



Pomp, Circumstance,
and the Performance of Politics
Acting Politically Correct in the Ancient World

EDITED BY KATHRYN R. MORGAN



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT CULTURES
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ACTING POLITICALLY CORRECT IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Edited by

Kathryn R. Morgan

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Papers from the postdoctoral seminar

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Acting ‘Politically Correct’ in the Ancient World”

held at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago

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Acknowledgments

This volume represents the proceedings of the fifteenth annual postdoctoral seminar, held March 7–8, 2019, at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago. The conference set out to investigate the applicability of the hot-button contemporary concept of “political correctness” to the ancient world by inviting scholars working in a wide range of disciplines and periods to consider how we reconstruct the (often unspoken) rules and norms governing public life in past societies, the ways in which they are established, and the moments at which they shift. The lively discussions that ensued and the shared enthusiasm of the participants are encapsulated in the present volume, whose contributions reframe politics—in the ancient world as in the modern one—as an ongoing conversation among diverse groups of constituents and their leaders, in which authority and legitimacy were objects of negotiation, not foregone conclusions.

I am deeply grateful for having had the opportunity to organize this conference and for the associated postdoctoral fellowship, both of which were made possible through the generous support of Arthur and Lee Herbst, as well as the efforts of numerous ISAC faculty and staff. Director Chris Woods opened the conference with words of welcome; sessions were chaired, and discussions gracefully moderated, by Jean Evans, Seth Richardson, and Gil Stein. Knut Boehmer, Nate Francia, Polina Kasian, Thalia Lysen, and Mariana Perlinac provided much-needed technical and logistical support. In the Publications office, Charissa Johnson and Steve Townshend went beyond the call of duty in assembling publicity materials for the event as well as providing initial guidance for this publication. Further editorial support for the volume has come through the generous and painstaking work of Luiza Osorio G. da Silva and managing editor Andrew Baumann.

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Kathryn R. Morgan

Introduction: Is Everything Political?

Kathryn R. Morgan
Duke University

My father is the opposite of politically correct.
He says what he means and he means what he says.
—Ivanka Trump, 2015

IN THE POLITICAL theater of the contemporary United States, political correctness has come to be seen as a form of cowardice: to act “politically correct” is to euphemize, to obfuscate, to conform. At the same time, in other contexts and to other audiences, political *incorrectness* represents a failure of care, weaponized to suppress concerns over diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. As the writer Toni Morrison put it, “the political correctness debate is really about . . . the power to be able to define. The definers want the power to name. And the defined are now taking that power away from them.”¹

It is no great revelation to realize that political correctness, like everything in politics, is really about power—those who wield it, and how they do so. But the mutability and multivalence of the term, the meaning of which is so highly contextual, is an important reminder that in public life, ancient or modern, authority and legitimacy remain in the eye of the beholder. Acting “politically correct,” in the sense of abiding by established norms underpinning possibilities for action,² calls attention to the fact that we perform to our audience, and its expectations shape our choices, whether our goal is to conform or to transgress, to innovate or to uphold. In a performance context, the locus of power is never uniquely in either actor or spectator: the two are mutually dependent, recalling to us not simply the dialogic nature of both power and performance but also the messy multidirectionality of the dominance relationships that shape our collective existence.

The essays in this volume³ are concerned with the performance of politics, the latter defined, at its most basic, as “the way people living in groups make decisions.”⁴ Some investigate political performances in the narrow sense—of spectacles, rituals, processions—a

1 Morrison and Denard 2008, 101.

2 Defined after political scientist Clarissa Hayward (2000); see Morgan, this volume.

3 Representing papers given at the conference titled “Pomp, Circumstance, and the Performance of Politics: Acting ‘Politically Correct’ in the Ancient World” (Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, March 7–8, 2019).

4 So defined by Simple English Wikipedia, <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics> (accessed June 4, 2021).

subject that has provided abundant fodder for archaeologists in particular: for them, such events are the active manifestation of the static state, their relatively abundant material traces offering rare insight into its practices of coercion, persuasion, and self-representation.⁵ Others construe performance far more broadly, following, for example, Ian Hodder, who at Neolithic Çatalhöyük eschewed the distinctions made by others “between ordinary, daily lives and exceptional actions in extraordinary circumstances” and instead considered “spectacle” to be “just a showing and a looking . . . however large the audience and however public or private that audience might be.”⁶ Throughout the volume, the performance perspective is taken as an invitation to a more general conversation about political practice: about the (culturally and historically) specific moments and ways in which the idea of the political community, or the state, intersects with and becomes part of lived experience.

Because while the rubric of “pomp and circumstance” implies a prescriptive, narrowly defined realm and form of political action—leaning into Foucault’s notion that “antiquity had been a civilization of spectacle,”⁷ together with the pragmatic view of practice theorists that we are more likely to recover shared action from the past than shared belief⁸—acting “politically correct” is a social behavior. We can be politically correct in our language, in our purchases, in our sexuality. It is, moreover, a learned condition, acquired and reinforced by our community in a broad range of contexts, encounters, and experiences, both planned and unplanned. Politics, in other words, is a cultural phenomenon, and considering it as such helps us better investigate and theorize both the extent to and means by which the many participate in it and the ways in which it can change, recognizing that we too can be changed by it.⁹

If personal experience is any indication, for me the spontaneous and unplanned have proved the more memorable of political events, perhaps because the element of surprise gives them the elusive veneer of authenticity. The year I finished my dissertation I was living in a small downtown apartment in Center City, Philadelphia; that February, at long last, the Philadelphia Eagles won the Super Bowl. I did not see the end of the game—but I did hear it. Cars began honking, then there was singing, and from my front window I could see that people had begun to flood the icy streets. They were streaming toward Broad Street, Philadelphia’s main thoroughfare, and as I watched them from my window I remembered that Broad was so called because it is more than twice as wide as the parallel streets. Broad was intentionally designed to accommodate crowds and processions much like this one—or rather, more like the official parade that followed, days later—in what was this nation’s first planned city and capital. Though I did not myself join them (it was late, and very cold), for days afterward I exchanged conversations with strangers about it on street corners and in downtown elevators as I went about my business, a behavior

5 Ristvet 2015; on spectacle, see papers in Inomata and Coben 2006; on performance more broadly, DeMarrais 2014.

6 Hodder 2006, 82.

7 Foucault 1995, 216.

8 See the discussion in DeMarrais 2014.

9 For social science approaches to politics as culture, see Greenfeld and Malczewski 2010; recently, Gelfand 2018 on “tight and loose cultures”; also Gelfand et al. 2011.

uncharacteristic of me and, I think, of most of us in the city in winter, where we keep our shoulders up, our heads down.

What I have described is a type of spectacle nearly impossible to access in the historic record, at least in the distant past. It was not institutionally sponsored, nor explicitly political; it was unplanned; it left no permanent material traces (with the possible exception of a few damaged telephone poles, though the local news had reported for days beforehand that they had been greased against the chance of an Eagles win). I myself was peripheral to it in most meaningful respects: barely a spectator, certainly not the intended audience. Yet its effects on me were very real. In the days and months that followed, I felt more at home in the physical city as I moved through it, because of the memory I had built around it, and more connected to its people, my fellow Philadelphians. I still feel a wave of nostalgia when I describe it. This spontaneous performance had made me a more engaged citizen, overnight, than had my longstanding residency or institutional affiliation with the University of Pennsylvania, and it influenced my subsequent behaviors, attitudes, and choices as a result.

I do not intend this anecdote to suggest that my individual experience is directly analogous to anything people might have experienced in the ancient world. But the intensity of this lived experience made me think differently about political identity: how it intersects with community or other kinds of group identity/ies; how it resides in, or is activated by, space and place; how it conditions our being-in-the-world, through movement and memory, in ways material and immaterial. And as the essays in this volume demonstrate, thinking thus broadly about the political opens new avenues for its exploration.

The contributions that follow here respond both to the possibilities of this broadened perspective and to its challenges. While experimenting with a wide range of theories and methodologies, all of them present carefully considered case studies grounded in specific historical and cultural contexts, simultaneously acknowledging and offering a path through the immense variability and considerable ambiguity any serious investigation of the topic affords. For as we have seen, variability and ambiguity are at the heart of the slippery notion of “political correctness,” which is a moving target, where it falls to the audience to sanction behaviors—whether by applauding, imitating, or redeploying them in other contexts—or to punish violations—for example, by “voting with their feet.” Yet by expanding our view to include (diverse) audiences and decenter rulers, acknowledging that both are simultaneously product and participant of the prevailing political culture—itsself a series of learned behaviors, performed and reperformed, tested, transmitted, (mis)remembered and (mis)represented in the public sphere—we make space for more nuanced conversations about where and how power and agency were negotiated in ancient societies.

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

RETHINKING ANCIENT STATES

The call for papers for the conference that gave rise to this volume asked scholars of the ancient world in various disciplines—anthropology, history, art history, philology, archaeology—to consider the ways in which ordinary people experience their political realities and contribute to shaping them, both in their built environment and through

practice. Broadly speaking, therefore, this volume explores the nature and locus of political power and power relations, following Foucault's assertion that power is neither an agency nor a structure but "is everywhere."¹⁰

Archaeologists have been especially receptive to this notion, which allows for the integration of the prominent (and therefore seductive) material remains of top-down political authority with the (still comparatively sparse) residues of daily life, construing them as part of the same diffuse, embodied power system. Claudia Glatz's recent book on Hittite Anatolia, for example, is presented as a study not of empire but of "sovereign practice" that investigates "the practices, places and things, and their evolving interconnections with people, that together produce, challenge, and above all, continuously transform imperial networks and their constituent communities."¹¹ Empire, for Glatz and others, is always in the making.¹² But the ripple effects of the postmodern formulation of power-as-process go well beyond the archaeology of empire. Historians of all stripes have been moved to rethink ancient states in terms that differentiate their claims, capacities, and efficacy, recognizing variance in domains of expression of state power as well as the limitations of typologies that remain grounded, however distantly, in neoevolutionary paradigms and presentist assumptions.¹³

These extend to the term "state" itself: In Mesopotamia, where we locate the very origins of the state, widespread recognition of the "weakness" of its kings and the fragility of their claims to authority has led some to propose that we jettison the term altogether. In the conclusion to her *Ritual, Performance, and Politics in the Ancient Near East* (2015), for example, Lauren Ristvet muses that "although it seems clear that Mesopotamian political communities were not nations, an assertion that would strike few scholars as debatable, there is growing evidence that they were not really 'states' either."¹⁴ James Osborne's (2021) study of the "Syro-Anatolian city-states" of the early first millennium BCE is more explicit, critiquing the related phenomenon he identifies as "methodological nationalism," "an intellectual orientation that sees the nation-state as the fundamental unit of analysis and assumes that [its] association of polity, territory, and ethnicity is the natural socio-political order," as empirically inappropriate to the political formation(s) in question.¹⁵ But he goes on to use the terms "city-state," "kingdom," and "polity" "in a more or less synonymous fashion," demonstrating the insufficiency of our vocabulary for representing political organization in just one small corner of the ancient Mediterranean in a relatively restricted period (900–600 BCE).¹⁶

10 Foucault 1998, 63.

11 Glatz 2020, 1.

12 See, e.g., Smith 2003, 2015; Düring and Stek 2018; Ristvet, this volume.

13 Graeber and Wengrow's 2021 *magnum opus* represents an ambitious recent take on this problem (and far more, but see ch. 10: "Why The State Has No Origin"), to a lively but mixed response: see, e.g., Kiddey 2022, Morris 2022, and "Archaeologists of West and South Asia Respond to David Graeber and David Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021)—Questions of Method, Theory, and Historiography (Colloquium Session)" at the 2022 annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in New Orleans.

14 Ristvet 2015, 219; see also Richardson 2012 and this volume.

15 Osborne 2021, 4.

16 Osborne 2021, 4.

Indeed, one cannot fault scholars for falling back on the convenient shorthand of “states” and “empires,” whatever the ensuing baggage, if the alternatives are the clunky and vague “polity,” “political entity,” or “political community.” Some might contend it is this preoccupation with semantics that has led us to pay too much attention to what states say and not enough to what they do. A wide-ranging colloquium structured around Seth Richardson’s essay “Early Mesopotamia: The Presumptive State” made a strong case for employing “historical and comparative rather than ideal-typical”¹⁷ approaches to sovereignty¹⁸ by focusing the discussion more narrowly on identifiable distinctions between “fetishized” despotic power and infrastructural power.¹⁹ Inevitably, the case studies presented therein fall somewhere between the two, making the distinction more useful in framing than in practice,²⁰ but this serves only to advance Richardson’s own claim, namely, that most ancient states worked on a “low power” model—in the gap between despotic control and hegemony-via-infrastructure—with “powers that were largely prospective.” Paradoxically, Richardson argues, “the state generates the most evidence for its ‘powers’ as it is trying to usher them into being, before it actually has them”; in contexts where state authority is uncontested, it has little need to exert itself, upending traditional equivalences between, for example, monumental building projects or royal inscriptions and state control.²¹

This paradox underlies the now well-established body of work on monumentality, which recognizes “monuments, artifacts, and landscapes *as process*—as the moments of interaction—rather than as expressions or correlates *of process*,”²² and parallel work on social memory, “an active and ongoing process” of “remember[ing] or forget[ting] the past according to the needs of the present,” employed both “to naturalize or legitimate authority” and “in the service of resistance.”²³ These processes are relational; though triggered by objects and rooted in space, the work of interpreting them depends on moving beyond their physical parameters toward their sensory perception, the behaviors and activity they generate, and ultimately their meaning for users. The latter are simultaneously more challenging for archaeologists to investigate and for regimes to control. Monuments are not fixed points, however much they may seem so; thus the performance perspective, broadly defined, has become a necessary component of their analysis.

Still, even the growing scholarly interest in “resistance” to centralized authority embeds these investigations within a dialectic of dominance and subordination that privileges elite perspectives, no matter how suspicious we are of their claims, and assumes autocracy to have been the default condition of life in the past, rather than the exception. The countervailing possibility, that collective action and cooperative management were widespread phenomena even in socially complex premodern societies, remains relatively underexplored, at least in the preclassical Mediterranean (outside Athens) and the Near

17 Ando 2017, 1.

18 In the sense of “political claims founded on sovereignty”: Alles and Badie 2016.

19 Following Mann 1984, 2008.

20 Ando 2017.

21 Richardson 2017, 17–18. See also Glatz and Plourde 2011 on “costly signaling.”

22 Pauketat 2000, 124.

23 Van Dyke and Alcock 2003, 3.

East.²⁴ A glut of recent work in New World archaeology takes this possibility seriously, however, adopting a “prosocial approach to the evolution of complexity.”²⁵ The seeds of this movement can be found in the pathbreaking work of anthropologists Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher, who applied a broader and more data-driven cross-cultural comparative approach to notions of despotic versus infrastructural power articulated by sociologist Michael Mann.²⁶

Blanton and Fargher set out to test the idea that “state formation is a process involving rational social action on the part of taxpayers as well as rulers” by drawing data from a sample size of thirty historically robust case studies to quantify levels of public-goods provision, bureaucratization, and “principal” control (by rulers) in different societies. Their results highlight the importance of state revenue sources in determining state structure, starting from the practical question of how states were funded, rather than the evidence of rulers’ self-representation.²⁷ Yet they, like Richardson, arrive at the unexpected conclusion that the most despotic rulers, who ran the least collective states, were in fact the *least* likely to interfere in the lives of their subjects, whether positively, through providing goods and services to the public, or negatively, by imposing taxes or tribute. More collectively organized states had many bureaucrats, their taxes were higher and harder to shirk, and commoners had less autonomy and were far more subject to state surveillance. Taxpayer compliance was instead encouraged through the provision of public goods, and rulers relinquished elements of their own privilege and agency to inspire taxpayers’ trust. In conclusion, Blanton and Fargher calculate where states fall on a “scale of rulership” that ranges from autocratic to collective, in implicit recognition that most states—even those that *represent* themselves as highly autocratic—fall somewhere in the middle. Their choice to present a continuum of rulership, rather than a typology, facilitates cross-cultural comparison; it further suggests that the “despotism bias” so prevalent in ancient studies is, at the very least, worth reexamining.

Limited as it is to historically robust case studies, Blanton and Fargher’s approach is not directly applicable to less well attested contexts (like many of those that follow in this volume). Furthermore, their focus on taxation falls somewhat into the *homo economicus* trap, that is, the assumption that people in the past behaved in ways that conform to modernist Western rationality.²⁸ They nonetheless have laid the groundwork for the burgeoning field of what McAnany has recently called the “archaeopolitical,” the major tenets of which are, first, that commoners in both more collectively and more autocratically organized societies are “conditional cooperators” who are “used to a fair deal”; second, that coercion is not a necessary prerequisite for human cooperation, even on a large scale, as can be demonstrated by empirical evidence—on the contrary, political scientist David Stasavage has gone so far as to state that “early democracy was widespread”;²⁹ and finally,

24 Fueled by the notion of the “Greek miracle,” though see Barjamovic 2004; Fleming 2004; von Dassow 2011; Otto 2012, 2014; Haggis and Fitzsimons 2020.

25 McAnany 2018.

26 Blanton and Fargher 2008; Mann 1984.

27 Following Margaret Levi (1981, 1989).

28 The field of behavioral economics seeks to amend this tendency: see, e.g., Thaler 2015.

29 Stasavage 2020, 29.

that political strategies of all kinds are “fragile experiments in living as a community, a group, a state, or a nation” and should not be “freighted with embellished expectations of longevity.” Political stability is ephemeral, with systems constantly in flux; cooperation is complicated, but coercion is costly, and in both cases the balance is delicate.

When we look for the means by which political communities are successfully maintained, however, a common denominator emerges: ritual. For archaeologist Charles Stanish, it is the major takeaway of his large-scale archaeological and ethnographic study of stateless societies:

Th[e ritualized] economy, structured by ritual, enculturated by habit, and culturally transmitted over generations, is the means by which the emergent properties of co-operation inherent in social interaction lead to “strong” forms of co-operation. These rules are transformed into norms and beliefs and are sustained by prosocial or altruistic behaviors that reward co-operation and punish free-riders. These are societies that use the capacity of inherently ego-directed individuals to create co-operative social models through effective ritual practice.³⁰

The centrality of political rituals is equally present not just in archaic states³¹ but also in modern ones: so in contemporary Yemen, as elucidated by political scientist Lisa Wedeen, the “performative dimensions of political life” are able to account for “the fragility and contingency of solidarities in a way that many explanations do not.”³² The performance perspective, therefore, particularly when reframed in terms of audiences, can help shift our focus away from governmental institutions and infrastructural power—which in any case are more likely to have been short-lived and low, respectively—and toward the meaningful experiences, affiliations, and solidarities generated through participatory politics on multiple scales.

PLAYING POLITICS

One idea suggested by the above discussion is that the state exists only insofar as it performs. But like “political correctness,” the term “performance” is multifaceted: it can mean both “to carry out, accomplish (an action, task, or function)” in a general sense as well as the more narrow “to present (to an audience).” Its combination with the term “politics,” which likewise has a set of fairly specific, descriptive, nonjudgmental meanings (“the art or science of government”; “political principles”) but can also carry a closely related negative valence (“political activities characterized by artful and often dishonest practices”),³³ yields kaleidoscoping permutations of meaning that cluster around considerations of authenticity and intent. These issues are nearly impossible to interrogate in the distant past, especially if we acknowledge the inevitable heterogeneity of audiences of “conditional cooperators.” It is not enough to be critical of rulers: as Richardson cautions, “we make a

30 Stanish 2017, 7. See also Spielmann 2002 on middle-range societies.

31 See Murphy 2016; Inomata and Coben 2006.

32 Wedeen 2008, 213.

33 Paraphrased from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary entries “perform” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perform>) and “politics” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics>) (both accessed June 4, 2021).

large error when we mistake evidence of persuasion to be evidence of capacity or audience belief.”³⁴ Where, how, and to whom must a state, or a political community, perform in order to exist? To persist? These questions cannot be addressed ahistorically.

Contributors to this volume were thus encouraged to focus on the “modes, means, and loci of public discourse,” and they interpreted this mandate liberally: “loci” range from the more traditional temple/palace courtyard (Augusta McMahon) to landscapes, both urban (Monica Smith, Margaret Andrews) and rural (Catherine Kearns), and funerary structures large and small (Anne Porter, Emily Anderson); “modes” explored were mainly textual or architectural (with some exceptions), but communicative strategies included everything from stubborn silence (James Osborne), to dialogue or competition (Anne Porter), to self-conscious/self-serving revisionism (Katja Goebis, Smith), to outright rejection (Kathryn Morgan, Marcella Frangipane)—or run the gamut of all the above, distributed differentially across the social landscape (Lauren Ristvet). Are there apolitical actors or spaces? Some seemed to argue yes (Amir Gilan, Osborne), others no (Kearns, Porter), but all agree that different forms of power play out differently across the social landscape and over time. Only in the gaps between earlier and later periods, or between urban and rural communities, can we recover political change in practice.

All seemed to agree that more than just “doing” something, performance requires an audience; yet as already noted, not all performance is spectacle, and the boundaries between actors and spectators (witnesses, participants) may well be blurred. Thus considerations of access, both to performance spaces and to the performances themselves, as well as scale/scalability, were fruitful avenues of inquiry. At what sizes do performances begin to be, or cease to be, effective? How does partial access (e.g., seeing but not hearing) affect or enable certain power dynamics—is being present, without fully seeing or understanding, more or less productive of engagement? How powerful, in other words, is ambiguity?³⁵

In a contemporary political climate in which Foucault’s observation that “each society has . . . its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” seems increasingly appropriate, and where emotional response—or belief—is seen to be a more powerful motivator to collective action even than economic self-interest, the concept of “performance” lies uneasily at the intersection between what is “true” or real and what we simply choose to make *function* as true, however briefly, cynically, or hopefully. To interrogate political correctness is to refocus attention on those gaps—between intent and action, signifier and signified—that send powerful messages of cultural inclusion and exclusion and underlie episodes of cultural and political change.

ESSAYS IN THIS VOLUME

The volume opens with Gary Feinman and Linda Nicholas’s trenchant essay, “Rethinking Politics and Spectacle in the Deep Past: Parallels for the Present?” Feinman and Nicholas chart a course from the contemporary United States to prehispanic Mesoamerica and back again, articulating a compelling case for “variability in governance, leadership, and political

³⁴ Richardson 2017, 18.

³⁵ See further discussion of the “eros” of performance by Richardson, this volume.

performance in both the present and the preindustrial past”³⁶ and dispelling progressivistic notions of a great divide between the two. Following Blanton and Fargher’s integration of political science and anthropological perspectives, summarized above, Feinman and Nicholas demonstrate meaningful correlations among patterns of spatial organization, modes of ritual performance, and strategies of governance at Teotihuacan and elsewhere. But they eschew restrictive dichotomizing in favor of multiscalar “axes of variability”—a middle way between the top-down and the grassroots, illustrating how studies of performance and participation rooted in spatial considerations can generate new, nuanced insights into broader historical and political phenomena.

Feinman and Nicholas’s emphasis on the multiscalar reverberates throughout the volume. The papers in Part I, “Making Space,” outline the practices of what Monica Smith calls “small-*p* politics,” that is, the politics of daily life within and among communities.³⁷ They could be construed broadly as “grassroots” approaches, but that qualification is too simple: Smith considers circulation and communication across the “nested spaces of urban life”—the civic, the neighborhood, the household—at the first-millennium urban site of Sipsupalgarh, India. Drawing on the study of contemporary urban migrations, she highlights how newcomers to ancient cities selectively performed and adopted appropriately “urban” behaviors as they moved through them.

This richly scalar model for the production of urban space resonates with that proposed by Catherine Kearns for rural Cyprus in the Archaic to Classical periods. Kearns’s essay refocuses our attention on “emergent places of engagement,” such as the small Archaic–Classical shrine of Kalavastos *Skouries*, which she resists classifying as merely rural, locating it instead at the “industrial edges” of the state. She argues poignantly that the “multivalence” of these places, both tied to “the political economy of the state” and yet “generative of smaller-scale social lives,” prompts their understanding as loci of discourse(s) on the relationship of space, place, and practice within what may be multiple overlapping ritual-political communities. Emily Anderson’s subsequent contribution on Prepalatial figurines from the neighboring Mediterranean island of Crete moves us in and out of still more intimate spaces, helping us visualize the kinds of performances that might have been taking place in these small-scale contexts—including at Kearns’s “shrine of the slag”—and their transformative potential through a deep investigation of the these objects’ material affordances.

To conclude the section, Anderson’s careful *longue-durée* approach and attention to materiality and context are carried through in Anne Porter’s paper on yet a different scale. Porter’s examination of two extraordinary mortuary structures at third-millennium Tell Banat, Syria—structures similar in their monumentality but highly distinct in their locations and methods of construction—reveals a complex conversation between them, thus raising critical questions about competing claims to identity and polity and the participation of the populace in the performance of power.

If the essays of Part I lean toward the grassroots, those of Part II, “Acting in Space,” consider the view from the top. Here the stage is set; what opportunities for action does it present, and which ones does it forestall? Augusta McMahon’s masterful case study

³⁶ Feinman and Nicholas, this volume.

³⁷ Smith, this volume.

on Mesopotamian temple courtyards deploys the holistic approach she has elsewhere described as “phenomenology with data.” She fills these imposing complexes with the sounds of drums, clapping, and chanting attested in our textual sources, then charts the reverberations—literally, by calculating rings of visibility, audibility, and intelligibility, like so many ripples in a pond. As respondent Jean Evans put it, McMahon asks the question “If we understand space as a container, was it meant to be filled?” and, considering a range of answers, leaves us with the evocative possibilities of “leaving some empty space for awe.”³⁸

McMahon’s essay effectively conjures a shadow theater for the complex performances recounted in text in the Hittite and Egyptian spheres, scrutinized by Alice Mouton, Amir Gilan, and Katja Goebis. Mouton mines textual sources to get at displays of military force in ceremonial contexts in the Hittite realm, detailing an array of characters and props whose participation in rituals would have sent powerful messages of legitimation to audiences. Gilan and Goebis focus on the ritual responsibilities of the ruler in Hittite Anatolia and Old/Middle/New Kingdom Egypt, respectively; reading between the lines, each teases out revisionist narratives concocted to conceal failed performances, traditions bent to suit changed realities. Yet both conclude that the very survival of these narratives attests the important presence of (mute) witnesses, arbiters of the efficacy of these events, for whose benefit scapegoats were found and inconsistencies explained away.

Margaret Andrews encounters a similar gap in her sources from a full millennium later despite marshaling an impressive array of textual and archaeological materials that vividly evoke the streets and churches of papal Rome. Her audience is a captive one, yet in the progressive appropriation of the popular cult of Mary by the politico-ecclesiastical authorities there, Andrews suggests we should see signs of the papacy’s interest in (re)shaping public perception. Viewed through Andrews’s urbanistic lens, the evolution of Marian-themed processions and publicly promulgated narratives bears witness to the vested interest Rome’s civic and spiritual leaders had in conforming themselves to their peculiarly Roman landscape and audience.

This urban perspective continues into the first essay of the volume’s Part III, “Reacting(?) in Space,” in which authors place the top-down and the grassroots in direct conversation by isolating moments of response, reception, and even transformation in the archaeological record. James Osborne counters a “Šuppiluliuma conundrum” proposed by Gilan with an “Osborne paradox”: he observes that the built environment of second-tier Syro-Anatolian cities of the first millennium BCE flagrantly lacks the architectural and iconographic trappings of political discourse so prevalent in the political centers of that period and region. Weaponizing one of James Scott’s “arts of resistance,” the “hidden transcript,” alongside space syntax analysis, Osborne posits that this “active nonparticipation” in politics might itself be a form of silent protest. My own study observes a contrasting silence at the contemporary site of Gordion in central Anatolia, long identified as the capital city of King Midas of Phrygia though no traces of such a character have been recovered in the excavated citadel itself. Implementing political scientist Clarissa Hayward’s framework of “de-facing power” at Gordion, I seek to redirect attention to the traces of other agents that lurk within and upon the city’s monumental walls, ultimately adducing,

³⁸ McMahon, this volume.

through contextual analysis of archaeological assemblages, broad participation in political activities in early Phrygia.

Contextual analysis, though on a much broader scale, is also a preferred methodology of Lauren Ristvet in the chapter following mine: she finds evidence for highly differential deployment and reception of imperial propaganda across the diverse towns, cities, regions, and populations of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, from imperial elites and centers to rural landscapes and subalterns. Ristvet's allusions to the forbidden jokes or "*anekdoti*" of Soviet Russia remind us that audiences "were as likely to be cynical as credulous," and she instead supplies an archaeological means of recovering their heterogeneity. Finally, in the last entry of Part III, Marcella Frangipane offers an explosive lesson in the perils of misreading one's audience by arguing that the fiery destruction of the early urban site of Late Chalcolithic Arslantepe can be attributed to the violent rejection by the populace of elite attempts to consolidate power through changes in ritualized political performances and accompanying iconography.

Held against each other, in their disciplinary variety and broad geographic and chronological scope, the essays gathered here give rise to unexpected questions. What insights could McMahon's intelligibility calculus yield in Anderson's Cretan houses and tombs—if we agree that the uncanny bodies of her figurines were even meant to be intelligible? Should we imagine Andrews's Roman audiences to be as cynical as those Ristvet describes in Soviet Russia? If so, what jokes might they have told? By what means might we be so fortunate as to recover them? Seth Richardson's concluding response to the volume teases out many more of these threads of conversation as they echo across time and space, framed in a theoretical discussion of performance's capacities and ambiguities in relation to power. But Richardson begins with a pertinent observation, with which I will end: "we imagine the nature of politics to be something substantially *other* than the performances we see."³⁹ Politics is nothing if not performative; moreover, it exists precisely to mediate difference. The critical lens(es) and theoretical and methodological creativity brought by the contributors here demonstrate that political performances, however ephemeral their traces, gain substance as we pursue them as objects of scholarly inquiry, thus offering some hope of recovering the heterogeneity of perspectives and experiences that must have characterized the worlds we study.

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³⁹ Richardson, this volume.

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1 Rethinking Politics and Spectacle in the Deep Past: Parallels for the Present?

Gary M. Feinman and Linda M. Nicholas
Field Museum

The past is never dead. It's not even past.¹

IN THE CALL for the conference that led to this volume on political pomp and performance, the editor, Kathryn Morgan, bridged the present and the past, highlighting former President Trump's showmanship and the strong bond that it helps him forge with a sizable portion of the contemporary American electorate. Morgan's observations mirror Douglas Kellner,² who observed in 2016 that "Trump is empowered and enabled to run for the presidency in part because media spectacle has become a major force in US politics, helping to determine elections, government, and more broadly the ethos and nature of our culture and political sphere, and Trump is a successful creator and manipulator of the spectacle." We, being students of politico-economic organization and behaviors in the deep past, have like many other researchers been captivated by the recent US political landscape. Here we begin with the contemporary—Trump and spectacle—and use it as a link to considerations of variability in governance, leadership, and political performance in both the present and the preindustrial past, with a focus on prehispanic Mesoamerica. Our aims are both to offer implications for how we conceptualize and study politics in the past and to challenge and question key assumptions and expectations for the present and beyond.

From a historical, social-scientific perspective, the rise and governance style of former President Trump and other leaders of today are somewhat unexpected,³ even potentially paradigm shifting. Basically, for much of the latter half of the twentieth century a prevailing view in political science and related fields was modernization theory.⁴ This perspective promoted the notion that after the Enlightenment, increasing economic growth and broader education would foment the spread of global democracy. The economist Simon Kuznets⁵ advanced an equally optimistic corollary that corresponding growth in market-based economics would foster greater economic equity. But, in recent years, many scholars have

1 Faulkner 1919, 85.

2 Kellner 2016, 4–5.

3 Applebaum 2020.

4 Lipset 1959.

5 Kuznets 1955.



Figure 1.1. Trump headlines.

realized that these expectations have not come to fruition, raising questions with key underlying tenets and predictions associated with both conceptual frames.⁶

The popularity and election of President Trump, with his nationalistic rhetoric⁷ and charismatic performances at mega-rallies and his reliance on personalized, transactional networks in a long-lived democracy, the United States, sharpen these doubts. Mr. Trump's adoption of an autocratic toolkit⁸ and reliance on spectacle was thought to be more the leadership style of the past than the democratic (small *d*) present (fig. 1.1). After all, as the saying goes, "democracy is not a spectator sport, as it requires participation

6 Bhambra and Holmwood 2021; Ikenberry 2018; Luce 2017; Savage 2021; *The Economist* 2014.

7 Kendzior 2016b; Rowland 2019.

8 Ben-Ghiat 2020; Snyder 2018; Swan, Savage, and Haberman 2023.

and negotiation.”⁹ More than three decades beyond the supposed “end of history,”¹⁰ the progressivistic assessment that somehow modern governance and political economy are wholly distinct and removed from the deeper, and especially non-Western, past requires reconsideration.¹¹

CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES GOVERNANCE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As archaeologists, our perspective on the present starts with the basic premise that the rise of Mr. Trump, his personalized showmanship, and the magnetic attraction it seems to foment for certain elements of his following¹² must be understood in a broader historical context. From the perspective of political economy, America today is a far different country from what it was fifty to seventy-five years ago. To enumerate some of the relevant factors: economic inequality has widened markedly, with great concentration at the highest levels of income¹³ and wealth (figs. 1.2–1.4); the import and quantities of money in politics has mushroomed¹⁴ (fig. 1.5); federal and state investments in infrastructure and other public goods and services have declined per capita¹⁵ (fig. 1.6); and the country’s

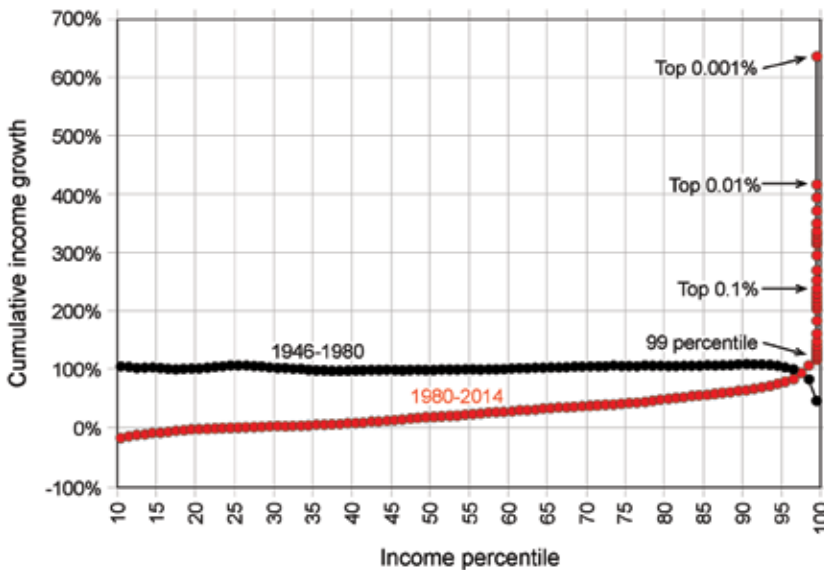


Figure 1.2. Cumulative pretax income growth in the United States, 1946–1980 and 1980–2014. Adapted from Piketty, Saez, and Zucman 2018.

9 Blaustein 2011.

10 Fukuyama 1989.

11 Blanton et al. 2022.

12 French 2023.

13 Piketty, Saez, and Zucman 2018.

14 Gilens 2014; Page, Seawright, and Lacombe 2018.

15 Whitman 2017.

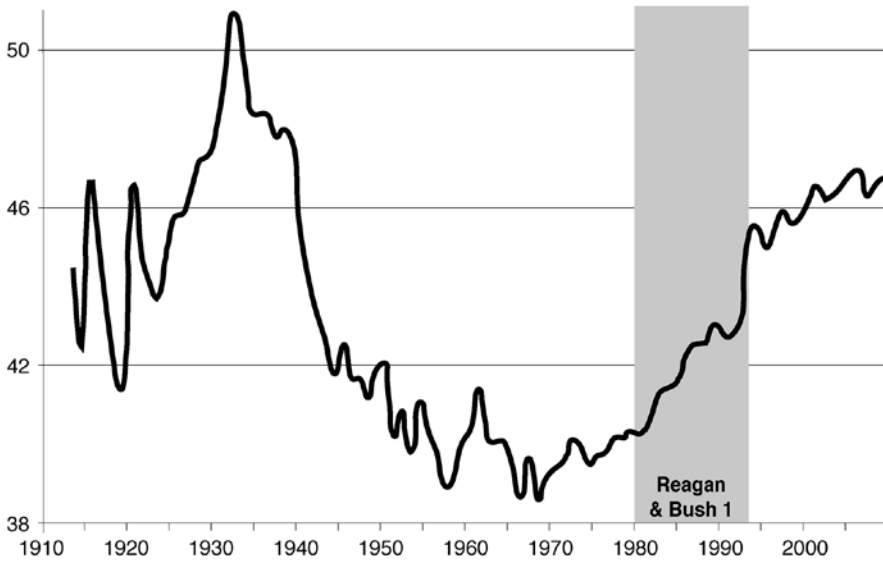


Figure 1.3. Evolution of the Gini index for income in the United States, 1913–2009. Adapted from Berruyer 2010.

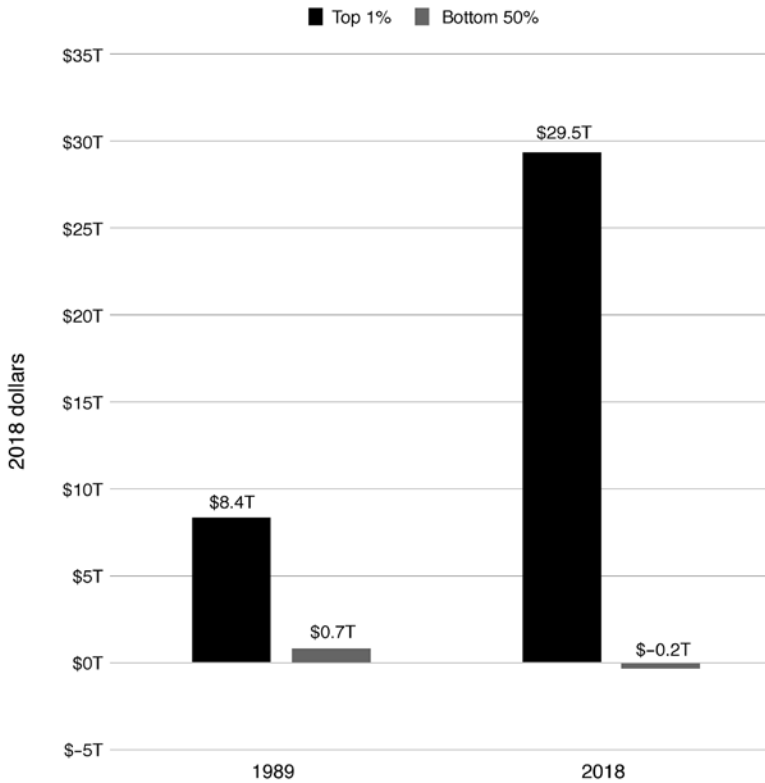


Figure 1.4. Total wealth of the top 1 percent and the bottom 50 percent in the United States, 1989–2018. Adapted from Max Bruenig’s graph in Johnson 2019.

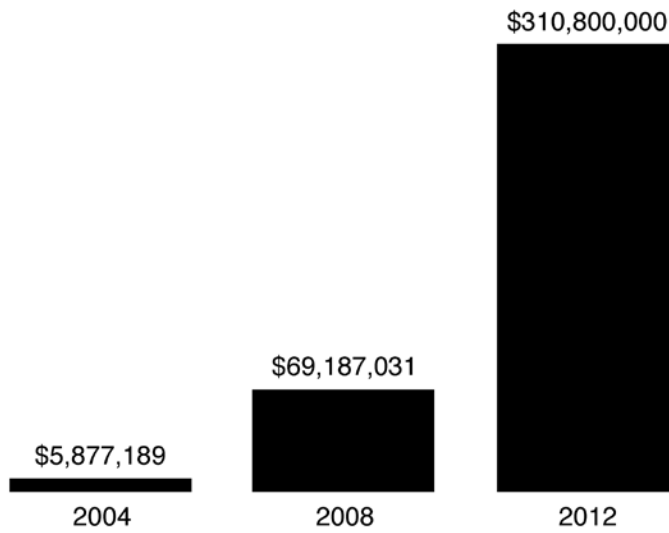


Figure 1.5. Reported dark-money spending on federal elections, 2004–2012. Adapted from Center for Responsive Politics graph in Prokop 2014.

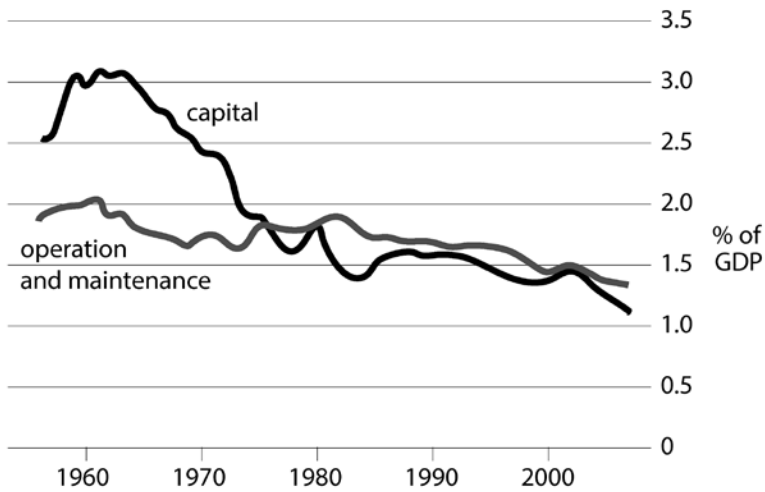


Figure 1.6. American public spending on transport and water infrastructure, 1956–2007, as a percentage of the GDP. Adapted from *The Economist* 2011.

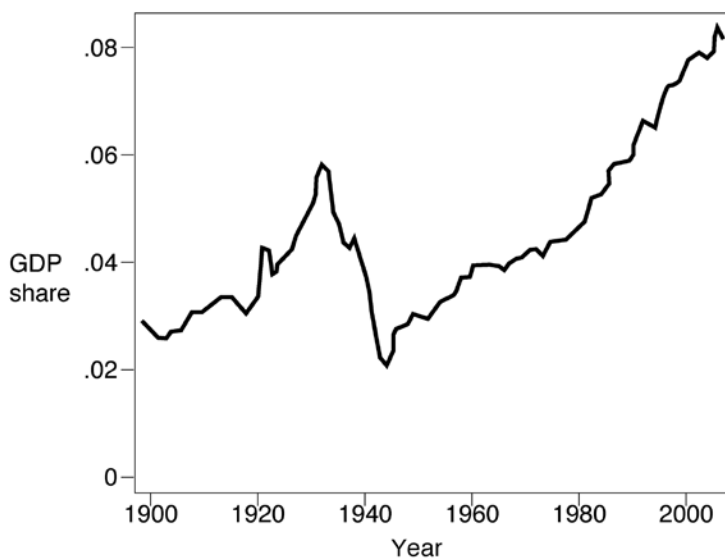


Figure 1.7. GDP share of the US financial industry, 1900–2007. Adapted from Philippon 2008.

core economic foundations have shifted from manufacturing and farming to finance,¹⁶ electronic-data transfer/computing, and energy (fig. 1.7). No longer does the jingle “As GM [General Motors] goes, so goes the nation” apply.

With the shift from an economic base in manufacturing to more capital-intensive economic foundations, the balance between capital and labor has swung markedly toward the former over the past decades in the United States. Likewise, political polarization and a persistent weakening and breaking of democratic norms did not start with Mr. Trump’s administration.¹⁷ The stark increase in the number of government shutdowns, the dramatic growth in the use of the Senate filibuster, the refusal even to interview or consider a Supreme Court nominee, and the questioning of the legitimacy of an elected president all presaged the blurring of norms and conventions that occurred during the Trump administration.¹⁸ Before 2016, the pillars of democracy were already a bit wobbly.¹⁹

At the same time, to understand Mr. Trump’s predilection for showmanship and spectacle, it also is informative to examine with a wider analytical lens the central features of how he and his subordinates lead. A sampling of headlines (fig. 1.1) suggests that many in the media saw, beyond a repeated willingness to break fundamental and long-standing norms, a tolerance for various forms of corruption, nepotism, personalized self-aggrandizement, the touting of vanity projects (walls, space shots, and the like), a persistent inclination to marshal misstatements into politicized propaganda, efforts to tighten access to public goods (such as health care), initiatives to hollow out bureaucratic institutions, a reliance on personal/transactional networks (often involving interim employees), and even a propensity to weaponize innuendo, intimidation, and cruelty both against foes

¹⁶ Davis and Kim 2015; Madrick 2011.

¹⁷ Mann and Orenstein 2012.

¹⁸ Hacker and Pierson 2019; Siegel 2018.

¹⁹ Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, 9–10.

and to bestir the base. One political commentator even observed these indicators of authoritarian practice to be coupled with a proclivity for dictator chic²⁰ and an attraction to the trappings of royal class and greater wealth, even at a time when the national debt and deficit were ballooning.

CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES GOVERNANCE IN A BROADER GLOBAL LENS

The weakening of democratic structure and practice that started before Mr. Trump's presidency, but was magnified subsequently, are not restricted in the present era to the United States. In fact, an array of international studies that annually assess and provide cross-national metrics for the comparative robusticity of democratic practices has found general diminishment across the globe.²¹ Though each survey has its own analytical criteria and assessment procedures, they devise metrics to gauge the quality of governance, the norms, rules, relations, and institutions by which cooperation, authority, and leadership are exercised. Good governance,²² which incorporates the core principles of effective democracies, generally encompasses criteria such as distributed as opposed to monopolized voice (checks and balances on power), the rule of law (rather than the rule of men), controls on corruption, efficacy in the provisioning of goods and services, and mechanisms for accountability. Uniformly, these analyses concur that recent years have seen more slippage than gains in the quality of the governance practices of nations that make up the global sample. Nevertheless, not only is there great worldwide variance in the quality of governance, but also the directionality of the changes is not uniform. In some nations there is movement toward more inclusive forms of governance; other nations head in the direction of concentrated power and authoritarianism.²³ All the comparative surveys report declines in the United States, where Freedom House views American democracy as weaker than at any time since it began the survey in 1941.²⁴

BRIDGING TO A BROADER HISTORICAL AND MORE GENERAL THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Given the often stark divide drawn between politics and governance in the past and in the present, it is surprising that a series of independent comparative analyses of non-Western and/or nonmodern political organization carried out on societal cases of different scales and complexities have isolated axes of variability similar to those used in the aforementioned surveys that compare governance in the present (table 1.1). Of course, the terminologies in these studies differ, as do the precise dimensions contrasted. Yet when these studies are examined in concert, one sees a similar set of factors—such as individualized

²⁰ York 2017.

²¹ Freedom House 2019; Economist Intelligence Unit 2019; Transparency International 2018; World Justice Project 2019.

²² Rothstein 2014.

²³ Kendall-Taylor, Frantz, and Wright 2017.

²⁴ Freedom House 2019.

Table 1.1. Axes of political organizational variability.

More collective	Less collective	Reference
Production-based big man	Finance-based big man	Strathern 1969
Group-oriented chiefdom	Individualizing chiefdom	Renfrew 1974
Staple finance	Wealth finance	D'Altroy and Earle 1985
Quasi-voluntary compliance	Predatory rule	Levi 1988
Corporate	Exclusionary/network	Blanton et al. 1996
Democratic	Monarchic	Grinin 2004
Inclusive	Extractive	Acemoglu and Robinson 2012

rule, centralization of power, transactional networking (vs. institutionalized bureaucracy), degree of economic inequity, extent of subaltern voice, and the fiscal underpinnings of governance—consistently recognized. Diversity along axes that connect these factors has been noted across widely differing temporal and spatial contexts.²⁵

To be more specific, where we found personalized power and governance, it tended to co-occur with the aggrandizement of principals and their kin, the centrality of individualized networks, autocratic leadership, muted voices for the powerless, and a key role for ruler-centered performances and spectacle. At the other end of the spectrum we noted more faceless, institutionalized, bureaucratic forms of governance that feature more effective checks and balances, distributed power, and mechanisms for subaltern voices and participation.²⁶ This axis of variation that we see for anthropological and historical contexts is not categorically distinct from the present, nor does it neatly align with long-held assertions²⁷ that only following the European Enlightenment did the latter, less despotic or more collective forms of governance emerge and spread. To understand variation in governance, leadership, and their links to pomp and performance in the present and the past,²⁸ it is worth taking a step back from old dichotomies and stereotypes that erected stark divisions across time and reconsider the bases of human cooperation and the array of ties that connect leaders and followers.

Cooperation is defined as a group of individuals acting together to a common collective end.²⁹ But generally with human groupings, and certainly societies, there are resources involved and so the potential for selfishness.³⁰ Humans have the potential to be excellent cooperators, and as a species we aggregate at scales shared only by social insects, whose

25 Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 2012a.

26 Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 2012a.

27 For example, Huntington 1996; Wittfogel 1957; cf. Fargher and Blanton 2007.

28 Blanton 2016.

29 Gillinson 2004, 4.

30 Blanton and Fargher 2016, 30.

groupmates are closely related genetically. But as humans, because we also are selfish, our cooperation is contingent and situational, which raises the dilemma Thomas Hobbes³¹ posed centuries ago: What holds human groupings together, given the tendency of individuals to pursue their self-interest?

SCALAR VANTAGES ON COOPERATION

Historically, increases in the scale of human groupings to sizes beyond which all residents of a community or members of a society can no longer know each other on a face-to-face basis foment the establishment of institutions tasked with coordination, cooperation, and punishment.³² These arrangements take an array of forms, but generally demographic growth corresponds with greater political complexity manifest through configurations of suprahousehold leadership and governance.³³ In large human aggregations, principals, with their implied dynamic with followers, often constitute a critical integrative element in building and strengthening cooperative networks.³⁴ Because of this relational element, and underpinned by the works of Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher,³⁵ we adopt an explicitly multiscalar perspective on human cooperation that is neither exclusively top-down nor bottom-up and that considers both individuals (leaders and followers) as well as institutions.³⁶

Long-standing approaches to cooperation have tended to focus on either individuals or groups as a whole.³⁷ For example, many, though not all, evolutionary psychologists, economists, and game theorists concentrate principally on general characteristics of individuals or consistent relations between small networks of people. Although these scholars have provided important insights regarding the bases of and implications for altruism, reciprocity, and self-interest, their approaches on their own have not built a firm foundation to account for patterns or axes of variation in the cooperative behaviors of large groupings. Nor do these approaches generally give sufficient attention to marked differentials in economic clout or power. For the most part, when institutions and governance are brought into their analytical frames, they are modeled as external factors, when, in fact, governance and leadership are generally by the people, internal to the group.

In contrast, most anthropological perspectives tend to examine cooperation at the level of the group. Reflective of this top-down vantage, Robert Carneiro³⁸ drew a dichotomous contrast between the two main approaches, voluntaristic versus coercive relations (which basically describes the underpinnings of functionalist vs. conflict models), to account for human aggregations and affiliations. Carneiro favored the latter—that dominance, coercion, and force serve as the basis for human political organization and aggregation. We

31 Hobbes 2003.

32 Birch 2013; Coward and Dunbar 2014; Johnson 1982.

33 Feinman 2013b.

34 Ahlquist and Levi 2011.

35 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 2016.

36 For example, Levi 1988, 7.

37 Feinman 2013a.

38 Carneiro 1970.

agree that force and coercion can be means to bind human groups and affiliations, but they tend to be costly to implement and maintain and so have limitations for extended duration.³⁹ Volunteerism presumes that all or most people tend to act for the good of the group. Yet as Carneiro noted, this perspective is problematic, as people continuously break basic rules and norms and do not perpetually yield individual agency to that of the group. The recognition that human affiliations across time have not been closed, finite, or primordial⁴⁰ further weakens the presumption that people will reflexively act for the good of the whole as affiliations shift over time and can be multiplex.

Fortunately, we now can see that the volunteerism/coercion dichotomy laid out decades ago is too restrictive. A third perspective, associated with the theory of collective action⁴¹ and advanced by the political scientist Margaret Levi,⁴² both grants degrees of agency to all participants and builds on the relational dynamic between leaders and followers. Principals strive for the quasi-voluntary compliance of followers, which allows leaders to reduce transaction costs (compared to those of strict coercion) while maximizing subaltern compliance and decreasing incentives to flee. From this perspective, the situational contingency of cooperation is explicable. Individuals may act to benefit the larger group to the degree that their interests are intertwined with the vitality and future prospects of that group.⁴³

FISCAL FOUNDATIONS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Humans have the capacity to cooperate, but to realize the benefits of cooperation is challenging. For a group to cooperate successfully, members must have the trust and confidence that others will behave in accord with collective benefits. Self-interest undermines cooperation and potentially the bounds of human affiliations themselves. Consequently, cooperative groups do not form or endure in the absence of specialized and effective institutions that can foster prosocial action.⁴⁴ At the other pole, as noted above, are human groupings forged through dominance and coercion that tend to have more aristocratic, authoritarian rule. These differences underpin the range of leader–follower dynamics that sit along a continuum between more collective and more autocratic modes of governance. It is important to make clear that by “collective” or “cooperative” bases of governance we do not mean leaderless or utopian, but rather that mechanisms for subaltern voice and checks on principal power are integral.

In their comparative analysis of thirty premodern, historically known states from around the globe, Blanton and Fargher⁴⁵ found an axis of variability in political organization similar to those we outlined earlier. Significantly, they also illustrated social mechanisms that underlie the co-occurrence of certain features of leadership and governance and

39 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 20; Roscoe 2013.

40 Blanton 2015; Feinman and Neitzel 2020; Jones 2008; Kristiansen 2014.

41 Olson 1965; Ostrom 1998.

42 Levi 1988, 48–70.

43 Blanton and Fargher 2016, 33–35.

44 Blanton and Fargher 2016, 37.

45 Blanton and Fargher 2008.

Table 1.2. Polity governance.

Variable	Less collective	More collective
Bureaucratization	Low	High
Control over principals	Low	High
Public goods	Low	High
Revenue source	External	Internal

documented them statistically. They showed that preindustrial rulers were not uniformly despotic; in certain settings leaders expressed concern for their people(s) and acted accordingly, while others were more self-aggrandizing.

According to the findings of Blanton and Fargher, when governance was highly focused on a dominant few and checks and balances on principals were minimal, those rulers tended to dispense and provide few public goods and services (table 1.2). The quality of life for most people was limited,⁴⁶ and the extent of bureaucracy was not vast. Alternatively, when power was checked and distributed, the provisioning of public goods was more robust, infrastructural investments that facilitated movement—both communication and commerce—were more ample, and bureaucratic organizations were relatively large and diverse (fig. 1.8). For most, the material standard of living was enhanced.

A critical element of the Blanton-Fargher findings was the link between how governance and power were funded and the ways by which it was implemented. The authors found an economic basis that underlies how power is wielded. When the fiscal underpinnings of government relied mostly on internal resources—derived from the local population—the wielding of power tended to be muted with checks and balances. Alternatively, when external resources—such as monopolization of trade routes, war booty, or produce from elite estates—predominated, principals depended less on the exaction of local production from subjects, and power could be exerted more freely. Since trust and confidence are keys to collective action, when governance is funded by the local population, rulers have incentives to encourage compliance and discourage people from voting with their feet through the provisioning of public goods and services. Tax collection and the distribution of public goods tend to promote and require investments in bureaucracy⁴⁷ (figs. 1.8 and 1.9; table 1.2).

The identification of cross-cultural economic foundations for different governance practices is important, as it helps us understand why certain social mechanisms and the resultant configurations and patterns of political organization transcend space and time. It also explains why modes of governance and leadership are not strictly static or set within specific cultural contexts. Political organizations can shift markedly in a specific polity

⁴⁶ Blanton and Fargher 2016.

⁴⁷ Blanton and Fargher 2008.

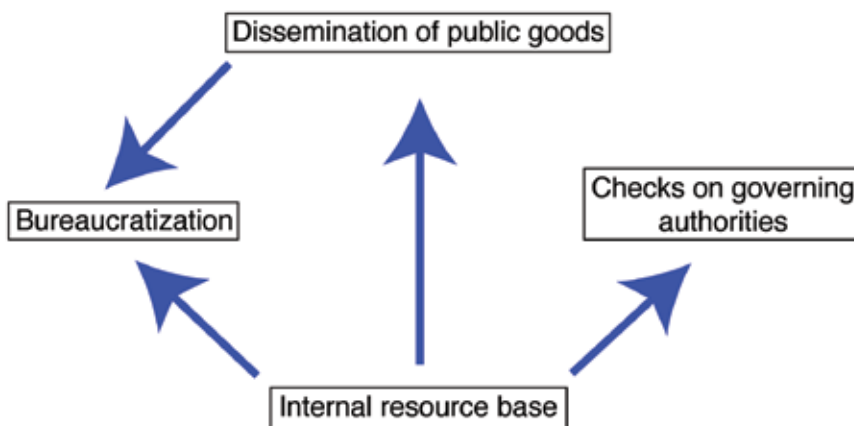


Figure 1.8. Socioeconomic mechanisms underpinning variation in governance. Adapted from Blanton and Fargher 2008.



Figure 1.9. Fiscal foundations of collective and autocratic governance.

over time. Culture enters the calculus of politico-economic decision making, but it does not determine it.

VARIABILITY IN GOVERNANCE: PREHISPANIC MESOAMERICA

As a next step, we assess whether these socioeconomic mechanisms (and the corresponding axes of variability) evidenced in premodern societies for which we have texts⁴⁸ can also be found in contexts where documentary sources are limited and archaeological findings (as well as art and architectural information) are preeminent. In this regard, we draw on observations concerning the different roles of public ritual and spectacle observed for more-or-less collectively organized polities. Based on his comparative analysis, Blanton⁴⁹ found that different types of rituals, rituals with distinct purposes, and rituals that invoke

⁴⁸ Blanton and Fargher 2008.

⁴⁹ Blanton 2016; see also Blanton and Fargher 2008; Feinman 2016.

varied behavioral processes were all linked to the degree of governance collectivity. More autocratic regimes were associated with modes of ritual that tend to confirm the legitimacy of superordinate principals. These performances took the form of spectacles centered on principals. Spectacles are intended to be seen or absorbed, not negotiated.⁵⁰ They often generate high levels of sensorial arousal among participants, thereby promoting emotional states that constrict the potential for rational thought. In contrast, in more collective contexts, rituals served to stimulate evaluative thought rather than preclude it. They served more regulative⁵¹ purposes in that they orient or order a practical or technical activity. Unlike spectacle, these rites include intervisibility, kinesthetic emulation, and public signaling that reaffirm commitment to a group's collective goals.

Application of this theoretical frame requires reconsideration of how we think about monumental and civic-ceremonial constructions and the signaling of status and identity. For example, whereas an elaborate monumental palace is an indicator of wealth concentration and the centralization of aspects of governance in the residence of a central authority (family), monumental investments in community defense, sewage systems, public ritual spaces, and even gridded streets are indicative of the use of resources toward public goods in that these constructions potentially enhance the well-being or standard of living of subalterns as well as elites. Even if local labor is drafted to build such architectural features, the work is still deployed to erect structures or facilities that provide services to the many as opposed to palaces or elite tomb monuments that benefit or glorify just the few.⁵² Likewise, the implications of signaling individualized power and prestige differ from the manifestation of corporate symbols and codes that represent holistic or broad, aggregate social affiliations (table 1.3).

To examine variation in urban political economy and governance in ancient Mesoamerica, we first draw contrasts between Classic period (250–900 CE) centers in the Maya region and Teotihuacan (fig. 1.10), as these settlements appear to define two ends of an organizational continuum for this prehispanic world. Subsequently, a larger set of Mesoamerican central places is considered. Teotihuacan, in Central Mexico, was much larger in population size and far more monumental, so from a strictly cultural evolutionary paradigm one would expect it to have more powerful, autocratic rulers; more lavish elite burials; and greater evidence for spectacular, ruler-legitimizing performances. But instead, what has been documented is a city that had large spaces for aggregations, plazas and wide streets with fewer restricted areas, an ordered grid plan, and, compared to Classic Maya cities, broader spaces at the tops of temples and other platforms.⁵³ In contrast, Tikal and most of the largest Classic Maya centers were much more highly dispersed, with fewer wide roads. The roads that were built tend to run to core palaces and associated temples at the central cores of these sites. Open spaces for massive aggregations were rare or absent, and most central plazas had restricted access.⁵⁴

50 Beeman 1993.

51 Tambiah 1985, 136.

52 On this topic, see also the contributions by Frangipane and Porter, this volume.

53 Cowgill 2015; Feinman 2001; Nichols 2016.

54 Andrews 1975; Blanton et al. 1993; Jackson 2013; Smith 2017, 155–56.

Table 1.3. Axes of collectivity for premodern complex societies.

More collective	Less collective
Internal revenues: regularized taxation, focus on staple finance and regional goods	External revenues: long-distance trade, importance of portable wealth, spoils of war, control of spot resources
More communally owned or managed land	Less communally owned or managed land
Fewer disparities of wealth in life and death	Greater disparities of wealth in life and death
Greater potential for shared power	Greater potential for individualized power
Political ideology emphasizes abstract principles of offices and strength of the polity, cosmology, and fertility	Political ideology emphasizes lineal descent systems for succession and legitimation, divine kingship, and royal patron deities
Not centered on palaces	Centrality of palaces
Monumental architecture fosters access (e.g., open plazas, wide accessways, community temples)	Monumental architecture fosters exclusivity (e.g., elite tombs and memorials, dynastic temples)
Greater expenditures on public goods	Smaller expenditures on public goods

At the heart of Classic Maya cities were elaborate palaces and exclusive temples. The latter buildings were characterized by elevated spaces that were small and restrictively accessed by steep stairways. Elaborate palaces, sometimes built with more than one story, were centers for courtly life.⁵⁵ The concentrated power and economic bounty of Classic Maya lords were associated with little formal bureaucratic development. The ties between kings and regents were personalized, often familial.⁵⁶ Palaces served as transactional hubs with secondary elite, such as scribes, and for attached specialists who produced for elite adornment and exchange spheres.⁵⁷

Although the material correlates of public goods and services distribution are not easy to assess archaeologically, the absence of wide thoroughfares, large open plazas, overarching road networks, and massive infrastructural investments all accord with relatively low public-goods expenditures. Likewise, at Classic-period Maya cities, ritual space in temples and ball courts was limited and restricted. Thus there is little indication that the distribution of public goods and services was extensive at central Classic Maya settlements.⁵⁸ The affiliation of commoners was reflective of ruler success in war, ritual, and other forms of social interaction.⁵⁹ The production, exchange, and consumption of prestige-related

⁵⁵ Inomata 2006a, 2006b; Jackson 2013.

⁵⁶ Tokovinine 2015.

⁵⁷ Halperin and Foias 2010; McAnany 2008; Schortman and Ashmore 2012.

⁵⁸ Dennehy, Stanley, and Smith 2016, 153.

⁵⁹ Fitzsimmons 2015.

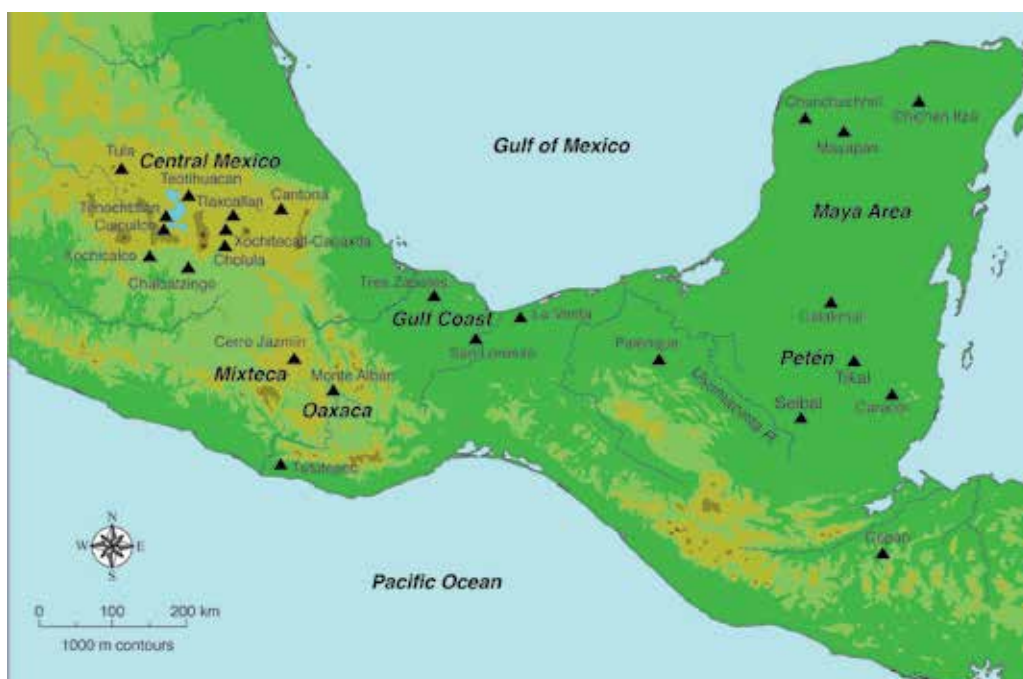


Figure 1.10. Map of Mesoamerica showing places mentioned in the text. Map by Linda Nicholas.

adornments and other goods were central features of courtly life. Maya subalterns were mobile,⁶⁰ perhaps prone to “voting with their feet,” which may have contributed to the cycling of power and population at competing Classic Maya polities.⁶¹

Classic Maya political organization generally was characterized by consolidated power in the hands of divine kings,⁶² economic inequality, transactional governance, lineal descent, status display, and limited public-goods expenditures. Royal performance and spectacle were critical activities and means through which kings garnered support and legitimated their positions.⁶³ In certain venues the pageantry was geared to fellow elites; in others it was directed more broadly.⁶⁴ In general, and aligned with theoretical expectations, most Maya polities were fiscally underpinned by external resources, such as the palatial production of specialized craft goods,⁶⁵ cacao estates,⁶⁶ the monopolized exploitation of riverine exchange corridors,⁶⁷ and the spoils of military action and associated tribute.⁶⁸ Although farming was key for subsistence in much of the region, there is little indication

60 Golden and Scherer 2013; Inomata 2004.

61 Carter 2016; Martin and Grube 2008.

62 Freidel 2008.

63 Inomata 2006a, 2006b; O’Neil 2011.

64 Inomata 2006a, 2006b.

65 Halperin and Foias 2010.

66 Garrison, Houston, and Firpi 2019; Webster and Murtha 2015, 229.

67 Demarest et al. 2014; Feinman 2017; Tokovinine and Beliaev 2013.

68 McAnany 2013.

for either overarching political control of basic agrarian production⁶⁹ or heavy reliance on exactions from dispersed farmers to fund governance. Across the Classic Maya region, large-scale agricultural intensification (including terracing and raised fields) is most evidenced in northern Belize.⁷⁰ In this part of the Maya realm, the agrarian production of subsistence crops likely led to larger surpluses that had a greater role in supporting governance. Significantly, the largest Classic-period center in this sector (Caracol) has fewer depictions of aggrandizing lords, lower degrees of economic inequality, and less ostentatious tomb contexts, and it was less stratified and politically authoritarian compared to elsewhere in the Classic Maya world.⁷¹

Teotihuacan at its apogee was larger, more densely inhabited, and had much greater architectural monumentality than any Classic Maya city. Yet despite these significant scalar distinctions, there is a growing consensus that governance at Teotihuacan was more collective, with lesser degrees of concentration in both power and wealth than evidenced at Classic Maya cities.⁷² Governance at ancient Teotihuacan simply does not conform to the long-held default presumption that rulership in preindustrial societies was necessarily individualized and autocratic, with widely encompassing and highly concentrated top-down control.⁷³

In stark contrast to Classic Maya cities, archaeologists cannot agree on whether or where there is a paramount ruler's palace at Teotihuacan.⁷⁴ Likewise, royal burials are absent from the site,⁷⁵ even though investigators have tunneled under three major pyramids looking for elusive majestic tombs. Instead of kingly graves, diverse human sacrificial (and other) offerings were recovered. Across Teotihuacan, grave accompaniments and exotic goods were much more evenly distributed than at the Classic Maya centers.⁷⁶ Unlike the Classic Maya, no Teotihuacanos were buried in elaborate tombs beneath great temple platforms.

The great majority of Teotihuacan residents lived in multiroom, multihousehold apartment compounds that had internal ritual spaces and shared a basic rectangular configuration. These compounds were internally variable, so that some sets of rooms were larger and more elaborate than others within the same structure. Some compounds were greater in size and more elaborately adorned than others, though the extent of variation was not extreme.⁷⁷ Overall, most households at Teotihuacan had relatively spacious dwellings in which to reside compared to households in other prehispanic Mesoamerican communities.

69 Baker 1998; Wyatt 2014.

70 Chase and Chase 1998; Dunning and Beach 2010; Luzzadder-Beach, Beach, and Dunning 2012.

71 Chase and Chase 2009; Chase and Chase 2017.

72 Blanton et al. 1996; Cowgill 2015; Feinman 2001; Feinman and Carballo 2018; Froese, Gershenson, and Manzanilla 2014; Froese and Manzanilla 2018; Manzanilla 2015; Nichols 2016.

73 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 8–11.

74 Feinman 2012b, 730.

75 Cowgill 2008, 2015; Nichols 2016.

76 Feinman 2001; Sempowski 1992; Smith et al. 2014.

77 Manzanilla 2017; Millon 1976; Smith et al. 2014.

At Teotihuacan, writing was known, and artistic representations, including polychrome murals, were amply displayed,⁷⁸ yet individual rulers were rarely, if ever, depicted or named at the site.⁷⁹ There are no carved-stone depictions that glorify and legitimize the succession of specific rulers, as there are for the Classic Maya; rather, representations of finely attired personages at Teotihuacan often situate them in processions of multiple individuals, and often these figures are masked. Lengthy texts that recount the military/leadership successes and lifecycle events of specific, powerful people do not exist at Teotihuacan. At the Central Mexican metropolis, the artistic corpus is focused on unnamed officeholders performing ritual roles rather than on individualized dynasts and their networks of ties. The central figures in these representations of ritual scenes are portrayed in service to other community members without asserting or aggrandizing their individuality or personal prestige.⁸⁰

Governance was a critical aspect of life at multiethnic Teotihuacan.⁸¹ Unusual for a prehispanic Mesoamerican city, the grid plan that orients major public buildings at the center of the site continues to define space through the urban center's peripheries. Both the layout of the city and the broadly shared configuration of the site's apartment compounds imply degrees of coordination fostered by communication mechanisms that harmonized action across numerous residential units. The modularized spatial layout of Teotihuacan—with households within apartment compounds, compounds making up spatially defined neighborhoods, and neighborhoods grouped into four quarters that together define the city⁸²—signals strong corporate coda and scaled-up means of linking diverse households across urban space through communally enacted rituals that inflected overarching cosmic ideologies.⁸³ Household ritual features and implements throughout the city share key symbolic elements.⁸⁴

Teotihuacan, with large, central spaces and plazas that allowed for large-scale assemblies, also had a ground plan that permitted rituals undertaken by representative agents at the site core to be followed, copied, and synchronized at dispersed locales across the site.⁸⁵ Processions are another practice that tied overarching beliefs to shared, bottom-up ritual participation.⁸⁶ The city's numerous public buildings and dispersed plazas likely were settings for the institutional communications and negotiations that enabled the implementation of these communal practices. The tracking of annual calendric cycles was more open and accessible at Teotihuacan⁸⁷ than for the Classic Maya, who employed the intricate, knowledge-laden Long Count, undoubtedly understood by only a limited few at the top of

78 Taube 2000.

79 Feinman 2012b, 731.

80 Froese and Manzanilla 2018, 871.

81 Manzanilla 2015.

82 Manzanilla 2009, 2012, 2015, 2017.

83 Blanton and Fargher 2012; Feinman and Nicholas 2012; Pasztory 1997.

84 Filini 2015; Froese and Manzanilla 2018; Manzanilla 1996.

85 Froese and Manzanilla 2018; Murakami 2014; Sanders and Evans 2006.

86 Evans 2016; Millon 1973.

87 Aveni 2010; Feinman and Nicholas 2020; Šprajc 2018.

the social hierarchy.⁸⁸ Consequently, ritual and exchange events could be synchronized in a manner at Teotihuacan that would have been possible only if directed from the top down at Classic Maya cities.

Teotihuacan was a planned city, built on a grid, in which shared construction canons were implemented across the urban landscape, sometimes in rapid episodes of monumental building.⁸⁹ The monumentality of the urban center and the array of grand-scale rituals, processions, and sacrificial practices⁹⁰ all imply high degrees of coordination and internal communication, especially in a context in which power and rulership were distributed/decentralized and the resident populace diverse. Governance roles, including priests, architects, construction forepersons, and event planners, are all evidenced or implied.⁹¹ The most common human representations in Teotihuacan mural art are people engaged in making offerings or distributing food and water.⁹² Both the provision of public goods and services and the nonpersonalized roles of governance were far more evident at Teotihuacan than at Classic Maya cities.

Internal resources seemingly were critical for financing governance at Teotihuacan. Sources included agrarian production, widespread nonelite craft production, and perhaps exactions from exchange activities. Although both local and long-distance trade were important at Teotihuacan, they do not seem to have been monopolized at the top; rather, both Teotihuacanos and the inhabitants of “foreign” neighborhoods at the metropolis were heavily involved in exchange and the procurement of exotics.⁹³ Likewise, the production and distribution of the city’s key export, obsidian, appears to have been largely decentralized.⁹⁴

Based on what we presently know, not only was governance at Teotihuacan markedly more collective than at Classic Maya cities, but also fiscal financing at the Central Mexican city was more reliant on internal resources compared to Classic-period Petén centers. At the latter, the monopolization of trade links through which precious goods were transferred may have fostered and financed more exclusionary holds on power and been associated with greater degrees of inequality and individualized status display. Whereas the well-dressed figures in Teotihuacan art were often both depersonalized (masked) and depicted in similar attire to others in the scene, Maya lords were generally named and represented in extravagant, individualized portrayals⁹⁵ showing them bedecked in elaborate costumes that could both affirm status and legitimate a network of personalized connections.⁹⁶ It has been argued⁹⁷ that the carved monuments held the essence of those depicted,

88 Rice 2008.

89 Murakami 2016.

90 Robb 2017b.

91 Cowgill 2015.

92 Robb 2017a.

93 Gómez Chávez 2017; Manzanilla et al. 2017.

94 Carballo 2013; Golitko and Feinman 2015.

95 For example, Houston and Stuart 1998.

96 Kovacevich 2014.

97 Houston and Stuart 1996, 1998.

often powerful royal figures. As the embodiments of divine individuals, these stelae and other representations became foci for veneration or supplication.⁹⁸ The absence of such personalized portraiture at Teotihuacan indicates that the relationship between ritual and power was not comparable there.

For prehispanic Mesoamerica more holistically, there are parallels along the same axis of variability⁹⁹ at least for a sample of twenty-six central places (fig. 1.10), which we ranked on a nominal scale for the degree of governance collectivity. Following closely the descriptions of findings at the sites by their investigators, we examined each central place along three dimensions (political economy, governance, architecture) that grouped the variables outlined above (tables 1.3 and 1.4). For each dimension, we employed a simple nominal scale from 0 to 1 (1 if more collective, 0 if less collective). If the findings were equivocal, we scored at 0.5. For example, concerning architecture, if there was ample public space, a communication grid, and no indication of elaborate palaces, the score would be 1. If there was minimal public space and elaborate palaces, the score would be 0. To derive a score for degree of collectivity, we added the three dimensions/variables, so that each city ranges from a score of 0 to 3. What we found was that the sums clustered between 0 and 0.5 and between 2.5 and 3.0, indicating that the expected characteristics of governance do tend to co-occur (table 1.5).

Table 1.4. Axes of collectivity coded for Mesoamerican cases.

Variable	1—More collective	0—Less collective
Political economy	Internal financing with greater focus on staple goods and market exchange; more muted socioeconomic differentiation	External financing with greater focus on prestige goods derived from long-distance exchange or control of spot resources; palace-centric production; more heightened socioeconomic differentiation
Governance	“Faceless” rulership; low mortuary differentiation; secular and bureaucratized political offices	Highly conspicuous rulers in burials and iconography; individualized rulers; divine kingship
Architecture	Emphasis on communal architecture over palaces, including temples, plazas, accessways; art emphasizing public goods	Emphasis on palaces so their elaboration and centrality matches or exceeds more communal architecture; art emphasizing exclusive access

⁹⁸ Feinman and Carballo 2022; Houston and Stuart 1996, 1998.

⁹⁹ Feinman 2018; Feinman and Carballo 2018.

Table 1.5. Mesoamerican cities and urban centers used in collectivity analysis.

Site	Period	Apogee	Maximum population	Political economy	Leaders	Architecture	Collectivity score
Cacaxtla	Epi/Late Classic	250	15,000	0.5	0.5	0	1
Calakmul	Epi/Late Classic	400	50,000	0	0	0.5	0.5
Cantona	Classic-Epiclassic	1050	60,000	1	1	0.5	2.5
Caracol	Epi/Late Classic	250	100,000	0.5	0.5	1	2
Cerro Jazmín	Postclassic	400	32,000	0	0	0.5	0.5
Chalcatzingo	Preclassic	500	1,000	0.5	0.5	1	2
Chichén Itzá	Postclassic	350	24,500	0.5	0.5	1	2
Cholula	Classic-Epiclassic	750	—	1	1	1	3
Chunchuchmil	Classic	300	38,500	0.5	1	1	2.5
Copán	Epi/Late Classic	250	10,000	0	0	0	0
Cuicuilco	Preclassic	700	20,000	1	1	1	3
La Venta	Preclassic	300	3,000	0	0	0	0
Mayapan	Postclassic	300	17,500	0.5	1	1	2.5
Monte Albán	Classic	1300	25,000	1	0.5	1	2.5
Palenque	Epi/Late Classic	300	7,500	0	0	0	0
San Lorenzo	Preclassic	300	10,400	0	0	0	0
Seibal	Epi/Late Classic	200	7,500	0	0	0	0
Tenochtitlán	Postclassic	—	212,500	1	0.5	0.5	2
Teotihuacan	Classic	600	100,000	1	1	1	3
Tikal	Epi/Late Classic	400	55,000	0	0	0.5	0.5
Tlaxcallan	Postclassic	—	35,000	1	1	1	3
Tres Zapotes	Preclassic	600	7,000	1	1	0.5	2
Tula	Postclassic	300	50,000	1	1	0.5	2.5
Tututepec	Postclassic	—	16,000	0.5	0	0	0.5
Xochicalco	Epi/Late Classic	250	12,000	1	0.5	1	2.5
Xochitecatl	Preclassic	850	17,500	1	1	1	3

Sources: Feinman and Carballo 2018, 2022; Feinman et al. 2023.

To recapitulate these findings, we see both in the pair-wise comparison of Teotihuacan and the Classic Maya and also for the broader sample that central places in prehispanic Mesoamerica were not all aristocratically governed; rather, they varied along the axis of collective–autocratic in the manner also found in the premodern historical sample.¹⁰⁰ Importantly, variation along this axis was neither a direct product of temporal or spatial variation nor culturally bound, as the nature of governance shifted over time in both the Maya region and Oaxaca. The nature of public ritual, ceremony, and spectacle also appears to have varied across this sample of central places. In the more collectively governed cases, we find broad public spaces where participatory rituals could be and likely were undertaken, whereas in the autocratic cases (Classic Maya centers, Gulf Coast Olmec centers, and Postclassic Mixtec) we see monuments and (in some cases) textual records that glorified rulers and their kin, legitimating their status.¹⁰¹

SYNTHETIC THOUGHTS

The axis of variability in prehispanic Mesoamerican governance presented here broadly dovetails with a wide range of cases, previously enumerated, as well as the premodern historical sample.¹⁰² There also are parallels with the patterns of political organizational variation that we see across the globe today. These correspondences across time and space, along with a suite of theoretical mechanisms that provide a basis to account for the observed patterns, at a minimum raise questions concerning progressivist and Eurocentric notions of political economic change that have permeated Western social science for more than a century and a half. There is no longer any basis to believe that collective forms of governance or social contracts involving leaders and followers are strictly modern phenomena.

