

The formation of collective, political and cultural memory in the Middle Bronze Age: foundation and termination rituals at Toprakhisar Höyük

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Abstract

Constructing and deconstructing public spaces in second-millennium BC Anatolia, the Near East and the Levant was not only a collaborative physical act but also involved deeply embodied ritual symbolism. This symbolism is materialised in the practice of conducting public foundation and termination rituals that unified individual memories in space and time, transforming the physical act into a collective memory: a process that contributed to the formation of political and cultural memory. The recent rescue excavations conducted by the Hatay Archaeological Museum at the hinterland site of Toprakhisar Höyük in Altınözü (in the foothills above the Amuq valley) add to the understanding of the practice of foundation and termination rituals during the Middle Bronze Age and how these moments may have contributed to the political and cultural memory of a rural community living away from the centre. The practice of foundation/termination rituals is archaeologically documented by caches of artefacts from votive contexts stratigraphically linked to the construction and termination of a Middle Bronze Age administrative structure.

Özet

MÖ 2. binyıl Anadolu ve Yakındoğu bağlamlarında kamusal yapıların inşaat ve yıkım süreçleri sadece ortak fiziksel bir eylem olarak kalmamakta aynı zamanda derin ritüel bir sembolizm içermektedir. Temel atma ve yıkım törenleri ile birlikte bu sembolizmin nesnelleştiği ve bu süreçte bireysel hafızanın toplumsal hafızaya, akabinde ise politik ve kültürel hafızanın oluşumuna katkıda bulunduğu vurgulanmıştır. Hatay Arkeoloji Müzesi tarafından Amik Ovası'nı çevreleyen dağlık coğrafyada, bir kırsal yerleşim olarak tanımladığımız Altınözü, Toprakhisar Höyük'te yürütülen kazılarda Orta Tunç Çağı temel atma ve yıkım törenlerini daha iyi anlamaya yönelik sonuçlara ulaşılmış ve bu törenlerin küçük ölçekli bir yerleşimde politik ve kültürel hafızanın oluşumuna katkısı irdelenmiştir. Bu süreç, arkeolojik bağlamı içerisinde bir Orta Tunç Çağı idari yapısının inşası ve yıkımı sürecinin stratigrafik tabakalaşma içinde tanımlanabilen adak çukurları ve içlerinde bulunan nesnelere bağlı kalarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Following the collapse and then re-establishment of the supra-regional chain of networks of the Early Bronze Age (Şahoğlu 2005; Efe 2007; Bachhuber 2013; Massa, Palmisano 2018; Osborne 2019), trade became a primary factor in the alteration of the urban landscapes of Anatolia, the Near East and the Levant at the beginning of the second millennium BC (Yener 2007; Burke 2008; Barjamovic 2011; Laneri, Schwartz 2011; Michel 2011; Butterlin 2018). This is reflected in the centralising role of the administrative complexes that were dedicated to strategies

enabling an increasing amount of production and storage extending over the Orontes, Halys, Euphrates and Tigris basins, and in all directions along the trade networks of the second millennium BC (fig. 1; for regional examples, see Woolley 1955; Özgüç 1999; Marchetti 2006; Ökse, Görmüş 2006; Laneri 2011; Bartl 2012). According to some scholars, as places of individual and group-based interactions involving production, surplus management and trade, such building complexes were also regarded as three-dimensional representations of the abstract concepts

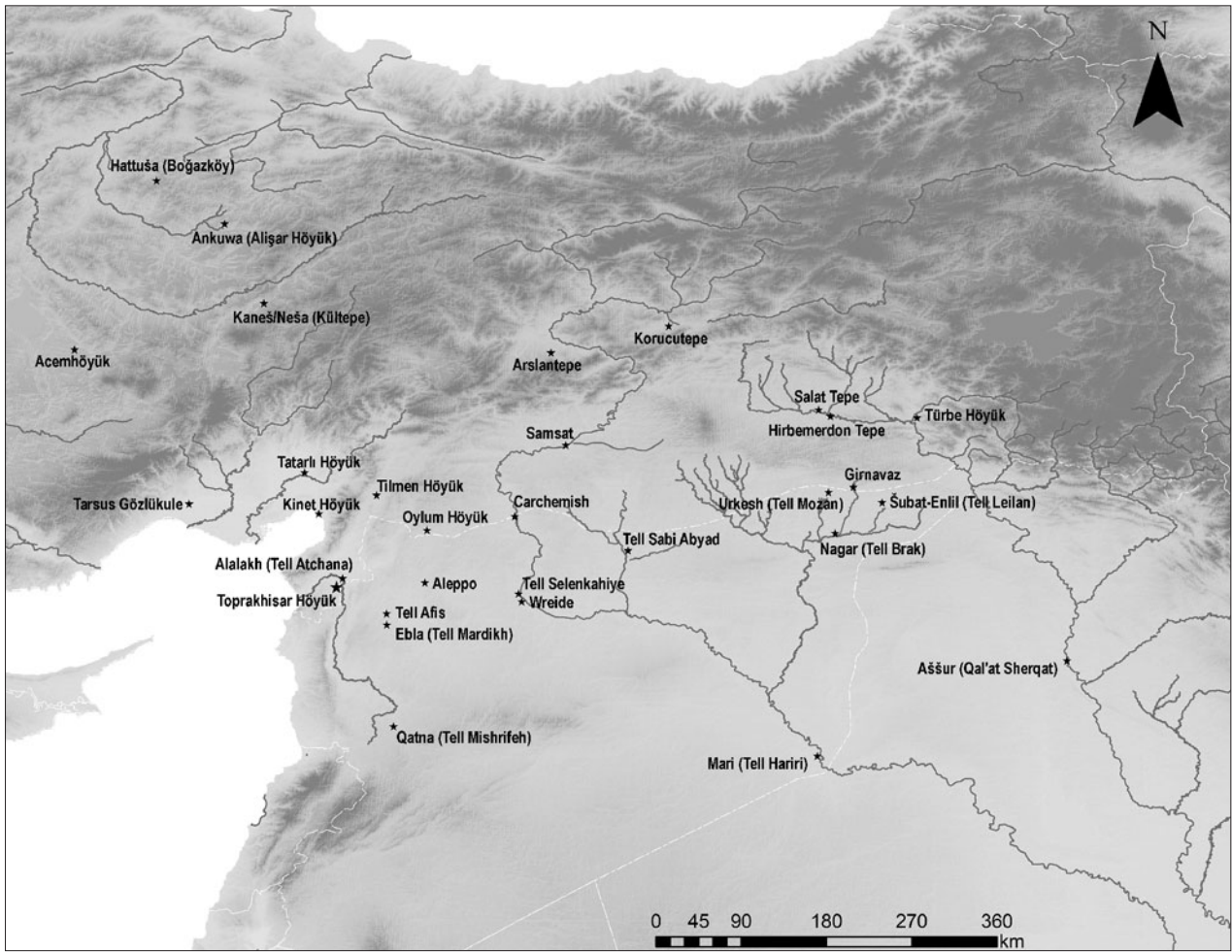


Fig. 1. Map of the second-millennium BC sites in Anatolia and the Near East referred to in the text (map by M. Akar).

of prestige and power relating to the ruling authority (Ussishkin 1989: 485; Winter 1993: 29). The definition of administrative buildings as economic and interactive spaces not only amplifies their functional economic attributes but also adds to the notion of how these monuments of authority were used to transmit symbolic and political messages and so construct individual and collective memories through the use of space. The dimensions of the building, the choice of construction materials and the stylistic traditions applied are regarded as deliberate choices employed to express and emphasise a materialistic embodiment of authority (Trigger 1990: 127).

In a sociological framework, following Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) Durkheimian understanding of collective memory, this symbolic messaging is accepted as an intended social construct that requires the perception, appreciation and acceptance of the responding social groups and is seen as a mnemotechnic social experience (Eco 1986: 93; Hamilakis 2015: 332). These symbolic expressions are aided by the material world, which develops mediated consciousness in society (Wertsch 2002). Accordingly, architecture shapes the individual and collective memories,

directs what and how to remember and creates bonds with the living space (Rossi 1984). Thus, we argue that the power to construct or deconstruct physical spaces provides the ruling authority with the possibility to alter social memory (see, for instance, Kubal 2008). This constructed form of memory is political, and it forms the basis of cultural memory as defined by Aleida Assmann (2006: 215–16).

The bounded relationship between architecture, politics and society, resulting in the building of mediated cultural memories, can then be traced in an archaeological context by structuring the cycle of events from a building's construction to its deconstruction. This approach aims to understand the process of memory building through contextual exploration of foundation and termination rituals, rather than focusing attention on the standing remains that define only a single period of a building's history. Here, this topic is approached through the contextual and cognitive understanding of a cache of ritual-related artefacts found in what we interpret as votive deposits made during the construction and later deconstruction of an administrative Middle Bronze Age (MBA) building at Toprakhisar Höyük.

Toprakhisar Höyük was a small-scale rural settlement located in the hilly landscape of the Altınözü district of Hatay, where, based on its distinct geographical attributes, the settlement likely functioned as a specialised centre dealing in the high-value agricultural products of olive oil and wine. Such activities would have linked this peripheral settlement to the palatial trade and exchange networks of the early second millennium BC.

Following an introduction to the theoretical background and a regional and textual overview assessing the functional designations of the settlement, the archaeological data are presented. First, the MBA structure, Building 2, and its administrative character are detailed through stratigraphic, architectural and contextual material. This discussion is supported by textual and comparative data. Second, the ritual paraphernalia that are stratigraphically linked to the foundation and termination ritual deposits relating to the construction and then the deconstruction of Building 2 are presented. The artefactual data from these votive contexts are then evaluated comparatively in terms of their suggested commemorative function and discussed within the theoretical framework of political and cultural memory.

