands to reason that the same holds true for Umm el-Marra's Acropolis. While no elite goods were recovered, Tefnin

observes that numerous large sherds from storage jars that appear to have held oil were found.⁵⁸⁰ The storage of large quantities of a valuable commodity such as oil would certainly be in keeping with the suggested function of the structure as a locus of economic power. Finally, a bulla impressed with a Mittani Elaborate Style seal found on the Acropolis indicates, at the very least, that someone with an elite seal was controlling goods on the Acropolis or that goods under the control of someone with an elite seal were being brought to the Acropolis. Such a situation supports the suggestion that the Acropolis was a locus of economic and, by extension, political power.

Elsewhere on the site, the changing nature of Late Bronze Umm el-Marra is also reflected in the use of space in North Area A. Instead of being used to make lime, the area transitioned to the production of ceramics. While lime would have been vital throughout the life of the town, as more and more of the site was used for housing, the dirty, smoky, acrid process of slaking limestone would become less welcome by the houses closest to it. Moreover, a growing community would also require more and more pottery for daily use, so North Area A was reused for this purpose. It was still industrial in nature, but now this industry was more compatible with the increasingly domestic nature of the site.

The final occupational phase of North Area A during the late Bronze Age demonstrates just how much the community had grown over the course of its occupation. While the previous two phases had been resolutely industrial in nature, and necessarily so to meet the needs of the community, the final phase of occupation consists entirely of domestic architecture. By the time

⁵⁸⁰ Tefnin, 1980. p.77

of the site's abandonment the need for housing in the community had taken precedence over the need for a nearby source for even a commodity as ubiquitous as ceramics.

While West Area A always had a wholly domestic character, the same trend towards more housing being constructed on the site during the second phase of Late Bronze occupation can be identified there. The earliest phase of occupation, seen in House 1, was comparatively small compared to the later architectural phases. In the next phase of occupation, House 1 was emptied in preparation for its reconstruction, as was done on the Acropolis, and then replaced with a larger structure, presumably housing more occupants, before being abandoned prior to the site's destruction. The other dwellings in West Area A, Houses 2 and 3, both date to the later phase of occupation when the community was growing and more housing was needed. Neither house had an earlier phase, nor could they have been contemporary with the initial occupation of House 1, given the limited lifespan of mudbrick architecture. Thus, roughly contemporary with the reconstruction of House 1, two other dwellings were constructed and a new "neighborhood" came into being.

Here, in West Area A, spatial organization can be clearly linked to social organization. Ethnographic studies of modern villages along the upper Euphrates suggest that the location of buildings in relation to each other is not happenstance but follows cultural norms predicated by familial relationships.⁵⁸¹ In these villages, it has been observed that the households of extended family groups tend to cluster together, creating kin-based enclaves within villages and towns. It is especially common for sons to build their own houses near that of their father.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Mori, 2008. p.119

⁵⁸² Aurenche, 1997. pp.116-117

Similar patterns can be found in textual data from Late Bronze Age Syria and northern Iraq. At Emar, for instance, records of real estate transactions and wills suggest that dwellings of extended families tended to cluster together or even be adjacent to each other in the same neighborhood of the city.⁵⁸³ A similar situation has been identified at Nuzi, where the ties between kinship and land were so strong that land could only be legally transferred between relatives, although in practice this was often circumvented by means of fictive adoption.⁵⁸⁴ The discrete clusters of settlement in the lower town at Umm el-Marra are indicative of the kin-based neighborhoods seen throughout the Near East.

The areas between the clusters of houses in the Lower Town would have been put to various uses. As has already been discussed, some areas were dominated by large refuse pits used to dispose of household waste. Elsewhere, it is highly likely that areas inside the town would have been under cultivation. Throughout many parts of the Near East today, horticulture, particularly olive and grape cultivation, is integrated into the fabric of towns and villages, mostly in the form of vegetable gardens and small orchards. Given the conservatism residential patterns observed in the region from antiquity to the present, as I discussed in Chapter 1, it stands to reason that Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra would have been similar. Bolstering this hypothesis are, again, texts from Emar which indicate that orchards and gardens within the city's defensive walls.⁵⁸⁵ Of this phenomenon Mori notes that they were "connected to urban areas, clearly distinguished from areas more intensively farmed such as fields and vineyards."⁵⁸⁶ Even Gilgamesh boasts that a full third of Uruk was date palm orchards.