As outlined by Ganesh Sitarman,¹⁰³ Aristotle recognized that “the constitution . . . is a community [and] the community is the constitution.” Throughout history and looking beyond the Euro-American past, we can now see that numerous episodes have occurred in which people forged cooperative relations and affiliations, social contracts, and constitutions (some written, most not) that to differing extents sublimated selfishness and enhanced public welfare to varying degrees. These episodes were not merely the consequence of ruler benevolence but also reflect a specific array of structural conditions and socioeconomic mechanisms. The deep past was not populated purely by despots.

No doubt the present is distinguished from the past in many ways—technologically, demographically, and in terms of transport efficiency and information processing, to name a few. But when it comes to the bases behind interpersonal relations, the socioeconomic mechanisms that underpin human affiliations, and the fundamental repertoire of tactics that bond leaders with followers, the basic “blueprints” are seemingly not completely distinct. When it comes to the bases of political engagement, as Timothy Snyder¹⁰⁴ recently reminded us, “history does not repeat, but it does instruct.” Our Mesoamerican findings

100 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 2016.

101 For example, Boone 2000; Fargher, Heredia Espinoza, and Blanton 2011.

102 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 2016.

103 Sitarman 2017, 31.

104 Snyder 2017, 9.

support Blanton and Fargher's¹⁰⁵ identification of "broadly comparable outcomes of human choice in the construction of systems of government across environments, technologies, cultures, civilizations, and time periods."

The years 2020 and early 2021 were without question two of the most calamitous and deadly in the history of the United States. And yet, whether the issue was the celebration of national independence,¹⁰⁶ the challenges of a viral plague,¹⁰⁷ or presidential transition, Mr. Trump rhetorically turned events into personalized displays.¹⁰⁸ This style of leadership and governance,¹⁰⁹ certainly in a relative sense, parallels in a suite of ways the modes of governance found for the less-collective polities that Blanton and Fargher¹¹⁰ analyzed and what we just described for prehispanic Mesoamerica.

This observation brings us to the recognition that the same nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euro-Americans who asserted that the foundations of their newly minted democratic arrangements were unique and more rational compared to whatever existed before, were also just the same people who erected a stark wall between humans in the past and their present.¹¹¹ "What seemed like Enlightenment to the philosophers of the eighteenth century . . . turned out to be the parochial self-consciousness of European expansion."¹¹² Before that time, the historical past was generally thought to be much like the present.¹¹³ Perhaps it is well beyond time to knock down that conceptual wall and recognize that history is not past, that time's arrow is not an inevitable path to an enlightened and newly rational world, and that the original meaning of democracy is the power and capacity to do things, for which humans have a long history.¹¹⁴ Good governance, whether ancient or modern, requires participation and collective action. Personalized power and spectacles, with the spotlight on power, generally act in counterweight.

105 Blanton and Fargher 2008, 264.

106 Robinson 2019.

107 Woodward 2020.

108 Senior 2020a, 2020b; Tanquary 2022.

109 Frantz et al. 2020; Kendzior 2016a.

110 Blanton and Fargher 2008.

111 Lowenthal 2015.

112 Sahlins 1999, ii; see also Conrad 2012.

113 Lowenthal 2015, 4.

114 Ober 2008.

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PART I

MAKING SPACE

2

Spatial Performances of Identity and Belonging in the Walled Cities of the Indian Subcontinent: Nested Spaces and Public Places

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ENTERING THE REALM of archaeological fieldwork in India is an intensely scalar experience: one comes into the country through one of the four great metropoleis (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai), then passes through a regional capital city to settle in a village house in the countryside. Stark differences are manifested in every aspect of space, from the sizes of buildings to the width of passageways to the frequency of markets and the availability of consumer goods. Although each size of settlement is composed of the same nationals who speak the same language(s), the settings and spatial organization in each place create an entirely different atmosphere for even the most basic daily actions by both visitors and inhabitants. Nor is the transition carried out only by a few individuals on a one-way migration; some transfers to the nearest city are taken on a near-daily basis by adults and young people going to work and school, while other trips are episodic and focused on planned special occasions such as marriages and the unplanned urgencies of medical care.

In every way, a metropolis like Delhi and capital cities such as Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, and Lucknow are places for a much greater range of actions and opportunities than what is available in villages. But *how* does the difference of interaction come into being, and how do the physical configurations of space reinforce and make possible the variety of activities in which people engage? More importantly, can we see similar physical configurations of change articulated in ancient cities, towns, and villages through archaeological evidence? This chapter highlights some of the physical configurations of space that create different phenomenological experiences of urban life and that affected how immigrants to the city would have contended with the changes they saw, experienced, and embodied. Those experiences were not only internalized through physical actions but also manifested in performances visible to others.

Through the rubric of “pomp and circumstance,” we can assess how people performed their daily routines within the framing devices of the physical landscape and within a political context. Hilary Janks¹ has noted that there are two types of politics: politics with a capital *P* signifies large-scale government, and politics with a lowercase *p* encompasses “the politics of everyday life.” Urban landscapes are integrated with both types of politics.

1 Janks 2010; 2012, 151.

There are hierarchies essential to the organization and execution of sustained tasks, in which leaders' specific desires and actions are rendered into physical form when they are able to exhort, coerce, or reward others to carry out the construction and maintenance of city walls, urban monuments, and infrastructure. The process of convincing people to make such visions a reality is encompassed by the works of politics with a capital *P*, in which persuasion and power result in new built environments that remind people who is in charge. But cities also contain numerous, overlapping opportunities for politics with a small *p* within neighborhoods, workplaces, places of worship, and social groups as people engage in new patterns related to every kind of activity, from routine acts of provisioning and self-care to once-in-a-lifetime transitional ceremonies. The activities associated with both big-*P* and little-*p* politics are visible to strangers, thus creating opportunities for self-definition through performance in a public sphere.

In the creation of social and political signaling, what makes a city different from a village, and what are the most distinct components of the transition? One of the most important economic markers of the urban transition is that urban dwellers consume greater varieties of foods and goods; among other things, they do not keep an entire year's harvest within their homes as they would in village settings. People also engage in more movement as they traverse the city for work, entertainment, education, religious activities, medical care, and companionship that in a village might be available within the immediate vicinity but in a city are distributed along pathways of longer distance. But the greatest emotional transition to cities involves an adjustment to the pressing confines of architecture, the connectivities of infrastructure, and the realities of constant interactions with strangers.² In a village atmosphere, there can be crowding within and among households, but the sense of crowding lasts only for 100 m or so, and then one exits the built-up area to the surrounding fields and forests. In a city, nature is subsumed; one might be able to see straight overhead, but the horizons are blocked. Living in a city requires an acquiescence to the anthropogenic landscape of construction that channels movement from crowded alleyways and narrow streets to open spaces of wider streets, public plazas, and market grounds.

Urban actions are encoded into the material world in ways we can evaluate archaeologically. From the time of the first cities, urban dwellers created and encountered new forms of architecture, in which verticality and compressed horizontal spacing prompted the development of distinctive collective patterns of movement.³ These new urban architectures included distinctive civic and administrative buildings as well as innovations in ordinary housing made possible by the advent of new construction techniques and materials (and made necessary by factors of crowding and shared infrastructure that had to be negotiated among households).⁴ Urban dwellers made use of an increased variety of portable goods in ways that enabled them to identify themselves as city-dwellers while visually demonstrating both their actual place in the social hierarchy and the social standing to which they aspired.

2 Smith 2019a.

3 Compare Branting 2004.

4 See, for example, Lechtman and Hobbs 1986; Lu 1995.

As a result of the human built environment that constrains the capacity to see and experience the totality of the natural world, cities present for their inhabitants and visitors what we can call “nested spatiality” in the form of visually bounded horizontal and vertical spaces.

The concept of nested spatiality, used elsewhere in the social sciences,⁵ is particularly applicable to the analyses of physical spaces in urban environments. Nested spatiality is akin to the principle of Russian dolls,⁶ in which “spaces and places are produced and contested within a multiplicity of vertically nested scales.”⁷ In this chapter, I use the concept of “nested spaces” as a series of encircling or enveloping environments in which the conditions of each sequential envelope are independent from but bounded by the conditions expressed in the proximate entities. In a city this concept is expressed through the physical containers of the dwelling, the neighborhood, and the encircling perimeter of the urban sphere (whether formalized through a wall or demarcated through some other visual means such as a density of housing or an accumulation of discards).

MIGRATION AND IDENTITY: THE NEED TO PERFORM

The transition from rurality to the urban sphere involves not only philosophical elements of identity making and individual initiative but also the most basic aspects of sociability and movement. In cities, there is much less personal space between and among people, whether they are pedestrians on the street or interlocutors in a bazaar. There are accelerations of familiarity in interpersonal contact and accelerations of the physics of motion as people move faster in their pace of walking. The merest actions mark the urbanite in the ebb and flow of city life, actions in which subtle movements of the body indicate the practiced familiarity with routines that newcomers may initially perform awkwardly, such as eating a meal from a takeaway food vendor or walking down a busy street. Participation in the pomp and circumstance of urbanism takes place not merely in the actions of special-occasion events organized by capital-*P* political agents but is also enacted every day through the use of a variety of urban spaces (such as the competent use of infrastructure) and material culture (clothing, ornamentation, and hairstyles) as a matter of small-*p* political negotiation.

Cultural anthropologists studying the patterns and adjustments of contemporary urban migrations have provided numerous insights on the ways in which individual migrants learn new patterns of social and physical behavior through both routine and special-purpose tasks. As part of moving into cities, new urban residents seek out particular forms of material culture for outward display as well as for their homes.⁸ They become habituated to new practices of provisioning through the use of money and other transactional mechanisms to acquire food and other basic items.⁹ They selectively engage with the populations around them, often preferentially seeking out immigrant enclaves in which they can learn

5 For example, “spatially nested ecosystems,” Larsen 2005, 4.

6 A phrase Larsen borrows from Sachs 1992, 32.

7 Larsen 2005, 6.

8 For example, Abu-Lughod 1969; Ahn et al. 2012; Sandikci, Ekici, and Tari 2006.

9 Penvenne 1997.

about job opportunities, housing accommodations, and companionship through familiar languages and cultural idioms.¹⁰

The archaeological investigation of everyday experiences is a growing field of study that has added much to our perceptions of ancient cities through the emphasis of the quotidian formation of social and economic spaces. Mesopotamian scholars have been at the forefront of this research because of the rich textual and archaeological evidence that identifies routine practices against the background of social expectations. Heather D. Baker, in her evaluation of Babylonian cities, has noted that the understandings of architecture and “power” emanate as much from the nonmonumental zones of a site as from areas with towering edifices.¹¹ Streets had altars, shrines, and religious pedestals, all of which could be places of individual and neighborhood initiative in construction and use.¹² Even the exteriors of houses were demonstrations of belonging and cultural *savoir faire* through the presentation of plain party walls through which homeowners demurred to divulge their family circumstances to casual passersby.¹³

Behaviors were tailored to the nested spaces of Mesopotamian urban centers, particularly with regard to religion. Baker notes that access to and engagement with civic monumental religious structures were apparently restricted to temple priests and other cultic personnel, with smaller shrines and streetside altars being places of greater access and general use.¹⁴ Ostensibly public spaces were described in different ways according to a hierarchical rubric of access, with large thoroughfares being called “broad street, way of the gods and the king” and smaller ones described as “narrow street, way of the people.”¹⁵ Even at the household level there was variability in religious practice, a factor of idiosyncratic behavior that can be envisioned through the analogy of differentials in household worship style elsewhere in space and time.¹⁶

Secular jurisdictions can divide people into different realms of performance even within a single component of nested space, as revealed in studies of modern urban placemaking. Janet Abu-Lughod’s examination of gendered behaviors by in-country migrants in Cairo showed that coming to the city resulted in greater freedom and variety of public spaces for men, while the spaces available to women diminished: whereas in their villages women could do their household washing according to their own perceptions of need, in the city they found themselves having to negotiate a tap that was “guarded” by a man, thus prompting them to carry water and do laundry at home rather than in the outdoor space of the water source.¹⁷ Ethnographic work done by Sandikci, Ekici, and Tari provides a vignette of female actions that vary depending on the part of the city the woman is using: household and neighborhood behaviors related to clothing and makeup are overturned

10 Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002.

11 For example, Baker 2011.

12 Baker 2011, 547.

13 Baker 2011, 541.

14 Baker 2011; see also Frangipane, this volume.

15 Baker 2011, 537.

16 For example, Clayton 2011 on ancient Teotihuacan; Nelson 2008 on contemporary Japan; Logan 1988 on Gujarati communities in the United Kingdom.

17 Abu-Lughod 1969, 385.

when a woman goes into the greater city and adopts “urban ways” even if for only an afternoon.¹⁸ Efforts at microscale placemaking are hinted at in ancient times as well—in Pompeii, householders had a certain jurisdiction and power at home that they might not have enjoyed elsewhere; Hales paints a picture of the *paterfamilias* performing his importance in the family realm, behind closed doors, in ways that might greatly vary from his standing in the community.¹⁹

In the nested spaces of urban life, performances of belonging and of demonstrating identity were not always carried out in accordance with the prescriptions of authority. One must also allow for the performance of contrary and resistant identities that nonetheless follow preexisting rules of behavior that emanate from the incremental and even anonymous acts of others. Locales of resistance can be embodied by individuals through acts of clothing, hairstyles, and body modifications such as piercings and tattoos as conscious demonstrations of (subaltern) status that are intentionally maintained even when the mainstream of society does not favor such presentations in the discourses of education, achievement, and power. Manifestations of resistance can be expressed through dwellings that violate implicit or explicit codes of behavior with regard to trash, vegetation, or maintenance.²⁰ People also express resistance and subaltern identity in public spaces through sound and music,²¹ odor,²² the use of athletic equipment,²³ and graffiti to make claims on public spaces. Deviant behavior is just as patterned as condoned performances, with resistance framed by the same physical constructs: riots and protest marches take over the broadest avenues and largest public squares in the same way that celebratory parades do, thus appropriating the “way of the gods and the king” to altogether different purposes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOUTH ASIAN URBANISM

In the Early Historic period of South Asia, the development of urbanism after a hiatus of more than 1,000 years after the collapse of the Bronze Age Indus civilization resulted in the creation of new physical spaces that had to be individually and collectively negotiated. The web of urban networks in South Asia, starting in the Initial Urban Period (eighth to fourth century BCE) and continuing into the Early Historic period (third century BCE to fourth century CE), linked approximately 100 centers of urban size in the subcontinent.²⁴ Cities ranged from 60 to more than 250 ha in size; some urban settlements, primarily in the northern subcontinent, were surrounded by monumental earthen and/or brick ramparts that encircled part of but not necessarily all the urban population. Other settlements of this era appear not to have had any formal boundaries, but their concentrations of structures and people would have marked the boundary of entrance into an urbanized locale within

18 Sandikci, Ekici, and Tari 2006, 432.

19 Hales 2003, 133–34.

20 Compare Hodder 1982, 60–65.

21 Streicker 1997.

22 Tan 2013.

23 Genova 2016; Nolan 2003.

24 Smith 2006; Smith and Mohanty 2016; Singh 2008.

a landscape where cities were interdigitated with rural villages, fields, and production centers for stoneworking, metallurgy, and pottery production.

The development of urbanism in the Indian subcontinent emanated from a landscape of dispersed Neolithic villages in the range of 1–3 ha in size. In eastern India, a number of such settlements have recently been investigated and show a similar range of architecture, foodways, and material culture.²⁵ Our excavations at the settlement of Ostapur provide a window onto the soberingly straightforward life of Neolithic subsistence farmers. The 2.1 ha site of Ostapur is located in a fertile agricultural plain 13 km south of the Mahanadi River. Dated to about 1300–1000 BCE, the site has yielded copious evidence for the consumption of rice and pulses along with the use of domesticated and wild animals.²⁶ Excavations reveal that the site was the locus of repeated episodic habitation by people using organic architecture, such as bamboo and wattle-and-daub structures, with the only permanent architectural investments being floors made of laterite gravel and clay. (Such floors are the only architectural investments in most of the region's other Neolithic sites as well.) Material culture is similarly quite sparse: other than several stone celt fragments, only a single stone bead was found amid the abundant ceramics that confirm the presence of extensive and long-lived occupation at the site.

The relatively parsimonious material assemblage of Ostapur is brought into sharp contrast by the diversity and abundance of material objects typically found in South Asian cities of the subsequent era. By the fifth century BCE, cities were well established as places occupied by tens of thousands of inhabitants and marked by a diversity of consumer goods, monumental architecture, and densely packed housing. Urban centers were not the only places in which people would have experienced the constraints (and opportunities) of interactions with strangers—textual documents discuss the existence also of army camps associated with the occasional bout of territorial warfare, and both texts and architectural remains testify to the existence of numerous pilgrimage locations linked to the nascent traditions of Buddhism, Jainism, and Ajivikism.²⁷ As seen in other ancient cases of urban formation through the amalgamation of immigrants,²⁸ the creation of new realms of interaction brought excitement and opportunity but also the potential for anxiety, missteps, and alienation. Ancient cities generally functioned as demographic sinks,²⁹ and the creation and maintenance of cities always came with a constant influx of new people. Individuals entering cities had to negotiate spaces and change their behavior to accommodate urban ways of doing things, even as those ways were themselves constantly changing.³⁰

25 These settlements include Bharatihuda and Suabarei, excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India; Deltihuda, excavated by Ravenshaw University (Acharya et al. 2017); Gopalpur (Kar, Basa, and Joglekar 1998; Kingwell-Banham et al. 2018); Golbai Sasan (Mohanty et al. 2012–13); and Harirajpur (excavated by a joint Deccan College–Utkal University team).

26 ¹⁴C dates provided courtesy of Dr. Eleanor Kingwell-Banham, archaeobotanist at University College, London.

27 Smith 2019b.

28 For example, Attarian 2003 for the north coast of Peru; Nichols, Spence, and Borland 1991 for Teotihuacan; Prowse et al. 2007 for ancient Rome.

29 See Scheidel 2009; Storey 1992, 262.

30 Compare Oejo 2018.

INVESTIGATIONS AT SISUPALGARH

Our excavations at the urban center of Sisupalgarh, 38 km east of Ostapur and the nearest urban center, were focused on the lives of ordinary inhabitants at one of India's premier ancient cities. Its documented occupational sequence begins in the late eighth century BCE,³¹ but we have a limited number of dates from the deepest soundings, and it is reasonable to assume that the abandonment of Neolithic settlements was linked to the beginnings of concentrated urban settlements. Sisupalgarh is a visually impressive site for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that it is the most regular of all the walled urban settlements in the Indian subcontinent (fig. 2.1). Envisioned and constructed as a perfect square measuring 1.1×1.1 km, the enclosing rampart has two formal gateways on each side.³² The site was first investigated by B. B. Lal in 1948, and its exploration constituted one of the

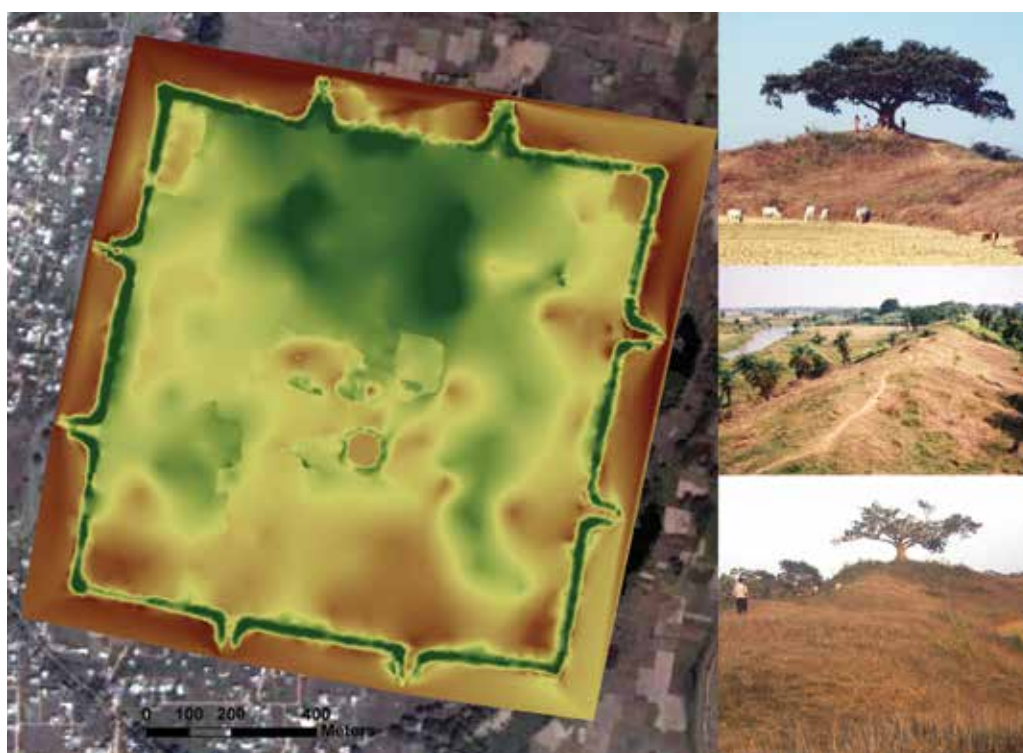


Figure 2.1. Topographic map of the outline of Sisupalgarh ramparts with insets of the rampart: *top*, northeast corner view from the south; *middle*, northern rampart view from the west; *bottom*, northeast corner view from the west.

31 Smith and Mohanty 2016.

32 A nearly similar pattern is seen at Jaugadh, also on the eastern coast of India and 135 km southwest of Sisupalgarh, but the walls are not quite straight; as assessed from a single excavation season by Debala Mitra in 1956–57 (*IAR* 1956–57) and on the basis of subsequent reconnaissance, the settlement of Jaugadh appears to have been relatively sparse and short-lived.

first excavations in independent India.³³ Further investigations were carried out through a systematic survey and collection program, followed by geophysical survey and five seasons of excavation by our collaborative UCLA–Deccan College team.³⁴

Sisupalgarh has distinctive architecture at the civic, neighborhood, and household scale. The civic architecture includes the surrounding rampart itself, which still measures more than 9 m in height but whose uppermost brick-and-stone wall (recovered in the form of a few foundation courses) would have been even more elevated in ancient times. All eight monumental gateways are likewise well preserved. The one gateway that has been fully excavated (by Lal in 1948) conveys the grandeur of a 100 m long passageway in which those entering would have been well aware of the phenomenon of being squeezed between the narrow stone walls of the entrance (fig. 2.2). Excavations of a portion of a second gateway by our team in 2009 confirmed that the structure itself was constantly modified through enlarging both the length and width of the gateway.³⁵ Another impressive element of civic architecture is the set of monumental pillars near the central portion of the site, today witnessed as a series of fourteen monoliths but which archaeology has revealed to



Figure 2.2. Foundations of one of Sisupalgarh's eight formal gateways, excavated by Lal in 1948 and subsequently partly reconstructed; view toward the west. Photo taken in 2006. The scale is 1 m.

³³ Lal 1949, 1991.

³⁴ Mohanty and Smith 2008; Mohanty, Smith, and Thakuria 2013; Smith 2005.

³⁵ Mohanty, Smith, and Thakuria 2013.

have been much more numerous in the past (our excavations brought to light the remains of eighteen additional pillars, and it is clear that many others were present both in the central pillar area and in the adjacent mounds (figs. 2.3 and 2.4).³⁶

Archaeological evidence and historical texts allow us to evaluate the impact of civic architecture on the actions and imagination of urban dwellers at Sisupalgarh. The fact that the ambitious project of enclosure in the form of the rampart was completed indicates a



Figure 2.3. Group of monumental pillars in the central zone of Sisupalgarh; view toward the west.



Figure 2.4. Area of four monumental pillars in the central portion of the site.

³⁶ Mohanty and Smith 2008.

sustained investment in management as well as in the physical labor of construction. Yet its emplacement would not have occurred without controversy, as excavations have shown that the construction of the rampart and gateways took place after the initial occupation of the site.³⁷ The presence of occupational deposits under the gateways demonstrates that the imposition of the wall resulted in the formal division of the urban social space into “insiders” and “outsiders,” for whom the phenomenological realities of gateway entrances and exits would have emphasized the power of place every time people entered or exited the urban core. Occupational sequences continued on both sides of the rampart, but did the external inhabitants think of themselves negatively, as “disenfranchised,” or positively, as “free”? As Augusta McMahon and James Osborne have commented in their essays in this volume, physical proximity to centers of authority comes with a mix of prestige, obligation, and the potential for oppression.³⁸

The ancient inhabitants of Sisupalgarh demonstrated their awareness of the confining processes of architecture through their knowledgeable use of gateways to gain entrance to the city and profit from or avoid the busiest times of the day. Nor were walls the only civic structures that urban inhabitants learned to negotiate; as we know from contemporary works on infrastructure,³⁹ the availability of both water and drainage are critical parts of urban quotidian viability. At the site of Sisupalgarh, the evidence for civic water management consists of formal, stone-lined reservoirs throughout the site and holding tanks for water gouged into the four internal corners of the rampart. The maintenance of the ramparts and water sources is acknowledged in the first-century BCE words of the ruler Kharavela, who inscribed a nearby religious site with a list of his regnal accomplishments. Although his *res gestae* eventually included military campaigns and the construction of what he called the “Great Victory Palace,” he notes that in the first year of his reign his signal achievements were that he “repaired the gate, rampart and structures of the fort . . . which had been damaged by storm, and caused to be built flight[s] of steps for the cool tanks [reservoirs] and thus pleased all his subjects.”⁴⁰

At Sisupalgarh, the creation of distinct urban infrastructure and both monumental and residential architecture was engaged on the quotidian level by archaeologically traceable behaviors. Our excavations revealed that the structure defined by the monumental pillars at the center of the site has a threshold stone over which people would have passed to reach the inner sanctum; this formal architectural element echoes the presence of vertical markers of passage in the gateway walls of the fortification (fig. 2.5). In the case of both the gateways and the pillar complex, these formal thresholds were different from households, which seem not to have been marked by any particularly distinct form of physical or symbolic barrier at their entrances (fig. 2.6). Traces of actions undertaken in the area of the monumental pillars show differential behavior in other ways as well, as the area has a much smaller repertoire of ceramics compared to the habitation areas of the site. This area contains few fragments of storage jars or cooking pots, and the ceramic debris consists of

37 Lal 1949; Mohanty, Smith, and Thakuria 2013.

38 McMahon, this volume; Osborne, this volume.

39 For example, Anand 2015; Mustafa 2005.

40 Sahu 1984, 334.



Figure 2.5. Threshold stone on the eastern side of the pillar area at Sisupalgarh denoted by the letter A in the center of the photo; note fallen pillars that once would have formed a columned entranceway.

a preponderance of bowls that suggest a zone of limited food handling—likely in the form of prepared food.⁴¹

The pillar area at Sisupalgarh also was characterized by a notable absence of the cheaply made terra-cotta ornaments found so abundantly in the residential areas of the site. When people were in the area of monumental architecture, their activities were curtailed to a circumstance of restraint and a narrowing of the spectrum of consumption to which they were otherwise accustomed—restraint perhaps something like an ascetic religious experience of deprivation that marked a stark contrast to their lives in full consumer bloom just outside the ritual precinct's perimeter in the heart of the city. As Osborne has noted,⁴² refraining from activities is a form of deliberate action in which self-preservation and identity are proclaimed just as thoroughly by what one does *not* do in a public sphere. Learning these practices of consumption and discard would have marked part of the learning experience of migrants into the city, albeit informed by their experiences of religious pilgrimage to the ascetic atmosphere of Buddhist and Jain sites in the surrounding countryside.

41 Our excavations in the pillar area consisted of twenty-two trenches, each up to 5 × 6 m in size in an overall area of 45 × 57 m, hence large enough to demonstrate that the lack of ceramics was area-wide and not an anomaly of one or two excavation locales.

42 Osborne, this volume.



Figure 2.6. Habitation area of Sisupalgarh within the rampart.

Behavioral expectations expressed through discard and augmentation can be tracked through the treatment of the city's ramparts as well. The upper portions of the ramparts had different types of superstructure—in some places stone walls, in some places brick walls, and in some cases simply the repeated augmentation of fill that included copious quantities of bricks and discarded ceramics (fig. 2.7). It seems that once the exterior perimeter's construction had been organized and sanctioned by the central authorities, the upkeep and regular maintenance fell to the adjacent neighborhoods. One can imagine local neighborhood associations' being tasked with, or (in the style of today's central business district concepts) assigning themselves

the task of, maintaining their proximate part of the wall.

As for the streets of the city of Sisupalgarh, they too were places of practiced expectations of behavior. Geophysical survey indicated that the principal streets linking the eight gateways were wide avenues, and excavations revealed there was very little trash in the areas identified as streets.⁴³ These patterns of trash deposition along with the perfectly straight passageways would have enabled an uninterrupted visual corridor from one gateway to the next, an anomaly in the otherwise dense maze of urban houses. Heather Baker reminds us that streets can be used for ritual purposes in which acts of pomp and circumstance are enacted by those qualified to do so but merely witnessed by passersby, who are not otherwise sanctioned to participate.⁴⁴ For urban dwellers, the appropriate actions during the procession of deities and officiants constituted yet another form of urban habituation, and another way in which they could demonstrate their urban competence through engaging in the "right" kinds of gazes, gestures, and selective exercise of silence.

The developments of Sisupalgarh at the household level brought another realm of interactions to the fore. One of the most striking things about the urban environment was the presence of built domestic architecture of a type that had hitherto not been seen in the eastern coastal region: built structures of stone and brick. It is difficult to overstate how odd and distinctive this type of construction would have seemed to both newcomers and

⁴³ Mohanty et al. 2007.

⁴⁴ Baker 2011, 544–46.

residents. Neolithic structures, both coastal and inland, are circular, lack permanent walls, and use no stone; the only lasting elements of dwellings were the ubiquitous floors, found as layer upon layer of clay or pounded gravel. In the city of Sisupalgarh, the construction of architecture not only for the creation of monumental structures but also for ordinary residences would have both enabled and forced people to accept the constraints and opportunities of rectilinearity in their most intimate spaces.

Urban residents subjected their household architecture to repeated iterations of construction, but more because of their desire to change their configurations and living quarters than to replace deteriorated organic elements in the way that rural dwellers

would have been continually obliged to do. Structures were sometimes subdivided by a wall or augmented by another room in a process of constant *ad hoc* modification. Our excavations revealed that much of the domestic architecture at Sisupalgarh, though made of durable materials, was relatively inexpert and of the “do-it-yourself” variety, suggesting that householders made use of materials to craft their dwellings in various combinations: sometimes stone with brick on top, sometimes stone alone as a base for upper courses of pisé. Yet a sense of precision, and the expectations of communal display, were found in the crafting of the structures. When brick fragments were used, the ragged edges were turned inward so that to the outsider the wall appeared to be made of pristine materials even during the process of construction, with the entirety of the brickwork later concealed by a coat of mud plaster.

Between the anonymous crowds of the greater urban realm and the autonomy of the residential unit, urban sites such as Sisupalgarh also had neighborhood-sized spaces with their own set of rules. The presence of neighborhoods as a subset of urban social and physical configurations provides an interesting opportunity to consider their role as a component of nested space intermediate between the household and the city at large. As an intermediate collection of unrelated people, the neighborhood results in a phenomenon of proximity that unwittingly promotes a certain ongoing familiarity, and it was perhaps at the neighborhood level that village experiences most directly translated to the urban sphere in ways that resonate with urban archaeological studies elsewhere. Elizabeth Stone



Figure 2.7. Trench through the northern rampart at Sisupalgarh showing a brick wall as a component of ancient rampart augmentations.

has noted that in Mesopotamia, for example, the neighborhoods in urban areas were the same size as the surrounding rural villages,⁴⁵ leading to the idea that a neighborhood was a village-level interactional unit within the larger urban realm.

If we use the size of the village of Ostapur as the proxy for the size of neighborhoods within the urban walled perimeter, we can estimate the presence of thirty to forty neighborhoods at Sisupalgarh; if we use the divisions created by the principal streets that came in from the eight gateways and formed a hashtag-like shape within the square urban perimeter, we can suggest the presence of nine neighborhoods within the rampart. Regardless of the number of divisions we envision, it is clear that some aspects of sight-lines, infrastructure, and daily routines of food, toileting, and self-care were conditioned by the concept of a neighborhood; urban residents would not have used the city *in toto* but would have made the most intensive use of the areas in and around their dwellings. One additional piece of evidence for a neighborhood level of social interaction is the presence of stone-lined ring wells, which were recovered at a rate far lower than the number of estimated households, suggesting that wells were constructed, maintained, and used at a neighborhood level of intensity.⁴⁶ Compared to food supplies, which could be diffused through a number of strategies that included merchants and vendors, water supply was more of a fixed-point resource, albeit with the potential for neighborhood-level rules of access along lines of gender, age, and social background.⁴⁷

The concept of nested spaces is not a hierarchical arrangement of possibilities, nor is there a linear correlation between the size of the unit and the frequency with which it was used by any given individual. To return to the Russian-doll example, there are many ways a smaller unit can fit into a larger one without an intervening container. In urban terms, an itinerant peddler, gate guard, or army commander might have spent much more time in the city at large than in any given neighborhood or “at home”; a homeless person or beggar might have been very familiar with a neighborhood without having a fixed place of residence. Indeed, it may be that the largest and smallest scales have commonalities not shared at the intermediate, neighborhood level. At the civic level people might have been anonymous enough to blend in with the crowd, but they would have had no such luck at the neighborhood level because their previous actions and personas were likely to have been well known to fellow inhabitants. As they reached the household door itself, they regained the freedom to make statements and improvise through material culture in a space over which they had much more control.

45 Stone 1995, 240.

46 The documentation of wells was done through the recording of laterite rings that served as well casings. Some of the stone wells remain in use and have been stabilized as part of contemporary households; the recording of other wells was done over a ten-year period of opportunistic sightings in each winter field season, as stone ring-well fragments were often dug up by farmers and placed by the side of the agricultural fields. Although these rings were robust enough at the time of discovery, they often disintegrated or were repurposed or broken up by the time of the next field season. A resurvey and tally of the known wells was done in 2006 and resulted in the recording of forty-six ring-well locations; in 2009 another resurvey documented thirty-five ring-well locations. Both figures are probably far below the tally of actual ancient wells but would support the assignment of about one well per hectare in ancient times; that we never recovered a ring well in our excavations supports the evidence from the tally that the wells were multihousehold installations.

47 Smith and Mohanty 2018.

SETTLEMENTS CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH SISUPALGARH

Urban activities and behaviors at Sisupalgarh can be contrasted not only with those of the preceding Neolithic period but also with those at the contemporary nonurban settlements in the eastern coastal region of India starting in the mid-first millennium BCE. Our team's investigations of several contemporaneous smaller settlements give us the opportunity to weigh the considerable difference the city of Sisupalgarh represented from both a chronological and a spatial perspective. Two of these settlements clearly have their inspiration from Sisupalgarh itself, as seen in the outlines of formal ramparts that exactly mimic the perimeter of Sisupalgarh but on a smaller scale. These sites are Talapada and Lathi, respectively located 40 km and 150 km southwest of Sisupalgarh.

Lathi was excavated in two locations by a Deccan College team led by R. K. Mohanty.⁴⁸ While the ceramic repertoire was identical to the long sequence of pottery from Sisupalgarh, the occupation of the site was thin and quickly terminated at bedrock. The configuration of the site appears to suggest a planned township that was only intermittently occupied. Lathi's relative proximity to the larger archaeological site of Jaugadh, which was itself somewhat sparsely occupied, suggests that investment in the formal outlines of habitation was insufficient to attract people to settle there. The site of Talapada, located closer to Sisupalgarh, was somewhat more robust in its occupational sequence than Lathi but similarly presented a picture of planned spaces that were only episodically occupied. At Talapada we conducted two seasons of geophysical research and three seasons of excavation with trenches in eleven locales to sort out the puzzle of a site that was clearly a focus of investment but paled compared to the "real" city of Sisupalgarh.⁴⁹ At Talapada, the surrounding rampart was highly labor intensive in providing a square perimeter of settlement that resulted in a wall 0.5 km in length and 2–3 m in height above the surrounding plain. However, this perimeter is actually more impressive from a satellite image than from the ground, as the rampart consists merely of a small rise that is easy to walk over. There is no evidence of any superstructure of brick or stone, and bisections of the rampart showed that no augmentation of it through the periodic addition of fill appears to have occurred as had taken place at Sisupalgarh.

There is some evidence for the existence of a central, special-purpose precinct at Talapada like that at Sisupalgarh. At Talapada, this precinct consisted of upright stones laid out in a circle, resembling the types of constructions we also recovered (but on the exterior of the rampart) at Sisupalgarh. All the excavation units at Talapada produced abundant evidence of consumption in pottery, though the amount and diversity of terracotta ornaments was markedly low compared to those from Sisupalgarh. Domestic architecture at Talapada was also conspicuously absent, and most of our excavation areas revealed evidence of only pottery and other artifact fragments, while lacking evidence of architecture—and even any architectural elements such as stone, brick, or tiles—in contrast to the case at Sisupalgarh (where every trench and surface-collection unit revealed architectural elements and where geophysical survey and farmers' fields throughout the site revealed the presence of intact foundations under the topsoil). From one trench at

48 Thakuria et al. 2013.

49 Mohanty, Smith, and Matney 2014; Mohanty, Smith, and Ray 2016; Mohanty et al. 2016.

Talapada we recovered good evidence for postholes, supporting an interpretation that the majority of the architecture elsewhere at the site was also made of perishable materials such as wood, bamboo, and thatch.

There was certainly a plan for a more elaborate architecture at Talapada, because geophysical survey on the exterior of the rampart walls revealed linear anomalies that a test excavation showed to be densely stacked bricks in parallel lines 20 m long. The bricks appear to represent a depot or a stockpile rather than a kiln or a wall, given the parallel, open-ended geophysical signature and the fact that the bricks had different types of inclusions, which indicated they had been brought as finished products rather than fashioned on-site. Another sign that the occupation of Talapada was an “in-progress” phenomenon is the fact that the four gateways were differentially constructed. Examination of the three extant gateways (two of those through excavation) revealed that only the northern gateway had any additions or elaboration. Moreover, the fact that it was the northern gateway—the one facing Sisupalgarh—that had the only embellishment among the site’s gateways further suggests the inhabitants had an eye toward Sisupalgarh’s potential oversight and were only marginally committed to the formalization of the other gateways. This surmise is bolstered by the fact that the stone and brick enhancement of the northern gateway was added after the rampart was constructed, as the earthen rampart had been cut into to accommodate the additional architecture.

The sites of Lathi and Talapada lacked a full complement of habitation, a factor that would have made their open spaces merely “empty” rather than “monumental” (though this observation brings to mind the question of how an open or even abandoned space can be transformed into a place of meaning through organic materials such as bunting or through performative means such as music, dance, and ritual donations).⁵⁰ At Talapada as at Lathi, the investigations showed that urbanism is not contagious; one cannot simply implant a feeder settlement for it to be as successful as the urban center it formally mimics. While capital-*P* politics were clearly implicated in the construction of Lathi and Talapada, the small-*p* politics of everyday life could not be implemented by fiat, perhaps because people found the fully occupied, long-lived urban center of Sisupalgarh more compelling.

In 2019 we had the opportunity to conduct excavations at the 6 ha site of Kankeikuda, located on the coast at the margins of Chilka Lake. Like Talapada and Lathi, the site of Kankeikuda has a ceramic repertoire identical to the materials found at Sisupalgarh, indicating that the inhabitants were certainly aware of and participated in regional patterns of material culture. Yet like Ostapur, Talapada, and Lathi, Kankeikuda lacks all signs of permanent architecture: no bricks or tiles or stone blocks were found at the site, and the only types of lasting investment of placemaking consisted of floors of lime or laterite gravel along with rounded platforms of pounded clay. Artifacts were similarly very sparse compared to the abundance of ornaments found at Sisupalgarh, and amid the tons of ceramics excavated from the site from five excavation areas at Kankeikuda, we recovered not a single terra-cotta ornament.

⁵⁰ See McMahan, this volume.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Migration into any new spaces of habitation requires distinct behavioral adaptations. To take advantage of the perceived opportunities of the new locale, individuals must learn to read their local landscapes, mark their territory accordingly, and negotiate their interaction with other people. Nowhere is this phenomenon more marked than in cities. Urban places are unique human creations that envelop migrants with enhanced capacities for identity formation, but in contexts in which those new identities must be displayed primarily to strangers. In a village there is almost no need to “perform” self, because one’s personality, social status, and capacities are minutely observed from birth such that there is little scope for reinvention. And there is little need for pomp and circumstance as a component of everyday life.

In cities, particularly in cities to which one migrates as a young person or adult, there can be a complete severing of prior ties, a process that enables people to invent and display entirely new personas commensurate with their new urban circumstances. Much of what constitutes these new identities at the individual and group level is demonstrated through changeable forms of display such as clothing along with music, song, dance, food, perfume, and cosmetics. For ancient cities and their countrysides, archaeologists are constrained to look for proxies of such behavior in durable elements of artifacts and architecture. Nonetheless, the comparisons of urban centers with both their chronological antecedents and their contemporary rural settlements illustrate that there are many ways in which cities’ new forms of architecture provide literal threshold moments of self-awareness and public performance. In cities, the spatial opportunities for overlapping forms of small-*p* politics are integrated under the watchful eye of capital-*P* politics.⁵¹ Tasks associated with everyday domestic life become part of a prescribed rhythm, but even labor is performative when people take up civic employment for various tasks of construction and maintenance in full view of others (fig. 2.8; see also Smith and Mohanty, forthcoming).

At Sisupalgarh, civic architecture was outsized compared to the quotidian spaces of both ordinary households in the city and the habitual residences of the countryside. The presence of ramparts that were too steep to be breached meant that everyone coming and going had to pass through the site’s monumental gateways, channeled through the liminal passageway and continuing through the site’s broad avenues. Natural horizons were supplanted by the built environment, meaning that negotiating streets and by-lanes was a matter of sublimating individual desires of movement to the preexisting channels of access, given that “as the crow flies” directionality was no longer the sole guiding principle of locomotion. In comparison to natural verticalities such as trees and mountains that occasionally punctuated the skyline, urban verticalities of rooflines and monumental structures constituted three-dimensional constraints that had to be negotiated every day.

For migrants into the ancient city, performance of both new and retained identities took place within already-established built environments that physically channeled their movements and actions and that constituted the boundaries of social mores and expected behaviors. Some spaces were created by political authorities as designated zones for

⁵¹ The intensity and ease of access of urban performances serve as a spatial compression of the same phenomenon expressed across broader territories, as noted by Richardson (this volume) about the way in which hinterland and rural performances tie far-flung locales into “national” political categories.



Figure 2.8. Men working together to carry an ancient laterite block from the excavations.

specific types of activities; some spaces were the accretionary results of other residents' actions, whether in the form of territorial markers such as graffiti and signboards or through the creation of distinctive residential enclaves. Such locales are not places where people create their own desiderata but places where they must fit in to survive. For them, pomp and circumstance, as measured by the physical evidence of the archaeological record, were framed as received categories with rules of behavior akin to the structure of grammar in which any new utterance or sentiment must be framed by existing structural options. In ancient cities as in modern ones, individuals negotiated their words and acts within a specific physical locale—a household, neighborhood, or greater urban realm—within the nested spatialities of the city.

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ABBREVIATION

IAR *Indian Archaeology Review* (sequential years). Government of India: National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities.

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3 Performing Community: Ritual, Copper Production, and Local Politics on Archaic–Classical Cyprus

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A PECULIAR PLACE of ritual sits tucked away in an area of copper mines on the island of Cyprus, at a locality called Kalavastos *Skouries*, a toponym meaning “slag”: it has the remains of a small building with associated terra-cotta figurines.¹ Now almost entirely covered in copper slag, the remnants of the ore-smelting phase, it is situated near the openings of several ancient mine shafts (fig. 3.1). The building sits in the Vasilikos Valley, roughly 20 km from the nearest Iron Age center, the polity of Amathus on the south-central coast. Who participated in ritual performances here? Did they commune here because of their work related to the mines, or because this area of mines, ores, and pine forests together acted as a salient, sacred landmark? If the participants lived in small settlements nearby, or were miners or metallurgists, were they building their own communities through rituals outside the purview of the state? Were they performing allegiance to, on a small scale, the ritual norms of a ruling polity? This essay explores these questions and, if framed against the title for this conference, focuses on the loci or circumstances of nonurban political performance.

A robust amount of scholarship has investigated various links between Cypriot religion, the state, and the political economy of copper throughout the island’s long prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic development.² Here I take up this triangulation to examine rituals at or near mining operations during the later Iron Age, or Archaic and Classical periods, roughly 750–300 BCE. Scholars working on this period have largely focused on the stylistic or iconographic elements of Cypriot cult, the ritual contexts of royal statements of power, and the ways in which sacred places interacted with and helped maintain sovereign claims of territoriality.³ This chapter argues that the enacting of both metal production tasks and ritual performances away from the more privileged sacred spaces of the state, especially in the rural places of small settlements and industry, became *one* nexus for the

1 Flourentzos 2008, 102; Kassianidou 2012, 233; 2013, 67. The toponym is also referred to as *Skourka* (“slag”; see Todd 2004, 35–36, 135–40; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018); Cypriot archaeological sites are conventionally listed with the name of the modern administrative unit and a toponym together, with the second part italicized.

2 Spigelman 2012 reviews scholarship on Bronze Age copper production and religious ideology; see also Knapp 1986; 2008, 76–78; Kassianidou 2005; Kieburg 2008.

3 See, for example, D’Agata and Hermary 2012; Papantoniou 2012b; Fourier 2013, 2014; Averett 2015.

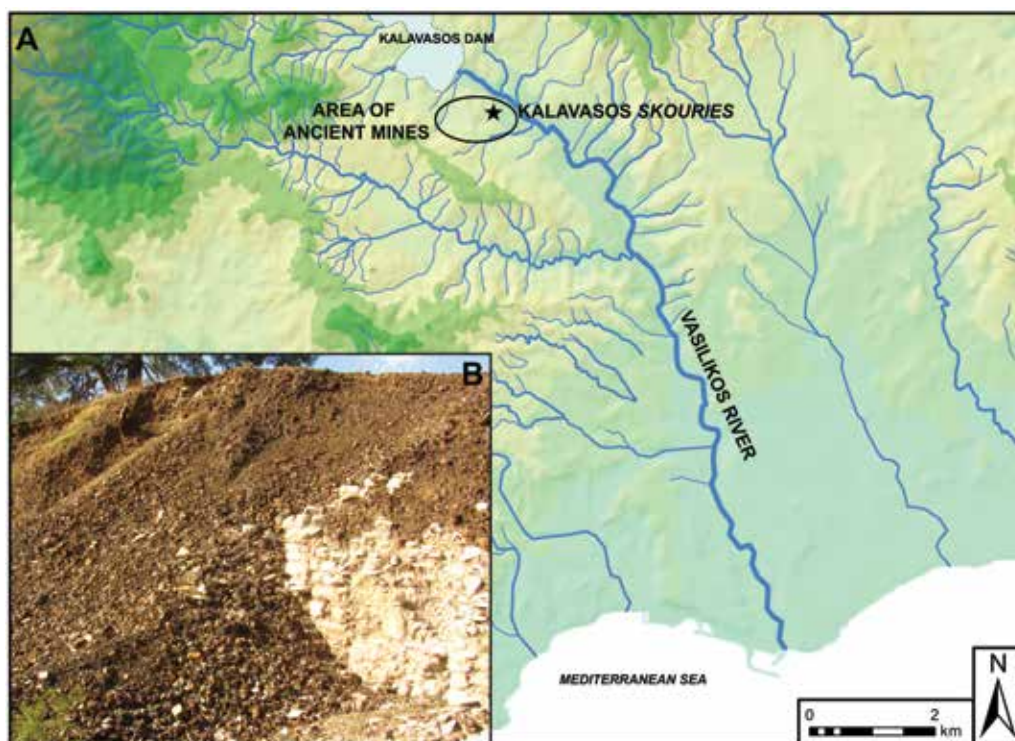


Figure 3.1. Map of the Vasilikos Valley showing the location of ancient mines, copper slag, and Kalavastos *Skouries* (A), with inset photo showing building under copper slag at Kalavastos *Skouries* (B). Map created by Catherine Kearns with data from the Geological Survey Department of Cyprus. Photo by Catherine Kearns.

construction of political affiliations of hinterland communities as a means for subjects to experience and contribute to their social logics.⁴ More tentatively, it suggests that these ritual landscapes stitched hinterlands to the state, through shared cultic practices and norms, but also constituted the development of local structures that produced and reproduced independent networks of community.

This essay adds recent studies of the Vasilikos Valley to growing interest in the agricultural or industrial extensions of major centers of these periods.⁵ By contextualizing this shrine within a social field of ritual dynamics, we can see more complexity than our typical models of town–country political relationships accommodate.⁶ Tropes of socially

4 On the archaeology of politics understood as the logics of authorization separating sovereign from subject see Smith 2003, 2015; Khatchadourian 2016. For recent thought on communities as interfaces between individuals and suprahousehold socialization, see, for example, Knapp 2003; Harris 2014. For the ways industrial practices create social frameworks, see, for example, Knapp, Pigott, and Herbert 1998; Knapp 2003; Knapp and Kassianidou 2008.

5 Compare Toumazou, Kardulias, and Counts 2011; Toumazou et al. 2015; for a groundbreaking treatment of historical rurality on Cyprus, see Christodoulou 1959. For the Iron Age evidence from the Vasilikos Valley, see recently Georgiadou 2016, 2018; Kearns 2019, 2022, 2023; Kearns and Georgiadou 2021.

6 See also Fourrier 2014; on dynamic town–country relationships, see, for example, Cronon 1991; Horden and Purcell 2000, 89–122; Foxhall and Yoon 2016.

marginal, static countrysides can be persistently powerful, especially in twenty-first century European and American political discourse, which describes rural industrial populations “forgotten” by modernization and progressive politics.⁷ Take, for example, the linking of religious conservatism and coal mining in Appalachia and its assumed representativeness for “Trump’s America.”⁸ The former president’s personalized governance and self-branding is framed agonistically in “winning” over a narrowly fixated industrial base by appealing successfully, if reductively, to their Christian and economic values. As studies beyond such media representations have shown, however, Appalachia has a longstanding history of state resistance through grassroots community organization, as well as more complex religious and moral practices than its caricature assumes.⁹ This chapter probes how to move beyond assumptions about ancient rural communities on Cyprus and to theorize how ritual structures and performances forged a political landscape—in Adam T. Smith’s definition, “places that draw together the imagined civil community, a perceptual dimension of space in which built forms elicit affective responses that galvanize memories and emotions central to the experience of political belonging.”¹⁰ The empirical groundings of my discussion are in many ways fragmentary and stem largely from notices of rescue excavations and survey material, and the arguments drawn from them are therefore circumstantial (a different valence than our conference theme). Nonetheless, they help expand our focus beyond the dichotomy of urban and nonurban sanctuaries to attend to the interstitial practices that cocreated social and political transformations.

APPROACHING NONURBAN POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

Before investigating these practices, let me briefly frame the sociopolitical setting of Iron Age Cyprus. We have little textual evidence of the apparatus of sovereignty or of governance, but increasing evidence of variably sized settlements and dense local organization surrounding several autonomous polities centered in town sites.¹¹ We can say that apparent forms of kingship (the *basileus* or *wanax*) probably became more institutionalized and legible throughout the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, taking on iconographic and numismatic claims of authority and perhaps, as Gary M. Feinman and Linda M. Nicholas (this volume) have outlined, a more collective form of governance than a highly personalized one tied to absolute, exclusionary power strategies.¹² By the fifth century BCE, for example, inscriptions from some administrative centers reveal tantalizing evidence of collaboration between the institution of royal kingship and a citizen or subject body, likely in the form of aristocratic officials or actors who helped reproduce the regime at locally salient scales

7 For example, Wuthnow 2018 on small-town Americans who feel “left behind” by federal politics.

8 McGreal 2017.

9 See, for example, Fisher 1993; Witt 2016.

10 Smith 2003, 8.

11 For a general overview of these polities (also known as “city-kingdoms”) and current scholarly consensus, see recently Georgiou and Iacovou 2020; Iacovou 2002, 2013, 2018; Pestarino 2022; see also Stylianiou 1989; Satraki 2012; Petit 2019.

12 See most recently Pestarino 2022; see also Stylianiou 1989, 402; Satraki 2013; Fourrier 2014; Hatzopoulos 2014; on power strategies, see also Blanton and Fargher 2008; Blanton et al. 1996.

through systems of land tenure and control of labor and resources.¹³ Indeed, one central question is whether the populations in nonurban hinterlands comprised royal subjects or more autonomous social groups who may have constructed and authorized their own wealth management, not just in staple goods or “semiluxuries” such as olive oil but also in access to foreign prestige goods.¹⁴

As an example of the latter in the same river valley as Kalavassos *Skouries*, a burial with Cypro-Archaic I (ca. 750–600 BCE) ceramic finds discovered in the village of Mari held the remains of a man, together with a woman holding a child, with access to imported iron swords and uncommon ceramic shapes but who lacked the signifiers of more precious goods seen in the nearby tombs of Amathusian elites.¹⁵ While these emerging status seekers may have linked themselves to the nearby coastal center to the west to access interregional trade networks, the placemaking practices in the Maroni and Vasilikos valleys suggest the creation of social and economic formations related to local scales of community.¹⁶ In this region, communities such as these were forming by the late ninth to eighth centuries BCE. Survey evidence has shown an expansion of numerous settlements, work sites, and tombs and cemeteries, like the one mentioned above, indicating a network of sedentary groups. Although survey data lack chronological precision, it is clear that people were starting to reoccupy this region and invest in permanent infrastructure, such as soil management and industrial installations, with which they could sustain themselves and potentially produce for wider markets.¹⁷

Scholars tend to overprivilege copper as a primary mover in the formation of Iron Age polities because of its appearance in external markets, but it was undoubtedly critical to various emergent political economies, especially linking coastal towns with wider interregional trade routes, as seen most clearly in Cypriot bronze imports discovered throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Near East.¹⁸ Furthermore, scholars assume largely top-down political control over the means of mining and copper production, with coastal and inland centers protecting or competing over access to mines near the copper sources in the lower pillow lavas surrounding the Troodos ophiolite massif, rendering the industrial countrysides largely apolitical (fig. 3.2).¹⁹ There is little published material on the social and political dimensions of copper production and their ties to these emerging polities during

13 Two inscriptions have significantly driven debates about civic participation and royal authority, both of which center on royal land grants: an inscription from Kourion (ca. 500 BCE), mentioning both a king and *demos* (see Stylianiou 1989, 402; Lejeune 2010) and the “bronze tablet of Idalion” (ca. 450 BCE), which records a royal decree of the king and city of Idalion (see Stylianiou 1989, 402); see discussions in Pappas-avvas 2014; Pestarino 2022.

14 Foxhall 2007, 17, 89–95; Kearns 2022.

15 Hadjicosti 1997, 2002.

16 See also recent reports on work at tombs at Amathus *Loures*, on the edge of town, and forms of placemaking (Stefani and Violaris 2018).

17 Georgiadou 2016, 106; 2018; Kearns 2019, 2023; for potential Cypro-Archaic maritime trade recovered through shipwrecks, see Greene, Leidwanger, and Özdaş 2011, 2013; see also Sherratt and Sherratt 1993 on Iron Age trade networks.

18 Iacovou 2012, 2013; Kassianidou 2013, 69–70.

19 Iacovou 2012, 2014; Papantoniou 2012b, 92; Kassianidou 2013.

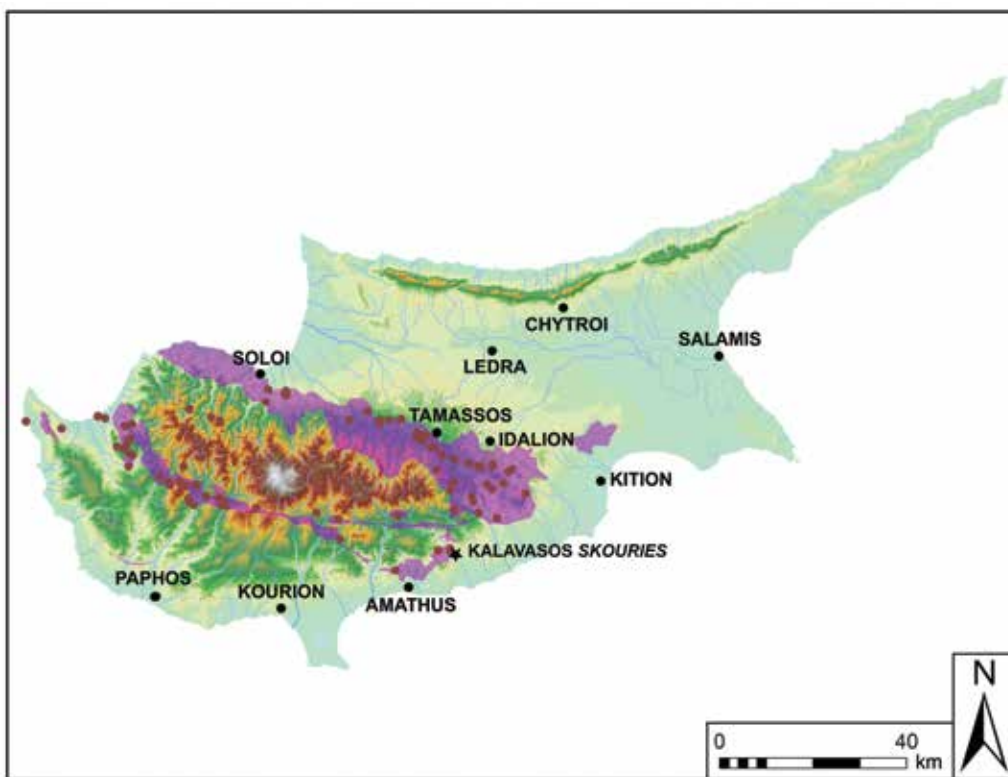


Figure 3.2. Map of known Iron Age urban centers and presence of ancient slags (brown circles) in the lower pillow lavas (pink) around the Troodos massif. Map created by Catherine Kearns with data from the Geological Survey Department of Cyprus.

the first millennium BCE.²⁰ We also know little about the economic and social mechanics of how these resource extraction zones were integrated with the polity's apparatus of governance and tax collection.²¹

At several known mining sites, however, we have increasing evidence of copper ores and workshops linked to local settlements and mortuary and ritual places. For this latter category, survey projects tend to find small votive deposits, demarcated ritual spaces, or even built structures that indicate close connections between some form of ritual performance and copper production areas.²² Typically, these connections have been glossed within a broader understanding of *longue durée* religion on the island persisting from Bronze Age contexts in the form of a deity who protects and mediates copper manufacture, most conspicuously evident in figurines holding copper ingots, votives in the form of ingots, and ritual assemblages in close spatial relationships with metal workshops in

20 Compare Raber 1987; the work of Kassianidou, especially 1998, 2012, 2013; Fasnacht 1999. For survey investigations of mining landscapes, see Given and Knapp 2003.

21 Important research has centered on the roles of tertiary sites of production controlled by coastal elites in the rise of social complexity for Bronze Age Cyprus; see, for example, Knapp 1986; discussion in Knapp 2008, 77, 137–44; Steel 2009, 2016; Spigelman 2012.

22 Given 2018, 171.

excavated Late Bronze Age centers.²³ Yet continuity of cult is a deeply complicated and ambivalent process.²⁴ What we have thought less about are the ritual performances undertaken directly at copper production sites and their possible instrumentality in binding new communities together in a period of widespread social and political transformation in local and regional landscapes.²⁵ Given the indications of local status differentiation on the margins of the political center, the presence of small-scale ritual activity raises timely questions about the placemaking practices of mining groups and their dependency on or integration with the developing ritual commitments of the state.

This ritual evidence also helps challenge assumptions about sacred spaces outside the city. For Cyprus, prevailing views of nonurban sanctuaries in this period tend to rely on structuralist geography and particularly models such as those of François de Polignac, which see such sanctuaries representing territorial claims for emerging sovereigns during phases of state consolidation.²⁶ But not all rural sanctuaries are alike, and we have thought less about their possible saliency for smaller-scale community integration.²⁷ In models where religious authority is held to radiate out from urban centers such as Amathus to extra-urban sanctuaries that duplicate urban elite practices, the analysis elides the complexity of discursive and material strategies at the margins, as well as the variability of the surrounding landscape.²⁸ Nonurban sacred places can often be simplified through top-down explanations as the arenas of elite aggrandizement or, alternatively, as ahistorical markers of a largely homogenous, politically impoverished hinterland consisting of extracted resources and laborers and existing outside the currents of historical processes.²⁹ This essay puts the analytical focus on the inverse: How did nonurban rituals tied to copper production enact conspicuous places for local politics and community engagement, which responded to, negotiated, or challenged authoritative structures?

My approach draws on modes of thinking about the socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of production within spatial and historical contexts of practice, such as Tim Ingold's concept of the "taskscape."³⁰ For Ingold, the taskscape embodies the routinized rhythms of patterned dwelling activities that develop in moments of practice to form

23 Knapp 1986; on *longue durée* religion, see Papantoniou 2012a, 2012b; Fourrier 2014, 120–22.

24 For example, Whitley 2009.

25 See, however, discussions in Given 2018, 170–72; Kassianidou 2013, 56, 63, 65–68; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018; Hadjisavvas 2022.

26 de Polignac 1995; compare Toumazou, Kardulias, and Counts 2011; Toumazou et al. 2015; on applications, see, for example, Fourrier 2002, 2013, 2014; Papantoniou 2012b; on the phase of kingdom consolidation in the eighth century BCE, see recently Iacovou 2018, 20–28; Georgiou and Iacovou 2020.

27 See important recent work on visibility and differentiated extra-urban sanctuaries in Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018.

28 Fourrier (2014, 126) sees a "city to territory" direction of influence: "Il existe également, dans le monde grec, des «dédoulements» de sanctuaire, mais de façon, à nouveau me semble-t-il, généralement inversée: de la périphérie vers le centre et non pas de la ville vers le territoire. . . . Les sanctuaires [chypriotes], urbains comme extra-urbains, sont étroitement liés à un centre dont ils dependent."

29 Compare Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018.

30 Ingold 1993; on taskscape, see also Hicks 2016; Rajala and Mills 2017; Thomas 2017; on relational theories of space, see also Harvey 1996; Smith 2003; on the interface of technology, materials, and practice theory, see especially Dietler and Herbich 1998; Knapp, Pigott, and Herbert 1998.

meaningful places.³¹ Through shared knowledge of metallurgical technologies and groups converging in labor as part of taskscapes, copper production encouraged community formation.³² Ingold's taskscape can, however, seem apolitical for its elision of structures of inequality and power;³³ instead, I would like to move beyond an accounting of how repeated gatherings of people make places through routinized tasks to ask how certain task-related performances produce places *for* political associations and community participation. In Seth Richardson's words, these heuristics aim to discover how politics necessitates places of interaction and audience, even in remote, rural, and seemingly commonplace margins.³⁴ I am particularly interested in emergent places of engagement that, while apparently critical to the political economy of the state when viewed at a macroscale, are also closely linked to, and generative of, smaller-scale social lives.

MINING COMMUNITIES AND RITUAL

The study of mining and metallurgy on Cyprus has long been a major focus of prehistoric and protohistoric archaeology.³⁵ For the eighth to fifth and fourth centuries BCE, scholars are less clear on the scale of copper production, its likely variable organization, and its position within regional political economies.³⁶ Undoubtedly, given the distribution and range of copper ores around the island, there was a mixture of locally operated production as well as more centralized operations facilitated through urban centers, whether via state-controlled labor or through middlemen who produced surplus copper for state consumption.³⁷ It does seem that the scale never reached the major enterprises of the Hellenistic or Roman periods, when we have evidence of massive industrial operations using *corvée* slave labor.³⁸ Typically, the investment in the Vasilikos Valley ores in this period is explained through the rise of the sovereignty of Amathus and its control over the means of copper production.³⁹ The multiperiod slag heaps at Kalavastos and nearby Asgata are some of the largest on the island. Evidence of roughly fifteen heaps as well as ancient adits at Kalavastos *Platies* and *Petra* point to extensive exploitation.⁴⁰ We have a less-than-clear understanding of labor at the mines and smelting operations, however, and its relation to regional settlement patterns. The Vasilikos Valley Project archaeological survey, which investigated this area, found evidence to infer that the activity around the Kalavastos mines was "larger and more organized" than that of small-scale operations.⁴¹ These findings may

31 Ingold 1993, 158.

32 Knapp 2003; see Catapotis 2007 for Bronze Age social and spatial organization of copper.

33 See Bender 2001, 83–85.

34 Richardson, this volume; see also Smith 2003.

35 See, for example, Muhly, Maddin, and Karageorghis 1982; Knapp 1986; Kassianidou 2004, 2012.

36 Kassianidou 2012, 2013; see also Raber 1987.

37 Raber 1987, 309–10; Kassianidou 1998.

38 Raber 1987, 301; Kassianidou 2000.

39 Todd 2016, 100, 120; Kassianidou 2013, 66–68.

40 Kassianidou 2013, 66.

41 Todd and Warren 2012, 52; see also Raber 1987, 301–2.

suggest state control and investment, though the lack of any other facilities or structures makes this interpretation circumstantial.

At the site of Ayia Varvara *Almyras* in the foothills of the central Troodos mountains, a Swiss archaeological mission discovered enough evidence of the *chaîne opératoire* of copper production to reconstruct one potential scale of operation beginning in the sixth century BCE.⁴² The site revealed open-cast mine surfaces as well as built spaces for the crushing and smelting of ores in several types of furnaces, but also significant amounts of domestic or residential materials, mostly in the form of fragments of storage and cooking vessels and lamps. The excavators interpreted the site as a seasonal spring and summer camp, where groups of men and potentially women and children would conduct temporary mining expeditions during the dry months, before winter flooding events. Seasonality is further implied by the relatively low total production of copper at *Almyras*—roughly 1,000 kg over an intermittent occupation period of 400 years—suggesting small-scale local production events rather than continuous investment.⁴³ Whether *Almyras* itself became a settlement for a community or was closely tied to a nearby agricultural village is less certain. That other comparanda from the Bronze Age on the island do indicate a potential reciprocal association between mines and nearby agricultural settlements helps dismantle the idea of the isolated, detached mining camp.⁴⁴

Evidence for ritual performances or sacred places at or within view of these mines or production sites can reveal some of the social dimensions of such a taskscape, as well as the diverse triangulations between landscapes of industry and labor, political economies, and social change. Before examining the particulars of the Cypriot case studies, it can be helpful to consider transhistorical and cross-cultural connections between mines and religion in ancient contexts and their divergent politics of performance. Elizabeth Bloxam, in her work on mining during the Middle and New Kingdom periods of Egypt, for example, argues from a bottom-up perspective that evidence of Hathoric imagery and votives at several mines suggests that ritual practices generated social cohesion of local laborers on the margins of the Egyptian state.⁴⁵ The goddess Hathor held particular resonance as a deity who traveled in distant, resource-rich lands as well as provided protection for miners.⁴⁶ In Bloxam's reconstruction, the ritual imagery of these indigenous groups helped solidify senses of community but, equally, provided spaces for Middle Kingdom officials to negotiate access to indigenous labor in acquiring gem and copper resources. This interpretation helps us view Egyptian mining as more than solely the state monopolization of industrial peripheries.⁴⁷

Robert Johnston has argued that mining practices during the Bronze Age in North Wales transformed how groups conceived and imagined underground places, such as caves, which had been ritually and mythically efficacious prior to exploitation.⁴⁸ Around

42 Fasnacht 1999; Kassianidou 1998; Fasnacht, Peege, and Hedley 2000; Peege 2018.

43 Peege 2018, 126, 136–37.

44 Knapp 2003; Steel 2009, 2016; on the spatiality of mining, see Catapotis 2007.

45 Bloxam 2006.

46 Bloxam 2006, 282; Hathor also becomes the principal deity of Egyptian mines, such as Timna.

47 Bloxam 2006, 278–80.

48 Johnston 2008.

the copper-mining area of the Great Orme, for example, Bronze Age communities had associated subterranean caves with liminality and otherworldliness, depositing votives and burials and performing rituals in or near them that helped construct a salient cultural landscape. After deep mining became more intensive during the second millennium BCE, however, ritual deposition in caves ceased, suggesting new sensibilities toward underground spaces as a result of extractive mining and smelting that cleaved caves from their previous mediatory powers.⁴⁹ Johnston further argues that patterns of ritual deposition around the Great Orme can reveal the social boundaries of these mining communities: residentially mobile groups from a large area within North Wales came together to work in the mines, preserving local differences yet sharing new landscape affiliations to underground spaces and solidifying control of access to mining resources.⁵⁰

In fourth-century BCE Attica, silver mining became institutionally tied to the religious topography of the state. Inscribed leases map the boundaries of public mining operations between sanctuaries, villages, and other mines in the territory of Laurion, and the majority of individual mines with recorded names relate to Greek deities and heroes—Artemis, a patron of mining, in particular.⁵¹ Associating the coerced labor of Athenian silver extraction with different divine or eponymous figures speaks in a banal way to Greek naming conventions and also to the imprinting of state resource production onto the religious ideology of the collective; further, it speaks to the presumed protection of mining and its dangerous risks via the worship of deities such as Artemis that was coopted by the interests of wealthy investors from the Athenian *polis*. By contrast, excavations in several of the residential working areas in the Laurion region, such as Agrileza and Thorikos, produced ritual vessels—for example, *rhyta*—which indicate how laborers themselves may have incorporated worship or ritual performances into their daily work.⁵²

These few, selective examples reflect the diverse integration of ritual practices in and around the interests of the polity or authorities in association with resource extraction. Some of these modes required the social cohesion and perhaps even consent of the laboring community, while others became imbricated in top-down ideological narratives of the state.⁵³

Turning now to Cyprus, the vestiges of these links between ritual performance and emerging political economies of copper production hint at the growth of local gathering places for rites marginal yet connected to interregional religious structures. At Ayia Varvara *Almyras*, for example, excavations revealed two anthropomorphic terra-cotta figurines, in the form of male musicians, and a limestone ram figurine, with iconographic and other stylistic connections to production in the nearby centers of Idalion and Amathus.⁵⁴ Although no unambiguous ritual structures were found, the excavators interpreted the

49 Johnston 2008, 202–4.

50 Johnston 2008, 205–6.

51 Of known Attic mine names (roughly thirty), about 85 percent are of gods or heroes; see Aperghis 1997, 9–12; for text and commentary see Crosby 1950. There is still debate on how the mines were administered and how revenue was controlled; see Aperghis 1997.

52 Jones 2007, 271, 275.

53 See Ristvet, this volume, for audience reception of state ideology.

54 Peege 2018, 131–36; see also Fasnacht et al. 1996, 99–102; Fasnacht, Peege, and Hedley 2000; Given 2018, 171.

figurines as vestiges of votive deposits left by laborers who, if perhaps independent, were worshipping near the mines while producing bulk copper for the state. At Mathiati *Mavrovouni* on the eastern edges of the Troodos massif, a small, Archaic–Hellenistic and Roman sanctuary with numerous associated limestone figurines, most abundantly of the rural divinity Pan, was covered by later slag from copper smelting.⁵⁵ Rescue excavations of this sanctuary revealed the remains of walls as well as affirmed its local character and long-term use, likely extending back into the Bronze Age.⁵⁶

Returning to the shrine in the Vasilikos Valley mentioned above, the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus performed rescue excavations at Kalavastos *Skouries*, where the remains of a small building made of local limestone blocks was found.⁵⁷ It appears to have been abandoned by the fourth century BCE and then covered by slag from later copper-smelting activity. This structure arguably would have held one or more cult figures and possible votive depositional areas, such as *bothroi* or benches, and been surrounded by an open-air courtyard for ritual performances.⁵⁸ In and around this small structure were found numerous figurines of “crudely made terra-cotta,” mostly of female bodies with up-raised arms in fragmentary ring compositions commonly associated with dance groupings and dated stylistically to the fifth century BCE.⁵⁹ Some reveal indications of the reuse of pot fragments, upcycled with added coroplastic features such as arms or breasts, to become votives (fig. 3.3). No large-scale terra-cottas or stone sculptures were found, nor were inscriptions to give more clues to the identities of the participants or the principal deities. These figural indications of ritual activity have a rustic quality, especially when compared to other examples in votive assemblages from contemporary sanctuaries in the area.⁶⁰

Such compositions of ephemeral ritual dances likely captured the important elements of music and dance integral to Cypriot ritual and religious iconography.⁶¹ Dance groupings in terra-cotta, an early form of representation beginning in the eleventh century BCE, are often associated with the worship of Artemis in the Greek world and here may have involved dedications to a Cypriot mother goddess and her associated fertility rituals.⁶² It is probable that the figurines represent worshippers themselves involved in the acts of ritual dance rather than the goddess. While any interpretations of these largely unpublished data are tentative, the figurines and building imply a locally maintained cult space used for

55 Karageorghis 1984, 962–65; Kassianidou 2012, 233–34; 2013, 56; Given 2018, 170–72; Hadjisavvas 2022. Another possibly similar case of a Classical rural sanctuary linked to smelting or the exploitation of metal resources is called Kataliondas *Kourvellos* in the Troodos foothills; see Beck and Birchler Emery 2012.

56 Hadjisavvas 2022, 118–20.

57 Flourentzos 2008, 102; Kassianidou 2012, 233–34, fig. 4; Todd 2013, 35–36.

58 The Geometric–Roman sanctuary at Athienou *Malloura* offers an example of what one rural precinct looked like; see Blackwell and Johnson 2011; Toumazou, Kardulias, and Counts 2011; Toumazou et al. 2015.

59 Larnaca Museum inv. 2005/1, 2005/2, 2005/6 (Flourentzos 2009, figs. 1–3). See also Kassianidou 2012, 233–34, fig. 5; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018, 566. For other examples of ring compositions of dancers, see Karageorghis 2006, 149–52.

60 Flourentzos 2008, 102. On the rustic character of the contemporary sanctuary at Maroni *Vournes*, see Ulbrich 2012.

61 Averett 2007, 196–97.

62 Averett 2007, 198.



Figure 3.3. A selection of figurines and fragments recovered from Kalavassos *Skouries*. Courtesy of Vasiliki Kassianidou.

performances, perhaps involving dance. The presence of standing architecture suggests, moreover, that this ritual activity entailed a built environment and over time came to require a sense of permanence.⁶³

What might these performances have looked like? We have significant evidence for ritual activities involving dances, processions, and the cultic wearing of masks.⁶⁴ Studies of ritual material culture have also concluded that each Cypriot polity supported several terra-cotta workshops and, while stylistically independent, recognized a shared set of symbols and images for deities and representations of ritual activity.⁶⁵ These commonalities further helped shore up the sanctioned persona of various royal houses. The “crude” dancing figurines deposited at Kalavassos *Skouries* are therefore borrowing and deploying the same compositions as those found in sanctuary contexts at major sites such as Ayia Irini and Amathus and even as those deposited in Iron Age sanctuaries around the Mediterranean.⁶⁶

What do we know of the landscape around the sanctuary and its history? The Vasilikos Valley consisted of a series of rural landscapes east of the coastal center of Amathus

63 See Toumazou et al. 2015 for the changing expansion of the rural sanctuary of Athienou *Malloura*.

64 Averett 2015.

65 Fourier 2007; Georgiadou 2011.

66 For a discussion on distribution of terra-cotta dance groups in the Mediterranean and their religious significance, see Averett 2007, 196–98.

during the eighth to fourth centuries BCE.⁶⁷ Immediately surrounding Kalavastos *Skouries* are the remains of several ancient mine shafts and heaps or scatters of copper slag.⁶⁸ This liminal area of the valley sits at the interface between the sedimentary soils of the river terraces and the igneous rock of the Troodos mountains. While it is assumed that the mines around Kalavastos *Platies* and *Skouries* must have been worked during the Late Bronze Age, radiocarbon dates recovered from charcoal in these slag heaps indicate at least some activity beginning in the Archaic period, perhaps by the seventh century BCE.⁶⁹ This period is concurrent with a shift to wetter conditions in regional climate, which likely afforded a greater availability of water in local springs and rainfall that extended the surrounding pine and juniper forest, thus providing timber and charcoal for industries such as copper production as well as for household tasks.⁷⁰

Survey work in these valleys has discovered clusters of small sites that emerged around the eighth century BCE during the later Geometric and Archaic periods—sites roughly 0.5–1.0 ha in area that seem to have taken advantage of the igneous foothills and associated relic landslide deposits with arable soils in this period of environmental transformation (fig. 3.4).⁷¹ These locations may have acted as the residential bases for mining groups. Several sites, such as *Asgata Neron tou Phani*, *Kalavastos Spilios*, and *Kalavastos Petra*, have surface evidence of slag, as well as diverse domestic and mortuary assemblages, and their similar abandonment by the fourth century suggests their close ties to the workings of the mines.⁷² Studies of the survey ceramics from this phase in settlement point to an association with ceramic production at Amathus, but skewed to the table wares and coarse ware assemblages indicative of residential and industrial communities.⁷³ Survey work has recovered fewer sites dating to the Classical period, which may indicate a change in settlement patterns and urban migrations connected to the solidification of sovereignty at Amathus.⁷⁴ For the area near Kalavastos *Skouries*, surface evidence points to at least one likely adjacent settlement, *Kalavastos Petra*, occupied during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The reduction of local settlement variability in the fifth and fourth centuries, or at least its archaeological visibility, further reinforces the political need for local gathering places for communities remaining in the area and potentially explains the creation of a permanent shrine at Kalavastos *Skouries*.

67 Kearns 2016; on Amathus, see Aupert 1997; Petit 2001, 2019; Iacovou 2018, 23–24.

68 Archaic–Classical mining evidence comes especially from the locality Kalavastos *Platies* (Kassianidou 2013, 75). Kassianidou has recently begun investigations of the mines and slag heaps around the nearby village of *Asgata* (part of the project METAL PLACES: Culture crossroads in eastern Mediterranean).

69 Kassianidou 2013, appendix 1; Zwicker 1986, 100. On the Late Bronze Age connections to the Kalavastos ores, see Van Brempt and Kassianidou 2016.

70 Kearns 2019; 2022, 113–53; for a study of the wood consumption associated with the copper production at Kalavastos *Skouries*, see Socratous, Kassianidou, and Di Pasquale 2015.

71 Kearns 2016, 2017, 2019; see also Todd 2004, 92–93; 2013, 99–102; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018, 558, 566.

72 Todd 2004, 32, 92–93, 101–4; 2013, 27, 102; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018, 561; Kearns 2023, 221–30.