Theoretical background

Foundation and termination rituals as collective performances are known from the Neolithic onwards (Garfinkel 1994; Meskell et al. 2008); they become textually evident from the third millennium BC onwards in the Near East, Egypt, the Levant and Anatolia, and were often performed in relation to temples or other sites of ritual significance (Ellis 1968; Ünal 1999; Soysal, Süel 2007; Ambos 2010; Romano 2015; Valentini 2015; Karkowski 2016; Laneri et al. 2016; Türkteki, Başkurt 2016; Müller 2018). The nature of such activities varied across these regions and reveals a diverse choice of material practices ranging from artefact placement to animal and human sacrifice in votive contexts (for example, see Ellis 1968; Morandi Bonacossi 2012; Porter 2012a; Schwartz 2012; Laneri et al. 2015; Soldado 2016). However, archaeological research often tends to separate artefacts of exclusive significance from their contextual and cognitive contexts, stressing the object itself rather than the moment of its use in its temporal and spatial settings (Hodder 1986; Meskell 2004: 14; Knappett 2011: 137). This tendency creates a world of culture-labelled artefacts which excludes how they were used to create and share ideologies, beliefs or common cultural behaviours (Zubrow 1994; DeMarrais 2004; Osborne 2004; Wengrow 2014; Mazzone, Laneri 2017).

In Halbwachs' influential sociological understanding, the focus of collective memory can be manifested in 'a physical object, a material reality such as a statue, a monument, a place in space, and also a symbol, or something of spiritual significance, something shared by

the group that adheres to and is superimposed on this physical reality' (1992: 204). The practice of placing votive offerings of a distinctive nature in the course of foundation rituals, such as bricks with cuneiform inscriptions, foundation pins, statues or vessels, marks, via these material forms, the ritual meaning of a constructed space. But such artefacts, being buried in the process of a ceremonial event, were not intended to be seen afterwards; therefore their social impact is dependent on their temporal moment of placement.

Ceremonial acts aim to unify, spatially and temporally, individual memories and so lead to the formation of a collective memory (Connerton 1989). The collective memory that forms the baseline for constructed political and cultural memories, as defined by Aleida Assmann (2006) and Jan Assmann (2008), is then materialised in the process of building spaces of social significance. Therefore, we see the objects of symbolic significance used in foundation rituals as short-lived but weight the moment of the ceremonial practice that targeted the responding audience in the process of mediated long-term memory creation. In this view, offerings made during the termination or abandonment of a structure are also regarded as tools aiding the creation of a sentimental remembrance link with the past, at both individual and collective levels (Crimson 2005; Kubal 2008; Mills 2008: 106; Harmanşah 2011: 624; Pfälzner 2017: 160).

In accepting constructed spaces as physical expressions of abstract concepts of power and prestige and of ritual significance in the wider framework of politics, and implementing Paul Connerton's (1989: 70) and Jan Assmann's sociological approaches (2008:110), the materials themselves are accepted as tools employed to transmit, shape and unify individual experiences on a social level (see also Collins 2004; Saito 2010). Thus, this article focuses on how objects used in foundation and termination rituals helped to form the political and cultural memory of a community through constructed spaces. In the archaeological consideration of the foundation and termination rituals, attention is focused on a precise moment in time: on when – and how – the objects were used within collective experiences (DeMarrais et al. 1996; Van Dyke, Alcock 2003: 4).

The regional setting of Toprakhisar Höyük

Toprakhisar Höyük is located on the Beyazçay river, one of the more accessible narrow valley systems that connects the highland Altınözü region to the Amuq valley (fig. 2). This is a hitherto relatively unknown district in terms of the early history of the region, since much of the archaeological research conducted here has been concentrated on the Amuq valley (Yener 2005), and has thus excluded the highland periphery. The opportunity to conduct excavations at a highland peripheral site offered the possibility to

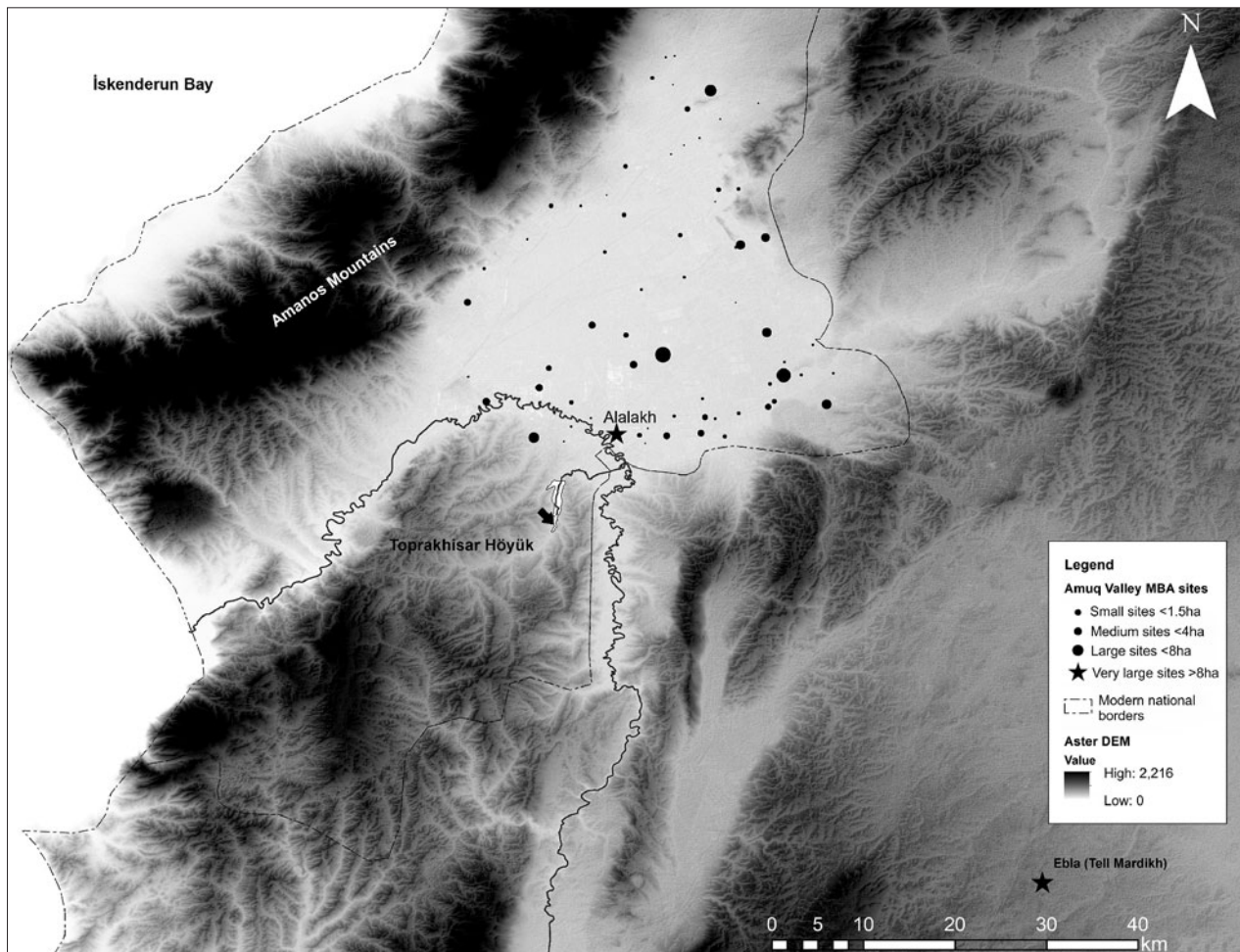


Fig. 2. The settlement distribution pattern of the Amuq valley in the Middle Bronze Age (map by M. Akar).

explore centre-periphery dynamics (which are often considered in theoretical terms only) within the regional setting of the Hatay (Trigger 1967; Parr 1972; Larsen 1987; Rowlands 1987). Furthermore, the site allowed for investigation of the role played by the periphery (Schwartz, Falconer 1994; Laneri 2011: 79, 90), enabling a broader understanding of the interregional exchange networks that define the early MBA systems of political, cultural and economic interaction. The significance of defining the symbiotic interaction between centre and periphery in southeastern Anatolia, for instance, is well attested for the MBA of the Upper Tigris region, as a consequence of intensive rescue excavations and surface surveys conducted there; but such an analysis had not been undertaken for the Amuq and its surroundings, a transitory buffer zone that has the potential to reveal something of the lesser-known MBA cultural interactions along the eastern Mediterranean coast (Akar, Kara 2018a).

The highland landscape of the Altınözü region is significantly different from the flat Amuq plain, consisting mainly of rocky low hills not suitable for large-scale agricultural production (Tchalenko 1953: 422; De Giorgi 2007:

294–95). Nowadays, the hilly landscape surrounding Toprakhisar Höyük is densely vegetated by naturally grown and cultivated olive trees. These constitute the major income of the region; and, as a product of great economic value, annual olive-oil festivals are held (Konuşkan, Canbaş 2008: 59). Previous and ongoing archaeological surveys of the highlands have revealed a comparable economic pattern in classical times. The remains of farmsteads with olive-oil production facilities indicate a similar economic model in antiquity. In the past, unlike today, vines were also grown. Thus there is clear evidence signifying ancient specialised agricultural production industries in the region (De Giorgi 2007: 295; Pamir 2010: 77). Surveys in the narrow river valleys of Altınözü have also revealed several mound-type sites, which confirm that the region was subject to settled human activity from at least the early Chalcolithic onwards (Pamir, Henry 2017: 150–51; 2018: 507–08).

The institutional organisation of the production and distribution of olive oil and wine is regarded as a major source of income for the Bronze Age palatial systems of the Near East and Anatolia (Liverani 1975; Milano 1994;

Hamilakis 1996). According to the available textual evidence, these commodities were highly prized beyond their limited production zones (Malul 1987; Knapp 1991), and major sites like Mari and Emar on the Euphrates acquired their wine from Aleppo and its vicinity (Durand 2000: 10–13; Chambon 2009; 2011). However, whilst there is plentiful textual evidence for the production and distribution processes of olive oil and wine in the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, there is very limited material evidence (Courtois 1962; Zettler, Miller 1995; Riley 2002; Salavert 2008; Laneri 2018), and much of our understanding is dependent on the vessels in which these commodities were stored and distributed (D’Andrea, Vacca 2013; Mazzoni 2013).