⁵⁸³ Mori, 2003. p.37

⁵⁸⁴ Dosch 1996. p.302

⁵⁸⁵ Mori, 2003. p.63

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.169

What kind of community was Umm el-Marra in the Late Bronze Age? The preliminary publications have stressed the small-scale, rural character of the site during this period.

However, this characterization requires reassessment.

As has been mentioned previously, the character of settlements changed markedly with the advent of the Late Bronze Age. The dense, urban settlements that had typified the Middle Bronze Age gave way to more dispersed settlement patterns at many sites throughout northern Syria and Iraq. Instead of characterizing this trend as one of ruralization we should instead reconsider the nature of what can be considered “urban” within the context of the mid-second millennium.

The only site that has traditionally been considered truly urban in Late Bronze Age Syria is Ras Shamra/Ugarit, and its uniqueness is often stressed.⁵⁸⁷ Even here, however, recent investigations have created a more nuanced picture of the site’s character during this period. While certainly denser than settlements farther inland, during the Late Bronze Age a full 25% of Ugarit consisted of open space, a significant area for a site consistently labeled as “urban.”⁵⁸⁸ Even in the more built-up areas of the city fewer than half of areas considered “residential” contained houses, which indicates that the city’s urban core was relatively low-density with much of the space taken up courtyards and vacant areas.⁵⁸⁹

Adding to this picture, Schloen has stressed the fundamentally agricultural nature of Ugarit’s economy in the Late Bronze Age. Instead of being dependent on rural communities to supply them with food, Late Bronze cities like Ugarit were actively involved in the production of

⁵⁸⁷ cf. Marfoe, 1998. p.200

⁵⁸⁸ Garr, Randall W. “A Population Estimate of Ancient Ugarit,” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 266 (May, 1987). p.35

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.38

their own sustenance, a situation which persisted until the Roman period.⁵⁹⁰ As such, there would have been no urban population wholly divorced from agriculture; people who lived in cities would still have worked the fields and tended flocks.⁵⁹¹ Umm el-Marra's low-density settlement and agrarian economy was the norm for cities in the Late Bronze Age. Even as late as the 19th century A.D., Cairo had a large portion of its population actively engaged in agriculture, tending fields on the city's outskirts.⁵⁹²

Recent scholarship has begun to reevaluate the nature of urban space and the relationship between the city and the environment in both antiquity and the modern world. The modern discipline of urban studies has all too often been plagued by 'recentism,' a phenomenon that causes the study of cities to focus on the 19th and 20th centuries while ignoring millennia of urban life.⁵⁹³ The dense built environment and separation from the natural landscape that tends to characterize cities in the modern world is just that – modern. Breaking free of that paradigm allows us to take ancient towns and cities on their own terms. What may look like a dispersed rural village to a modern archaeologist may have been perceived very differently in antiquity.

One of the key factors is that the occupation density in ancient cities may be much lower and more dispersed than modern urban landscapes.⁵⁹⁴ In fact, these "low-density cities" may well have been the norm in many areas throughout antiquity. According to Fletcher, though more common in some regions than others, these low-density cities "have been used by every

⁵⁹⁰ Schloen, 2001. p.335

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.* p.102

⁵⁹² Issawi, Charles. "Economic Change and Urbanization in the Middle East," in *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium on Ancient, Islamic, and Contemporary Middle Eastern Urbanism*, ed. I. Lapidus. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969. pp.105-106

⁵⁹³ Smith, 2010. p.230

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.234

major socio-economic system on the planet.”⁵⁹⁵ For example, Tikal in Mesoamerica and Angkor Wat in Southeast Asia were both undeniably urban while at the same time had a relatively low population density. Moreover, these cities were situated in agricultural landscapes, and large portions of their populations were directly involved in subsistence activities.⁵⁹⁶

The nature of Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra’s settlement can be framed in the same way as the discussion of the Acropolis; debating the designation of Late Bronze Umm el-Marra as a “city” or “urban” is just another semantic argument. While during this period the community was not nearly as urban as Ugarit to the west or as extensive and monumental as sites to the east such as Tell Brak or Nuzi, the settlement pattern is still consistent with the latter two, with denser occupation on the high tell and more dispersed occupation in the lower town.