73 Georgiadou 2016; 2018, 161.

74 Todd 2013, 102–4.

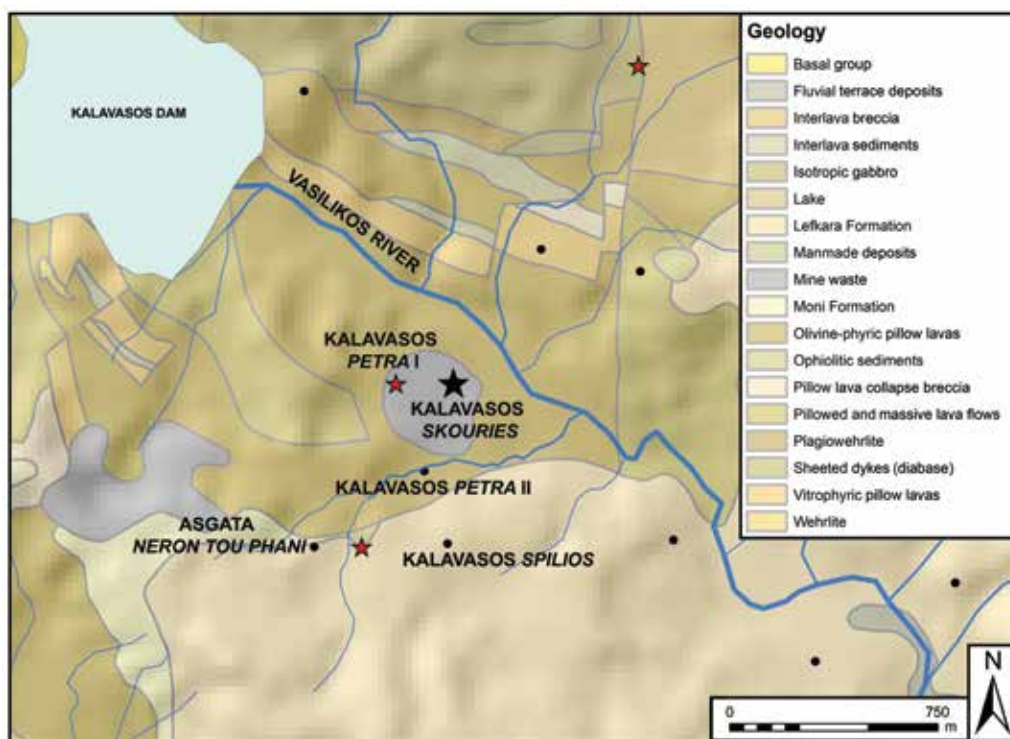


Figure 3.4. Geological map of the Vasilikos Valley near the mines showing the location of Archaic and Classical settlements (black circles) and tombs (red stars) mentioned in the text. Map created by Catherine Kearns with data from the Geological Survey Department of Cyprus.

DISCUSSION

Contextualizing these finds against what we know of Archaic and Classical religion on Cyprus can help flesh out these practices. By the Iron Age, urban centers such as Amathus provide evidence of copper slag intertwined with cult imagery and votive figurines that indicate ritual activity in metallurgical spaces within the administrative and palatial contexts of the ruling elites. At Amathus, excavations in the “palace” revealed a room with an apparent shrine and evidence of metallurgy, while at the inland political center of Tamassos, copper slag has been found within *bothroi* of the Ashtart temple, near a copper workshop.⁷⁵ Other indications of copperworking within or associated with sanctuaries appear at Kition *Bamboula* and Polis *Peristeries*.⁷⁶

These intrasite assemblages of the remnants of metalworking and ritual activity may find purchase in Cypriot and Mediterranean myths of metallurgy and its associated sacred registers developing in the period, made famous through figures such as the Greek deity Hephaistos. Mentioned first in Greek epic poetry such as the *Iliad*, the Cypriot king named

⁷⁵ For Amathus, see Petit 2002; Kassianidou 2013, 68; for Tamassos, see Buchholz 1987, 177; Given 2018, 171.

⁷⁶ For Polis, see Smith 1997. See discussion in Given 2018, 171; Kassianidou 2012, 233–36.

Kinyras became fixed in Greek and Roman thought as a *proto heurètes* of iron production and a persona linked to the divine lyre and ritual song (*Il.*11.19–28; *Nem.* 8.18; *HN* 7.195).⁷⁷ Elites at places such as Paphos claimed genealogical ties through the Kinyradai, temple musicians of Aphrodite.⁷⁸ The goddess herself was intertwined in myths of metal craftsmanship alongside her consort Hephaistos (*Hymn Hom. Ven.* 5.2–13) and the mythic creatures known as the “daktyls,” diminutive beings typically associated with discovering iron and metallurgy on Crete but also part of a Cypriot mythic topography (e.g., *HN* 7.197). Such mythic contexts may have paired metallurgy with the divine rights of the royal households, but they may also have called ritual attention to the sensorial and transformative state of metals during the production processes, as raw ores become crushed, heated, and shaped through physical force and fire into anthropogenic forms. Indeed, some scholars have argued that metallurgy itself and particularly smelting can be a ritual spectacle, involving a choreography of flames, sounds, and malleable metals and requiring an audience of captivated participants.⁷⁹

At a shrine such as Kalavassos *Skouries*, in the geologically liminal zone between agrarian and copper production regimes, mining and smelting may have entailed such a performative aspect. We can imagine specialists in mining and metallurgy acting for inclusive audiences or inviting members from the larger community to witness the affective dimensions of their technology.⁸⁰ The small ritual building might have been a permanent marker of these congealed gatherings that amplified the highly charged and potentially sacred aspects of the mining landscape around it. The clearly homemade, localized propensities of the figurines found at Kalavassos *Skouries* therefore raise some interesting possibilities for the mechanics of worship. Without the telltale signs of interregional participation at the shrine—signs such as inscriptions or large-scale statuary erected through wealthy benefactors—it seems unlikely that urban dwellers were making a pilgrimage to the mines for the purpose of ritual performances. We could be seeing traces of the deposition of votives that people fashioned as needed and used in intimate community rituals but that shared material traits and norms with the larger polity. If the settlements near Kalavassos *Skouries* were cohering as emergent communities with their own forms of differentiation and bonding, these gathering places became venues for the reproduction of social organization through inclusive ritual spectacles.

Survey evidence is always notoriously limited. Combined with the difficulties in our epistemologies of the archaeology of religion, these terra-cotta snapshots of ritual performance at mines and copper production areas and their instrumentality in community cohesion are heuristic. Nevertheless, a picture emerges of a rural sanctuary or shrine set within the material and politico-economic setting of copper production and maintained by a local community that was oriented to and perhaps dependent on the nearby polity of Amathus. The cultural activities here were likely part of broader currents that paired

⁷⁷ Morris 1997, 610; Franklin 2016.

⁷⁸ West 1997, 57; Franklin 2016, 401–25.

⁷⁹ Catapotis 2007, 216–18. On the sensory nature of Roman copper mining on Cyprus, see *De simp. med. temp. ac fac.* 9–11; Given 2018, 170–71. On fire and its imagery “haunting the early Greek imagination,” see Neer 2018, 487–88.

⁸⁰ Catapotis 2007, 217.

copper production with divine mediation, but they also established devotion or ritual attention to the increasing productivity of this broader taskscape of agropastoral work. This highly charged context, between arable and copper production, fostered the creation of audiences for novel social formations and anchored understandings of community through the enacting of rituals.⁸¹ Interestingly, survey and excavation in the region have produced evidence of only a few other ritual sites belonging to the transition to the Classical period: Vavla *Kapsalaes*, Maroni *Vournes*, and probably also Maroni *Yialos* and Vavla *Metaxa*.⁸² The scattering of rural sanctuaries, combined with a probable praxis of household religion that currently evades our archaeological grasp, further emphasizes the choices made to create a place of ritual gathering at *Skouries*.

The site's afterlife situates ritual performances here in an ambivalent relationship to political change: radiocarbon dates from the slag heap covering the structure suggest the sanctuary was likely abandoned, and then deliberately used as an extensive copper-smelting site and dumping ground for slag, sometime between the fourth century BCE and first century CE.⁸³ The ritual salience of the abandoned site may have become operative as a renewed space of copper production, tying the performative acts of smelting to liminal or charged spaces. Set against the broader political shifts occurring on the island with the transition to Ptolemaic imperial control, however, it also becomes compelling to see the ends of worship here as resulting from the breakdown of local community structure and the withering of investment in its maintenance.⁸⁴ Indeed, survey in the Vasilikos Valley has recovered very few settlements from the Hellenistic period (fig. 3.5).⁸⁵ If the Ptolemaic administration that assumed sovereignty over the island sanctioned more exploitative conditions for copper production, and more surveillance of its associated labor groups, the covering of this earlier shrine may also indicate the imperial destruction of local ties of belonging to limit chances for empowerment of the colonized.

CONCLUSIONS

The site of Kalavassos *Skouries* prompts us to “reevaluate the realm of the political” by considering how even the seemingly banal politics of rural industry and economy *needs* performative space, as well as how such charged localities are produced and instrumentalized by communities through outwardly nonpolitical acts, such as copper mining, and shaped and maintained by members making the community legible.⁸⁶ In the reconstructions offered above, communities began gathering near the evocative and likely mythically potent landscape of the mines during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE as they reinvested in this part of the valley through arable, pastoral, timber, and copper production. These

81 On the anchoring of cultural practices and *habitus*, see Swidler 2001; see also Lindsay 2016.

82 Papantoniou et al. 2015; Todd 2016, 35–36; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018; Kearns 2023, 172–85. On Maroni *Vournes*, see also Ulbrich 2012.

83 Kassianidou 2012, 234; Kassianidou 2013, 67.

84 For the destructive effects of Ptolemaic control on existing ritual landscapes in the later Hellenistic period, see especially Papantoniou 2012b; Papantoniou and Kyriakou 2018, 572.

85 Todd 2013, 104.

86 Appadurai 2003, 338; on politics necessitating space, see Morgan, Introduction, this volume; Richardson, this volume.

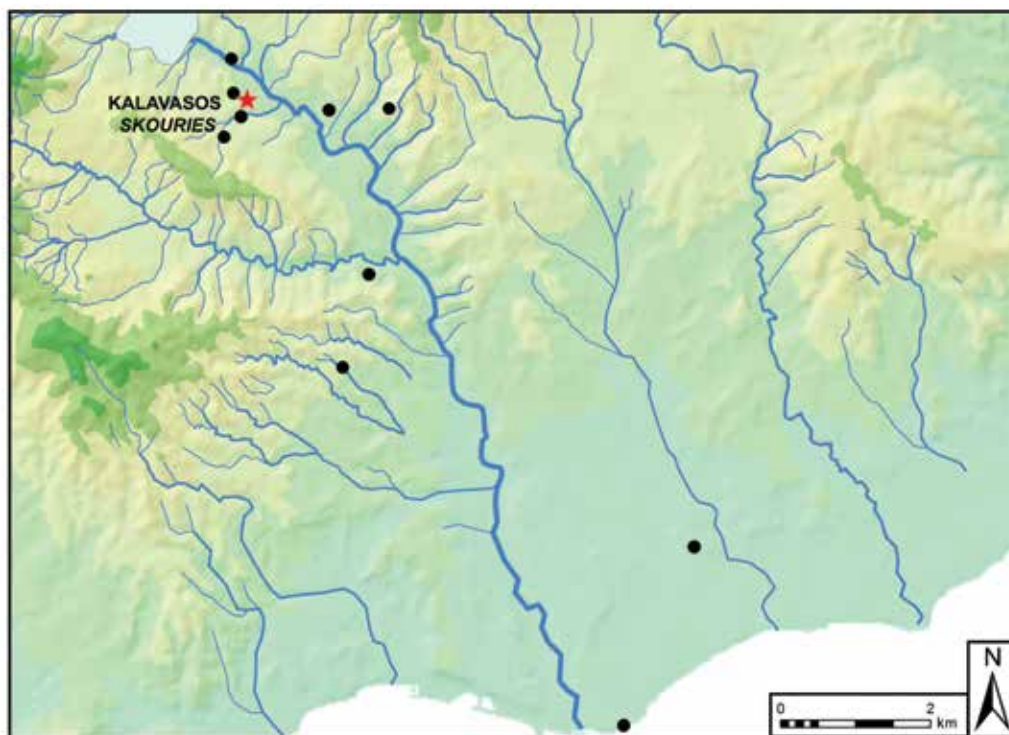


Figure 3.5. Map showing the location of Hellenistic settlements recovered through survey in the Vasilikos Valley. Map created by Catherine Kearns with data from the Geological Survey Department of Cyprus.

groups came to require a more permanent space for inclusive performances, building a small, limestone-block shrine by the fifth century that centered activities such as dancing and votive deposition. The ritual gatherings and performances staged there made it comprehensible for local communities as a place of meeting and encounter—whether private and exclusive to outsiders or more public is difficult to discern without more evidence. Indeed, the material signatures of the shrine, its ephemerality, and its vernacular character suggest that it was an arena of small spectacles aimed at political affiliations to community, reproducing broader ritual domains of practice at intimate scales and anchoring those involved in nearby tasks to meaningful places.⁸⁷

As Arjun Appadurai has argued, these investments in place that generate familiarity and affiliation often exist outside or persist alongside the different demands of the polity.⁸⁸ With our current meager understandings of Archaic and Classical political systems on the island, it is challenging to interpret how a state such as Amathus may have demanded particular commitments to its sovereignty from those working the mines in the Vasilikos area, or how performances there reproduced, challenged, or afforded the attachments of ruling elites and subjects. But the finds, when contextualized, plausibly reveal how these

⁸⁷ On anchoring practices, see Swidler 2001; see also Brace, Bailey, and Harvey 2006 on the geographies of religion as articulations of community identity.

⁸⁸ Appadurai 2003, 338.

spaces for ritual performance were more than border cults where state-driven ideologies of territoriality were played out. The terra-cotta figurines found at *Skouries* are especially interesting for their handmade imitations of Cypriot religious activity seen at larger sanctuaries but seem meant for personal or knowable relations rather than “being seen.”

Kalavastos *Skouries* thus directs critical attention to the variety of ritual audiences within Archaic polities. It also helps us confront a need to dichotomize the potential for discourse in ancient ritual spaces between those that unified populations and those that divided them.⁸⁹ The setting, materials, and contexts of deposition and tasks at *Skouries* speak instead to an ambivalence of political performance and community on the rural, industrial edges of the state. The shrine and its larger landscape help us move beyond questions of whether the figurines represent the reception of elite ideology by “commoner” audiences or whether locals were “resisting” the top-down control of a city-state such as Amathus through the creation of new schemes of local empowerment and community action. Rather than assume that sites like *Skouries* fit one or the other model, it is helpful to question how such multivalence anchored local communities to a shared place just as it afforded commitments to regional and interregional schemas. In other words, Kalavastos *Skouries* exemplifies how particular scalar arrangements between mining community and polity were socially constructed and constituted by political formations through diverse material forms.⁹⁰ *Skouries* as a place for public performance was likely critical to some senses of community and territory, shaped by everyday routines at the mines and small spectacles of metallurgical ritual, which only partly integrated the religious authority operating at a center such as Amathus through the reproduction of common figurine forms.⁹¹ At the same time, the proximity to active mining operations may have demonstrated the legitimacy of copper-related ritual practices that were then referenced in urban sanctuaries through the enacting of metallurgical craftsmanship. While it may be tempting to see Kalavastos *Skouries* as an isolated rural shrine, its instrumentality in creating a sense of community for nearby settlements through ritual acts and votive creations enmeshed in wider schemas helps us explore how it generated a broader social and political field.

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⁸⁹ See Blanton 2015.

⁹⁰ On scale, see Brenner 2001.

⁹¹ On multiple constructs of territory and countrysides, see Foxhall and Yoon 2016; “sense” here carries the connotations of Smith 2015, 57: “the domain of evocation, of signification, where assemblages work to (re)define value.”

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ABBREVIATIONS

- De simp. med. temp. ac fac.* Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus*
HN Pliny, *Natural History*
Hymn Hom. Ven. Homer, *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*
Il. Homer, *Iliad*
Nem. Pindar, *Nemean Odes*

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4

The Reinvented Social Somatics of Ritual Performance on Early Crete: Engagements of Humans with Zoomorphic Vessels

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I WISH TO use this space to consider the political experiences of early Crete in terms of bodies. The relevance of the human body in sociopolitical domains is an extremely well-studied topic—at this point a field of its own—approached from diverse perspectives. My interest, however, is primarily in the contribution of nonhuman bodies in these contexts. The open-endedness of the term “nonhuman” is important here. I intend it to embrace both artificial bodies that present in some ways as humanlike and the bodies of animals beyond the human species. I am interested in how these categories coincide in certain objects and the unique effect of that coincidence.

My discussion surrounds a group of Prepalatial Cretan (ca. 2350–1900 BCE)¹ objects that are most frequently described as “anthropomorphic vessels.” I investigate their particular material and their mechanical and interactive potentials, with a focus on their performance of distinctive “body techniques” that could variously engage or deemphasize living humans. Thus the fact that these things were experienced *as bodies* becomes extremely important for understanding their entangled practical and social dimensions. Of equal focus are the objects’ contexts—both material and sociopolitical. Working with their depositional settings as well as current discussions of social organization and community life in Bronze Age Crete, I investigate the participation of these “other bodies” in venues of collective action. By foregrounding the corporeal status of these objects and, with it, their rich *intercorporeal* dynamics, new connections arise. I suggest that to really get at the contexts of these human-form vessels, we in fact need to view them more broadly as zoomorphic, opening the door for new comparisons and insights. With this perspective, I close by examining changes in the physical character of zoomorphic vessels as Crete progressed from the Prepalatial to “palatial” phases. I argue that corporeal changes in these things would have poignantly contributed to sociopolitical reformulations on the island by changing the bodily dynamics of key ritual performances.

1 That is, late Early Bronze Age/early Middle Bronze Age.

ESTABLISHING A CLAY KIN GROUP

In the early twentieth century, Stephanos Xanthoudidēs undertook a series of excavations throughout the southern Mesara Plain of Crete. These excavations explored multiple monumental stone tombs constructed and used throughout the Prepalatial period, from the Early to early Middle Bronze Age (fig. 4.1). These “tholos” tombs, characterized by a distinctive vaulted form, were collective and multigenerational, their use sometimes spanning centuries. Within the material culture Xanthoudidēs recovered in the tombs at Koumasa were several remarkable clay objects that he described as “anthropomorphic vases.” The best-preserved example, HM 4137, was found in the area between the three tholos tombs at Koumasa (figs. 4.2 and 4.3).² It stands 16 cm high. The overall form of the body is that of a hollow, narrow, trapezoidal bell, closed at the bottom. Upward from the shoulders projects a spade-shaped head with slightly concave sides, or cheeks, and a pronounced rhinal protrusion. At the left shoulder a miniature clay jug has been formed, giving the effect that the figure carries it. The inside of this small jug communicates with the hollow interior of the larger vessel body—this opening is, in fact, the only one in the entire object. Two thin ropes of clay, painted with fine red dashes, have been added, one at the right shoulder, continuing onto the torso, and the other curving around the miniature jug from the figure’s left shoulder. They have been read both as arms and as snakes. Two small pellet breasts have been affixed to the front of the body. A pair of fine clay bands ring the front of the neck, perhaps as necklaces. Red paint has been added in linear and geometric patterns on the front and back. On the front, a narrow central panel of bounded X-motifs extends from neck to base, flanked by double fringed lines. On the back, lines swoop from the base of the neck to the sides of the body, creating arcs. A simple vertical handle is placed in the middle of the back.³

Xanthoudidēs also found three other highly comparable but less well preserved objects at Koumasa (HM 4138, 4139, 4993; fig. 4.4).⁴ Since his discovery of these vessels, five more objects, each very similar to the Koumasa jug holders, have been found at sites around Crete.⁵ In addition, three other vessels have come to light, each clearly akin to this group but differing in certain interesting ways. In 1969, Warren’s team at the Early Minoan II (ca. 2700–2200 BCE) settlement of Myrtos Founou Korifi uncovered a distinctive

2 Xanthoudidēs (1924, 39) describes this as “Region Delta,” between Tholoi A, E, and Gamma.

3 Xanthoudidēs 1924, 13, 33, 39. See also Warren 1973, esp. 138, pl. XVIII 1–2; Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 50.

4 Xanthoudidēs 1924, 12–13, pl. XIX. See also Warren 1973, esp. 138, pl. XVIII 3–4 (HM 4993); Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 50–51.

5 One object from Trapeza Cave, HM 9339, dating to EM I–MM, EM IIB, or EM III; one object from Ayios Myron (see Alexiou 1969, pl. 273α), dating to EM III–MM IA or EM II–III; one from Yiofyrakia (see Marinatos 1933–35, 50, fig. 2, no. 8, 3), dating to EM III or EM III/MM IA; two objects from Archanes Phourni, Area of the Rocks (see Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, vol. 2, figs. 538 [HMII 25770] and 539 [HMII 25770] and unknown museum number [HMII 25770]) dated to EM III or MM IA and the other to EM III. Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2013, 46–52), has assembled a concise and excellent catalog of the Prepalatial “anthropomorphic” vessels, with dating (drawn on here) and further bibliography (her catalog also extends to subsequent periods).

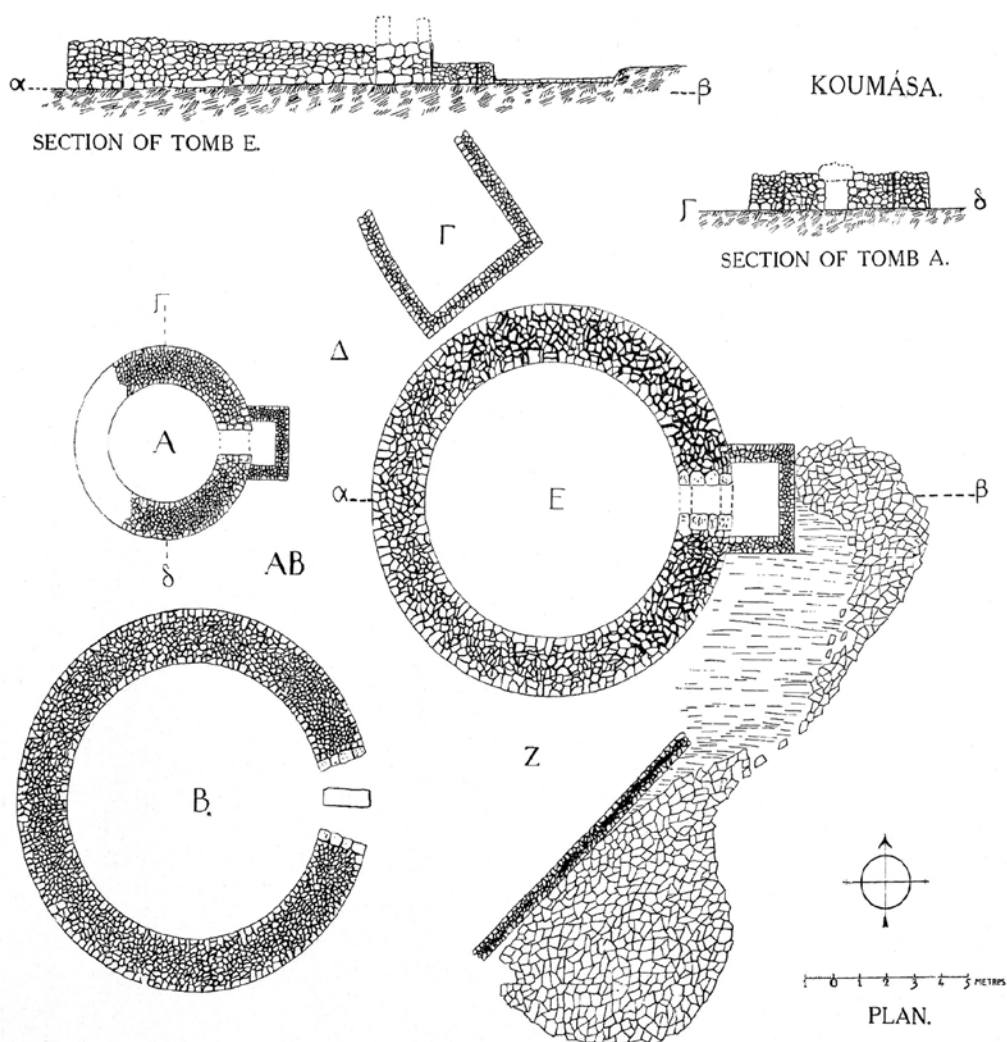


Figure 4.1. Koumasa, plan of area of the tholos tombs. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. LXI.

corporeal vessel (ANM 7719; fig. 4.5).⁶ It sits just over 21 cm high. Its body has a bell shape like the Koumasa vessels, but here it is much more inflated, almost globular. An extremely long, narrow neck extends upward, ending in a petite head with clear eyes, pronounced ears, and a beak-like nose. A long, slender right arm crosses the body to meet the other arm at the articulated handle of a well-formed jug, clutched to the figure's left shoulder. As with the other anthropomorphic vessels, this miniature jug communicates with the interior of the entire hollow object and provides its only opening. A number of geometric hatched panels have been painted in red on the figure's body, perhaps indicating textiles or anatomy; painted single lines with herringbone-like projections run up the sides. There is no handle.

⁶ See Warren 1972, 208–10 and fig. 92, as well as lengthy discussion in Warren 1973, esp. 139, 140–41, pls. XX–XXI. See also Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 46.



Figure 4.2. Vessel from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs, Region Delta; HM 4137; photo. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. XIX.

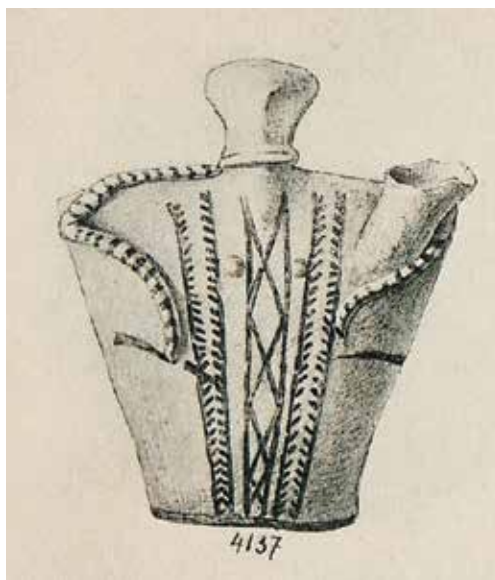


Figure 4.3. Vessel from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs, Region Delta; HM 4137; drawing. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. II.



Figure 4.4. Four “anthropomorphic” vessels from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs; HM 4137, 4138, 4139, 4993; photo. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. XIX.

From Malia and Mochlos we have two vessels that are much like the others described, except that they do not clutch jugs but instead have pierced breasts (HM 8665, 3499/5499; figs. 4.6 and 4.7).⁷ The vessel from Mochlos is, as Warren states, “the most anthropomorphic” of the bunch.⁸ Notable is the smooth band that encircles the head, punctuated only by a single bulb. The band could be some sort of hair garment, cap, or, in Warren’s view, a snake. The figure cups her breasts with her hands, each carefully articulated with delicate

7 HM 8665, from Ossuary II at Malia, is dated to EM III–MM IA or MM IA, while its context contains some Late Minoan material. See Demargne 1945, 14 and pl. 31.1–2; Warren 1973, esp. 138, pl. XIX.1–2; and Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 48. HM 3499 from Mochlos Tomb XIII is dated to EM III or EM III–MM IA. See Seager 1912, 64, figs. 32, 34 no. XIIIg; Warren 1973, esp. 138–39 (who gives the inventory number as HM 5499); and Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 47.

8 Warren 1973, 138.

fingers. Intricate linear motifs cover the dark ground of the vessel's body. The figure from Malia, on the other hand, looks only somewhat humanoid. The dark surface of the body is covered in white-painted designs that seem to meet, or part at the front central axis of the body, around the breasts. The eyes are large and pronounced and the face is dramatically concave on both sides, with a sharply projecting "nose." The top of the head is formed as a wreathlike ring, perhaps a cap or hair, which broadly parallels the Mochlos figure. The arms are not articulated as such but instead rise in winglike drapes from the sides of the vessel. This object, like the one from Mochlos and most of the others, has a vertical handle on its back. The vessel from Myrtos was found in a domestic context. One of the jug carriers stems from the Trapeza Cave, in a zone that includes burials. The other vessels all come from tomb chambers or spaces around or near tombs.



Figure 4.5. Vessel from Myrtos Fournou Korifi, found in Room 92; ANM 7719. "Goddess of Myrtos, Phournou Koryphi, 2500–2300 BC, AM Ag. Nikolaos, 0501222" by Zde is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goddess_of_Myrtos,_Phournou_Koryphi,_2500-2300_BC,_AM_Ag._Nikolaos,_0501222.jpg.

IN WHOSE HANDS?

I wish to draw out several distinctive and interrelated features of these peculiar object-bodies that would dynamically affect their performative character. First, all the objects can stand on their own, without the aid of human hands—a quality that sets them apart in the broader sphere of anthropomorphic objects from Prepalatial Crete, especially figurines. It is their peculiar, flaring body shapes that afford this independent deportment. Related to this ability to sit—or stand—on their own is the fact that all these clay bodies could hold a liquid.⁹ This feature might seem unremarkable, but it is a corporeal affordance that, quite significantly, is not shared by other contemporaneous representations of humans. Having the ability to hold liquids thus affected both the basic nature and the *temporality* of our clay figures, extending their performative capacity indefinitely between the moments of being filled and, later, emptied.

⁹ This distinction is also noted by Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2013, 33–34), who works with the notion of "containment," citing the work of Warnier (2006); Crossland (2010); and Knappett, Malafouris, and Tomkins (2010).



Figure 4.6. Vessel from Malia; HM 8665. “Rhyton_Mallia_01” by Olaf Tausch is licensed under CC BY 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhyton_Mallia_01.jpg.



Figure 4.7. Vessel from Mochlos; HM 3499/5499. “Rhyton Mochlos 01” by Olaf Tausch is licensed under CC BY 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhyton_Mochlos_01.jpg.

In the interim, they were bodies—like our own—with liquid in their bellies.¹⁰ This capacity would have affected their distribution of weight, the hollowness lightening each figure and the liquid bringing it a responsive variability that would react to each different movement, angle, and rhythm that engaged it. More fundamentally, receiving and holding liquid charged the bodies’ participation in a social context with a powerful potential energy that could be drawn out toward the objects’ performative climax.

In the kinetic moment of decanting, these figures would strikingly mediate, or take responsibility for, the stream of liquids. For, in each example, the current of liquid would actually be seen to originate out of something manipulated by the figure: in ten instances the figure uses a jug, and in two, its breasts.¹¹ The liquid, therefore, appears as the im-

10 Compare Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2013), who considers how some of the Cretan “anthropomorphic” vessels “provided metaphors for the biological body” (p. 33) and makes the compelling assertion that the liquid contents could be considered “an integral part” of the vessels (p. 27).

11 Alberti’s (2001) observations concerning the representation of exposed human breasts in later Bronze Age Crete could be relevant here. He argues that the imaged bare chest was part of the constructed gender of certain bodies at Knossos, contributing to the constitution of identity in a manner akin to (and in combination with) costuming. The notion that bared breasts were not merely a natural bodily given, but were objectified as part of a cultural form, resonates with the idea proffered here that the exposed breasts of the clay bodies should in part be understood as a productive device—like the miniature jugs that others hold—the manipulation of which was significant to the figure’s particular active identity. That in some cases the jugs are merged into the figure carrying them underscores that the division between body and pouring device was actively being blurred.

mediate output of the clay body's effort instead of the fleshy human's. Indeed, while the whole clay body is also a thing we could refer to as a "vase," there seems to be an attempt to distance this aspect of its identity from its performances. A vase is something that an animate agent can manipulate to bring forth a liquid. Here that productive agency is literally put in the hands of the clay figures. Moreover, if the act of filling the vessels was concealed, the clay bodies would seem to generate the liquid of their own accord during the later performative moment of decanting, thus bringing yet further potency to the effect of their independence.¹² In some cases the filling may in fact have been a distinct moment of performance, one in which the clay figure was seen to receive the liquid actively.¹³ Yet there is a clear emphasis, in each instance, on the figure's autonomy as a dynamic body.

Specific, formal details of the objects support this impression of independence. In most of the examples in which the body holds a miniature jug, that small vessel provides the only opening in the whole object—the opening through which all liquid would have to enter or exit. The absence of a separate, conspicuous opening for the introduction of liquid further erases a human's role in the filling of the vessel's body from its persistent physical form. So the *miniature* jug becomes the primary vessel, and the clay body becomes the principal corporeal agent, which appears solely responsible for "bringing forth" the liquid. In the two cases where liquid is instead produced through the breasts, there is in fact another opening, but it is discretely located on the back of the head, behind the raised ridge of the cap, such that it would not be markedly visible to those who faced the clay "being."

The fact that most of the objects have handles is also relevant.¹⁴ In each of these cases the handle extends from the back of the body opposite to the direction the clay figure faces. Thus the living human hand that would grasp the handle to tip the vessel body could, in a sense, be removed from the action, discretely kept behind the scenes instead of visibly gripping and manipulating the small body. Hence various features of these objects could cleverly obscure the living human's role in providing the liquid or motivating its reappearance. Instead, the uncanny clay body would be experienced as unusually, movingly animate and independent—not as a device employed but an active and productive participant.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw has undertaken investigations of the ergonomics of these clay body-vessels.¹⁵ Her work crucially reminds us of the potential variability in human engagements with such things—indeed, there was not one way to hold them, but multiple ways, afforded by the peculiar object-bodies and their contextualized relations with different human hands. The presence and dexterity¹⁶ of the larger, fleshy hands, and their role in the movements of the smaller clay bodies, could be more or less marked, the performative effect intonated and altered therewith. The clay figures, like the humans who held them, would vary in size and character. It could be that certain ways of filling, holding, and decanting were learned as traditional skills involving these peculiar objects (an idea

12 In some cases, the filling may in fact have been a distinct moment of performance, in which the clay figure was seen to receive the liquid actively. Yet there is a clear emphasis, in each instance, on the figure's autonomy as a dynamic body.

13 See Warren 1973; Cadogan 2010.

14 See discussion of the Myrtos vessel below.

15 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013.

16 See Mauss 1979, 108–9.

that certainly would not preclude innovation and improvisation in the realization of such actions¹⁷). In this light, it is especially important to consider how these objects *were* and how they acted *across* moments—as bodies expressively standing on their own and as bodies engaging with different bodies, in variable environments. What was it that they themselves brought to the table?

TECHNIQUES OF PECULIAR BODIES

The impression of the autonomous production of liquids undertaken by these little bodies—be it potential or in-process—could well have been quite powerful, even wondrous, to those who shared a social context with them. Wonder can be found in a wide diversity of traits and circumstances. It can be felt when confronting something unexpected, unprecedented. But that surely was not the case here. If these clay bodies could inspire wonder in their performative autonomy, they likely did so through movements and abilities that were expected, that were traditional and established—if acutely extraordinary. A person in the presence of one of the vessels would be able to predict the animation to come. The open jugs they carry, their pierced breasts, would be gazed upon with anticipation of a fluid’s imminent appearance. More fundamentally, the fact that we already have numerous contemporaneous Cretan vessels that share such a distinctive bodily form indicates that people likely would have approached these objects with a knowledge of what they were and what they could do. In other words, they were not only bodies in possession of iconic cues that conjured familiar experiences involving liquid but likely also established material forms associated with certain characteristics and hence predictable capabilities. Thus it was not *what* they were doing that was extraordinary but *their doing* itself.

In this light, Mauss’s notion of “body techniques” becomes a powerful means for thinking about the actions of these object-bodies.¹⁸ Mauss develops the idea of body techniques to get at the cultural specificity of the movements, “attitudes,” “habits,” and “mechanical” processes undertaken by bodies. He stresses the external derivation of these techniques, arguing that even bodily actions as basic as sleeping and walking are in fact carried out through particular movements that do not emerge “naturally” in the individual body but are, somehow and variably, “transmitted” to it from its social and material world.¹⁹ As such, these techniques are repeated, their iterability being at the core of their very nature. At the same time, these movements can be specific to certain groups of bodies within a society²⁰ and can involve the engagement of multiple bodies with one another;²¹ they entail and solicit specific social engagements. They are thus familiar, predictable, and traditional but also keenly compelling and efficacious. They are a realization of a body’s social existence in a lived world, and they contribute to realizing its identity therein.

17 See, for example, Ingold 2009; Hallam and Ingold 2007, on the inevitability, even necessity, of variation within learned tradition and repetition; and discussion in Anderson 2016, esp. 113–39.

18 Mauss 1979.

19 Mauss 1979, 108. Compare Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus.

20 Mauss (1979) gives examples that are differentiated by age, gender, and occupation.

21 Mauss (1979, 111) discusses, for example, a toddler’s responsive perching on a mother’s hip.

Mauss's discussion embraces the potential involvement of nonhuman entities—including material culture and nonhuman animals—in the body techniques of living people. It also opens the door for stepping in a further, reciprocal direction, recognizing other bodies as primaries in sociocultural movements. Better appreciating the potential role of objects is crucial here. That nonhuman animals can affect our culturally specific and regularly experienced movements can be comfortably recognized. One obvious example would be instances where horse riding is a principal means of transportation or farming, and the beast is central to the human's bodily practices involved therein. Likewise, there is now a rich field of scholarship problematizing the myriad ways in which objects can be active elements of a human body's particular movements, attitudes, and dispositions, and how they can be fundamental elements of a person's somatic sociocultural experience.²² Mauss discusses, for example, how shoes "transform the position of feet," affecting our gait, our ambulatory habits, and our character—something also discussed more recently by Ingold.²³ Think also of how a chair or hammer affects the basic nature of sitting or making and, with that effect, the rich cultural implications of both. (Clearly relevant here is the work of Heidegger and of Sennett.²⁴) Working with Gibson's notion of affordances,²⁵ Knappett has provided stimulating discussions of how things, even "inanimate" ones, in fact should be recognized for their generative roles within actions that emerge through ever-particular *relations between* humans and environments.²⁶ Working on a related but distinct path, Malafouris has investigated the idea that some things can become effective parts of a human's active body in "prosthetic" cognitive and physical relationships.

Mauss's work remains valuable within this context of rich theorization because of its razor-sharp focus on the embodied physical and practical aspects of sociocultural action, or, to put it another way, because of his assertion that bodily work, in its bare and subtle dimensions, is the basic stuff of sociocultural life. It is here that we can see the contributions of object-bodies and living bodies playfully coincide—and, in some ways, Mauss's ideas may be especially useful for contemplating such coincidence.²⁷ If one's primary focus were on the living human's body, theories that have developed in part on the shoulders of Mauss's work might better get at the inevitable cognitive and emotional dimensions of bodily action and experience. But for the present discussion it is absolutely crucial to recognize the unique dynamics at play when the *things* humans are interacting with are understood *as bodies*—as complexly nonhuman (but uneasily *sort of* human) bodies that

22 Other scholars, in addition to Mauss, have certainly been fundamental in establishing this area of inquiry. The phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945, 1964) has been a basis for much recent work that has challenged the division of mind and body and rethought the relationship of the human body and its world. The somatic character of human experience, and the emphasis it brings to relationships of human and nonhuman bodies, has since been problematized, to various ends, by, for example, Latour 2005; Knappett 2002, 2004, 2011; Knappett and Malafouris 2008; Malafouris 2008, 2013; Bennett 2010; and Harman 2018.

23 Mauss 1979, 102; Ingold 2004. See also Anderson (2015; forthcoming) concerning how the presence or absence of footgear would affect the bodily/sociocultural experience of pilgrimage.

24 See especially Heidegger, Macquarrie, and Robinson 2006; Sennett 2009.

25 He also deals with the work of Latour and Bourdieu, among others.

26 For example, Knappett 2002, 2004, 2011; Gibson 1986. Compare Heidegger, Macquarrie, and Robinson 2006 on "readiness-to-hand."

27 Mauss 1979.

have their own distinct potentials, ones that are dynamic, social, and keenly engaging.²⁸ In other words, these things are part of humans' body techniques but also are experienced as having body techniques of their own—ones that engage humans.

Understanding the performance of our Cretan vessels through Mauss's notion of body techniques thus brings them into the fold of animate social bodies; it takes seriously how the actions carried out by their clay bodies also contributed to the social habits, relations, and experiences constitutive of social formations in early Crete.²⁹ These actions were characterized by a culturally established repertoire of bodily movements, dispositions, and anticipated relational engagements. In these respects, the techniques of their clay bodies coincided with the techniques of living human actors—the techniques of *both* types of bodies being intrinsic elements of the social spaces they shared.³⁰

The iterative nature of the vessels' body techniques merits closer consideration. It can be recognized in two senses, each involving an experience and expectation of replication inherent in the performance of the vessel-bodies. In part, this iterative effect would have been realized as people, considering different anthropomorphic vessels comparable and capable of comparable actions, associated them with one another in certain key respects. But we should also recognize an iterability pertaining to each of these objects on its own, over time: all these bodies would have been expected to perform, or be able to perform, certain techniques time and again. These techniques were culturally articulated and surely had specific significances, even if we cannot access them. But they were also material—they belonged to and characterized a body and hence were present in each context in which that body dwelled.³¹

The reiteration of techniques by these relatively stable social bodies linked the various contexts between which they could move as portable things. But always, of course, each instance of repetition was in fact also something new, materially and socially. These objects do age, they wear and chip; some may have been intentionally damaged.³² They may have decanted different liquids or stood on different surfaces. They may have streamed their liquids on different things, bodies—living or dead, human or nonhuman—each with different characters. Thus in a powerful way it was not so much the vessels that were consistent but their perceived bodily potential, something that certainly involved their

28 Knappett's insightful discussion of marionettes is relevant here, given their bodily and often human-like bodily nature (2002, 113–14).

29 Mauss's discussion is of course not without its shortcomings. In particular, he does not fully problematize the variation that inevitably occurs between iterations of a given bodily technique (a starting point for others' work, e.g., Butler's; see discussion of Butler 1993, below) and hence could risk reifying and dematerializing the technique, though his stated interest is precisely to highlight the actually performed action. Nevertheless, I have gone back to his work because Mauss's explicit focus on the specificity of bodily practice, the significance of the particular dynamisms and actions of bodies, and their social nature is incredibly useful. With this focus, Mauss undermines a notion of universal or natural corporeality, replacing it with a focus on what bodies do and how they do it, thus leaving space for a real diversity in the character of the bodies themselves. This approach allows us to appreciate points of commonality and distinction between bodies that otherwise were implicitly treated as incomparable.

30 Naturally they are powerfully distinct from the actions of living beings in other respects—both the overlaps and the divergences are significant.

31 Compare Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013.

32 See Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 34–35; also Rehak 1995a, 1995b.

ongoing materiality but was more crucially social, relational. If social space is constituted by active relations, by their character and realization over time (as discussed by, e.g., Lefebvre and Soja), then these clay bodies can be understood as generating a distinctive space, in different places.³³

ABJECT AND DOMESTICATED

The clay bodies would not have acted alone, and the relations they were part of fundamentally involved other bodies, movements, and matters. There are, however, reasons to expect that these diminutive bodies were especially prominent and efficacious in social contexts. Some of this reasoning concerns the nature of community organization at the time, a topic I will consider shortly. But it also has to do with the objects' unusual bodily nature. From an interpretive perspective, these things are difficult to categorize. They are vessels—clay containers—but they are also sculptural, representational figures, robust, vibrant, and potentially active bodies. Simandiraki-Grimshaw describes them as “not matter of fact” and, working with the notion of containment, considers how they could act as both “artifactual” and “biological” bodies.³⁴ Such complicated identity, frustrating to the modern scholar searching for efficient terminology, was almost certainly part of the objects' unique efficacy within their Bronze Age contexts. Indeed, these things seem intentionally designed to challenge clear ontological classification, and experiences with them would have realized a blurring of the animate and inanimate.³⁵ Their affordances arise from their various aspects, “thingly” and bodily, not as a combination of distinct capacities but as relational and corporeal potentials realized as both: the ways they attentively sit, produce, receive, and engage cannot be reduced to one facet of their identities or the other.

Their identities are complex in other senses, too. Usually described simply as “anthropomorphic,” their characters are more restless than this neat term acknowledges. The distinctive bell-like body shapes and curious formation of the faces, the markings that cover the bodies, and even in some cases their appendages eschew straightforward human identity. They are sometimes described as fully robed, or as nude, as female or male, as decked in a full-length garment or, in one view, as just a torso. These interpretations are not only hard to reconcile but also complicated by the prominent markings added to the bodies in paint and relief.³⁶ In fact, the closest contemporaneous parallels we have for the distinctive body shapes of these objects occur in nonhuman zoomorphic vessels, especially

33 For example, Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996, 2008.

34 Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2013, 25–29) discusses the unclear “boundaries” of these vessels, especially regarding their gender, fragmentariness, clothedness, and object type (between vessel and figurine); see also pp. 33–34 for fascinating observations concerning containment and movement of these objects as artifactual or biological bodies. On the question of gender in and through Minoan material culture, including these objects, see Goodison 2009.

35 Compare Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 35; also Knappett 2002 on complicating the division of animate and inanimate. See relevant discussion in Anderson 2019 concerning the unique animacies of material culture.

36 See also Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 22.

ones identified by Koehl as “hybrid birds,” which have avian bodies and the heads of various other animals.³⁷

Frankly, the heads of our “anthropomorphic” figures are themselves quite problematic. Warren, who excavated the Myrtos vessel, states of it, “although clearly female, the representation is far from literal and clearly not intended to be literal. The long, stalklike neck suggests it is not intended to represent a human figure.”³⁸ In several of our vessels, the pronounced central ridge of the face appears more like a beak than a nose, an impression that is strengthened by the proportionally very large eyes, set low in concave spaces flanking the rhinal protrusion. The face of the Malia figure exemplifies this ambiguity especially dramatically, and its body form also strongly suggests the avian—with “arms” that are equally winglike as they gently rise away from the sides of the body as soft and lightly perforated triangular sails, the sweeping painted designs contributing to the effect.³⁹ That these could be read as cloaked arms or wings, the face human or avian, keeps the figure in a powerful limbo—a tense open-endedness also played out in many of our other clay figures that likewise have a rather uneasy fit with human identity.

The specifically birdlike elements of the Malia figure, and several of the other vessels with their beaked faces, are worth a brief exploration. Avian vessels were widespread in Prepalatial Crete. They ranged from clearly zoomorphic objects that, like our more anthropomorphic ones, were powerfully bodily (figs. 4.8 and 4.9), to jugs that subtly but certainly gave the impression of birds through their upturned, beaked spouts and the frequent addition of pellet eyes (figs. 4.10 and 4.11). As the Middle Bronze Age progressed into the Late Bronze Age, the form of these beaked jugs was further developed on the island (fig. 4.12) and in the Cyclades, north of Crete. The Cycladic developments elaborated the bodily character of the vessels, clearly drawing gender into their distinctive corporealities. These so-called “nipped ewers” were given simple breasts, unmistakably insinuating the human female into bodies that were also birds and also vessels—human, woman, bird, vase: each aspect is powerfully present, but no single one dominates the form, the articulation of each remaining engagingly elusive (fig. 4.13). In some respects, this merging of identities continues in Late Bronze Age Crete, when we have ample evidence of a composite woman-bird embodied in material culture, especially in glyptic (fig. 4.14).⁴⁰ Perhaps our Prepalatial body-vessels actualize a long-standing if fluid cultural association of women and birds. Perhaps not. What is very clear is that they were extraordinary bodies that hovered across identities—spanning different species of animal and thing.

37 For example, Xanthoudidēs 1924, pls. XX, XXVIII. See Koehl 2006, 17–18.

38 Warren 1972, 210.

39 Simandaraki-Grimshaw (2013, 26) raises the fascinating possibility that another material may have been fitted onto this vessel’s arms/wings at the perforations, and that some of the other anthropomorphic vessels also may have had matter attached to them—for example, matter suspended from the pierced ears on some examples. If something like feathers were added to the Malia figure’s winglike arms, the effect would be quite dramatic and certainly would further complicate its status (physical, textural, notional) between avian and human.

40 This combination is impressively exemplified in forms engraved on seals from Late Bronze Age Zakros (forms often referred to as “monsters”), as discussed, for example, by Weingarten 1983; Krzyszkowska 2005, 150–53. At the same time, the dynamics of copresence between woman and bird are distinct in these later composite embodiments, a topic I will consider at more length elsewhere.



Figure 4.8. Four-legged avian-form vessel from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs; HM 4121; drawing. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. II.



Figure 4.9. Avian-form vessel, Early Minoan; Chania Archaeological Museum. “AMC – Vogelgefäß” by Wolfgang Sauber is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMC_-_Vogelgef%C3%A4%C3%9F.jpg.



Figure 4.10. Vasiliki Ware beak-spouted jug with pellet “eye” and suggestive streaking pattern, Early Minoan II; HM 5231. “Vasiliki ware, jug, 2400–2200 bc, AMH, 144530” by Zde is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vasiliki_ware_jug_2400-2200_BC,_AMH,_144530.jpg.



Figure 4.11. Vasiliki Ware beak-spouted jug, Early Minoan II; MMA 07.232.14. Metropolitan Museum of Art. <https://www.metmuseum>.



Figure 4.12. Kamares Ware beak-spouted jug from Phaistos, Middle Minoan II; Herakleion Archaeological Museum. “AMI - Kamaresvase 1” by Wolfgang Sauber is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMI_-_Kamaresvase_1.jpg.



Figure 4.13. Cycladic Nippled Ewer from Akrotiri, Thera; NAMA 877. “Pottery jug 16th c BC, NAMA 877 102922” by Zde is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pottery_jug_16th_c_BC,_NAMA_877_102922.jpg.

As physical social presences, the vessels’ bodily unconventionality would have given them a distinct poignancy. They can be understood as what Butler describes as “abject” bodies—bodies that deviate from and in a sense supersede the discursive norms through which a society knows and regulates human bodies.⁴¹ Natalie Wilson argues that within Butler’s work, which primarily characterizes bodies as discursively constituted, abject bodies are uniquely problematized for their substantive, material reality.⁴² That their immediate and undeniable material manifestation “fails to fit normative criteria” brings them a truly unique status. Such bodies can become distinctly effective in sociopolitical life, she argues, precisely because their material realities fall beyond the catchment of subsumable bodily norms. Did our clay vessels’ abnormal “human” bodies, their irascible identities, bring them a unique social efficacy? This possibility seems highly probable, especially when we consider that they were embedded in crucial contexts of community action. At

⁴¹ Butler 1993.

⁴² Wilson 2001.

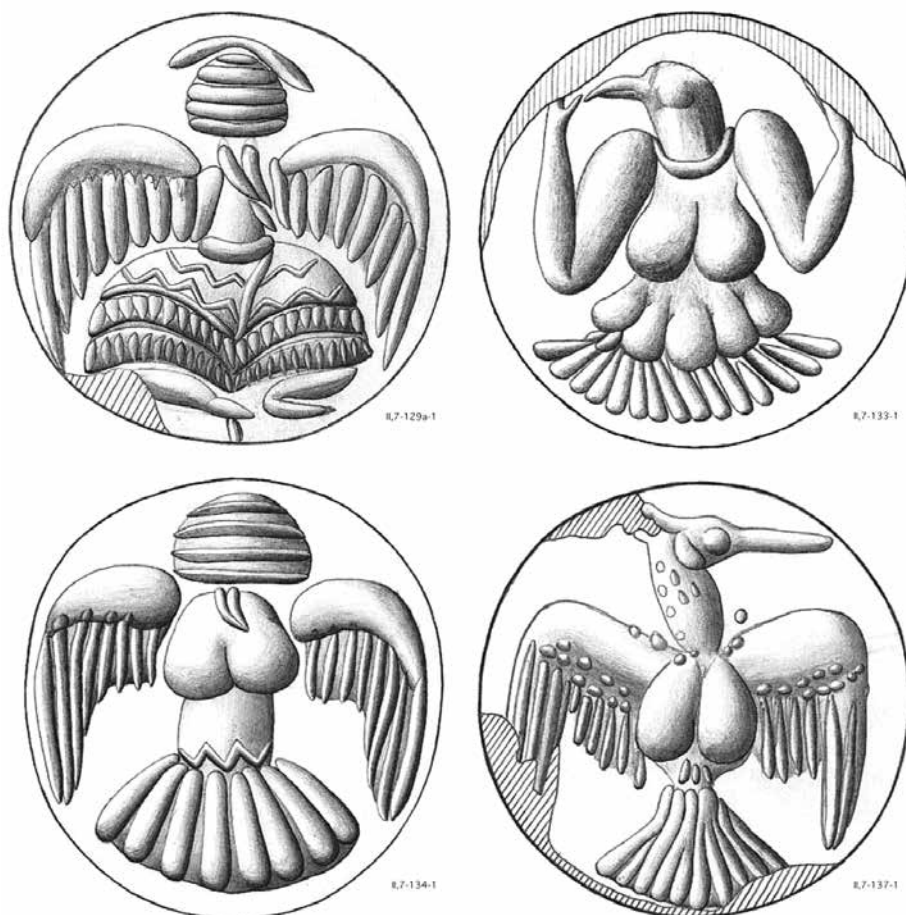


Figure 4.14. Four examples of Late Minoan glyptic iconography depicting a bird/woman composite, from Kato Zakro; CMS II7.129, 133, 134, 137; drawings of ancient seal impressions in clay. Images reproduced with permission from the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (CMS), Heidelberg University.

the same time, we need to recognize that these particular social bodies were fabricated things selected for participation in community contexts. They certainly are rare objects,⁴³ and some examples are deeply idiosyncratic, but it seems that as bodily outsiders and confounders they did find company in one another, constituting a distinctive “type.” As such, while powerfully extra-ordinary, these bodies and their bodily potentials were at the same time actively incorporated into the shape of community experience. Thus they were simultaneously abject and domesticated—a paradox, to be sure, but so were many other dimensions of these peculiar things.

⁴³ See also Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 24.

MOBILE AND SITUATED: THE SOCIO.SPATIAL CONTEXTS OF THESE BODIES

If these objects were social bodies, what were the social contexts in which they participated? To get at the answer, we need to wade into ongoing discussions of social organization on Bronze Age Crete. Many of the vessels have been found in the area of communal, built tombs, including the stone-domed tholoi of south-central Crete. Based on the identity of these contexts, it has been assumed that the vessels primarily had funerary roles—but how funerary, in fact, were the tombs?⁴⁴ The tombs were clearly multigenerational spaces, and it has been argued by numerous scholars that they were connected with relatively small social groups, perhaps based on kinship ties. The nature of the tombs' relationships with communities has, however, been complicated in recent years. Legarra Herrero has argued that the scale of social groups associated with tombs varied and that in some cases a tomb may have served a more dispersed community.⁴⁵ Likewise, Murphy and others have considered not only the social scale of the tombs' relevance but also the nature of their involvement in community actions. Here a crucial dimension is the consideration of the tombs' embeddedness in the local and regional interactive landscape. Dederix's work has strengthened our understanding of this embeddedness by crucially recognizing the significance of movement *between* places in examining the tombs' social contributions.⁴⁶ I believe we can work further with this focus on movement between locations, especially between tombs and settlements, to complicate the identity of objects often deemed "funerary," such as the Prepalatial body-vessels.

Working in a different but complementary direction from that of Dederix, Driessen has rattled traditional views of the tombs' role in the living fabric of groups by rethinking the fundamental funerary identity of these places.⁴⁷ Through careful consideration of the skeletal remains found both within and without Prepalatial tombs, he has argued that often, in fact, the tombs were not final resting places for dead individuals but instead "temporary repositories, places of transition, structures that served the decomposition of the bodies, before specific parts were selected to be stored elsewhere."⁴⁸ Thus Driessen postulates that the remains of many, even most, individuals would have had only an ephemeral position in the tombs as mortuary processes were undertaken and decomposition occurred. Afterward, he argues, the remains apparently were "interfered with," as certain elements of the skeleton, especially craniums, cranial fragments, and long bones, were removed and placed in new locations. These new locations could actually be "elsewhere" within the tombs, typically in heaps along with bones from many bodies, or in separate places—other structures or locales near or away from the tombs, sometimes in settlements.⁴⁹

Driessen contends that at this point the bones were deindividualized and generically identified with a collective ancestry. With this contention, he describes the secondary

44 Murphy (e.g., 1998, 2011) has discussed this topic extensively.

45 Legarra Herrero 2014.

46 Murphy 1998, 2011; Déderix 2015, 2017. For further discussion, see, for example, other contributions in Branigan 1998 and Relaki 2004 on "networks of relevance."

47 See Driessen 2010.

48 Driessen 2010, 109. Driessen also discusses tombs beyond the Prepalatial period.

49 Driessen 2010, esp. 109–11.

practices involving skeletal material as “having in fact little to do with death.”⁵⁰ In other words, the bodily remains became mobilized and, therewith, were part of *nonfunerary* social rituals. It is in this way that he reads a cranial fragment found within the settlement at Myrtos Fournou Korifi next-door to the room where the anthropomorphic vessel was uncovered. He submits that the cranial fragment was curated as a focus of ancestral veneration, having been extracted from a tomb. He then suggests a parallel tomb-to-settlement trajectory for the anthropomorphic vessel itself, given that similar vessels have been found in funerary settings. Thus Driessen’s suggestion is that the anthropomorphic vessel from Myrtos was originally placed in a tomb associated with the community and, like the cranial fragment, was later selectively withdrawn from that context and repositioned within the domestic area of the village of Myrtos.

Driessen’s reevaluation of the vessel in the light of the nearby cranial material is astute, and the link between the tomb and the settlement indeed seems highly significant, even if I see the path of the clay figure in a somewhat different light. Posing the Myrtos vessel as *displaced* from a funerary context may miss some of the complexity of its unique mobility—namely, as an object that was not of one place and then secondarily another but, instead, potentially of numerous places, the potentiality being key. This is not to say that these clay bodies were placeless, but rather that they are better understood as generative of spatial relations that linked their situatedness in different locales.

The Myrtos figure was found fallen off a low, fixed stone structure or “stand” in Room 92 at Myrtos Fournou Korifi. Warren identified the room as a community “shrine” and the structure associated with the vessel as an “altar.” This identification was largely based on the presence of the vessel itself, which he saw as divine, dubbing it the “Myrtos Goddess.” I am not comfortable identifying it as a representation or embodiment of a divine being (nor is that question especially relevant to my discussion), but I am interested in the relationship of this small body and its sociospatial context. Whitelaw’s careful reassessment of the architecture and material culture at Myrtos suggests that Room 92 and the three surrounding rooms (89, 90, 91) formed a regular domestic household unit that has parallels in both form and content⁵¹ elsewhere within the conglomerate architectural zone of the settlement; his reading has been broadly accepted.⁵² The stone structure/platform associated with the vessel was low, probably no more than 30 cm in height.⁵³ We can imagine

50 Driessen 2010, 111, working with the ideas of Goldstein 2000; Schroeder 2001; and Kuijt 2008.

51 The similar contents include storage vessels, hearths, and benches—but no other anthropomorphic vessels were identified at the site. However, it is certainly worth noting that a clay head, rather similar in size and peculiar form, was discovered in the “northern Rubbish Pit” at the north of the settlement (figure 70—see Warren 1972, 70–71, pl. 72, E–G). This pit primarily contained material of the same subphase as the anthropomorphic vessel. Warren describes this “figurine” fragment as solid and having been made to “fit into a separate body.” The heavy coating (more than a slip) of the head and neck did not cover the “base” of the figure, which leaves “the core exposed as a tenon to fit the body.” This description is odd, and one wonders whether we might have here (at least) one more peculiar little clay object-body that was active in the Myrtos settlement concurrently with our famous, still-complete one.

52 Whitelaw 1983, 2007.

53 Warren 1972, 86. The platform had a preserved height of 0.13 m when excavated, but Warren notes that another “loose slab” had been removed from it earlier in the excavation—a slab that could have, in his opinion, “at least” doubled the height (Warren 1972, 86). Still, even at 0.26 m it would have been a low platform. Gerald Cadogan, who excavated the object, describes the piece of furniture and the deposition

the clay figure there, independently standing upright, attentively looking outward. In this position it could be engaged with as people would see and perhaps touch it. At the same time, it certainly would have moved. Its filling may have happened while it stood there but also could have taken place elsewhere, perhaps in the storage space next door. The object would have moved in people's hands during filling, its altering weight and variable contours being directly sensed.⁵⁴ Cadogan points out that if the vessel were immersed to be filled, it would have made a "glug-glugging" sound as air escaped through its small opening, extending its sensorial impact into the auditory; the same can be said of its decanting, as Simandiraki-Grimshaw points out.⁵⁵

Given the low height of the structure on which the figure stood, it is likely that some people interacting with the Myrtos vessel would have been sitting in front of it. There is about a meter of space between the front edge of the platform and a pier in the middle of the room. North of this pier was a more open space, but the presence of the pier would have partially defined an intimate area around the figure. For decanting, a person could have stood or kneeled beside the small platform and inclined the vessel. She also may have held it while standing, in which case people seated would have been positioned below, and the figure's face may have come into view as it leaned forward or to the side and poured from the miniature jug in its hands. Intimate indeed, this space was potentially a charged sociopolitical one, defined not only by the architectural constraints but crucially also by the bodies of both living humans and the clay nonhuman, engaged in close proximity.⁵⁶

Based on ergonomic studies with the Myrtos vessel, Simandiraki-Grimshaw has discussed different ways it could be held for pouring.⁵⁷ This vessel stands out among the Prepalatial body-vessels for lacking a handle, meaning that the presence of a fleshy human hand holding it would be more pronounced during the event of pouring. Further, as Simandiraki-Grimshaw notes, the Myrtos figure's face is in fact gazing in a direction "almost the opposite" of that in which liquid would flow from the small jug it grasps.⁵⁸ This feature might seem odd, until one recognizes that the positioning of the miniature jug, with its spout directed backward, allows the clay figure's careful grip on its little vessel

of the clay figure: "This stand (two flat-topped stones with a clayey filling set on the floor) was only 13 cm high as found. At any rate, the figure had not fallen far, since it was unbroken (until hit by the little pick in excavating). It was in a clayey fill (presumably decayed mud brick) above the floor which was about 15 cm further down: this could suggest that it did not fall at the time of the EM IIB destruction by fire (which would have affected mainly the roofs and the upper parts of the walls) but later, perhaps decades or even centuries later, as collapse(s) continued. (As I know from Pyrgos, the winter rains at Myrtos can do plenty of damage to buildings at hilltop settlements, and easily wash out their contents.) There is no evidence that anything else had occupied the stone structure" (Cadogan 2010, 41).

54 See Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 28–29, discussing "tactile feedback" and the "blurred interface" of the vessel and human bodies. While I do not follow this analysis to the point of considering the vessel an extension of the acting human and vice versa, her discussion here is rich and valuable.

55 Cadogan 2010, 43; also Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 30–31.

56 In this volume, see McMahon's relevant discussion of the dynamics of human gatherings in circumscribed spaces. Among other issues, she considers the copresence of people and things and how the size and character of the built space they inhabit would affect the experiential (including the political) dimensions of a collective action.

57 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 30–31, along with excellent images (see fig. 04).

58 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 31.

to be foregrounded as a living person faces the clay body—and as the clay body faces the viewer. Hence the directionality of the small jug, with its handle projecting forward along with its holder's gaze, cleverly permits one to appreciate the clutch the little body has on the source of the liquid, held within its dramatically attenuated arms. Thus the agency of the clay-jug bearer would be center stage as she determinedly stands at the ready, perhaps for a prolonged period of time, charged with potential social energy leading toward the moment of pouring.

The mobility of the Myrtos vessel, and the other body-vessels we are considering, would have extended into other dimensions as well. In addition to their dynamic performance within one place, the Prepalatial anthropomorphic vessels could have moved back and forth between local contexts. In the Mesara, most tholos tombs are positioned less than an eighth of a mile from a settlement—a distance that would have posed no impediment to the regular transfer of things and bodies. Some of the anthropomorphic vessels have been found within tomb chambers themselves, where they may have performed in mortuary rites by decanting liquids on a dead or living body. But they likely also were part of nonmortuary⁵⁹ activities in the chambers, perhaps those involving the masses of ancestral bones often located therein. The vessels have been found outside the tomb chambers as well, yet still within the zone of built tombs, areas that are increasingly recognized as venues for nonfunerary community action. These spaces sometimes have paved courts and have produced evidence of repeated consumption activities. Courts also were located within settlements. Whitelaw identifies three “public courts” within the Myrtos settlement that he postulates were used for community actions.⁶⁰ McMahon's research concerning different types of courts in Mesopotamia (including houses, tombs, and palaces) examines whether activities performed in these varied “open” spaces would have been similar or quite divergent, given differences in size, contents, access, and sociocultural associations.⁶¹ The answer to this question is complicated. It is possible that underlying very significant variations, there may have been some common, culture-specific associations with court spaces. In Crete, such established cultural associations may have related actions that took place in courts located within the area of tombs with those occurring in courts within residential zones; this idea is suggested by comparable material culture recovered from both venues. Simandiraki-Grimshaw highlights the common “liminality” of the varied spaces in which the vessels have been found; this status could subtend actions between tombs and residential courts, as well as other places.⁶² The vessel found at Trapeza Cave incorporates yet another type of place into the performative field of these bodies, one characterized by stalagmites, stalactites, rocky niches, and a dramatically enclosed air.

With this possible sociospatial circuitry of the vessels in mind, I want to tie in another component of Driessen's recent research. He has worked with Levi-Strauss's notion of *house societies* to consider the social structures of Bronze Age Crete, arguing that such

59 It might be best to understand such activities as in practice superseding a divide between funerary or nonfunerary.

60 Whitelaw 2007, 73.

61 McMahon, this volume.

62 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 35–36. An interesting comparison can be found in Braithwaite 1982 concerning particular material culture as mediating liminal relational spaces.

microsocial formations were active on the island. He defines houses as “inter-generational, locus-bound social groups” that are “materialized” in built places.⁶³ While domestic structures are at the center of Driessen’s discussion, it becomes clear that he sees Cretan houses, as social groups, potentially involving networks of places, including tombs and sometimes multiple settlements.⁶⁴ His arguments are compelling and resonate with ample evidence that Cretan social organization did not fit neatly within traditional analytical units such as villages or nuclear families, instead fluidly hovering across and around them. In this light, it seems Driessen is arguing for the Cretan house as something that is crucially *emplaced* but greater than a place itself.⁶⁵ These houses are relational and dynamic. Hence they will *be* somewhere, but it is their ongoing social nature, maintained through “renewal,” that makes these places and makes them explicitly greater than an individual place, person, nuclear family, or generation. In this context we find our little clay figures. As bodies, they could have participated in the repeated emplacing of these houses through their repertoire of techniques and affordances. We can imagine them dynamically involved in political actions that maintained the community, actions something like the “social dramas” discussed by Turner.⁶⁶ That the clay bodies were also vessels, also movable things, gave them a distinctive material persistence as community members, thriving through the iterability of their performative action. Hence the ways they contributed to social experience could have been recreated, from instance to instance and from place to place, in the *same* body—a body whose material constitution and temporal and spatial rhythms were experienced as being distinctly ongoing, over time and through places. So their bodies, as perpetuated social entities, smaller yet also greater than a living human’s, would have been powerfully resonant with, or even constitutive of, aspects of the embodied and situated social relations of the house, as perpetuated social entities.

It is quite possible, even likely, that these vessels were tangible symbols of communities—communities that may have had the distinctive dynamics of house societies as discussed by Driessen. As such, each could have been a “miniaturized, animated proxy of the humanity of its community”⁶⁷ or even a conventional emblem of such collectives (though this potentiality, of course, would be nearly impossible to ascertain). Yet if these

63 Whitelaw (2014) asserts that Driessen’s notion of the house is too broad. Driessen does indeed identify evidence of Cretan houses in a wide variety of contexts. Whether this breadth reflects the dynamism of the notion or weakens its claim is debatable, but I find many aspects of Driessen’s argument highly compelling, both because the house as he develops it seems to account uniquely for features of Prepalatial society and because many alternatives have been largely unsatisfying.

64 Driessen 2010, 46–47, 55–57.

65 In this volume, Porter’s discussion of third-millennium BCE mortuary places at Tell Banat in Syria explores some similar ideas about the placement, or multiplacement, of communities. Porter deeply complicates the role of tombs, carefully considering how, even when associated with the same site, different funerary places could be active venues for the articulation of very distinct sociopolitical experiences. These places, and the sociopolitical experiences they were part of, were contemporaneous but also fluid over time. Thus people at Tell Banat would have been aware of both places and their dynamic identities. Through her discussion, Porter brilliantly highlights how the simultaneity of multiple, distinct places participated in the characterization of collective experience, each being potentially related (connected, contrasted, distinguished) to the other and to other aspects of their environment.

66 Turner 2012.

67 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 35.

vessel-bodies acted in these roles on some level—as is likely—they were also always, and more fundamentally, something else. We need to take them seriously as physical, social bodies in the fray, something that classifying them as symbols can make difficult to do. The irony is that by vaunting these objects as powerful, symbolic things, we risk reifying and indeed disempowering them as social bodies. Thus I do not see these figures *primarily* as stand-ins for or even dynamic referents to the human components of the community. Their clear, robust *nonhumanness* is crucial to consider here. We should instead recognize these clay bodies as on-the-ground members of diverse communities. They were extraordinary parts of such collectives, contributors more than referents, who brought their own material and relational complexity to the mix. This complexity engaged living humans and their vigor—as well as other things, materials, and bodies. The engagements involving the clay bodies were distinct from those effected between biological human bodies and from those between biological human bodies and other elements of the environment, but aspects of these engagements sometimes overlapped.⁶⁸ These peculiar bodies—decidedly not just anthropomorphic—have distinctive techniques and dispositions, unique dynamism and animacy realized through their relations. Recognizing this fact should subtly but deeply upset how we view these communities; we should view them not as humans and their extraordinary instruments but as collectives of entities of richly diverse and sometimes dramatically coinciding characters. In other words, in reality the house would have been lived as a multiplicity of diverse bodies—of dynamisms, animacies, and inanimacies—with a variety of transiencies and persistences at play.

PRESENCE AND (DE)EMPHASIS—CHANGES OVER TIME

As the Middle Bronze Age progressed into what we identify as the first or “Protopalatial” period on Crete, the occurrence of anthropomorphic vessels diminishes and in some ways alters. Only three such objects have been found from this period, and only at Phaistos—notably, not in the palace. Each is a rhyton with openings positioned so that the body would not hold liquid, only mediate its flow. One of the vessels is highly anthropomorphic—a standing, skirted woman—that closely parallels associated figurines (e.g., a clay figurine from Protopalatial Chamezi, also a standing, skirted figure who makes a nearly identical gesture).⁶⁹ Two, however, are remarkably peculiar bodies. Simandiraki-Grimshaw describes one as “monkey-like,” and indeed both—with crouching, heavily curved postures, bodies sunk between high-swung knees, and low, neckless heads—appear quite simian.⁷⁰ These “anthropomorphic” vessels may then embody a continuity in abject corporeality,

68 I find none of this to be at odds with what Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2013) has articulated; indeed, her brilliant work with the vessels is in part a basis for my assertions.

69 HM 3489; see Xanthoudidēs 1906, fig. 3. See also Lenuzza 2011, 64, including fig. 6.6 (left) and n. 21; also Davaras 1972, 38, cited by Lenuzza.

70 The simian character of both of these bodies, though they are far from being straightforward figures, is striking and certainly complicates their identification as “anthropomorphic.” In fact, on a popular photo-sharing website, a traveler who photographed these objects in the Herakleion Museum candidly describes them just as “seated monkeys wearing caps”: <https://arctangent.smugmug.com/Locations-International/2011-Mediterranean-Cruise/Med-Cruise-Greece/Med-15-Heraklion-Museum-Crete/i-NVccBqg> (accessed August 9, 2020).

again integrating the nonhuman, but the species involved are different from those of the earlier, Prepalatial objects.

In the Neopalatial period, humanoid vessels essentially cease. Thus, if we solely follow the designation “anthropomorphic,” the road seems to end. But I believe this point should spur us to recognize the *nonhuman* context of our anthropomorphic vessel-bodies and consider developments in this broader zoomorphic light. Zoomorphic vessels were there from the beginning and found at the same Prepalatial sites, sometimes in the very same contexts as our more anthropomorphic ones. Bird forms were especially prevalent and in some cases had similar bodily affordances. Articulated feet ground some as bodies, and some were rendered quite extraordinarily (see figs. 4.12 and 4.13).⁷¹ We also have some apparent hybrids of birds and other beasts, bringing these avian bodies a wondrous non-conformity that resonates in certain ways with the contemporaneous, abject, humanlike vessels (figs. 4.15 and 4.16).⁷² That some bird vessels in the Middle and Late Bronze Age Aegean came to have explicitly female human anatomy (notably breasts) further stresses a relatedness to the more anthropomorphic vessels.

Bovine vessels are represented through all phases of the Cretan Bronze Age. In the Prepalatial period they typically took the form of a bull’s entire body, often standing on



Figure 4.15. Avian or composite zoomorphic vessels from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs; HM 4124, 4123, 4142. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. XXVIII.

Figure 4.16. Composite zoomorphic vessel from Kyparissi, found in the area of the burials, later Early Minoan. “Minoan pottery, kernos, head of a bull, 2600–1900 BC, AMH, 144563” by Zde is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.



⁷¹ See Xanthoudidēs 1924, pls. XXVIII, XXX, LI.

⁷² Koehl (2006) describes several rhyta with trapezoidal bodies, similar to those of the core group of Prepalatial “anthropomorphic” vessels considered here, to be “bird hybrids.” See, for example, HM 4124 from Koumasa (Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. XVIII), with a ram’s head. Also HM 6867 from Platanos, with a bull’s head. Some contemporaneous vessels with this body form, some from the same contexts, appear more fully as birds—for example, HM 4142 or 4123 from Koumasa (Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. XXVIII).

four legs, with one opening on the base of the upper neck and another in the muzzle (figs. 4.17, right; 4.18). At times their form is more complicated. Some blur the body and the vessel's shape (and therewith the status of the object; fig. 4.19), and in certain instances the bovine is combined with other animal species (e.g., human or bird), creating dynamic things that embody "events" or composite full bodies (e.g., figs. 4.18 and 4.19; also fig. 4.15, far left). Vessels in the form of full-bodied bulls (or full-bodied composites involving bulls) have been found in numerous Prepalatial cemeteries and settlements.⁷³ Their occurrence drops off considerably after the Prepalatial period, paralleling the situation with anthropomorphic vessels.⁷⁴ For the Protopalatial period, such are published from one deposit, again at Phaistos, and for the Neopalatial, examples are known from Pseira. In both contexts there are reasons to see their exceptional presence as in some senses archaizing.

During the Protopalatial period, another type of zoomorphic vessel began to appear in both palatial and nonpalatial contexts. These vessels took the form of an animal's head from the neck up; bulls' heads were the most common (figs. 4.20–4.22). By the early Neopalatial period most of these rhyta are found in "cultic" storage areas along with many other objects linked to ritual, both in the palaces and beyond. The animal-head rhyta represent a dramatic, substantive shift in what we can broadly call Cretan "zoomorphic" vessels—taking in both human and nonhuman species. The mechanics of the animal-head vessels are quite distinct from the full-bodied ones, altering the nature of their participation in social contexts. These isolated heads were unable to retain liquid independently. Consequently, their entire performance took place in a moment, and passively in human hands. With such a vessel's two openings, top and bottom, a living human would need to manipulate the object carefully to control the movement of liquid (fig. 4.22). Koehl believes these animal-heads were immersed in liquid for filling, with a hand positioned over the upper opening before the vessel was pulled out, thus forming a vacuum and trapping the liquid inside. With the vessel held aloft, the hand could be removed from the primary opening and the liquid flow outward. Supporting the vessel while also operating the orifices would have required knowledge, skill, and dexterity, especially with the larger stone rhyta that could weigh 6 kg when full (fig. 4.21).⁷⁵ Given these mechanical demands, incredible emphasis fell on the performance of the living human in manipulating the head. Beyond the moment when a human was actively handling the head, it would have lain lifelessly, perhaps resting prone on its flat back plate, perhaps on its side. The fact that the majority of these rhyta have been found in storage contexts underscores how, as mere animal *parts*, they were vigorous, engaged contributors to social experience only for spurts of time—intense, impressive, but

73 They have also been found at the Kofinas peak sanctuary, located in south-central Crete in the region of tholos tombs and their settlements. South-central Crete emerges as a region with especial interest in such bodily vessels. That they were found at peak sanctuaries, key venues in the development of regional-scale communities, may indicate how these objects were involved in processes of social change—recontextualized, innovatively serving new types of community making.

74 Koehl 2006, 308.

75 Compare the discussion in Anderson 2011 concerning the manipulation of later Aegean "trick" rhyta. Koehl (2006, 267–68) offers an excellent discussion of the holding, filling, and decanting of these head-form rhyta, which are in his "Type II Head-Shaped" class. One possibility is that an assistant could have been involved with the performance around the head rhyta, as discussed by Rehak (1995b) and Koehl (who in 2006, 444 with n. 55, cites Rehak's discussion and Younger's weight estimate). Younger estimates that the weight of a filled stone bull's head rhyton, about 6 kg, could be handled by someone alone or with an assistant.



Figure 4.17. Bovine and composite vessel from Platanos; HM 6867, 6869; photo. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. LI.

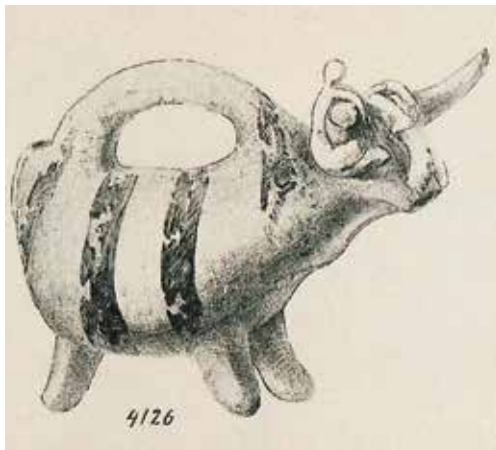


Figure 4.18. Bovine vessel with humans attached to horns, from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs; HM 4126; drawing. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. II.

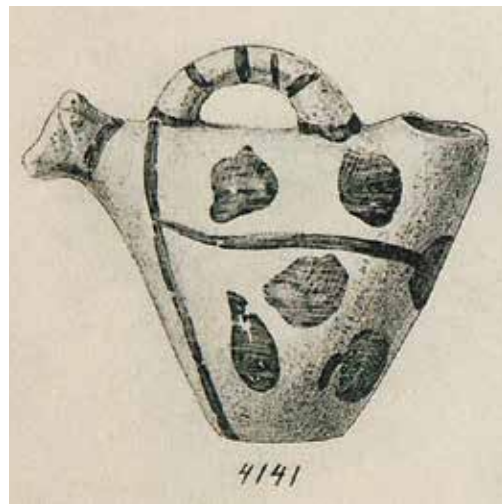


Figure 4.19. Bovine or composite zoomorphic vessel from Koumasa, found in the area of the tombs, HM 4141; drawing. Xanthoudidēs 1924, pl. II.

strikingly short-lived.⁷⁶ Moreover, as isolated heads lacking bodies, these rhyta were conspicuously incomplete. Only while being held up in the hands of a living human did they

⁷⁶ Koehl mentions Matz's theory that the bull's head rhyta were linked to sacrifice; the discovery of fragments of such rhyta within a layer of ash with oxen bones supports this theory (see Koehl 2006, 268, after Dawkins 1904–5). Morgan (1995) has argued that in Minoan art a full-frontal gaze of an animal indicates death or dying. Perhaps some of these animal heads, issuing forth liquid while momentarily staring straight ahead, were experienced as being in the throes of death at human hands—or in its bloody aftermath.



Figure 4.20. Bull's head rhyton from Palaikastro, Neopalatial (Late Bronze Age), clay; Herakleion Archaeological Museum. "Palekastro Rhyton Stierkopf 02" by Olaf Tausch is licensed under CC BY 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palekastro_Rhyton_Stierkopf_02.jpg.



Figure 4.21. Bull's head rhyton from Knossos, Little Palace, Neopalatial (Late Bronze Age), soft stone and gold; Herakleion Archaeological Museum. "Ρυτό ταυροκεφαλής 6396" by C. Messier is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ρυτό_ταυροκεφαλής_6396.JPG.