Nonetheless, olive oil and wine are extensively referenced in the Middle and Late Bronze Age textual sources of Alalakh that deal with land tenure and the exchange and purchase of towns (Dietrich, Lorenz 1969; Magness-Gardiner 1994; Casana 2009; Lauinger 2015). This textual evidence implies that certain administrative privileges were given to settlements specialising in olive-oil production within the territory of Alalakh in the Amuq valley (Wiseman 1953; Lauinger 2015: 85). Similar textual references to towns of specialised agricultural production can also be found at Ebla (Archi 2015: 256). The suitability of Alalakh for specialised agricultural production is stressed by a group of letters found in the Mari archives. The correspondence between Zimri-Lim and his representative Nur-Sin (FM 7 26:29–36) is of great significance. According to a letter written by Nur-Sin, he was at Alahtum to investigate and later purchase Alahtum and its agricultural lands from Hammurabi I of Yamhad (Durand 2002: 95). With some uncertainty, Alahtum is accepted as equating to Alalakh, the capital city of the Late Bronze Age kingdom of Mukish (Durand 2002: 60–66), and was under the management of Zimri-Lim of Mari for an unknown period of time before Level VII at Tell Atchana. According to the Level VII texts (AIT 1 and AIT 456), Alalakh was by this time owned by Yarim-Lim I of Alalakh through an exchange of settlements with his brother Abba-el, son of Hammurabi I of Yamhad. This implies that, following Zimri-Lim’s short-lived possession of Alalakh and its agricultural territory, the region was once again owned by the kings of Yamhad (Lauinger 2015: 212).

Spatial analysis of settlement and land-use data from the Amuq valley and its highlands for the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age (Early: Batiuk 2013; Middle and Late: Casana 2003: 111) has enabled the plotting of the likely locations of vineyards with small-scale settlements; these are largely clustered in the narrow river valleys of the Altınözü region, where Toprakhisar Höyük is situated. It has been estimated that 1,269,000 litres of wine could have been produced annually within the territory of the

kingdom of Mukish in the Late Bronze Age and distributed through networks of exchange (Batiuk 2013: 471). This land-use analysis confirms the functional designation of Toprakhisar Höyük as a likely olive-oil and wine production centre.

The rescue excavations at Toprakhisar Höyük

Toprakhisar Höyük is one of 67 sites discovered in the Amuq valley and its surrounding landscape that have revealed archaeological material dated to the MBA (Braidwood 1937; Yener et al. 2000; 2017; Casana 2009; Bulu 2017). The site was targeted for rescue excavations in 2016 due to significant erosional damage caused by the Beyaz Çay, as well as the effect of the Yarseli Dam, which was constructed in the 1980s to provide water for agricultural activities in the region. The water level in the dam reaches up to 12m in April and May, but it is completely dry in July to August following the irrigation season. This cycle of wet and dry episodes accelerated the decomposition of the site, especially in its southern section (fig. 3). This area of the site now resembles a steep cliff. Since it is densely occupied by the village of Toprakhisar, the extent of the site to the west remains unclear. An area of about 1ha is thus available for archaeological exploration.

Preliminary extensive surface surveys conducted on the eastern lower slope of the site revealed material evidence that the site was occupied from the sixth millennium BC to the first half of the first millennium BC, with an occupational break during the late MBA that lasted throughout the Late Bronze Age (Akar, Kara 2018a). This longevity of occupation, in contrast to the settlements of the Amuq valley, is a key feature of the site. Recent archaeological research conducted in the Amuq, at the sites of Tell Kurdu (Yener et al. 2000; Özbal 2010; 2012), Tell Atchana (Akar 2013; Yener 2013), Chatal Höyük (Pucci 2019) and Tell Tayinat (Welton et al 2011; Harrison 2013), has revealed archaeological data from narrowly defined chronological periods. Except for Robert Braidwood’s limited soundings at Tell el Judaidah (Braidwood, Braidwood 1960), no archaeological research has been conducted in the valley aimed at exploring the region’s chronological and cultural sequence in a wider temporal setting at one location. This has led to major gaps, significantly in the prehistoric sequence (Amuq A–J,) and in the understanding of local responses to larger phenomena such as the Ubaid-Uruk affinities, early Transcaucasian influence and the lesser-known Early to Middle Bronze Age transition in the Amuq valley (Welton 2017; Akar, Kara 2018a). Once revealed, Toprakhisar Höyük’s complete stratigraphic sequence will contribute to understanding cultural transformations that occurred over the *longue durée* from a rural perspective.



Fig. 3. Comparative aerial photos of the site: the dry season in August (left) and the wet season in May (right) (photographs by M. Akar).

The stratigraphy

The 2016–2017 excavations were conducted on the edge of the highest part of the site, where the top 2m of the mound, with a gentle slope towards the west, had previously been bulldozed in order to create a flat surface for the construction of a barn, which was later demolished. The area was then backfilled to be used for small-scale agricultural activities. It has not been possible to excavate on the privately owned top of the mound; thus a site-wide periodisation is not yet possible (fig. 4). Nevertheless, section cleaning conducted on the 2m-high modern terrace cut revealed that, during or after the MBA, the site was abandoned and reoccupied in the Early Iron Age. The latter is defined by the profile of a large fire-related feature visible in the cut that yielded Early Iron Age local simple and painted wares. No Late Bronze Age ceramics were encountered.

North-oriented excavation squares – 51.37 and 52.37 – were placed along the line of the eastern terrace cut (fig. 5). The southern end of the excavation area is defined by the southern cliff-like edge of the mound. The northern end of the terraced field was subject to another terracing operation for the construction of a mudbrick house and a yard for small-scale farming; it was limited by a road to the west. Due to these physical restrictions, it is not possible to expand the excavation area in any direction.

The earliest architectural remains are encountered in square 52.37 only. These are currently labelled as Local Phase 4 and represent small-scale domestic units dated to the early MBA or terminal Early Bronze Age. The dating is detailed below. Building 2, which is the principal focus of this article, is defined as belonging to Local Phase 3, and has been explored in both excavation units. The succeeding Local Phase 2 is defined by a series of MBA pits that indicate a functional change in the use of the area. The modern terracing operations and the remains of a barn (Building 1) represent the most recent activities, undertaken during Local Phase 1 (Akar, Kara 2018b).

The MBA administrative Building 2

The exposed section of Building 2 covers an area of 125m². It has been spatially analysed within five main sections: (1) an outer space, which possibly functioned as a street leading to a passageway; (2) a passageway; (3) narrow, buttressed rooms constructed on a northwest-southeast axis; (4) partially exposed rooms in the northeast and (5) courtyards (figs 6, 7).

Building 2 was built solely of mudbricks, with no stone foundations; this is a characteristic of Amuq valley architecture in general (see, for instance, Woolley 1955; Braidwood, Braidwood 1960). Forming the southern section, the major, approximately northwest-southeast



Fig. 4. Topographic plan of Toprakhisar Höyük with squares excavated in Area 1 (plan by M. Akar).

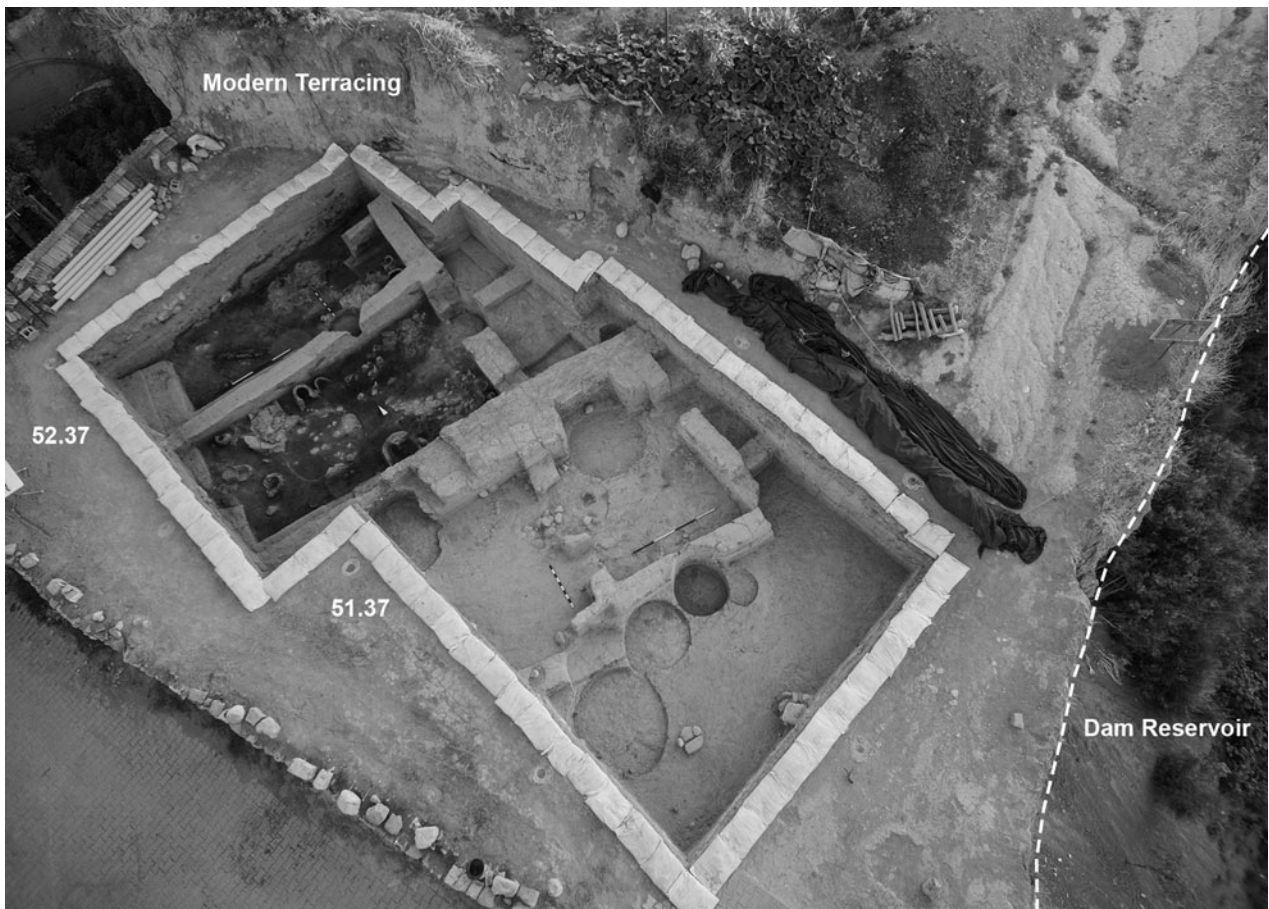


Fig. 5. Aerial view of the excavation area and its heavily disturbed surroundings (photograph by M. Akar).