Even in the modern world, landscapes that are considered “urban” vary greatly. The urbanism that defines London varies greatly from that of Los Angeles, which is different than that of Beijing. Nonetheless, all of these are still indisputably “cities.” What binds these cities together under this urban rubric is their role as loci of economic and political power and the understanding by the populations both within them and inhabiting the landscape around them that they are the physical and conceptual focal points of regional occupation. As the largest site in the region, Umm el-Marra, though on a much smaller scale, fulfills this role for the Jabbul Plain. Moreover, its settlement pattern is entirely consistent with other sites labeled “cities” in the Late Bronze Age.

⁵⁹⁵ Fletcher, Roland. “Low-Density, Agrarian-Based Urbanism: A Comparative View,” in *Insights*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2009). p. 2

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.9

Using Central Place Theory to approach the question of urbanism, Richard Blanton has eschewed basing the designation of a “city” on metrics such as size or occupational density.⁵⁹⁷ Rather, he defines cities as places where institutions not dispersed across the landscape are centralized.⁵⁹⁸ As the largest site on the Jabbul Plain in the Late Bronze Age, it is probable that any public institutions would have been situated there as opposed to the small villages that were scattered across the landscape. Indeed, it would be surprising if, in a region that served as a crucial link between valuable Mittani holdings in the west and the emporia of the middle Euphrates⁵⁹⁹ there was no type of institutional administration at all. If such administration did exist, it almost certainly would have been at Umm el-Marra. There is simply no other place it could have been during this period.

Whether Umm el-Marra is designated a “city” or a “town,” the fact remains that it was the only focal point of Mittani power between the Euphrates and, at the very least, Aleppo (though little is known about that city’s occupation during the period under discussion) and quite possibly the Orontes. It was Mittani imperial control made manifest on the landscape and, as such, would have played a not insignificant role in binding northwest Syria to the Mittani crown. As the only community with any substantial population on the Jabbul Plain during this period, Umm el-Marra would have played an integral role in the economy and administration of the region.

The wealthy cities of the Mediterranean Coast and the middle Euphrates that the Jabbul Plain linked had been won from the Hittites in the previous century. With their intercine strife

⁵⁹⁷ Blanton, Richard E. “Anthropological Study of Cities,” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 5 (1976). p.253

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p.251

⁵⁹⁹ Yukich, 2013. p.39

behind them, the kings of Hatti became more aggressive and began to actively reclaim what Mittani had taken from them

Decline

The man who eventually succeeded Šuttarna II, Tušratta, is probably the best known of the Mittani rulers because of his participation in the Amarna correspondence. While he was able to bring a certain amount of stability to the empire after a troubling period of uncertainty, Mittani's rivals had become emboldened and began to challenge the empire's suzerainty.⁶⁰⁰

The most serious challenge to Mittani during Tušratta's reign came from Hatti and its ambitious king Šuppiluliuma. Shortly after seizing the throne, Šuppiluliuma sought a major victory in the Mittani heartland, but Tushratta managed to avoid confronting him in open battle. Instead, Šuppiluliuma marched west and began conquering Mittani vassals in Syria.⁶⁰¹ During Šuppiluliuma's "one year campaign," the Hittites conquered Aleppo, Mukiš, Alalakh, Qatna, and Nuhaše. Thus, large swathes of northwest Syria were now under Hittite sway. It was during this campaign that Umm el-Marra was probably put to the torch.

Eventually, Tušratta was assassinated by his own sons, setting off a series of events that would make the remnants of Mitanni a Hittite client known by its Akkadian name, Hanigalbat. Even this diminished state was too much for Assyria, who had once been a Mittani vassal. The Assyrian king Šalmaneser I marched on Hanigalbat and eventually defeated it along with its Hittite and Ahlamu allies. The Assyrians continued to put pressure on the shrinking remnants of Hanigalbat and it ceases to be mentioned after the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, Šalmaneser I's son.

⁶⁰⁰ Wilhelm, 2000. pp.1250-1251; Klengel, 1992. p.108

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid* Wilhelm.