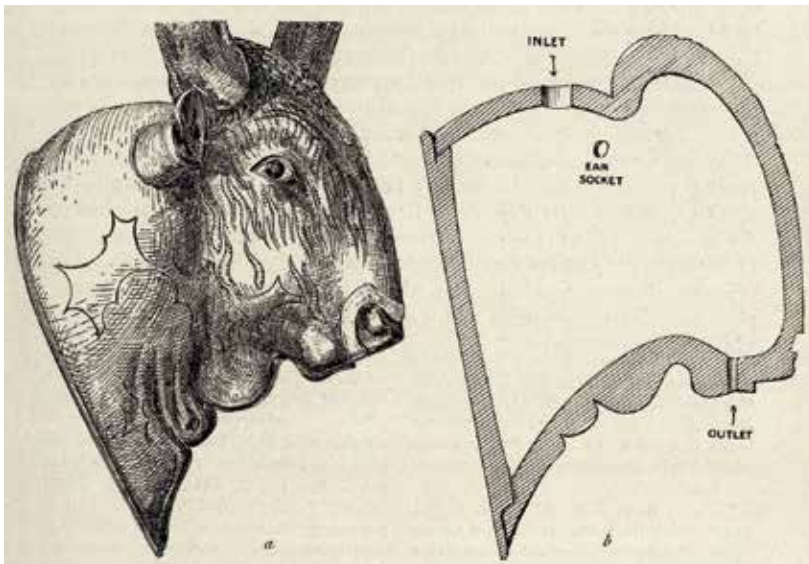


Figure 4.22. Section of the stone bull's head rhyton from the Little Palace at Knossos. Evans 1928, 529, fig. 332.

gain corporeal completion, in a sense acquiring human bodies from the neck down, while also receiving temporary vigor from the person's prominent manipulations.

Performances with these palatial objects thus had remarkably different somatic, social, and potentially political emphases compared with those involving the Prepalatial body-vessels. Now it was an individual human social actor that was given the performative power. These radically reformulated performances took place in novel social places as well. The Neopalatial evidence suggests a formalization to ritual experience, with rotating, perhaps event-specific paraphernalia and more dedicated cultic places, many within the palace complexes. The Cretan palaces were core venues in regional-scale social formations that incorporated multitudes of villages. Within these formative "networks of relevance,"⁷⁷ people likely had distinct social interests, related to new scales of social comparison, in new cultural contexts without the same sense of common identity that was experienced within the sociopolitical contexts of Prepalatial houses. Certainly this situation is not unequivocal—there would have been competition between members of Prepalatial social arenas, as well as interests in asserting similarity and sharedness at formative regional scales. Indeed, the continued use of zoomorphic vessels in collective rituals may have been experienced as a potent perpetuation or maintenance of a traditional social practice. What we should notice, however, is that the corporeal politics of the zoomorphic vessels—human and nonhuman—did *not* persist unaltered between these different contexts. Instead, closer consideration of the vessels' performance has indicated that they keenly contributed to a recharacterization of social experience on the island—from the intimate loci of their peculiar bodies outward.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Aghios Nikolaos Museum
EM	Early Minoan
HM	Herakleion Museum
MM	Middle Minoan

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⁷⁷ Relaki (2004) develops this powerful analytical notion.

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5 The Power of the Populace: Politics and the Mortuary Monuments of Tell Banat

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THE THIRD-MILLENNIUM SITE of Tell Banat, on the left bank of the Euphrates River (fig. 5.1), houses some of the most extraordinary mortuary constructions yet found in greater Mesopotamia. Among these constructions are two built, earthen mounds, one of them situated in the heart of what would become the main settlement of Tell Banat, which was itself located on a promontory jutting northward from the small mountain of Jebel Bazi, and the other Tell Banat North (TBN), located about 200 m as the crow flies from the outer edge of the main settlement (figs. 5.2 and 5.3). Each tumulus was enlarged in three distinct acts that occurred, if not simultaneously, then certainly within the same chronological phases. Each tumulus enclosed human remains of one kind or another. Tell Banat North, also known as the “White Monument,” is a series of vertical cemeteries containing multiple secondary burials disported in various ways. The mound in Tell Banat Area C, labeled Mortuary Mound II (MMII), culminates in a stone-built tomb unparalleled in its architectural grandeur.

While the archaeological details are complex, irreducible to an easy interpretation, and raise more than one possible reconstruction, in this essay I explore what happens when we consider these twinned monuments through the lens of an approach current in studies of contemporary commemorative practices: the counter-monument. Such monuments take the traditional memorial and invert it, subvert it, or convert it in a clearly critical engagement with the event/history they commemorate—and particularly with the establishment/perpetrators that frame it.¹ Inextricable from both monument and counter-monument are the dead, directly or indirectly, for it is the dead that constitute the past. Events matter in the first place because of how they affected past peoples—those either killed in the event or those, now dead, whose lives were caught up in it.

Largely generated by Germany’s struggle with remembrance of its role in both world wars, the notion of the counter-monument forces us to reexamine simple notions of power, just as it obliges us to contextualize any given monument within a much broader landscape of commemoration and meaning. If the monument is constructed by the organs of authority, be it at the local, provincial, or national level, in narratives of self-presentation, the

1 Ashton, Hamilton, and Searby 2012; Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012; Eröss 2016; Angelucci and Kerschbamer 2017; Osborne 2017; Demoiny and Waters 2019.

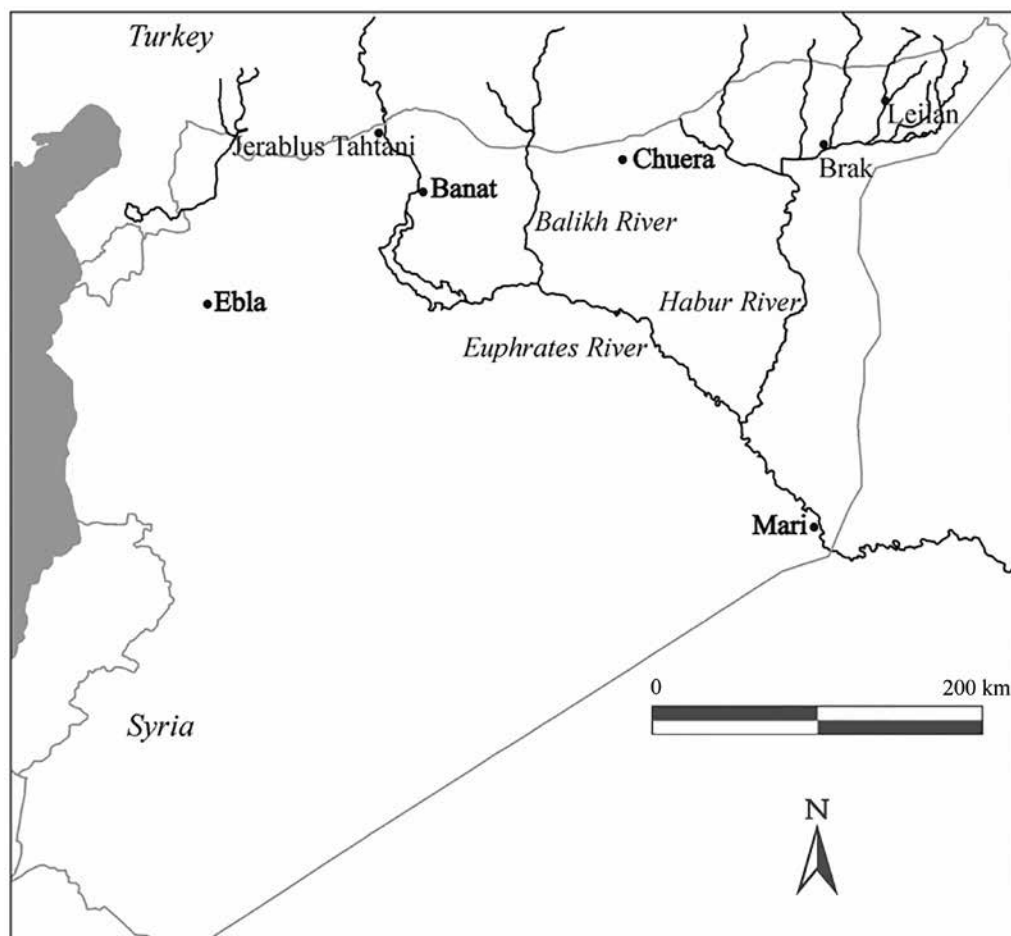


Figure 5.1. Map of Syria with key sites.

counter-monument is deconstructed, often literally, by those left out of, or suborned by, those narratives. Yet ironically, it is often the very same authorities that end up funding and erecting the counter-monument in, at the least, recognition of the moral complexity of national history and/or, at the most, atonement. If not officially approved, the counter-monument is removed.² This tension, this push and pull between establishment and antiestablishment voices—the corresponding normalization or denial of the antiestablishment—often results in a landscape inscribed³ with traditional and discordant objects as well as brutalized spaces of absence. Passersby, in moving across this landscape, might encounter classic statuary or stelae, often defaced; modern sculpture; and empty plinths or patches of concrete either one after the other⁴ or all at once. They might correspondingly experience a bewildering evocation of multiple histories or be left with a profound sense of internal conflict.

² See, for example, Osborne 2017, 170–72.

³ Connerton 1989.

⁴ See, for example, Liberty Square, Budapest, in Eröss 2016, fig. 1.

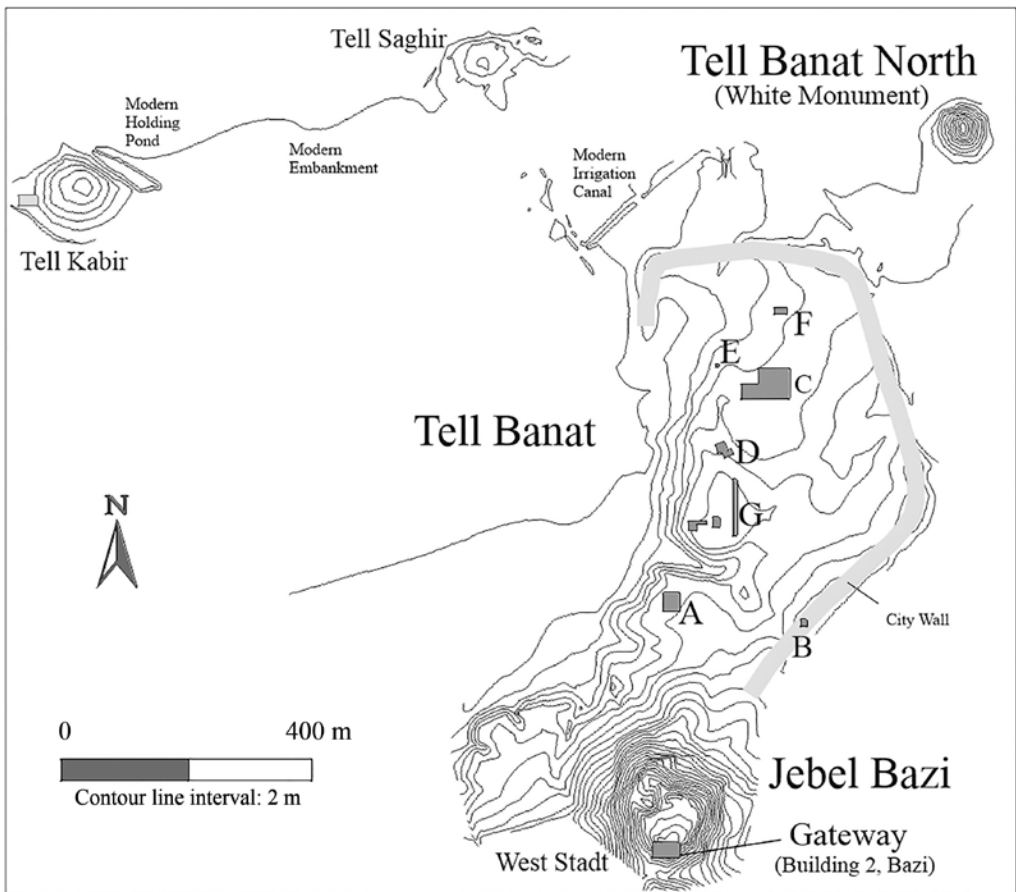


Figure 5.2. Map of the Banat-Bazi settlement complex.



Figure 5.3. Modern village of Tell Banat and surroundings from Jebel Bazi. The upper right corner shows Tell Banat North; the centerground (modern cemetery) is Area G.

Two specific versions of the counter-monument are the focus of this burgeoning literature. One is the anti-monument, where the original monument itself is reinscribed⁵ or redressed,⁶ thus becoming a locus of contested power, or where a traditional form is destabilized, such as the inversion of a fountain.⁷ The other is the dialogic monument. Given the proximity and shared architectural elements of the two Banat mounds, it is the dialogic that is particularly relevant here. Dialogic monuments are paired, and their individual significance is transformed when juxtaposed with each other. The

dialogic monument critiques the purpose and the design of a specific, existing monument, in an explicit, contrary and proximate pairing. . . . As modes of commemorative practice . . . paired dialogic monuments have reshaped and reinvigorated collective memories, activities and landscapes. Even as such practices define themselves through their opposition to traditional monumentality, they have cultivated their own particular publics.”⁸

This description perfectly defines the relationship of the two Banat monuments as revealed by both the archaeological sequence and the resources that sequence draws on—space, natural features of the landscape, and most importantly, the dead. Viewed through this lens, traditional conceptualizations of the construction and operation of power as might be applied to Banat are exploded. Rather than a manipulative, exploitative domination of a subordinate population by an elite who control all material and ideological resources, those who would be elite become constrained—even threatened—by the power of the larger population. The differences between the White Monument and MMII, the bodies inside them, and traces of associated ritual practices are evidence of dynamics that, whoever the actors and whatever their intent, demonstrate the engagement of the populace in the performance of power in the third millennium BCE.

THE SEQUENCE

Two main periods of occupation were recovered from Banat:⁹ Period IV (2700/2600–2450 BCE) and Period III (2450–2300 BCE). Excavated remains of both phases consisted primarily of public buildings and a manufacturing sector focused on, but not limited to, pottery production. While no purely domestic habitation was found for Period IV, a residential area dating to Period III was sampled. But an earlier phase of activity in and around Banat sometime prior to Period IV was indicated by the sequence of the mortuary monuments themselves. Geomagnetometry surveys indicate that these mounds were erected over small tumuli, each of which was merely one out of a group in the two locations (fig. 5.4a–b). As indicated by excavation of a pit dug into the initial mound, MMII in Tell Banat Area C, the small tumuli were burial mounds. This pit left a spoil heap that not only contained fragmentary objects typical of Banat mortuary contexts but also showed the construction

5 Demoigny and Waters 2019, 98.

6 Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012, 955.

7 Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012, 954.

8 Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012, 952.

9 Porter 2018.

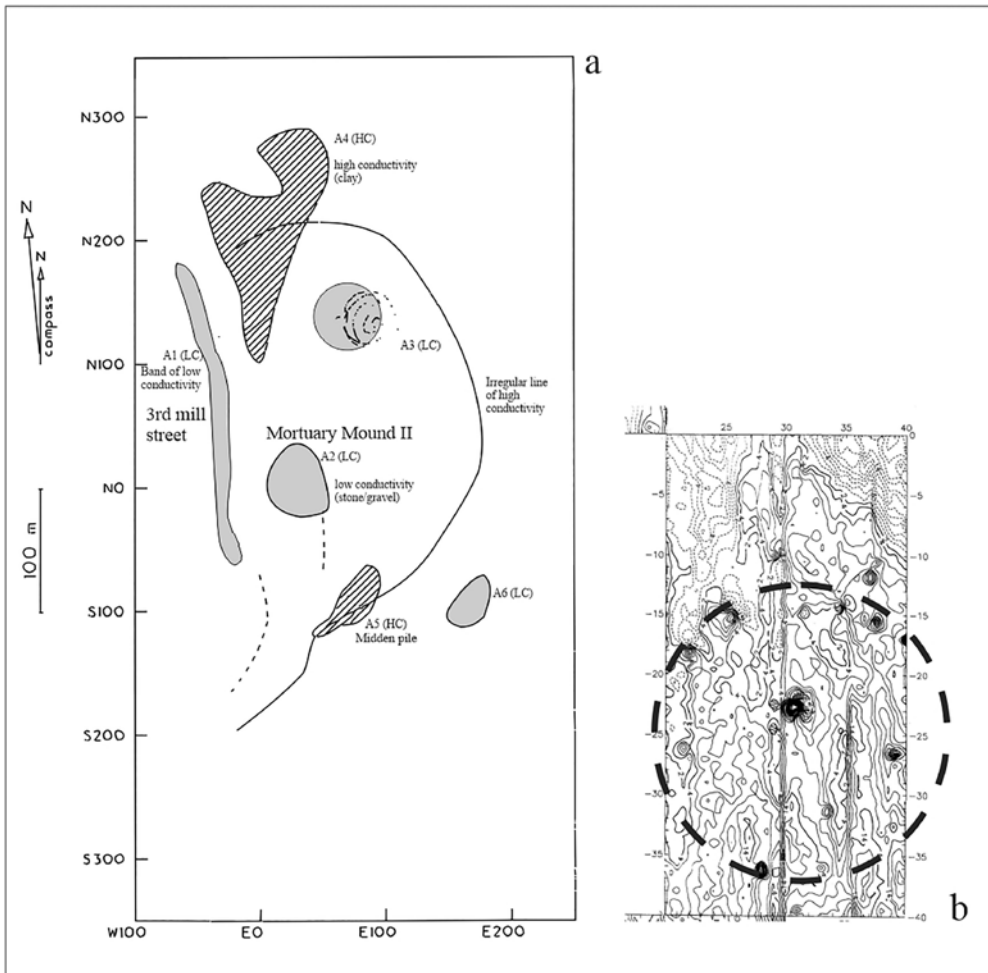


Figure 5.4. Magnetic evidence for circular features at Tell Banat/Tell Banat North: *a*, anomalies in and around Area C; *b*, circular feature adjacent to Tell Banat North. Note the differences in scale.

of MMID to be similar to the inner cairns of White Monument B (WMB), the third phase of TBN and the earliest phase excavated there. We can have no idea of the nature of these initial burials. Nor do we know when they were founded beyond the fact that the one in the middle of Tell Banat precedes any evidence of other kinds of occupation recovered from the site. The most likely period to which the initial tumuli date is between 3100 BCE, with the collapse of the so-called “Uruk system” in the north, and about 2700 BCE, when the settlement was established.

Around 2700 BCE, both tumuli were selected from their neighbors for the purpose of enlargement (table 5.1). We may never know which tumulus, if either one, was enlarged first. But whatever the origin of these remains, they came to form the basis of performative creations of ancestral claims to identity and polity that, at least at one point in their history, were in competition if not outright conflict. Beginning the process of enlargement within Tell Banat was the deposition of tons of gravel over the first tumulus to form a

Table 5.1. Relative construction sequence of Tell Banat North and Mortuary Mound II.

Time BCE	White Monument	Mortuary Mound II	Associated tombs
Banat Period III (2450–2300)	White Monument A	Building 6	Submersion of Tomb 7 in gravel layer Last use and closure of Tomb 7
	Ritual deposits on the exterior of White Monument B		
Banat Period IV (2700/2600–2450)	White Monument B1 corrugated surface	MMIIA1 Building 7	Construction of Tomb 7
	White Monument B2 cairns	MMIIA2 pits MMIIA3—gravel enlargement	
	White Monument C?		
(Date undetermined)	Initial tumulus?	MMIIB—initial small tumulus	

somewhat shallow mound of about 60 m in diameter (fig. 5.5a). Then, that first tumulus was breached. This breaching may not have been intended as a disrespectful or destructive act; rather, it may have been the first step in the significant enhancements of the subsequent construction sequence that culminated in Tomb 7. Within the same chronological period, the first recognized act in the expansion of TBN was undertaken. In as much of it as was exposed, this expansion seems to have consisted of a tall, smooth-surfaced, somewhat angular mound, White Monument C (WMC), coated in a whitish gypsum-based material sourced from a couple of kilometers away.¹⁰

The next step at TBN was the construction of several small cairns placed in and on the surface of WMB, four of which were excavated (fig. 5.6). The cairns were loose agglomerations of earth and occasional stones compiled in an inverted “V” shape (fig. 5.7a–b). Included in these cairns were the secondary remains of multiple individuals (table 5.2).

One of those cairns, Inner Tumulus 1, housed a minimum number of five individuals—four adults and one subadult between the ages of 8 and 11 years old. One adult was male and more than 60 years old; one adult—possibly the 60-year-old male—suffered severe arthritis; another adult, probably male, was older than 25 years of age; and one adult was probably female.

Another cairn, Inner Tumulus 2, contained a minimum number of three individuals—one adult; one subadult or adult female, represented by a gracile clavicle with healed fracture; and one neonate, represented by skull fragments.

¹⁰ This statement presumes that the material came from the same area from which the modern inhabitants of the site gained material for whitewashing their houses. This phase of the mound was not excavated because of the completion of the Tishreen Dam in 1999.

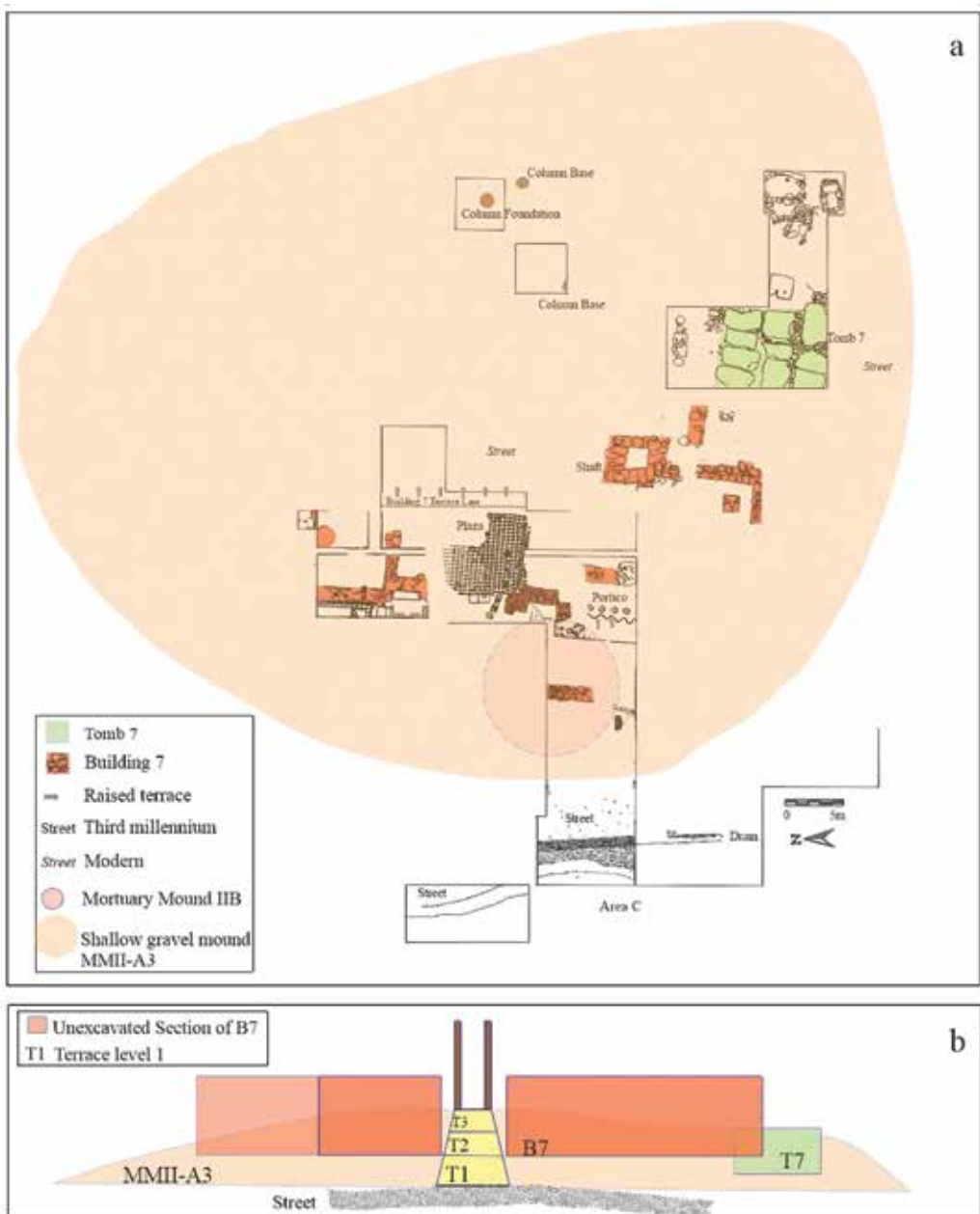


Figure 5.5. Mortuary Mound II: *a*, gravel mound over the excavated extent of the original tumulus, with Building 7 and Tomb 7; *b*, schematic drawing of the mound with Building 7.

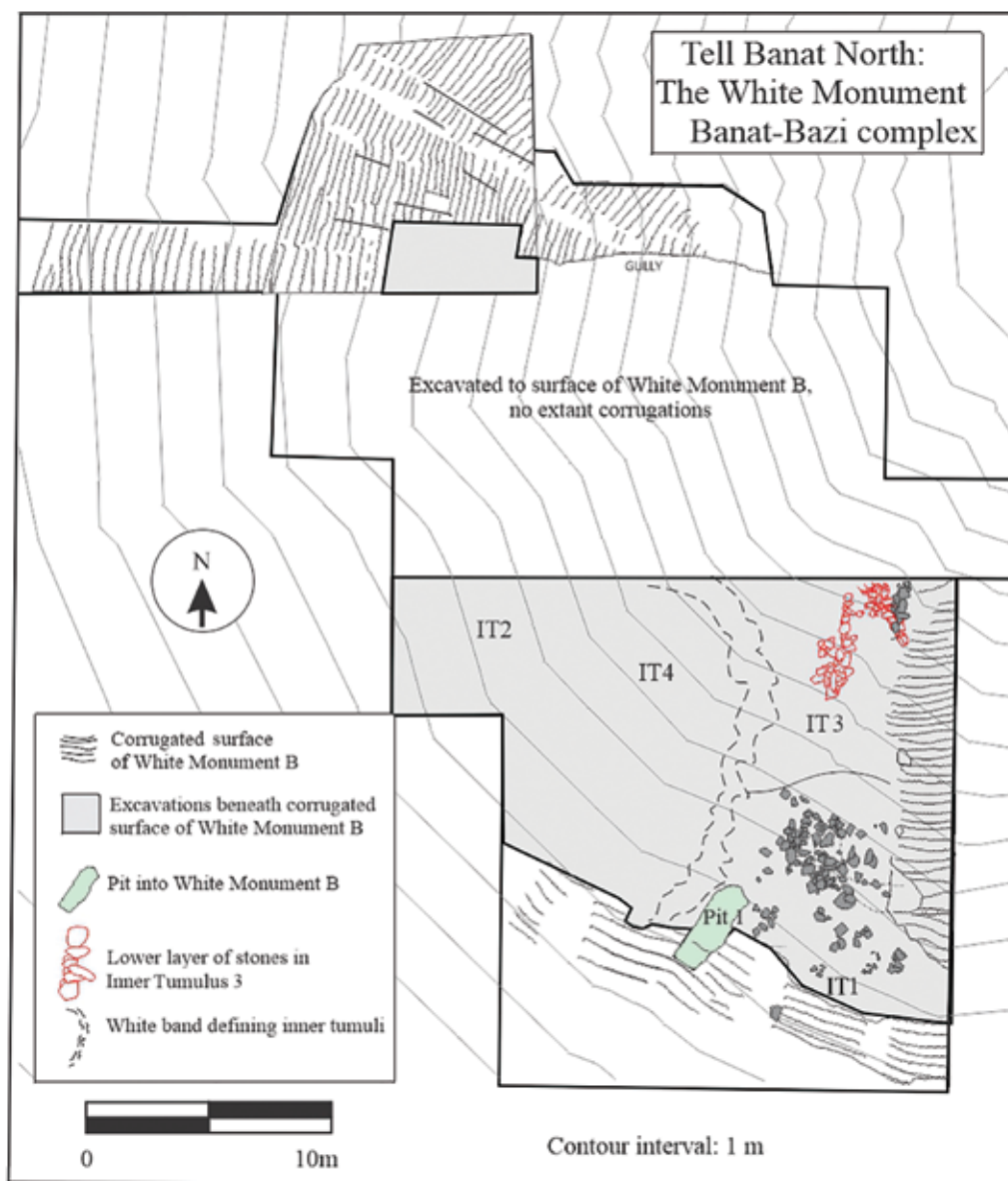


Figure 5.6. Excavation plan of Tell Banat North showing the location of the inner tumuli and ritual pit.

Inner Tumulus 3 also contained a minimum number of three individuals—two adults, one of whom fell into the age range of 17–25 years and the other of whom suffered perimortem trauma with a sharp object; the third individual was a subadult younger than 15.

Inner Tumulus 4 contained a minimum number of two adults, one of whom was a man between 30 and 50 years of age, and one subadult. Inner Tumuli 4 and 2 may constitute the same cairn; if they do, together they contain the remains of two adults, two subadults or one female and one subadult, and one neonate.



Figure 5.7. View of the inner tumuli of White Monument B in section: *a*, Inner Tumulus 4 (left) and Inner Tumulus 3 (right); *b*, top of Inner Tumulus 2 (lower left corner) and Inner Tumulus 4 (center).

Table 5.2. Numbers and ages (in years) of individuals interred in the inner tumuli of White Monument B.

	Geriatric	Adult male	Adult female	Subadult	Infant
Inner Tumulus 1	1 male (>60)	1 (25+), 1?	1?	1 (8–11)	
Inner Tumulus 2		1	1?		1 (neonate)
Inner Tumulus 3		1 (17–25), 1 (perimortem trauma)		1 (<15)	
Inner Tumulus 4		1 (30–50)	1?	1	

? = gender probable but not confirmed.

Since the estimation of the minimum number of individuals (MNI) is based on the presence of duplicate bones, it is widely considered that especially in contexts such as this one, where the bones are fragmented and dispersed, the actual number of interments is considerably underrepresented. One further note to bear in mind: In the absence of skull and pelvic remains, it is difficult to determine whether gracile bones represent subadults or females.

On the face of it, the human remains appear to have been dispersed randomly through the cairns. An exception to this indeterminate patterning is the observation that skull parts in Inner Tumulus 3 seem to be associated with stone deposits. The cairns contain few grave goods. Those found tended to be small and simple. Inner Tumulus 4, for example, contained an upturned pedestal base with a stone tool placed in it, a shallow bowl, a mother of pearl bead, and biconical pellets; the bone in Inner Tumulus 3 was distributed in various levels throughout the tumulus, and each bone deposit was accompanied by one or two vessels. Inner Tumulus 2 contained a pot and a biconical pellet.

These cairns constitute the interior of the construction phase WMB. Because these cairns had little structural integrity and would have been badly damaged in the first violent rainstorm such as occurs in these parts, it is likely that their compilation and the execution of their next construction phase—enclosure in a fill covered by a distinctive surfacing—took place in very short order. This surfacing was composed of a clean, white, packed, gypsum-heavy earth built up in bands, resulting in a corrugated effect (fig. 5.8). These bands were well preserved in the northwest and south-southeast parts of the excavation unit but in the west part were no longer extant. Repeated erosion and consequent resurfacings were clearly evident. Also evident were construction seams in the surfacing of WMB that indicated distinct work groups.

At the same time, back in Tell Banat, MMII also underwent a very short-term, but expansive, modification. The gravel deposit covering the initial tumulus was now enhanced with a protective facade of rooms (Building 7) built around and partway up the sides of the mound (fig. 5.5b). This facade on the south side constitutes a monumental open-air



Figure 5.8. Corrugated bands on the northwest edge of White Monument B1.

entranceway rising over three terraces from a street to the apex of the mound, on which once sat at least two columns.¹¹ The core of the entranceway was a baked-brick floor or plaza. The bricks themselves were somewhat water resistant, but traces of bitumen over the bricks, in addition to the bitumen mortar between the bricks, suggest the plaza may once have been completely coated with that substance. In any case, this plaza subsided at one point, was lifted, a drain beneath it added, and the bricks replaced. This entire complex constitutes a kind of ceremonial way. Installations such as a flat stone slab adjacent to a similar slab with a central depression at the edge of the plaza suggest ritual performances directed toward the columns on top of the mound.

At TBN, WMB was not without its own, highly visible, ritual space. A neat, rectangular pit with rounded ends, measuring about 2.9 × 1.5 m, was dug through the corrugated surface on the lower, south flank of the mound (fig. 5.6). Placed in this pit were parts of at least two individuals—one female aged 23–30 years, and one male of indeterminable age. The bones had been arranged in two layers in ways that mirrored one another. In the lower layer were the incomplete skull of a female and the left femur of a male. In the upper layer were a portion of a mandible, most likely of a male, and parts of another left femur, likely from a female. Whether these two deposits were parts of a single female and male or they belonged to more than two individuals cannot be established.

The pit had then been sealed by a series of five thin, white, waterlogged layers of plaster (fig. 5.9). Placed around the pit, directly on the corrugated surface of WMB, was the densest concentration of nonhuman materials found in any phase of TBN, including several beads, ceramic vessels, pieces of alabaster bowls, an incised bone fragment, a miniature jar packed with a hundred beads, biconical pellets, and animal bones (fig. 5.10). In addition, this deposit contained a few fragments of at least three individuals; among these fragments is the tibia of an infant.

It is possible that the bones found around the outside of the pit came from an interior cairn of WMB, bones thrown out when the ritual pit was dug. The density of objects, however, is atypical of WMB—and of deposits in the subsequent phase, White Monument A (WMA)—and the highly eroded condition of most of those bones on the surface of WMB indicates they may have been exposed to the elements for some time. Therefore it seems most likely that



Figure 5.9. Plastered surfaces of Pit 1 in section.

11 Although the family living in the compound were extremely generous in allowing us to excavate within their property, at considerable inconvenience to them, the presence of the modern buildings inhibited our ability to determine the presence or absence of additional columns.

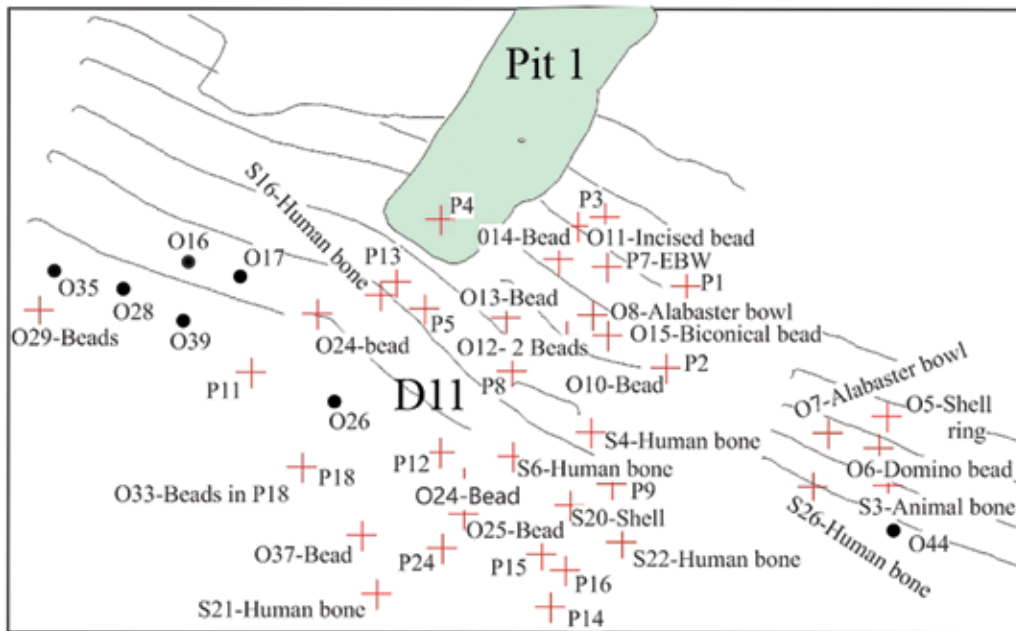


Figure 5.10. Deposit on the surface of White Monument B, around Pit 1.

human bones were deposited as part of the periodic rituals directed toward WMB. The waterlogging of the white plaster layers covering the pit may have resulted from annual rains that in this area occur in spring and autumn, or it might have been done as part of the ritual itself. The pouring of libations is a well-attested component of mortuary practice in greater Mesopotamia.

And now comes the next phase of MMII and what to many is its highlight, if not *raison d'être*: Tomb 7. In fact, and despite its monumentality, Tomb 7 may be only tangentially related to this construction sequence, for it is a secondary addition to MMII, itself no doubt already an historic artifact to the inhabitants of Banat by that time. Whether an opportunistic result or a planned component of the overall design, and whether or not the ultimate focus of that design, Tomb 7 was inserted into the side of this mound, possibly outside its facade, created by Building 7 (fig. 5.5a).¹² If the original destination for the completion of MMII, we might expect it to have been set in the top of the mound, with the columns placed around it. Instead, a large pit had been dug into the gravel and the tomb constructed within it, leaving the roof of the tomb part of an open surface. The stone-lined shaft, capped by a movable lid, protruded above ground level. Below, the shaft led into a dromos with three shallow steps. A single large, vertical limestone slab sealed the opening to a central, waisted hallway, from which stemmed three additional rooms. On the north side was the single largest space, Chamber F, in which was found a wooden box that, judging by the orange-colored stain that remained, had once housed a single flexed, human

¹² If Building 7 extended around the mound to the east, lying north of Tomb 7, it was obscured by the modern building there. There is a slight possibility that Building 7 continued south of Tomb 7, outside the excavation area, but there was little to indicate that it did.

skeleton. This body had either dissolved in the repeated flooding to which Chamber F bore witness or been deliberately removed. In addition, this room contained several fragments of wood, nails, and inlay that would have comprised at least two tables on which several objects were originally positioned. On the south side of the central hallway lay another two rooms, with the west one, Chamber C, containing the bulk of the ceramic inclusions recovered from the tomb and the east one, Chamber D, a small pile of fragmentary, disarticulated bones belonging to at least one individual aged between 20 and 35 years.¹³ The teeth associated with this secondary burial showed evidence that the individual had endured repeated stress until about 13 years of age.¹⁴ The bones were very worn. Impressions and ridges in the bitumen floor beneath these bones indicate they were associated with some kind of installation—but it is difficult to determine just what kind.

Not only do the design and size of this building stand out among third-millennium mortuary structures, but so too do the construction techniques employed. The interiors of the stone walls were sharply cut, and they were inset with window-like niches. Each course of stone in the walls was mortared with bitumen, and the baked-brick floor was entirely coated by the substance. Bitumen also sealed the seams between the ten large limestone slabs that formed the roof of the tomb.

There was no stratigraphic evidence of a connection between Building 7 and Tomb 7, nor was there any evidence refuting the possibility, so any arguments one way or the other are of necessity circumstantial. Slight though it is, the first piece of evidence that connects this phase of MMII with Tomb 7 is the alignment of the structures; the second is the use of a baked-brick floor, as in Building 7, coated with bitumen. Then there is the fact that the tomb was initially accessible, as well as the evidence that things were added and removed over time. Finally, there is little doubt that the tomb was remodeled by the addition of monolithic limestone pillars and beams as roof supports, and ultimately submerged in more gravel—remodeled probably *because* it was submerged—as part of the construction program of the last period of occupation. The placement of a series of small bowls on the floor adjacent to both the wooden box in Chamber F and the secondary deposit of bones in Chamber D suggests the presentation of offerings at this time. A closure ritual was enacted, resulting in the mass deposition of vessels within one chamber of the tomb. At some later point, a building composed of monumental stone walls, Building 6, was erected around, if not over, the mortuary mound. In this period, Period III, the temple *in antis* was built at Tell Kabir¹⁵ with the same construction techniques and using the same proportions evidenced in Building 6, and an enigmatic structure was constructed on top of Jebel Bazi.¹⁶ At TBN, this final phase saw a completely different arrangement of the dead. Here adult/subadult pairs were spatially segregated according to the type of mortuary inclusions associated with the human bones (table 5.3).¹⁷

13 Wilhelm 2006, 363.

14 Wilhelm 2006, 371.

15 Porter 1995b.

16 Otto 2006.

17 Porter et al. 2021.

Table 5.3. Numbers of inhumations and inclusions in White Monument A according to sector.

Deposit	Adult	Subadult	MNI	Faunal	Pellets
NW-D2	1	1	2	Equid	1
NW-D3	1	1	2	Equid	
NW-D4	1	1	2		
NW-D6	1	1	2	Equid	
NW-D7	2		2	Equid	
NW-D8	1		1	Equid	4
NW-D18	2		2		
SW-D9	1		1		
SW-D12	1	1 (Infant)	3		9
SW-D13	1	1	2		1
SW-D14	1		1		4
SW-D15	1		1	Equid	3
SW-D16	1		1		1
SW-D17	1		1		20
SW-D19	1	1	2		7
SW-D20	1		1		1
SW-D21		1	1		4
SE-D22	1	Infant	2		

MATERIALITIES OF POWER

Over the years, various suggestions have been made as to the origin, function, and inhabitants of the White Monument and MMII/Tomb 7. To many, it seems obvious that they are all, in one way or another, visible declarations of elite power—all components of the very *same* power. I have been told that Tomb 7 is undoubtedly a royal burial associated with Building 7, itself undoubtedly a royal palace. It has also been said that a royal burial lies at the base of the White Monument, perhaps housing the king to Tomb 7's queen—or vice versa. The subsequent interments in TBN, or on top of and around Tomb 7, have been accorded little more significance than that of people seeking enhanced status by association with a paramount. All these ideas are, at root, dependent on long-standing assumptions about work and value. The monuments are big, and they represent considerable investments of labor. A high degree of labor investment then indicates elite status in

two ways—one derived from contemporary valuations of labor, where size is calculated in person hours and person-hour costs, and one derived from the premise that a centralized authority is required to deploy said labor.¹⁸ The riches in tombs indicate the wealth of the inhabitants; exotic inclusions indicate elite participation in, or control of, long-distance trade, without consideration of whether those items were gifts from others or were possessions of the interred and their family—or a combination of all three.

Yet despite the fact that the small cairns dug into and sitting on the surface of WMC did not accumulate gradually over time but were part of a coherent, unified act (as outlined above), the only significant resources deployed in the construction of TBN were time, dirt, and the will to transport significant amounts of white earth over 2 km or so.¹⁹ For while person hours may themselves be absolute, person-hour costs are culturally constructed. In ancient Near Eastern societies, “state” labor was exceedingly cheap, as in the third millennium it was carried out by prisoners of war, subjects of *corvée* systems, and debt slaves, all of whom were compensated in rations—usually minimal. The value of slave labor may have included the cost of replacing the laborer, while calculations of the value of *corvée* labor should have included the costs of taking a worker from his normal tasks.²⁰

But the state was certainly not the only body capable of assembling manpower for such a project. The seams in the corrugated surface indicating work gangs are as likely to have been organized along the lines of family or kin groups as along the lines of state laborers. Social collectives as well as political ones may mobilize significant volunteer labor forces for community projects. While great care was taken in creating the highly regular bands of the corrugated surface, no specialized engineering knowledge would have been required for the construction of the White Monument (unlike Tomb 7), which shows in both phases B and A evidence of simple compilation through the repeated action of dumping basketloads of dirt. The same is true for the compilation of the gravel mound, MMIC.

Indeed, the family-like groups interred in each cairn within WMB, rather than indicating the locus of a state-controlled ideological edifice, represent a different social construct, one in which relationships extending beyond a single individual or even nuclear family are constructed by shared access to this burial space. I say “family-like” because the human inclusions in each tomb do not need to be biologically related to constitute a family in these circumstances. It is unlikely that entire families, with members at the same various lifecycle stages, died simultaneously on a regular basis; rather, bodies *representing* these stages were selected for inclusion from a previous point of deposition, for reasons to be explored elsewhere.

It is certainly possible that the burials within WMB were of the elite, or that the burials came to be seen as elite over time. There are significant differences, though, between the shaft and chamber tombs, Tombs 1 and 2, excavated at Banat,²¹ and WMB. These differences suggest that there were also quite different conceptions of the inhabitants of these two

18 Abrams and Bolland 1999.

19 For an important analysis of the construction costs of a somewhat comparable structure, see Pickett et al. 2016.

20 Powell 1987; Snell 1997; Garfinkle 2013. It was usual, however, for *corvée* demands to be filled at times of minimum agricultural input.

21 Porter 1995a, 2016.

distinct mortuary spaces—the shaft and chamber tombs, and the interior cairns of WMB. Like WMB, Tombs 1 and 2 also contained multiple secondary human interments, with similar age and gender ranges (table 5.4). In contrast to the shaft and chamber tombs, though, the mortuary inclusions within the inner tumuli of WMB are sparse. And the belowground versus aboveground location signals sequestration versus a highly obtrusive presencing.

However, the elaboration of MMIIC—that is, the addition of Building 7—is a different matter to the White Monument. Sequestration is also evident here, though in a rather different way from that of the shaft and chamber tombs. There is a complex interplay of visibility and concealment that speaks volumes to those moving through Tell Banat. Indeed, the very prominence of Building 7's external walls tells the passerby that something is hidden within.²² At the same time, those standing in a certain place in the street would have had an unobstructed view to the columns at the top of MMII, for there was no extant evidence of a gate closing off the 7 m wide brick plaza to block their view. This contrast speaks to control through a combination of inclusion, exclusion, and mystification. Unless guards were stationed at the entrance, it seems people could pass through unrestricted to the top of the mound, but their numbers at any one time, such as for the enactment of commemorative rites, would have been limited, especially for those rites that took place within the rooms on each side of the entrance. The people permitted access would be aware of their privilege. The broader public, however, could only hear and glimpse tantalizing fragments of any performance.

Similarly with Tomb 7—its roof was visible and immediate access to it apparently unconstrained. A large crowd could assemble around it. But only a select few would descend

Table 5.4. Comparison of interments in White Monument B and shaft and chamber Tombs 1 and 2, with ages in years indicated in parentheses.

	Geriatric	Adult male	Adult female	Subadult	Infant
Tomb 1	1 male (>50), 1 female (45–55)	1?	1? (20–40)	1 (~6)	
Inner Tumulus 1	1 male (>60)	1 (25+), 1?	1?	1 (8–11)	
Tomb 2	1?	1 (18–25; perimortem trauma)	1		
Inner Tumulus 2		1	1?		1 (neonate)
Inner Tumulus 3		1 (17–25), 1 (perimortem trauma)		1 (<15)	
Inner Tumulus 4		1 (30–50)	1?	1	

? = gender probable but not confirmed.

²² On the sensory effects of this tension, see also McMahon, this volume.

through the shaft into the sepulcher(s) below, for whatever purpose. I hesitate, however, to label the differences between the groups cohering around these two memorials, MMIC and WMB, as “elite” versus “populace,” or even as “authority” versus “community,” for I argue below that in both cases the nature of power is in formative stages arising from the dialogic relationship between mounds. Contrasts are redolent throughout the prime burial remains at Tell Banat—contrasts between family groups, between classes, between monuments. And since each mound must have been elaborated in full knowledge of what was happening or had just happened in the other place, the contrasts would have been deliberate and clearly understood: external versus internal, free and open versus controlled, family versus individual. Those differences give rise to tension if not outright competition between different societal sectors, different visions of society, a tension that was enacted not only in construction but also in ritual performance multiple times thereafter.

Lauren Ristvet,²³ in a far more nuanced approach than that of other commentators, has situated a discussion of the White Monument within consideration of the effects of ritual movement. She imagines, as I read it, a royal progression from the settlement to its periphery, whereby the White Monument was incorporated into the rhetoric of the state—but again, as a component of the same power, in which the actions of the king are determinative. Similarly with the Ebla Royal Ritual, where the king and queen, their gods, and various members of their retinue progress out of the city and into the countryside to visit the burials of previous rulers.²⁴ A fundamental understanding of royal processions as the elite manipulation of ideology and display is widespread; its purpose is seen as a means of integrating the components of the state that live at a remove from its everyday demonstrations of authority, thereby reminding them of who is in charge and why.

It is certainly tempting to see parallels to the Ebla Royal Ritual at Banat and to take, in turn, evidence from Banat to the interpretation of the Ebla text. As the destination of the Ebla ritual is outside the city,²⁵ so the White Monument is outside the settlement of Banat; multiple Ebla kings in a line of succession are invoked, and two monumental mortuary structures are present at Banat. More importantly, Tomb 7 is the only known mortuary structure with the affordances for the specifics of such a ritual. It is certainly the most spacious tomb in the North. Four human-sized beings enter the Ebla structure—the king, queen, and city gods Kura and Barama. The king and queen, at least, sit on the thrones of their fathers overnight. Tomb 7, with its five large rooms of standing height and a central unit uncluttered by many objects, provides space for these and other actions (fig. 5.11). Moreover, there are square impressions suggestive of chairs (at least as they are commonly seen in images)—one in the bitumen floor of the first antechamber, Chamber A, and four in the second, Chamber B (fig. 5.12), located just in front of the entrance to Chamber F, where the wooden coffin with a primary burial was located.²⁶

²³ Ristvet 2014.

²⁴ Fronzaroli 1992; Archi 2001; Biga 2007–8; Bonechi 2016.

²⁵ The locations of places mentioned in the Ebla ritual, however, are at least 20 km from Tell Mardikh, rather than the distance of 200 m or so between WMB and MMII.

²⁶ My thanks to Zeynep KUSDIL for this determination; see Suter 2020 for a discussion of third-millennium chairs.



Figure 5.11. Interior of Tomb 7 Chamber B (after excavation) from Chamber A. The entrance to Chamber F is on the right.

At least two kings performed this Ebla ritual, and they all performed it in the same place: the *É-matim* of the town of Nenaš (or Binaš). The literal translation of *É-matim* is “the house of the land”; the focus on an interpretative translation “mausoleum” obscures the significance of this label. It is the burial place that defines the identity of the kingdom. And it is not at Ebla itself. Other dead kings are presented offerings at other towns, though there is no indication that a similar overnight and transformative stay was performed at these places. Three dead kings are associated with Nenaš and are seemingly interred in the *É-matim*.²⁷ In one more provocative point of contact, there may have been two separate individuals interred in Banat Tomb 7: one primary, and no longer extant, and one secondary.²⁸

But such comparisons are ultimately false, and for a number of reasons. In practical terms, any such “royal” progression would originate in a place outside Banat itself, because Tomb 7 is not associated with a palace. Building 7 is little more than an elaborated wall around the top of MMII (fig. 5.5a–b), while the monumental gateway on the top of Jebel Bazi (at the south end of Banat), whether it should prove a secular structure or a sacred one, simply did not exist at the time of WMB and MMIIC–B. Its construction dates to the time of the final phase of the White Monument, WMA. But more to the point is the fact that the *sequence* of constructions and the nature of each one reveal two separate loci of

²⁷ Biga 2007–8, 46–47; Archi 2001, 5.

²⁸ Work is ongoing in an effort to determine whether this interment represents a single individual moved over space or two individuals. See future publications on Tomb 7. Currently, however, we are inclined to see Tomb 7 as having housed two separate bodies.



Figure 5.12. Circular and square impressions in the bitumen floor covering of Chamber F.

power. The Ebla ritual may be answering to the population as much as it may be bamboozling it. The coexistence of the White Monument and MMII, their shared and yet vastly disparate features, demonstrates this entangled nature of power and politics.

DIALOGIC MONUMENTS

In the light of traditional assumptions of the nature of power, it would be easy to assume that the White Monument was simply the counter to MMII. After all, MMII, and especially Tomb 7, would seem traditional manifestations of an elite authority that can marshal the resources for such elaborate constructions. The architecture of Tomb 7 undoubtedly required highly skilled masons. The fuel required to bake the number of bricks in the floors, not just of the open plaza (380) but also of an additional room (only partially excavated) in Building 7, and in Tomb 7 too (528),²⁹ as well as the quantity of bitumen employed in both plaza and tomb, elevates costs to a significant level, especially given the potential distances involved in the bitumen's procurement.³⁰ Because of the grand scale of all these actions, there is little fine-tuned sequencing that allows us to determine exact chronological relationships between the corresponding stages of these two monuments. White Monument B and MMIIC-B belong to the same ceramic phase. Yet there are clues that lead to a dynamic reconstruction of events, and it is the dynamic itself that is of considerable interest.

²⁹ I thank Mohammed Abualsaid for these figures.

³⁰ Although there may have been the occasional bitumen seep much closer to Banat, the most likely source is either in the vicinity of Der ez-Zor, the location of modern oil fields, or ancient Hit.

The relationship between mounds certainly begins with conceptions of the past, as any monument does,³¹ and especially the ancestral past, because the simple fact of choosing a burial, covering it over, yet making it bigger—whatever its stated intent, and by whomever it is done—is an act of appropriation. It is simultaneously an appropriation of the past, a claim to descent, and also of place. It is a statement of presence that establishes current and historic relationships with land as it knits together all who claim this descent in common. When two such claims are monumentalized, at more-or-less the same time, it is inherently conflictual—even if those memorialized are within the same line of succession, such as one king after the other, and even if they are a cognate pair, where descent from both maternal and paternal lines is reckoned. For how the mounds are enlarged, and where they are enlarged, leads to a separate constituency for each and creates two separate visions of society. The *sequence* in which they are enlarged is not only reactionary but also, in and of itself, becomes constitutive of authority.

The corrugated mound that constitutes the earliest—at least so far as exposed—phase of MMII (MMIID) is, as far as we know, the original tumulus that underpinned subsequent constructions. If the next phase of construction there is the deposition of the gravel mound, MMIIC, then the next phase of construction at TBN is WMC—a simple mound with a smooth surface. This scenario suggests that the corrugated cover of WMB erected over the cairns was a deliberate, retroactive imitation of the initial tumulus MMIID. Such mirroring,³² a thread seen in a number of aspects of Banat material culture,³³ effects the annexation of that which is mirrored. It can accomplish a range of different ends—to make something more like the other and so more likeable,³⁴ or to make something like the other to emphasize points of difference subtly. The latter seems to be the case here, given the contrasts in the size and prominence of each mound. It is WMB that stands out as bigger and better than MMIID. Intentional or not, the outcome of this emulation was tantamount to a mockery of MMIID.

It is possible that this action was taken in response to the enclosure, or planned enclosure, of MMIID/C within the facade of Building 7. But before even the corrugated cover of WMB was accomplished, the inclusion within it of multiple cairns of multiple bodies effected a relationship between the ancestor, society, and space that markedly diverged from the sterile, shallow, gravel deposit of MMIIC. White Monument B is a picture of inclusion. Mortuary Mound IIC is not. White Monument B lays claim to a world of descendants—it shows the progenitive success of the ancestor—just as those who built it lay claim to their descent through the monument. Mortuary Mound IIC does not. It gives birth, at this stage in the sequence, to no one.

Perhaps, as originally proposed, the sterility of MMIIC was deliberate, the gravel a denial of the tumulus below it.³⁵ Given the sloping dimensions of the mound, however, it is more likely that the ritual entranceway to the columns and the flanking building were

31 Van Dyke 2019.

32 See also Ristvet, this volume.

33 Porter 2012. Mirroring is also to be found in several ways in Tomb 7.

34 Mirroring has indeed become a classic technique taught as an element of success in business.

35 Porter 2002. This interpretation, however, was made before the sloped dimensions of the gravel deposit were fully appreciated. The pit was seen as a separating element between the gravel and Building 7.

always intended to augment it, or rather, that the gravel mound was always intended as the substructure for these elements to create a place for the active commemoration of Area C's founding ancestor—the founding ancestor, by virtue of its place in the center of what was to become the settlement, of the town itself. But if this was the case, the plan seems to have changed, and changed midway in the construction process.

It is at this point that a theoretical perspective underlying that of the dialogic monument requires explication, and it is that of object agency,³⁶ for both mounds are nothing more than grand objects. As expressed by Gosden³⁷ (writing on Gell), “forms of abstract thought and mental representation take the shape suggested by objects, rather than objects simply manifesting pre-existing forms of thought.” In the first instance it is the shape of the initial tumulus, MMIID, that gives rise to the thoughts implicit in WMB, thoughts so implicit that we might venture to think we can read them: this ancestor, our ancestor, is just like that one. No, wait—our ancestor is more than a match for that one, and we are more than a match for you! And if monuments build a sociospatial relationship to land, then WMB claims all the great outdoors. Standing tall, gleaming white, WMB is a beacon visible across the river-valley floor and the steppe above. It is both a site of attraction and, in Gell's terms, a captivation.³⁸ It demands that the viewer think about it as an object not known (as yet) anywhere else. Placed on the open plain, it is also an unpoliceable place of assembly, one constructing its own public—a public that may consist of anyone of any class of any ethnicity, from near or from far.

It is the very openness of WMB that gives rise to a very different thought—and shape—in what then happens in MMII. The addition of new elements to MMII B, that is, Tomb 7, can be understood as reactive to the construction of WMB. The new presence in the landscape of a massive, gleaming construction that deliberately invokes the other ancestral foundation, whether before or after the deposit of the gravel comprising MMII C, can have been little other than sheer provocation. It is—and again, whatever the stated intent—a challenge to the status quo.

It may be suggested that it was this challenge that afforded the accumulation of resources that underpinned the monumentalization of Building 7, and ultimately Tomb 7, by prompting those who claimed alliance with the ancestor buried beneath the gravel mound to reemphasize their own presence in the landscape and to respond to size with materiality. One way they may have accomplished this goal was by bringing quite literally to the fore the ancestor originally to be commemorated at a distance in this complex of mound and building. Conveying the bones from beneath the gravel mound to above and within it not only highlighted the individual in contrast to the collective but also imbued this ancestor with an immediacy and a physicality that rendered him no longer just a figure in the past but a reality in the present. And if “forms of abstract thought and mental representation take the shape suggested by objects,” as Gosden states,³⁹ that shape is not always literal. The reactionary nature of dialogic monuments gives rise to oppositions. If old white men are the traditional subjects of establishment monuments, young women of

36 Gell 1998.

37 Gosden 2005, 196.

38 Gell 1998.

39 See n. 37.

color are their antiestablishment counter.⁴⁰ If conspicuousness, openness, and inclusion are read as the instigating challenge, then the response is to shroud and shield the answering, exclusive constructions.

Archaeologically, this scenario is indicated by the location of Tomb 7 as ancillary to the apex of the mound itself, as well as by the fact that a deep pit was dug through the gravel of MMIIIC into the initial tumulus MMIIID but sealed by the Building 7 floors of MMIIIB. For this pit, I would argue, represents a change in the intention of the builders of MMII. Such change might be wrought simply by time—once the gravel was laid, little consideration was given to this space. Someone dug a pit; someone decided to enhance the mound perhaps because of the pit, perhaps in spite of it. But two pieces of evidence obviate against an unintentional development of the mound in this way. The presence of a secondary interment in Chamber D of Tomb 7 raises the very real possibility that the pit was dug to retrieve, and Tomb 7 built to rehouse, a targeted ancestor, but that intent was conceived while Building 7 was in the process of execution, or at least in plan. This understanding is suggested by the presence in a second pit through the gravel, immediately adjacent to the intrusion into MMIIID and also sealed by Building 7, of the articulated lower half of a human body 1.5 m below an articulated upper torso and skull found deposited above the floor of Building 7. This find suggests there was a deliberate linking of the excavation of MMIIID and the construction of Building 7, a marking of a relationship to transcend this change, even if created by biologically unrelated bodies. The deployment of a human body in such a way is hardly surprising given the various ways the dead were used across the site.⁴¹

Both monuments “have cultivated their own particular publics”;⁴² moreover, both monuments give rise to their own particular political ethos. The White Monument, in its equality of access, conveys an ideology of social and political participation. This ideology need not be inherently antithetical to the “state.” The second-millennium Zukru festival at Emar,⁴³ for example, shows that politics may be practiced outside the city for the very purpose of reducing distance between classes, as well as between classes of being. Gods, king, citizens—all come together in a feast, thus creating community whatever the reality of day-to-day life. But what is at stake here is the continual construction of *contrast* between the two mounds. The spatial dimensions both within and outside MMII/Tomb 7 give rise to an emphasis on restricted authority, a dimension of power different from the free faces of WMB. Mortuary Monument II is formed within a depression at the center of Banat and sheltered by Building 7, thus allowing for fewer viewers and even fewer participants than its counterpart. Entrance to the mound is funneled through the ascending-terrace system, controlling the way participants in its rituals experience it. Tomb 7 is sunken, in a situation that, while open, requires those who enter it to disappear mysteriously through a box-like structure into the depths below, while the celebration of WMB takes place high on the sides of the structure.

40 See, for example, Osborne 2017, fig. 3.

41 A point of comparison is also provided by the partial interments of the closure rituals at Tell Brak (Oates, Molleson, and Soltysiak 2008).

42 Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012, 952.

43 Fleming 2000.

So while both WMB and MMII may be understood as monuments in the classic definition of the word, for they “induce remembrance of specific events or people,”⁴⁴ they should not be understood as inducing the *same* memory in all the people; rather, they may become the focus for multiple views of the past—and of the present as constituted by the past.⁴⁵ They are neither unchanging nor purely focused on memorializing the past. They appropriate and invoke the past, certainly, but with each iteration they change it; each iteration is creating something new in the present. If Tomb 7 is a reactionary construction to the building of WMB, WMB is itself a *lieu de discorde*, “making dissensus visible,”⁴⁶ by virtue of its evocation of MMII and its place in the landscape. For the appropriation of the initial tumulus of MMII by its enclosure within the gravel mound may have initiated festering resentments if it was intended to sequester a forebear previously claimed by all.

CONCLUSION

Two mounds, then, each enclosing generations of the dead, each building ancestral claims through the appropriation of earlier burials and thereby realizing a complex relationship with the past, a relationship that is memorialized at the same time as it is removed from sight. Each simultaneously transformed on three separate occasions. But each of those transformations was different in construction and constituents. One stood tall on the open plain outside the settlement, one was screened within it. Access to one seemed open, unconstrained, while access to the other was mediated by an elaborate facade. Viewed from a distance, and from south to north or from west to east, the end result was a line of undulating mounds in a complex replication of the natural landscape that was itself a “descent-scape.”⁴⁷ From a distance, the mortuary nature of these structures may not be obvious. Yet a glimpse of the associated rituals evidently practiced in both locations would indicate the highly charged nature of this landscape, singling out some features in an otherwise undifferentiated backdrop and ultimately binding the dead to the land.

Two distinct lines of authority become both instantiated and memorialized in the White Monument and MMII, then. While the nature of those two lines of authority is not immediately evident, there are two main possibilities. One is a population in opposition to its elite. Another is the elite itself. We have a tendency to elide elites and palace together—to conceive them as a single, unified entity. But of course if there is a threat to power, there are two places it is most likely to come from: those with power, and those without it. Sitting so close to the seat of power often generates a desire to make that seat one’s own, and such proximity offers the alliances with which to make that happen. Equally, there comes a moment in the dialectic of control where those without power are willing to sacrifice everything to exert it. In each case, the White Monument is a powerful source of attraction—for the powerless because it is a place they can see, and be, without power’s control; for the elite because it is a symbol that echoes the center, asserting likeness, and thereby offering all the center can offer, while yet asserting its innate superiority.

44 Gregory et al. 2009, 478.

45 See also Lau 2016.

46 Dolff-Bonekämper 2002, 247.

47 Lau 2016, 169.

Notions of power are often constructed in monolithic, top-down ways. In these frameworks, society is divided into two groups: the elite, and everyone else, with all agency attributed to the former and none to the latter. Yet each generation of scholars has lived through histories in which popular outcries and uprisings challenge, and sometimes defeat, that power. And outside our era, evidence abounds of rebellions⁴⁸ in the documentation of the ancient Near East. Even when revolts and resistance fail, they effect change on both sides of the relationship. This reality should make us more sensitive to the power of the populace—not necessarily as a threat, but as a framework within which authority resides and to which it responds.

It is the human constituents of WMB that I would argue are determinative. The separate cairns, and the slight distinctions between them in both human and structural components, speak to the individual construction of each cairn by representatives of multiple sectors (families?) of the community rather than evidence of an elite distinguishing itself from another elite (which may perhaps be seen in the contemporaneous Tomb 1). At the same time, the general sameness of these cairns, the lack of differentiation within them, and their ultimate subsumption within a single entity speak not just to the collective dead but also to the corporate identity of the living. It is difficult *not* to read WMB as a statement of identity—a claim, even—to self-determination. Whether intended as such, whether the burials of a local elite or simply of those who wanted to be seen as such through association with an ancient ancestor buried below, it would not have been long before the monument itself constituted a constant reminder of the potential accumulation of power by others than the establishment, if the establishment is represented by MMII. The extramural location of TBN makes this mound available for untrammelled gatherings of people from any sociopolitical, and even geographical, context. The looming aspect of this mound as seen from inside the town, the fact that the exterior of WMB was the subject of repeated ritual performance and votive offerings (actions, moreover, visible from within the town), and the consequent potential to mobilize the public would all soon come to represent an incipient threat to those inside the settlement.

The power of the populace, therefore, may have been the impetus for the changes (albeit not necessarily desired) that took place in the last phase of occupation at Banat. As Julian Thomas⁴⁹ notes in his discussion of house societies,

mutually competitive relations tend to emerge in periods of significant structural transformation. . . . The recurring, mutually associated factors are rapid social change, the transformation of property relations, and the emergence of more bounded and competitive social formations.

The White Monument and MMII both manifest and create the above conditions. If the amplification of MMII and the control of its ancestor gave rise to an enhanced power to the town, it seems it was that power that was ultimately successful in the contest between sectors of society. In the final stage of Banat's history, political tensions seem to have been reconciled, whether amicably or forcefully, for a single power unified all the components of the settlement complex. The White Monument was transformed, and in ways that might

48 Richardson 2010.

49 Thomas 2016, 145.

represent the process by which the unification took place. The final stage, WMA, was built up in horizontal platforms, with secondary deposits of adult and subadult pairs placed in the soil during the construction process. No longer were there tumuli, but patterns in the deposition and in the mortuary inclusions accompanying these remains are distinct. Toward the north, adult and subadult pairs were accompanied by equid remains, and toward the south, by bi-conical earthen pellets. White Monument A, it is proposed,⁵⁰ housed those fallen in battle.

ABBREVIATIONS

IT	Inner Tumulus
MMII	Mortuary Monument II
MNI	minimum number of individuals
TBN	Tell Banat North
WMA, B, C	White Monument A, B, C

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⁵⁰ Porter et al. 2021.

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PART II

ACTING IN SPACE

6 Spacious or Empty? Making Courtyards in Mesopotamia

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MESOPOTAMIA WAS A courtyard culture. Excavations of Mesopotamian houses dating to the third through first millennia BCE suggest that the ideal urban house included a courtyard, often—though not exclusively—central to the building.¹ Many daily activities of cooking, eating, greeting guests, crafting, and sleeping took place in house courtyards. Such courtyards were private and yet open, forming small, safe oases of fresh air and light within dense urban neighborhoods. House courtyards also filtered access to other parts of the building.² Courtyards were similarly important spaces within Mesopotamian monumental buildings, both temples and palaces. But archaeological evidence for the activities that took place in the courtyards of such public buildings is thin. These courtyards are enormous, beyond the excavation capacity of even the massive expeditions of the early 1900s, and archaeologists have not been able to excavate such spaces with adequate attention to features, residues, and discard patterns to judge what activities might have taken place there. Ancient texts provide some information, however, suggesting that monumental courtyards contained important artworks and enclosed occasional large-scale performances that involved the interaction of kings and gods.

These spectacles had political as well as religious significance and support theoretical proposals that performances in the past emphasized political legitimacy, hierarchy, social order, and permanence.³ More specifically, public spectacles can create memories, reinforce social identities, and impart information about ideologies.⁴ But although the primary actors and enactors of such performances have been addressed, the audiences for performances in Mesopotamia and elsewhere remain perversely underexamined. Discussion of the messages and effects of performances, such as maintaining social order and creating memories, is meaningless without consideration of the people receiving those messages.

1 See plans of third-millennium BCE Tell Asmar (Delougaz, Lloyd, and Hill 1967) or second-millennium BCE Ur (Woolley and Mallowan 1976; also Stone 1996; Ur 2012).

2 Rapoport 2007.

3 DeMarrais 2014; Inomata 2006.

4 Harmanşah 2013; Soar 2014.

QUESTIONS ABOUT COURTYARDS

What was the intent behind the creation of enormous courtyard spaces within Mesopotamian monumental buildings? What were their uses, and who were their users? Were such courtyards spacious so as to allow awe-inspiring maximum visibility of surrounding walls, internal features, and public performances? Or were they intended to be filled with people and to generate senses of solidarity through the creation of crowds?

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR COURTYARDS IN ROYAL BUILDING PROJECTS

Mesopotamian royal inscriptions referring to monumental building projects were common from the third to first millennium BCE, but they rarely gave details of building, room, or courtyard size or of basic construction materials. Instead, they emphasize exotic materials used for surface finishing—for example, doors, paving, or roof beams.⁵ Dedication inscriptions, such as those on bricks and foundation figures of Ur III kings (late third millennium BCE), provided the specific names of temple-building elements such as *temenos* and *terrace*. But they did not give details of courtyards. Even the Gudea Cylinders (ca. 2141–2122 BCE), famous for their detailed description of temple construction, did not mention courtyards but focused on foundations, the mixing and making of the first brick, and surface finishing in imported stones and cedar. Courtyard walls occasionally appeared as a topic in texts—for example, a Late Babylonian tablet describing brick numbers in the walls of the E-sagil temple in Babylon.⁶ However, the focus of the exercise in this text was the walls and the effort in their construction, not the space they enclosed.

Similarly, Neo-Assyrian inscriptions describing palaces also detailed the exotic materials used, such as ivory, maple, and boxwood, and features such as bronze-covered cedar doors and roof beams or limestone gate protectors and wall reliefs. If interior building spaces were described, they were elements such as the porch-like *bit hilani*, and even there the emphasis was on the cedar columns and their animal-shaped bases, not on the courtyards these porches faced. Dimensions of terraces, foundations, or the “footprints” of buildings were occasionally recorded, but not interior divisions of space. Mentions of courtyards were very generic. Sennacherib wrote about his Nineveh palace: “I greatly enlarged its [the palace’s] outer courtyard” to make room to inspect people, horses, and the army and its equipment (Sennacherib 22 vi 65b,⁷ 25 ii 6⁸). Sennacherib also commissioned work on the Nebi Yunus armory: “I greatly enlarged its outer courtyard for making my thoroughbred horses submissive to the yoke and for reviewing the substantial enemy booty” (Sennacherib 34 66b⁹). In much the same terms, Esarhaddon reported enlarging his

5 Here I focus on the projects of the Gudea and Ur III dynasties of the late third millennium BCE and the Neo-Assyrian kings of the first millennium BCE. While admittedly selective, these periods saw some of the largest building projects and the most intensive documentation of royal actions in Mesopotamian history.

6 George 1995.

7 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003496/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

8 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003499/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

9 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003508/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

palace court (Esarhaddon 1 vi 32,¹⁰ 2 v 57¹¹); he specifies 95 × 31 cubits as the palace size but does not go into that level of detail for the courtyard. Ashurbanipal simply enlarged the courtyards of the Nabu and Ishtar temples (Ashurbanipal 59 12,¹² 60 12¹³).

Official textual records of monumental building projects thus appear to be of limited utility for understanding audiences and effects of past performances. Large size was an important feature, and enlarging courtyards was an important royal action, but exact dimensions and capacity were left unrecorded. However, the emphasis on creating a textual record of the investment of labor in constructing and enlarging courtyards does amplify the significance of these spaces.¹⁴

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR COURTYARD ACTIVITIES AND FEATURES

In contrast to the thin details on courtyard size, there is substantial textual evidence for the built features and ritual events that took place in courtyards, especially those of temples. The texts of Gudea provide a particularly rich stream of information about installations and ritual actions. Gudea recorded his placing of a stela in the courtyard of the E-ninnu temple to Ningirsu and also noted that “its courtyard resounds with holy prayers, *sim* and *ala* drums” (Gudea Cylinders A and B: t.2.1.7: 770–780¹⁵). Further, on the day of the temple’s dedication, “to see that the courtyard of the E-ninnu will be filled with joy; to see that the *ala* drums and *balaĝ* drum will sound in perfect concert with the *sim* drums, and to see that his beloved drum Ušumgal-kalama will walk in front of the procession, the ruler who had built the E-ninnu, Gudea, himself entered before Lord Ningirsu” (Gudea Cylinders A and B: t.2.1.7: 1155–1181¹⁶). Drums are depicted on the many fragmentary stelae of Gudea from Telloh, as well as the stela of Ur-Nammu/Urnammu from Ur, though these stelae do not show the built context for the dedication events or any audience for the procession described.

After dedication, courtyards were used for regular food offerings to the gods, sometimes accompanied by music from harps or lyres as well as drums: “The ruler raised his head high in the courtyard of the goddess from Sirara. He offered bread, poured cold water and went to Nanše to pray to her” (Gudea Cylinders A and B: t.2.1.7: 90–100¹⁷). Such offerings also are recorded in the Akkadian period¹⁸ and at the end of the Isin-Larsa period: “O king, since you have offered your food offerings first offered in the *abzu*; O king, since you have offered your food offerings afterwards in the great courtyard, there shall be no end to the abundance” (Prayer to Nanna for Rim-Sîn; Rim-Sîn G: c.2.6.9.7: 11–21¹⁹). And music performance during rituals persisted at least into the Old Babylonian period:

10 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003230/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

11 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003231/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

12 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003758/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

13 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q003759/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

14 Inomata and Coben 2006.

15 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#> (accessed August 12, 2020).

16 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#> (accessed August 12, 2020).

17 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#> (accessed August 12, 2020).

18 Cohen 1993.

19 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr2697.htm> (accessed August 12, 2020).

“The sweet-sounding *tigi* instruments are arranged in the majestic forecourt where your food-offerings are presented. In the heavenly assembly (?), the *tigi* instruments resound for you. Nanna, the sweet-sounding *tigi* instruments are arranged in the majestic forecourt where your food-offerings are presented. In the heavenly assembly (?), the *tigi* instruments resound for you” (Nanna N: c.4.13.14: 22–27²⁰).

In terms of built features or focal points in the courtyards, broken statue fragments and texts suggest that statues of deities and votives were placed in temple courtyards during the Early Dynastic,²¹ Akkadian,²² and Ur III periods.²³ Shulgi indicated: “I lined up my gold statues and lapis-lazuli statues in the main courtyard of her E-niğara. I filled it with treasures like those of holy Aratta” (A Praise Poem of Shulgi, Shulgi Y: c.2.4.2.25: 22–31²⁴). In the Neo-Assyrian period, Sennacherib also recorded placing pedestals of exotic stones (often supporting statues of the Igigi gods) and bronze braziers in temple courtyards (Sennacherib 196: 2²⁵; 197: 2²⁶; 209: 11–13²⁷). Texts recording names of the parts of Late Babylonian temples suggest that temples in Babylon, Uruk, and Nippur had courtyards containing a “Dais of Destinies,” presumably supporting a statue or statues, and further that such courtyards were called the “Court of Divine Assembly,”²⁸ thus implying that temple courtyards’ use and activities changed little between the third and first millennia BCE.

Finally, the Babylonian Akitu festival included purification of the Marduk temple, which took place largely in the courtyard: water was sprinkled in various places around the temple, a kettledrum was played, and the doors were smeared with cedar resin.²⁹ The core of the purification involved a silver censer in the courtyard and a ritual with cypress and other aromatics, followed by decapitation of a ram or sheep and recitation of incantations, all within the courtyard. Some versions of the Akitu-festival description involve the digging of a pit in the temple courtyard and the sacrifice of an ox and/or placing of a reed bundle there. The festival involved many other performances, inside and outside the temples, with the primary actors—the king and deities (materialized through their statues)—taking part in feasting, traveling in processions, and making sacrifices. The Hellenistic versions of the Tashritu and Nisannu New Year festivals at Uruk also involved a gathering of gods’ statues or symbols in the courtyard of the Resh temple or Akitu temple, with water sprinkling, libations and other offerings, and a ritual meal for the gods, king, and other elites.³⁰ The rededication of the Assur temple by Esarhaddon (Esarhaddon Prism Assur A,

20 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr41314.htm> (accessed August 12, 2020).

21 Cohen 1993.

22 Eppihimer 2010; Thomas 2015.

23 Suter 2010.

24 <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr24225.htm> (accessed August 12, 2020).

25 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q004001/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

26 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q004002/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

27 <http://oracc.org/rinap/Q004014/> (accessed August 12, 2020).

28 George 1995, 194.

29 Cohen 1993.

30 Cohen 1993; Linssen 2004.

VII: 28–29³¹) involved three days of celebration in the temple's courtyard by Esarhaddon and other members of the court.

The reconstruction of some features and activities in temple courtyards is therefore possible and remains essentially the same across time. Statues, stelae, and altars were present, combining with the scale of the courtyards to mark the spaces as extraordinary.³² Regular rituals of offerings and less-common events of purification or dedication took place there, accompanied by music, processions, and sacrifices. But while the direct actors in these rituals and events—mainly priests and the king—are suggested by texts, the potential audiences are rarely mentioned.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR MONUMENTAL COURTYARDS

Most archaeological plans of monumental buildings depict huge and utterly empty courtyards—for example, the representations of the Neo-Assyrian palace at Khorsabad³³ and the Ur III Moon God temple complex at Ur.³⁴ But even in the massive explorations of the late 1800s and early 1900s, such as the excavations at Khorsabad, rarely was a courtyard completely excavated; walls would be traced by tunneling or trenching to reconstruct the plan, but the courtyard's center was left unemptied.³⁵ Because of selective excavation strategies such as tunneling, combined with the massive scale of these constructions, approaches that are now regularly applied to household spaces to identify activity areas and determine levels of cleanliness, such as residue and microstratigraphic analyses,³⁶ have never been applied to monumental courtyard spaces.

One exception to the typical empty representation of monumental courtyards is the work of the University of Chicago's 1930s Diyala project. Plans of some levels of the Early Dynastic temples at the Diyala sites show internal courtyard features. The illustrations of the Oval Temple at Khafajah, for example, detail the courtyard pedestals, offering tables, drainage, and a possible well, all of which reflect an intensive use of this space and the range of open-air activities.³⁷ Similarly, the plan of Level IX of the Sin temple at Khafajah shows the central basin and its drainage, plus an altar and numerous offering pedestals against the south wall of the courtyard.³⁸ However, three-dimensional reconstructions vary in their inclusion of these installations and representations of the people who might have used them. Even in the Diyala publications, human figures appear mainly to have been inserted as scale devices, not to suggest users, activities, and audiences.³⁹

31 Steele 1951. See also the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (ORACC) subproject, Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (RINAP) 4: Esarhaddon 057.

32 Inomata and Coben 2006.

33 Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 76.

34 Woolley 1939, pl. 68.

35 Loud 1936, figs. 29, 30, 94, 109; Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 6.

36 Cereda and Romano 2018; Matthews et al. 1997.

37 Delougaz 1940, pls. III, IV.

38 Delougaz and Lloyd 1942, pl. 11.

39 Delougaz 1940, fig. 65.

EMPIRICAL CAPACITY TESTING

Although past excavations of courtyards were neither complete nor concerned with details, they have given us useful raw data on scale. Consideration of potential audiences can be based in these empirical data on courtyard size when combined with estimates of recommended space per person in specific situations—estimates derived from modern urban planning. Allowing us to go beyond the simplistic proposal that performances made political and social statements, a range of questions affords us the opportunity to examine the potential receivers of those statements.⁴⁰ How large were courtyards, and what percentage of the total space of monumental buildings did they represent? How many people could fit into these courtyards? What percentage of the adult population of the city would this capacity have comprised?

While the first question about size requires only basic mathematics, the second and third questions involve predictive variables, so any answers will be somewhat speculative. For the second question, the key variable is the space required per standing person. For this calculation, Keith Still's work on modern crowd dynamics and risk management is extremely valuable.⁴¹ His calculations suggest a level for crowd density that achieves the largest numbers within a defined space, but with limited risk to safety; this level falls at two to three people per square meter.⁴² At a greater crowd density, the risk of incidents incurring mass injury increases. Effective event crowd management should also include assessment of safe flow rates through entry and exit points and the relationship of the space used for static standing versus that used for movement and access. However, such a full assessment of a past event would require modeling of the wider urban context for any public building and is a project for the future. The third question—regarding the percentage of the adult population any space could hold—involves the long-standing debate on the number of people per hectare in Mesopotamian settlements. The density of occupation of Mesopotamian sites has been discussed for decades⁴³ using ethnographic analogy, people per square meter of roofed space, people per household, and hinterland carrying capacity. Although Postgate's detailed estimate for the town of Abu Salabikh in the Early Dynastic period ranged from 248 to 1,205 people per hectare,⁴⁴ most scholars use estimates of 100–200 people per hectare.