Fig. 6. Aerial view of Building 2 in squares 51.37 and 52.37 (photograph by M. Akar).

oriented, northern wall (L.19) is 1.30m wide and buttressed; the projecting southern wall (L.37) is slightly narrower (1m) and not buttressed. Room spaces and doorways were created by the use of partition walls extending from the buttresses on the northern wall and two partition walls extruding from the southern wall. The overall thicknesses of these two projecting walls indicate that the structure likely comprised two storeys. Consisting of narrow, buttressed, corridor-type rooms arranged in a terraced in the south, Building 2's northern extent was occupied by courtyards with designated cooking platforms

and storage sections revealing a large cache of utilitarian objects used in food preparation, serving and storage. Including five distinct, decorated horseshoe-shaped hearths related to large-scale cooking, these features are well beyond the needs of a single household. The excavated context is highly specialized in function. It lacks any other type of finds, such as metal tools or ritual paraphernalia, and thus it is concluded that it was the kitchen, storage and serving quarter of a much larger building complex, which itself had a designated function (Akar, Kara 2018b).

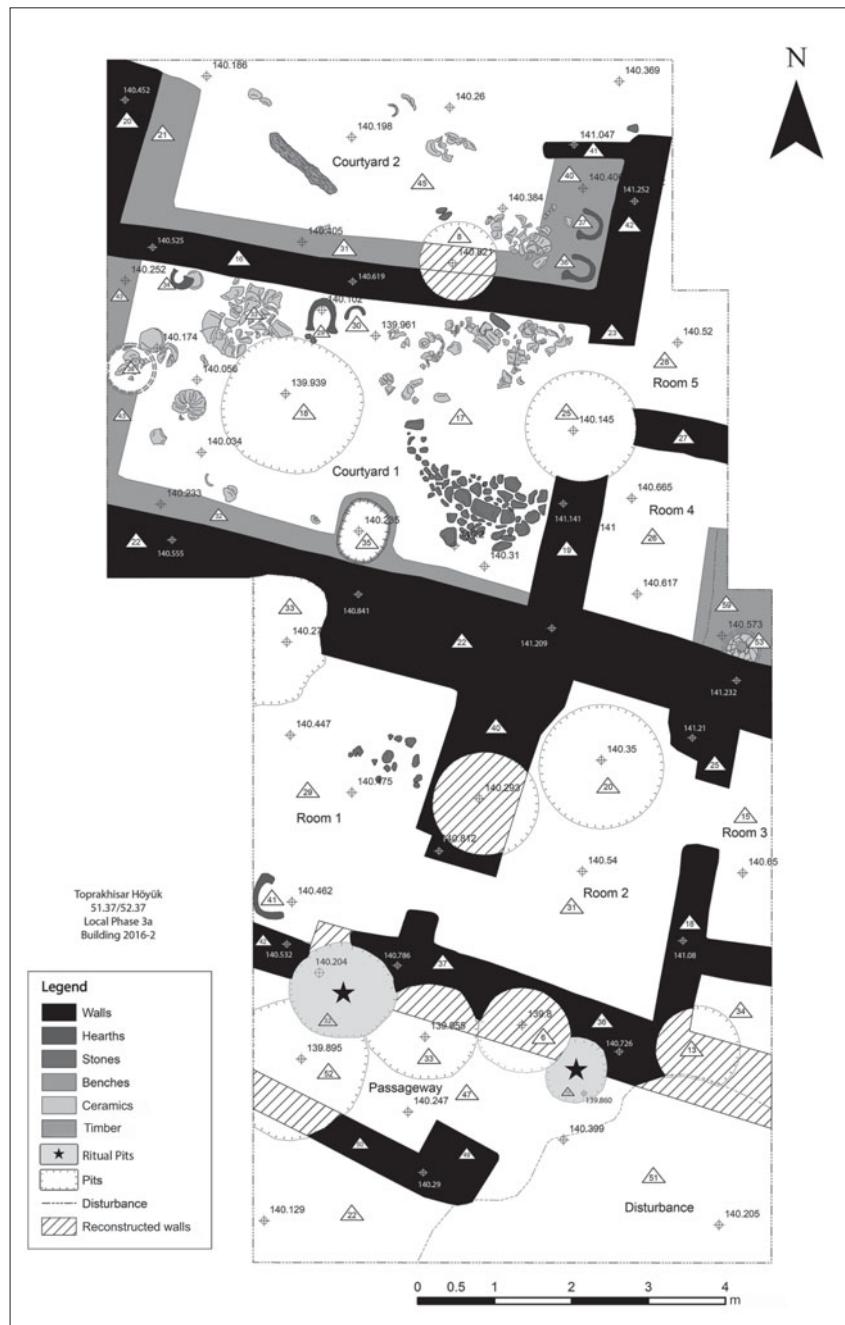


Fig. 7. Plan of Building 2 in squares 51.37 and 52.37. The pits associated with the foundation and termination rituals are indicated with stars (plan by O.H. Kirman and O. Omuzubozlu).

The traits of functionally specialised and spatially designated quarters in a building complex are considered to be the primary markers for defining the role of the structure. In the case of Building 2, the large amount of space dedicated to surplus storage and food processing is considered to indicate administrative management. The kitchen, storage and serving quarter is likely related to the large number of personnel that the administrative management was responsible for feeding in return for participation in labour-intensive activities such as olive/grape picking and oil/wine processing (for distribution of food and *corvée* labour practices, see Pollock 1999: 194).

This functional interpretation of Building 2 sits well with the textual evidence acquired from the MBA (Level VII Palace) archives of Alalakh, Tell Atchana. In terms of the organisation of agricultural production, the texts indicate that administrative personnel from the centre resided at peripheral settlements in order to oversee and control the agricultural process (Magness-Gardiner 1994: 43; Lauinger 2015: 95). Thus, we argue that Building 2 was likely used by a local ruler or an administrator from Alalakh in order to manage labour and the surplus supply that would be delivered to the centre. However, since purchasing or owning a settlement was not necessarily

related to distance (Casana 2009; Lauinger 2015), the settlement at Toprakhisar Höyük could well have been directly linked to other centres, such as Ebla, Tell Mardikh.

The employment and adaptation of an architectural style that shares similar structural and symbolic attributes across a broader regional and interregional setting can be considered as another marker that designates a privileged building. The plan of Building 2 convincingly finds almost exact parallels in the kitchen, storage and serving quarters of administrative structures excavated both at nearby sites and regionally. Style- and function-based comparisons with the kitchen, storage and serving quarters of the Western Palace of Ebla, Tell Mardikh (Matthiae 1985: pl. 68; 2002: 193), the Level VII Palace of Alalakh, Tell

Atchana (Woolley 1955: 92–106), and the Period 16 Burnt MBA Building at Kinet Höyük (Gates 2000) indicate that similar trends can be seen in the arrangement of administrative space in the MBA across Cilicia, northwestern Syria and the Amuq (fig. 8; see also Akar 2006; Marchetti 2006). While Ebla and Alalakh were the urban centres of the region, Kinet Höyük and Toprakhisar Höyük were secondary sites with designated economic functions. They both seem to have adopted common stylistic trends and constructed similar structures to those of the larger centres, but on a smaller scale (Akar, Kara 2018b: 100). This, we stress, was related to the symbolic messages intended to be conveyed by the authority to the targeted community via the construction of spaces of power that resembled the major palaces of the region.

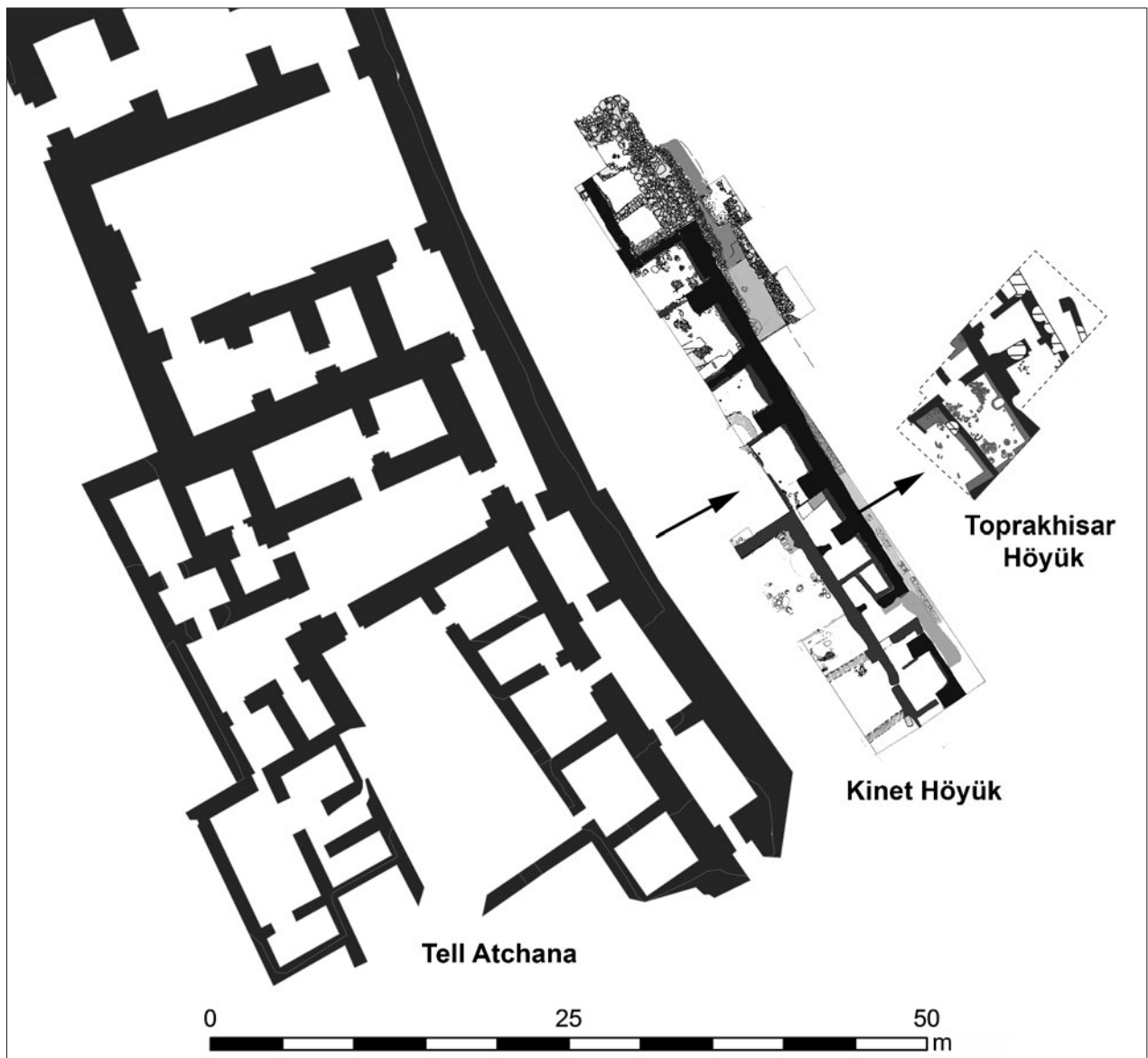


Fig. 8. Scaled comparative plans of the Tell Atchana (after Woolley 1955: 93, fig. 35), Kinet Höyük (after Gates 2010: 314, fig. 3) and Toprakhisar Höyük buildings.