Hanigalbat was brought under the yoke of Aššur and would remain so until the fall of the Empire in 612 BC.⁶⁰²

Umm el-Marra, Munbaqa and Tell Hadidi⁶⁰³ were all abandoned around this time, a fact which Dornemann also attributes to the Hittite incursions. On the other hand, sites that had been abandoned centuries earlier like Tell Nebi Mend and Tell Afis are reinhabited due, it is hypothesized, to the Hittites' attempt to bring Syria under their control,⁶⁰⁴ much as Mittani had done in the previous century. Adam T. Smith sees the destruction of the works of previous rulers by a subsequent conqueror as an attempt to remove the memory of the earlier polity from the political landscape.⁶⁰⁵ The Hittite practice of destroying Mittani towns and establishing, or reestablishing, new settlements elsewhere may be a manifestation of this desire of a new polity to remove vestiges of the past and put their own imprimatur on the landscape.

The fiery destruction at the hands of the Hittites was not the final chapter of Umm el-Marra's occupation in the Late Bronze Age. After the fire, there is an attempt to reestablish the community amidst the charred ruins. Though by no means a particularly large community, even during its heyday, the second Late Bronze reoccupation was a fraction of the community's former size. Late Bronze occupation at Umm el-Marra subsequent to the destruction appears to be limited to the Acropolis and the Southeast Area and, in contrast to the pre-destruction architecture, is uniformly small-scale and domestic.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Dornemann, 1979. p.147

⁶⁰⁴ Bourke, 1993. p. 189; Cecchini and Mazzoni, 1998. pp.134-135

⁶⁰⁵ Smith, Adam T. *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Societies*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003. p.167

This second, and final, Late Bronze Age reinhabitation of Umm el-Marra is, on a conceptual level, fundamentally different than the first. According to the hypothesis advanced here, the impetus for the initial resettlement was external; the Mittani state used it to help incorporate newly acquired territory into the Empire. The site's destruction, on the other hand, was part of the chain of events that led to the fall of Mittani and, as a result, there was no political impetus behind the attempted reoccupation because there was no Mittani polity. Rather, the will to try and rebuild the community came from within the community itself. While it is possible that the second occupation was part of the Hittite imperial project, the small-scale, ephemeral nature of the post-destruction community stands in stark contrast to other settlements that were rebuilt by the Hittites, like Tell Afis or Tell Nebi Mend, making this scenario unlikely.

It is difficult to determine how long the second Late Bronze Age occupation of Umm el-Marra lasted. There is only one occupational level, and the architecture is minimal, suggesting that it was not long, perhaps a generation at the very most. Why did this reoccupation fail when the previous one had created a thriving community for over a century? As I have discussed, Umm el-Marra during this period was a product of the Mittani imperial project, and its economy was fully integrated into the empire's. This is reflected, for instance, in the presence of luxury goods from the Burned House in West Area A, probably produced in a palace workshop, in the processing of carcasses for chariots and bows demanded by the state, and in the consumption of Mittani ceramic types and seals. With the collapse of the empire, the political and economic networks in which Umm el-Marra functioned vanished, and the community found itself adrift in a rapidly changing landscape, both physically and politically. As northwest Syria was incorporated into the Hittite Empire, new political and economic networks were being created which would have bypassed Umm el-Marra in the now Hatti-centric world. Cut off from the

polity and its markets which had helped sustain the community, Umm el-Marra's position was untenable and the community withered. When the last inhabitants of the community left or died, the site would remain abandoned until the Persian period centuries later.

Conclusions

The Late Bronze Age occupation of Umm el-Marra was inexorably bound to the arc of the Mittani empire's fortunes. The site's initial resettlement, which coincided with the empire's rise, was an attempt to establish a Mittani foothold in the largely depopulated landscape of the Jabbul Plain. This would have served to create a node of imperial control on the route between the Euphrates and the Mittani possessions to the west while, at the same time, the people who were granted the land would have been bound to the crown by personal loyalty. Thus, the resettlement of Umm el-Marra would have helped to create both a physical and conceptual cohesion within the Mittani Empire. As such, Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra can be understood as a multivalent artifact of the imperial enterprise.