CASE STUDIES: UR AND NIPPUR

The cities of Ur and Nippur in the Ur III period, 2112–2004 BCE, offer strong case studies for estimations of ritual audience size within monumental structures. During this period, the temples of the patron deity of each city, Nanna/Sin and Enlil, respectively, each had two

40 See Inomata 2006 for a similar exercise for Mayan plazas; Gilibert 2011, 103, for Iron Age Carchemish.

41 Still 2013.

42 Both variables addressed here—standing-audience density and people per hectare—are necessarily very general estimates. These calculations are not intended to provide exact numbers but to suggest possibilities and refinements to the traditional representation of Mesopotamian ritual audiences as simply “large.”

43 For example, Colantoni 2017; Postgate 1994; Wilkinson 1994.

44 Postgate 1994, 64.

large courtyards—an inner courtyard surrounding the newly built ziggurat and an outer courtyard offering additional ritual space.

The site of Ur is commonly reported as encompassing about 45–60 ha, though a recent survey there suggests it may have expanded to 120–500 ha in some periods.⁴⁵ Until we have greater precision on the temporal cycles of settlement, 50 ha is acceptable as the approximate size of the Ur III city. Ur's neighborhoods appear to be quite dense wherever they have been excavated, though the best-known neighborhoods belong to the early second millennium BCE.⁴⁶ Based on this tightly packed architecture, an occupation density of 200 people per hectare is plausible, making the population of Ur about 10,000 people in the Ur III period. Subtracting a conservative 15 percent for children and the very elderly leaves about 8,500 as the possible adult population of the city who might be expected to make up the audience for ritual events.⁴⁷

The outer courtyard of the Moon God temple during the Ur III period has a group of rectangular altar bases, pedestals, and installations that suggest some ritual activities took place in its northwest corner.⁴⁸ This outer courtyard measures 43.6 × 65.7 m, or just under 2,865 m². The inner courtyard provides a frame for the ziggurat and a space for processions or activities on or to its stairs or stages. This inner courtyard measures 90 × 113–18 m, or about 10,395 m². After removing the area taken up by the ziggurat, the ground-level shrine, and the narrow area of limited access between the back of the ziggurat and the courtyard wall, about 5,660 m² are left. The open space in the inner courtyard, together with the outer courtyard, make up about 43 percent of the building's total area (as measured from the exterior facades).

In estimating capacity of the ziggurat courtyard for a ritual audience, it is necessary to subtract further unusable space southeast of the ziggurat, from which any ritual on or in front of the stairs would be invisible (fig. 6.1). The resulting space measures 118 × 30 m, or 3,540 m². This space could hold 8,850 people at 2.5 people per square meter if people were packed into the space right up to the walls. Thus the estimated urban, active, adult population of Ur, about 8,500, could fit inside this courtyard. However, this tight packing, with no space to move and no buffer zone near the walls or stairs, is possible but improbable.

A similar calculation of the capacity of the outer courtyard should leave just under one-fourth of the space open for the features and installations in the northwest corner and for the movements and access of actors in any ritual that used them. The outer court covers 2,865 m², but with the northwest corner removed from the calculations, about 2,150 m² are left. That area could hold 5,375 people at 2.5 people per square meter, or just over 60 percent of the estimated active, adult, urban population. Again, this tight packing and total use of available space are possible but improbable.

Examination of spaces for audiences, however, should examine not only capacity but also issues of visibility and audibility. And the visibility of any event that took place at

45 Hammer 2019.

46 Woolley and Mallowan 1976.

47 Ritual audiences might have been limited by other factors beyond age, and such groups might have consisted of adult males, elites, administrative officials, or families of a particular class or profession. Such audiences are more challenging to calculate and model but would presumably be smaller than the active, adult, urban population.

48 Woolley 1939, pls. 68, 77.

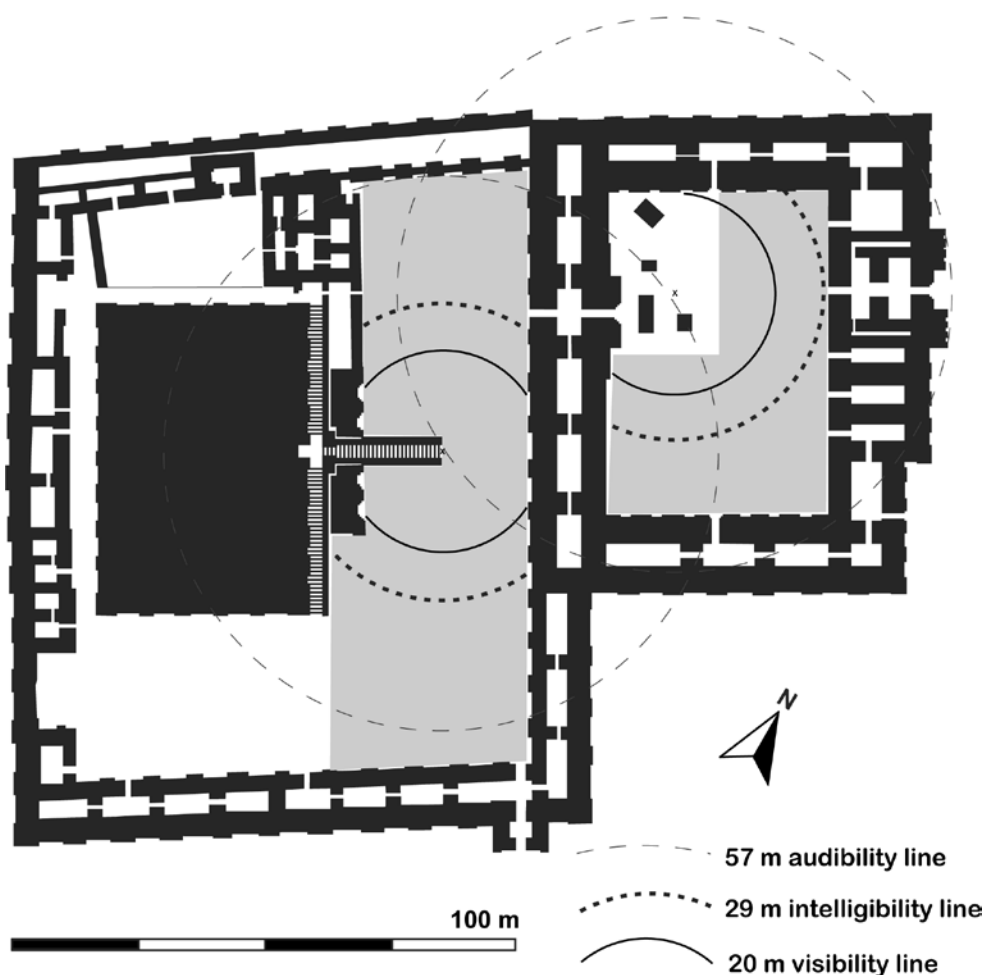


Figure 6.1. Plan of the Moon God temple, Ur (Ur III period), with visibility, audibility, and intelligibility distances suggested. Gray-shaded areas indicate space in each courtyard usable for ritual. After Woolley 1939, pl. 68.

ground level in either courtyard at Ur could be quite poor, not only because of crowding but also because of the distances involved. In a modern theater, the maximum acceptable distance between actor and spectator varies; musicals and dramatic works can be enjoyed from a greater distance than more nuanced plays. But the usual distance at which a drop in visual appreciation of gestures and facial expressions occurs is about 19–20 m.⁴⁹ Facial expressions may not have been a great factor in past Mesopotamian rituals, but gestures (pouring, praying, and manipulation of objects) were. The 20 m distances are marked on the plan of the Ur temple complex (fig. 6.1), one centered on the bottom of the ziggurat stairs in the inner court and another on the middle of the altars in the outer court.

The ziggurat stairs allow performance to be raised above the crowds to improve sight-lines in the inner courtyard, but the altars in the outer courtyard were not raised on an

⁴⁹ Shook 2015.

internal platform. The largest altar is about 7.5×2.5 m, the smallest about 3.0×3.0 m, but Woolley's plan is not detailed, and these sizes are possibly very rough estimates. These features were badly damaged and not preserved to their full, original height, but they do appear to be altars or offering tables rather than platforms themselves. In the outer courtyard, a crowd packed in at 2.5 people per square meter on a flat surface thus would rapidly experience completely obstructed sightlines well before being 19–20 m from the ritual action. Visibility of rituals on the ziggurat stairs or stages would have been better, since events there would have taken place above crowd level and sightlines would be hugely improved. But details of actors' faces and gestures would have been diminished for a large portion of any maximum-capacity audience.

Audibility is also a concern when reconstructing past spectacles. Modern studies of acoustics suggest that 72 dB at a 0.9 m distance is the approximate average loudness for a practiced male speaker without artificial amplification and aiming to produce loud, well-modulated and projected speech. We can assume a Mesopotamian priest accustomed to spoken ritual would aim to sustain this level. Audibility also depends on the pitch of the relevant sound, as well as one's distance from its source. Adult-male voice fundamental frequency or pitch is usually about 60/80–180 Hz.⁵⁰ The average of this range—120 Hz—is at the threshold of audibility at about 31–42 dB (average 36.5 dB), with some variation based on the age of the listener.⁵¹ In open-air situations, sound level is reduced by 6 dB every time a distance is doubled; thus a 72 dB sound at 0.9 m would reduce to 36 dB and become inaudible at about 57.6 m from the source.

A circle of 57 m in radius centered on the ziggurat stairs in the inner courtyard of the Ur temple and a second circle of 57 m in radius centered on the altars (fig. 6.1) in its outer courtyard suggest that spoken rituals would have been audible by virtually everyone in both courtyards, despite the limited visibility. But the difference between equation-based predictions and the variation caused by individuals' capacity and the circumstances of actual built space are illustrated by an acoustic survey of an Inca capital that suggests there was greater audibility in some spaces than predicted.⁵² In particular, the surrounding walls of a courtyard will slow sound reduction and, through reverberation, increase audibility. But the same reverberations can reduce clarity of speech. For precise calculation of sound level at the Ur temple complex, we need to know the height of the surrounding walls of the courtyards, which were not preserved. But it is probable they were high enough for the courtyards to keep the audibility of any prayers or pronouncements above 36.5 dB.

But speech intelligibility (the ability to understand words spoken) is distinct from audibility. Intelligibility is related to sound level but also to ambient or background noise. Modern acoustic studies suggest that sound must be 15 dB higher than ambient background noise for optimal intelligibility, though this level varies with the type and frequency of background noise.⁵³ Modern ambient background noise is much louder than in the preindustrial past, but even remote rural areas far from traffic or machinery experience noise of about 30–40 dB from wind among plants or buildings, sounds of animals, and

50 Re et al. 2012; Titze 1989.

51 Lee et al. 2012.

52 Kolar, Covey, and Cruzado Coronel 2018.

53 Houtgast 1981.

so forth.⁵⁴ And during public performances, the sound of any crowd would be a factor in intelligibility—breathing, coughing, conversation, shuffling of feet—and this noise would be supplemented by sounds from the surrounding city, sounds of animals, children, birds, and wind. Using 30 dB as a likely ambient noise level within the temple courtyards at Ur, and adding 15 dB for the difference needed for intelligibility, means a crucial drop-off at 45 dB. The logarithmic reduction in decibels over distance means the speaker generating 72 dB near source would become unintelligible to a listener positioned about 29–30 m away.

On the Ur temple plan, circles with a 29 m radius centered on the ziggurat stairs and altars (fig. 6.1) suggest that intelligibility of speech during rituals would have been slightly better than visibility but still poor in much of both the inner and outer courtyards. These calculations provide a very rough guide—it is probable that reverberation from courtyard walls and absorption of some sound by people would have made this reconstruction of intelligibility far less regular. But the drop-off of intelligibility at the southern edge of each courtyard in particular is likely to be real. Effective messaging would require concentration of the audience within the intelligibility ring, leaving a significant part of the courtyard empty.

Texts and art suggest that music was a large part of many Mesopotamian public ceremonies and rituals. And music, particularly the sound of drums (explicitly documented in texts and artworks), would have been less affected than speech by distance and by the distortion and reduction of clarity though reverberation. Instead, by amplifying and blurring individual beats into a heart-stopping wall of sound, reverberation can actually add to the appreciation of drumming. Thus a capacity crowd in either Ur courtyard could probably have heard the louder sounds of a performance but not the more nuanced, spoken sounds of a ritual. Drums and other musical instruments should have been heard above crowd and ambient noise, but spoken incantations would be less clearly audible to many and the visual aspect would be extremely constrained. Only an audience very near the main actors in any performance might have seen and heard the full event.⁵⁵

The Enlil temple at Nippur during the Ur III period provides a useful comparison to the Ur Moon God temple. Nippur encompassed about 135 ha in the Ur III period.⁵⁶ Its rapid expansion during the reigns of the early Ur III kings into previously unused areas, especially in the southern portion of the city, suggests we should estimate a lower overall population density than for Ur. Using 150 people per hectare, the urban population would have been 20,250. Subtracting 15 percent for infants, children, and the elderly leaves an active, adult, urban population of 17,210.

The plan of the Enlil temple at Nippur is less carefully reconstructed than the plan of the Nanna/Sîn temple at Ur; both cities saw significant rebuilding of the temples during the second and first millennia BCE that obscured their Ur III plans. The Parthian fortress built over the Nippur temple makes its Ur III form particularly challenging to reconstruct. The plan produced by the University of Pennsylvania team's efforts at Nippur during the late 1800s and early 1900s is extremely schematic. The inner courtyard is plausible, but

54 Meyer, Dentel, and Meunier 2013.

55 See Mouton, this volume, for object display and nonverbal cues during Hittite rituals.

56 Gibson 1992.

the outer courtyard's dimensions and placement are problematic. Hilprecht locates the outer court to the southeast of the ziggurat,⁵⁷ but this position is largely hypothetical. The Kassite map of Nippur places a courtyard to the ziggurat's northeast.⁵⁸ Reconciling these contradictions is complex and not attempted here; the Hilprecht plan is used for simplicity. After removing the space taken up by the ziggurat itself, the "kitchen temple" to its northeast, and the narrow spaces between the temple and ziggurat and behind the ziggurat, the usable space in the Nippur inner ziggurat courtyard is about 2,552 m², or about 1,000 m² less than the equivalent courtyard at Ur (fig. 6.2). This space would hold about 6,380 people at 2.5 people per square meter, or only about 37 percent of the estimated active, adult, urban population. The usable space in the outer courtyard is more challenging to calculate, since the plan is inexact and includes a small, two-room shrine of Amar-Sîn. Texts refer to the presence of a dais in this courtyard. Figure 6.2 shows a hypothetical use of this courtyard, placing the dais to one side of the Amar-Sîn shrine. This arrangement eliminates approximately one-fourth of this courtyard as usable space, to reflect the area taken up by the shrine, the hypothetical dais and some space around it, and the area on the opposite side of the shrine, from which any ritual near the dais would be invisible. This use of space leaves about 4,400 m², more than twice the size of the outer court at Ur. This area could hold 11,000 people at 2.5 people per square meter, or about 64 percent of the estimated active, adult population of Nippur, similar to the relative capacity of the outer courtyard at Ur. The percentage of total built space in the Enlil temple made up by courtyards is about 38.5 percent, a similar figure to that calculated for Ur.

These comparative data suggest a potentially intriguing pattern between estimated active, adult population of the relevant city and outer courtyard sizes of the major temple. The estimated capacity of the outer court in each case is nearly the same percentage of the estimated adult population: just under two-thirds.⁵⁹ But the inner ziggurat courts vary significantly in capacity—one overly large and the other relatively small. This discrepancy suggests that the focus of the ziggurat court was on the space's size in and of itself, as a frame for the ziggurat, not as a space geared toward a capacity audience. Meanwhile, the outer court in each case may have been built with audience capacity in mind.

Nippur's Enlil temple courtyards present similar challenges regarding visibility and intelligibility as do those at the Moon God temple at Ur. The 20 m visibility line and 29 m intelligibility line are shown on figure 6.2. Although these areas are estimates that cannot take reverberation from courtyard walls into consideration, it is possible that at maximum capacity, large areas of each courtyard would have contained people who could neither hear the details nor appreciate the spoken nuances of any performance. At Nippur, it is in the eastern portions of each courtyard that a person would have experienced the strongest effects.

57 Hilprecht 1903, fig. 27.

58 Scazzosi 2014.

59 There may be a spurious precision suggested by these figures; these calculations rely on the accuracy of several linked assumptions about settlement size and density of occupation. The outer courts do, however, vary in size proportionally to the settlement size, while the inner ziggurat courts in each case do not.

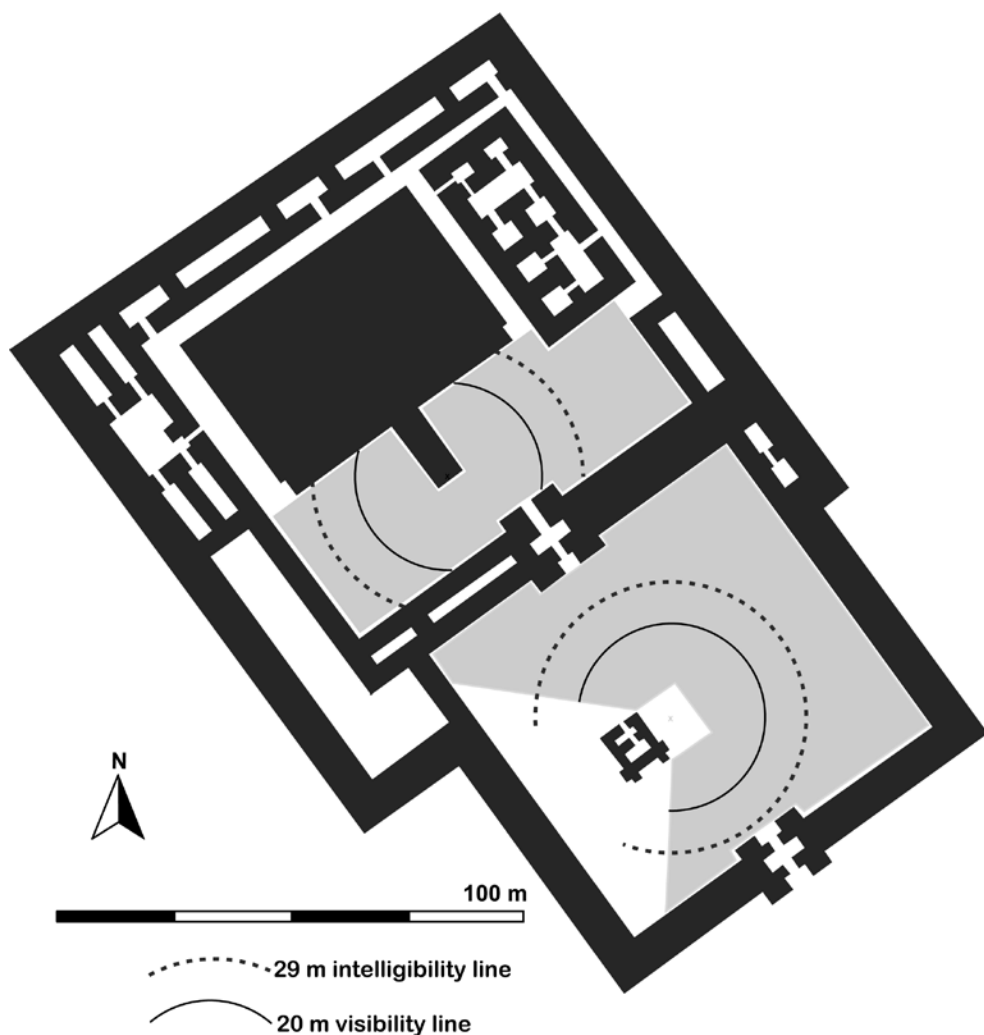


Figure 6.2. Plan of the Enlil temple, Nippur (Ur III period), with visibility and intelligibility distances suggested. Gray-shaded areas indicate space in each courtyard usable for ritual. After Hilprecht 1903, fig. 27.

MODERN ANALOGIES

There are useful modern analogies for the audience possibilities within these ancient open spaces. The central courtyard containing the Kaaba in the Great Mosque of Mecca is one of the world's most crowded ritual spaces at very specific times. The most common images in social media and publications show this court during the Hajj, when it is crammed with hundreds of thousands of people. The expansion of the mosque is an ongoing project, but the current capacity of the building is about 2,000,000 people spread over two levels and about 356,800 m².⁶⁰ This estimate equates to about four people per square meter, but the density of space use is variable and often much higher near the Kaaba itself.

⁶⁰ Rahman et al. 2017.

The time during which the space is filled to capacity is limited to the week of the Hajj, and there are months in every year in which the courtyard is spacious, open, and far less crowded. However, because this space can and does hold huge crowds, because the main focus of the entire year is on the hinge event of the Hajj, and because of the Kaaba's global importance for so many people, the image of the courtyard's use is always tinged by the memory of those crowded images and the sense of capacity. This space was made to hold people.

By contrast, one of the largest open-air walled spaces in Cambridge (United Kingdom) is the Great Court of Trinity College. It is not exactly rectangular, varying from 78 to 88 m east-to-west and 98 to 103 m north-to-south⁶¹ and thus creating an area of roughly 8,300 m². This courtyard could fit about 20,750 people at 2.5 people per square meter, but there are only about 1,160 students and fellows of Trinity at any one time. But this space never holds large numbers of people, and indeed there are restrictions about what parts of the courtyard one can use—walking on the grass is prohibited for nonmembers of the college, for instance. Movement is severely constrained by paved paths, and porters oversee all access. So the sense of this space will always be one of emptiness—there will be no crowd or memory of a crowd here. The courtyard functions to capture open space in the increasingly crowded city, and it creates a frame for very regulated movements, originally between the chapel and living spaces. This space was not made to hold people but to control them.

Which situation provides a better analogy for Mesopotamian monumental courtyards: the crowd capacity-focused use of Mecca's Grand Mosque, or the static emptiness of Cambridge's Trinity College?

INTERPRETATIONS

Winter has argued eloquently for the Mesopotamian concept of space being linear, whether vertical or horizontal, and proposes that space was there to be crossed rather than appreciated from a static viewpoint.⁶² She leverages artworks (e.g., the Warka Vase) that depict processions in registers, read from the bottom upward, to support her view. But those images of processions show only the key actors in such events. Nonparticipant audiences for those events, as well as visitors on nonevent days, may have experienced and appreciated the volume of space in nonlinear ways.

Courtyards constitute the third step in an encounter with a Mesopotamian monumental building, and the contrast with the first two steps of such an encounter intersects with the question of audience. The first step is the gaze from the exterior at the building's facade. This step potentially has aspects of awe and excitement derived from the large scale and the eye-filling visuality. The second step is the gateway or entrance, which compresses and concentrates that awe and adds anticipation. The gateway organizes the individual's speed and direction of movement and offers an up-close, tactile experience of the scale and texture of what is to come—tall spaces, enormous doors, forbidding gate-guardian figures, and carved wall slabs. Slowed movement within the gateway intensifies the noise

61 As measured on Historic England and Ordnance Survey maps.

62 Winter 1991.

of footsteps and chatter and reinforces the sense of audience size. The courtyard is then the third step, reopening vistas and creating a built frame for a staged event or for the ziggurat, shrine, throne room, or administrative office. Anticipation is partly resolved, but awe at contrasting openness perhaps resurges to replace it; the huge scale reminds the visitor of the authority behind the building and their own insignificance.

The open space that a monumental courtyard creates inside a city could come as a surprise, especially since in Mesopotamian cities there was minimal separation between blocks of houses and temple-compound walls. There were few internal long-distance vistas within city settings. But unlike courtyards in houses, which were intimate pockets of fresh comfort, monumental courtyards could be hot, bright, windy, and dusty. They were alien and abnormal spaces in which unusual, disruptive events were expected and where one's presence might be challenged. Even when monumental courtyards were empty, their statues, stelae, and altars were reminders of past performances that reinforced power relations among gods, rulers, and people. The stelae of Gudea and Ur-Nammu/Urnamma (presumably set up in courtyards, though their original provenance is lost) narrated and reminded viewers of these events. Unlike house courtyards, temple cellae, or throne rooms, monumental courtyards did not offer cues to expected movement, as far as we know; in them there might be several sets of statues or stelae on daises, doorways could be multiple but distant, and paths were apparently not indicated. Monumental courtyards lacked a single focus of attention that would guide movement in the way a cella or throne room concentrated a clear goal in the altar or throne. Movement through them was only for those accustomed to being there, such as administrators or institutional personnel. For others, courtyards were spaces to stop and stare, or they were for spectacles and performances that reinforced power relations among gods, rulers, and people.

Risk is involved in creating large spaces if the intent is for them to be filled with an audience and those ambitions fall short (e.g., recall the discussions surrounding the size of the crowd in the National Mall in Washington, DC, during the 2017 US presidential inauguration). Spectacles may also be expensive to create, and losses are incurred if an adequate and proper audience is not present to observe. A small or thin audience may reflect lack of power, rejection of power, dislike, or overt mocking of the individual(s) at the performance's center. A huge space can also swamp a spectacle or performance and reduce it to insignificance; the space should not be so large and empty that performances become overshadowed or lost in it.

Ultimately, for most parts of any day, month, or year, Mesopotamian temple and palace courtyards were likely to have been largely empty or merely crossed by people working in the buildings and accustomed to the space. Texts reflect that there were regular events in temple courtyards, and the amplification of these events in royal inscriptions suggests large audiences were expected. But the capacity of the spaces and the limits on visibility and intelligibility suggest the audiences were never intended to include the entire adult population of any city, nor was filling the courtyards the objective. A balance between the awesomeness of captured space and the collective excitement of the event would have created the most effective impact and memory.

In order for performance to be effective in its messaging, and especially for community cohesion or creation, the audience should be larger than its members' usual quotidian

interaction network, made up of family and neighbors.⁶³ In the Mayan setting of highly diffused and dispersed populations, spectacles were an important way of offsetting fissioning tendencies, and there was emphasis on creating spaces that could hold an entire community.⁶⁴ But Mesopotamian cities were less subject to fissioning and more densely occupied than Mayan cities; their occupants' sense of community may have been relatively strong and bringing the entire community together unnecessary.⁶⁵ What was needed in the Mesopotamian case was a reminder of hierarchy and of the position of kings vis-à-vis the gods, so leaving some empty space for awe may have been a crucial ingredient of any performance. Crowds of several thousand, gathered near the ritual action, would have been sufficient and uplifted the spectacle.

From the standpoint of sightlines, it is clear that a movable performance or spectacle and a stationary audience constitute the most efficient way to achieve the largest number of viewers if the intent is for the audience to see the action. The extramural travels of various actors (king, priests, deities' statues) during the Akitu festivals, and processions during temple dedications, may have been intended for such maximum visibility. The reasonably good visibility and audibility in the inner ziggurat courts (if events took place on the stairs), combined with their relatively short and wide proportions, suggest good visibility was a goal for events there. But if the main intent is for the audience to hear a spectacle, neither audience nor actors should move, and a courtyard is a potentially appropriate venue, holding performers and receivers in close proximity. The larger outer courts, with their greater capacities albeit limited viewing possibilities, may reflect this alternative goal. In either case, it is likely that maximum-capacity audiences were not the aim and that significant parts of the courtyards remained unfilled. I propose that the audiences for rituals in Mesopotamian temple courtyards numbered in the range of hundreds to the low thousands at most and were concentrated within areas of good visibility and intelligibility, adjacent to the main actors. Courtyards were deliberately built larger than the space required for performance audiences, leaving open space for awe as a reminder of hierarchy and exclusion.

ABBREVIATIONS

dB	decibel(s)
Hz	hertz
ORACC	Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/)
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/)

63 Inomata 2006.

64 Inomata 2006. But see Feinman and Nicholas, this volume, for limits on the scale and access to Mayan open spaces.

65 See Osborne, this volume, for neighborhood solidarity in the Syro-Anatolian Iron Age.

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7

Hittite Political Rituals

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CENTRAL ANATOLIA WAS the seat of the Hittite kingdom, a powerful political entity that prospered between the second half of the seventeenth and the end of twelfth centuries BCE. As Hittite cuneiform texts are mainly religious in character, they provide an important amount of information about rituals and cultic festivals.

In the present essay I deal with the concept of “political rituals” in the Hittite texts, a concept at the crossroads of religion and politics.¹ I borrow the expression “political ritual” from Catherine Bell, who wrote: “As a particularly loose genre, political rituals can be said to comprise those ceremonial practices that specifically construct, display and promote the power of political institutions (such as king, state, the village elders) or the political interests of distinct constituencies and subgroups.”² Such a definition fits many Hittite public ceremonies.³ During some of them, the Hittite Great King wears the “garments of the god,” thus demonstrating his close proximity to him.⁴ In addition to being visual statements of divine support, Hittite cultic ceremonies are also occasions for expressing the king’s political power through the display of military force.

THE MILITARY PARTICIPANTS OF CULT FESTIVALS

In the Hittite festival texts, one finds many mentions of the so-called “great assembly/meeting” (*šalli aššeššar*).⁵ This expression occurs in stereotyped sequences of cultic ceremonies. Several festival texts list the actors of the great assembly, as for example in the following excerpt describing a sequence of the great festival of the city of Arinna:

The stew(s) (made of) water and beef meat arrive; the herald goes in front. § He makes the assembly sit, (namely) the craftsmen, the foreign officials, the DUGUD officers, the

1 This essay naturally complements Gilan’s contribution in this volume.

2 Bell 1997, 128.

3 The texts do not allow us to specify how open a public ceremony was. In my opinion, at least the royal processions could very well be visible to all, whereas other sequences of the same cultic festival could be restricted to the social elite of the kingdom. See also the expression “peaceful (crowd)” mentioned below.

4 Taggar-Cohen 2006, 432.

5 CHD Š, 98–99.

chief of the provincial troops, (those) of the meal. § The stews are divided in half; the chief of the royal bodyguards announces: “*tawal*-drink for the assembly!” [excerpt 1].⁶

A passage of a text describing a spring festival of the city of Tippuwa enumerates other participants of the great assembly:

The herald goes in front. The [Old] Men, the foreign officials, the D[UGUD] officers and the Old Women si[t]. § The stews are divided in half; the chief of the royal bodyguards announces: “Let them pour *tawal*-drink for the assembly!” [excerpt 2].⁷

Although this passage is very similar to the previous one as far as the ritual actions and utterance are concerned, the identity of the participants of this great assembly varies. This time, no craftsman or chief of provincial troops but “[Old] Men” and “Old Women” sit together. In both excerpts, however, military officers are present: the DUGUD officers participate in both ceremonies.

THE DUGUD OFFICERS

The DUGUD officers are members of the Hittite army who command troops.⁸ Their presence during cultic events needs to be further explored. An oracular report states:

They will celebrate the thunder festival for him. The DUGUD officers will bring one billy goat and one sheep, while he will bring the cult provisions of the district of the chief of the royal bodyguards and then they will celebrate the festival for the god [excerpt 3].⁹

This excerpt shows that the DUGUD officers not only take part in the ritual meals in the context of the great assembly but are also supposed to provide sacrificial animals from time to time. Their association with royal bodyguards is frequent, as we will see in other examples. As for the third-person singular in this excerpt, it most probably designates the Hittite king himself.

In another passage of the same oracular report, we read:

After[ward], they will celebrate the torch festival. They will take from the palace two billy goats and the cult provisions, and the DUGUD officers will also come in.

6 KUB 25.3 iii 17–24 (CTH 634, great festival of Arinna; Gonnet 1982, 58, differently): *nu ŠA GU₄ TU₇ MĒ UZU tianzi LÚ^{GIS} GIDRU peran hūwai § nu ašeššar LÚ.MEŠ UMMENU TI LÚ.MEŠ UBA<RUM> LÚ.MEŠ DUGUD <<LÚ.MEŠ DUGUD>> LÚ.MEŠ UGULA LĪM ŠA NAPTANIM ašaši § TU₇^{HÁ} takšan šarrattari GAL MEŠEDI tarkum-miyaizzi ašešni tawal.*

7 IBoT 4.64:5'–11' (CTH 594, spring festival of Tippuwa; Groddek 2007, 49–50): *ta xx LÚ^{GIS} GIDRU p[eran] hūwāi ta LÚ.M^[ESŠU.GI] LÚ.MEŠ UBARUTIM LÚ.MEŠ D[UGUD] MUNUS.MEŠ ŠU.GI=ya aš[āši] § TU₇^{HÁ} takšan šarra[ttari] GAL MEŠEDI tezzi a[šešni] tāwal lāhuwa[ndu].*

8 Beal 1992, 488–504; Bilgin 2018, 365. The military character of this office is undeniable, according to Beal's argumentation. Therefore, the translation “dignitary” that one finds here and there in the secondary literature for DUGUD does not seem satisfactory, since it omits the military aspect.

9 KUB 22.27 iv 25–26 (CTH 568, oracle about festivals; Lebrun 1994, 57): *nu=(š)ši EZEN₄ tethūwaš DŪ-anzi nu 1 MĀŠ.GAL 1 UDU LÚ.MEŠ DUGUD ūnniyanzi halkueššar=ma ŠA GAL LÚ.MEŠ MEŠEDI maniyahhiyaš uday nu ANA DINGIR-LIM EZEN₄ iyanzi.*

Then, they will celebrate the festival. These (are) the festivals of spring and autumn [excerpt 4].¹⁰

This excerpt confirms the role playing by the DUGUD officers in yet another cultic festival. Their very presence in a religious ceremony provides a military dimension to this public event.

Logically speaking, the festivals celebrating a military victory of the Hittite Great King are expected to have such a military dimension as well. The so-called “festival of the haste” (*nuntarriyašhaš* EZEN₄) is precisely one of these festivals, as a passage of several colophons of this composition and a tablet catalog show:

n tablets. When the king comes back from battle from the city of Arinna to Hattuša in autumn for the festival of the haste [excerpt 5].¹¹

Since the very beginning of this composition, the great assembly is involved in the ceremony.¹²

During this festival, one also finds the DUGUD officers taking part in the great assembly, as the following excerpt makes clear:

The DUGUD officers and the treasurer celebrate the deity Maliya. On that day, (they give): three sheep, one *PARĪSU*-measure of flour (and) one KA.GAG vessel [excerpt 6].¹³

As similarly in excerpt 3, the DUGUD officers are responsible for bringing some foodstuffs for the sacrifices to come.

This excerpt can, in its turn, be compared with that describing another cultic festival, namely, the festival in honor of the Storm-god of the army. An excerpt of a tablet catalog indeed states:

When the king celebrates the Storm-god of the army, the chief of the provincial troo[ps] and the DUGUD officers give oxen and sheep [excerpt 7].¹⁴

Together with Šawoška of the battlefield, the Storm-god of the army is often celebrated after a battle.¹⁵ The festival referred to in this tablet catalog is, therefore, most probably celebrated after a military victory of the Hittite Great King. As a rule, this very short excerpt of a tablet catalog corresponds to the (unrecovered) colophon of the composition describing the festival for the Storm-god of the army. The fact that in such a short passage the DUGUD officers are mentioned, together with the king and the chief of the provincial troops, illustrates their predominant role during this ceremony.

10 KUB 22.27 iv 22–23 (CTH 568, oracle about festivals; Lebrun 1994, 57, differently): EGIR-[*anda=m*]a EZEN₄ *zuppari iyanzi nu IŠTU É.GAL-LIM 2 M[Ā.Š.GA]L halkueššar=(r)a danzi* L^U.MEŠ^{DU}DUGUD=*ya anda uwanzi nu EZEN₄ iyanzi kī EZEN₄ H^A zēnantaš hammišhantaš=(š)a*.

11 KBo 47.6 Rev. 4–6 (CTH 277, tablet catalog; Dardano 2006, 188–89; composition version with the colophons edited by Nakamura 2002): x *TUPPU mān LUGAL-uš lahhaza zēni* URU^{URU} Arinnaz ANA EZEN₄ *nuntarriyašhaš* URU^{URU} Hattuši *uizzi*.

12 Nakamura 2002, 17ff.

13 KUB 25.27 iii 3–5 (CTH 629, “regular festival”; Nakamura 2002, 77): L^U.MEŠ^{DU}DUGUD=*ma=šmaš* L^U.MEŠ^{DU} ŠĀ.[TAM=*ya*] ^D*Maliyan <iyanzi> apedani U₄.KAM-ti 3 UDU 1 PA ZĪ.DA 1* ^{DUG}KA.GAG.

14 KUB 30.56 iii 19–20 (Dardano 2006, 214): [*m*]ān=*za LUGAL-uš* ^{DU} KARAŠ DÛ-*zi nu UGULA LĪM* ^{MEŠ} Š[ĒRI^{L^U.ME}]Š^{DUGUD}=*ya GU₄ H^A UDU^{H^A} SUM-anz[i]*.

15 Mouton 2016, 284–85.

THE PROVINCIAL AND ŠARIKUWA-TROOPS

The chief of provincial troops is mentioned several times in the Hittite festival texts. I have mentioned above that he might take part in the great assembly. We also find him in the following excerpt of the so-called “ritual for Muršili II,” where we read:

Then, he (i.e., the king) sits on the throne. The thron[e] is covered by a cloth. Furthermore, they put a [table before] him. All the men of Hattuša, (namely) the chiefs of the provincial troops, the chiefs of the *captives*, [. . .] the chief of the *šarmiya*-men, the chief of the men of the *dog gate* bow with presents. They seat them. Then they give them *bread allotments* and they give them (something) to drink [excerpt 8].¹⁶

Note the expression “all the men of Hattuša,” which seems to overlap partly with the great assembly and partly include lower social categories. This overlapping might show that the religious ceremonies could, from time to time, include a wider—and less elitist—audience. Before sitting in the presence of the king for the banquet, the officials bow down and offer gifts to the sovereign, two acts that, in the eyes of all participants, symbolize their subordination to their lord. I will return to the notion of “bread allotments(?)” below.

The nature of the ritual actions performed by the members of provincial troops is often the same: as in this excerpt, they take part in a public meal or walk in procession—with at least one exception, however. The following excerpt describes a sequence of the KILAM festival:

Afterward, the men of the provincial troops lift the *aliyazena*-objects *karkidant*- [excerpt 9].¹⁷

Although we cannot determine what these objects are, the unique character of this ritual operation is noteworthy.

In my study of the *haššumaš* festival,¹⁸ I briefly argued that the participation, in this ceremony, of a *šarikuwa*-troop was to be interpreted as a political statement within this religious event. The Hittite term *šarikuwa*-¹⁹ indeed designates a military troop composed of horsemen and foot-soldiers, according to the Hittite historical records. In several festivals “of the month,” *šarikuwa*-troops are also mentioned. One of these texts states:

The chief of the troops lead[s] the *šarikuwa*-troop inside. Whoever goes in front bows down to the king. The entertainer calls out: “Gods of Hattuša!” [excerpt 10].²⁰

16 VS NF 12.7 i 7'–14' (CTH 462, ritual for Muršili II; Görke 2014, § 2): *namma=aš=za=kan ANA* G^{IS}ŠÚ.A *ešari* G^{IS}ŠÚ.[A . . .] *IŠTU GADA kariyan namma=(š)ši* G^{IS}[BANŠUR *peran*] *tianzi nu=kan* LÚ^{MEŠ} URU^{HATTI} *hūma[ntes]* LÚ^{MEŠ}UGULA *LIMTIM GAL* LÚ^{MEŠ} *ASİRUTIM* [. . .] GAL LÚ^{MEŠ} *šarmiyaš* GAL LÚ^{MEŠ} KÁ.GAL UR.GI₇ [. . .] *IŠTU IGLDU*₈ A^{HA}-TIM *hinkanzi n=aš ašešanzi nu=šmaš* N^{INDA} *šarām[a pia]nz[i] akuwanna=ya=šmaš pianzi*.

17 KBo 10.24 i 6–9 (CTH 627, KILAM festival; Singer 1984, 16): EGIR=ŠU=*ma aliyazenuš karkidanduš* LÚ^{MEŠ} LĪM ŠĒRI *karpanzi*. About *aliyazenuš karkidanduš*, whose meaning is unknown, see Singer 1983, 94–95.

18 Mouton 2011.

19 CHD Š, 260–61; Beal 1992, 37–55.

20 KUB 34.127 iii 1–3 (CTH 591, month festival; Klinger 1996, 410–11): *nu=kan* EN ÉRIN.MEŠ ÉRIN.MEŠ *šarikuwan anda uwatez[zi] nu peran kuiš huyanza ta* LUGAL-i UŠKĒ[N] LÚ^{ALAM}.ZU₉=*ma halzāi* URU^{KÜ}.BABBAR-š=*an te=pa=šha[p]*.

A passage of another month festival shows that the *šarikuwa*-troop can be part of a wider military group in a ceremonial context. The text states:

The chief of the royal bodyguards makes (a signal) with (his) eyes, and the chief of the entertainers comes. He stands by the *taparwašu*-bread. The chief of the ten royal bodyguards goes and takes the place of the chief of the royal bodyguards, by the royal bodyguards. Then he lets the chiefs of the *šarikuwa*-troops in, one (after) the other. § The first chief of the troops bows down to the king; a *haliyami*-man hands (him) over the *taparwašu*-bread. The entertainer says: “Come to Hattuša of the gods! Rise, eagle of the sky! Run bac[k] to Hattuša, to the city of the gods! Let them (i.e., the gods) give to Labarna (and) Tawananna (i.e., the Hittite king and queen) long years (and) long life!” [excerpt 11].²¹

In the context of this cultic ceremony, the chief of the royal bodyguards makes a signal with his eyes for ordering a new ritual action.²² Whatever the exact nature of this eye signal may be, it clearly belongs to the sphere of nonverbal communication, and the person performing it thus becomes the master of ceremonies during this part of the festival. This excerpt shows that the chief of the royal bodyguards, a military officer in charge of the king’s security, is playing a central role at this stage of the ceremony. Other high military officers approach the king while the entertainer utters a conjuration (i.e., a protective incantation) for the benefit of the royal couple. The location of this scene is unknown to us. Be that as it may, the public character of this scene cannot be denied, for several military officers are in attendance. And the very presence of an entertainer (^{LÜ}ALAM.ZU₉) tends to confirm this character as public: his role is to entertain both the divine and the human audience.

A *šarikuwa*-troop is also mentioned in the text of a storm festival²³ and in that of the royal funerary ritual,²⁴ both times in fragmentary contexts and in close association with DUGUD military officers. What strikes one is that, in each context, whenever the *šarikuwa*-troop is present, the king is also explicitly mentioned—in my view, thus illustrating the fact that such sequences relate these cultic festivals to royal ideology.

PARTICIPATION OF MILITARY CHARACTERS IN PUBLIC MEALS

Many banquet scenes are described in the Hittite festival texts. These public meals most certainly had a political aura: the great assembly was actually a gathering of some members of the social elite for a communal meal with the Hittite king or royal prince.²⁵ The

21 VS NF 12.30+ iii 12'-iv 6 and duplicates VS NF 12.29 rev. 5'-12' and KBo 3.26+ iii 5'-13' (CTH 591, month festival; Klinger 1996, 364–69): [(GAL MEŠEDI AN)]A EN ÉRIN.MEŠ IGI^{HÁ}-it iya[(zi UGULA ^{LÜ.MEŠ})]^ŠALAM.ZU₉=ma uizzi n=aš^{NINDA} taparwašui tapuša tiyazi ^{LÜ}UGULA 10 ^{LÜ.MEŠ}MEŠEDI=ma paizzi n=aš ANA AŠAR GAL MEŠEDI ANA ^{LÜ.MEŠ}MEŠEDI kattan tiyaz[(i)] n=ašta E[(N ÉRI)]N.MEŠ šarikuwan 1-an 1-an an[(d)]a tarniškezzi § ta IGI-ziš EN ÉRIN.MEŠ LUGAL-i UŠKĒN ^{LÜ}haliyamiš^{NINDA} taparwašun parā pāi ^{LÜ}ALAM.ZU₉ memai § ehū^{URU} Hadduša DINGIR^{MES}-an karpiya TI₈^{MUSEN}-aš tapaššan EGI[R-pa=ma] piddätten^{URU} Hadduša šiunan URU-riya labarna tawannanni MU.KAM^{HÁ} GÍD.DA-uš daluga TI-tar [peškandu].

22 See Hoffner 1996, 254.

23 KBo 20.61+ ii 14 (CTH 631, thunder festival).

24 KUB 39.9 Obv. 10 (CTH 450, royal funerary ritual; Kassian, Korolëv, and Sidel'tsev 2002, 304, 312–13).

25 One should note that the so-called “dog-men” also participate in the assembly from time to time. Since we know nothing about the social status of these men, it is difficult to determine whether they also belonged to the social elite.

hierarchy within this assembly is possibly implied by the order in which its members were allowed to sit. Indeed, in the text of a festival honoring the god Telepinu, we read:

[They set] the sheep and ox before the prin[ce; the assemb]ly (called) by name [sits] in the same way. They make a round in the same way [(with) cups and then the prince is d]one [excerpt 12].²⁶

In this excerpt, it seems that the assembly members are called by name one after the other and only then are they allowed to sit.

In excerpt 3, we saw that DUGUD officers were supposed to offer sacrificial animals for the thunder festival. A thunder festival is also described in other texts recently edited by Francesco Barsacchi.²⁷ In these texts, the DUGUD officers take part in a toast in honor of the Storm-god²⁸ and in a meal.²⁹ One of the sequences of this festival goes as follows:

The herald comes in and brings in the palace officials, the chiefs of the provincial troops, the DUGUD officers, (and) the foreign officials. [T]hen they bow to the king and sit. The king drinks (in honor) of the Storm-god and the deity Wašezzili while standing. The GALA-men sing. The cupbearer gives one loaf of sour bread to the [king]; the king breaks (it). The cupbearer takes the bread from [the king] and then he takes it away. § The king prostrates himself. The *kīta*-man calls out. The king drinks (in honor) of the gods he celebrates as a group. Then, the great assembly is done [excerpt 13].³⁰

This time, the text does not mention a banquet—not even the king eats. He only drinks and makes toasts. As for the bread he breaks, one could deduce that it is destined for the same deities who receive a royal toast. However, the next excerpt gives a different explanation. Note, once more, that the DUGUD officers are part of the great assembly together with the chiefs of the provincial troops.

Compare the sequence in the above excerpt with the following one for a festival in the city of Nerik:

The cupbearer brings one loaf of sour bread from outside. He gives (it) to the king; the king breaks (it). § They take the *bread allotments* of the princes, palace officials, and

26 KBo 54.123 iv 1'-4' (CTH 638, festival for Telepinu; Haas and Jakob-Rost 1984, 75): UDU^{HA} GU₄ PANI DUMU.LU[GAL *tianzi ašešš*]ar lamnit Q[ĀTAMMA eša GAL^{HA} Q]ĀTAMMA irhanz[i t=aš DUMU.LUGAL ā]ppāi. See also KBo 54.123 iv 20'-21'.

27 Barsacchi 2017.

28 Barsacchi 2017, 30.

29 Barsacchi 2017, 38.

30 VS NF 12.10 i 11'-20' (CTH 631, thunder festival; Barsacchi 2017, 112): [LÚ] ^{GIS}GIDRU *anda uizzi nu* DUMU^{MES} LUGAL ^{LÚ.MES}UGULA 1 LĪM ^{LÚ.MES}DUGUD-TIM ^{LÚ.MES}UBA<RU>TIM *anda uwatezzi [na]mma LUGAL-i hinkanta n=at ešanta* [LUGA]L-uš GUB-aš ^{DIM-an} D Wašezzilin=a ekuzi ^{LÚ.MES}GALA SĪR-RU nu ^{LÚ}SAGI 1 NINDA.GUR₄.RA EMŠA [LUGAL]-i pāi LUGAL-uš paršiya ^{LÚ}SAGI NINDA.GUR₄.RA [LUGAL]-i ēpzi n=an=kan parā pēdai § [LUGA]L-uš aruwaēzzi nu ^{LÚ}kitaš halzāi [nu] DINGIR^{MES}-aš=kan kuieuš ir[h]āizzi nu LUGAL-uš apūš DINGIR^{MES}-uš ekuzi nu GAL-i ašešar appāi.

royal bodyguards and they carry them away. § They make the DUGUD officers of the meal and all the people stand and then they leave [excerpt 14].³¹

The keyword of this new excerpt is “bread allotments(?)” (^{NINDA}*šaramma*), a term already encountered in excerpt 8. Although its exact translation can be debated, this term clearly refers to bread that is being shared in cultic context.³² Thus this excerpt clarifies the previous one: we understand that the bread the king breaks is destined for the “princes, palace officials, and royal bodyguards,” who in this context replace “the palace officials, the chiefs of the provincial troops, the DUGUD officers, (and) the foreign officials” of excerpt 13—in other words, the participants in the great assembly. The latter expression is most probably replaced by “the DUGUD officers of the meal and all the people” in excerpt 14. Here it should be specified that this excerpt makes use of the logogram ÉRIN.MEŠ, which is traditionally translated as “troop.” However, in the Hittite texts it was also used for referring to a group of persons in general. And actually, the translation “people” has already been acknowledged by several Hittitologists.³³ So since the meaning of this logogram is ambiguous, in the present essay I have not included it among the designations for military characters.

The combination of excerpt 14 with excerpt 13 seems to indicate that the king divides bread for the members of the great assembly before they separate. Being performed in front of this assembly—that is, publicly—this action certainly reveals a rare privilege: only the members of the great assembly are allowed to eat the bread given by the king in person. Sharing bread makes these people equals; it also makes them closer to the Hittite sovereign. As a distorted echo, the king becomes the commensal of the gods whenever he breaks bread for them—a very frequent gesture in the cultic context.

Compare the following sequence of the KILLAM festival:

The king gives (something) to drink to the lords, in the hand. § When he gives (something) to drink in the hand to the chief of the royal bodyguards, the chief of the palace officials, the intendant, the ‘chief of the wine,’ the chief of the chariot-drivers and to the DUGUD officers and the men of the spear, [. . .] [excerpt 15].³⁴

In this excerpt, several military characters are involved: the chief of the royal bodyguards, the “chief of the wine,”³⁵ the chief of the chariot-drivers, the DUGUD officers, and the men of the spear. That they receive a drink directly from the king shows their close proximity

31 KUB 2.15 vi 9–15 (CTH 678, festival of Nerik; partly in Alp 1983, 86): ^{LÚ}SAGLA 1 ^{NINDA}GUR₄ RA EMŠA āškaz udai LUGAL-i pāi LUGAL-uš paršiya § ŠA DUMU^{MES} LUGAL DUMU^{MES} É.GAL ^{LÚ}MES MEŠEDI=ya ^{NINDA}šaramma danzi n=at=kan pēdanzi § ^{LÚ}MES DUGUD NAPTANIM ÉRIN.MEŠ=ya hūmandan šarā tittanuanzi [n]=at=kan parā pānzi.

32 CHD Š, 239–43.

33 Ünal 2007, 112.

34 KUB 10.13 iv 20'–28' (CTH 627, KILLAM festival; Singer 1984, 95 n. 21): LUGAL-uš ANA BĒLU^{MES}-TIM kiššarī akuwanna pāi § GIM-an=ma ANA GAL MEŠEDI GAL DUMU^{MES} É.GAL ^{LÚ}ABŪBITUM GAL.GEŠTIN GAL ^{LÚ}MES KUŠ, U ANA ^{LÚ}MES DUGUD ^{LÚ}MES GIŠSUKUR § kiššarī akuwanna pāi [. . .].

35 Beal 1992, 342–57.

to him. This action can be viewed as a close equivalent to the king's breaking bread in excerpt 14.

Elsewhere³⁶ I have argued that this KILAM festival was no calendar festival but instead the occasion of reaffirming the king's rule. In other words, it would be a political ritual. Indeed, I have noted the emphasis made, in a colophon of this composition, on the king's sitting. The "sitting of the king" refers very often—if not always—to his sitting on the royal throne; it is a strong symbol of royal authority in a ceremonial context. Itamar Singer,³⁷ the editor of the KILAM festival, observed that the setting of this ceremony within the year was never specified in the preserved fragments. The participation of several military protagonists in the KILAM festival, as illustrated by excerpt 15, strengthens the political character of this ceremony.

All these meals and toasts are public events during which military officers play an important role. They sit next to the king and receive food and drink directly from him as a clear symbol of their high status.

PARTICIPATION OF MILITARY CHARACTERS IN PROCESSIONS

Another opportunity to display military force and thus impress the audience occurs every time a royal procession occurs. In the text of the "festival of haste" celebrating a military victory of the Hittite Great King, we read:

They open the *halentu*-building. They lift the curtain. [The kin]g goes to the bathhouse. He puts on ceremonial garments, (namely) white [BART]E-garments (and) silver earrings; he wears black Hattian shoes. § The king comes out of the bathhouse. The royal bodyguards have golden spears. They give them to the DUGUD officers of the spearmen, so that they (i.e., the DUGUD officers) bring them in Hattuša. The (royal) chariot plated with gold enters Hattuša. § The royal bodyguards do not have (their) golden spears; they (i.e., the DUGUD officers) bring (them) in Hattuša. The royal bodyguards take white wooden spears [excerpt 16].³⁸

In this text of the "festival of haste," the royal bodyguards are very often mentioned in close proximity to the king. What strikes one in this excerpt is that their golden spears are exchanged with white wooden spears at the time they enter Hattuša. Also white are the ceremonial garments of the king at the time he enters the capital city on his golden chariot. The symbolism of white is unexplained in the text; one might see a link with light and purity after the king's ablutions in the bathhouse. The ostentatious character of the victorious entry of the king in the city is plain: the shiny chariot together with the king clothed in

³⁶ Mouton *apud* Görke and Mouton 2014, 127.

³⁷ Singer 1983, 133.

³⁸ KBo 11.43 i 12–25 and duplicate KUB 25.19+ i 15'–31' (CTH 626, *nuntarriyašha*-festival; Nakamura 2002, 173): [(^hha)]en[t]ūw[a] *haššanzi* [(^{KUS}NÍG.BĀ)]R=*ašta* [u]ššianzi [LUGAL-u]š INA É.DU₁₀.ÚS.SA *paizzi* [(ta)]=za [KIN]-ta [T]ÚG[BART]E^{MES} BABBAR-TIM HUB.BÍ^{MES} KÜ.BABBAR *dāi* [(^{KUS})E.S[I]R *hattiliš* GE₆-TIM *šarkuzzi* § [(LUGAL-u)]š=k[an] I[ŠT]U É.DU₁₀.ÚS.SA *uizzi* [LÚ].MES^{MES}MEŠEDI=*ma=kan* GISŠUKUR^{[H]A} KÜ.GI *harkanzi* n=*at* ANA [LÚ].MES^{MES}DUGUD ŠA LÚ^{MES} ŠUKUR *pianzi* t=*an* andan^{URU} *Hattuši pēdanzi* GIS^S*hul*[u]ganniš=(š)a KÜ.GI GAR.RA andan^{URU} *Hattuši paizzi* § [LÚ].MES^{MES}MEŠEDI GISŠUKUR^{HĀ} KÜ.GI UL *harkanzi* andan^{URU} *Hattuši pēdanzi ta=za* [LÚ].MES^{MES}MEŠ[E]DI GISŠUKUR IŠŠI BABBAR-TIM *danzi*.

white and his bodyguards, probably walking before him and carrying white spears, create quite a scene—one that could be witnessed from afar. Surely, such pomp impressed the members of the local audience and remained in their memories.

Another procession occurred during the thirtieth day of the same festival:

They [op]en the [*halent*]u-building. They lift the [curtai]n. § [The kin]g goes to the bathhouse. He [puts on] two ceremonial garments (and) golden earrings. The king comes out of the bathhouse. The [chi]ef of the palace officials [gives] the lituus to the king. § [Two] palace [official]s (and) one royal bodyguard (are) going in front of the king. They strike *arkammi*- and *galgalturi*-musical instruments [excerpt 17].³⁹

This procession is quite different from the previous one. No victorious entry with white weapons or a golden chariot here—rather, a king wearing new ceremonial garments, holding the lituus, the symbol of the gods, and preceded by only one royal bodyguard. It is unclear whether the latter is the one playing music together with the palace officials, but I doubt this idea. The last verbal form, “they strike,” is most probably an impersonal one, implying that musicians not far from the king are also taking part in this procession.

Although, unlike in excerpt 16, the *mise en scène* in excerpt 17 does not emphasize the military aspect of royal power, one can compare it with a sequence of a festival of the city of Nerik:

When (it is) the next day, they open (the *halentu*-building) in Nerik. The king wears the deity’s vestments, (namely) a tunic (and) an *adupli*-garment. He puts on a belt, the [*ka*]ttiluri-garment of the deity, the [l]ituus. He [p]uts the shoes on. § [The kin]g holds a spear of iron [and then] he comes down from the city [excerpt 18].⁴⁰

Several protagonists walk before the king while he is leaving the city. Then the text states:

[The king] goes and bows down [*in front of*] the throne [excerpt 19].⁴¹

Because of the context, I suspect that the throne mentioned here is the throne of a deity, probably the very same deity whose vestments the king has put on. To my mind, it would make some sense if the king, dressed with this god’s clothes, would go and bow in front of that god’s throne. Furthermore, the king holds a spear which could very well be the weapon of that same god. In that case, I suggest the god could be the Storm-god of Nerik, the most prominent god of that Hattian city and a very important god during the imperial

39 KBo 30.77 iii 1’–9’ (CTH 626, *nuntarriyaša*-festival; Nakamura 2002, 261): [É*halent*]uw[*a hašša*]nz[i KUSNÍG.BÀ]R=*ašta uššian*[zi] § [LUGAL-*u*]š INA É.DU₁₀.ÚS.SA *paizzi* [ta=za] 2 [TÚ]G.NÍG.LÁM^{MES}-*tar* HUB.BI KŪ.G[I *dāi* LUGA]L-*uš=kan IŠTU*É.DU₁₀.ÚS.SA *uiz*[zi GA]L DUMU^{MES} É.GAL LUGAL-*i* GIS*kalmuš* [pāi] § [2 DUMU]^{MES} É.GAL 1^{LU}MEŠEDI LUGAL-*i* per[an h]ūiyantes^{GIS} *arkammi galga*[lturi w]alhiškanzi.

40 KUB 58.33 iii 24’–33’ (CTH 678, festival of Nerik; García Trabazo and Groddek 2005, 84; Taggar-Cohen 2006, 423–24): *mān lukkatta* URU*Nerikki haššanzi* LUGAL-*uš=za* TÚG DINGIR-LIM TÚGÚ.É.A *aduplita waššiyazi išhuzzin=a=za=kan* [i]šhuzziyaizzi [TÚG*ka*]ttiluri ŠA DINGIR-LIM [GIS*ka*]muš KUS^E.SIR^{HA} [šark]ueyazi § [LUGAL-*u*]š AN.BAR-*aš tūrin harzi* [n=*ašt*]a URU-*yaza* GAM *uizzi*.

41 KUB 58.33 iii 37’–38’ (CTH 678, festival of Nerik; García Trabazo and Groddek 2005, 85): [LUGAL-*uš*] *paizzi* ANA GISDAG [p*era*]n⁷ *aruwaizzi*. Both García Trabazo and Groddek 2005 and Taggar-Cohen 2006, 424, have copied the misreading of Haas 1970, 262, namely, GIS GAL (instead of GISDAG collated from the photograph of the tablet), which does not make sense in this context.

period. Indeed, the spear is one of the typical weapons of Storm-gods.⁴² In other words, during this procession, the king probably embodies the Storm-god of Nerik himself in the ultimate show of divine legitimacy, where the king and the god become one and the same body.

Both types of royal processions, the military type and the “divine” one, display a whole series of symbols that would immediately speak to the local audience. In the first case, the gold, the white implements, and the military escort might symbolize military victory. In the second case, the king embodies the god, thus symbolizing his privileged relationship with the deity and his divine legitimacy to rule. As Catherine Bell has written, “political rituals display symbols and organize symbolic action in ways that attempt to demonstrate that the values and forms of social organization to which the ritual testifies are neither arbitrary nor temporary but follow naturally from the way the world is organized. For this reason, ritual has long been considered more efficient than coercive force in securing people’s assent to a particular order.”⁴³

The text of the instructions to the royal bodyguards actually describes a straightforward royal procession. The section is quite long, but here is a summary of it.⁴⁴ First the text states:

When the king goes outside (of the palace), a palace official leaves the palace and calls out ‘*tahaya*’ in Hattian. They call the barber ‘*tahaya*’ in Hattian [excerpt 20].⁴⁵

Note that the text does not specify the purpose of the king’s departure. This regulation is probably the usual one whatever the circumstances may be. The continuation of the text shows that the barber is asked to cleanse the gate through which the royal chariot will leave the palatial compound. Royal bodyguards are supposed to stand on the right-hand side of the royal chariot at all times. The text specifies that they hold spears. Military heralds, holding staffs, walk before the royal chariot. A soldier holding a golden spear is also present in the procession. At several stages of the procession, men holding spears and palace officials bow to the king. Then the text states:

When the royal bodyguards walk, two royal bodyguards go in front of them and hold their spears. They are aligned. On the left walks a palace official. He holds the lituus. That one too is aligned with the two royal bodyguards, so that the three of them are aligned together [excerpt 21].⁴⁶

42 See, for instance, van den Hout 1995, 550, fig. 2. See also Tudhaliya’s seal at Ugarit and Tudhaliya’s relief at the Çorum Museum.

43 Bell 1997, 135.

44 Miller 2013, 106ff.

45 IBoT 1.36 i 64–66 (CTH 262, instructions to the royal bodyguards; Miller 2013, 106–7): *māhhan=ma* LUGAL-*uš arahza paizzi n=ašta* 1 DUMU É.GAL ^É*halentüaz parā uizzi nu hattili tahaya halzai tahayan=ma=za hattili* ^{LÜŠU.I}*halzišsanzi*.

46 IBoT 1.36 ii 32–35 (CTH 262, instructions to the royal bodyguards; Miller 2013, 110–11): ^{LÜ.MEŠ}*MEŠEDI=ma kuw[ap]i iyanta nu* 2 ^{LÜ.MEŠ}*MEŠEDI peran huyante[š]* ^{GIŠŠUKUR^{HÁ}}*=ya harka[n]zi n=at=kan handānteš* ^{GÜB-la[z]} DUMU É.GAL *iyatta nu* ^{GI[ška]}*lmuš harzi n=ašta apaš=(š)a* ANA 2 ^{LÜ.M[ES]}*MEŠED]I [ha]ndānza n=a[t=k]an 3-ēš takšan handānteš*.

Note the display of the two items already observed in the context of cultic festivals: spears and the lituus, the military and the divine symbols. Behind the three leaders, other royal bodyguards and palace officials walk in three columns—two of royal bodyguards and one column of palace officials, as specified in the text. All of them walk behind the royal chariot.

Behind them, a soldier holds a golden spear and an A.ZU physician holds a *mukar*-object (whose nature is unknown to us). They walk together, and the physician utters conjurations for the benefit of the king. Behind them are two soldiers—either DUGUD officers or SIG₅ officers, states the text—wearing ceremonial garments (TÚG.NÍG.LÁM). Next come soldiers of provincial troops, who hold their spears and also wear ceremonial garments. Their chiefs hold staffs. Then the text states:

The troop which belongs to the provincial troops holds the peaceful (crowd) aligned on the side: (the troop) of the left side holds (it) aligned on the left and that of the right side holds it on the right [excerpt 22].⁴⁷

This passage alludes to the “peaceful” people who might gather to watch the royal procession. This mention of such an event is probably unique in the Hittite texts, since usually they do not deal with the “ordinary” people but instead focus on the royal family and its circle.

The whole section of this instructional text is precious to us, for it describes in great detail a royal procession. One clearly observes not only the display of military force seen in cultic contexts but also the religious dimension, which is symbolized by both the conjurations uttered by the A.ZU and the presence of the lituus. This excerpt shows better than any other the overlap of the political and religious dimensions.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

We have noticed that the military protagonists involved in the cultic ceremonies most often take part in the great assembly. This group is both an important actor in and the main audience of these ceremonies. It represents the social elite of the Hittite kingdom, the segment of the population that enjoys royal privileges. The military function of several of these people makes sense: the army played a central role in the consolidation of the king’s rule. Furthermore, the highest military ranks were very often—if not always—given to members of the royal family. For instance, frequently the chief of the royal bodyguards was the king’s brother.⁴⁹ In most of the scenes we have examined, the military protagonists appear near the king. In itself, this proximity illustrates their high rank, since physically approaching the king is not permitted to just anyone.⁵⁰ The repeated presence of this elite as well as the king’s donation of food and drinks to its members illustrate, I believe, the political importance of this group. Through public meals, the king publicly declared these

47 IBoT 1.36 ii 60–62 (CTH 262, instructions to the royal bodyguards; Miller 2013, 112–13): *ŠA LĪM ŠERI=ma kuiš ÉRIN.MEŠ-az nu takšulān tapūša išgarān harzi GÜB-laš GÜB-laz iškarān harzi n=[a]t ZAG-ša ZAG-az iškarān harzi.*

48 See also Andrews, this volume.

49 Beal 1992, 214.

50 Dardano 2010.

people's proximity to him; in other words, he conceded them symbolic power. In procession, however, the military officers had a double function: they protected the king as he ventured out publicly and, at the same time, made his military power visible to all.

Certainly, the forthcoming editions of Hittite festival texts⁵¹ will provide other examples of royal pomp. The text of the instructions to the royal bodyguards shows that this royal pomp was not exclusive to the context of cult festivals. In theory, any royal departure from the palace was the occasion of a procession during which the military and religious dimensions were intertwined. To quote Claude Rivière:

Why do politics tend to be sacralized? Because the rite represents the fundamental attitude through which someone acknowledges himself as inferior to the manifestation of power, and because, from the point of view of the powerful, the rite is a theatrical means to legitimize himself and to obtain respect and honor through the display of symbols of dominance, wealth and power. This allows the powerful to dominate without real violence through the creation of an urge to reach a superior state. In order to display an identity, to mobilize a collectivity, to develop loyalism, there is no state that does not seek to celebrate itself.⁵²

ABBREVIATIONS

- CHD Hans Gustav Güterbock, Harry A. Hoffner, and Theo van den Hout, eds. *The Hittite Dictionary of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 1989–
- CTH Emmanuel Laroche, *Catalogue des textes hittites*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971
- IBoT *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde bulunan Boğazköy Tabletleri (Boğazköy Tablets in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum)*. Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi
- KBo *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*. Leipzig/Berlin: Hinrichs/Gebr. Mann
- KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*. Berlin: Vorderasiatische Abteilung der Staatlichen Museen

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51 Das Corpus der hethitischen Festrütiale project: <http://www.adwmainz.de/projekte/corpus-der-hethitischen-festrütiale/informationen.html> (accessed August 10, 2020).

52 Translated by Alice Mouton from Rivière 2006, 1026: "Pourquoi le politique tend-il à se sacraliser? Parce que le rite représente l'attitude fondamentale par laquelle quelqu'un se reconnaît inférieur face à la manifestation d'une puissance, et parce que, du côté de la puissance qui se manifeste, le rite est le moyen théâtral d'accréditer une supériorité et donc d'obtenir respect et honneur par l'étalage de symboles de domination, de richesse, de pouvoir, ce qui permet de contraindre sans violence réelle en créant l'aspiration à un état supérieur. Pour afficher une identité, mobiliser une collectivité, développer un loyalisme, il n'est point de régime qui ne cherche à se célébrer."

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8

The “Šuppiluliuma Conundrum”: A Hittite King between Religious Piety and Political Performance

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MAINTAINING THE CULT of the gods was one of the main duties a Hittite king was expected to perform. The introduction to Tudḫaliya I’s decree concerning penal and administrative reforms (CTH 258.1) is especially illuminating in this respect:

Thus (speaks) the Tabarna Tudḫaliya, Great King: Once I destroyed Āssuwa, I [ca]me back to Ḫattuša, and I provided for the deities. The entire population of Ḫattuša began to make obeisance to me and spoke thus: § “You, Your Majesty, our [L]ord, you are a *campaigner*, so you have not been able to render judgment concerning law cases.”¹

The Hittite king was the highest cultic administrator of the kingdom, becoming a “priest” (L^USANGA) to the gods when he ascended the throne. This role is especially thematized in royal prayers of the Empire period. In one notable example—King Muwatalli’s prayer to the assembly of gods through the Storm-god of Lightning (CTH 381)²—the title “Priest to the Sun-goddess of Arinna and to all the gods” is used as a synonym for the office of kingship:

Storm-god of Lightning, my lord, I was but a human, whereas my father was a priest to the Sun-goddess of Arinna and to all the gods. My father begat me, but the Storm-god of Lightning took me from my mother and reared me; he made me priest of the Sun-goddess of Arinna and of all the gods; for the Land of Ḫattuša he appointed me to kingship.³

As this passage, and numerous others suggest, the designation “priest” (L^USANGA) conveyed the responsibility of the Hittite king for the cult of all the deities in the land, not just to the well-being of an individual deity in its temple. The function of the king as SANGA-priest of all the gods manifests itself perfectly in the contents of the Hittite royal archives. A substantial number of the texts excavated in Ḫattuša, as well as in various other Hittite towns, relate to the proper practice, administration, and maintenance of the

1 KUB 13.9 + KUB 40.62 i 1–8, edited by Marazzi 2012 and Miller 2013b, 134–39, each with slightly different translations.

2 Edited by Singer 1996. See also Singer 2002, 85–95, and more recently Rieken, Lorenz, and Daues 2016c, as well as Daues and Rieken 2018, 402–11.

3 KUB 6.45 iii 25–31; Singer 1996, 21, 40. The passage, invoking the Storm-god of lightning, is translated here after Singer 2002, 91, with minor modifications.

cult—aptly termed by Schwemer “cult quality assurance management.”⁴ Numerous Hittite texts of different genres bear witness to what must have been a genuine royal concern for the upkeep of the cult. They include numerous festival texts of various types, royal prayers, votive texts, royal instructions, cultic endowments and foundation texts, cultic inventories, and oracular investigations conducted to establish the correct practice of a cult or to detect the possible neglect of it. The absolute high percentage of cult-related texts in the Hittite royal archives may even suggest, as intriguingly proposed by Theo van den Hout, that Hittite administration was primarily cult administration. Catering to the gods was one of the central tasks of royal administration.

Neglect of the cult of a certain deity could have caused real damage, as numerous Hittite compositions illustrate.⁵ The following passage from a prayer of the late Empire period King Tudḫaliya IV to the Sun-goddess of Arinna is often cited in this context:

I have offended [the Sun-goddess of Arinna], my lady, and I have insulted the Sun-goddess of Arinna, [my lady]. In that I began to take away [. . .] and cancelled (*karšanu-*) your festivals. [If you], O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, became somehow angry with [me] on account of the festivals, care [for me] again, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady! I want to defeat the enemy! [If you, O Sun-goddess] of Arinna, my lady, will stand by [me], I shall defeat the enemy and I shall [confess] my offence [before you] and never again [shall I] cancel (*karšanu-*) the festivals. I will not again delay (*wahnu-*) the spring and [autumn festivals]. [The festivals of spring] I shall perform punctually in spring, [and the festivals of] autumn I shall perform punctually in autumn. Never leave [. . .] amid [your] temple.⁶

The second paragraph of the prayer (KBo 12.58 + KBo 13.162 obv. 11–19) is even more fragmentary and less known. It investigates the possibility that the Sun-goddess of Arinna was angry on account of a lost divine cult image, suggesting that this image was lost long ago, during the reign of one of Tudḫaliya’s predecessors. It was even possibly lost during the reign of Tudḫaliya’s great grandfather, King Šuppiluliuma I, who ruled a century earlier (obv. 11–13).

The great conqueror, King Šuppiluliuma I, is widely regarded as one of the greatest Hittite kings.⁷ However, the destroyer of the Mitanni Empire and founder of the Hittite Empire in Syria also gained a different kind of notoriety: he is relatively often faulted by

4 Schwemer 2016. Other recent overviews on Hittite cult management are Lorenz 2014 and Cammarosano 2018. See now Burgin 2019, 1–12.

5 The theme of cultic neglect in Hittite sources was recently surveyed by Schwemer 2016, 1–7. See also CHD Š, 59–60, for attestations.

6 KBo 12.58 + KBo 13.162 obv. 2–10, CTH 385.9. The passage was translated by Houwink ten Cate 1986, 110; Singer 2002, 108–9; and Schwemer 2016, 6. A recent edition is Rieken, Lorenz, and Daus 2016d. In all four translations, the sentence containing the verb *wahnu-*, “to make (something) turn,” is translated as “interchange” or “vertauschen.” The whole sentence is rendered by Singer 2002, 108, as “I will not again interchange the spring and autumn (festivals).” But were Hittite cultic administrators really capable of such a ludicrous blunder? It seems more plausible to me, as the instruction text KUB 13.4 ii 52–70 (Miller 2013b, 254–57) suggests, that the author is alluding here to unacceptably long delays in the celebration of the festivals.

7 See the overviews of Klengel 1999, 135–68; Bryce 2005, 154–89. Newer studies on his reign are Stavi 2015 and the articles collected in de Martino and Miller 2013.

his successors for his neglect of the cult. The next sections of this essay examine several occurrences of cultic neglect by Šuppiluliuma as they are portrayed in the sources, exploring their religious and ideological significance.

According to his Ten Year Annals,⁸ Muršili II's very first deed as a king was to celebrate the regular festivals of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, seeking her support before setting out to confront his enemies.⁹ The festivals of the Sun-goddess of Arinna were not celebrated on time by Muršili's father, Šuppiluliuma, because he was held up garrisoning in Mitanni.¹⁰ Therefore, it was up to the young Muršili to celebrate the festivals of the leading goddess of the Hittite pantheon. As both the prologue and later the epilogue of the composition illustrate, the intention of the Ten Year Annals was to narrate the story of how the Sun-goddess of Arinna stood by the young king throughout the first ten years of his reign. The wording of the prologue clearly connects the celebration of the festivals, the ensuing victories, and the composition of the Ten Year Annals:

^(16–18) Because my father had been garrisoning in the Land of Mittani and had been held up in garrison, the festivals of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, were being neglected.

^(19–29) When I, My Majesty, sat on my father's throne, before I had set out against any of the enemy foreign lands that were in a state of hostilities with me, I exclusively cared for the regular festivals of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, and celebrated them. I held up the hand to the Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, and said as follows: “O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, the enemy foreign lands who have called me a child and belittled me, have begun seeking to take away the borders of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady. Stand by me, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady. Destroy those enemy foreign lands before me.” The Sun-goddess of Arinna heard my words and stood by me. After I sat down on my father's throne, in ten years I vanquished these enemy foreign lands and destroyed them.¹¹

It is noteworthy that Muršili was celebrating the “regular” (SAG.UŠ) festivals for the Sun-goddess of Arinna in his first regnal year. As Singer suggested in his edition of the KILAM-festival, Hittite festivals were probably celebrated in two formats. The “eternal, ever recurring, regular” (*ukturi*-, SAG.UŠ) festivals were performed annually, whereas the so-called “great, royal” (*šalli*-) versions of the same festivals were celebrated at greater intervals.¹² Singer tentatively connected the latter format to the “festivals of the sixth year” (EZEN₄^{MES} ŠA MU.6^{KAM}) and to the “great festivals of the sixth year” (EZEN₄^{MES} GAL^{MES} ŠA MU.6^{KAM}), celebrated by King Muršili in years 10 and 16 of his reign, respectively. Perhaps, as suggested by del Monte, these sixth-year festivals were celebrated as a kind of a royal jubilee.¹³ If Singer's hunch is indeed correct, and the regular (SAG.UŠ) festivals were celebrated annually, Muršili's urgency to celebrate the annual festivals of the Sun-goddess of

8 Edited by Götze 1933. A recent English translation is Beal 2000.

9 Götze 1933, 20–21.

10 See also CHD Š, 59; Schwemer 2016, 6.

11 KBo 3.4 i 16–29, edited by Götze 1933, 20–23. Translation after Beal 2000, 84, with some modifications.

12 Singer 1983, 37–48; see also Schwemer 2016, 8 n. 23.

13 del Monte 1993, 27–29, cited by Schwemer 2016, 8 n. 23. The pertinent text passages are edited by Götze 1933, 138–39, 162–63. See also del Monte 1993, 100, 113–16.

Arinna upon his enthronement becomes understandable. His explanation for the delay, however, is not without interest. Muršili does not attribute the delay to his predecessor, his elder brother Arnuwanda, because Arnuwanda reigned for only a very short period of time, perhaps no longer than a year.¹⁴ Instead, the cultic neglect is attributed to the delayed sojourn of his father, King Šuppiluliuma, in Mitanni. Therefore, Šuppiluliuma must have been in Mittani shortly before he died—otherwise, why was his stay in Mittani relevant for the delayed celebration of an annual festival? Did Šuppiluliuma die in Mittani or shortly after his return from there? The next section takes a closer look at what is known about the circumstances in which the great conqueror died and the ways his death was interpreted by his successors. These questions are quintessential to any discussion of Šuppiluliuma's fame and notoriety.

The chronology of Šuppiluliuma's reign is baffling, especially because of the fragmentary nature of the main historical source documenting his reign, the Manly Deeds of Šuppiluliuma (DS), authored by his son Muršili II.¹⁵ This confusion holds especially true for the second part of Šuppiluliuma's reign. According to Bryce, the king died about six years after the conquest of Carchemish and the so-called "*daḥamunzu*" affair.¹⁶ In their groundbreaking article on Hittite absolute chronology, Wilhelm and Boese allow for an even longer interval, one of about ten years.¹⁷ Miller's recent reconstruction of KUB 19.15++, a narrative by Muršili II recounting the history of the conflict between Egypt and the Hittites, established a probable synchronism between Haremheb's ascension to the throne and Muršili's eighth year. The new synchronism seems to support an interval of ten years between the *daḥamunzu* affair and Šuppiluliuma's death, if Akhenaten is to be identified as the deceased Nipḥururiya, or of seven years if Smenkhkare, identifying his consort Meritaten as the *daḥamunzu*.¹⁸

The colophon of tablet twelve of the DS (KUB 19.7 + KBo 19.48), recently tentatively joined by Miller, suggests that the twelfth tablet is indeed the last tablet of the composition. It shows that five tablets were dedicated to Šuppiluliuma's deeds after the *daḥamunzu* affair, which is related in the seventh tablet.¹⁹ Other fragments of the DS document various military campaigns into the northern Kaška regions during Šuppiluliuma's last years.²⁰ The uprisings in the Kaška regions apparently continued after Šuppiluliuma's death. Ḫannutti, the governor of the Lower Land and an experienced military commander, was ordered by Arnuwanda II, Šuppiluliuma's successor, to march north to the Land of Išḫupitta, on the northern outskirts of the Upper Land, and restore order there. Ḫannutti's subsequent

14 For a survey of his short reign, see Klengel 1999, 168–70; Bryce 2005, 190–91.

15 Edited by Güterbock 1956; del Monte 2008.

16 Bryce 2005, 187.

17 Wilhelm and Boese 1987.

18 For the former, see Miller 2007; for the latter, see Wilhelm 2012, esp. 247, with a thorough discussion of other proposals.

19 Miller 2013a, 127–30. As Miller argues, the join, if correct, may also confirm that very late in his reign, Šuppiluliuma was confronted with a rebellion in Kinza and Nuḫḫašše. However, it is not clear whether the rebellion was quenched by Šuppiluliuma himself. The land of Mittani is not mentioned in the very fragmentary tablet.