Building 2 at Toprakhisar Höyük, as defined above, marks the beginning of a new period that differs strikingly from the previous Local Phase 4 explored in the same excavation unit. The earlier building remains encountered below the courtyards in square 52.37 are local in terms of their character and revealed no signs of being related to administrative structures. Rather, they are the remains of small-scale units with a multifunctional use of space, as would be expected in a small settlement. The establishment of a relatively large-scale structure in the succeeding phase indicates an upwards trend in the economic capacity of the settlement, likely related to its specialised agro-industries. The excavations have revealed olive pits in a courtyard of Building 2, pointing to olive consumption. Ongoing archaeobotanical and instrumental analyses should cast further light on this.

The date of Building 2

Dating Building 2 into a narrower time span requires the pinning down of changes in ceramic shapes and ware types through evaluation of MBA data from a continuous sequence; unfortunately, such a sequence is not available for Toprakhisar Höyük (fig. 9). The excavations have revealed only two local phases that define the MBA; since the upper levels were destroyed by modern terracing, the succeeding MBA phases need to be explored in an undisturbed area of the site. Nonetheless, the MBA ceramic repertoire of the Amuq valley is relatively homogenous over a long period of time, though the transition between the EBA and the MBA (Amuq J) requires attention. Unfortunately, Tell Tayinat's late EBA phases (Welton et al. 2011) and Tell Atchana's earliest levels have been revealed in limited soundings only, not suitable for ceramic studies (Woolley 1955). The same situation also persists in northwestern Syria (D'Andrea 2019: 281; see also Mazzoni, Candida 2007). The distinction between MB I and MB II (Amuq K–L) also needs further attention at Tell Atchana in order to establish a fine-tuned MBA ceramic chronology (Horowitz 2015; Bulu 2017). The ongoing operations at Tell Atchana are currently exploring the late MB II sequence, but the MB I phases are known only from Leonard Woolley's excavations (1955), which revealed limited and statistically unreliable datasets due to the discard policies adopted in these early excavations.

However, Building 2 was destroyed by a burning event; this sealed not only its material contents in situ but also the well-preserved, carbonised wooden logs likely used to support either a second storey or the roof. These logs were carefully block-lifted and are now under dendrochronological study. As part of this research, two ¹⁴C dates acquired from the short-lived branches found around the hearths, possibly used as fuel, have given consistent early second-millennium BC dates (fig. 10). The

absolute dates acquired match well with the foundation of the Western Palace at Ebla in northwestern Syria (Matthiae 1984; 2002) and Kültepe Level 8/Karum II in central Anatolia (Özgüç 1999), indicating that Toprakhisar Höyük also benefited from the trends in re-urbanization well noted for the Amuq as well as for neighbouring regions (for an interregional overview, see also Laneri and Schwartz 2011). Thus the construction of Building 2 may correlate with the foundation of the region's centre at Alalakh, but, unfortunately, the absolute dating of Levels XVII–XVI at Tell Atchana remains elusive.

A moment in time: the foundation ritual

The construction of Building 2 defined a new era for the community of Toprakhisar: a period of administrative management and economic flourishing that would have affected the lifeways of the entire community. We propose that this was a moment in time that would have left marks in the collective memory of its residents and that this was a deliberate outcome intended to build up a mediated political and cultural memory. This claim finds archaeological support in the discovery of offerings left in a sealed votive pit along the outer wall of Building 2, indicating that a foundation ritual was conducted prior to its construction.

The stratigraphic relationship of Pit 72 (figs 6, 7) to Building 2 comes from two lines of evidence. First, it was dug from the same ground level as the base of the mudbrick walls; it is shallow and smaller in size than the other pits and silos excavated. Secondly, the pit contained no deposits of rubbish, but yielded a stone statuette (the term 'statuette' is used here merely to differentiate it from common MBA terracotta figurines). It was then sealed, and two crudely carved and highly stylised sandstone torsos were placed, marking the location of the pit.

The stone statuette (TPH 737, ENV 20454) is carved from sandstone (figs 11, 12). This is a typical, easily available raw material that is frequently encountered and was used to produce utilitarian objects like weights (Akar, Kara 2018a: 248). From head to hips, the upper torso is carved in a crude style to represent a male figure (height 7.8cm). A faint incised line circling the elongated head likely defines a cap or hair. In line with cylinder-seal iconography, we suggest that the figure is represented wearing a cap (for example, Collon 1975: pl. VII, no. 76; Erkanal 1993: Lev. 3, I-A/06). While the back of the statuette is largely flat, the head, neck and cap are emphasised by protrusions. The eyes are roughly carved; the left pupil is in low relief, whereas the right eye is emphasised by carving. The nose is in low relief and is delimited by a triangular outline. The lower line of the triangle may define the mouth. The jaw has a small chip. A barely visible outline along the neck may represent a necklace. The shoulders are emphasised by the thin waist; the intention

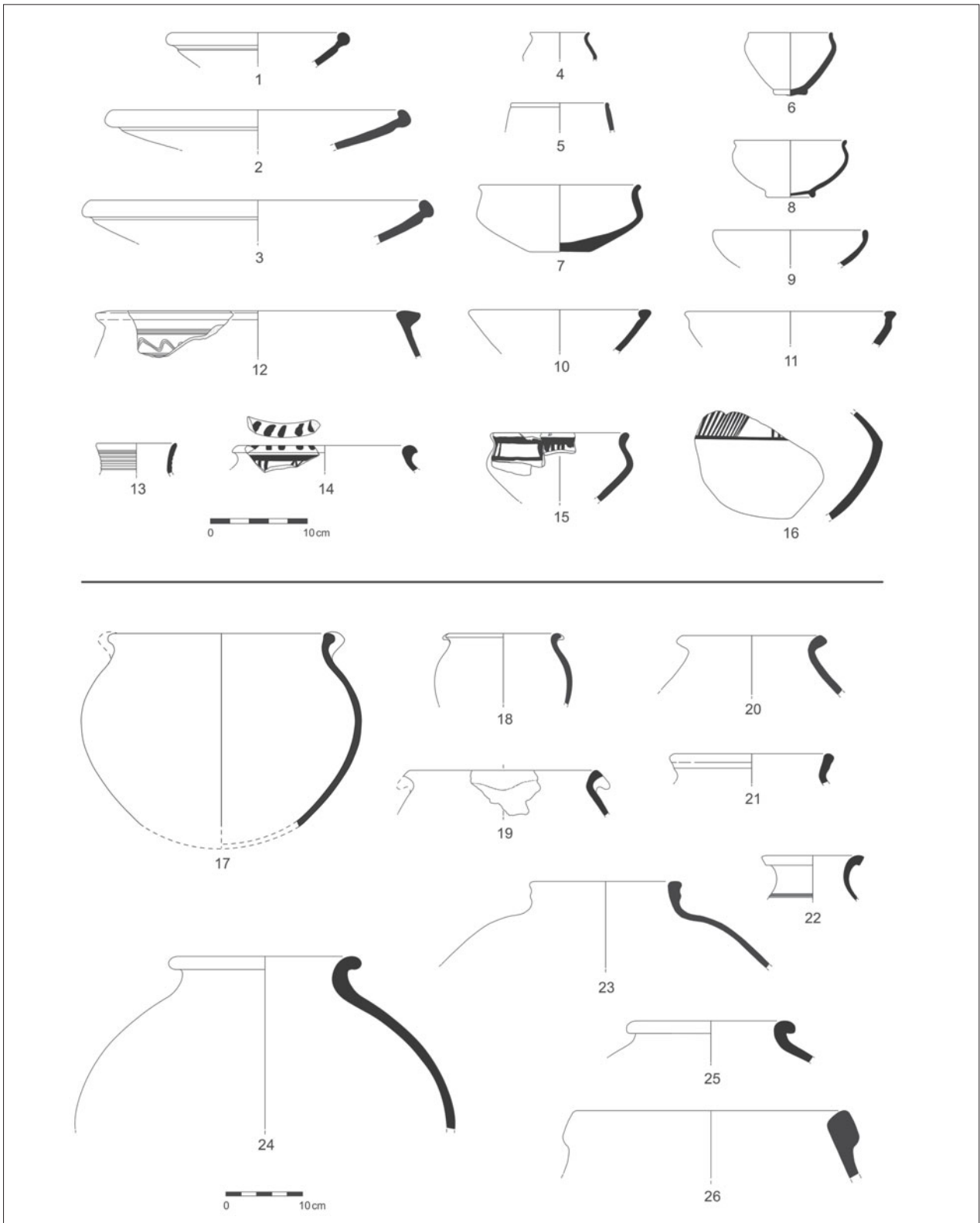


Fig. 9. A selection of pottery types from Toprakhisar Höyük Building 2: (1) TPH 222.2; (2) TPH 222.1; (3) TPH 228.1 (Grey Burnished Ware bowls); (4) TPH 364.1; (5) TPH 683.1; (6) TPH 410.1 (Simple Ware cups); (7) TPH 927.1; (8) TPH 694.1; (9) TPH 706.1; (10) TPH 285.2; (11) TPH 694.3 (Simple Ware bowls); (12) TPH 686.1 (Simple Ware krater); (13) TPH 260.2 (Simple Ware short-necked jar); (14) TPH 692.1; (15) TPH 953.2; (16) TPH 364.3 (Syro-Cilician Ware vessels); (17) TPH 694.2; (18) TPH 995.1; (19) TPH 285.1 (cooking pots); (20) TPH 408.1; (21) TPH 233.1; (22) TPH 1031.2; (23) TPH 255.1; (24) TPH 716.1; (25) TPH 357.4; (26) TPH 254.2 (Simple Ware jars) (drawings by İ. Görmüş, G. Temizkan, G. Alkan, M. Mimaroglu and M. Bulu).