Further helping to incorporate Umm el-Marra into Mittani was the adoption of names, ceramics, and seals associated with the culture of the Hurrian elite. The use of these goods and onomastic practices would have helped to create a common imperial culture that was able to incorporate diverse populations into a more conceptually cohesive polity. A Mittani subject could travel from the foothills of the Zagros to the Mediterranean coast encountering many diverse populations, but all along the route such a person could still drink beverages out of Nuzi Ware goblets served from a jar set on a piecrust potstand. At the same time, the production of these

goods would have fostered internal markets and trade networks which would further help to incorporate the various regions of the empire into a more coherent economic framework.

Though not “urban” in the sense of a densely populated city with large-scale public architecture, since Umm el-Marra was the largest settlement on the Jabbul Plain it would have served as a focal point of the region’s economic and political activity. What constitutes urbanism is, on a certain level, a question of perception. Small settlements dotted the plain during this period, as indicated by the 1996 survey, and the region was almost certainly traversed by pastoralists. Though modest compared to other Late Bronze Age sites in Syria, to farmers living in rural hamlets or pastoralists tending their flocks, Umm el-Marra would have been a destination; a place of substantial architecture and more people than they would regularly interact with. To Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the Jabbul Plain, Umm el-Marra would have seemed like a substantial center, possibly even a city.⁶⁰⁶

While the contemporary political context created the environment in which Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra existed, the settlement history of the site created the physical environment the community inhabited. Its layout followed contours of the landscape created by the decisions of previous inhabitants and formed a physical template for settlement. The Acropolis, for instance, was the focal point around which the community was organized, and the outer wall both physically and conceptually circumscribed it. While the influence of contemporary external forces in shaping a community is obvious, the diachronic influence of past inhabitants must also

⁶⁰⁶ In the modern village of Umm el-Marra the nearby town of Deir Hafer, though quite modest, especially in relation to Aleppo a mere 50 km away, is the focus of local life. It is where the residents go to shop, do business, and to see and be seen. The weekly bazaar was particularly anticipated despite that fact that a city of two million people and all the amenities it had to offer was a just short drive away. Despite a larger alternative, Deir Hafer was perceived as a city by the residents of a smaller community.

be taken into account as a major factor in shaping the nature of settlements, particularly continuously reoccupied ones of the type common throughout the Near East.

The quest for correlates between political change and the archaeological record is often quixotic. However, a broader examination of settlement history, both on and off site, can begin to shed light on the political and cultural tides that shape a landscape. These settlement histories are often heavily influenced by external factors acting on communities and can serve to help contextualize a site within broader historical trends.

Chapter 5.

Conclusions.

This dissertation has sought to examine Late Bronze Age society in Syria through the study of the physical manifestations of institutions as intimate as households and as expansive as empire. Though disparate in scale and purpose, they existed along a social continuum and each acted on, and reacted against, the other. In my reconstruction, the Mittani Empire created the political and economic conditions for the reoccupation, growth, and eventual abandonment of Umm el-Marra, while the residents of the community provided goods and labor that the empire needed to further its own ends.

The decision to establish a community at Umm el-Marra in the Late Bronze Age was predicated by decisions made more than a millennium earlier. Centuries of occupation in the Early and Middle Bronze Age created the space which the Late Bronze Age residents inhabited. Umm el-Marra was both a physical and conceptual focal point on the landscape. As the largest tell in the region it would have been an imposing site on an otherwise flat landscape and able to be seen from a distance. Conceptually, tells have a hold on memory and draw people to them. This is evidenced archaeologically by their repeated occupation over the course of centuries or millennia. The topography of the tell itself dictated much of the settlement's use of space. The Acropolis served as the site's focal point, and the remnants of the city wall circumscribed the community.

During the Late Bronze Age, the earliest activity at Umm el-Marra can be ceramically dated to the mid-15th century, which is precisely the time the Mittani Empire was expanding its influence westward from its homeland in the Khabur. The severe reduction in settlement on the Jabbul Plain, which started in the Middle Bronze Age and culminated in the Late Bronze Age, resulted in a depopulated landscape between the cities of the middle Euphrates and the more populous centers to the west such as Alalakh, Ugarit, and possibly Halab. The reoccupation of Umm el-Marra would have established a Mittani presence in this region and more fully integrated it into the empire. A settlement at this location would also have helped control the east-west routes facilitating trade and communication as well as exploit the resources of the steppe.