20 See the overview in Klengel 1999, 167–68.

death constituted a further blow to the young Muršili upon his ascension to the throne.²¹ Thus the fragments of the DS identified so far do not reveal any information concerning the circumstances in which Šuppiluliuma died. He must have outlived the initial outbreak of the plague following the *daḥamunzu* affair by a number of years and seems to have participated in several military campaigns in different parts of his empire. Nevertheless, it is often assumed in modern scholarship that Šuppiluliuma fell victim to the plague.²²

One indirect indication as to the cause of his death may be found in the opening lines of Muršili’s Ten Year Annals; they suggest that Šuppiluliuma, like his son Arnuwanda, died of an illness: “When my father died (literally, became a god), Arnuwanda, my brother, seated himself on the throne of his father but later he likewise (*-pat*) became (mortally) ill.”²³ The author of the Ten Year Annals, however, does not explicitly relate the death of the two to the epidemic. According to Muršili’s so-called “Second Plague Prayer” to the Storm-god of Ḫattuša (CTH 378.II), the plague was brought to Ḫattuša by Egyptian captives carried off by Šuppiluliuma.²⁴ They were captured by the Hittites in a punitive raid conducted within Egyptian-controlled territory, thus infringing the border between the two empires. The raid was executed in revenge of the death of Šuppiluliuma’s son Zannanza. The Hittite prince was sent to Egypt at the request of the *daḥamunzu*, the Egyptian royal widow:

At that time too the Storm-god of Ḫattuša, my lord, by his verdict caused my father to prevail, and he defeated the infantry and the chariotry of Egypt and beat them. But when the prisoners of war who had been captured were led back to Ḫattuša, a plague broke out among the prisoners of war, and [they began] to die. When the prisoners of war were carried off to Ḫattuša, the prisoners of war brought the plague into Ḫattuša. From that day on people have been dying in Ḫattuša.²⁵

Here the author famously reveals that the Hittites were fully aware of the “natural” causes of the epidemic, unequivocally dating the initial outbreak of the epidemic in Ḫattuša to the reign of Šuppiluliuma.²⁶ If Šuppiluliuma had indeed died as a direct result of the plague, the Second Plague Prayer, in which Muršili acknowledges the offenses of his father, thus assuming responsibility for them, would have been the perfect place to proclaim it. But the death of Šuppiluliuma is not explicitly mentioned in the Second Plague Prayer at all, nor is it argued that Šuppiluliuma had died in the plague as a punishment for his offenses. If the chronology of Šuppiluliuma’s reign, outlined above, is correct in allowing six to ten years between the *daḥamunzu* affair and Šuppiluliuma’s death, it is unlikely that Šuppiluliuma’s death could have been directly linked by his contemporaries to that initial outbreak of plague.

21 Götze 1933, 18–19; Bryce 2005, 190–92.

22 Klengel 1999, 168; Bryce 2005, 188; Singer 2002, 47.

23 KBo 3.4 i 4–6, edited by Götze 1933, 14–15: *nu-za A-BU-IA ku-wa-pí DINGIR-LIM-iš DÛ-at* ⁽⁵⁾ *m* *Ar-nu-an-da-aš-ma-za-kán ŠEŠ-IA A-NA* ^{GIS} *GU.ZA A-BI-ŠU e-ša-at EGIR-an-ma-as* ⁽⁶⁾ *ir-ma-li-ia-at-ta-at-pát*. See also CHD P, 224.

24 Edited most recently by Rieken, Lorenz, and Daues 2016b. See now also Daues and Rieken 2018, 378–88. Recent translations include Singer 2002, 57–61; van den Hout 2006, 263–66. A recent study of Muršili’s prayers is Czyżewska 2012.

25 KUB 14.8 obv. 25’–28’, with duplicates.

26 Singer 2002, 47.

Šuppiluliuma's death is more explicitly thematized in Muršili's so-called "First Plague Prayer," addressed to the assembly of the gods (CTH 378.I).²⁷ There, Šuppiluliuma's involvement in the murder of his brother, Tudḫaliya "the Younger," was indicated by the oracle as a possible cause for the continuation of the plague.²⁸ The author relates the crimes of Šuppiluliuma and his associates, the "Men of Ḫattuša," in deposing and murdering Tudḫaliya the Younger and poses the theological question of delayed divine justice:

[But, you, O gods], my [lords], protected my father. You were standing in [. . .]. And because Ḫattuša [was attacked?] by the en[emy . . .], the enemy had taken borderlands of the Land of Ḫattuša. [. . .] kept defeating [. . .] and kept killing them. He also kept taking the [. . .] of the Land of Ḫattuša. He (Šuppiluliuma) took away the borderlands from them and re[settled] them. Furthermore, [he] also [conquered] other foreign lands [during his] reign. He sustained Ḫattuša and [secured] its borders on each side.²⁹ During his (reign) the entire land of Ḫattuša did well. [People?], cattle and sheep became numerous during his (reign). And also the deportees that [were brought] from the e[nemy] land were sustained. Nothing perished. You came, O gods, [my lords], and now have belatedly taken vengeance on my father for this affair of Tudḫaliya the Younger. *My father [died] because of the murder of Tudḫaliya.* The princes, the lords, the overseer(s) of provincial troops, and the dignitaries who joined [him] died because of [that] affair. That same affair also reached the Land of Ḫattuša and the Land of [Ḫattuša] has been dying since because of [that] affair.³⁰

In modern scholarship it is often assumed that the author of Muršili's First Plague Prayer here suggests that Šuppiluliuma died from the epidemic as a punishment for the murder of Tudḫaliya the Younger, reconstructing to that effect the broken verb at the end of line 34 (in bold type above).³¹ The reconstruction is very likely, but not certain. But even if correct, and Šuppiluliuma's death was indeed attributed by the author to the affair of Tudḫaliya the Younger, his death is not directly linked to the epidemic that broke out as a consequence of the *daḫamunzu* affair. The considerable chronological gap between the *daḫamunzu* affair and Šuppiluliuma's death makes such an attribution highly unlikely.³² In fact, the author of the First Plague Prayer often strives to distinguish between Šuppiluliuma's involvement in the affair of Tudḫaliya the Younger and that of the Land of Ḫattuša, represented by the dignitaries listed after him. Whereas Šuppiluliuma harassed the young Tudḫaliya (KUB 14.14 + obv. 16: *dam-mi-eš-ḫa-a-et*), it was the dignitaries of the Land of Ḫattuša that joined his cause, eventually killing Tudḫaliya and banishing into exile his supporters (§3, KUB 14.14 + obv. 16–22). Whether Šuppiluliuma himself was involved in the murder plot is not clearly evident from the narrative, and the ambiguity is probably

27 Edited most recently by Rieken, Lorenz, and Dawes 2016a. See now also Daues and Rieken 2018, 368–77. Recent translations include Singer 2002, 61–64; van den Hout 2006, 259–63.

28 CTH 378.I, §§2–3; Singer 2002, 61–62. On this episode, see Klengel 1999, 148; and esp. Groddek 2009, 99–106, with a new reading of the passage.

29 See CHD L–N, 83.

30 KUB 14.14 ++ obv. 23–40, §4, translation slightly modifying earlier translations of Singer 2002, 62, and van den Hout 2006, 264. Emphasis mine.

31 KUB 14.14 obv. 34: . . . *nu-kân A-BU-IA IŠ-TU ŠA mDU-UT-ḪA-LI-IA iš-ḫa-na-[az . . .]*.

32 See Groddek 2002 on the chronology of the plague.

intentional. Later in the prayer (§7, KUB 14.14 + rev 2'–12'), another distinction is drawn between Šuppiluliuma and the Land of Ḫattuša. While Šuppiluliuma and, after him, Muršili both performed for themselves a “ritual of bloodshed” because of the murder—presumably a purification ritual³³—the Land of Ḫattuša neglected to perform it. Nor did those dignitaries responsible for the murder perform such a ritual for the land.³⁴ The distinction between the perpetrators and the Land of Ḫattuša is also kept in section §9' (KUB 14.14 + rev. 9'–28'). There, Muršili argues that those who have murdered Tudḫaliya the Younger have already given compensation for the bloodshed, and so did the Land of Ḫattuša. Šuppiluliuma, however, is not explicitly mentioned, so it is again uncertain whether he belonged to that group of perpetrators.

Both the First and Second Plague Prayers were composed after “twenty years,” probably confronting another outbreak of the plague. And both were probably composed more or less simultaneously.³⁵ In the prayers, undoubtedly among the most engaging compositions of Hittite literature, the Hittite king argues before the gods against the punishment they have inflicted on his kingdom. Suffering the outcome of their apparent wrath, manifested in several violent outbursts of the epidemic, he desperately seeks to understand the reasons that led to it. Within this framework, the prayers engage in an array of themes, such as the theological problem of delayed divine justice, the question of collective culpability, and the concept of paternal sins imposed on sons, who endure the divine punishment. However, as the passage cited above clearly illustrates, the author also grapples with the particular theological conundrum posed by Šuppiluliuma's reign and death. The gods did not merely “protect” Šuppiluliuma and spare him from retribution for his involvement in the murder of Tudḫaliya the Younger. Šuppiluliuma even became an outstanding king, not only reconquering lost Hittite territories but successfully conquering and securing new ones, eventually building an empire. Ḫattuša continued to thrive throughout his reign. Šuppiluliuma could have accomplished these successes only with divine support—even the circumstances of his death could not be unambiguously linked to the epidemic and unequivocally interpreted as punishment for it. Yet precisely Šuppiluliuma's most magnificent achievements also brought with them catastrophe in the form of the epidemic, which in turn was necessarily interpreted as a willful punishment of the gods. And since the author(s) of the prayers assume(s) the plague began during Šuppiluliuma's reign—with both prayers insisting on that fact—the offenses that triggered the lasting wrath of the gods must also have occurred during Šuppiluliuma's reign. Therefore, even after “twenty years,” the oracular consultations initiated by Muršili concerned “ancient” offenses from the reign of Šuppiluliuma. Only offenses that occurred during Šuppiluliuma's reign were considered to be possible causes for the renewed outburst of the plague.

The theological conundrum that evolves from Šuppiluliuma's reign is also found in Muršili's Second Plague Prayer, as the passage cited above reveals. By winning the battles against the Egyptians on several occasions, Šuppiluliuma must have been acting justly, by verdict of the Storm-god of Ḫattuša. By itself, the fact that he defeated the Egyptians

33 On the nature of this ritual, see Haas 1994, 291; Feder 2011, 224–27.

34 They are represented perhaps by the preterite plural verbal form at the end of the passage, KUB 14.14 + rev 12'.

35 van den Hout 2006, 260.

verifies the deity's approval of his actions. However, by defeating the Egyptians in accordance with the verdict of the Storm-god of Ḫattuša, Šuppiluliuma also brought the plague into Ḫattuša and therefore must have angered the gods in some other way. For this reason, according to the preceding passage of the Second Plague Prayer, the so-called "Kuruštama tablet"—which recorded a century-old treaty between Ḫattuša and Egypt—had to be rediscovered (§4, KUB 14.8 obv. 13'–24').³⁶ It enabled Muršili to solve the theological conundrum and interpret one of Šuppiluliuma's forays into Egyptian territory as a violation of that ancient treaty,³⁷ and thus the plague became comprehensible again. It was, after all, another case of delayed divine justice, a late punishment for Šuppiluliuma's transgression of the oath.

According to his Second Plague Prayer, addressed to the Storm-god of Ḫattuša (CTH 378.II), Muršili "discovered" not only the record of the Kuruštama Treaty but also another ancient tablet. The second concerns a ritual of the Māla River (SĪSKUR ŠA ^{1D}MA-A-LA), the Hittite name of the (upper) Euphrates. As convincingly suggested by Vieyra, and more recently by Arikan, the ancient tablet discovered by Muršili must be KUB 23.79, an intriguing and fragmentary Middle Hittite tablet incorporating myth and ritual.³⁸ The colophon (KUB 23.79 rev. 10'–15') describes the ritual as:

(10') Ritual [o]f the Māla River: [Whe]n a plague breaks in the land ^(11') they thoroughly investigate using divination this ritual [through] a deity ^(12') and if [it] is established, the king and queen ^(13') [. . . the] people from the [. . .] as well as from the land ^(14'–15') [. . .] and they perform this ritual [. . .]. Complete.³⁹

As noted by Arikan, the colophon resembles the wording in Muršili's Second Plague Prayer (KUB 14.8 obv. 38'–40' and duplicates), where the king acknowledges that he, too, investigated the ritual of the Māla River in connection with the plague: "I also investigated by means of divination the ritual of the Māla River because of the plague and there too it was established for me to appear before the Storm-god of Ḫattuša, my lord."⁴⁰

The question posed to the oracle, as reported by Muršili in his Second Plague Prayer, was somewhat different. Instead of asking whether or not to perform the ritual in case of a plague, as KUB 23.79 rev. 10'–15' stipulates, the question concerns the deity to whom the king should make atonement for the lasting neglect of performing the ritual. The

36 On the treaty, see Singer 2004; Groddek 2008. On the historical plausibility of this archival discovery and its depiction in Muršili's Second Plague Prayer as well as in the DS, see Klinger 2001, 287; Singer 2013, 188–89; van den Hout 2014. A "[tablet] of the [land] of Egypt" is also mentioned in KUB 31.121 ii 6–7, edited by Sørenhagen 1985, 10–11. Miller has now joined KUB 31.121 to KUB 19.15++, the narrative by Muršili II mentioned above, recounting the history of the conflict between Egypt and the Hittites.

37 KUB 14.8 obv. 18'–19'.

38 Vieyra 1974, 123; Arikan 2007, 45. A recent edition is Rieken, Lorenz, and Daues 2009. See Haas 2006, 147; Polvani 2010; most recently Steitler 2017, 164–65, on the myth contained in KUB 23.79 and its relation to the ritual.

39 KUB 23.79 rev. 10'–15': ^(10') [Š]A^{1D}MA-A-LA SĪSKUR[R] [ma-a-a]n KUR-ia an-da ḫi-in²-ká[n] ^(11') [ki]-i²-ša nu ki-i² [S]ĪSKUR [. . .] DINGIR-LIM ar-ḫa a-ri-ia-an-zi ^(12') [n]a-at ma-a-a[n . . . ḫ]a-an-da-it-ta-ri nu LUGAL MUNUS.LUGAL ^(13') [. . .]x x[. . . -i]a-az-zi-ia KUR-ia-az-zi-ia an-tu-uḫ-š[e-eš] ^(14') [. . . -z]i na-aš-ta ki-i SĪSKUR' ^(15') [. . .]x i-en-zi QA-TI. See also Waal 2015, 279–80.

40 KUB 14.8 obv. 38'–40': . . . SISKUR-ia ŠA ^{1D}MA]-A-[LA] ḫi-in-ga-ni še-e-er⁽³⁹⁾ a-ri-ia-nu-un nu-mu-kán a-pí-ia-ia ^{4I}ŠKUR (URU)ḪA-AT-T)I EN-IA pé-ra-an ti-ia-u-an-zi ⁽⁴⁰⁾ ḫa-an-da-a-it-ta-at.

neglect itself has already been established earlier in the composition, after the discovery of the two ancient tablets is announced (KUB 14.8 obv. 10'–12'): “[. . .] ancient kings [. . . the] plague (by means³⁾ of the ritual of the Māla River.’ However, as long as [people have been dying] in Ḫattuša, since the days of my father, we never performed [the ritual] of the Māla River.”⁴¹

The end of line 10' is often reconstructed in modern renderings of the passage as *ḫi-in-ká[n har-ke-e]r*, understanding *ḫi-in-ká[n* as “offering.”⁴² However, the analogy to the colophon of KUB 23.79, if accepted, strongly suggests that the ritual of the Māla River (SÍSKUR ŠA ^{1D}MA-A-LA) was not a festival during which offerings were presented to the river by kings of the past, and which was overdue now, but was instead a magical procedure to be performed by the royal couple in the case of an epidemic—a procedure Muršili had neglected so far to perform. The *ḫi-in-ká[n* in line 10' must therefore simply denote the plague, requiring another verb to be reconstructed at the end of the line. Indeed, according to a fragmentary passage in Muršili's annals, the king did come around to perform that ritual.⁴³ The failure to perform the ritual of the Māla River was therefore not another instance of cultic neglect by Šuppiluliuma, as it is often assumed in modern scholarship. It is also noteworthy that by using the first-person plural, Muršili takes on himself the responsibility for failing to perform the ancient ritual that could have saved the land from the plague.

The theological conundrum, connecting military success with neglect of the cult, is found not only in the Plague Prayers. In a fragmentary section of his Annals dedicated to the deeds of his ninth year, King Muršili II recounts a journey he made to Kizzuwatna, where he was met by his older brother, Šarre-Kušuh, who ruled as king in Carchemish. The original aim of the king's journey to Kizzuwatna was to celebrate there the overdue festival of invocation of one of the local deities, Ḫebat of Kummanni.⁴⁴

⁽²⁶⁾ [When the (matter of the) festi]val of invocation of Ḫebat of Kummanni ⁽²⁷⁾ [became troublesome to me], I went [to] Kizzuwatna. ⁽²⁸⁾ [Whe]n, however, I arrived [in Kizz]uwatna ^(29–30) [Šarre-Kušuh], my brother, [king of the land] of Carchemish [drove toward me] to Kizzuwatna and stayed with me.⁴⁵

41 KUB 14.8 obv. 10'–12': ⁽¹⁰⁾ [. . .] *ma'-wa SISKUR ŠA ^{1D}MA-A-LA ka-ru-ú-[i-li]-e-eš LUGAL^{MEŠ} ḫi-in-ká[n . . .]* ⁽¹¹⁾ [. . . -e]r *ku-it-ma-an-ma IŠ-TU UD^{KAM,r} az A'-BI-IA I-NA KUR ^{URU}ḪA-AT-TI x[. . .]* ⁽¹²⁾ [*nu SISKUR ŠA ^{1D}MA-A-LA Ū-UL 'ku'-wa-pi-ik-ki i-ia-u-e-e[n]*].

42 See most recently Daues and Rieken 2018, 380–81.

43 KUB 19.37 ii 47, iii 1; Götze 1933, 170–73.

44 As already noticed by Goetze 1940, 9–10, who first studied the text passages relating to this episode, “Kizzuwatna” and “Kummanni” are interchangeable. For this episode, see also Trémouille 1997, 28–31.

45 KUB 19.3 + KUB 14.29 (+) KUB 14.28 i 26–30 (CTH 61.II.5.A), edited by Götze 1933, 108–9: ⁽²⁶⁾ [*ma-aḫ-ḫa-an-ma-mu A-NA EZ]EN ḫal-zi-ia-u-wa-aš ŠA ^dḪE-PÁT ^{URU}KUM-[MA]-AN-NI ⁽²⁷⁾ [na-ak-ke-e-eš-ta nu I-NA]^{URU}KI-IZ-ZU-WA-AT-NA *pa-a-un* ⁽²⁸⁾ [*ma-aḫ-ḫa*]-an-ma [I-NA ^{URU}KI-IZ-Z]U-WA-AT-NA *a-ar-aḫ-ḫu-un* ⁽²⁹⁾ [*nu-mu ^mLUGAL-^dSIN-aš* ŠEŠ-IA [LUGAL KUR] ^{URU}KAR-GA-MIŠ I-NA ^{URU}KI-IZ-ZU-WA-AT-NA ⁽³⁰⁾ [*me-na-aḫ-ḫa-an-da u-un-ni-eš-ta* na-aš-mu kat-ta-an e-eš-ta. See also Goetze 1940, 9–10. The reconstruction of *na-ak-ke-e-eš-ta* at the beginning of line 27 follows the parallel text KUB 19.30 (2BoTU 57) iv 12–13, edited by Götze 1933, 104–5: . . . *ke-e-ez-za-ma-mu ^dḪE-PÁT ^{URU}KUM-MA-AN-NI ⁽¹³⁾ A-NA EZEN ḫal-zi-ia-u-wa-aš na-ak-ke-e-eš-ta*, “at that time Ḫebat of Kummanni troubled me (concerning) the festival of invocation.” See also CHD L–N, 371.*

Whether Muršili celebrated the festival of invocation of Ḫebat of Kummanni as he planned cannot be conclusively determined, mainly because of the passage's poor state of preservation. It is clear, however, that the subsequent lines no longer depict the festival but are dedicated to the unforeseen event that overshadowed Muršili's sojourn in Kizzuwatna, namely, the death of his older brother, Šarre-Kušuh. According to the narrative, which can be reconstructed only by combining three badly damaged manuscripts, Šarre-Kušuh became ill and died in Kizzuwatna. His remains were brought to Ḫattuša, where he received condign funerary rites.⁴⁶

Šarre-Kušuh's death had an undoubtedly overwhelming effect on his younger brother both personally and politically, especially as Muršili's other Syrian viceroy, his brother Telipinu ("the Priest"), who ruled in Aleppo, had died shortly earlier.⁴⁷ Only single words or phrases are preserved in the three pertinent fragments. Some of them may convey Muršili's anger at his brother's death. Such is the phrase "the [god]s did an evil thing" by causing or allowing Šarre-Kušuh's death, if Meriggi's reconstruction is indeed correct.⁴⁸

The death of Šarre-Kušuh in Kizzuwatna just when Muršili was visiting there to celebrate an overdue festival for a prominent local deity must have triggered some kind of theological crisis—so much the more since it was apparently Šuppiluliuma I, the father of both Šarre-Kušuh and Muršili, who vowed to celebrate the festival for the deity in the first place. This situation is revealed in another composition "authored" by Muršili II: his prayer concerning the misdeeds and the ousting of the Babylonian Tawannanna (CTH 70.1.A).⁴⁹ The matter of the festival of invocation of Ḫebat of Kummanni is mentioned in the third column of the composition and reveals the reason why the king was troubled over the celebration of the festival. According to the text, the festival was promised to the deity by Muršili's father, King Šuppiluliuma I, but he never celebrated it.

(KUB 14.4 iii 23–24) When I went to the land of Kummanni, however—my father had promised a festival of invocation to Ḫebat of Kummanni, but had not yet given it to her⁽²⁵⁾—she troubled me so I went to Kizzuwatna,⁽²⁶⁾ and I spoke thus: "I will come and fully compensate for the debt of my father"^(27–29) [And] I myself kept luring⁵⁰ (and) invoked Ḫebat of Kummanni f[or] my own [pe]rson, my wife, my son, my estate, my land and for the [...] of my enemies.⁵¹

46 See Götze 1933, 108–9. Meriggi (1978, 67–70) added KBo 10.38 to the duplicates already available to Götze (KBo 4.4 and KUB 14.29). A composite translation is del Monte 1993, 92. See partially CHD Š, 46.

47 The historical context is sketched by Bryce 2005, 202–5.

48 KUB 14.29 i 31, reconstructed with KBo 10.38: 4', Meriggi 1978, 70: [nu-mu DINGIR]^{MES} i-da-a-lu-un me-m[i-an i-]e-er, "[The god]s [d]id an evil thing [to me]." "The festivals of the gods" are also mentioned in the passage, but the corresponding verb is broken. The section ends with the verb "I kept demanding" (ú-e-eš-ki-nu-un, KBo 4.4 iv 4), perhaps while Muršili was still in Kizzuwatna.

49 Most recently edited by Miller 2014.

50 For talliya-, "to lure," see Melchert 2010; Czyzewska 2012, 68–79, with earlier references.

51 KUB 14.4 iii 23–29; Miller 2014, 521, 526: ⁽²³⁾ ma-a-an-ma I-NA KUR URU KUM-MA-AN-NI-ma pa-a-un A-BU-IA A-NA dḪĒ-BAT URU KUM-MA AN-NI ⁽²⁴⁾ EZEN₄ ḫal-zi-ia-u-wa-aš ta-ra-a-an ḫar¹-ta pé-eš-ta-ma-an-ši na-a-ú-i ⁽²⁵⁾ na-aš am-mu-uk na-ak-ke-e-eš-ta-at nu I-NA URU KI-IZ-ZU-WA-AT-NA pa-a-un⁷⁽²⁶⁾ nu ki-iš-ša-an me-mi-iš-ke-nu-un pa-i-mi-wa-za ŠA A-BI-IA še-eš-ši¹-[ia-a]n ⁽²⁷⁾ ar-ḫa šar-ni-ik-mi [nu]-za am-mu-uk dḪĒ-BAT URU KUM-MA-AN-NI A¹-[NA SA]G.DU¹-IA ⁽²⁸⁾ DAM-IA DUMU¹-IA É-IA KUR-TI-IA Ū A-NA¹ URU KUR¹[^{HLA} . . .] ⁽²⁹⁾ tal-li-iš¹-ke²-nu-un mu¹-ki¹-iš-ke-nu-un x[. . .]. For the reading URU KUR¹[^{HLA} . . .], see Miller 2014, 525 n. 44.

In contrast to the Annals, whose fragmentary state of preservation does not allow a definitive inference, the account here clearly suggests—even though the invocation is depicted in rather generic terms—that Muršili indeed celebrated in Kizzuwatna the festival of invocation promised to the deity by his father.⁵² Whether the death of Šarre-Kušuh was subsequently thematized in Muršili’s prayer as well as in the broken part of the third column cannot be conclusively determined.⁵³

There is, however, a third source describing the neglect of the festival of invocation of Ḫebat of Kummanni by King Šuppiluliuma: KUB 21.16 (CTH 84.1), authored during the reign of Ḫattušili “III,” Muršili’s son and Šuppiluliuma’s grandson, perhaps as a historical introduction to a composition pertaining to his own restoration of the goddess’s cult. As KUB 21.16 is less well known than the Plague Prayers, a transliteration and translation of the better-preserved first column are in order:⁵⁴

KUB 21.16 i 1’–13’: [. . . A-NA A-BI]⁵⁵ A-BI^dUTU-ŠI⁽²⁾ [. . . te-eš-ḫ] a-ni-ia-at²-ta-a[t] ⁽³⁾ [. . . KUR. KUR^{HLA} ḫu-u-m] a-an-da pé-eḫ-ḫi⁽⁴⁾ [. . . ḫ] al-za-a-i GIM-an-ma⁽⁵⁾ [. . . nu-u] š-ši DINGIR-LIM-iš KUR.KUR^{HLA} ⁽⁶⁾ [ḫu-u-ma-an-da p] é-eš-ta nu-uš-ši ke-e-ez-za⁽⁷⁾ [. . .]-an ZAG-an i-ia-at ke-e-ez[-za] ⁽⁸⁾ [. . . ZAG-a] n i-ia-at ke-e-ez-ma-aš-ši⁽⁹⁾ [KUR^{URU}GA]-AŠ-GA KUR BA-LA-A KUR TU-MA-AN-NA⁽¹⁰⁾ [. . .] x A-BI A-BI-ŠU^{GIS}TUKUL^{??} ku-wa-pí x[. . .] ⁽¹¹⁾ [. . . a-pé] e KUR.KUR^{HLA} tar-aḫ-ta nu-kán DINGIR[-LAM . . .] ⁽¹²⁾ [ḫal-z] i-ia-u-wa-an-zi Ū-UL nam-ma [ú-et] ⁽¹³⁾ [n] a-aš-za DINGIR-LIM-iš ki-ša-a[t]

KUB 21.16 i 14’–20’: GIM-an-ma^m Mur-ši-li-in A-BU-IA DINGIR^M[EŠ A-NA] ⁽¹⁵⁾ A-ŠAR A-BI-ŠU ti-it^l-ta-nu-er⁽¹⁶⁾ nu A-NA A-BI-IA DINGIR-LUM na-ak-k[e-e-eš-ta²] ⁽¹⁷⁾ A-NA A-BI-KA-wa KUR.KUR^{HLA} ḫu-u-m[a-an-da] ⁽¹⁸⁾ pé-eḫ-ḫu-un ḫal-zi-ia-at-ma-w[a-mu-za Ū-UL] ⁽¹⁹⁾ nu-wa-mu-kán zi-ik-ma an-da [le-e] ⁽²⁰⁾ da-a-li-ia-ši nu-wa-mu-za ḫal-za-a-[i]

KUB 21.16 i 21’–25’: GIM-an-ma-wa A-BI-IA I-NA^{URU}[Ki-iz-zu-wa-at-na pa-it] ⁽²²⁾ nu-za ŠEŠ-ŠU LUGAL KUR^{URU}KAR-GA-MIŠ x[. . .] ⁽²³⁾ pé-ra-an ú-’e-mi^l-ia-at na-aš-za [GIG-at na-aš BA.ÚŠ]⁵⁶ ⁽²⁴⁾ ‘nu-za’ nam-ma DINGIR-L[UM] Ū-UL ḫal-za-i[š . . .] ⁽²⁵⁾ [. . .]-it [. . .] x li-x[. . .]

(KUB 21.16 i 1’–13’): [ca. 8 signs missing . . .] to the [grand]father of My Majesty ⁽²⁾ [(the deity) . . .] appeared in a [dream . . .] ⁽³⁾ [. . .] I will give you a[ll the lands] ⁽⁴⁾ [. . .] invoke [me]! When ^(5–6) [. . .], the deity [g]ave [to hi]m [all] the lands. In this direction s/he established [. . .] as his border to him. ^(7–8) In this direction s/he established [. . .] as border while in this direction (s/he established) ⁽⁹⁾ [the Land Kaš]ka, the Land Palā and the Land Tumanna. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Wherever his grandfather [. . .] the *weapon* [. . .] ^(11–12) [. . .]

52 An identical sequence of beneficiaries is found earlier in the composition, in ii 16’–17’.

53 Only a few words are preserved in the ensuing lines (KUB 14.4 iii 30–33), before the third column breaks off completely. They read, according to Miller 2014, 521: ⁽³⁰⁾ A-NA A-WA-AT^mX[. . .] ⁽³¹⁾ ku-it ‘ú-’e-e[k- . . .] ⁽³²⁾ nu^dU[TU-ŠI . . .] ⁽³³⁾ a-pa-’a^l[-. . .]. Note the appearance of the verb *wēk-*, “to demand,” which also concludes the Annals’ episode concerning Šarre-Kušuh’s death. The traces in line 30, however, do not seem to support reconstructing the broken personal name as “Šarre-Kušuh.”

54 The fragment was partly edited by Goetze 1940, 10–11. Reconstructions generally, but not exclusively, follow his rendition.

55 About ten signs are missing. The gaps at the beginning of the lines gradually decrease toward the end of the paragraph.

56 The reconstruction of line 23’ is by Goetze 1940, 11 n. 47.

overpowered those lands. He did not [go] anymore to [in]voke the deity ⁽¹³⁾ [An]d he became a god.

(KUB 21.16 i 14'–20'): But when the gods enthroned Muršili, my father, in the place of his father, ⁽¹⁶⁾ the deity haunted my father (saying): ^(17'–18) “I gave al[l] the lands to your father but he did [not] invoke [me]. ^(19'–20) But you, [do not] forsake me! Invoke me!”

(KUB 21.16 i 21'–25') But when my father [went to Kizzuwatna] ^(22'–23) he came upon his brother, the king of the Land of Carchemish. [He (Šarre-Kušuh) became ill and died]. ⁽²⁴⁾ Subsequently, he [did] not invoke the deity. [. . .] ⁽²⁵⁾ *traces*.

If the restoration of line 3' above is correct, the account seems to begin with a dream, as is typical of compositions from the era of King Ḫattušili “III.” According to this version of events, Ḫebat of Kummanni appeared in a dream to Ḫattušili’s grandfather, Šuppiluliuma, promising him military victories and demanding in return that he perform a ritual of invocation for her. Intriguingly, the narrative seems to contradict the account given in Muršili’s prayer concerning the misdeeds and the ousting of the Babylonian Tawannanna (CTH 70.1.A). According to the account given by Ḫattušili, Muršili did not invoke the deity in Kizzuwatna after all. Most importantly, this late account also connects Šuppiluliuma’s military achievements with his neglect of a cult. Thus Šuppiluliuma’s apparent failure to perform the festival of invocation to Ḫebat of Kummanni represents another embodiment of the “Šuppiluliuma conundrum,” as it is revealed in Muršili’s Plague Prayers.

In conclusion, to rule “politically correct” in Hittite Anatolia was, above all, to obey the will of the gods. But the will of the gods can often manifest itself only in hindsight, warranting in retrospect explanations for major setbacks. In this vein, the reign of King Šuppiluliuma I posed a unique theological dilemma for his successors, one tentatively termed here the “Šuppiluliuma conundrum.” It arose from the unfathomable knowledge that it was Šuppiluliuma’s pinnacle achievement of all things—the foundation of an empire—that also brought with it a catastrophe in the magnitude of an epidemic. Šuppiluliuma’s astounding military successes must have been considered by his contemporaries as consistent with the will of the gods. Otherwise he would certainly not have been able to materialize them. The outbreak of the epidemic during Šuppiluliuma’s reign, however, was stringently interpreted by Muršili in his Plague Prayers as a sign that Šuppiluliuma must have angered the gods in some way(s) after all. Thus it made perfect sense to investigate by divination various offenses that were committed during Šuppiluliuma’s reign, such as his involvement in the murder of Tudḫaliya the Younger and his assumed violation of the Kuruštama Treaty. It was also plausible to attribute to Šuppiluliuma retrospectively—even at times generations after his reign—other occurrences of cultic neglect, such as the failure to celebrate the festival of invocation to Ḫebat of Kummanni. The failure to perform the ritual of the Māla River, as indicated in Muršili’s Second Plague Prayer, addressed to the Storm-god of Ḫattuša, was shown not to be a case of cultic neglect by Šuppiluliuma after all but instead a failure to perform an ancient magical ritual that could have saved Ḫattuša from the plague.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations follow the Chicago Hittite Dictionary: <https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/publications/chicago-hittite-dictionary>.

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9 Botched, Tweaked, Reinterpreted— Three Case Studies of Manipulated Royal Rituals in Ancient Egypt

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For my dear colleague, Ronald J. Leprohon, on the occasion of his retirement



IT IS WELL known that the Egyptian king was believed to straddle the divine and terrestrial spheres. This belief is particularly explicit in two foundational royal myths. One, the Heliopolitan Creation Myth, is attested, albeit in fragments, from the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts¹ (ca. 2350 BCE). It holds that the creator god Atum created from himself a multitude of gods known as the “Heliopolitan Ennead” (group of nine gods). Two of them, Osiris and Isis, conceived a further, tenth, god—Horus—who was embodied in the reigning king and could thus be said to connect the realms of gods and humans.² The equation of king and sky-god Horus is attested from the earliest periods in image and text, with the so-called Horus-name of the king being the first royal title.³ The second narrative underpinning the divine aspect of the king is known as the “Myth of the Divine Birth” and presented the office holder as a descendant of the sun-god, Re, later Amun-Re. As of the middle of the Fourth Dynasty, from the reign of Djedefre (ca. 2450 BCE), Egyptian kings adopted the title *s3 Rꜥw*, “Son of Re,” as part of their royal titulary.⁴ This myth, once fully attested in the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1460 BCE), in partially pictorial format,⁵ demonstrates that the idea of divine descent was taken rather literally. The reigning king is shown to have been

1 For example, PT 493, 527, 600; Popielska-Grzybowska 2013; see Allen 1988, 13–14ff. for further examples from the Coffin Texts onward. For the conceptions surrounding creation in the latter corpus, see also Bickel 1994.

2 Allen 1916, 21–22, esp. section C.2–5 for examples from the Pyramid Texts.

3 For a summary, see, for example, Leprohon 2013, 12–13.

4 Leprohon 2013, 19.

5 Brunner 1986. There is now evidence for a snippet of the pictorial cycle—the circumcision scene—from the Old Kingdom funerary temple of Djedkare Isesi; see Megahed 2016, cat. no. 40 (with pls. 63–64), and discussion on 131–39 with references to earlier literature; also Megahed and Vymazalová 2011. Some more fragmentary evidence has been found in the Twelfth Dynasty funerary temple of Senwosret III at Dahshur (Oppenheim 2011, 171–88). The myth is passed down over centuries and millennia—with snippets making their way to Rome; see L’Orange 1941.

conceived when the head of the pantheon, at this time Amun-Re, visited the human queen and had intercourse with her. I will return to, and elaborate on, the Myth of the Divine Birth below.

As representative of the divine on earth, the king was in charge of maintaining the cosmic order that the solar creator had put in place at his first rising and that was encapsulated in the Egyptian term and concept of Maat—commonly translated as “order,” “justice,” “truth,” or “righteousness.”⁶ Maat’s counterpart was Isfet—with corresponding translations such as “chaos,” “disorder,” “evil,” and related terms—and it is important to note that Maat and Isfet encompassed the social, political, and even personal spheres as much as the macro-level of cosmic order or its disturbance. The association of the king with this concept is attested as early as the middle of the Second Dynasty, in the Horus-name of its sixth king: Sekhemib-perenmaat—“Horus the strong-willed, who comes forth for (= is a champion of) Maat.”⁷ Later texts make it explicit that the king was placed on the throne of Egypt to keep the land and its citizens safe from external and internal threats (= Isfet) and that he had further obligations; significantly for our topic, these included the performance of rituals. Fulfilling these obligations was understood as “doing Maat.”⁸ Two compositions are particularly explicit in this regard. The first is a Middle Kingdom royal instruction text known as the *Instruction for King Merikare*,⁹ which has been credibly compared to exponents of the Mirror for Princes genre as attested in many other cultures.¹⁰ The fictional author of the text, Merikare’s deceased father and predecessor, is unequivocal on the social and religious components of Maat, presenting a threefold division of royal obligations: to the general populace, the elite, and the gods. While composed in the aftermath of the social changes brought about by the First Intermediate Period of the late third millennium BCE, when the ideology of the kingship underwent some important developments, the tripartite view presented of the Egyptian social universe as reflecting Maat and the role of the king as its preserver are attested throughout its history.¹¹

Merikare’s father includes the following recommendations on the proper conduct of the royal office:¹²

Do Maat so that you may endure on earth!
 Make [many] monuments for God;
 This makes the name of him who does it live.
 A man should do what is good for his soul:

6 Assmann 1990; see also Lazaridis 2008, esp. 1–2.

7 Leprohon 2013, 29 with literature, who renders “for whom Maat has come forth,” however.

8 See, for example, Goebis 2007, 375–79 with further literature.

9 For the latest edition, see Quack 1992, with earlier literature. With the best-preserved version of the text, Papyrus St. Petersburg 1116A, dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty, some scholars have proposed that the composition perhaps dates to this later time (see, e.g., Stauder 2013, 198–99, 510–11, with the approach critiqued by others: see Quack 2013, 415ff. for criteria).

10 Langer 2015, 49–79.

11 See also Goebis 2007, esp. 275–79.

12 Translation after Parkinson 1997, 218–21, largely following Papyrus St. Petersburg 1116A (P, lines 33–63). The text is further noteworthy for stating that God created the institution of kingship for the sake of humankind, namely, to protect them: “He made for them rulers in the egg” (i.e., hereditary kingship), “leaders to raise the back of the weak.”

Performing the monthly service, putting on white sandals [i.e., ritual dress],
 Joining the temple estate, keeping confidential the mysteries,
 Entering into the sanctuary, eating bread from the temple!
 . . .
 God knows the man who acts for Him. . . .

The second explicit testimony as to the king's ritual role is found in a text known as *The King as Sun-Priest*, originating in the solar cult celebrated in temples. The king is, according to state doctrine and in practice, the chief priest in the land.¹³ As intercessor between gods and humankind, he is privy to the mysteries of the solar journey—its perpetuity in its daily and annual recurrence and thus the very mechanism upon which the concept of Maat is based. It is likely that the “mysteries” that Merikare's father instructs his son to keep confidential concern these or similar rituals. By performing the cult, the king moreover actively sustains Maat and thus the cosmos:¹⁴

King N.N. worships Re at dawn . . .
 [He] says that secret speech, spoken by the eastern ba-souls,
 when they make jubilant music for Re as he rises and appears on the eastern horizon; . . .
 He knows the words spoken by the two (solar) crews when they drag the boat of the
 one who lives in the horizon.
 He knows how Re is born. . . .

Then, importantly:

Re has installed King N.N. on the earth of the living
 for endless repetition and duration (*nḥḥ* and *dt*),
 to administer justice to human beings and satisfy the gods,
 to fulfill Maat and annihilate injustice (*jsft*).
 He gives food-offerings to the gods and funeral offerings to the transfigured (*ḥw*). . . .

To fulfill Maat and repel Isfet is, therefore, the ideological underpinning for the institution of kingship and it entails the performing of rituals.¹⁵

13 See recent discussion, with literature, in Baines 2021, who argues against the long-established notion that Egyptian priests acted in the role of the king.

14 Assmann 1970, lines 1–33; a Late Period copy containing the matching evening text appears in Betrò 1989; the present translation follows Assmann 1995, 19–20.

15 For discussion see, for example, Assmann 2001, 3–6. Another text that highlights the important role of the king as guarantor of ritual is the Coronation Inscription of Hatshepsut as recorded in her funerary temple at Deir el-Bahari and her Red Chapel at Karnak. The text asserts that Amun placed Hatshepsut on the throne of Egypt to equip (*sdf*) the gods' altars, guide (*sšm*) priests with regard to their cultic tasks, determine and enforce rules (*tp-rd*) and laws (*hpw*), and increase (*sʿ*) cultic offerings, ending with the summary statement that she is to “add to that which was before” (*rdj ḥḳw-ḥr wnt m-bḥ*), that is, enhance the current status quo (see Lacau and Chevrier 1977, 124). From the New Kingdom temple of Seti I at Abydos, we have very good evidence for the temple rituals the king was to perform. It seems that these rituals had not changed much from earlier times, as we have similar, albeit many fewer, scenes dating to at least the early Twelfth Dynasty; see Eaton 2013; also Tacke 2003. For the Old Kingdom, our evidence is scantier, although we have references to, and some descriptions of, offering rituals in the offering formulae and Pyramid Texts. For a potentially somewhat more limited role of the king in temple ritual, see now Baines 2021. The king had various other ritual roles pertaining to the maintenance of cosmos and country,

The important ritual role of the king has been recognized by many and was celebrated in a now classic 1966 monograph by Erik Hornung entitled *Geschichte als Fest*¹⁶—translating as “History as Celebration,” or perhaps better as “History as Ritual.” Hornung’s treatise argued that, to the Egyptian, historical development was of lesser importance than ritual recurrence. He based this view on many examples of at-first-glance historical sources, dating to the reigns of specific kings, but which can in fact be shown to be copies of earlier materials—sometimes several hundred years old.¹⁷ What is more, so-called annals¹⁸—collecting the most important events that occurred in a given regnal year—habitually listed ritual performances rather than events that would today be considered historical. Ritual, as many a scholar has noted, made life predictable and ensured continuity with the creator’s plans. This conception was mythically underpinned by the idea that the gods once ruled Egypt as kings but later withdrew from the earth,¹⁹ as well as by asserting that each king carried in himself the ka, and thus part of the essence, of the solar creator Atum.²⁰

Yet, even if eternal, unchanging perfection, or at least recurrence, was one of the professed aims in the religious sphere and beyond, and while many texts reflect a deep-seated Egyptian conservatism, many a king prided himself on having advanced progress, certainly in terms of enlarging or beautifying temples or cities,²¹ or extending Egypt’s borders or spheres of political and economic influence. In fact, there are abundant references to kings claiming that they went “further than any previous king.”²² There was thus room, in the Egyptian mind, for innovation, for historical developments, and existing structures had to be adapted to accommodate it.²³ Some of the resulting changes were intended, others accidental. In this context, it may be worth returning to the foundational Egyptian time denominators *nḥḥ* and *dt*, encountered above in the definition of the king as sun-priest: *nḥḥ* can be clearly shown to relate to eternal recurrence, as perceived—at the cosmic level—in the daily repetition of the sun-god Re’s solar rising, journey across the sky, and

including the celebration of royal renewal in the Sed-festival and the ritual execution of enemies. For a survey of the most important types of royal ritual see, for example, Baines 2019 with literature.

16 Hornung 1966.

17 Hornung 1966, 19 n. 33: “Geschichte ist für den Ägypter kultisches Geschehen, das nach einem festgelegten Ritual teils in der Abgeschiedenheit von Tempel und Palast, teils vor den Augen aller Welt Gestalt annimmt.” Further, according to Hornung, the tension (with Hornung using the term “Kampf,” i.e., “battle” or “competition”) between the perfection that was attained at the moment of creation and the gradual decay, the eroding, of that same perfection, which coincides with the progression of time, is at least in part “auf Erden aktualisiert, ist Kult, ist Fest, ist Geschichte” (p. 29). Some of the earlier evidence has recently been collected and reexamined by Bestock 2018, who does not, however, engage directly with Hornung’s arguments.

18 Wilkinson 2000.

19 As explicit, for example, in the Royal Canon of Turin (Gardiner 1959, pl. I fr. 11) and repeated still in the Ptolemaic history of Egypt attributed to Manetho; see Redford 1986, 231–34.

20 Popielska-Grzybowska 2013.

21 Franke 2008, esp. 43; Hsu 2017, 276–77 for the Egyptian terms employed in such descriptions.

22 Hsu 2017, 285–86 for a collection of examples.

23 In a recent essay, John Baines formulates one aspect of this conundrum by referring to the king’s relationship with his court and other institutions as being defined, at least in part, by a tension between sustaining ritual and ceremony, on the one hand, and initiative for change, on the other (Baines 2019, 271).

setting in and traversing the Duat-netherworld, or in the annual cycle of the natural and calendrical year.²⁴ However, as such it also encompasses the structure and function of ritual recurrence on earth, which serves to integrate the human world into the cosmic order established at the moment of creation.²⁵ *ḏt*, by contrast, is most commonly rendered “eternal sameness” or “resultative time” in Egyptological literature, based on the well-attested association of Osiris with *ḏt*. Since Osiris is dead, he is in the Duat for all eternity—in an eternal and perfect(ed) state.²⁶ These fundamental definitions of time and eternity are therefore based, at least in part, on the myths of two important Egyptian deities. A further aspect of their intertwined myths enters the equation when (at the latest by the New Kingdom, whence most of our evidence derives) Osiris is cyclically revived when merging with the sun-god Re during the latter’s daily journey through the Duat. What is more, Osiris is dead, but he and one of his foundational aspects, his legitimate kingship, live on in his son Horus, who is embodied in the reigning king just as the deceased ruler becomes Osiris at his death.²⁷ Thus, the reign of every Horus-king is followed by that of another—in an eternal historical succession. In this sense, a contrast somewhat more pertinent to the present discussion can be seen between the eternally cyclical solar journey of Re, which is celebrated in recurring rituals, and the eternally progressing and linear succession of Horus-kings on the throne of Egypt, a succession that constitutes the backbone of the country’s history.²⁸ The cyclically recurring ascent to the throne of a new Horus-king, celebrated in another foundational royal ritual, integrates *nḥḥ* into *ḏt*. What is more, there had to be room for innovation and change despite the prescriptive nature of ritual and its importance in the Egyptian mind, and existing ritual structures can indeed be shown to have been adapted to accommodate such transformations. If we envisage history as unfolding in a linear trajectory (*ḏt*) —, while ritual is eternally repeated sameness (*nḥḥ*) ○, then we may perhaps envisage a historical development of ritual, or even the ritualizing of history, in terms of a spiral ∞∞∞∞.

In what follows, I introduce four cases of royal rituals that were manipulated—adapted to either intended or accidental change—and consider the reasons underlying the specific format that their accounts take. I argue that the great length to which the royal actors went in order to rationalize their behavior, often by drawing on well-known mythical structures, makes sense only if the audience of the ritual (or of the texts and images presenting it) played a significant role.

24 Foundational is Assmann 1975, esp. 41–48; 1983; 2001, 74ff.; 2011, e.g., 117, who also speaks of “recursive” or “virtual” and “imperfective” time expressed by *nḥḥ*, as opposed to the determined, perfective time of *ḏt*. See now also Reemes 2015, e.g., 47, contra Assmann’s (1975, 33–34) association of the ouroboros with this time concept. Servajean 2007, 57–64 views *nḥḥ* as time reckoned by humans and, as such, constituting a part of *ḏt*, which represents immutable eternity, from which *nḥḥ* can be extracted/to which it can be returned at regular intervals. Also Popko 2014, 2 views *nḥḥ* as circular, recurring, and *ḏt* as linear.

25 For example, Assmann 2011, 106.

26 Assmann 2011, for example, 77ff. See also Servajean 2010, who, however, shows that also Osiris can be associated with *nḥḥ*—as a deity who is periodically regenerated; Zago 2022, 226–27 with literature on the concept of Osiris embodying cyclicity in some contexts; see further discussion below.

27 For example, Mathieu 2010, with earlier literature.

28 On Egyptian history as a succession of Horus-kings, see also Assmann 2011, 64; Popko 2014, 2.

NEFERIRKARE'S BOTCHED BARQUE RITUAL AND THE EXONERATION OF RAWER

My first example of an accidental occurrence in the royal ritual sphere is the case of a high official in the court of Fifth Dynasty king Neferirkare, Rawer.²⁹ As was customary, Rawer presented himself in his tomb texts as an individual deserving of respect and, as a result, of a continued offering cult that would ensure his afterlife and memory.³⁰ Unusually, however, his texts include an account of a botched royal ritual:³¹ during the performance of the ritual “Seizing the prow-rope of the God’s barque” (*hrw n(j) šzp.t(j) h3tt dpt-ntr*), for which the king assumed one of his many ritual roles and “appeared as *bitj*”—that is, as King of Lower Egypt with Red Crown and beaded hip drape³²—Rawer in his role as Sem-priest comes into contact with the royal *3ms*-scepter. Some scholars have surmised that this incident could have had fatal consequences for Rawer, as items of royal regalia were thought to embody deities or their powers. At this early time, a mere mortal’s coming into contact with either such an item or the body of the monarch would have had devastating results for that individual in their view. This, it is argued, may have been the reason why the king felt impelled to intervene immediately to prevent any harm—as Rawer records in his biographical text. However, most of Rawer’s titles convey his habitual physical closeness to the king—a sign of utmost distinction in the earlier periods of the unified state. They imply that Rawer would touch both the king and his paraphernalia on a regular basis, thus rendering the cited interpretation rather unlikely.³³

29 Rawer was an important man in his time, as borne out by his monumental mastaba tomb at Giza. Moreover, his titles identify him as a high-ranking cultic performer who, besides Sem-priest, was *hrj-sšt3 n mdw-ntr*, “Keeper of the secrets (or Privy Councillor) of sacred words” (or “speech”) and thus of religious texts and likely rituals (see, e.g., alabaster panel Cairo JE 66626). It is tempting to link this title with access to, and perhaps even a charge to compile or compose, collections of religious texts that were titled *md3t ntr*, “God’s Book” or “Sacred Book.” Evidence for this religious composition or corpus is currently attested from the Sixth Dynasty pyramid of Queen Ankhesenpepi II. See Mathieu 2004, 259 with figs. 2a–b, who suggests that texts copied on funerary monuments (such as the Pyramid and later Coffin Texts) may have formed part of a generic corpus named *md3t ntr*. The book’s title was found drawn on supporting blocks behind some walls of Ankhesenpepi’s pyramid chambers and seems to have denoted the location of her funerary texts. *Mdw ntr* denote a ritual recitation, for example, in the Twentieth Dynasty magical amulet Papyrus Deir el-Medina 36, lines 5–6 (Sauneron 1970), where they are to be recited over some papyrus drawings. For *mdw* by itself as referring to magical recitation, see also Ritner 1993, 50. See also below, n. 48, for some Middle Kingdom titles associated with *mdw ntr*.

30 The text concerning us here is inscribed in the principal serdab (serdab 12; Hassan, Boghdady, and Bovier-Lapierre 1932, 15, 18, and pl. XVIII). This serdab was accessible, so the text was visible to visitors of the tomb.

31 *Urk.* I, 232; translation and earlier literature appear in Strudwick 2005, 305–6; also Stauder-Porchet 2017, 45–48. For a recent, brief commentary, with a copy of the hieroglyphic text, see also Baines 2019, 265.

32 This royal costume is attested already on the Narmer Palette and has been discussed in Grimm 1989; 1990, esp. 34 with n. 8; Patch 1995, esp. 113–14; see also Goebis 1998, esp. 65; 2008, 369–70.

33 See Hassan, Boghdady, and Bovier-Lapierre 1932, 2–3, for Rawer’s titles, which include “Overseer of the Royal Accoutrements” (*iry-hr-*; Jones 2000, no. 1199, renders “Keeper of the band”), “Royal Hairdresser,” and “Director of the Royal Kilt.” Stauder-Porchet 2017, 46 (following Loprieno 2001, 23–26) suggests instead that the scepter’s coming into contact with the priestly foot compromised the (necessary) separation between the royal and nonroyal spheres; Baines 2019, 265 holds that the blow from the scepter would have been dangerous only in this particular, ritually charged context.

While the Sem-priest Rawer was at His Majesty's feet/following in his office of Sem-priest and Keeper of Accoutrements (*hr-ḥ*), a royal staff (*3ms*), which was in His Majesty's hand, came into contact with (or: obstructed)³⁴ the foot of the Sem-priest Rawer.

His Majesty addressed him: "Be sound!"—so voiced His Majesty.

His Majesty said: "What is desirable for My Majesty is that he be very sound, without a blow/harm to him" (*wḏ3=f wrt nj sqr n=f*), because he was more precious to His Majesty than any man.

The king then orders that the incident be recorded on Rawer's tomb in writing, and he personally makes sure that a correct account is given by ordering that

... a document be made of it, written in the presence of the king himself (*(j)rr-gs njswt ḏs[=f]*), at the stoneworks of the palace, in order to write (it) in his tomb in the necropolis in accordance with what was (actually said).³⁵

In other words, the king himself ensures the historicity of how news of this exceptional event should be disseminated and remembered by personally overseeing the drafting of a documentary record—and even having it carved in stone for everyone to see.³⁵

There are two possible explanations for the king's at first sight rather unusual desire to document, for all eternity, a botched royal ritual. The Egyptians normally avoided recording anything untoward, since a record, especially one in stone, would have had the potential to render such occurrences both real and perpetual. We are left to speculate what exactly happened. As several scholars have pointed out, the primary significance of the event would have been for Rawer: the king's reaction demonstrated to every onlooker and later reader of his autobiographical text that the ruler cared so much for his courtier that his immediate and only concern was for the latter's safety rather than for the bad impression the incident might have left on the audience.³⁶ Possible scenarios of what unfolded before their eyes range from a simple brushing of Rawer's leg with the scepter to a much more dramatic scene, such as a stumbling and tripping Sem-priest, potentially dropping ritual items in the process, or even falling against the king. Accordingly, another possible explanation for the king's reaction is his trying to exculpate his attendant from any blame

34 Allen (1992) interprets this passage as Rawer's tripping over the scepter and cites later evidence for the verb *hsf* from the so-called Negative Confession in Book of the Dead chapter 125, where the deceased states that he did not "obstruct" (*hsf*) the path of the god in procession.

35 The practice of transcribing royal documents in the tombs of courtiers is attested from this time onward. A total of three biographies, all dating from Neferirkare's time or later, present transcripts of such royal decrees. These tombs include those of Rawer, Washptah, and Niankhsekhmet (Kloth 2002, 219–20, 239ff.; Stauder-Porchet 2017, 45–62). The format of these texts corresponds to that of the official documents of the time (Helck 1974, 10ff.).

36 For the highly formal and ritualized court setting in which king and elite citizens interacted, and for the importance of performance in such contexts, see also Stauder-Porchet 2017, 61–62: it is the king's ka, beloved of Re (and thus the divine aspect of the king), who is addressed by the official Niankhsakhmet, for example, rather than the king as a human person and actor. Niankhsakhmet's text further describes the presence of courtiers in the form of the *stp-z3* and royal followers (*šmsw*); they "acclaim" the king for his actions (*rdj j3*) or praise the gods on his behalf (*dw3 ntr nb*). As noted by Baines 1999, 22–24, these actions express a certain reciprocity, in the sense that the official may ask for a royal favor or present from the king, who grants it—but the king receives abundant praise from the courtier and the audience in return.

accorded by onlookers, who would have held the attendant, not the king, responsible for the blunder. By recording the “true” version in his tomb, with bona fide authentication from the royal scriptorium and authorization by the king himself, Rawer was exonerated for all eternity from what would otherwise, we may surmise, have entailed social stigmatization and perhaps loss of his position. His memory and thus his eternal afterlife would also have been affected.³⁷

Rawer’s account thus highlights the importance of correct ritual performance. Its surprising focus on an unfortunate mistake by one of the courtiers involved, and in particular on the king’s concern with averting negative repercussions for him, grants us a glimpse of the role of the audience in such enactments. It is not entirely clear whether this ritual was performed publicly or was restricted to courtly participants (the latter the more likely scenario in my view), but clearly a saving of face before this audience was necessary, as the king’s wish to see Rawer “hale—without harm to him” makes little sense if directed at either a(n) (imagined) divine spectator or simply at Rawer himself. The effort made to publicize this version of events as widely as possible by employing state craftsmen and materials to produce an eternal version for Rawer’s tomb autobiography lends further support to this interpretation. Proper performance of rituals is, as discussed, included under the royal obligation to do Maat, and the performances’ effectiveness seems to have been judged—as either worthy or ineffective—by the audience.

SENWOSRET I, SINUHE, AND MIDDLE KINGDOM COURTLY SOCIETY

This important role of the court and/or wider elite audience, and of the highly ritualized life inside the palace, is showcased impressively in the famous Middle Kingdom (ca. 1875 BCE) *Tale of Sinuhe*—a literary narrative about the adventures of a courtier (inadvertently) turned dissident, who flees Egypt for Syria-Palestine amid what may have constituted a harim conspiracy that led to the death of King Amenemhat I.³⁸ Since Amenemhat was the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty, and his people still remembered vividly the preceding so-called First Intermediate Period, which was characterized by a fragmented state and civil war between Egypt’s regions,³⁹ regicide at this time could easily have spelled political upheaval. This situation appears to have constituted at least one of the factors leading to Sinuhe’s fleeing the country upon overhearing news of the king’s death. He finds refuge with a Syrian tribe in Upper Retjenu, whose Egyptianized chief takes him in and promotes him to high rank. After a pivotal and violent event, Sinuhe nevertheless grows weary of living abroad and yearns for home. He writes for pardon to the new king, Senwosret I, in whose queen’s entourage he had been, in his youth, a courtier, and the king invites him to return home. Even though *Sinuhe* is a literary tale, surely somewhat embellished, there is arguably no other Egyptian text that describes the atmosphere and ritual at court and the importance of fitting into Egyptian courtly society as completely and as colorfully: while

37 For the concept, see, for example, Bochi 1999, who focuses on execration rituals, however.

38 For a full translation with extensive commentary in annotations, see Parkinson 1997, 21–53. Five Middle Kingdom papyrus copies of this text are known, making the text one of the best-attested literary texts of this early period; see, for example, Kosack 2015, 5–7, for a list of manuscripts.

39 For a survey see, for example, Willems 2010.

Sinuhe *does* everything right as he is ushered into the royal presence and rejoins his peers of old,⁴⁰ having lived a nomadic life for decades he *looks* wrong.⁴¹ The court is shocked, the queen and princesses “shriek” in utter disbelief. Ultimately, the king himself intervenes, and proper court etiquette and ritual resume. This involves the female members of the court’s adopting the role, normally occupied by goddesses, of appeasing an enraged male deity, with the king thus slotting into the latter role:⁴²

When it was dawn, very early, they came and summoned me; . . . ushering me to the palace. I touched the ground between the sphinxes, as the royal children stood in the portal, receiving me; and the Friends who usher to the Pillared Hall were showing me the way to the Audience Hall.

I found his Majesty on the great throne in the portal of electrum.

Then I was stretched out prostrate, unconscious of myself in front of him, while this God was addressing me amicably. I was like a man seized in the dusk, my soul had perished, my limbs failed, my heart was not in my body; I did not know life from death. And his Majesty said to one of the Friends: “Raise him up, let him speak to me!” . . .

And the royal children were ushered in, and his Majesty said to the Queen: “Look, Sinuhe has returned as an Asiatic, an offspring of the Syrians!” She gave a very great cry, and the royal children shrieked as one [i.e., in unison, KG]. And they said to his Majesty: “Is it really he, sovereign, my lord?” And his Majesty said: “It is really he.”

Now, they had brought with them their necklaces, their rattles, and their sistra, and they presented them to his Majesty: “Your hands upon this beauty, enduring king, (on) these insignia of the Lady of Heaven [i.e., Hathor, KG]! May the Golden One give life to your nostrils, the Lady of the Stars enfold you!

. . . Hail to you as to the Lady of All! Slacken your bow, . . . Give breath to him who suffocates! . . . present us with North Wind’s son, the barbarian born in the Homeland! . . .”

And his Majesty said: “He shall not fear, he shall not gibber in terror! He will . . . be appointed amongst the entourage. Proceed to the Robing Chamber to attend on him!”

I went forth from the Audience Hall, with the royal children giving me their hands. . . . The years were made to pass from my limbs; I became clean-shaven, and my hair was combed. A load was given back to the foreign country and clothes back to the Sand-farers. I was clothed in fine linen, I was anointed with fine oil. . . . I returned the sand to those who are upon it. . . .

The tale ends with the assertion that Sinuhe was in the king’s favor until his death.

40 See Parkinson 2009, e.g., 16, 47–51, for the reconstruction of this pivotal scene in performance. For the protocol of the palace and of royal audiences see, for example, Menshawy 2003.

41 See Parkinson 2009, 51, fig. 3.3 (a representation of a Syrian foreigner from the Middle Kingdom tomb of Khnumhotep II); also Mourad 2014 for an iconic evocation of what Sinuhe may have looked like.

42 Parkinson 1997, 40–41.

This text underscores impressively, therefore, the importance of court etiquette, of relative rank within the palace and elite, and—importantly—of performance in accordance with these two principles. At the same time, it demonstrates that the Egyptian king stood above the rules of the court—a principle we saw at work already for Rower: it is the king who decides who belongs, who does not, and where exactly they should stand—both literally and hierarchically—relative to everyone else. In order to enforce his royal decision, however, rituals based in mythical precedent are performed that elevate the proceedings onto a divine plane and imbue them with timeless validity.

PROGRESSIVE ROYAL HERO VERSUS TRADITIONALIST COURT: KAMOSE'S KING'S NOVEL ON THE WAR AGAINST THE HYKSOS

Another literary genre that has produced a number of exemplars showcasing important aspects of courtly ritual is the King's Novel.⁴³ It was recognized as a distinct text type by Alfred Hermann in 1938 based on certain formal criteria. The King's Novel focuses on the king as protagonist in an important decision-making process. In most contexts, the king symbolizes the state. The King's Novel, by contrast, presents a narrative on the king's human person, making him the proactive hero of a singular (real or fictional) historical episode. Typically, he overcomes a state of uncertainty or deficiency and in this way enhances his reputation. Much focus is on royal pronouncement⁴⁴ and proactiveness. Scholars have, moreover, commented on the propaganda aspect of these texts as well as on the "literarification" of the king that is presented in them. The latter is seen as an important step within a general trend toward historicizing reality,⁴⁵ which entails a move away from the traditional focus on the king as ritualist, as described above for Hornung's cited classic *Geschichte als Fest*, and appears to align with the fact that most attested King's Novels date to the New Kingdom.

For our purposes, it is significant that many accounts unfold in the context of what must be seen as a mandatory and ritualized consultation by the king of a group of royal advisors⁴⁶—in most cases the state or military council—but strikingly, and despite clear

43 See Loprieno 1996; Hofmann 2004, 14–40; and Stauder 2021 for a review of earlier scholarship, a list of the texts that have been classified as exemplars, and comments on the varying definitions—including the question of whether the literary classification as a genre in its own right is appropriate.

44 The recent study by Stauder (2021) highlights the importance of royal speech in these texts and interprets the King's Novel, somewhat more broadly, as a frame for showcasing such speech.

45 Loprieno 1996, esp. 284. The King's Novel has hence been proposed to have evolved out of earlier systems of historical recordkeeping, such as annals; see Vernus 2013, e.g., 304, 306.

46 A good example appears in the introduction to Hatshepsut's Punt inscription, as recorded in her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari (see, e.g., Hofmann 2004, 170–77 with earlier literature):

<i>hpr hmst m d3dw</i>	Occurrence of a session in the throne room.
<i>h't njswt m 3tf</i>	Appearance of the king with the Atef-Crown
<i>st wr< t> nt d'mw</i>	(on) the great throne of electrum
<i>m hnw dsrw nw 'h=f</i>	in the private part of his palace.
<i>st3 wrw smrw nw stp-s3</i>	Summoning the Great Ones and Friends of the Palace,
<i>r sdm sšm n wdt</i>	to hear the instruction of what is commanded.

The reaction of the courtiers to the queen's (referred to with the traditional male titles and pronouns) proposals is not preserved in this case. See also Quack 2010, 7 for the role of the council.

traces of a historicizing narrative, in several of the New Kingdom exemplars the opinions and advice of this council are either not important enough to be described or are entirely ignored.⁴⁷ This situation stands in stark contrast to other, and often earlier, examples of such royal texts, in which the consultation between king and court is amicably resolved. The king informs the courtiers of his intentions, they agree, and once he utters his final decision, it is approved and acclaimed by them.⁴⁸

Typical topics include construction activities (renewed or completed); inaccessible knowledge discovered and/or employed; and, particularly prominently, military interventions. These texts clearly had a political context or function, discernible in both their content and the fact that most known King's Novels were published in conspicuous, monumental, and public locations such as temples, in some cases augmented by pictorial versions (e.g., Rameses II's account of his battle at Qadesh).⁴⁹ A number of these texts have moreover survived in several contemporary copies, revealing an explicit desire to generate publicity and wide dissemination.

In terms of content, the royal protagonist is often presented as the recipient of divine inspiration and thus as close to the gods. Yet, the role of the human audience witnessing the king's decision-making process—in most cases his cabinet or council—is equally important in these accounts. My discussion focuses on the example of the so-called Kamose texts,⁵⁰ which detail the processes that led to the eventual expulsion of Egypt's first-ever foreign dynasty known as the Hyksos. Kamose, local ruler of the Theban Seventeenth Dynasty—a vassal fiefdom of the Levantine Hyksos king ruling Egypt from the Delta capital of Avaris—succeeded Seqenenre Tao, who had initiated Egyptian military action against the perceived occupiers to the north. He continued his predecessor's quest, although he failed to accomplish the final expulsion—a feat left to his successor, Ahmose. Kamose's descriptions of his military decisions and battles are nevertheless famous for both their historical detail and propagandistic elements.

47 Already Hermann (1938) noted that a "*festes Schema*" (recurring scheme) of superior insight of king over council seems to have been a part of the genre.

48 For a collection of examples, see Stauder 2021, 106–9; also 117–20 for examples of Old Kingdom texts, especially royal decrees, that share certain features with the King's Novel. The example on the Abydos stela of Neferhotep I of the Thirteenth/Fourteenth Dynasty (today Cairo JE 6307; see, e.g., Hofmann 2004, 85ff.) may serve to illustrate the setting of the royal council meeting with a positive outcome: Neferhotep decides to consult the archives with a view to celebrating the so-called Osiris Mysteries at Abydos correctly and in style. He gathers his council, consisting of nobles (*s^chw*), Followers (*smrw wnnyw m-ht=f*), Secretaries of the Religious Writings (*sh³w m³(w) n(w) mdw-ntr*), as well as of Privy Councilors (*hrjw-tp št3 nb*), in the throne room of his palace and informs them of this decision (lines 2–3). The courtiers agree immediately: "What your ka commands is what comes to pass, Sovereign my Lord—May your Majesty proceed to the Houses of Writings [i.e., the archives, KG] and view all religious writings (*mdw-ntr nb*)" (line 6). When the king returns from the archives with the relevant books, he views them together with the courtiers and then announces his plans for the Osiris Mysteries. The courtiers once again assent to, and acclaim, his intentions: "What your Majesty has ordered comes to pass" (*wdt.n hm=k hpr*) (lines 12, 14).

49 See, for example, Bryan 1996 with further literature, who comments on the differences between the textual and iconographic accounts.

50 See translations in, for example, Redford 1997, 13–15; Simpson 2003, 345–50; Hofmann 2004, 105–12; for a discussion and earlier literature see, for example, Spalinger 2010.

The text of his first stela⁵¹ informs us that the setting for Kamose's decision to go to war was a session of the Council of Nobles (*d3d3t srw ntj(w) m-ht=f*). Kamose complains that he is de facto sharing rule of what he perceives as traditional Egyptian lands with two foreign powers—an Asiatic and a Nubian, respectively ruling the Egyptian Delta and the former Egyptian provinces in the south. After further registering his objections to the facts that a Theban wishing to travel to Memphis, the old capital city of the country, would essentially be leaving Egyptian soil; that the Hyksos are in control even of the important Middle Egyptian city of Hermopolis; and, finally, that the taxes imposed by them are impoverishing Egyptians, he announces his decision to go to war to “save Egypt.” The courtiers respond forcefully and negatively to this proposal: they are satisfied with “their Egypt” (*t3(y)=n kmt*), or Egypt proper, which they define as extending from Aswan to Qusae in Middle Egypt only; they point out that, as Thebans, they have the option of letting their cattle graze in the Delta without interference and that they receive agricultural products from the north. Further, and importantly, they maintain that war should be a last resort and considered only as a defensive measure. The king is upset—their counsel is “painful to his heart” (*mr hr jb n hm=f*). What is more, he elects to ignore it altogether and to confront the Hyksos against his courtiers' advice, convinced that success will come to pass (*hpr w3d*). After a few more threatening words and gesturing, the surviving parts of the text describe the military maneuvers and successes of Kamose and his navy, including the capture of Egyptian towns allied with the Hyksos and, finally, siege and invasion of Auaris and the cowardice of the Hyksos king and his troops. Kamose claims to have returned to Thebes victoriously; the invasion is explicitly said to have occurred at the command of “Amun just of counsel” (*jmn mtj shrw*)—providing both the above-cited divine inspiration that is customarily showcased in the King's Novel and a wonderful contrast with the earlier, unwelcome, and in hindsight inappropriate advice of the courtiers.

The blatant disregard for the courtiers and their counsel thus results in a roaring success for king and country, and one wonders what the intended audience of such an account would have been. As indicated, these texts were published—the Kamose stelae were put up in the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak in conspicuous locations, and the presence of an early Eighteenth Dynasty copy on a writing board suggests they may have been either copied from there or disseminated on other media also. In this way, two types of audience for the king's actions in this King's Novel account come into focus. One, very select and playing an active part in the account, is composed of high-ranking key players in the Egyptian administration and is explicitly named and described in the text. Their function can only be described as that of a foil used to showcase the royal heroism depicted in the ensuing parts, however. The presence of, and disrespect shown to, the courtiers appear as indispensable preconditions—as a backdrop before which the king's divine inspiration and heroic acts can unfold. It clearly cannot have been in the interest of this important and literate segment of Egyptian society to be presented in this way, but equally obviously, the need to showcase the king as a heroic and ultimately successful individualist⁵²

51 Best preserved on the writing board Carnarvon Tablet I (Cairo JE 41790), an early Eighteenth Dynasty copy.

52 See also Quack 2012, 282.

before a larger part of the population—the second, implicit, and intended audience of this account—topped their needs. As indicated, the precise origins of the King’s Novel remain to be established, but it is noteworthy that the examples describing disregard for the opinions of courtiers and council date to a time when Egypt had experienced the traumata that were the two Intermediate Periods. The first saw a civil war that had multiple pretenders to royal power fight each other in a variety of alliances and produced a society that prized heroic acts of individuals for the benefit of their local communities.⁵³ The second resulted in Egypt’s having to come to terms with the shame of the first-ever foreign rule and the loss of control over large parts of the country. It is out of this second trauma that the ensuing New Kingdom’s Egyptian expansionism was born,⁵⁴ the royal executors of which presented themselves as physically strong military (and sporting) heroes.⁵⁵ In this respect, these royal texts are evocative of earlier and contemporary private individuals’ tomb autobiographies, which—beginning in the later Old Kingdom—showcased the individual accomplishments of their owners relative to king, state, and local community and which, from the First Intermediate Period onward, highlighted aspects such as decisiveness, proactiveness, perseverance, and individual accomplishments—often on the back of (perceived) adversaries.⁵⁶

As regards our question of ritualized royal behavior and its audiences, we see in the later exemplars of the King’s Novel evidence for the king’s “going through the motions” of a traditional and ritualized consultation of the royal council for major political decisions—clearly a procedural court requirement—only to ignore their advice. That the king can overrule and break with court etiquette and rules is not new. We saw instances in both Rawer’s autobiography and *Sinuhe*. But this time, his breaking away from the formulaic is imbued with a sense of heroism and presented as overcoming adversity—for the better of Egypt.⁵⁷ It is only in setting his decision and speech explicitly against an audience of rejected courtiers that the text acquires its function as a vehicle for presenting the king’s divinely inspired heroism—a heroism intended to impress a wider audience.⁵⁸

53 For a survey, see Willems 2010.

54 See, for example, Morenz and Popko 2010; also Manassa 2014, for example, 144–45.

55 Compare the royal aspect of the “sporting king” as discussed by Decker (e.g., 1971, 1986); particularly explicit in this regard are kings such as Thutmose III (e.g., his Armant stela; *Urk.* IV, 1244–46) and Amenhotep II (e.g., his Sphinx Stela; *Urk.* IV, 1276–83).

56 Baud 2003, 271–301; also Stauder-Porchet 2017, for example 309 with n. 48.

57 It is likely no coincidence that an even later development, albeit in a Demotic literary text, has the Saitic king Amasis ignore the advice of his court not to imbibe a barrel of wine, leading to a terrible hangover and thus a detrimental outcome (see Quack 2012, 283 with n. 36 for literature). This account dates to a time when respect for the institution of the kingship had suffered considerably; Amasis was, moreover, of nonroyal descent (see Rössler-Köhler 1991, e.g., 247, 396, who speaks of “limited acceptance” of this king in contemporary sources; see also Quaegebeur 1990).

58 As evident also in later elaborations of some of these royal feats in literary formats (Manassa 2014, 144ff.). Good examples include the Ramesside development of the events surrounding the initial stages in the expulsion of the Hyksos in the literary tale *Seqenenre and Apophis* (for which see, for example, Manassa 2014, 30–65) and *The Capture of Joppa*, which is based on events such as those described in Thutmose III’s accounts of the Battle of Megiddo (*Urk.* IV, 645–67; see Redford 2003, 206–7 for a list of sources; Manassa 2014, 67–101 with earlier literature for the literary tale).

FROM SON OF HORUS TO SON OF AMUN—HOREMHAB'S MYTH OF DIVINE ADOPTION

My final example concerns the generalissimo, high court official, and eventually king Horemhab—the last ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who served under his predecessors Tutankhamun and Aya of Amarna Period *Götterdämmerung* fame before ascending to the throne himself (1319–1292 BCE).⁵⁹ As a former court administrator, and being of nonroyal descent, Horemhab was in particular need of legitimizing his rule, and it seems that he pursued a number of avenues to this end.⁶⁰ These include mobilizing the ancient Myth of the Divine Birth, but with a twist.⁶¹

To reiterate, the Myth of the Divine Birth involved the conception of the new king through a physical union of the head of the pantheon with the human wife of the current office holder, whom the god, in the surviving sources Amun-Re, is said to have found exceedingly beautiful.⁶² While divine lust hence played a part in this process, the primary motivation is revealed to be the conception of a successor. The god is explicit in this regard both in his pronouncements during the intercourse as well as in episodes pre- and suffixed to the central conception scene, where he states his decision to conceive an heir and announces it to the messenger of gods, who in turn relays it to the mother to be.⁶³ Conception and birth, as well as the forming of the child's appearance, are sanctioned, aided, and acclaimed by divine actors, and the final scenes show the King of Gods accepting his spawn as legitimate (figs. 9.1 and 9.2).⁶⁴ Hellmut Brunner pointed out that these concluding scenes likely reflect a ritual of paternal acceptance of the newborn that was current at the time, an occasion on which the name of the child may also have been announced.

Regarding the purpose of the overall cycle, William Murnane once postulated that, as long as the royal succession remained within one dynastic family, the element of divine paternity—as mythically elaborated in the Myth of the Divine Birth—served to reinforce the royal principle of descent by blood.⁶⁵ This would have posed a problem for Horemhab, who was not related to the previous royal line. His so-called Coronation Inscription offers an excellent example of how an Egyptian politician could draw on ancient mythical and ritual structures for political ends—to convey notions such as legitimacy and being in accord with Maat—yet not ignore fact altogether and adapt the myth to align with the historical situation at hand.⁶⁶ In fact, Horemhab cleverly and strategically weaves factual data into the traditional rituals of kingship and the Myth of the Divine Birth, clearly in an

59 Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, 493 with chronology table.

60 For example, Hari 1965; Murnane 1995a, 188–89.

61 Gardiner 1953; also *Urk.* IV, 2113–20; translation, for example, Murnane 1995b, 230–33 (text 107A). For the Myth of the Divine Birth, see above with n. 5.

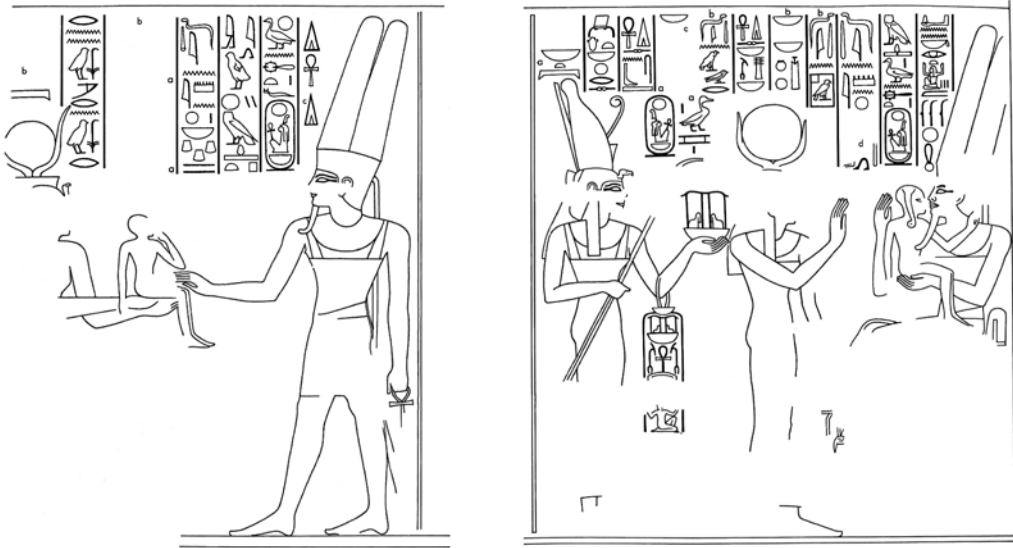
62 English translation of the texts describing the birth of Amenhotep III in Murnane 1995b, 22–27.

63 Not entirely haphazardly, this mythical episode has provoked comparison with the Christian annunciation; see, for example, Schneider 2004.

64 Murnane 1995b, 26 scene XIV.

65 Murnane 1995b, 188.

66 Given the overall dearth of texts describing the intricacies of Egyptian royal accession rituals, the text is of course of broader significance also.



Figures 9.1 and 9.2. Amun-Re accepts the newborn king and his ka as his own, legitimate offspring and heir. After Brunner 1986, pls. 5–6, figs. 10–11.

effort to meet the expectations of an audience about whose exact composition we are left to speculate.

The best version of the text is found inscribed on a double statue of the king and his queen Mutnodjmet, set up in the outer parts of the temple of Karnak, where it was hence published to be seen by literate Egyptians who had access to this area.⁶⁷ At least one existing, unfortunately very fragmented, copy of the text from the temple of Ptah at Memphis⁶⁸ suggests that it was distributed, at the very least, to the important sanctuaries of the land. We may surmise that an Egyptian king could not “get away with” a fully invented account of his right to rule. The audience of such accounts, be they the court or the wider literate elite, had to be convinced. As regards the significance, if any, of such inscriptions for the lower echelons of society we can only speculate. One possible scenario is that such texts were read out to illiterate visitors by priestly guides, another that copies were distributed on other media, which were perhaps read in towns and villages throughout Egypt.

The ritual setting in which Horemhab’s very own version of the Myth of the Divine Birth unfolds is the annual “Beautiful Feast of Southern Opet” (that is, Luxor and its temple), which by the New Kingdom was the traditional occasion on which the king would affirm his relationship with the King of Gods and head of the pantheon, Amun-Re, and which could include oracles relating to priestly installations and the royal succession.⁶⁹ One influential theory holds that the king merged with the royal ka during the god’s ritual

⁶⁷ Now Museo Egizio Turin (Drovetti Collection 1824); also *Urk.* IV, 2113–20.