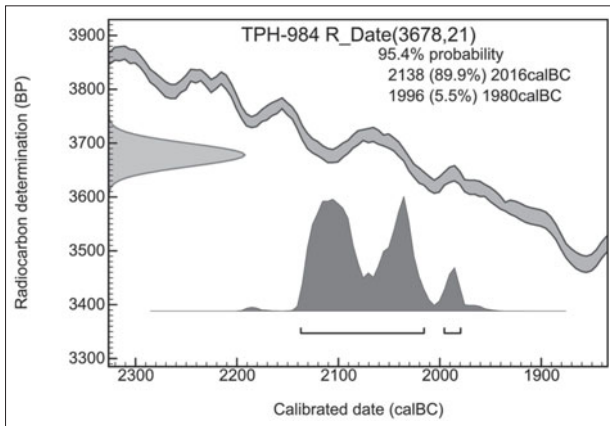


Fig. 10. AMS ^{14}C dating of the short-lived fuel wood sample TPH-984 (University of Arizona AMS Laboratory). The raw date was calibrated using OxCal 4.3.2 software (Bronk Ramsey 2017) based on the IntCal13 atmospheric curve (Reimer et al. 2013).



Fig. 11. Stone statuette found in Pit 72: front, side and back views (photographs by M. Akar).

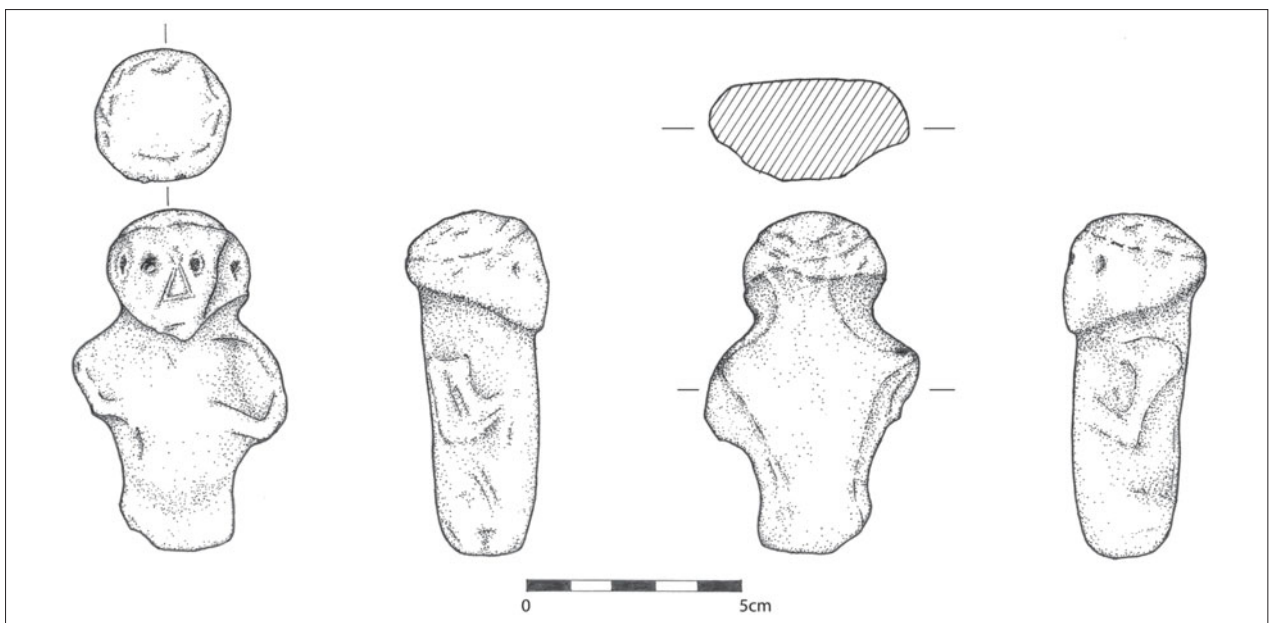


Fig. 12. Stone statuette found in Pit 72: front, side and back views (drawing by O.H. Kirman).

was seemingly to give a masculine and athletic look to the figure. The arms are carved disproportionately and look masculine from a side view. From the front view, the arms are thin and carved in low relief in a votive gesture. The hands are worn and indistinguishable. The navel is not indicated. The lower edge of the hip is rounded. Stylistically, the statuette falls into the ‘worshippers’ category in terms of established Anatolian and Near Eastern iconography (Hansen 2003).

As they are highly stylised, the two sandstone pieces found above the sealed pit are only cautiously identified as human torsos. Our interpretation of them as such relies on similar examples found at Tell Atchana (Woolley 1955: pl. XLIV). The upper portion of TPH 532 (figs 13, 14; height 27cm), which likely represents a torso, was formed

by rough chipping. The angular top may represent a head. The shoulders are thin and also angular. The disproportional upper body is delimited by rough, deep carving that defines the upper portion of the lower body. The part below the carving is intended to emphasise the hips and has angular edges at the sides. A depression in the centre was likely made by a thumb; this would have been easily accomplished since sandstone is extremely soft and easy to carve. While some sections are worn, this stone torso can stand without support.

TPH 533 (fig. 15; height 23cm), in contrast, is squarish in shape with smoothed edges on all sides. The interpretation of this piece as a torso relies heavily on its find-spot next to TPH 532 and this conclusion is offered with extreme caution.



Fig. 13. Stone torso (TPH 532) found above Pit 72: front, side and back views (photographs by M. Akar).

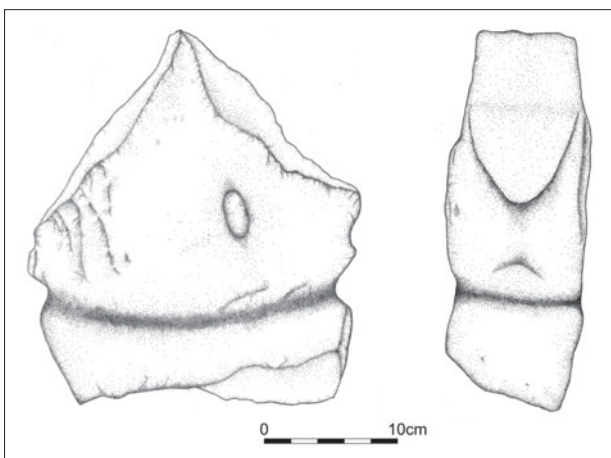


Fig. 14. Stone torso (TPH 532): front view (drawing by O.H. Kirman).

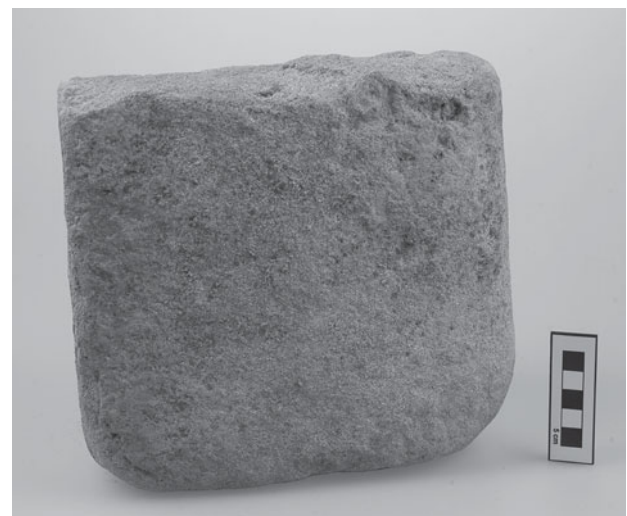


Fig. 15. Stone torso (TPH 533) found above Pit 72: front view (photograph by M. Akar).

A moment in time: the termination ritual

The lifespan of Building 2 ended with a burning event. Sealed by its own destruction debris, a number of pits were dug into it in the succeeding Local Phase 2. Currently, it is difficult to pin down the temporal distinctions within the pit phase and what happened in the succeeding phases, as the upper levels above the pit phase were completely destroyed by modern terracing and building activities (Local Phase 1). However, judging by the features visible in the modern cut and observed during the section-cleaning operation, it is presumed that the site was abandoned or lost its administrative status after the destruction of Building 2. This interpretation may change once the upper levels are investigated through an undisturbed area.

Pit 32, located along the outer wall, differs from the surrounding pits that were used for rubbish disposal or grain storage during the succeeding Local Phase 2 (fig. 16), and we suggest that a termination ritual can be attested here. This interpretation is based on two lines of evidence. First, the pit was dug into the burnt debris of the building, and no levelling fill between the destruction and the succeeding phase is stratigraphically defined. Second, it contained eight almost-complete vessels. The ceramic collection consists of two jugs, two bowls, a cup, a cooking pot and two large storage jars; these were perhaps used in a ritual that included feasting. The pit also yielded a

heavily burnt plaque fragment. These artefacts indicate an intentional deposition rather than rubbish disposal, as they were found in situ defining one single event rather than continuous usage.

The vessels found in the pit are characteristic of Simple Ware vessels encountered at both Toprakhisar and Tell Atchana in MBA levels (fig. 17). Examples of these types have been found in domestic, administrative and burial contexts at Tell Atchana (Heinz 1992; Horowitz 2015; Bulu 2016) and within the perimeters of Building 2 at Toprakhisar (Akar, Kara 2018b: 93–95), indicating the ware's wide range of use at both sites. Similar forms also appear in the Orontes and Euphrates regions (Nigro 2002).

Only the upper-left corner of the plaque has survived (figs 18, 19; height 4.5cm), but the framing indicates that a figurine might have been attached in the centre, like similar examples found at Hirbemerdon Tepe (see discussion below). The object was likely used as a wall decoration, as indicated by the three perforation holes visible at the back.

Discussion

The relationship between cult, ritual and politics during the first half of the second millennium BC has been an intriguing topic for Near Eastern and Anatolian archaeology due to the formation of new political identities



Fig. 16. Pit 32 with ceramics in situ (photograph by M. Akar).