It is a well attested practice for empires to consolidate territorial gains by encouraging settlement in marginal areas, such as the Jabbul Plain. Elites are often coopted for this endeavor and there is textual evidence for the Mittani crown granting land to nobles. Taken together with the fact that the site's reoccupation coincides with Mittani's thrust westward, these data suggest that the Late Bronze Age reoccupation of Umm el-Marra was not only predicated by the spread of the Mittani imperium, but actively encouraged by it.

The traditional view of Mittani imperial administration holds that it was largely accomplished through vassal treaties which bound nobles to the empire while still giving them considerable autonomy. While this was certainly true in many cases, the data from Umm el-Marra suggest that in other circumstances the Mittani state took a more proactive role in imperial administration. By establishing a settlement on the Jabbul Plain, Mittani was actively putting its

imprimatur on the landscape. In this regard, Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra can be understood as a physical manifestation of imperial will, not a cooption of an existing regime.

Households were the most basic economic institutions in the Late Bronze Age. Within the community they were at once self-sufficient, growing enough to feed themselves, while also engaged in small-scale craft production for the local market. Within the context of empire, labor obligations were imposed on households, not individuals or the community. The history of occupation at Umm el-Marra is reflected in the domestic architecture these households inhabited. I hypothesize that there were two types of households at the site: institutional households and private households, identified by their different use of space and location on the tell. The institutional households are organized around courtyards and are located on the Acropolis and in the Southeast Area: the Acropolis is the most prominent point on the site and the Southeast Area is the most isolated. These were households that were set apart. With the exception of one structure, the rest of the buildings were Central Room Houses, a type common throughout Syria during this period. I argue that the institutional households would have been loci of economic and, by extension, political power, given the large amount of commodities stored in them; oil on the Acropolis and grain in the Southeast Area.

The built environment, the physical structures these households inhabited, was an expression of the needs of their inhabitants. Human life is dynamic and the changes that occur in a household over the course of one or more generations are reflected in the changes that are made to a structure. As babies were born, parents died, and slaves were bought, the spatial needs of the household changed and houses were altered in accordance. Examining the way buildings and the use of space changed over time can inform our understanding of the changes in domestic

life that are not otherwise evident in the archaeological record. The addition of rooms to an existing structure indicates that a household is growing. This practice is seen at Umm el-Marra in dwellings in West Area A, the Northwest Area, and North Area A. Conversely, as families shrink, rooms and entire buildings fall out of use. In the Southeast Area the northernmost suite of rooms in the Complex was probably not in use when the structure was put to the torch, while the rest of the building was clearly still in use.

The same approach can be applied to settlement history. Over the course of a settlement's occupation, demographic, economic, and political changes can all affect the built environment. As households shrink or move away, their dwellings are often abandoned, a process which is visible archaeologically. Houses that were abandoned are devoid of artifacts and their doorways are often blocked. Adding to this, I suggest that on sites that were burned contemporary structures that were not set on fire were probably empty.

Because parts of a site were unoccupied, it does not mean that the entire site was abandoned. Rather, this site-wide difference in occupation can be understood as a spatial artifact of the changing nature of the community. Demographic trends that result in extended families shrinking can lead to the consolidation of living space which would be visible archaeologically in the abandonment of dwellings. Alternately, economic changes can force households to relocate to other settlements or seek out other subsistence strategies, which would also result in the abandonment of dwellings. The abandonment of parts of a site does not necessarily reflect an impoverishment of the remaining community. At Umm el-Marra, while the buildings on the Acropolis North, Acropolis West, North Area A, and the Northwest Area were abandoned by the time of the site's destruction, the Acropolis Center, Acropolis East, West Area A, and the

Southeast Area continued to be occupied. Indeed, the assemblages from these areas suggest that despite its diminished size, the community was thriving.

Previous treatments of the data from Umm el-Marra have emphasized the rural nature of the Late Bronze Age community. Traditional metrics of urbanism have included size, population, and settlement density, all of which would preclude Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra from being considered urban. However, when other paradigms of urbanism are brought to bear on the site during this period, the designation of Umm el-Marra as a resolutely rural community become less tenable. Modern western notions of urbanism tend to stress the disconnect between cities and the agricultural hinterlands that supply them with food. A reassessment of urbanism in antiquity suggests that the residents of cities were actively engaged in agriculture. Moreover, the occupational density of these cities was relatively low compared to cities in the classical world and beyond. This low-density agrarian urbanism may well have been the norm for much of antiquity and so sites with settlement patterns and economies like that of Umm el-Marra should not automatically be labelled “rural.”