⁶⁸ *Urk.* IV, 2121–24. Where preserved, the Memphis text presents mostly a verbatim copy of the Turin version but adds particulars on the restoration of, and beneficial acts for, the temple of Ptah at Memphis. The act of reinstating the cults and benefiting the gods is hence one of the factors that predestine the king to be the bodily son of Amun in this version; see below.

⁶⁹ Waitkus 2008, 223–67, and 2013 for later developments; Fukaya 2012; see below, n. 73, for the oracles surrounding Hatshepsut’s election as king.

procession into Luxor Temple—this ka being the immortal and divine aspect of the kingship, which inhabited the monarch’s physical and mortal body and was passed on from one ruler to the next. In this way, the king would be cyclically regenerated by Amun.⁷⁰ Horemhab makes use of this important ritual, but with one crucial twist: he explicitly acknowledges that he is not a king by birth; neither does he claim to be the son of Amun-Re—at least not when he first embarks on his ritual procession to Luxor Temple to meet the god. Instead, he admits to his origin in the Middle Egyptian town of Herakleopolis—once a royal capital in its own right, albeit during the notorious First Intermediate Period—and this enables him to claim divine descent after all, although of a different kind: he professes to be the son of the local god Horus of Herakleopolis (lines 4, 5, 12). The fact that Horus himself was an ancient royal god was surely helpful and further resonates with the fact that Horemhab’s birth name means “Horus is in Festival”; the “throne of Horus” is also mentioned in the text. Horemhab’s divine nature is stressed repeatedly, and much is made of his supernatural appearance: he issued from the womb “clothed in awesomeness, the complexion of a god being upon him.”⁷¹ In this way, a “divine birth” is alluded to, but not one of the traditional kind. Further, Horemhab’s divine father is said to have intended him to become king, but *only* once the time was right. Until then, Horus promotes Horemhab’s career in the court of his royal predecessors, and he makes a fantastic administrator (lines 4–9):⁷²

The arm was bent to him respectfully as a youth, and the ground was kissed by great and small . . . [he was pointed out among] the officials at the front of everybody. A god’s image was his complexion: one feared when his form was beheld. His father Horus placed himself behind him, the one who created him making his protection.

A generation passed and another [came and his father still kept him] safe, for he knew the day on which he would retire to give him his kingship. So this god was distinguishing his son in the sight of everybody, for he desired to “widen his stride” until the day of his receiving his office would come; and he caused [him to be more respected than anyone else] of his time, the king’s heart being satisfied with his dealings (*hrwt=f*) and rejoicing at the choosing of him. In order to make fast the laws of the Two Shores he appointed him chief spokesman (*r3 hry*) of the land, being the hereditary prince (*jry-p^t*) of this land in its entirety. He was unique, without his equal . . . everybody [rejoiced] at what came out of his mouth. . . .

So he was administering (*jdⁿ*) the Two Lands for a period of many years . . . the councils [came] to him bowing at the gate of the king’s house. The chiefs of the Nine Bows . . . appealed to him, their arms outspread at his approach, as they did reverence to his face as to a god (*sw3š=sⁿ n hr=fmj ntr*). . . . “Surely he is the father of the Two Shores, with the excellent wisdom of the god’s giving (*s3rt jkr n dd ntr*) to make fast [the laws of the Two Lands].”

⁷⁰ Bell 1985; now somewhat revised by Winnerman 2018.

⁷¹ Further divine metaphors and similes employed to highlight his special status concern Thoth, the god of wisdom and writing, and the creator and craftsman Ptah; *Urk.* IV, 2114.2, 2115.8–10.

⁷² Translation follows Murnane 1995b, 230–31; for the emphasis on Horemhab’s skills as scribe in this text see also Allon 2019, 142–45.

From the beginning, therefore, the text presents an extraordinary instance of interweaving myth—of divine descent and protection—with elements of the historically accurate political situation that would have been common knowledge throughout the country, or at the very least in all elite circles: Horemhab, before he became king, was a court official in the service of Tutankhamun and Aya.⁷³ This fact is explicitly acknowledged in phrases such as “a generation passed and another [came]” and confirmed by the texts and images Horemhab had produced for himself before he became king. His famous Memphite tomb shows him, among other things, in the role of vizier and diplomat presenting to the king envoys from different countries.⁷⁴ In keeping with this portrayal, the Coronation Inscription argues that Horemhab’s mythical divine descent and predestination to be king were kept hidden until the right time for his accession had come, yet it is said to reveal itself in both his appearance and, importantly and unprecedentedly, in his substantial skills as administrator in the service of previous kings. A passage setting his competent, calm-and-collected demeanor, which as such coincides with the Egyptian ideal of an elite member and official, against that of his royal lord and other courtiers is particularly remarkable. Horemhab is said to have been able to advise and solve problems even when “the palace had fallen into rage” (or better, “was about to fall into rage,” KG—*ḥ wʒj=f r nšn*).⁷⁵ His former life as an official seems to be evoked even in the royal titulary he chooses for himself: his Horus-name is “Mighty Bull effective of advice” (*k3 nḥt spd šhrw*).⁷⁶ Horus decides that the time for Horemhab to accede to the throne has come only when his predecessor Aya dies, and the god then proceeds to escort him to Luxor to present him to Amun during his all-important Opet festival:⁷⁷

Now, when many days had passed after this—the eldest son of Horus being chief spokesman and hereditary prince in this land in its entirety—then did this noble god, Horus, Lord of Herakleopolis, desire in his heart to establish his son on his continual

73 A similar twist in a ritual performance, to accommodate as well as facilitate political change, is encountered in the accounts of the purportedly divine election of Hatshepsut as female king. In her coronation texts as recorded in her Red Chapel at Karnak, Hatshepsut describes how Amun-Re emerged from his temple in a procession intended to pronounce oracle statements about the royal succession (for this process, see Jansen-Winkeln 1999; also Fukaya 2012). However, departing from custom, the god did not do so by moving his divine barque toward the royal Stations of the Lord, resulting in confusion and panic among the nobles and courtiers in attendance. Instead, the god is said to have bowed “his face” (that is, the front aegis of the processional barque) in an easterly direction, toward the double gates of the royal palace, where the then royal widow Hatshepsut meets him. In this way, Amun-Re “gives a very great oracle” by sending a clear signal that Hatshepsut is the desired royal successor. He then proceeds to crown her (Lacau and Chevrier 1977, 98–104, §162–64). In a related text, which presents a fictional account of how Hatshepsut’s father, Thutmose I, decided to declare her his successor (thus ignoring both the short reign of her brother and husband, Thutmose II, and the claim to the throne of the latter’s offspring, Thutmose III), a royal decree is pronounced in a public address to courtiers and officials (*špsw njswt sḥw smrw*, earlier also *šnyt nt ḥnw*), in a setting similar to the one we described for Hatshepsut’s decision to send an expedition to Punt; see n. 46. The reaction of the courtiers is said to be pure joy (*Urk. IV, 259.7–260.1*).

74 Martin 2016, for example, pls. 33–37.

75 *Urk. IV, 2116.2–5*; Murnane 1995b, 231.

76 For example, *Urk. IV, 2013.66*; see Leprohon 2013, 107; for discussion, see also Hari 1965, 212, 248, 296; on recurrent references to literacy and scribedom specifically in the Coronation Inscription, see Allon 2019, esp. 142–45.

77 *Urk. IV, 2116.9*; Murnane 1995b, 231–32.

throne; and [he] commanded [him to go to the] monument of Amun. So Horus . . . proceeded, rejoicing, to Thebes, . . . , his son in his embrace (*s3=f m ꜥnj=f*), to Karnak, in order to lead him (*bzj*) into the presence of Amun, to bequeath to him his kingly rule (*sw3d n=f j3t=f n njswt*) and make his term of rule.

Now, [Amun-Re . . . came out . . .] in his beautiful feast in front of the Southern Sanctum [= Luxor temple, KG] and he saw that the Majesty of this god, Horus Lord of Herakleopolis, had his son with him at the “King’s Induction” (*bz njswt*), in order to give him his office and his throne. And Amun-Re became possessed with joy when he saw [the eldest son of Horus] on the day of taking his retirement [perhaps rather “of granting that he ‘sit,’” i.e., his installation on the throne, *hrw rdjt htp=f*, KG]. Then he addressed himself to this official [*sr pn*, sic!, KG], the hereditary prince and chief of the two lands, Horemhab, and he proceeded to the king’s house, having placed him in front of him (*rdj.n=f sw hr h3t=f*)— . . . his noble daughter Werethekau [= the goddess of the royal crown and uraeus, KG] . . . she embraced his beauty and fixed herself upon his forehead. All of the Enneads [specific groups of gods, KG] were in jubilation at his appearance (*m jhhy n hꜥ=f*) . . . [and made] acclamations to the height of heaven, . . . , and saying: “Behold, Amun has come to the palace, his son in front of him (*s3=f hr h3t=f*), in order to establish his crown on his head and to exalt his lifetime like his own! We are gathered together so that we may affix [his crowns] for him and assign to him the insignia of Re (*hkrw Rꜥw*) and glorify Amun on his account, saying: ‘You have brought our protector to us!’ Give him the jubilees of Re and the years of Horus as king. . . .” . . .

The Majesty of this noble god, Amun King of the Gods, then went out from the king’s house, his son in front of him (*s3=f hr h3t=f*), crowned with the Blue Crown. . . . Heaven was in festival and earth laden with joy (*m ršt*). . . . Great and small took up shouting, and the entire land rejoiced (*hꜥyw*). After this feast in front of the Southern Sanctum was over, Amun, King of the Gods, returned in peace to Thebes.

Then did his Majesty sail downstream with the statue of Re-Horakhty, and he reorganized this land, restoring its customs to those of the time of Re.

We must envision a situation, therefore, in which two divine processions meet in the course of the annual Opet festival at Luxor. The barque procession of Amun has left the temple of Karnak and at Luxor is met by that of Horus of Herakleopolis, who has “his son in his embrace.” This phrase, as well as the latter instances that place Horemhab “before” the god (*hr h3t=f*), evoke the icon attested in many royal, especially three-dimensional, representations of the king standing or kneeling before a deity, who, when shown anthropomorphically, extends their arms toward the king’s shoulder and crown to indicate acceptance and thus legitimacy.⁷⁸ Amun now “addresses himself to this official”—that is, the as-yet-uncrowned Horemhab—and, significantly, places him “in front of himself,” meaning that Horemhab switches from the procession and protective gesture of “his father” Horus to that of Amun. The latter’s procession now moves to the king’s house for the coronation ceremony amid the acclaim of deities (meaning, potentially, that of the priests carrying

78 With theomorphic deities, the king is shown between their front paws or legs and/or beneath their shielding head. Good examples are Horemhab before Amun (Luxor Museum 2) or the Hathor-cow shielding Amenhotep II found in the chapel of Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahari (Cairo JE 38574).

their divine images in barques),⁷⁹ who announce that “Amun has come to the palace, his son in front of him.” In other words, when “switching vehicles” in the course of this ritual, Horemhab morphs from “son of Horus” to “son of Amun.”

In Horemhab’s coronation account, both the old Myth of the Divine Birth and the Opet festival were hence tweaked to allow for the inclusion of certain historical and political details, which, it seems, would have been difficult to deny before those involved—namely, the elite and perhaps other audiences.⁸⁰ To satisfy the requirement of divine descent, a different divine father was brought in, since, arguably, the traditional one, Amun-Re, would have been known to the entire country as the father of Horemhab’s royal predecessors, to whom he was not related by blood. The old story of divine conception and legitimation through Amun (which would have been “shelved” during the Amarna Period at any rate) is mobilized only at a relatively late stage in this particular narrative—namely, at the moment when the god accepts the divine offspring as his own, as illustrated in figures 9.1 and 9.2 above. Horemhab is called “the son of Amun” only at this point in the text, in essence turning the old Myth of the Divine Birth into a “Myth of the Divine Adoption” in the interest of continuing the royal line and Maat for the good of the country.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

In sum, we have investigated four cases of royal rituals that deviated from their traditional formats. Some reenacted, or drew upon, mythical episodes that served to align the ruler with divine actors and provided a sense of universal validity to his actions by emulating perceived divine precedent; others were simply the products of long-standing traditions. In three cases, however, these rituals were manipulated to fit an unforeseen eventuality or a changed social or political reality.

Neferirkare has to interrupt the “Seizing of the Prow-Rope” ritual to attend to his courtier Rawer, who, it seems, had stumbled and disrupted the performance; Kamose, while respecting the format of the royal council as the traditional setting in which political decisions were made, overrules his advisors and single-handedly decides to go to war, presenting the resulting military campaign as a roaring success brought about by his own heroic decision and behavior; Horemhab mobilizes the traditional Myth of the Divine Birth

79 Acclamation is recognized by Quack (2010, 1–2) as one of the mechanisms constituting a quasi-political act, in the sense of reflecting a “public opinion of sorts,” even though the groups involved in such acclamations are not necessarily well defined, or may at times even be composed of mythical actors, as in the case here. In the later parts of the text, the spectators as a whole are “shouting” and the entire land is “in joy.”

80 It may be relevant in this context that Horemhab explicitly states that he has appointed military men in priestly positions (Allon 2019, 144–45 with nn. 53–54).

81 References to Horemhab as “son of Amun” and “offspring” (*mstjw*) of Kamutef when he is first introduced at the beginning of the coronation text with his full titulary are to be viewed as referring to the accomplished “adoption,” after the events described in the narrative have already unfolded (e.g., *Urk. IV*, 2013.10). It is of note that the Memphis version of the text (*Urk. IV*, 2121–24) places even more emphasis on Amun’s decision to recognize Horemhab. During the second day of his sojourn in Luxor Temple, he addresses Horemhab as his son: “You are my son, my heir, who issued from my body. So long as I exist you shall exist . . . [you shall act on behalf of the gods] . . . so that they might recognize you as my son, who issued from my body, and gather to give you [the kingship]” (Murnane 1995b, 233).

and the rituals surrounding the Opet festival to have himself declared and crowned king, but adapts both to reflect the fact that he is not of royal descent. In the example of *Sinuhe*, we moreover saw a literary elaboration of a courtly ceremony that is disrupted by the audience's violent reaction to the foreign, and thus undecorous, attire of the protagonist.

Such tweaking of royal rituals and the myths on which they are often based highlights that important ritual performances, or their written accounts, were witnessed or read by an audience, and that this audience had to be convinced that the rituals' desired effect of contributing to the maintenance of cosmic order/Maat had, in fact, been achieved.

ABBREVIATIONS

Urk. I Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reichs*. 4 vols. *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* 1. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903/1933

Urk. IV Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* 4, fasc. 1–16. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 2nd rev. ed., 1927–30; continued by Wolfgang Helck, fasc. 17–22. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955–58

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10 City and Soul: Marian Processions in Late Antique Constantinople and Early Medieval Rome

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ON AUGUST 15 in the year 847 CE, Pope Leo IV performed a minor miracle in the city of Rome. A basilisk—a sort of serpent king that took the form of a snake and a rooster combined and could kill by its glance or breath—had taken up residence in the cavernous, empty substructures of the small church of Santa Lucia:

In the first year of his pontificate, close to St Lucy the martyr's basilica in Orphea, in some noisome and hidden caverns arose a serpent of dire sort called *basilisk* in Greek and *regulus* in Latin; by its breath and glance it speedily overwhelmed all who went into those caves and gave them over to danger of death, so that amazement and terror attacked all who gazed on the serpent's might and penetrating power.¹

Leo prayed and fasted for an unspecified period of time in the hope of delivering the faithful from this evil creature. On August 15, he finally conquered the beast in miraculous fashion. August 15 was—and still is—the Feast of the Assumption, the celebration of Mary's death and bodily ascension into heaven.² This feast, along with three other Marian holidays, had been celebrated in Rome since sometime around 650 CE, and by about 680 a papal procession had become a regular feature of their celebration. These processions made their way from the church of Saint Hadrian in the city's ancient Forum to the basilica of Saint Mary Major—the city's premier Marian shrine—on the Esquiline Hill (fig. 10.1).³ It was during the Annunciation procession of 847 that Leo seized the opportunity to exorcise the basilisk, since the church of Santa Lucia stood along the processional route:

When he reached the place where the savage basilisk lay in noisome caverns . . . he ordered all the clergy and people to halt, and making his way close to these caverns, he halted fearlessly over the cleft from which the breath of that plague-bearing serpent emerged. Raising eyes and hands to heaven, with abundant tears he besought Christ who is God above all to put to flight by his power the dire kind of serpent from that place. And giving out the prayer over the people he set out to the basilica . . . to display

1 LP 105: 18.

2 See Shoemaker 2002, 121–22; 2016, 100–65.

3 LP 86: 14; Botte 1933; Russo 1980/81, 95–147; Saxer 1989, 936–80; 2001, 116–17, 53, 67–74, 444–47; Baldwin 1987, 160–66, 289; Wolf 1990, 131–90; de Blaauw 1994, 1:436–39.

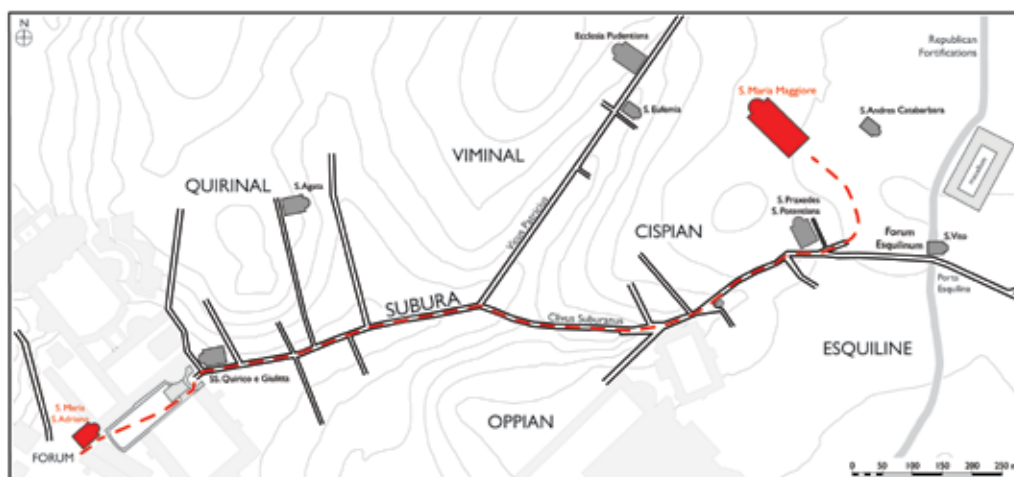


Figure 10.1. Plan of Rome showing the path of the Marian processions between the Forum and S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. Image by M. M. Andrews.

God's praises. But from that very day the death-dealing basilisk was put to flight and expelled from those caves so that there appeared no further trace of its damage in those places.⁴

At face value, the description of the event in the *Liber Pontificalis* gives the impression that Leo's exorcism of the basilisk and the occasion for it were unrelated, that the pontiff simply took the opportunity to perform the exorcism since the procession coursed in front of the church. But Leo's deliverance of the neighborhood around Santa Lucia was anything but; it was instead a carefully choreographed performance in the context of the Marian processions that originated in sixth-century Constantinople but since that time had taken on a life of their own in papal Rome.⁵

It hardly needs elaborating that the story of Leo and the basilisk was a fiction, considering the obviously fantastic nature of the beast and the pope's vanquishing of it. But such questioning misses the point. The story is plausible enough once stripped of its obvious exaggerations, starting with the setting itself. The diminutive church of Santa Lucia was established within a fourth-century CE apsidal hall that was constructed above a row of first-century BCE street-front shops built of large travertine blocks (fig. 10.2). Pope Honorius (625–638 CE) converted the structure with few changes into a church and dedicated it to the young and virginal Sicilian saint Lucia. Some of the ancient shops at ground level had been partially blocked up by the seventh century, but most of them remained open to the main urban thoroughfare—the Clivus Suburanus—that ran in front of them, and they are likely the spaces to which the papal biography refers.⁶ It is also possible, however, that the “caves” and “caverns” were simply some of the many dark and recessed hollow spaces

⁴ *LP* 105: 18.

⁵ See also the contributions by Gilan and Goebis, this volume, on carefully choreographed political ritual in Hittite Anatolia and in Egypt.

⁶ Krautheimer 1937–77, 2:186–90; Serlorenzi 2004.

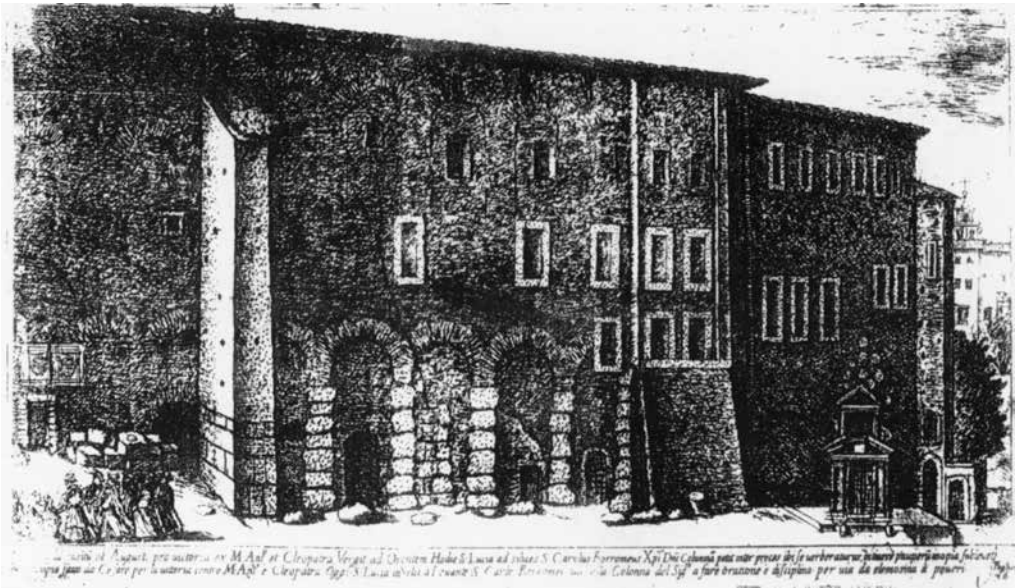


Figure 10.2. *Santa Lucia in Selcis*, from Alò Giovannoli, *Roma antica di Alò Giovannoli da Cività Castellana, libro secondo*, Rome, 1615, f. 36.

within the vast quantity of collapsed structural remains that would have been present on the steep slopes of the hill, where a significant density of ancient urban fabric had been built on a series of terraces. While certainly no dragon with chicken legs breathing poisonous gas ever inhabited these spaces, the loose rubble and ancient debris within them could have emanated noxious fumes or odors. And it is easy to imagine that, at the very least, snakes and other undesirable creatures inhabited such dank, smelly, unsettling places. Ultimately, it matters not whether the monster below the church was a basilisk or a beetle and the noxious vapors methane or mold. The event, however exaggerated or fabricated, was part of the pope's official and contemporary biography and was therefore something that the pope and his court wanted readers to believe.

The annual procession held in Rome on the day of Mary's Assumption in August was one of several celebrations of Mary that had been performed in the city since the sixth century. That of January 1, which commemorated the birth of Mary herself, was the oldest and may date to as early as the fifth century. Others were added at some point later in the late sixth or early to mid-seventh century: February 2 to celebrate what was called, first, the *Hypapante*, which commemorated Mary's presentation of a newborn Jesus to Simeon at the Jerusalem temple, but later the Purification, in reference to Mary's purification forty days postpartum, as prescribed by Jewish law; March 25 for the Annunciation, when the archangel Michael announced to Mary that she would bear the son of God; August 15 for the Assumption, Mary's death and ascent into heaven; and September 8 for Mary's own birth, which had replaced the celebration of January 1 by 613.⁷ Each of these celebrations was held at Santa Maria Maggiore. Processions preceding them were introduced by Pope

⁷ Botte 1933; Russo 1980/81, 91–100; Saxer 1987.

Sergius (687–701), thus importantly distinguishing these holidays from other papal masses at the basilica, such as those held on Easter and Christmas day.⁸

We know a good deal about the dynamics of these processions from roughly contemporary or later liturgical sources. The processions were held in the predawn hours. Clerics and spectators processed from their local churches to San Adriano in the Forum, which had been installed within the ancient Senate House in 630. The pope then arrived and, after having changed into black vestments with the deacons, presided over a ceremony in which candles were distributed to the crowds of men, women, infants, and the elderly. After more prayers, the crowd, led by the urban poor and pilgrims, set forth on the climb uphill through the Subura valley to the basilica of Santa Maria on the Esquiline. Seven crossbearers were dispersed among the clergy who followed, and the pope, typically walking barefoot, followed with his attendants and cantors. Bede, writing later in about 725, recorded that the people processed from church to church singing hymns, while other descriptions emphasize the deeply solemn nature of the ceremony, with the darkness of the early morning hours, the black vestments of the pope, and his bare feet all contributing to such an atmosphere. Upon reaching Santa Maria Maggiore at the top of the hill, the pope would then change into white vestments and say mass with readings, psalms, and homilies relevant to each particular holiday. After the mass, the crowd would disperse in time for a midday meal. The procedures for these processions grew more complex over time, with additional people and props, but the most important and solemn part remained the main procession from the Forum to Santa Maria Maggiore.⁹

What accounts for the solemn, penitential nature of these Marian processions when there was little or nothing about the Marian holidays, per se, that called for it? To understand it better, we must turn to the early history of these Marian festivals and processions not only in Rome but also in Constantinople, the imperial capital. Public processions were not new to Rome when the Marian ones were introduced in the seventh century. The city had witnessed a few earlier papal processions, but they were typically displays of factional ecclesiastical politics, not liturgical and not public or participatory. It was not until the papacy of Gregory I at the end of the sixth century that public liturgical processions became common. Especially important would have been two processions staged by Gregory on occasions of acute civic disaster. Twice during his papacy, in 590 and 603, the city was struck by massive floods that destroyed the food supply and sparked waves of plague. Gregory himself ascended the throne when his predecessor fell victim to the first plague, and his response to both disasters was quick and firm. On each occasion, he organized what was called a “seven-form litany” (*laetania septiformis*) in which residents of the city were divided by age, sex, and ecclesiastical status into seven groups. Each group gathered at one of seven chosen churches in the city, then processed from them to Santa Maria Maggiore (figs. 10.3 and 10.4). The participants in each of the seven processions were instructed to show extreme contrition in their hearts during the march to Santa Maria Maggiore, to tread on their tears and cry out in prayer along the way. Once all groups had arrived there, Gregory himself said a mass in which he begged for God’s mercy and forgiveness for the

⁸ *LP* 86: 14.

⁹ *PL* 90: 351. See de Blaauw 1994, 1:436–42; Saxer 2001, 133–46, for a summary of these processions and their transformations into the Middle Ages.

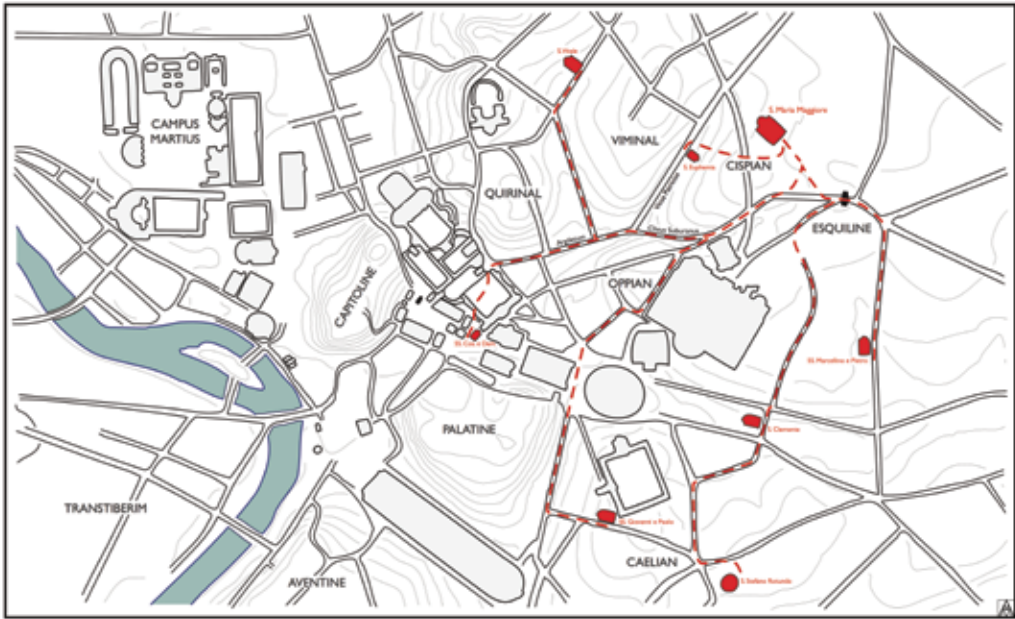


Figure 10.3. Plan of Rome showing hypothesized routes of Gregory I's *laetania septiformis* in 590. Image by M. M. Andrews.

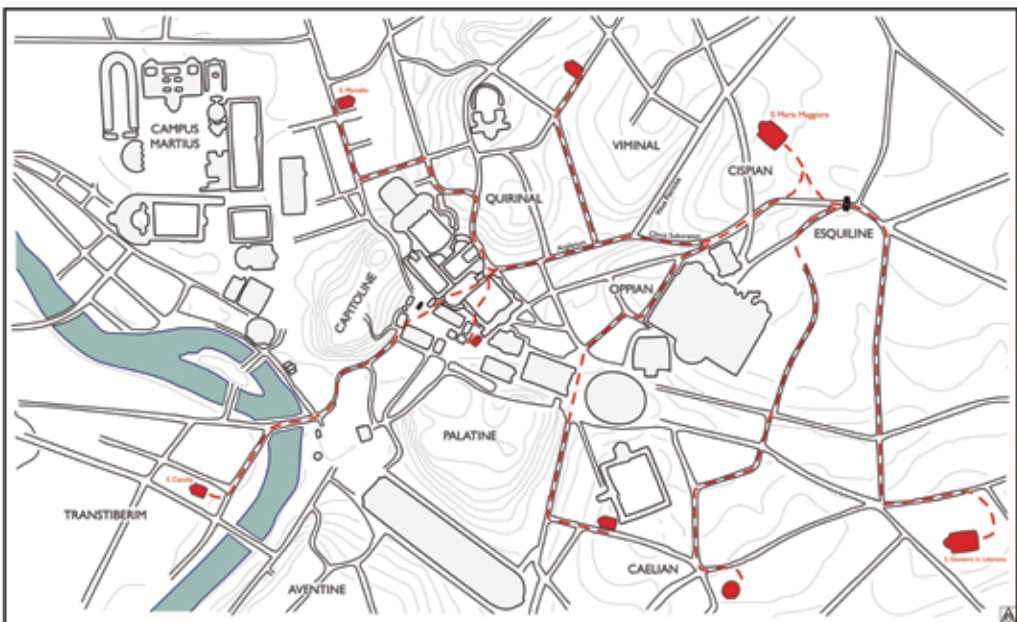


Figure 10.4. Plan of Rome showing hypothesized routes of Gregory I's *laetania septiformis* in 603. Image by M. M. Andrews.

city's collective sins. In their use of Santa Maria Maggiore as the terminus, both sets of Gregory's seven-form litanies mark the first time that, as I believe, Mary was invoked so directly during a public ceremony in Rome, and it is critical to note the circumstances of civic disaster in which they occurred.¹⁰

Prior to Gregory's processions, public expression of Marian devotion had been limited and rather slow to develop in Rome. The construction of Santa Maria Maggiore itself in the 430s marks the most important moment and most visible papal endorsement. Its construction occurred within the context of a much wider discourse on the nature of Mary and her relationship to Christ that, after decades of growing disagreement, culminated in the Council of Ephesus in 432 and the declaration, as orthodoxy, of Mary as a virgin mother of a fully divine Christ. Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome was the first Marian church in the Western empire, and its construction and decorative programs signalled strongly the papacy's support of Mary's now orthodox role of *Theotokos*, bearer of the divine. After the construction of the basilica, however, another Marian church would not appear in the city until more than a century later, nor is there much evidence for her presence at the center of any liturgical celebrations prior to the sixth century. The construction of Santa Maria Maggiore, then, appears to have been more a papal statement within the context of the Mariological debates of the early fifth century than an institutional embrace of swelling and pervasive popular sentiment for the Virgin.

However out of the ordinary Gregory's processions and Mary's central role within them were to Rome, the young pontiff was aware that such events had been features of the urban liturgy already for decades in the Mediterranean's most important city for both political and religious administration: Constantinople. Early in his ecclesiastical career, Gregory spent six years as a papal envoy and secretary in the imperial court of Constantinople, with the primary task of securing aid for Rome in the face of a growing foreign threat from the Lombards in northern Italy.¹¹ Marian liturgical processions had been both ecclesiastical and imperial events in Constantinople since the reign of Justinian (527–65) and had thus been well established for nearly half a century by the time Gregory arrived there. Because Mary had already been an object of both popular and civic devotion so widely and strongly in the East, Constantinople embraced Mary at the civic level much more vigorously than did Rome, where public veneration of Mary had stalled in the fifth century. Early interest in Mary in Greece, Syria, and Africa can be seen already in the second century in the widespread appeal of the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*, which provided much more background into Mary's life before her giving birth to Jesus.¹² In the third and fourth centuries, the narrative of Mary becomes more robust with the appearance of the earliest accounts of the Dormition and Assumption, that is, her death and ascent into heaven, and these accounts, in addition to a devotional prayer to the Virgin from Egypt known as the *Sub tuum praesidium*, attest to an emerging interest in her as an intercessor to God.

10 Andrews 2015. For the historiography of these processions and the overfocus on them as important moments in the shaping of Gregory's papacy in the following centuries, see Latham 2015.

11 *PL* 72: 703–5; Markus 1997, 10–12; Ekonomou 2007, 8–13.

12 Succinct treatments of the *Protoevangelium of James* can be found in Constan 2003, 325–28; Shoemaker 2016, 47–61.

Liturgical celebrations, feast days, and shrines of Mary seem to appear first in Alexandria and Jerusalem at the end of the fourth century.¹³

Such public celebrations of Mary emerged in Constantinople in the early fifth century, propelled by the very public debate about the nature of Mary's role in the Nativity and the subsequent implications for the nature of Christ himself. One side, which included both the ecclesiastical and imperial administrations in Constantinople, argued for Christ's full divinity, which necessitated a special divine status for Mary (*Theotokos*, "bearer of God") that had already been prevalent in more popular devotional practices, while the other argued for a human Mary who gave birth to an only partially divine Christ. The debate culminated in the Council of Ephesus in 432, where the status of Mary as *Theotokos* was agreed upon as orthodoxy.¹⁴ Public veneration of Mary in Constantinople was indeed closely shaped by the culture and patronage of the imperial court, which was lacking in the empire's other metropoleis. This was particularly the case during the lifetime of Pulcheria, the sister of emperor Theodosius II (r. 402–50) and wife of emperor Marcian (r. 450–57). Pulcheria had been very close to the primary shaper of Constantinople's public Marian cult since her childhood, and she played a significant role in the downfall of the primary opponent of Mary's divine maternity.¹⁵ She also founded three of Constantinople's most important shrines of Mary—Blachernae, Chalkopratéia, and Hodegetria—and these shrines saw further work by the imperial couple Leo and Verina in the 470s. The Blachernae would become the most important church of Mary in the city by the sixth century, when various emperors, most notably Justinian, expanded it.¹⁶

Justinian, in fact, played a key role in formalizing the public celebration of Mary in Constantinople far beyond church patronage, first by fixing the date of the Annunciation celebration on March 25 and then by instituting the celebration of other occasions in Mary's life: her birth on September 8, her entry into the temple as a child on November 21, and her purification on February 2.¹⁷ Justinian's actions concerning Mary, however, went even further and are critical for understanding the penitential origins of Marian holidays. While the emperor's legacy is strong and mostly positive because he managed to reunite parts of the fallen Western empire with the East and because his magnificent building program has survived so well in many places, his reign was fraught with a series of crises. Most famous and perhaps threatening were the devastating and nearly fatal Nika revolts in 532, in which factions loyal to different circus-racing teams united during a circus event to oust Justinian's ministers and then the emperor himself. Thirty thousand deaths were

13 The entirety of Shoemaker 2016, but see especially 68–73 for the *Sub tuum praesidium*; see also Johnson 2008.

14 The latter doctrine was championed by Nestorius of Constantinople, who gave his name to the controversy. For a general but thorough treatment of the Nestorian schism, the debates of the Council of Ephesus, and the implications of Nestorius's defeat for the early cult of Mary in Constantinople, see Shoemaker 2016, 205–28.

15 How significant Pulcheria's role was is debated, as many scholars cast doubt on the accuracy of the later sources that are the primary evidence for her involvement. See Shoemaker 2016, 208–22, for a summary of the positions.

16 Mango 2000; Shoemaker 2016, 166–204. On the church of the Blachernae, see Mango 1998; Shoemaker 2016, 220–21.

17 Pentcheva 2006, 12.

reported, and as much as half of the city suffered some physical damage.¹⁸ Having narrowly escaped the internal Nika revolt with his life, throughout the course of his reign Justinian was dealt several significant foreign military threats from the Sassanid Persians, Huns, Turks, and Slavs, and he met with protracted resistance from Visigoths during his thirty-year attempt to reincorporate Italy into the Roman Empire. More acute and perhaps portentous threats, however, came from nature itself. As emperor, Justinian experienced nearly every natural disaster imaginable—volcanos, plagues, earthquakes, and comets.¹⁹ It was a time of strong apocalyptic sentiment, and Justinian's leadership ability and decisions were in doubt. Procopius, former panegyrist for the emperor, went so far as to call Justinian a "demonic," even the "prince of demons," perhaps meaning the Antichrist.²⁰

Mischa Meier has convincingly shown that, amid these disasters and questions of leadership, Justinian combined the relatively recent imperial interest in the cult of Mary with the already strong, popular sentiment for her to create a new sense of imperial unity with the people under divine protection, thus also enhancing the popular perception of his own *theosébeia*, or "fear of god"—a religious concept that was nonetheless considered to be required for political success. In 542, immediately following these disasters, Justinian issued a mandate about the celebration of Mary's purification on February 2, creating a major imperial ceremony for it. Meier argues that this act was a carefully calculated strategy to consolidate both imperial and religious power amid his leadership crisis. Prior to Justinian, the festival of the Purification focused less on Mary herself and more on Jesus, specifically his encounter with the holy man Simeon at the temple. Indeed, the festival was more commonly referred to as the Presentation of Jesus.²¹ Justinian shifted the focus, however, to Mary's acts within the temple, specifically her purification forty days post-partum in accordance with Jewish law. Not only was the Marian aspect of the February 2 holiday novel, but so also was the penitential aspect, perhaps conceptually related to the idea of purification and expiation. Mary's intercession during civic disasters was explicitly invoked in many of the hymns produced for the celebration, as well as in descriptions of the disasters themselves, such as that of the plague. Even more telling is the fact that Justinian's new policies for the celebration of the Purification applied exclusively in Constantinople for several decades, indicating their applicability to the very local circumstances of crisis affecting that city. Only in 561 did he mandate that a similar celebration be held in Jerusalem, where the holiday had been commemorated on a different day and had not been penitential; notably, it came just one year after a plague had struck that city.²²

Liturgical processions were certainly not new to Justinian's Constantinople; evidence for them extends as far back as the fourth century.²³ Nor were *penitential* liturgical processions in the wake or face of natural or civic disasters new, as about half a dozen of them had been held since the 440s, and some were reperformed every year thereafter.²⁴

18 Malalas 2000, 18.71; *Wars* 1:24.32–54; see also Greatrex 1997; Bassett 2004, 121–22; Croke 2005, 71–72.

19 Bassett 2004, 121–22; Croke 2005, 68–71.

20 *SH* 12:14–32; see also Meier 2002, 92–95, for all the above disasters.

21 Bickersteth 1951; Allen 2006; Denysenko 2007.

22 Meier 2002, 105–6.

23 Janin 1966; Baldovin 1987, 181–226; Bauer 2001; Berger 2001.

24 Baldovin 1987, 220–22; Meier 2002, 98–99.

But Justinian's procession on the occasion of the Purification in 542 appears to be the first to combine a penitential procession—this time in the wake of a whole series of multiple civic calamities—with an explicitly Marian liturgical celebration and an explicitly Marian destination—the shrine of the Blachernae. Although the intentions of the procession were addressed to the heavens, the circumstances of its performance had everything to do with Justinian as an earthly ruler and his public perception as a mediator between the populace of Constantinople and Mary, herself the ultimate mediator to Christ and God. His message was clearly that, with Mary's assistance and intercession, Justinian could fix the many problems that faced the city.²⁵

After Justinian, Marian celebrations and ceremony were increasingly formalized. In 587 or 588, the emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) fixed the date of Mary's Assumption on August 15 across the empire and its celebration in Constantinople at the Blachernae.²⁶ He also established on Fridays a weekly procession, called the "Intercession," that started at the Blachernae and crossed the entire city to the Chalkoprateia, thus clearly connected to Mary. In fact, it was under Maurice that Gregory "the Great" had served as papal envoy. Gregory's letters attest to his close acquaintance with the entire imperial family and the highest officials within its court, and he may have still been in the city at the time of Maurice's Marian interventions. In any case, there should be no surprise that, in the face of Gregory's own civic calamities and doubts of his untested leadership abilities at Rome, he should organize his own processions to that city's premier Marian shrine, Santa Maria Maggiore, as he did in 590 and 603, seeking the intercession of the Virgin in behalf of his own city.²⁷

In the early Byzantine period, Mary remained, for the most part, an imperial figure at Constantinople; when her intercession was sought at the civic level, it was generally in times of imperial—that is, political or military—crisis. Such was also the case for processions—Marian and otherwise—in the imperial city, as they arose within a context of intraurban factional conflict and were carried out by various parties within political, ecclesiastical, and theological disputes as means of claiming urban space.²⁸ Indeed, recent scholarship has emphasized how disorganized Constantinople's processional practices were in the early Byzantine period—frequent, apparently, but lacking a coherent program or pattern in their performance. Any number of occasions merited processions, which were sometimes celebratory, sometimes penitential, and sometimes agonistic. And even if the five or six most important churches tended to predominate as terminal locations, at some point nearly every church in the city served as a destination. By the seventh century, the processional habit of Constantinople had grown so extensively that it had no fewer than sixty-eight processions per year, many of which were popular. Processions were thus an integral aspect of urban life, but they lacked any collective coherence or even distinction from regular liturgical practices. Constantinople's liturgy was so inherently urban and civil that it is difficult to separate religious and secular processions.²⁹ Although

25 Meier 2002, 110–11.

26 *Chronologia*, 387; *PG* 147: 291–92; Pentcheva 2006, 12; Berger 2001, 81.

27 Andrews 2015.

28 Baldovin 1987, 183–86, 210.

29 Baldovin 1987, 211–14; Bauer 2001, 50–56.

the Virgin was present in Constantinople's urban liturgy and image from the fifth century and gained a more formal presence in the city's liturgy under Justinian, she was still only one of the many figures and causes around which urban space and institutional ceremony had been constructed.

The traditional scholarly narrative argues that Mary became the undisputed sacred symbol for the city and its protection in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, when she was believed to have dramatically intervened during a number of civic or imperial crises.³⁰ For example, in 608, Heraclius apparently displayed images of the Virgin on his ships during a successful naval revolt against the incompetent emperor Phocas, while in 626 an icon and relics of Mary were allegedly paraded throughout the city to protect it during a Persian and Avar invasion that was ultimately repelled.³¹ But more recent scholarship has shown that these legends were retrojected onto the liturgical life of the earlier city during the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Marian icons emerge more definitively as objects that were believed to grant imperial and civic protection.³² This retrojection was part of an effort to pare down Constantinople's busy processional calendar to make it much more consistent, civically unified, and, most importantly for our purposes, Marian.³³ In short, Mary's focal role in Constantinople's civic and religious life comes into full focus only in the tenth century and later.

This revised chronological assessment of Mary's role in the urban liturgy of Constantinople complicates the traditional narrative of cultural change in Rome during its (re)incorporation into the Byzantine Empire from the mid-sixth to the mid-eighth centuries. Since 476, Rome and the Italian peninsula at large had been under the control of various Germanic and Gothic powerholders, while the Roman Empire survived only in the East. Justinian undertook the protracted Gothic Wars from 535 to 544 to reclaim the peninsula for the Roman Empire, but he subsequently lost control of practically all of it except for Rome, its immediate surroundings, and the toe of the peninsula to the Lombards in the 560s.³⁴ Rome has therefore been traditionally seen as an imperial bastion within the otherwise hostile peninsula and a sort of mirror for Byzantine cultural practices during this period. Eastern influence moved west to Rome, a robust cult of Mary and regular Marian liturgical processions chief among the new arrivals.³⁵ While much evidence supports attributing the rise in popularity of the Marian cult in Rome to Byzantine activity and influence there, the narrative of how processions dedicated to Mary emerged is more complicated. If Mary emerged as a consistent focus of urban liturgy in Constantinople much later than the traditional narrative posits, we can see Rome's early medieval Marian processions as constituting a much more local papal creation during the seventh and eighth centuries and less a Byzantine import. The introduction of the penitential Marian procession under Gregory appears indeed to have been inspired by Justinian's imperial practices in the

30 Most famously Cameron 1978.

31 See Peltomaa 2009 for an analysis of the sources for this event.

32 Pentcheva 2002; 2006, 16–35.

33 For the reduction in processional frequency, see Baldovin 1987, 212–13.

34 For more historical overviews of these events, see Wickham 1981; Noble 1984; Christie 1995, 2006; La Rocca 2002.

35 Krautheimer 1980; Ekonomou 2007; Osborne 2017, 2020; Maskarinec 2018.

capital city, but the continuity of such processions in Rome thereafter can now be more clearly considered within the context of Rome itself and seen as distinct to the papal city.

In early medieval Rome, the pope was both the spiritual and civic leader, the latter role increasingly apparent from the late seventh century when Rome began to break from the Byzantine administration, ultimately gaining full independence in the 750s.³⁶ The papacy alone now controlled both the sacred *and* political landscapes of the city, unlike in Constantinople, where a wide variety of processions were used to construct these landscapes necessarily late in the history of Christianity's urban diffusion. Rome's Christian landscape had been fixed for centuries; it consisted primarily of martyrs' tombs and the shrines built on top of or around them—Saint Peter's tomb at the Vatican, Saint Paul's, and Saint Lawrence's among the most notable. Other churches were established where Christians had met in secret during the centuries before Christianity was legalized by Constantine in 314. The Church, which had operated either in conflict with the imperial administration or in its absence, had always been the undisputed steward of Rome's sacred landscape. The political and ecclesiastical situation in seventh- and eighth-century Rome, where a singular institutional presence could exploit them with singular focus apart from much Byzantine influence, permitted an efficient consolidation of and much clearer messaging around processions and their ritual dynamics. Compared to Constantinople's sixty-eight processions at this time, Rome had only eight, apart from the Lenten season, and by the late seventh century, four of them were specifically Marian and penitential. After a successful precedent for penitential Marian processions was set by none other than Gregory the Great, who had been especially revered in the eighth and ninth centuries, it is therefore unsurprising that a papacy now responsible for the civic and spiritual well-being of its residents would again focus most heavily on Mary and her intercessory powers.³⁷

As was the case for Justinian in sixth-century Constantinople, Rome's Marian processions became a context for liturgical and ceremonial innovation to heighten the public perception of the papacy's growing power. The penitential drama and performance of the processions increased in lockstep with its political independence, clearly emphasizing the pope's role as the primary—indeed only—mediator among Mary, Jesus, and the city of Rome. In 757, just five years after the official break from the Byzantine Empire, Pope Stephen II held a procession in the face of aggressive Lombard threats:

. . . with the holy image of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ and . . . various other sacred religious objects. With the rest of the *sacerdotes*, the holy pope bore that holy image on his own shoulder, and both he and the entire people processed barefoot into [Santa Maria Maggiore]. Ash was placed on the heads of all the people, and they made their way with great wailing and besought the most merciful Lord our God. They attached and fixed to our Lord God's adorable cross the actual treaty which the unspeakable king of the Lombards had torn to pieces.³⁸

This occasion indeed marked the earliest appearance of ashes in a procession, but even more importantly the icon of Christ, said to have been painted by the evangelist Luke,

36 For the papacy's independence from the Byzantine Empire, see Noble 1984.

37 See Latham 2015.

38 *LP* 94.11.

that was housed in the Lateran (fig. 10.5).³⁹ This icon was the same one that, nearly a century later in 847, Leo IV would carry in his procession on the Feast of the Assumption, when he vanquished the basilisk from below the small church of Santa Lucia on his way to Santa Maria Maggiore.

By the ninth century, icons of Mary herself joined that of Christ in the Marian processions, and the Marian holidays themselves focused more explicitly on Mary's intercession in behalf of the city. Particular emphasis was given to the Assumption, as it was the moment when Mary entered the heavenly realm with God. The entire celebration moved from the early morning to the late evening to emphasize even further the solemnity of the occasion. And instead of beginning at San Adriano in the Forum, it now began at the

papal palace of the Lateran. There the icon of Christ carried earlier by Stephen II was formally unveiled and removed. The pope and his attendants then made their way in a formal procession to the Forum, where the usual ceremony at San Adriano and the procession to Santa Maria Maggiore would then unfold (fig. 10.6). But dramatic new elements focused the attention on the power of Mary to intercede in behalf of believers to God and Christ. During the procession from the Lateran to the Forum, an icon of Mary holding Christ was brought forth from the church of Santa Maria Nova (now Santa Francesca Romana) to meet the icon of Christ (fig. 10.7) ceremonially, and another icon of Mary awaited the icon of Christ at Santa Maria Maggiore. Much later accounts from the mid-sixteenth century describe how the latter icon of Mary would sometimes tremble in anticipation of this meeting.⁴⁰

There is considerable debate on the identity of the icon of Mary used at Santa Maria Maggiore in the initial centuries of these processions. It is most commonly believed to have been the very icon of Mary housed there, which from the nineteenth century has been known as the *Salus Populi Romani*, the "health of the Roman people," a phrase adopted from pre-Christian Roman religion and a clear indication of its enduring ability to



Figure 10.5. Icon of Christ (*Acheiropoietos Lateranensis*) housed within the Sancta Sanctorum at the Lateran and carried in Stephen II's procession to stave off the Lombard threat in 757 CE. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

³⁹ See Noreen 2006 for a brief overview of this icon.

⁴⁰ Tronzo 1989; Belting 1994, 47–77; Wolf 1990, 31–37.

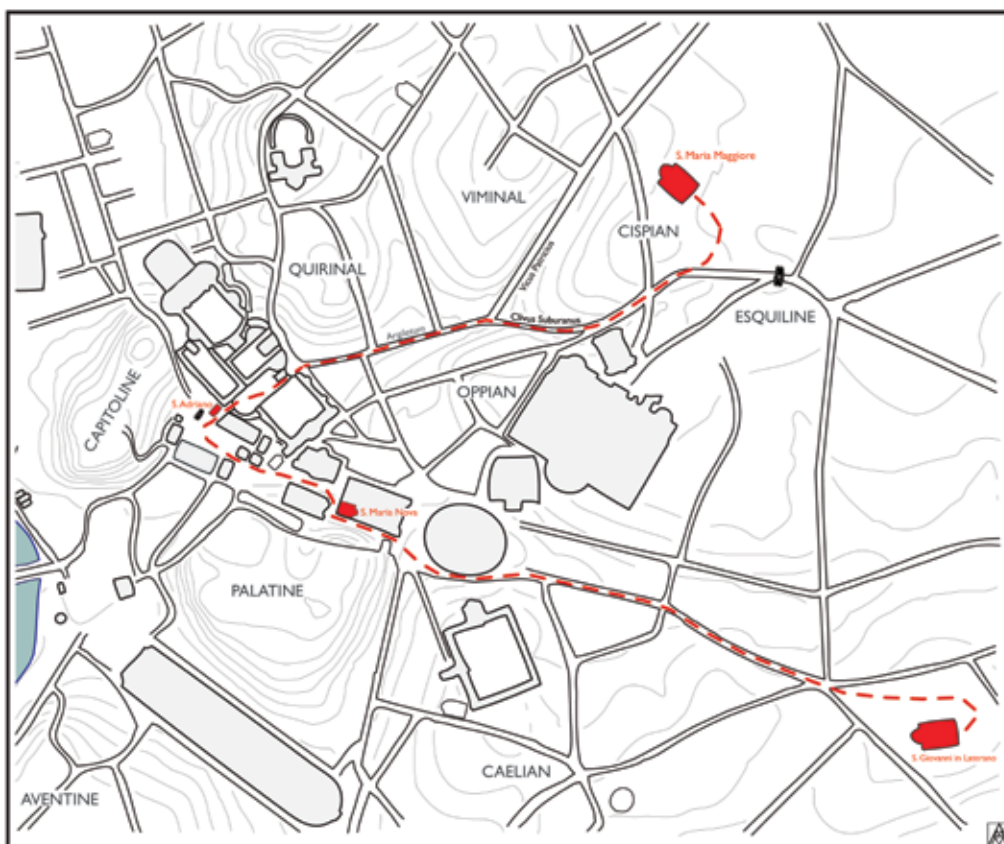


Figure 10.6. Plan of Rome showing the extended route of the Assumption procession in the ninth century CE. Image by M. M. Andrews.

ensure the survival of Rome and its residents.⁴¹ The icon depicts Mary holding the Christ child on her lap with her arms draped and hands folded around his legs (fig. 10.8). This particular image was certainly used by the twelfth century, but the date of the icon is believed to extend back to the early medieval period, if not earlier.⁴² As would have been the case also at Santa Maria Nova, the union of this icon with the Lateran icon of Christ would have created a double appearance of Christ, thus complicating any narrative interpretation. Gerhard Wolf, who has most extensively studied the *Salus Populi Romani*, proposed that such a scene might have represented the belief that Mary was both the mother *and* the bride of Christ, as well as his daughter in the moment of her Assumption, with which we are concerned here.⁴³

Another interpretation of the sources, however, proposes that the *Salus Populi Romani* would not have been introduced until the later medieval period, when our sources for it begin, and that initially the Marian icon that met the Lateran icon of Christ was a different

41 Wolf 1990, *passim*.

42 Wolf 1990, 24; 2005, 31–32.

43 Wolf 2005, 33–34.



Figure 10.7. Icon of Mary housed within the church of Santa Maria Nova (now Santa Francesca Romana) during the Assumption processions beginning in the ninth century CE. Image from public domain, Creative Commons license.



Figure 10.8. The *Salus Populi Romani* icon of Mary within the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

one: the Madonna Advocata icon currently held in the convent of Santa Maria Rosario on Monte Mario in the northwestern extents of Rome. This image depicts Mary alone and in an act of appeal and intercession, with her hands extended to a Christ who is presumably beyond the boundary of the icon (fig. 10.9). The icon has a number of indirect associations with the Assumption procession in medieval sources, and the Advocata image type was also used in Assumption processions in nearby towns, whose ceremonies were all but certainly modeled on that of Rome. If this icon were in fact the one used in Rome itself, its union with the Lateran icon of Christ would have created a scene known as the *Deesis*, the standard depiction of intercessory prayer in the medieval period, and one thus quite appropriate to a principal meaning of the Assumption procession. Indeed, the meeting of the icons could have been understood as representing the Assumption itself, when Mary united with Christ in heaven—the critical moment in which she gained her intercessory powers on behalf of humankind.⁴⁴

In either case, it is clear that public or institutional ceremony focused on Mary became much more robust in the seventh century and thereafter in Rome, well before the Virgin emerged as the savior of Constantinople. The concept of the penitential Marian procession

⁴⁴ Tronzo 1989, 175–84.

came initially through Gregory from sixth-century Constantinople and Justinian's struggle to maintain his position and perception as the city's civic—and also to some degree spiritual—leader. While Justinian exploited the idea of Mary as a civic protectress and intercessor and the necessity of penitence to activate that role, Rome's early medieval penitential Marian processions assumed their characteristic nature in a local context, where, as the papal city shed the mantle of Constantinople's imperial control, a more streamlined power structure and less complex liturgical calendar consolidated their focus. Mary certainly had a special status wrapped up in imperial association that remained apparent until the eighth century in Constantinople, but she received little special attention in a calendar of nearly seventy liturgical processions per year there. At Rome, on the other hand, such processions were much rarer events, and, as such, they became much more important—and ultimately successful—moments for an increasingly independent papacy to shape its public perception and convey a direct ability to channel Mary's intercessory powers. They were occasions for performative innovation that stressed the papacy's special connection to her independent of any imperial mediation from Constantinople. So when Leo IV vanquished the basilisk from Santa Lucia on his way to Santa Maria Maggiore in the Assumption procession of 847, he was enacting a Marian miracle in behalf of his city and its soul, and a miracle that, at least until the tenth century, was distinctively Roman.



Figure 10.9. The Madonna Advocata icon, now kept in the monastery of Santa Maria Rosario. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Chronologia* Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History ad 284–813*. Edited by C. Mango and R. Scott. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997
- LP* Raymond Davis, trans., *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995
- PG* J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia cursus completes: series Graeca*. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1857–66
- PL* J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia cursus completes: series Latina*. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1844–80
- SH* Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*. Translated by H. B. Dewing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935
- Wars* Procopius, *History of the Wars*. Translated by H. B. Dewing. 5 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924

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PART III

REACTING(?) IN SPACE

11

The Great Silence: Politics and Resistance in the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex

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THIS ESSAY TAKES its title from a well-worn anecdote in the annals of twentieth-century science. In the summer of 1950, a group of physicists were having lunch at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Among them was Enrico Fermi, most famous for his role in creating the world's first nuclear reaction. The conversation turned to a cartoon from the *New Yorker* that depicted aliens emerging from flying saucers to abscond with New York's public garbage cans, thereby offering a solution to the mystery of disappearing trash cans that was then plaguing the city while also offering a comical take on the midcentury rash of UFO sightings. Conversation meandered, but Fermi abruptly returned to the subject, blurt-ing out, "Where is everybody?"—which everyone present instantly knew to be referring to the curious absence of evidence for aliens. The answer to Fermi's question has been debat-ed ever since. The problem is this: given that there are hundreds of billions of stars (many presumably with planetary systems) in our galaxy alone, and that there are hundreds of billions of galaxies, why have we no evidence for extraterrestrial life? The issue is the con-trast between scale and outcome—the probability of extraterrestrial life is astronomically high; the evidence for it, nonexistent. This conundrum has come to be known as the Fermi Paradox or, more evocatively, the Great Silence.¹

I open with Fermi because his paradox reminds me of a paradoxical great silence in my area of study, the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex, or SACC.² In this case the paradox is that there is an overwhelming likelihood that common citizens were involved in political discourse in SACC, yet there is an almost complete absence of evidence for nonelite polit-ical life. On the one hand, we have a vast array of archaeological and historical evidence for political authority in SACC, yet, on the other, we know precious little about the expe-rience of politics within SACC, how—or really even *whether*—its citizens participated in political discourse. We are faced with the paradox that scale and probability favor a deeply felt political experience, yet there is, in fact, little evidence for involvement with political phenomena beyond the most elite political actors.

1 Accounts of the famous lunch meeting have been provided by Fermi's interlocutors that day—Emil Konopinski, Edward Teller, and Herbert York—in correspondence compiled by Eric M. Jones in an unpub-lished 1985 report, Los Alamos Technical Report LA-10311-MS. See also Webb 2015.

2 As Seth Richardson refers to it in his concluding response to this volume, the "Osborne Paradox."

If we can ask, as Fermi did, why we do not see action on the political stage that we think must have existed, I suggest that, unlike the Fermi Paradox, “great silence” is in this case not simply an alternative name of the problem but rather a description of the solution. Like James C. Scott’s analysis of the arts of resistance,³ I view quotidian Syro-Anatolian life as conspicuously, even deliberately, not participating in political discourse. Daily life was a domain that, at most, viewed political rhetoric emanating from the capital cities as something that could be blithely ignored while tending to the exigencies of existence, or perhaps more likely, a domain whose political isolation was itself an active and deliberate stance against domination.

In the spirit of recent archaeological work exploring the relationship between politics and the built environment inspired by Adam Smith,⁴ this essay draws evidence for this counterintuitive argument for ancient political life—resistance to power by refusing to engage with it—from rural settlement pattern dynamics and especially the domestic architecture found in secondary and tertiary sites. A modest but growing corpus of nonelite residences from SACC provides our best picture of Iron Age domestic life. Yet the record of SACC’s domestic architecture has rarely, if ever, been compiled in a single venue, nor has it been tapped for what it contributes to our understanding of political dynamics in this time and place. As Morgan notes in this volume’s introduction, such a “grassroots” perspective on political authority offers a much-needed complement to studies of ancient politics that have been almost exclusively restricted to the uppermost echelons of political society. After a brief description of Syro-Anatolian history and archaeology and the contours of its elite political life already established by scholarship, therefore, this essay turns to settlement patterns and hypothetical agricultural catchment areas and finally explores the region’s underdiscussed assemblage of domestic architecture. Several settlements that were never capitals of Syro-Anatolian polities, including ‘Ain Dara, Çatal Höyük, Tell Mastuma, and Tille Höyük, have produced such remains. Here these buildings are analyzed by means of space syntax, a method of spatial analysis that reveals a region-wide pattern of interaction between neighbors even while internal building traffic was closely regulated, supporting a picture of domestic life that was deliberately closed from participating in elite political supervision and control.

POLITICS AND THE SYRO-ANATOLIAN CULTURE COMPLEX

During the early centuries of the first millennium BCE, the northeast corner of the Mediterranean was occupied by a patchwork of roughly a dozen city-states, each characterized by a large and politically dominant urban center that served as the capital city, surrounded by a handful of secondary towns and dozens of rural villages (fig. 11.1). While these kingdoms are typically labeled using a variety of terms, including Neo-Hittite, Luwian, Aramaean, and Syro-Hittite, based especially on the predominant language found in a kingdom’s inscriptions (usually, though not always, Luwian or Aramaic), I have elsewhere proposed that an appropriate descriptor for this cultural phenomenon is the previously

³ Scott 1990.

⁴ Smith 2003.

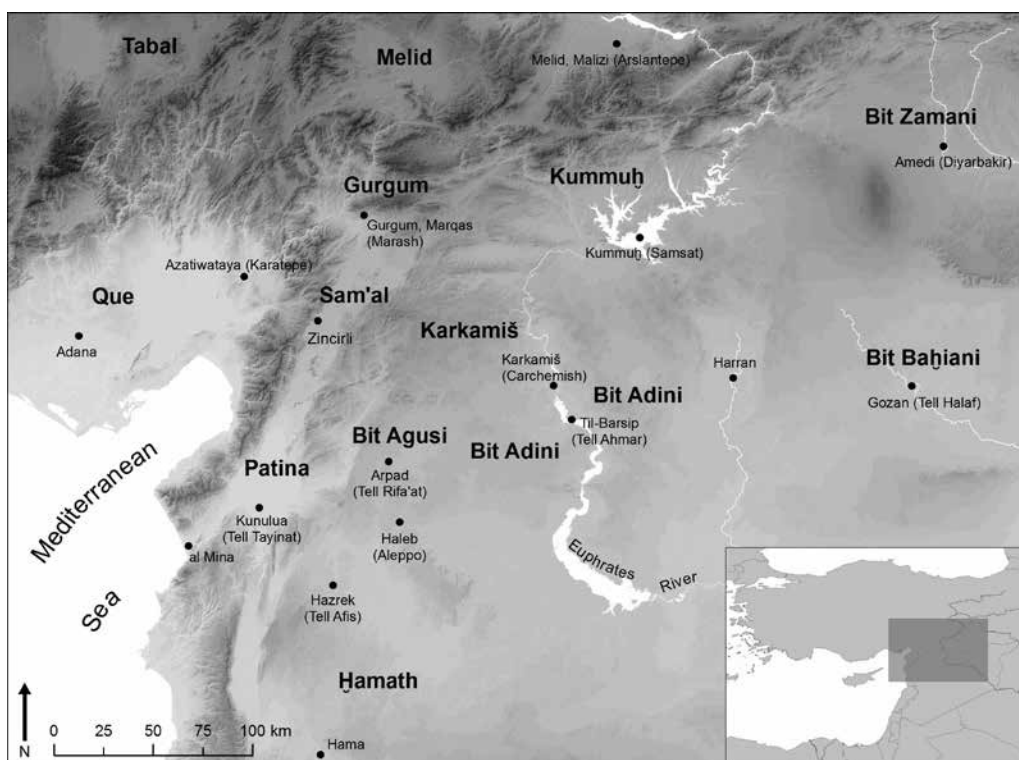


Figure 11.1. Map of the principal city-states and capital cities of the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex.

mentioned “Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex.”⁵ The city-states that constitute SACC came into existence in the late second millennium BCE following the end of the Late Bronze Age and the subsequent cultural demographic transformations. The Iron Age I period, roughly 1200–950 BCE, saw new manifestations of preceding political formations first take shape, and in the following Iron II period (ca. 950–700 BCE) these city-states were at their wealthiest and most powerful, even while having to assuage the economic and political demands of the region’s contemporary superpower: on the Tigris River to the east of SACC lay the aggressively expansionary Neo-Assyrian Empire, which eventually brought SACC to its own demise.⁶ Following conquest, individual Syro-Anatolian city-states were absorbed piecemeal into the apparatus of empire as constituent provinces.⁷

5 Without getting drawn into a lengthy exposition that would involve a fuller characterization of SACC than is possible here, the principal motivations for avoiding ethnic phrases include the fact that these polities were occupied by multilingual communities whose ethnic affiliations are not always clear, and the need to avoid the trap of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller 2002), by which is meant the tendency to treat the contemporary nation-state’s fusion of polity, territory, and ethnicity as the natural sociopolitical order, an order that is empirically absent from the archaeological and historical record of these polities. See Osborne 2021.

6 For historical summaries of individual polities and details of the numerous relevant inscriptions that scaffold this historical framework, see Bryce 2012, Hawkins 2000, and Younger 2016.

7 Radner 2006.

Our knowledge of political authority and its textual and archaeological expression in SACC is a view almost entirely from the top-down. In part this situation results from the nature of the evidence itself, such as the numerous and well-preserved monumental inscriptions compared with the rare and poorly preserved lead strips that recorded mundane economic transactions, like the ones discovered near Kululu,⁸ as well as correspondence such as that excavated from Assur.⁹ But fault lies also with the century and a half of scholarship that has been disproportionately preoccupied with elite remains. We know, for example, that rulers of Syro-Anatolian city-states ruled from palaces that historical texts refer to as *bīt-ḥilāni*, known especially for their columned-portico entryways. Scholars have performed spatial analysis on these buildings, including interpretations of viewsheds and visibility graph analysis, concluding that these structures tightly coordinated symbols and space to promote royal authority.¹⁰ As David Kertai has aptly summarized, lines of sight between the porticoes of Zincirli's *bīt-ḥilāni* Palaces J and K and the entrances to the courtyard before them were deliberately established to evoke an emotive response from viewers that reinforced social hierarchies: "The Northwest Complex provided insight into social relations, which were created, enhanced and reacted upon through the gaze."¹¹ But as my own article's title on this topic—"Communicating Power in the *Bīt-Ḥilāni* Palace"—suggests, we may understand how these buildings were designed to express a particular political message, but we have little inkling of their actual political reception. No amount of predictive modeling can tell us whether such designs and communications actually had the desired effect on the people who moved through these buildings.

We possess a number of royal inscriptions, typically commemorations of monumental constructions, military events, and the allegedly unprecedented accomplishments of the authors. Regular citizenry appears rarely in such texts, and when it does, it is in the patronizing tones of paternalism; for example, in the Phoenician-Luwian bilingual inscription from Karatepe, the author describes his improvement of security within his realm by stating that in places where men once feared to go, now even women may walk, and without even disturbing their spindles.¹² These texts are unhelpful for the project of nonelite political processes, for they present the commoners' loyalties as so obviously earned that explicit mention of the nonelites is barely necessary. And as noted earlier, the lead strips that were apparently used as the medium of quotidian textual communication have not been preserved in sufficient quantity to provide us with the actual voices of more than a handful of nonelite authors.

We know a fair bit about Syro-Anatolian urban planning and the royal agency behind it, thanks to more than a century of excavation of SACC's capital cities, including Arslantepe (Malatya), Tell Halaf (Gozan), Tell Tayinat (Kunulua), and Zincirli (Sam'al), among others. Several scholars have argued that these city plans index a series of decisions in which monumental statuary, public buildings, and inscriptions were tightly coordinated

8 Hawkins 2000, 503–13.

9 Hawkins 2000, 533–55.

10 Osborne 2012; Kertai 2017, 2019.

11 Kertai 2019, 94–95.

12 Röellig 1999; Hawkins 2000, 52–53.

to promulgate a message of royal authority to urban dwellers.¹³ Such seems especially apparent, for example, in the consistent symbolic association between royalty and city gates mentioned in inscriptions—inscriptions that were often located in the gateways themselves, which were often further adorned with a colossal royal statue. Still debated is whether such design decisions were noticed or understood by pedestrians moving through these spaces, or whether urban elements such as monumental art were part of a largely unnoticed backdrop. As with the *bit-ḫilāni* palace, evaluating the intellectual or emotional experience of an urban environment charged with political symbolism amounts to little more than guesswork.¹⁴

A long-standing assumption within the study of Syro-Anatolian urbanism has been that the large lower settlements surrounding the raised upper cities and palace compounds—the standard morphology of Syro-Anatolian cities—were occupied by non-elite residents living in small-scale domestic residences. This supposition has been based primarily on the fact that only the upper cities have been excavated; when those quarters produced monumental elite architecture, it was reasoned, it must be in the predominantly unexcavated lower towns that people other than the royal family and its retinue actually resided. Yet recent research beyond the upper city has destabilized this fixture of Syro-Anatolian urbanism, and it now seems that even here the cities were largely occupied by elite residents.

A magnetic gradiometry geophysical survey in the lower town at Zincirli, for example, has documented courtyard building plans of the late eighth and seventh centuries that are as monumental in scale as the acropolis's Upper Palace as well as other sites' largest elite buildings.¹⁵ Noting that this plan represents only the Neo-Assyrian (i.e., post-SACC) phase of the settlement,¹⁶ Virginia Herrmann conducted excavations in the northern lower town, Areas 5 and 6, which confirmed that architecture prior to Assyrian annexation was indeed at least partially occupied by elites. Although the building complexes excavated in this area appear to have begun as small-scale domestic structures that were agglutinated through time into larger complexes, by the time of the last independent Samalian rulers the district had already turned into the elite residential area that would be even further monumentalized during the period of Assyrian rule. One of the large courtyard buildings nearby may even have been occupied by Katumuwa himself, author of the mortuary stela discovered there.¹⁷ Intensive surface survey of the unexcavated lower town at Tell Tayinat has shown indications of elite occupation there as well. Collection units measuring 10 × 10 m and spaced 20 m apart, for example, produced distinct spatial clusters of imported ceramics from Cyprus compared with ubiquitous common ware, and fragments of monumental sculpture were also discovered, including a piece of curly hair and another one more difficult to identify, but both likely originating from a colossal statue (fig. 11.2).¹⁸

13 Gilibert 2013; Harmanşah 2013; Osborne 2014; Pucci 2008.

14 For a sophisticated attempt to model predictively some of the emotional characteristics of audiences' experience of performances held in Mesopotamian courtyards, see McMahon, this volume.

15 Casana and Herrmann 2010, fig. 9; see also Herrmann 2017, fig. 5.

16 Herrmann 2017, 289–92.

17 Herrmann 2017, 299.

18 Osborne 2017b; Osborne and Karacic 2017.



Figure 11.2. Syro-Anatolian statuary fragments found on the surface of the lower town of Tell Tayinat, ancient Kunulua—hair fragment from a colossal statue (A) and an unidentified, possible dress fragment (B). Photos by Emily Booker and Steven Karacic.

It seems that we may now have to understand the capital cities of SACC as being occupied more or less entirely by elite actors, especially toward the end of the city-states' independent existence. This new model of “elites behind walls,” as Mirko Novák has called it,¹⁹ inevitably returns us to our initial paradox: if nonelite citizens were not even present (at least not to the extent that we previously thought) in the political centers where the trappings of political expression were located, then how were they experiencing the political?

A recent answer to this question has been that politics was experienced in moments of spectacular performance. Developing DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle's work on the materialization of ideology,²⁰ Alessandra Gilibert argues that state-sponsored spectacles in the relief-lined courtyards of Syro-Anatolian capitals, evidenced not only by monumental art lining those spaces but also by the presence of libation receptacles and cup-marks, fused permanent but emotionally empty monuments on the one hand with fleeting but emotionally charged experiences on the other hand; the combination created a long-term sense of political subjectivity.²¹ Calculating from an average crowd size of 2.5 people per square meter along with an approximately 3,000 m² courtyard at Carchemish, for example, Gilibert arrives at an estimate of 7,500 people in attendance at a festival in the city's public plaza.²² According to the usual settlement population density range offered in ancient Near Eastern contexts of 100–200 people per hectare,²³ this number would have been an extremely large proportion of the roughly 9,100–18,200 people who lived in the 91 ha city. By this same logic, almost 14,000 people could have attended the same at Tayinat, based on the significantly larger courtyard space in that site's palace compound (fig. 11.3). However,

¹⁹ Novák 2018.

²⁰ DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996.

²¹ Gilibert 2011.

²² Gilibert (2011, 103 and n. 168, with references) notes that certain gatherings produce crowd densities far higher, reaching as high as 10 people per square meter.

²³ Zorn 1994.

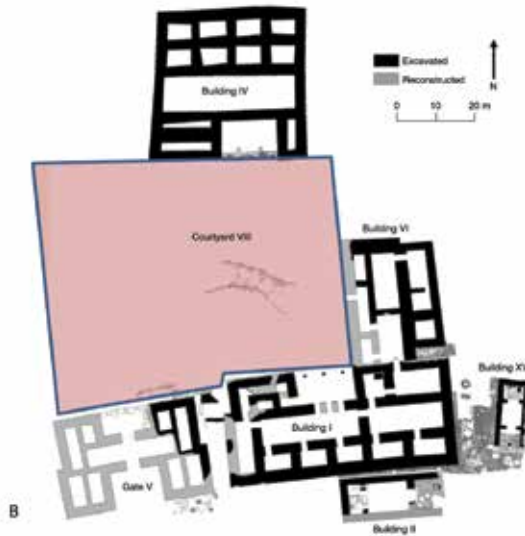
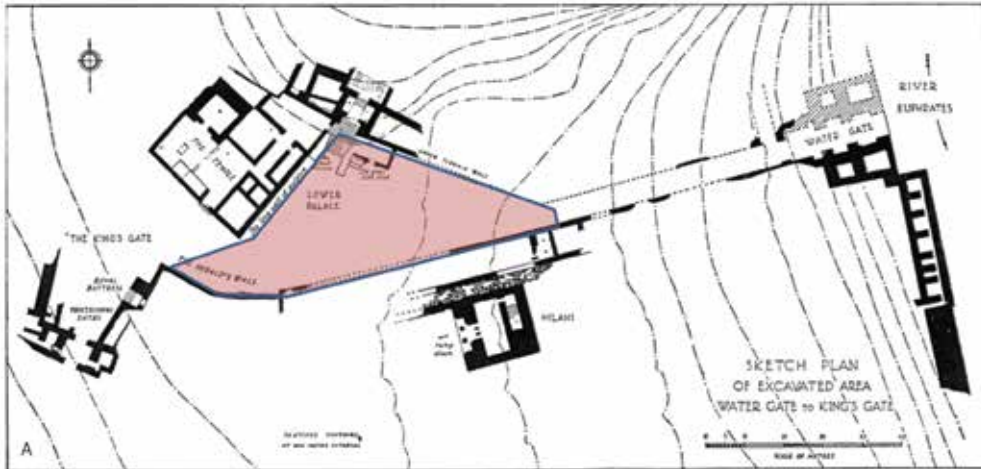


Figure 11.3. Public courtyards in the palace compounds of Carchemish (A) and Tell Tayinat, ancient Kunulua (B). Drawings at the same scale.

given that at Tayinat, comprising only 35 ha, the entire population was likely between 3,500 and 7,000 people, and given the unexpectedness of the smaller city's having such a disproportionately larger plaza, we need to consider some caveats before being completely seduced by the power of performance.

For one thing, to my knowledge we have no evidence that such Iron Age public festivals actually took place. There are no texts stating that they did, let alone providing detailed descriptions or instructions. This situation contrasts starkly with that of the Hittite world of the preceding Late Bronze Age, where texts provide in great detail the nature of the festivals that took place.²⁴ In other words, for SACC we have the stage but no script

²⁴ Bryce 2002, 187–210; Haas 1994.

or stage directions. Even if we grant that state performances did occur in these venues, which does seem a reasonable assumption, we know nothing about the composition of the audience. Why assume the audience was composed necessarily of nonelite citizens being indoctrinated into state ideology as opposed to members of the elite who were already sympathetic to the message? Given what we now know about the composition of the capitals' lower towns, it seems equally possible that only the privileged few were granted access to such ceremonies.

The most significant point that compromises our ability to put so much interpretive weight on the shoulders of Iron Age performance is that we tend to misunderstand just what such performances are telling us about ancient political life. We assume that demonstrating their existence is simultaneously proof of their success and efficacy, but this is by no means the case. Regardless of attendance and audience, such performances constitute only one portion of the political sphere. This portion says little about the popular experience of politics, since it belongs to what James C. Scott refers to as the "public transcript" of political relationships, or the open, publicly declared, and mutually agreed-upon interactions between those with power and those without.²⁵ And because the public transcript is established predominantly by those with power, we are able to see in it only those things that the powerful would like us to see. With respect to performance specifically, Scott writes: "Nothing conveys the public transcript more as the dominant would like it to seem than the formal ceremonies they organize to celebrate and dramatize their rule. Parades, inaugurations, processions, coronations, funerals provide ruling groups with the occasion to make a spectacle of themselves in a manner largely of their own choosing."²⁶ Critically, this observation holds true even if subordinate participants are fully and willingly engaged—for how could they be otherwise?²⁷ It follows that performances are not informative about nonelite citizens' engagement with the political domain, since in many cases they are merely saying the necessary words through gritted teeth. Even if we grant that Gilibert's Syro-Anatolian performances took place with the involvement of commoners, therefore, they instruct us about official political discourse only, not the political experience of the subordinate.

For the latter, we need to turn our attention to the political "hidden transcript," or "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders."²⁸ Scott

25 Scott 1990.

26 Scott 1990, 58.

27 Another passage of Scott's definition of the public transcript is worth quoting at length: "The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail. In the short run, it is in the interest of the subordinate to produce a more or less credible performance, speaking the lines and making the gestures he knows are expected of him. The result is that the public transcript is—barring a crisis—systematically skewed in the direction of the libretto, the discourse, represented by the dominant. In ideological terms the public transcript will typically, by its accommodationist tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse. It is in precisely this public domain where the effects of power relations are most manifest, and any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination" (Scott 1990, 4).

28 Scott 1990, 4.

details a number of social sites where the hidden transcript of otherwise powerless people is able to give expression to autonomy and resistance precisely because it is not out in the open and is thus impervious to elite attack. This transcript has an audience all its own, one that is unmonitored and therefore free to express political resistance. The sites of the hidden transcript are diverse and might include linguistic behavior, such as slang, songs, and folktales, or practices such as poaching, feet dragging, and engaging in surreptitious religious gatherings.²⁹ Such sites might also, one presumes, include material culture and the built environment, though Scott himself does not explore these options.

Note that resistance in this context does *not* refer to overt challenges to the political status quo such as open rebellion and revolution. Regarding SACC, one might include its colossal royal statues in this context, since many of them were found smashed to pieces or mutilated in symbolically meaningful ways (fig. 11.4). In some cases this destruction likely took place upon the Neo-Assyrian conquest; in others it is possible that these episodes of counter-monumentality represent radical acts of internal political protests that flashed brightly before quickly expiring.³⁰ Instead of such brazenly declared protest movements, what we need is access to the everyday forms of quiet resistance that took place out of sight from public discourse. Not surprisingly, this realm of political discourse is all but hidden



Figure 11.4. Head of a colossal statue likely originally standing roughly 3.5 m tall, found within Tell Tayinat's Gateway VII and smashed by unknown agents. ISACM photo Tayinat FN 322-T.