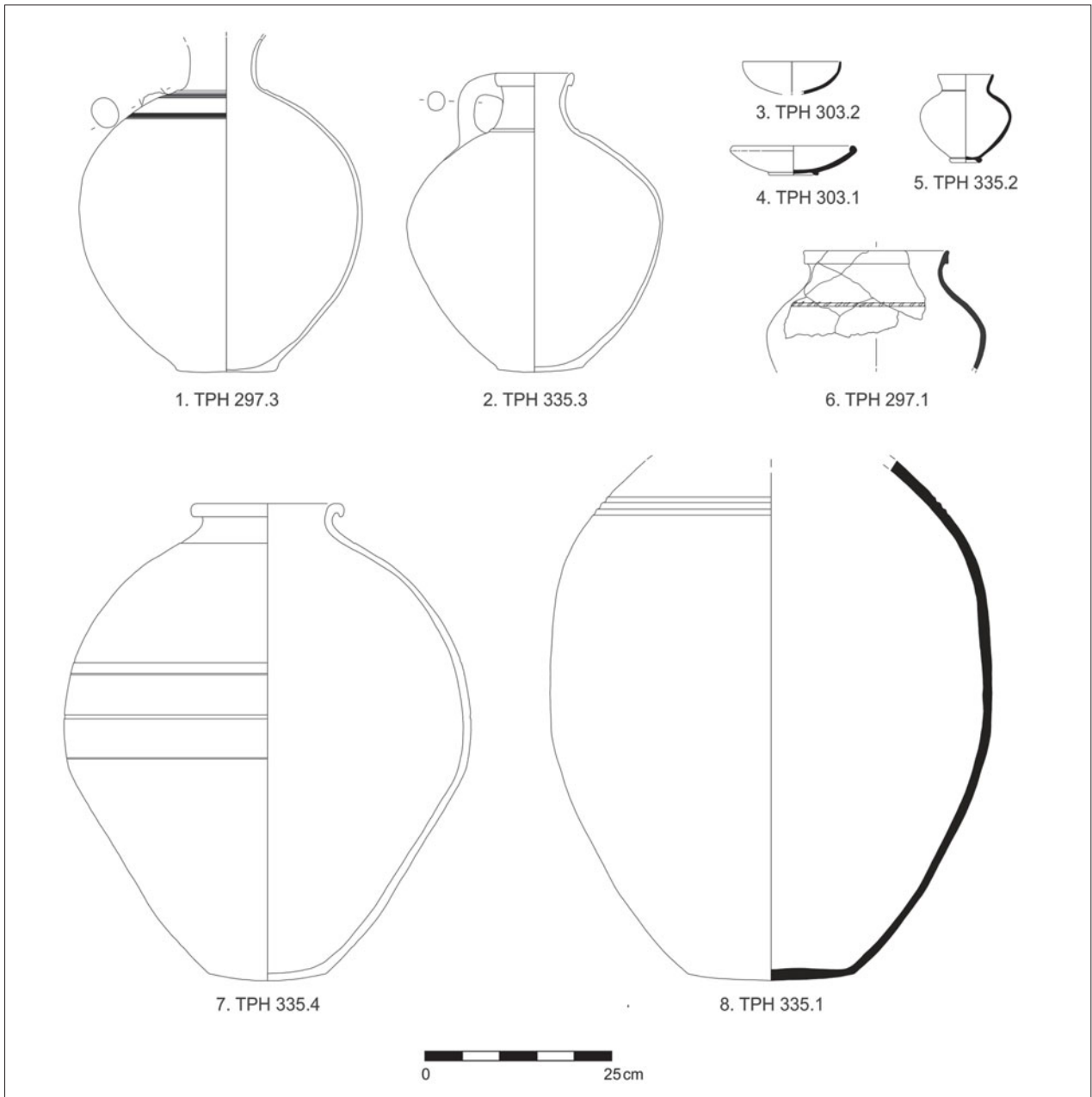


Fig. 17. The ceramic assemblage from Pit 32: (1) TPH 297.3; (2) TPH 335.3 (jugs); (3) TPH 303.2; (4) TPH 303.1; (5) TPH 335.2 (bowls); (6) TPH 297.1 (cooking pot); (7) TPH 335.4; (8) TPH 335.1 (pithoid jars) (drawings by İ. Görmüş, M. Mimaroglu, G. Temizkan and M. Bulu).

forged from the Amorites and Hurrians, on the one hand, and the Hittites, on the other. Yet it is a relatively unexplored subject because of the fragmented nature of the evidence (Ristvet 2015: 2). Furthermore, whilst considering physical remains, archaeological research needs to target the symbolic messaging offered by the specific use of space and objects. Such an approach relies on data generated from a wide geographical area, from sites with diverse functional attributes and open to multi-directional change. Thus, the interpretations we offer here of the

limited dataset acquired from the MBA Toprakhisar Höyük contexts and how they fit into the wider political, cultural and economic settings of the Near East and Anatolia are open to discussion.

The literature on foundation and termination rituals of the first half of the second millennium BC, specifically those of the Amuq and connected regions, reveals that such practices were not related to temples only, but applied also to spaces of political authority, including administrative complexes, thus forming entangled spaces of cult, ritual

and political power (Morandi-Bonacossi 2012: 575; Laneri et al. 2015: 508; Ristvet 2015: 216). This is best demonstrated by Ebla's sacred space, which was surrounded by both public and cultic buildings including *favissas* with ritual paraphernalia (Marchetti, Nigro 1997; 2000). The construction of the Royal Palace at Qatna over the elite necropolis is perceived as a foundation ritual that created a commemorative link with the past (Pfälzner 2017: 159) and it is suggested that the late MBA *favissa* found in the upper mound in Area J of Qatna was used for a termination ritual in relation to buildings of cultic and administrative importance (Morandi-Bonacossi 2012). The construction in the MBA of the sacred Monument 1 at Umm el-Marra over the Early Bronze Age mortuary complex may be linked indirectly to a foundation ritual, where the choice of location aided the creation of a link with ancestors (Schwartz 2013). Similar practices can also be observed at Alalakh, where the city's temple and palace structures were integrated into one complex and termination rituals were performed during the decommissioning of buildings of significance, with evidence pointing to animal sacrifice and feasting during socially binding performances (Yener 2015: 113; on the topic of feasting, see Dietler 2011).

Of specific importance, due to their functional similarity to those at Toprakhisar Höyük, are the traces of ritual practices seen in the rural landscapes of the Upper Tigris region. Here, the architectural complex exposed on the northern side of the high mound of Hirbemerdon Tepe included a craft quarter with a sacred nature, evident in the ceremonial buildings, and an open space that yielded objects of ritual significance in a *favissa* (Laneri et al. 2016: 48). At the end of its life, the deliberate filling of certain rooms of the ceremonial complex and the burning of the *favissa* demonstrate that termination rituals were also an important part of the collective and commemorative performances of this rural community (Laneri et al. 2015: 558).

The amount of investment put in across both space and time when constructing spaces of authority is connected to the economic and political autonomy of the rulers, along with the establishment of networks that provide access to raw materials and craft specialists who can successfully adopt and accomplish the desired end product (see Zaccagnini 1983 for textual references). This level of multi-user interaction not only necessitates the participation of conspicuous consumers in the act of building political, economic and symbolic spaces, but also an awareness and acceptance of the social groups for whom the structures serve as symbols of an emerged representation of the economic wealth and social status of the community (Trigger 1990: 125). This, we argue, was achieved at Toprakhisar Höyük by targeting the collective memory of the residents through ritual and cult with the foundation and later termination activities associated with Building 2. While these collective acts were performed in accordance with likely nomadic customs (discussed below), forming the cultural memory of the groups involved, they had a political agenda in their overall intent and, thus, were likely mediated by the ruling authority.

The absence of administrative structures from both earlier and succeeding phases implies that during Local Phase 3 the site had gained a special status in accordance with its suggested function as a production centre of olive oil and perhaps wine (in relation to the textual evidence of Tell Atchana, Level VII). This marked a period of economic prosperity. In contrast to the purification, foundation and termination rituals attested at various sites in temple contexts (Ellis 1968; Romano 2015), the rituals performed at an administrative building dictate its importance from a ruler's perspective. Political messaging through ritual was needed to create a bond between the



Fig. 18. Plaque fragment (TPH 319) found in Pit 35: front and back views (photographs by M. Akar).

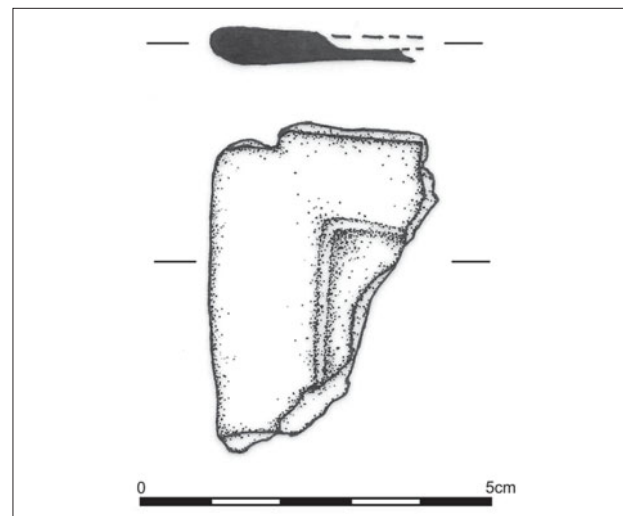


Fig. 19. Plaque fragment (TPH 319) found in Pit 35: front view (drawing by O.H. Kirman).

community and the administration. In the case of the settlement at Toprakhisar Höyük, this enabled the efficient use of *corvée* labour in tasks like olive and grape picking, as well as in olive-oil and wine production – products of high value in the second-millennium BC palace-controlled exchange systems. This ‘ritual mode of production’ (Spielmann 2002; 2008; Laneri et al. 2008) exclusively defines the way communal ritual practices were used by authorities as a way of establishing and emphasising political power. The stone statuette and the two torsos found in the foundation deposit at Toprakhisar Höyük were not intended to be viewed by an audience, yet their moment of placement was used to engrave a moment in the constructed collective, political and cultural memory of the residents of the settlement.