Adding to this varied interpretation of urbanism in antiquity is the notion that a city is a place where institutions not dispersed across the landscape are centralized. Umm el-Marra is the largest site on the Jabbul Plain and the only one with extensive Late Bronze Age occupation. Given the importance of the Jabbul Plain as a link between the east and west, it would be surprising if there were no administrative institutions in the region. The nature of settlement on the Jabbul during this period suggests that Umm el-Marra is the only place where these institutions could have been located.

Defining what constitutes urbanism can also be approached through a perceptual rubric. As the largest and most extensively occupied site on the Jabbul in the Late Bronze Age, Umm el-Marra would have stood in stark contrast to the small villages, hamlets, and farmsteads that dotted the landscape. Individuals from one of these communities, or pastoralists from the region, would have encountered more people and built space at Umm el-Marra than any place else in their daily experience. As such, while to modern western sensibilities Late Bronze Age Umm el-Marra might not be perceived as urban, to most inhabitants of the Jabbul during this period it may well have been experienced that way.

Just as the data suggest that Umm el-Marra was reoccupied as Mittani hegemony was spreading, its destruction coincides with the empire's precipitous decline. C-14 data indicates a 14th century date for the site's destruction, and this is precisely when the reascendant Hittite state began making forays into northern Syria. Thus, the Late Bronze Age occupation of the site falls wholly within the Mittani Empire. Umm el-Marra's resettlement was an expression of Mittani imperial will and its destruction signifies the same impulse on behalf of Hatti. A brief attempt was made to reoccupy the site after its destruction, but this endeavor proved to be short lived. The political and economic networks Umm el-Marra had been a part of were upended and a product of the Mittani imperium had no place within a Hittite dominated world.

An overarching theme of this dissertation has been the importance of temporality in interpreting archaeological data. The archaeological record is static, representing a single instance, either a site's destruction or its final abandonment. This stands in stark contrast to human lived experience, in which change is a constant. To understand how past societies functioned, the dynamic forces that shaped the lives of their inhabitants must be studied. As I

stated above, the changes in a household are reflected by changes in the built environment it inhabits. Since the use-life of mudbrick architecture is no more than fifty years, alterations to a dwelling mark change over a period of years or decades. Being aware of these changes, and incorporating them into the interpretation of the data, allows for a more intimate and immediate study of life in antiquity. The phrase “Late Bronze Age occupation” covers a span of centuries, far beyond the scope of a human lifetime, and the people whose dwellings and settlements archaeologists study did not experience their world this way. Rather, archaeologists should attempt to understand antiquity through the rubric of the lived experience and scale of the societies they study.

Investigating change over time is only one way to incorporate temporality into the interpretation of archaeological data. For instance, mudbrick architecture must be built in the summer because winter rains would make construction difficult, if not impossible. Thus, Umm el-Marra was probably initially reoccupied at this time of year. Seasonality also manifests itself in the ancient economy. Umm el-Marra and, indeed, Late Bronze Age society in general, was primarily agricultural. As such, life revolved around the cycle of planting and harvesting. The very destruction of the site is an artifact of this seasonality because large-scale mobilization of labor could only be done in the summer after the harvest was brought in.

Much still remains unknown about both Umm el-Marra and the Late Bronze Age. While it is well established that the site was reoccupied at the beginning of this period, it is not known by whom. It could be that the descendants of the Middle Bronze Age inhabitants of the site were those responsible for rebuilding it. However, a lack of recognition of the Acropolis Center as a “place apart” may cast doubt on this, particularly in light of the continuity seen there between

the Early and Middle Bronze Age occupations. One avenue of inquiry might be to consider similarities in building styles and practices from Umm el-Marra with those of other areas. As was noted in Chapter 3, the practice of using platforms of upended mudbricks to form a foundation is also seen in the Khabur, possibly suggesting the origin of the builders. Such inquiry would help to shed light on the movement of populations within Mittani, a practice well attested in other empires such as Assyria and the Inka.

Concurrent with the spread of Mittani hegemony was the spread of a suite of artifacts specifically associated with the imperium. I have suggested that other fashions not readily visible in the archaeological record, like cuisine, may have spread as well. Comparing the butchering techniques evident in faunal remains from both before and during Mittani occupation of various sites may be one way to identify changing culinary practices associated with the spread of Mittani imperial culture.

The economy of Mittani is poorly understood, and studying the movement of goods within the empire would be valuable for understanding the inner workings of one of the major international powers of the Late Bronze Age. Dunham has noted the similarity of the impression of the Elaborate Style seal on the bulla from the Umm el-Marra Acropolis with those from Nuzi, suggesting it may have even come from there.⁶⁰⁷ Neutron activation analysis could either confirm this hypothesis or suggest another origin. Luxury goods, such as the glazed jar from the Burned House, were generally produced in palace workshops. A similar analysis of the jar could help understand the relationship between large public institutions, such as the palace, and the empire's provinces.

⁶⁰⁷ Schwartz, *et al.*, 2012. p.187

While empires are political entities of the largest-scale, it is my hope that this dissertation has demonstrated that such extensive polities can be studied and understood from the perspective of its smallest-scale constituents such as household, neighborhood and community. While such materials as architectural fragments, potsherds, and carbonized plant remains are humble when compared to monumental palaces or imperial administrative records, they too have an important role to play in understanding how empires functioned and why they rose and fell.

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B.A., With Honors Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2000 (Anthropology and Religion;
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Dissertation Title:

“Umm el-Marra and the Westward Expansion of the Mitanni Empire in Northwestern Syria”

Classroom Experience:

-Instructor: “Archaeology of Empire,” Intersession 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013

-Instructor: “The Archaeology of Food,” Fall 2008

-Instructor: “Ancient City of the Future,” at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Spring
2008

-Instructor: “The Use and Misuse of Archaeology,” Expository Writing Class, Fall 2009, Spring
2010

-Instructor: “From Feast to Famine in the Ancient World,” Intersession 2010, 2012, Fall 2013

-Instructor: “Archaeology, Politics, and the Uses of the Past,” Expository Writing Class, Fall
2010, 2011, 2012, Spring 2010, 2011, 2012

Awards:

-Dean’s Teaching Fellowship, Fall 2008

-J. Brien Key Fellowship for Graduate Research, 2007

-Explorer’s Club Grant for Graduate Research, 2004

Publications:

“A Mesopotamian Feast: Ancient Recipes for Modern Cooks,” in *Archaeology Odyssey*,
January/February 2006, pp. 32-35

Professional Papers Presented:

- “In the Shadow of Empire: Archaeological Evidence of Mitanni Public Institutions at Umm el-Marra,” Conference on ‘Palace and Temple in the Late Bronze Age of the Ancient Near East,’ Harvard, April 2012
- “Sweet as a Dilmun Date: The Archaeology of the Kassite Luxury Trade in the Persian Gulf,” American Schools of Oriental Research, New Orleans, November 2009
- “A New Look at Syrian Bottles,” American Schools of Oriental Research, Boston, November 2008
- “In Search of an Elusive Empire: Umm el-Marra and the Archaeology of Mitanni,” Walters Art Museum, May 2008
- “Life Amid the Ruins: Small-scale Occupation at Umm el-Marra, Syria,” American Oriental Society, Chicago, March 2008
- “Umm el-Marra and the Mitanni Empire in Inland Syria,” American Schools of Oriental Research, San Diego, November 2007

Fieldwork:

- Associate Director: Kurd Qabristan, Iraqi Kurdistan (Johns Hopkins University) 2013
- Site Supervisor: Oğlanqala, Naxcivan, Azerbaijan (University of Pennsylvania) 2009
- Site Supervisor: Tell Umm el-Marra, Syria (Johns Hopkins University/University of Amsterdam) 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010
- Site Supervisor: Mut Temple, Luxor, Egypt (Johns Hopkins University) 2004, 2006 and 2007
- Site Supervisor: Kinet Höyük, Turkey (Bilkent University) 2005
- Field Technician: Various Sites in the Northeastern United States (The RBA Group) 2000-2002
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