The objects used in this ritual context are of a peculiar character, further contributing to the understanding of their temporal and spatial distribution in Near Eastern contexts. Generally defined as ‘stone spirits’ (following Carter 1970), the crudeness of the style attested in statuette TPH 737 is identical to that of the stylised male and female stone reliefs found in Late Bronze I (16th- to 15th-century BC) contexts at Tell Atchana. These were also carved in a worshipping posture and are associated with Hurro-Mitannian levels at the site. Several other smaller and much cruder versions found are presented without arms and legs; the head is often roughly shaped and facial details are vaguely added to some of them (Woolley 1955: pl. XLIV; Carter 1970: 39). These figures have been interpreted as stone spirits, guardians or chthonic deities placed in doorways or building foundations; their sporadic appearances continue into 14th-century BC contexts at Tell Atchana (Woolley 1955: 238–39; Yener, Yazicioğlu 2010: 257, A04-R277; Yener 2015: 207, fig. 3). TPH 532 and TPH 533, as more abstract representations without facial characteristics, fall into the broader, crude category of figures.

Although a rich collection of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic terracotta figurines has been found in the MBA residential, cultic and funerary contexts of Tell Atchana (Woolley 1955), no early stone statuettes in the crude style have been recovered (see also Marchetti 2000; Ramazzotti 2014). While a ‘presence-or-absence’ approach should only be adopted with caution, the data generated by both the Woolley and K. Aslıhan Yener excavations at Tell Atchana demonstrate that the style likely appeared at the site following the establishment of the Mitannian authority in the region (Akar 2018). On the other hand, T.H. Carter’s work (1970) on plotting the spatial distribution of stone spirits in Near Eastern contexts demonstrates that the style likely developed in the Khabur basin. Subsequent to Carter’s work, no comprehensive research has been conducted on this particular group of objects (although Wiener 2011 presents a corpus of recently found stone

figurines/statuettes within the scope of a study focused on the figurines of the Middle Assyrian levels of Tell Sabi Abyad). The combined data show that the earliest attestation of this style dates back to the Early Bronze Age, at Munbaqa (Czichon 1998), Selenkahiye (van Soldt 2001), Wreide (Orthmann 1991) and Tell Brak (Oates, Oates 1997), pointing to its likely origin in the middle Euphrates, Khabur and surrounds. Several examples from Girnavaz (Erkanal 1988), Hirbemerdon Tepe (Laneri et al. 2016: 47, 538, human figurine 5263, pl. CLXIV, fig. 186) and Siirt Türbe Höyük (Sağlamtimur 2012: 414, fig. 14) define their extent into the Upper Tigris region in the Middle and Late Bronze Age. Examples from sites in northwestern Syria, such as Ebla, Tell Mardikh (Matthiae 1996; 2006) and Tell Afis (Venturi 2005: 194, fig. 54.8; see also Mazzoni 1998: 208), also occur in archaeological contexts of the late Middle or Late Bronze Age. The Toprakhisar Höyük examples from early MBA contexts may indicate that the practice of placing crudely carved figures as votive offerings or as protective spiritual guardians evolved long before the Mitannian era in the region. In accordance with the distribution patterns of the available dataset, this may perhaps signal a nomadic, pastoralist Hurrian or Amorite identity in its origin that is not local to the Amuq valley.

The Amorite and Hurrian movements in northwestern Syria and the Amuq, and their role in the formation of the MBA kingdoms, have been a subject of major debate in Near Eastern archaeology, and there is no consensus on the matter (Schwartz 2006; Tubb 2009; Porter 2012b; Burke 2014). Textual evidence implies that Amorite movements likely began at the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennium BC as an intrusion of pastoral nomadic groups into northwestern Syria, and ultimately gained administrative control of the region via key sites such as Ebla, Qatna and Alalakh (Klengel 1992; Streck 2000). On the other hand, Hurrian identity in the material record also extends back to the third millennium BC, in the form of textual and archaeological data obtained from Khabur sites such as Urkesh, Tell Mozan (Buccellati 2013; see also Wilhelm 1989: 5; Salvini 1998: 99).

Although run by Amorite rulers, roughly half of the names attested in the Tell Atchana Level VII texts are Hurrian, pointing to an already formed mix of Amorite and Hurrian groups towards the end of the MBA in the Amuq valley (Wiseman 1953: 3–10; Draffkorn 1959: 17). Thus it is generally accepted that, following the period of crisis caused by the conflict between the Hittites and Amorites that led to the fall of the Amorite kingdom of Yamkad and the Old Babylonian dynasty, the Hurrian states between the Euphrates and Tigris zones were unified under Hurrian rulers and set the foundations of the Mitanni empire that stretched from Alalakh in the west to Nuzi in the east during the Late Bronze Age (Wilhelm 1989; Novák 2013).

Harvey Weiss has recently discussed the relationship between the globally traced 4.2k BP climatic event and the archaeologically not-well-traced population movements that likely occurred at the end of the third millennium BC (2014; 2017). The 4.2k BP event created arid environmental conditions, especially in northern Mesopotamia, and it is suggested as a catalyst behind the nomadisation of diverse groups, such as the Amorites and Hurrians, and their movement to more favourable and climatically less-stressed regions. Due to its karstic nature, the Orontes river and its catchment area is defined as a habitat-tracking zone; this hypothesis was confirmed recently by a sediment coring project conducted in the Amuq valley around Tell Tayinat and Tell Atchana (Avşar et al. 2019). The sediment data confirm that the Amuq valley was likely less affected by the 4.2k BP event than other areas, and may indeed have acted as a refuge zone where nomadic pastoralist groups, including the Amorites, Hurrians and others migrants, were attracted to escape from the insufficiently rain-fed, arid Euphrates-Tigris zone (Weiss 2014; Burke 2017: 296).

This environmental issue, in prompting long-distance cultural interactions, may reasonably be seen as one of the triggers behind the appearance of the stone spirits at Toprakhisar Höyük in the early MBA, particularly since ritual paraphernalia are regarded as distinct markers for defining culturally and traditionally distinguished groups (Geertz 1973: 142; Eriksen 1991; Durkheim 1995: 421; Emberling 1997: 310; Reynolds, Erikson 2017: 11). The material culture connections of Toprakhisar Höyük with the Khabur and Upper Tigris regions is also evident in daily cooking practices (to be discussed elsewhere in detail), including the use of distinct decorated horseshoe-shaped hearths similar in style to the hearths and andirons found at sites like Urkesh, Tell Mozan (Kelly-Buccellati 2004) and Hirbemerdon Tepe (Aquilano 2016: 114). These MBA decorated hearths, as suggested for those from Khabur and Tigris sites, may perhaps have their roots in a deeply embedded practice originating from early Transcaucasian influence in the region (Kelly-Buccellati 2004; Akar, Kara 2018b: 98). Interestingly, neither decorated hearths nor stone spirits have been found in the MBA levels of the capital, Alalakh. This perhaps suggests that, if habitat-tracking populations arrived in the Amuq towards the end of the third millennium BC, their intrusions likely occurred at rural sites, since the established centres would have been more likely to resist new pastoralist groups. Thus, being semi-isolated from the major centres, these newcomers seem to have continued to perform their own local practices, and this may explain the choices of objects used in the foundation/termination rituals. Even though the ruling authorities had access to better stone-carving techniques (see Matthiae 1996), they preferred to use objects of cultural significance in the creation of a mediated cultural memory.

While it is difficult to pin down the series of events that led to the destruction of Building 2, it clearly had a significant impact on the community of Toprakhisar Höyük. Based on the current understanding of the stratigraphy, the absence of administrative structures above Building 2 may indicate that the local production and distribution networks that connected the settlement to regional centres such as Alalakh (Yener 2007) were interrupted or that a population movement to another location in the vicinity was triggered by environmental or socio-economic factors, as evidenced by other MBA sites in the region (Hatice Pamir, personal communication March 2019). In any event, the destruction of Building 2 marks the end of an economically prosperous era, and this was implanted into the collective memory of the community by the termination ritual conducted there.

The most distinctive object found in the termination ritual is the burnt plaque fragment that has no direct parallels from Toprakhisar Höyük or Tell Atchana. The best functional and stylistic comparative examples can be found at Hirbemerdon Tepe, where several plaques have been found within ritual contexts (Laneri et al. 2016). They include attached figurines within a central frame and are defined as cultic objects used to decorate the ceremonial MBA buildings; they were intentionally deposited in the 'piazza' transforming the locale into a *favissa* (Laneri 2008: 366; 2011: 84; 2016: 64–67; 2017: 98). Presumably once adorning the walls of Building 2, the burnt plaque fragment from Toprakhisar Höyük was likely recovered from the destruction debris and reused as an offering in the termination ritual. If so, this moment in time may also have been used as a unifying social event that aided the maintenance of the political and cultural memory that had been formed through the construction of Building 2.

Conclusions

MBA rural dynamics and the way symbolic messaging was manifested in the formation of collective, political and cultural memory of remote groups living in rural peripheries are relatively new and little-explored subjects. It is suggested here that the vital economic role that peripheries played and the ways in which authority was established were mediated through ritual commemoration. Furthermore, considering the strong material connections of Toprakhisar Höyük with the Upper Tigris site of Hirbemerdon Tepe and their shared rural settlement identity, the architectural and material evidence implies that rural sites likely adopted similar interregional trends in terms of architecture and material culture, but also held on to practices that reflected traditional perspectives. The similarities observed in the rituals and also everyday practices of these distant but culturally linked sites suggest the influence of the east-west population movements of the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennium BC.

The conclusions reached here are, of course, based on a limited set of data from Toprakhisar Höyük's MBA sequence, and, as a consequence, they may develop or alter in the future as further discoveries are made. Future research targeting rural dynamics will certainly expand our physical understanding of theoretical centre-periphery relations, how cultural memory was formed at peripheries and the role that rural settlements played in second-millennium BC interaction patterns, including those of politics, economics, rituals and perhaps long-distance population movements.

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Acknowledgements

The Toprakhisar Höyük Rescue Excavation is funded by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Hatay Mustafa Kemal University (Scientific Research Project no. 16481).

We would like to thank K. Aslıhan Yener, Yağmur Heffron and the anonymous reviewers of *Anatolian Studies* for their valuable comments, which have significantly improved and expanded the discussion of wider Anatolian and Near Eastern contexts. We are also grateful to Tara Ingman for proofreading the final text.

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