²⁹ For a twentieth-century example from Soviet Russia, see the popular *anekdoti* produced at the centennial of Lenin's birth, described in the introduction to Lauren Ristvet's contribution to this volume.

³⁰ Osborne 2017a.

from view—as, of course, it was intended to be. Where Scott has his memoirs of formerly enslaved African Americans to marshal, for example, with their unique vantage onto a political world completely unseen by the plantation owners, Iron Age scholars have little but the material remains of subordinate peoples. Although not informative of the hidden transcript in a direct sense, indirectly the material record, including the architectural remains, of nonelite actors in SACC provides evidence for a political position set in opposition to political authority, expressed primarily in its indifference to that authority's existence.

Until recently, the archaeology of resistance has not been afforded a tremendous amount of attention by archaeologists, for whom identifying structures of power is typically a more accessible entry into ancient political life. By virtue of the presence of textual records, historical archaeology has traditionally been the primary venue in which archaeologists incorporate resistance into their reconstructions of the past. Marxist archaeology has been especially effective in its critique of the dominant ideologies at play in early American capitalism,³¹ and the material study of slavery³² and indigenous populations³³ has done much to emphasize agency in the face of political oppression. More explicit archaeological evidence for resistance comes in the form of historically and archaeologically attested open rebellions, such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.³⁴ But together the explorations of overt rebellion and local agency have had the unintended consequence of overplaying the ability of the subordinate to resist in situations of genuinely imbalanced power relationships. As Alfredo González-Ruibal has stated, “archaeologists in recent years have constructed narratives of social discrepancy that have a rather benign conception of colonial power and sometimes an anachronistic flair. They tend to assign values to nonmodern communities that are alien to them—most notably a very postmodern sense of identity.”³⁵ González-Ruibal's study of the archaeology of contemporary Ethiopia is insightful for resistance studies precisely because he is interested in situations where resistance is accomplished through long-term continuity in the face of state pressure to modernize—that is, resistance accomplished by what would otherwise appear to be a *lack* of agency. Here Scott's hidden transcript becomes a powerful interpretive tool, because even while it does not deny the reality of disproportionate power wielded by those in positions of authority, it opens the possibility for resistance to be identified in counterintuitive venues, such as domestic architecture.³⁶ Unlike Martin Hall,³⁷ therefore, who used the hidden transcript

31 Leone 2005.

32 Orser and Funari 2001.

33 Silliman 2005, 2009.

34 Liebmann 2012.

35 González-Ruibal 2013, 19.

36 Rubin (1995, 238–39) distinguishes between collective political resistance movements explicitly oriented toward creating change, and local, individual, “everyday” acts of resistance of the kind described here—a distinction that is important to maintain. I disagree, however, with González-Ruibal's characterization of the hidden transcript as resilience rather than resistance and his understanding it as “the capacity to adapt, psychologically and socially, to power through the development of cultural copying mechanisms. . . . Resilience works often at an unconscious level, beyond discourse” (González-Ruibal 2013, 20). The hidden transcript and its multifarious manifestations are more active than an adaptive coping mechanism and constitute a manner of conscious discourse in their own right, even if they are not explicitly aimed at collectively reorganizing structures of power.

37 Hall 2000, 97–124.

as a way to identify the impact of subaltern populations on public buildings, this study is restricted to the most humble Iron Age settlements and buildings.

THE IRON AGE DOMESTIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Rural settlement pattern dynamics offer our first glimpse into nonelite political life. One city-state that has been thoroughly surveyed is the kingdom of Patina, today located in southern Turkey. Survey of mounded sites in the 1930s³⁸ combined with remote sensing and off-mound survey techniques in the 1990s and early 2000s³⁹ has identified fifty-five sites whose ceramics collected from the surface indicate an early first-millennium BCE occupation, dated primarily on the basis of a ceramic tradition known as “Red Slipped Burnished Ware.” Gravity modeling of site sizes with respect to the proximity of sites to one another indicates a three-tiered hierarchy of settlements, with Tell Tayinat, ancient Kunulua, at the top, followed by a handful of secondary fortified sites and several dozen 1–2 ha villages.⁴⁰ But lest we get carried away into reconstructions of a rigidly organized political economy, in which economic output from villages feeds into secondary centers and then streams into the capital city in the manner of central place theory, we can see whether this expectation aligns with settlements’ ability to sustain themselves independently of political supervision.

Tony Wilkinson proposed a simple method for reconstructing the agricultural catchment areas surrounding ancient settlements based on known parameters of annual grain consumption per individual and site size, and applicable especially in isotropic environmental conditions like those provided in the alluvial plain of the Amuq Valley.⁴¹ Figure 11.5 provides reconstructions of catchment areas for the range of population densities most often cited in archaeological literature from ethnographic parallels: 100, 150, and 200 people per hectare. Particularly noteworthy in this image is the great degree of agricultural autonomy enjoyed by most or all of the settlements in Patina. Being obliged to receive subsistence from other sites because of site size and specialized nonagricultural labor is one of the traditional hallmarks of urban settlement systems,⁴² yet it appears this attribute of urbanism was almost entirely lacking in this case. Of the fifty settlements shown here, only a handful have the overlapping catchments one would expect to see in contexts where food was distributed between settlements. On the contrary, even at the population estimates of 200 people per hectare, almost every settlement, including the capital city, was apparently able to support itself. Here is our first significant indication that life outside of the public transcript on display in the capital city was disengaged from political rhetoric.⁴³

38 Braidwood 1937.

39 Yener 2005.

40 Osborne 2013. Gravity modeling predicts which sites were most closely related to one another economically by means of the equation $M_{ij} = A_i A_j / (d_{ij})^2$, where A_i and A_j are the areas of settlements i and j and d_{ij} indicate the distance between them. In short, larger and closer sites are predicted to have greater interaction than smaller, more distant sites. See Osborne 2013, 783, for details.

41 Wilkinson 1994.

42 Childe 1950.

43 Although here is not the place to explore dynamics of political economy, this finding is also a strong indicator that Patina, and by extension the broader SACC, operated under a wealth finance, not a staple finance, model of state financial accumulation and distribution (D’Altroy and Earle 1985).

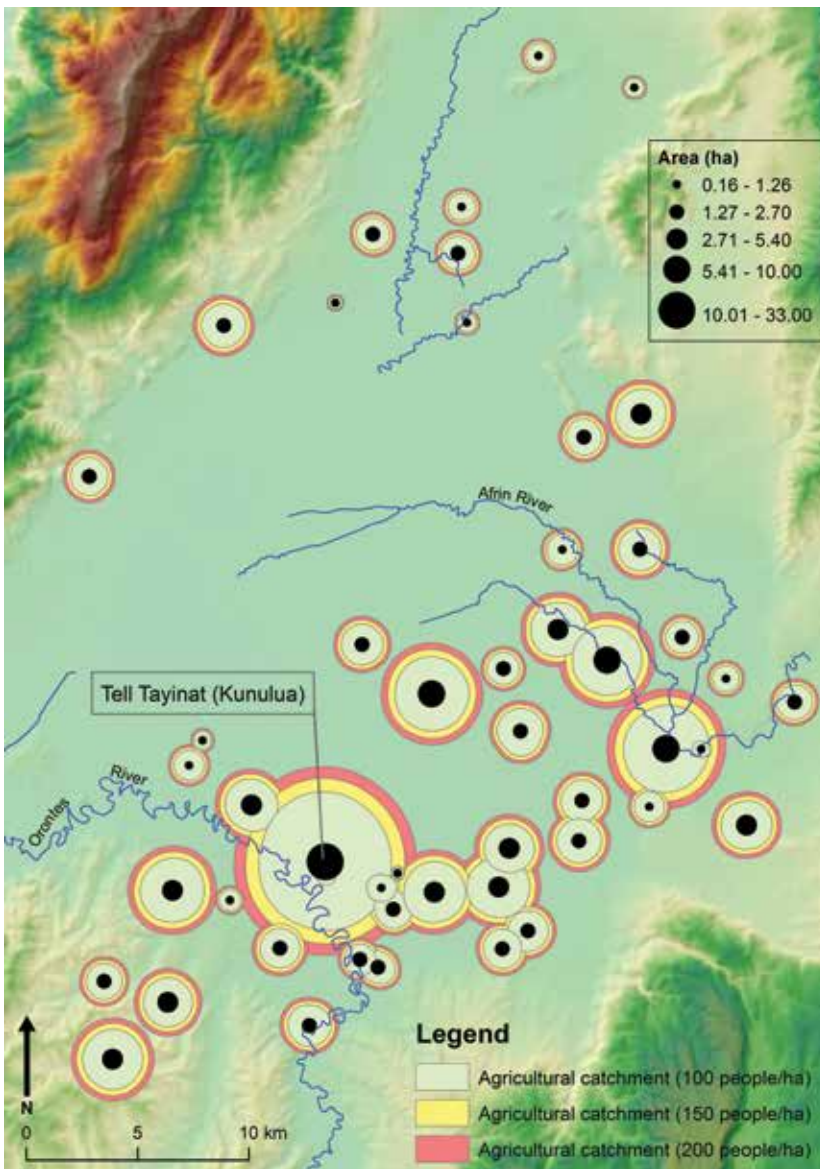


Figure 11.5. Estimated agricultural catchment areas surrounding settlements within the city-state of Patina.

Looking in greater detail at the domestic architecture in towns and villages like these helps elucidate this point.

Located in the Afrin Valley, which feeds into the Amuq Valley from the east, the site of ʿAin Dara is an approximately 20 ha secondary center long known for the elaborately decorated monumental temple that stood on its acropolis.⁴⁴ This temple, likely built in the eleventh century but in use for centuries afterward, is a stark expression of the public

⁴⁴ Abu ʿAssaf 1990.

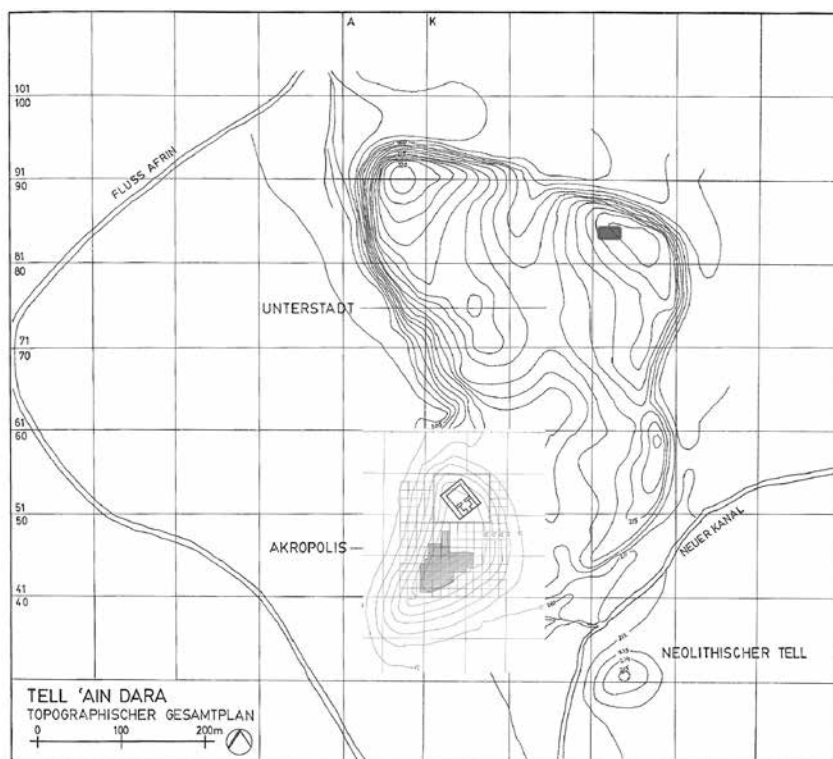


Figure 11.6. Plan of 'Ain Dara, located in the Afrin Valley, with the schematic plan of its temple superimposed on the upper mound (adapted from Abu 'Assaf 1990, figs. 2 and 3). The location of Squares 4 and 5 from the Stone and Zimansky excavations are marked in red in the northeast corner of the site.

transcript, a building that could only have been underwritten by powerful actors, and one whose longevity is testament to its ongoing presence as a component of political discourse (fig. 11.6). Less famous than the temple are the excavations conducted by Elizabeth Stone and Paul Zimansky in two 10 × 10 m squares in the far lower town,⁴⁵ where a sequence of twenty “microphases” was found across four centuries, roughly 1100–700 BCE, or about the same lifespan as the temple. This sequence is striking for its level of stratigraphic detail, uncovering plans that on average would have been in existence for only twenty years apiece.⁴⁶ Also remarkable is the degree of architectural continuity, with multiple phases showing simply reconstructions of preexisting structures that apparently stood for many decades. They include one building that lasted with minor renovations from Phase XVI through Phase XIX, and another that lasted from Phase VII all the way through Phase XII (fig. 11.7). Although the excavations are too horizontally limited to say much about the function of these buildings, it is likely that they consist of relatively small, irregular domestic structures not characterized by central planning. Their material culture likewise shows a basic suite of domestic objects throughout their existence; more elite items, such

45 Stone and Zimansky 1999.

46 Stone and Zimansky 1999, 36.

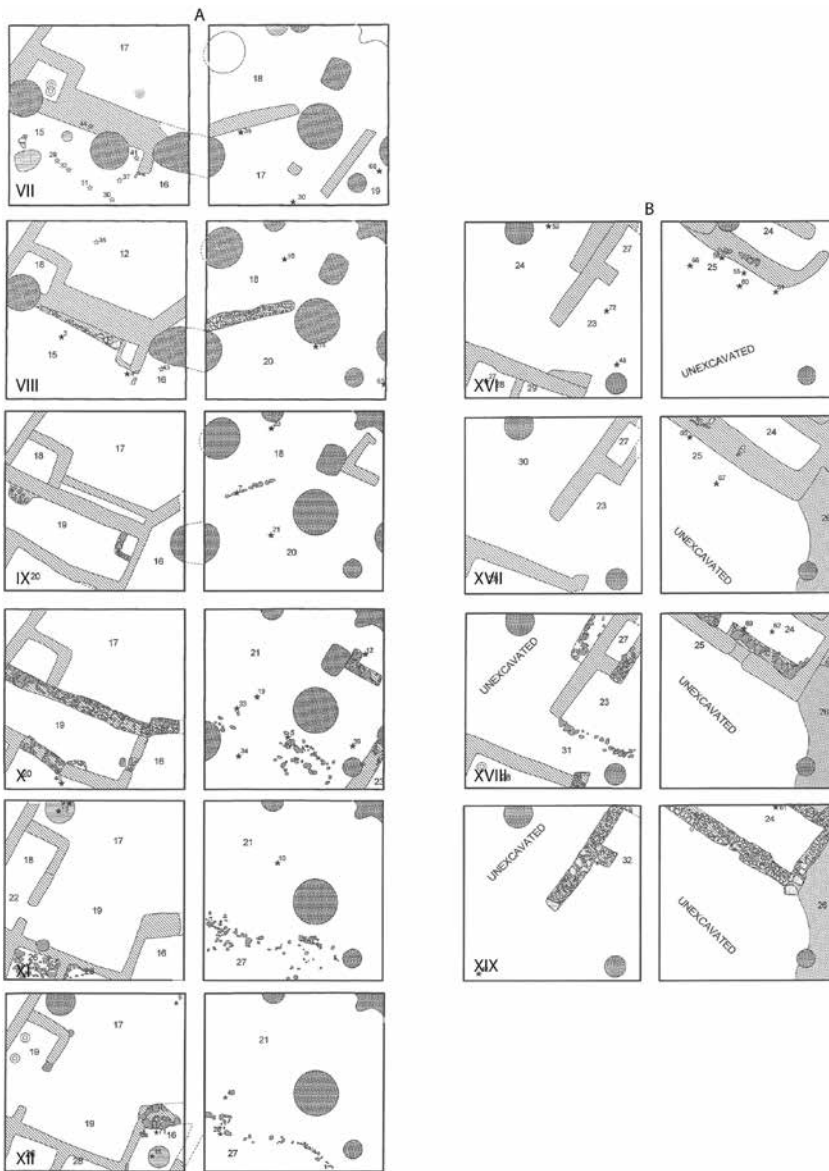


Figure 11.7. Two domestic structures from 'Ain Dara, Squares 4 and 5, occupied and modified for generations: Phases VII–XII (A) and Phases XVI–XIX (B).

as an ivory knife handle and scaraboids, derive from pits in Phase 147 and thus the end of the eighth century BCE, after the region was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. In other words, political authority does not seem to have extended far beyond the monumental temple into the lower city. On the contrary, regular people who occupied this quarter of the settlement could conceivably have lived in relatively undisturbed peace, disengaged from the public affairs in the acropolis and repeating their domestic status quo for generations.

47 Stone and Zimansky 1999, 75.

Clearer information is found at Çatal Höyük in the Amuq Valley proper, roughly halfway between ʿAin Dara and Tell Tayinat. Çatal was excavated by the Oriental Institute (now the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures) in the 1930s, at a time when massive horizontal exposures were financially feasible and methodologically responsible. The result is that, unlike for ʿAin Dara, we have a reasonably good picture of what the layout of this settlement looked like during the early first millennium BCE,⁴⁸ and almost no evidence was found for anything other than domestic architecture (fig. 11.8). A large fortification wall surrounded the Iron Age settlement, and one building slightly larger than the rest was interpreted as a *bīt-ḫilāni*. (This interpretation was no doubt aided by the fact that door openings were explicitly restored on the basis of the plan of the *bīt-ḫilāni* at Tayinat.⁴⁹) But even if a slightly elevated official lived in this structure, the ultimate impression one gains from early first-millennium Çatal is one of surprisingly little monumentality—and, rather, a proliferation of quotidian buildings.

The largest horizontal expanse is in Area I, the spur at the north end of the site. Here excavators found the area “covered with crowded irregular complexes of private houses.”⁵⁰ Four levels dated to the early first millennium BCE, of which three (5, 4, and 3) were fully excavated. But the excavators were clear that their “levels” are almost arbitrary divisions of a single process of continuous remodeling and rebuilding. Streets are present but are highly irregular. Neither are the houses of a standard shape or size. In short, very little is indicative of any overt political authority mandating the layout of the town’s plan. On the contrary, the site is an excellent example of the Mediterranean style of settlement in which irregular lanes culminating in unpredictable cul-de-sacs and densely packed structures are evocative of a kinship-oriented social structure.⁵¹ One open area in the east is closed behind a long retaining wall and thus appears to be restricted to the large household beside it; public, collective gathering space is nonexistent.

The clearest structures come from Levels 5 and 4, dating to roughly 950–750 BCE.⁵² In Level 5 the houses fall into three primary categories of scale and internal complexity (fig. 11.9): (1) small one- to three-room houses, usually sharing party walls with neighboring structures; (2) slightly larger and more complicated four- to seven-room houses; and (3) large complexes that look to be the result of smaller buildings having been amalgamated into a single structure. The same categories appear in the subsequent Level 4, though with certain notable changes (fig. 11.10). New, small dwellings have appeared, such as the cluster of houses in the center of the spur that seem to have replaced Level 5’s large House 13, now fragmented into a number of small units. Medium-sized houses are likewise

48 Haines 1971; Pucci 2019.

49 Haines 1971, 19.

50 Haines 1971, 7.

51 Schloen 2001, 108–16, 127–33.

52 Pucci (2019, 149–53) dates the start of Amuq Phase O, marked by the appearance of Red Slipped Burnished Ware, to the mid-ninth century primarily on the basis of imported pottery at the site, especially Black-on-Red Ware from Cyprus (Schreiber 2003) and Cypro-Geometric pottery (Gjerstad 1948). This Cypriot pottery is itself dated on the basis of its Levantine contexts, however, and recent radiocarbon dates from stratified contexts at the nearby site of Tell Tayinat indicate that Red Slipped Burnished Ware began in the third quarter of the tenth century (Welton et al. 2019). I therefore treat the town plan of Pucci’s Phase O “middle” as belonging to roughly 850–750 BCE, not 750–600 BCE (cf. Pucci 2019, pls. 194–96).

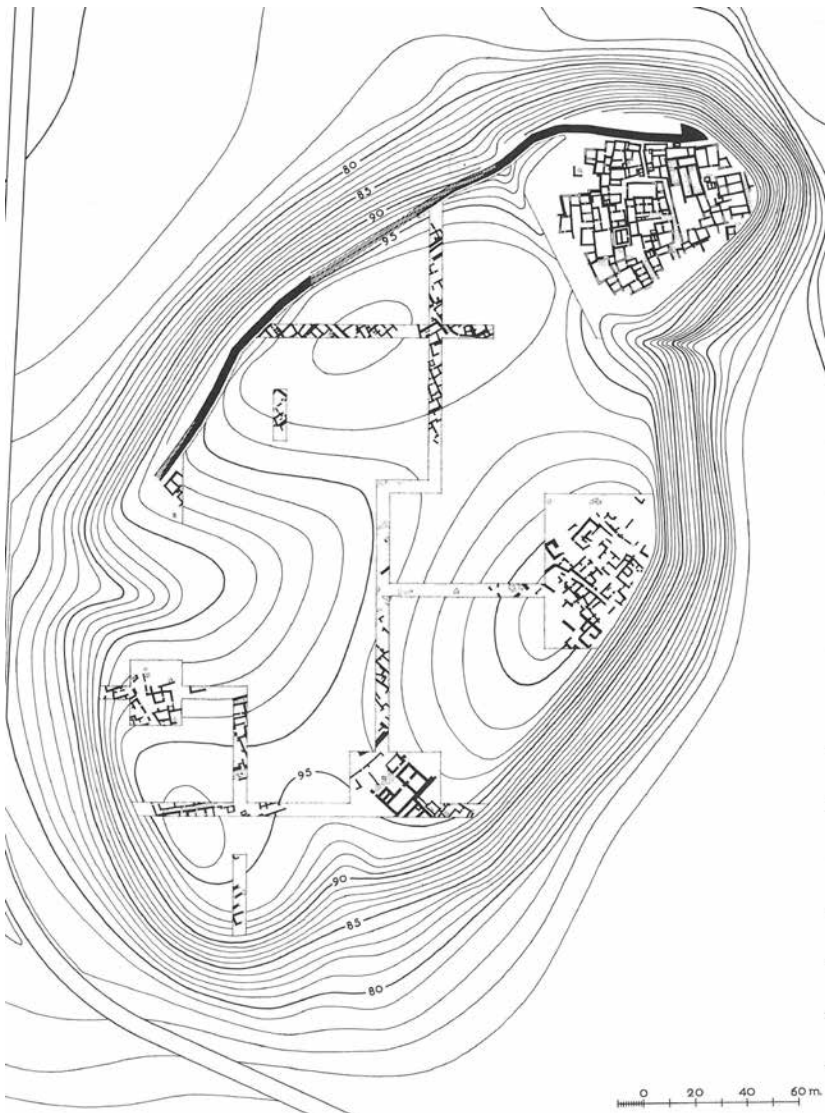


Figure 11.8. Plan of Çatal Höyük during the Iron Age II period, or early first millennium BCE. Haines 1971, pl. 20.

in flux, such as the apparent disappearance of House 8 in the northwest and the upgrading of Phase 5's House 11 in the north into a larger complex, House 16. These changes are precisely what one would expect when domestic neighborhoods are left to develop of their own accord: fluctuating house sizes that grow and shrink according to shifting demographic needs, with the growth and splitting of households from nuclear to extended families and back again. The precise size and layout of the other houses in these plans are challenging to discern because their plans are incomplete or excavators were unable to find doorways connecting rooms, meaning that it is not always possible to understand where buildings begin and end. In these cases, therefore, it is impossible to understand how one moved through them. This latter point of accessibility is critical for space syntax



Figure 11.9. Çatal Höyük Area I, Level 5, with houses shaded according to categories of scale and complexity: red = small, one- to three-room houses, usually sharing party walls with neighboring structures; green = slightly larger, more complicated, four- to seven-room houses; yellow = large complexes. Adapted from Haines 1971, pl. 24.

analysis, a method of spatial analysis that helps us better understand the experience of living in this neighborhood.

Space syntax was developed by architects Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, who argue that the configuration of rooms within a building has a significant effect on human behavior.⁵³ This method encompasses a series of graphical representations and quantitative analyses that describe a building's makeup regarding the ease or difficulty with which individuals move through the building's rooms. As the linguistic metaphor in the name suggests, it is the relationships between those units, not the units themselves, that determine the nature of a building. It follows that there are social interpretations that can be made from those relations. The first stage is reducing a building plan to its constituent components of rooms, represented by circles, and relations of permeability between rooms, or doorways, represented by lines. Each room of a particular "depth" from the exterior—that is, how many spaces one must pass through to get to a particular room from outside—is aligned, or "justified," on the same horizontal plane. Figure 11.11 shows two examples of a building and its justified graph (or "j-graph"). In each case the building has essentially

53 Hillier and Hanson 1984.



Figure 11.10. Çatal Höyük Area I, Level 4, with houses shaded according to categories of scale and complexity: red = small, one- to three-room houses, usually sharing party walls with neighboring structures; green = slightly larger, more complicated, four- to seven-room houses; yellow = large complexes. Adapted from Haines 1971, pl. 25.

the same outline and number of rooms, but changing the number and locations of the doorways makes a significant difference in the building's graphical outputs. These two j-graphs, therefore, illustrate aptly that understanding how accessibility functions is an important complement to a building's layout. Hillier and Hanson describe the syntactic properties of *symmetry* versus *asymmetry*, referring to the number of spaces that control other spaces, and *distributedness* versus *nondistributedness*, referring to the number of routes between spaces. In this case it is clear that the building on the left in figure 11.11 has a greater degree of symmetry and distributedness, while the building on the right has a greater degree of asymmetry and nondistributedness. In terms of the social significance of these properties, Hillier and Hanson argue that, generally, *symmetry* in a building tends to promote social integration between social categories, such as inhabitants of and visitors to a building, while *asymmetry* is correlated with segregation between social groups. Similarly, a greater degree of spatial *distributedness* across a building plan tends to be related to diffuse spatial control, or power, while greater *nondistributedness* is associated with unitary, superordinate spatial control.

For the Çatal houses that are analyzable from Level 5, some interesting patterns emerge when their plans are converted to j-graphs. As one would expect, small houses are

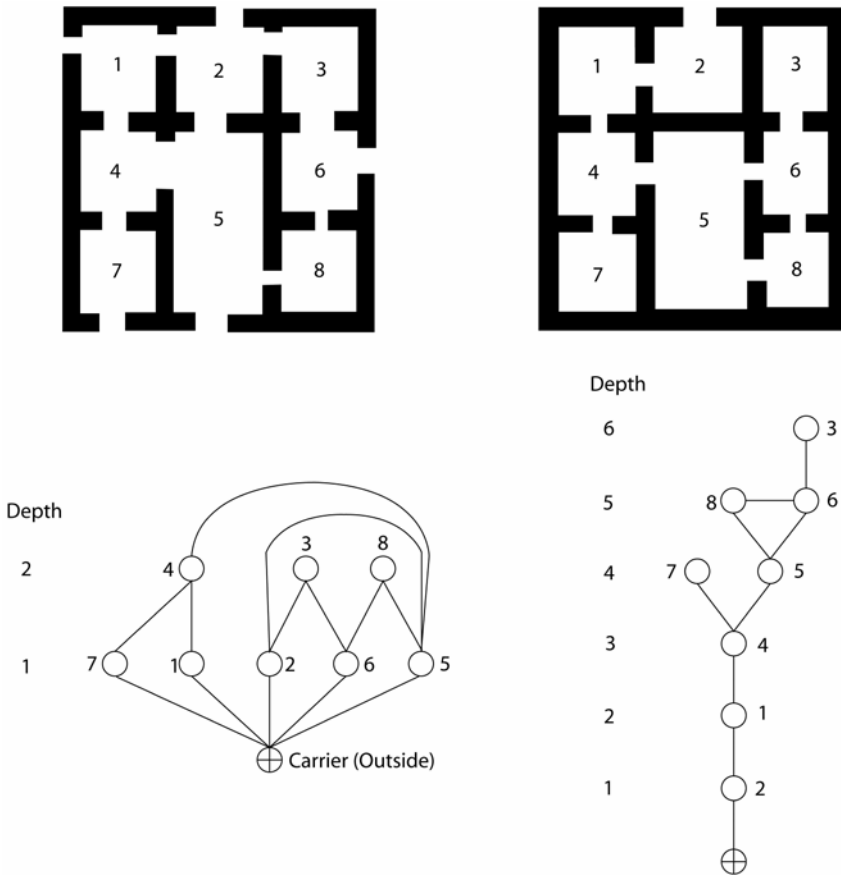


Figure 11.11. Example of space syntax: two formally similar buildings with different j-graphs. Adapted from Hillier and Hanson 1984, figs. 93–94, and Fisher 2009, fig. 1.

generally asymmetrical and nondistributed. Symmetry increases slightly in second-order houses, however, though nondistributedness remains high. The same pattern is raised again in the one analyzable large structure: greater symmetry, but stubbornly high nondistributedness (fig. 11.12). The same is true for Çatal's Level 4, though in this case none of the largest houses were available for analysis (fig. 11.13). Before interpreting the significance of increasing degrees of symmetry but consistent nondistributedness at Çatal Höyük, we also need to look at rural sites in the SACC settlement hierarchy.

Very few early first-millennium rural settlements have been excavated across the Syro-Anatolian region, and even fewer have witnessed horizontal exposure significant enough for spatial analysis. The site of Tell Abou Danné, for example, is well known for its Iron Age ceramic repertoire, but the horizontal extent of the soundings was limited.⁵⁴ One of the only village-scale sites within SACC to have been broadly excavated is Tell Mastuma, located 6 km south of the modern city of Idlib in Syria. The architectural plans of Stratum I-2 produced by eight excavation campaigns are highly familiar from higher-order

⁵⁴ Lebeau 1983.

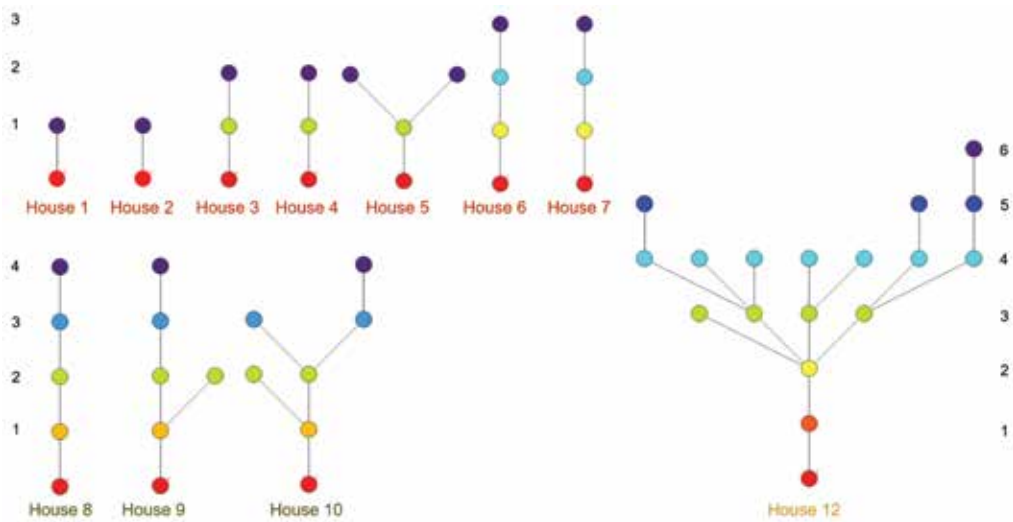


Figure 11.12. J-graphs of domestic buildings from Çatal Höyük, Level 5. Note that symmetry increases with building scale, but distributedness does not.

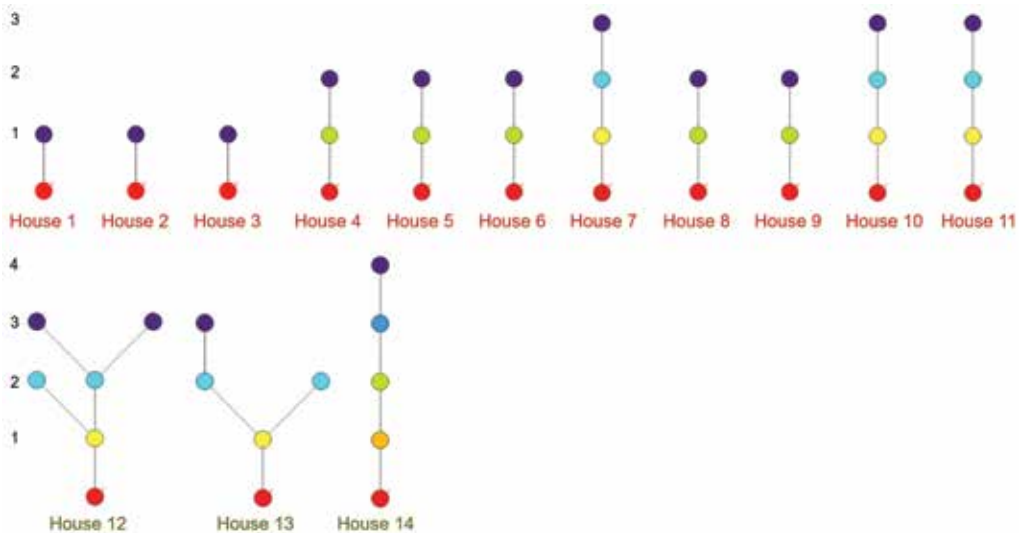


Figure 11.13. J-graphs of domestic buildings from Çatal Höyük, Level 4.

settlements (fig. 11.14); if it were not for the fact that this settlement is less than one-tenth the size of Çatal Höyük, there would be nothing on this plan to differentiate them. None of the structures of this site—40 percent of which was excavated—are monumental in scale, and again there is no space for public gatherings among the densely packed buildings. The houses fall into the same three categories we saw at Çatal: one- to two-room structures that are sometimes grouped, sometimes not; more complicated simple houses; and large

complexes of agglutinated structures.⁵⁵ In all cases, excavators report a material culture assemblage that is unambiguously domestic in character, including cooking installations and grinding stones, textile production implements, and only rarely ceramics more elaborate than Red Slipped Burnished Ware.⁵⁶

A recent reanalysis of the stratigraphy of House b4-1—at 27 × 16 m, the largest building excavated at Tell Mastuma—has proposed reconstructing it as a small, rural temple similar to the larger versions found at the nearby site of Tell Afis.⁵⁷ The proposal is compromised, however, by the poor preservation of the architectural features and by the quotidian nature of the small finds, which Nishiyama admits “mainly relate to daily use, and include pottery, ground stones, clay loom weights, and bone implements.”⁵⁸ It seems more likely that the excavators’ original observation was correct, that “nothing allows us to identify it as a palace, a temple complex, or other public buildings.”⁵⁹ However, unlike the excavators’ claim that the building’s scale indicates its use by a high-ranking individual, it seems equally plausible that it was occupied simply by a large extended family at the maximum stage of the conventional household demographic cycle, such that no individual building at the site can be isolated as being uniquely significant in socio-economic terms.

Just as Tell Mastuma’s building plans resemble those from Çatal Höyük, the site’s j-graphs are likewise identical to Çatal’s (fig. 11.15). Only in House b4-1, number 17 in figure 11.14 and Tell Mastuma’s only large structure available for space syntax, do we see a small amount of distributedness, or multiple pathways. Otherwise it is the same basic pattern of a rising symmetry and ubiquitous nondistributedness. What these results tell us is that settlements both large and small were made up of houses that promoted social solidarity within neighborhoods in the sense that they increasingly permitted interaction between house residents and house visitors as house sizes increased (i.e., the increase in symmetry mentioned above) but whose occupants were always able to maintain control over accessibility and movement at all household scales (i.e., the nondistributedness mentioned). Even while solidarity between groups such as neighborhood family units was encouraged, house owners maintained tight control of built space, preserving for themselves the power over how their houses were to be experienced.

In sum, the picture painted by the large towns of ‘Ain Dara and Çatal Höyük and the rural village of Tell Mastuma is one of long-term continuities and high degrees of independence. Buildings were built and rebuilt on the same plan for generations, and those plans facilitated close control of access through the rooms of houses, even while inter-community interaction was encouraged. None of these plans betrays significant oversight from political authorities beyond the inhabitants of the settlement themselves, and the lack

55 A similar sense is gained from the even smaller site of Tille Höyük on the upper Euphrates, though there the houses are less well preserved in plan, and a terrace system seems to divide the early first-millennium settlement into more clearly demarcated spatial units (Blaylock 2009).

56 Iwasaki et al. 2009.

57 Nishiyama 2012.

58 Nishiyama 2012, 109.

59 Wada 2009, 189.



Figure 11.14. Plan of Tell Mastuma, Stratum I-2, with houses shaded according to categories of scale and complexity: red = small, one- to three-room houses, usually sharing party walls with neighboring structures; green = slightly larger, more complicated, four- to seven-room houses; yellow = large complexes. Adapted from Iwasaki et al. 2009, fig. 4.1.

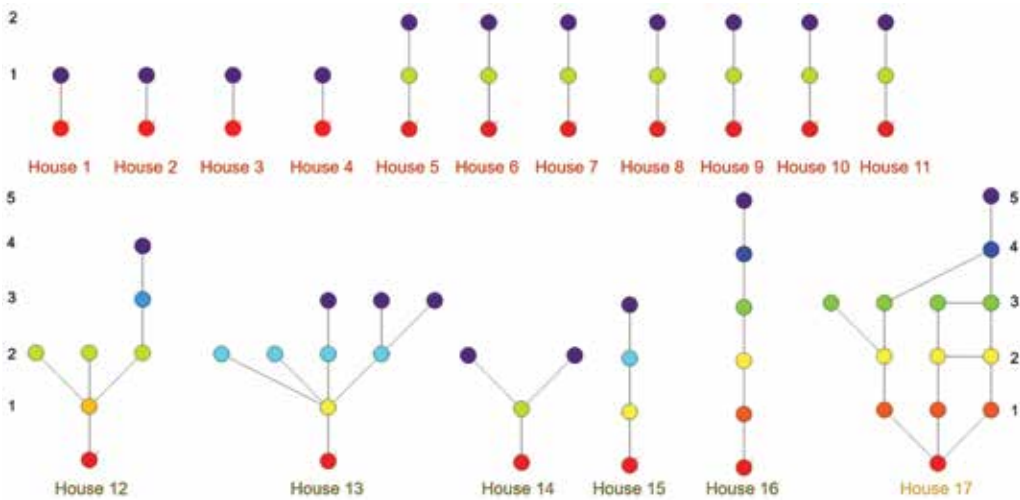


Figure 11.15. J-graphs of domestic buildings from Tell Mastuma, Stratum I-2.

of communal gathering spaces in favor of inwardly focused domestic residences suggests a resolute insistence on not participating in political discourse. There are no overt trappings of the political in any of these building layouts or in their associated material culture. On the contrary, the admittedly limited evidence for nonelite life in SACC implies a world apart, one where people minded their own business while tending to their own subsistence needs free from state control.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

What does this domestic architectural spatial signature say about the Iron Age political experience? Perhaps it is warranted to extrapolate from the “lack of participation” identified here to a form of resistance characterized by “active nonparticipation.” It may not be unreasonable to interpret the stubborn domestic continuities and control of access attested in built form at Syro-Anatolian sites not merely as benign ignorance of the political furor taking place in the capital cities but along the lines of Scott’s hidden transcript, in this case a transcript consisting of a discreet course of political action chosen to maintain independence by remaining insular. Although not overtly challenging the political authorities, and thereby securing for themselves neglect from oversight and domination, this active disengagement was a form of resistance in its own right, but one that was challenging to recognize as such.

Challenging and, it must be admitted, possibly misidentified or exaggerated by the analyst—it may never be possible to confirm whether this interpretation of SACC’s domestic architecture is accurate; certainly, it is plausible to infer from these spatial patterns of the domestic architectural record that common citizens simply did not wield significant political power of any sort, hidden or otherwise. Of course, this essay has studied only domestic building plans; further evidence for the hidden transcript along these lines might be found by examining additional examples of material culture in domestic contexts, much as Lauren Ristvet proposes in her analysis of domestic cylinder seals, seal impressions, and

figurines in this volume.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it will likely remain difficult to discern between deliberate disengagement and unwanted disenfranchisement. But even the prospect of being able to design one's houses for centuries according to a hidden transcript of resistance-by-nonparticipation suggests that interpretations of strong, centralized authority effected by phenomena such as memory-celebrating performances are misguided or exaggerated. Although not the purpose of the present study, conceiving political legitimacy in the Syro-Anatolian city-states in ways that are not so tacitly reliant on assumptions of despotic rule now becomes necessary.

This essay opened with the metaphor of the Fermi Paradox, or the high probability of something's existence (in Fermi's case, extraterrestrial life) for which no evidence is known. Over the years, dozens of solutions to the Fermi Paradox have been proposed, ranging from the prosaic "rare Earth hypothesis," which states that Earth is simply a uniquely fortuitous occurrence of circumstances, to more creative proposals, such as the "water world hypothesis" that most planets with sufficient water for life will have far less land mass than Earth and therefore life on those planets will necessarily consist only of aquatic species that cannot colonize the galaxy. One that I like is the so-called "zoo hypothesis," according to which intelligent extraterrestrial life does exist, and knows of our existence, but is intentionally not contacting us, perhaps awaiting assurance that humans are not some kind of threat.⁶¹ I cannot evaluate whether this hypothesis is true for the Fermi Paradox, but it does help explain the political great silence of the Osborne Paradox—the contrast between the great likelihood for political experience among the regular citizens of the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex and our lack of evidence thereof. Perhaps there is so little evidence for bottom-up political discourse in SACC because people actively chose not to participate in it, electing instead to continue their daily lives as though the capital city did not exist and leaving those with political authority to strut among themselves. Such an interpretation is difficult to confirm without recourse to the hidden transcript's minor forms of resistance that are preserved only in informal writings and oral interviews. But it seems that with respect to commoner participation in political discourse and the great silence that characterizes Iron Age political life, the old archaeological aphorism might not apply: in this case, the absence of evidence really is evidence of absence.

ABBREVIATIONS

SACC	Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex
ha	hectare(s)

60 For a related view of the role played by rural material culture in highly localized instantiations of the political field, see also Catherine Kearns, this volume.

61 As six-year-old cartoon character Calvin says to his imaginary tiger-friend Hobbes while they mourn a freshly cut tree stump, "Sometimes I think the surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that none of it has tried to contact us" (Watterson 2005, 2:198; the cartoon first appeared in syndicated newspapers on November 8, 1989).

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12 **Fumbling toward Complexity: Collective Action and the Built Environment at Early Phrygian Gordion**

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INTRODUCTION: OF KINGS, CITIES, WALLS, AND POWER

“He who saw the Deep, the country’s foundation, [who] knew . . . , was wise in all matters!
[Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the country’s foundation, [who] knew . . . , was wise
in all matters!

[He] . . . everywhere . . . and [*learned*] of everything the sum of wisdom.
He saw what was secret, discovered what was hidden, he brought back a tale
of before the Deluge.

He came a far road, was weary, found peace, and set all his labours on a tablet of stone.
He built the rampart of Uruk-the-Sheepfold, of holy Eanna, the sacred storehouse.

See its wall like a strand of *wool*, view its parapet that none could copy!
Take the stairway of a bygone era, draw near to Eanna, seat of Ishtar the goddess,
that no later king could ever copy!

Climb Uruk’s wall and walk back and forth! Survey its foundations, examine the brickwork!
Were its bricks not fired in an oven? Did the Seven Sages not lay its foundations?”

The Standard Version of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic
Tablet 1, lines 1–21
Translated by Andrew George

THE FIRST LINES of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, widely regarded as the world’s oldest surviving work of literature, establish its hero as the archetype of kingship. The poet alludes to Gilgamesh’s wandering and hard-won wisdom—his knowledge of his country’s very foundations—but dwells on what is enduring and tangible: the tablet of stone on which his deeds are inscribed, and the baked-brick walls of Uruk, his eternal city. Gilgamesh’s crowning achievement is as city-builder, the majesty of the built environment an enduring testament to his rule; and while he and his labors are situated in the distant

past, the city remains present and immediate. We are enjoined to see it, walk it, examine it, experience it—just as in Gilgamesh’s day. Much like narratives, walls, if well founded, can withstand the test of time.

From Hadrian’s Wall to the Berlin Wall to the putative wall on the United States’ southern border, this symbolic equation of leaders, walls, and power endures. The relationship is a convenient one for archaeologists in particular: because of the nature of our evidence and the questions we ask of it, the built environment has come to be seen as a key element of the expression of political authority in ancient states.¹ And because of the ways we have traditionally modeled power, namely, as a social phenomenon that wears a face—a practice in which we are conditioned by the historical narratives that survive to us, from the time of Gilgamesh onward—we have tended to identify monumental buildings, architectural levels, and even entire cities (better still, their destruction) with the agency of known individuals: with rulers.

Yet archaeology is by and large a discipline of the *longue durée*—we study mounds that have built up over centuries, the accumulated actions of the many; cities are not events, they are palimpsests, their attractive power precisely rooted in the fact that they transcend human scales and lifespans. Thus our inclination to see in the built environment the hands of powerful men is fundamentally at odds with the nature and temporality of urbanism: as cultural geographer Michael Crang has put it, “instead of being a solid thing, the city is a becoming, through circulation, combination and recombination of people and things.”² More recent approaches to ancient politics treat power as a collective phenomenon, relational by definition, and thus envision public buildings and spaces not merely as outlets for the expression of political authority but as sites of its negotiation, through performances and interactions both pompous and prosaic.³ So while it is clear that the built environment of cities forms part of the structure of political organization in ancient societies, we can study both more productively in the knowledge that political life is the prerogative not of the one but of the many; it is produced and shaped by the collective over time and subject to constant reformulation, just as the city itself is.

The central case study of this essay is a city far from Uruk and the Mesopotamian heartland: the Iron Age citadel of Gordion in central Turkey (fig. 12.1⁴). Gordion is a large, multiperiod settlement mound whose origins may well date back to the time of Gilgamesh, though its apogee was much later—about 900–600 BCE—as the presumed capital of the state of Phrygia.⁵ Still, the city’s history, its very walls, have long been intertwined with the life and death of its most famous king, Midas, known worldwide as the mythical man

1 This literature is vast, going back at least to Childe 1950; see, for example, Marcus and Sabloff 2008; Smith 2003; Smith 2007; Trigger 1990; recently, on Mesopotamian urbanism, McMahon 2020.

2 Crang 2001, 190.

3 De Marrais 2014; Glatz and Plourde 2011; Harmansah 2013; Inomata and Coben 2006; Kurnick and Baron 2016; Ristvet 2015; Smith 2003. See also Introduction, this volume.

4 All images are courtesy of the Gordion Project, Penn Museum.

5 The walled citadel is 13 ha in size; the city also had an enclosed lower town and an outer town, both of which appear to originate in the Middle Phrygian period (ca. 800–540 BCE), making the total enclosed area of settlement at that time about 100 ha. The earliest known occupation at the site dates to the mid-third millennium BCE. For an overview, see Voigt 2013; for recent work, Rose 2017; on Bronze Age Gordion, Gunter 1991; on Iron Age Gordion, Kealhofer, Grave, and Voigt 2022; essays in Rose 2012; Rose and Darbyshire 2016.



Figure 12.1. Map of Phrygia in the eighth century BCE. Prepared by Gareth Darbyshire, Ardeth Anderson, and Gabriel H. Pizzorno. Gordion Archive.

with the golden touch. The Midas myth, best known from later Greek sources, has cast a long shadow at Gordion: while no one believes that an historic ruler of Phrygia could turn all he touched to gold, the story has been taken, often implicitly, as a metaphor for the wealth and power concentrated in Phrygian kingship.⁶ And while most scholars consider the historicity of Midas to be corroborated by several Assyrian references to an Anatolian warlord called Mita limited to nine years during the reign of Sargon II (721–705 BCE),⁷ and therefore recognize that the Early Phrygian citadel, destroyed by fire in the last quarter of the ninth century BCE,⁸ predates Midas—the only historically attested Phrygian king—by at

6 The earliest reference to the golden touch occurs in the fourth century BCE, in Aristotle's *Politics*, though the best-known version is that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (first century CE). An earlier allusion to "the wealth of Midas and Kinyras" appears in a fragment of Tyrtaios's dated to the seventh century BCE. See Amrhein, Kim, and Stephens 2016; Roller 1983.

7 "Mitā of Muški" or "Mitā king of Muški" appears six times in Sargon's Annals, beginning in Year 5 (717 BCE) and ending in Year 14 (708 BCE) (RINA 2 nos. 1, 2, 4). Similar events from the first fifteen years of Sargon's reign are rehearsed in several display inscriptions from Sargon's capital at Khorsabad (RINA 2 nos. 7–8), as well as on stone pavement slabs (RINA 2 nos. 10–14) and stone bull colossi (RINA 2 nos. 9, 42). The same events are chronicled in many other media, primarily clay cylinders and prisms found at Khorsabad (RINA 2 no. 43), Nimrud (RINA 2 nos. 74, 76), Nineveh (RINA 2 no. 82), Karkemish (RINA 2 no. 109), Arslantepe (RINA 2 no. 112), and Tell Haddad (RINA 2 no. 129). On the example from Karkemish, see also, recently, Marchesi 2019. Finally, a copy of a letter from Sargon to his governor in Que (Cilicia), SAA XIX no. 152, edited as SAA 1 no. 1 (accessible at <http://oracc.org/saao/P224485/>), excavated at Nimrud and now in the Iraq Museum, refers to the attempted establishment of diplomatic relations between Sargon and Mitā and likely dates to 710–709 BCE; see also Postgate 1973.

8 The date of the destruction has most recently been reaffirmed by Kealhofer, Grave, and Voigt (2019, 509) as 838/816 BCE (1σ range). Until the early 2000s, however, the destruction was dated historically to 700 BCE

least a century, kingship has remained the default interpretive framework for understanding the long-term organization and function of Gordion's urban core.

What I mean to probe here are the limits of the kingship paradigm at Gordion: how the expectation that political power, especially in the ancient Near East, could look only a certain way has obscured the tremendous variability in structures and approaches to governance in ancient states in general and at Gordion in particular.⁹ There, in the absence of any of the traditional material culture signatures archaeologists associate with kingship, most notably a palace, it is the monumental walls of the citadel—those that encircle it, those that subdivide it, and those of its many buildings—that have been taken as the expression of a powerful central authority (fig. 12.2). Despite an abundance of *in situ* finds preserved in the Early Phrygian destruction level, however, that authority remains faceless. The citadel instead contains within its buildings overwhelming evidence for industry—conducted by many busy hands—and ample open space for collective gatherings outside them. Both were surely related to the construction of political authority at Gordion; yet neither requires or even really supports the notion that such activities, in early Phrygia, revolved around the “kingly body,” or were subject to the constraints of despotic rule.¹⁰ Rather, close analysis of the architectural and artifactual remains of the Early Phrygian citadel, as presented below, suggests the involvement of broad and diverse groups of participants in many aspects of political life, thus challenging assumptions about the nature and distribution of political power in the formative period of the Phrygian state, the ninth century BCE.¹¹

To illustrate how this evidence for “politics of the everyday”¹² found in the destruction level can help inform models of Phrygian political organization and development, I adopt a theoretical framework developed by political scientist Clarissa Rile Hayward: that of “de-facing power.” Hayward argues explicitly “against the prevailing conceptualization of power as a social phenomenon that necessarily wears a ‘face’—against, that is, the presumption that power is an instrument powerful agents use to prevent the powerless from acting independently.” She frames power instead as “a network of social boundaries that constrain and enable action for all actors.”¹³ So conceived, even powerful actors are subject

based on a story related by Strabo that Midas had committed suicide after his city's destruction at the hands of the Kimmerians, who appear in Assyrian annals around that time. See especially DeVries 2011.

9 See also Feinman and Nicholas, this volume; Stasavage 2020.

10 I use the term “despotic” here pointedly; theories of Oriental despotism current at the time of the Young excavations, which began in 1950, clearly influenced his interpretations of Phrygian Gordion, but those arguments lie beyond the scope of the current paper.

11 Kealhofer, Grave, and Voigt (2019, 509) model the transition from the small-scale Early Iron Age settlement at Gordion (Voigt's YHSS 7A) to the monumentalizing Early Phrygian period (YHSS 6B) at 912/862 BCE (1 σ range). This has the remarkable consequence of limiting the transformations of YHSS 6 (the construction of two citadel walls, twelve megaron-style stone buildings, and the addition of the TB Complex), which ends with the destruction in 838/816 BCE (see n. 8 above), to roughly two generations, or a span of approximately fifty-five years. They observe that “the emergence of Gordion as a Phrygian capital in the middle of the ninth century BCE is all the more striking for its speed and scale” (Kealhofer, Grave, and Voigt 2019, 511).

12 See Smith, this volume, on “small-*p* politics.”

13 Hayward 2000, 11. Hayward's research focuses on power, democratic theory, and American urban politics.

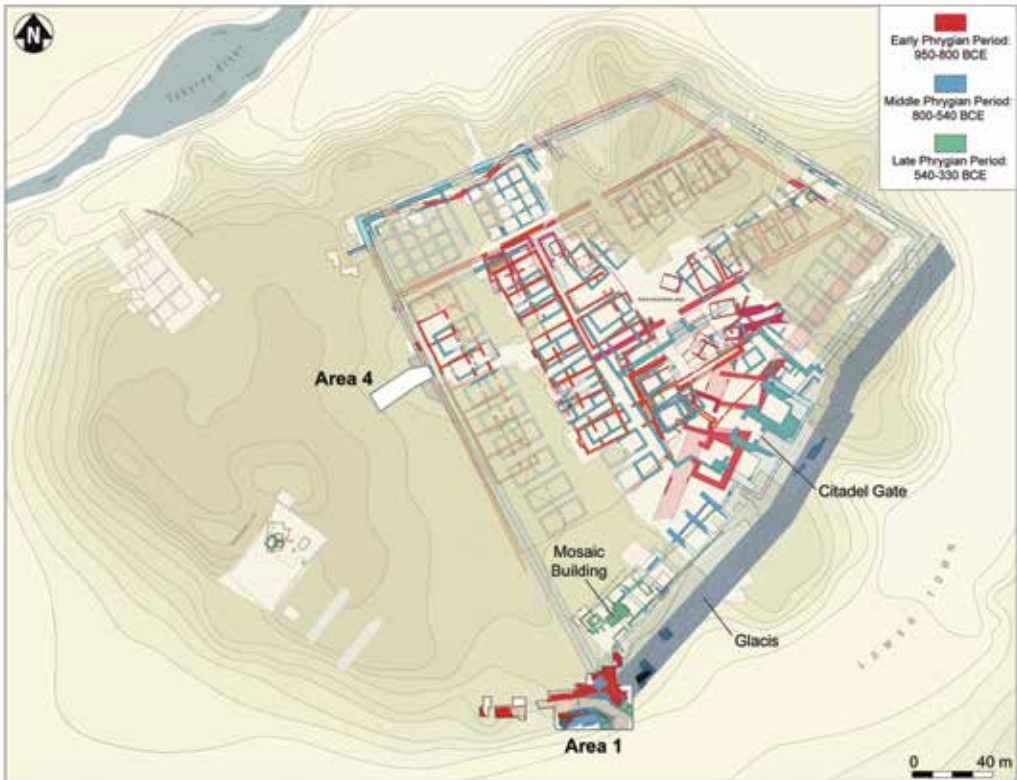


Figure 12.2. Color phase plan of the Gordion Citadel Mound showing the Early (red), Middle (blue), and Late (green) Phrygian phases. Prepared by Gareth Darbyshire, Ardeth Anderson, and Gabriel H. Pizzorno. Gordion Archive.

to certain socially determined limits, just as agents who do not appear powerful may be capable of expressing and even acting upon power's mechanisms. De-facing power at Gordion thus disposes us to step out momentarily from Midas's shadow—if only as a structuring metaphor for political power in the Phrygian state—in order to “center on the processes through which the boundaries to action that comprise [power] relations are made, re-made, modified, and transformed.”¹⁴ In the context of the Gordion citadel, doing so means identifying not just the constraints on but also the possibilities available to Citadel Mound users. What did it mean to act “politically correct”—to participate meaningfully in public life—at Early Phrygian Gordion? If we take the citadel walls literally as boundaries to action, as previous scholars have done (see below), a close examination of the extent to and ways in which they and the spaces they delimited were used, accessed, and modified, and by whom—whether as a system of oppression or a means of ordering collective value and meaning—should yield fresh insight into power dynamics in the emergent Phrygian state.

In what follows, after a brief overview of the history of archaeology at Gordion, particularly that of the Early Phrygian destruction level, I filter this evidence through the rubric of “power de-faced.” I consider, on the one hand, that the evolving architecture of the Citadel Mound attests to the ways in which, in Hayward's terms, “boundaries to action

¹⁴ Hayward 2000, 171.

were made and modified” at Early Phrygian Gordion; on the other hand, I take the residues of activities within those spaces as indications of the kinds of practices and participatory opportunities available to Gordionites—identified here as Citadel Mound users—that is, the “possibilities for action” to which they had access. Finally, I highlight an episode in Gordion’s urban history that has received little recent attention, despite a resurgence of interest in their Syro-Anatolian counterparts: that of the short-lived Gordion orthostats. These relief-carved blocks, the only examples of large-scale figural art to have emerged from the Early Phrygian citadel, are known only in fragments, their unceremonious reuse as building material an indication of the counter-monumental practices to which they were subjected.¹⁵ Placed in the broader historical context of Iron Age Anatolian urbanism, I suggest that this brief experiment in public art—along with its longer-lived but less substantial neighbors, the “doodle stones” of Megaron 2—represents an otherwise invisible negotiation of political authority, or its representation, at Gordion. The orthostats’ removal can therefore be understood as an expression of political freedom, as defined by Hayward: “a social capacity to act, alone and with others, upon the boundaries that define one’s field of action”—in this case, on the urban fabric that was in a very real sense the fabric of Phrygian political life.¹⁶

POWER-WITH-A-FACE: MIDAS AT GORDION AND THE RODNEY YOUNG EXCAVATIONS

The citadel of Gordion was first identified as such by Alfred and Gustav Körte in 1893. The German brothers—a classical philologist and archaeologist, respectively—lamenting that the “mysterious civilization of the Phrygians” was known only “through the dense veil of legend,” conducted limited excavations at the site, including at several nearby burial mounds, but did not reach the destruction level.¹⁷ Large-scale excavations began in 1950 under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the direction of Rodney S. Young, professor of classical archaeology at Penn, who had previously worked in the Athenian Agora and elsewhere in Greece.

Young’s own expectations of Gordion were abundantly clear: in a much-cited anecdote, the first missive he sent back to Penn from the site read, “Gold the first day!” This exclamation referred to jewelry from a small burial mound in the city’s hinterland whose occupant, he joked, was “perhaps K.M.’s golden daughter”—“K.M.” for “King Midas,” naturally.¹⁸ When excavations on the mound did reach the destruction level and Young re-

15 On counter-monumentality, see Osborne 2017; also Porter, this volume. The Gordion orthostats have been published by Sams (1989).

16 Hayward 2000, 8.

17 Körte and Körte 1904.

18 Edwards 1980, 159. The landscape immediately surrounding Gordion is dotted with more than 100 such mounds of varying size, of which by far the largest is the so-called “Midas Mound,” excavated by Young in 1957 and dated by dendrochronology to 740 BCE. The rest of the tumuli are dated based on stylistic parallels to their contents: the earliest tumuli to the second half of the ninth century BCE, but most to the eighth and seventh centuries. The one in question, however, Tumulus A, turned out to date to the Achaemenid period. The gold Young referred to was that of a necklace including acorn and fruit/nut pendants, now dated to about 540–520 BCE. See the photograph and discussion in Rose and Darbyshire 2016, 27 and 61, respectively; also Kohler and Dusingberre 2023.

alized its extent, he attributed it to an attack on the city by Kimmerian raiders in about 700 BCE—because classical sources claimed that King Midas had committed suicide after such an event (including the salacious detail that he did so by drinking bull’s blood).¹⁹ Thus from the first, not just the story of Gordion but also the chronology of Iron Age Anatolia—constructed on the basis of artifactual parallels from “fixed events” such as these—became rooted in the life and death of the legendary Midas.

Young’s preconceptions were equally explicit when it came to the mound itself. In a 1962 publication, while first echoing the Körtes in acknowledging that Phrygia was “a kingdom whose actual extent and power are unknown to us” and Phrygian history “largely a blank,” he offered a detailed outline of what its capital, “the seat of the king,” should contain:

It should be a *fortified stronghold* capable of withstanding attack from without or insurrection within the kingdom. It should contain barracks for the housing of a garrison to protect it; perhaps also stables for the horses of the cavalry; certainly storerooms for arms and military equipment; possibly workrooms for the production and repair of the armament. *The palace of the king should lie within the fortifications*—a building or a complex of buildings within a compound, on a large scale, with rooms big enough to serve as audience chambers, banquet halls, or courtrooms. Attached to the palace should be many storerooms for the accumulation of tribute or of taxes paid in kind. . . . The palace probably had attached to it also the workshops of the artisans who produced its furnishings—workers in bronze and ivory, woodcarvers and cabinet-makers, leather-workers and the weavers and embroiderers who produced the hangings for the palace and raiment for its dwellers. *The complex as a whole must have been much like a feudal castle of medieval times*—a self-sustaining unit revolving around the court. The religious life of court and kingdom too must have centered around a temple or temples of the various deities at the capital, where the king could exercise his functions as religious head of the state. For all these functions there must have been functionaries great and small, all clustered around the seat of power; *Gordion, in short, must have been the center of an extensive bureaucracy* [emphases mine].²⁰

However brief Midas’s reign or limited his individual influence, in other words, the very notion of kingship carried with it all the baggage of a specific politico-economic model with clear material correlates.

These expectations have long played a part in interpreting the architecture of the Early Phrygian city. As recently as 2012, the overall organization of the citadel was described as divided “into two zones of very different function,” one “intended for the elite,” the other “devoted to industry” (see plan, fig. 12.3).²¹ At the east, Young dubbed the series of free-standing buildings arranged around two courtyards (the “Inner” and the “Outer”) “megarons,” based on their perceived resemblance to the columned halls with central hearths known from Mycenaean (Late Bronze Age Greek) palaces.²² There they are interpreted as kings’ throne rooms, for example, at the Palace of Nestor in Pylos, named for the Iliadic king. Adopting the same terminology for Gordion’s ubiquitous building form

¹⁹ Young did so in print as early as 1951, in the University of Pennsylvania Museum bulletin (Young 1951, 12).

²⁰ Young 1962a, 3, clearly heavily influenced by Childe 1950.

²¹ Rose 2012, 4.

²² Initially these buildings were described simply as “houses.”



Figure 12.3. Plan of the Early Phrygian citadel prior to its destruction at the end of the ninth century BCE. Prepared by Gareth Darbyshire, Ardeth Anderson, and Gabriel H. Pizzorno. Gordion Archive.

strengthened the implicit correspondence between the centralizing palatial economies and hierarchically organized societies thought to characterize the Bronze Age Aegean and Near East and those of Iron Age Phrygia.²³ To the west of the Megaron Courts, in the “industrial” quarter, stood one very long building (ca. 100 m) subdivided into eight units of identical size. These units shared the megaron plan, with front porch and central hearth, but were not freestanding; the building became known as the Terrace Building (or “TB”)

²³ It is generally recognized that these early models presented a highly simplified view of the Aegean Bronze Age economy and society; see the recent discussion and debate in Nakassis, Galaty, and Parkinson 2016; also, earlier, in Galaty, Nakassis, and Parkinson 2011; Parkinson, Nakassis, and Galaty 2013. The appropriateness of the widely used Homeric term “megaron” for the simple freestanding rooms fronted by porches, entered axially on the short side and sometimes with central hearths, so designated across (primarily Early) Bronze Age Anatolia (Warner 1979), is debatable, since very little is actually known of the function of those spaces outside Mycenaean palatial contexts, nor is there any reason to assume they all shared the same function across sites widely separated in space and time.

because of its bedding, a massive rubble terrace that raised its floor level as much as 1.5 m above those of the adjacent megarons.²⁴ Parts of a second such building, called the Clay Cut Building (or “CC”), were excavated mirroring TB to the west.

The overall similarity in dimensions and floor plan among the megaron buildings, of which Young eventually excavated twelve, along with a general lack of associated finds made it challenging either to isolate their function or to tease out a hierarchy among them.²⁵ In a 1960 field report he wrote: “Each year at Gordion we seem to find something palatial, and it becomes the palace-of-the-year . . . about one fourth of the area of Megaron 3 remains to be cleared; there is always a chance that this may produce something to indicate whether the building was actually the palace, or merely palatial.”²⁶ Meanwhile, in the same report, Young wrote of the newly discovered TB: “Details of construction indicate that it was planned and built all at one time, evidently as an important public building” (in contrast to the other megarons, which varied in both size and construction style²⁷). He went on: “Its prominent position on a high terrace gives it a claim to have been the king’s palace rivaling that of Megaron 3.”²⁸ Young further emphasized the architectural similarity between Megaron 3’s main room, which featured an elaborate system of wooden posts and beams that probably supported an upper gallery, and those of the inner rooms of the TB units (fig. 12.4).

Still, Young was bemused by the findings inside TB, which, unlike the megarons, contained an abundance of material that lent itself to functional inferences:

If it was the palace, we have opened so far only some of the work- and storerooms; and we can have little admiration for the Phrygians as neat and orderly housekeepers. In a palace, as at Knossos for example, one would expect many storerooms for the stowing of goods and equipment of all kinds; one would also expect workrooms in which the chores of daily living were performed. But one would expect at least a modicum of neatness and order. . . . The rooms of the Terrace Building, with evidence for all kinds of different activity in each . . . suggest nothing so much as a large and disorderly apartment house in which each family carried on its manifold daily activities in its own room or suite of rooms.²⁹

These inherent contradictions—TB’s monumentality versus its utilitarian function—puzzle excavators still. A 2012 synthesis of recent work noted that each of its eight units “encompassed the same space as the megarons at Mycenae, Pylos, and Tiryns”—reinforcing the association with Bronze Age palatial institutions—but their “abundance of equipment

24 A 2014 sounding beneath TB Unit 6 revealed that the depth of the terrace was highly variable, extending to 3.5 m in some places (Rose 2017, 155–57 and fig. 17). This variability suggested to the excavator that the larger goal of the Terrace project was to level the western edge of the Citadel Mound, thereby considerably expanding the usable area inside the citadel (Morgan 2018, 154–57).

25 Some dated to earlier periods megarons 6, 7, and 8. Megaron 3, the largest, had an apparently complete inventory with a higher proportion of “elite” goods than most of the TB units (though not TB Units 1 and 2). Megaron 4’s inventory was also apparently largely complete and contained a notable concentration of storage vessels. The other megarons, namely, 1, 2, 9, and 10, were mostly empty. Detailed summaries of these contexts, their excavation history, and their stratigraphy can be found in Sams 1994b.

26 Young 1960, 240.

27 Sams 1994a.

28 Young 1960, 242.

29 Young 1960, 242–43.

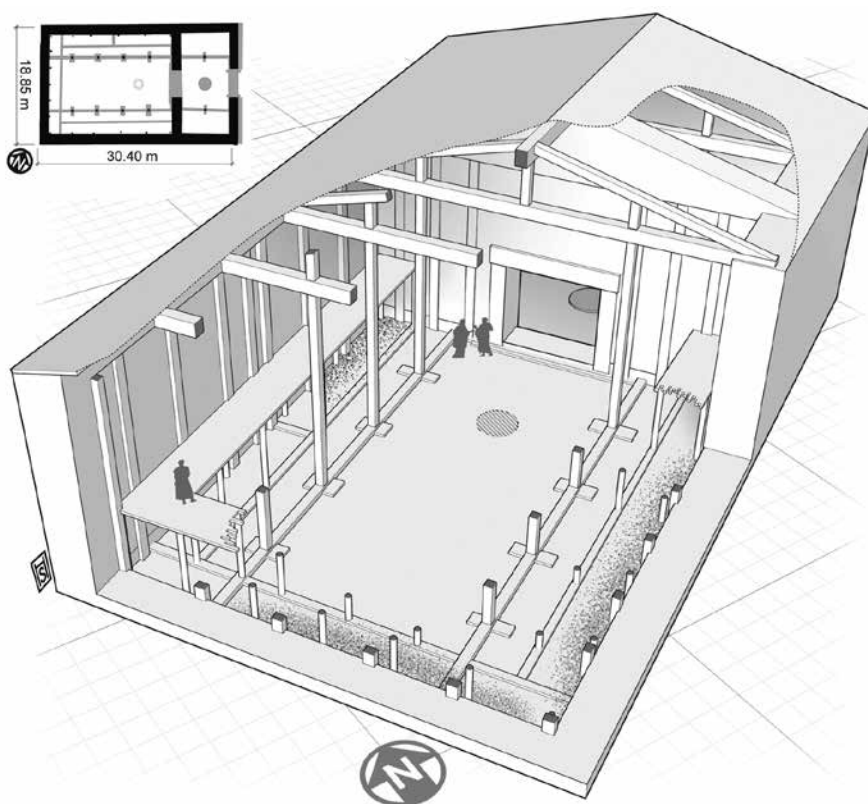


Figure 12.4. Reconstruction drawing of the Megaron 3 interior with second-story gallery. Prepared by Sam Holzman. Gordion Archive.

for textile and grain processing” distinguished them from the “elite” megarons.³⁰ This distinction, moreover, was supposedly reinforced in the citadel’s plan: “the highly restricted access routes between [the terrace and megaron] districts suggest a society more tightly controlled than any other in Anatolia or the Near East.”³¹

Recent research has determined that at the time of the destruction, the citadel was undergoing major modifications: indeed, the final Early Phrygian architectural subphase on the citadel is known as the “Unfinished Project,” and it involved such large-scale efforts as closing off the monumental citadel gate, presumably for renovation.³² Recognition of its incomplete state complicates efforts to use the citadel plan as evidence for sociopolitical organization one way or another, especially since the major work in progress seems to have been the Terrace itself. Though it was sufficiently complete to house the fully-functioning TB, just prior to the fire the Terrace had also been partially extended into the zone of the Megaron Courts and a new megaron building (Megaron 4) constructed atop it.³³ On the side of the Megaron Courts, the Terrace was accessed via two narrow, out-of-the-way

30 Rose 2012, 3.

31 Rose 2012, 4.

32 Voigt 2012.

33 Young 1964, 286–88; see also Voigt 2012, 93–94.

staircases, one near the Megaron 4 facade and another beside the entrance to Megaron 3, thus giving rise to the arguments for “restricted access” cited above. But these staircases, we now see, were temporary solutions to accommodate the Terrace expansion project. At the same time, a wide and well-finished flagstone staircase (fig. 12.5) gave access to the Terrace from the unexcavated zone to the north, where an additional city gate has long been hypothesized.³⁴ Access between TB and the north, then, was not so tightly controlled.³⁵ Moreover, when the citadel was rebuilt immediately after the fire, the subsequent Middle Phrygian plan—generally thought to represent the completion of the Unfinished Project of the earlier period—featured direct access between the Terrace and the Megaron Courts, as well as freestanding, megaron-style buildings in both (see fig. 12.2; the Middle Phrygian—phase architecture appears in blue). While the fact remains that these two zones were clearly delimited and likely also functionally distinct, the case for the deliberate spatial segregation of TB, and thereby control over its users, is not particularly strong.



Figure 12.5. Looking south, TB staircase under excavation in 1971. The wall on which the excavators are standing is the back wall of the pre-Terrace Megaron 7. The lower-middle steps of the staircase were destroyed by the subsequent construction of a Middle Phrygian retaining wall (see fig. 12.2). Gordion Archive image no. G-5807.

34 See DeVries 1990, 377–81, on the city wall and gate; 381–83 and figs. 10–15 on the flagstone staircase.

35 In the subsequent Middle Phrygian phase a large building, the Persian-Phrygian Building, was constructed in this area. Only its foundations were recovered, cutting into and severely damaging any Early Phrygian construction (if it existed). This building, based on its plan, is interpreted as possibly a storage facility in the Middle Phrygian period; it may have replaced an earlier building of similar function for which there is no longer any evidence, but it is equally possible that it was a Middle Phrygian addition. On the Middle Phrygian period, see Rose, forthcoming.

Why, then, does it persist? Patently, as an artifact of the kingship paradigm, Hayward's "power-with-a-face," though it has been diluted over the years. In his 1980 contribution to Young's *Festschrift*, synthesizing results from Gordion, Young's successor, Keith DeVries, wrote of TB:

Both King Alkinoos' and Odysseus' households were staffed by fifty slave women, who ground grain and did the textile work. The situation seems strikingly like that at Gordion, with its quarter devoted to just those jobs. But where Alkinoos and Odysseus had fifty women, Midas may have had (conservatively) three hundred.³⁶

It is not functional analysis of TB, but the idea of a Midas—modeled on the fictional kings that Iron Age Greeks fancifully situated in their own imagined Bronze Age past—that lies at the heart of this reconstruction. And paradoxically, the relative scarcity of finds in the so-called "elite" zone of the megarons—Midas's very facelessness in the archaeology of the Early Phrygian citadel—only fuels this purpose. Without iconographic evidence for kingship or sufficient inventory for functional analysis of the elite megarons—the presumed seat of power, where "Politics"³⁷ would have taken place—we cannot directly interrogate the workings of power at Gordion. We can only presume that it did so, in all the ways we are accustomed to imagine (how similar we are to Iron Age Greeks!), with monumental results, of which the subjugation of TB users is necessarily one.

The broad strokes of this analogy may yet be accurate. It is certainly the case that the grinding of grain and the making of textiles are well attested cross-culturally—in both the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean and in preindustrial societies worldwide—as women's work.³⁸ The purpose and status of those activities, however, is highly variable across social and spatial contexts.³⁹ Their location at Gordion in a monumental new building in the heart of the citadel, in the period immediately preceding the appearance of Phrygia on the international stage, is a strong indicator that they, and the people undertaking them, had a political role to play—if only in the chorus.⁴⁰ By denying this status to TB users—by viewing the Terrace and all it contained as a product of natural (extreme) asymmetries in the distribution of power—we deny ourselves the use of its rich contents, which, given the vicissitudes of archaeological preservation, remain our best chance at understanding, however indirectly, the foundational sociopolitical structures of the Early Phrygian state. To aid our doing so here, let us consider, with Hayward, the perspective of the "student of power de-faced."

36 DeVries 1980, 42.

37 See Smith, this volume, on small-*p* versus capital-*P* "politics."

38 Barber 1994; Costin 2012; Wright 2016.

39 Baking, brewing, and weaving appear, in both material and textual sources, in contexts ranging from the domestic to the institutional and may have had subsistence, economic, and/or ritual purposes. In the latter case in particular, we can suspect the involvement of elite women: see, e.g., Arthur 2003 (ethnoarchaeological study of the Gamo people of southwestern Ethiopia); Costin 2018 (Inca Peru); Halperin 2008 (Classic Maya Guatemala); Meyers 2013 (Etruscan Italy); Moseley et al. 2005, 17267–68 (Wari Peru); Neils 2009 (classical Greece). Some have argued that skill in these activities may have allowed women to accrue power or status (Meyers 2002; Mueller 2010; Wattenmaker 2008).

40 For textile production and the Phrygian political economy, see Burke 2005, 2010.

DE-FACING POWER IN EARLY PHRYGIA: PRODUCTION AS POLITICAL PRACTICE

Hayward's investigation of the "faces" of power ultimately stems from the power debate launched by political theorist Robert Dahl in the mid-twentieth century, contemporary with the Young excavations at Gordion. In an influential 1957 article, Dahl articulated what he believed to be "the central intuitively understood meaning" of power, that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."⁴¹ Power thus construed is a directional instrument, used by the powerful "A" to constrain the otherwise free action of a powerless "B." The ensuing debate identified second, third, and more "hidden faces" of power, recognizing that power not only directly influences actions but also shapes behaviors, expression of preferences, and perceived interests and desires.⁴² But few took issue with the broader premise "that elaborating normatively compelling arguments about power requires dichotomizing, both between agents who have power and actors who are powerless, and between actions agents choose or authentically desire, and those that are socially constrained."⁴³

This temptation to dichotomize, where power dynamics are concerned, is clearly at work in the Early Phrygian citadel: Terrace/megarons; industrial/elite; powerless ("slave women")/powerful (Alkinoos/Odysseus/Midas); unfree ("tightly controlled")/free. What is less clear, or has long gone unobserved, are its consequences for the study of Phrygian politics. Hayward observes that the power-with-a-face model "deflects attention . . . from social relations that do not involve agents who seem powerful, and from the ways power is exercised in the absence of apparent connections, such as communication or interaction."⁴⁴ In other words, only the spaces and places where we believe powerful agents to have been present and acted are those germane to the study of the Political, that is, the negotiation of power. As a result, we have marginalized the Terrace and its users as uninteresting for this purpose, considering them and their activities the mere *result* of power, with no role in constructing it—its object, not its agent.

For Hayward, this is a false dichotomy: the state of "freedom" we ascribe to characters like Midas and deny to others—what she terms "negative freedom," "a political void where action is independent of social constraint"—does not exist.⁴⁵ No matter how powerful, we are all governed and conditioned by norms, rules, and other social boundaries that circumscribe "fields of action" for each of us—"forms of expression in which [we] might engage, social capacities [we] might develop that are publicly recognized and rewarded"—making "identity itself . . . a product of power relations."⁴⁶ If we acknowledge that *all* social actors are situated within relations of power, Hayward's more general definitions of politics, following Habermas, as "the collective definition of social possibility" and of political

41 Dahl 1957, 202–3.

42 Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974; Gaventa 1980. See discussion in Hayward 2000, ch. 2.

43 Hayward 2000, 5. The existence of a realm of free, unconstrained action—what Hayward terms "negative freedom"—was important to midcentury theories of democracy in opposition to other forms of governance (that would likewise have influenced Young's thinking on monarchic Asian regimes).

44 Hayward 2000, 38–39.

45 Hayward 2000, 38.

46 Hayward 2000, 171.

freedom as “the social capacity to help shape the terms of one’s life with others”⁴⁷—these definitions open up new realms for exploring the political in Gordion’s Early Phrygian citadel. By this measure, the city and all its users, from Midas on down, were subject to the same shared set of social boundaries, and they were all shaped by and contributed to shaping political life.

The critical question for students of power de-faced relates instead to the inclusiveness of these processes. At Gordion, it is not likely that all Citadel Mound users were able to contribute to political life in the same way. To what extent can we determine how different groups were endowed “with the social capacity to participate effectively in determining, evaluating, criticizing, and changing the norms and other boundaries to action” that comprise power relations?⁴⁸ In other words, in what ways were TB users, and those of the Early Phrygian Citadel Mound overall, free? These questions require an alternate approach to spatial and artifactual analysis in TB.

As we have already seen, the focus in TB has long been on the architectural uniformity of the units and their permanent installations, taken as evidence of top-down planning: the anteroms of TB Units 3–8 each contained a large beehive oven; at the back of the main room of each unit, a long bench supported anywhere from six to twelve querns for grinding grain, with a total of fifty-four querns found *in situ* across TB and CC (fig. 12.6a–b).⁴⁹ Carbonized grain was found in many of the units, as were an abundance of tools that could be associated with textile production (spindle whorls, loom weights, needles, and knives); quantities varied widely



Figure 12.6a. Excavated TB units looking northeast, showing TB Unit 5 in 1961, with Megaron 3 in the background. Gordion Archive image no. G-3934.

47 Hayward 2000, 6.

48 Hayward 2000, 169.

49 Later pitting disturbed the rear areas of several of the TB/CC units where grinding benches were usually located, namely, TB-8 and CC-3, so this number would probably have been slightly higher.

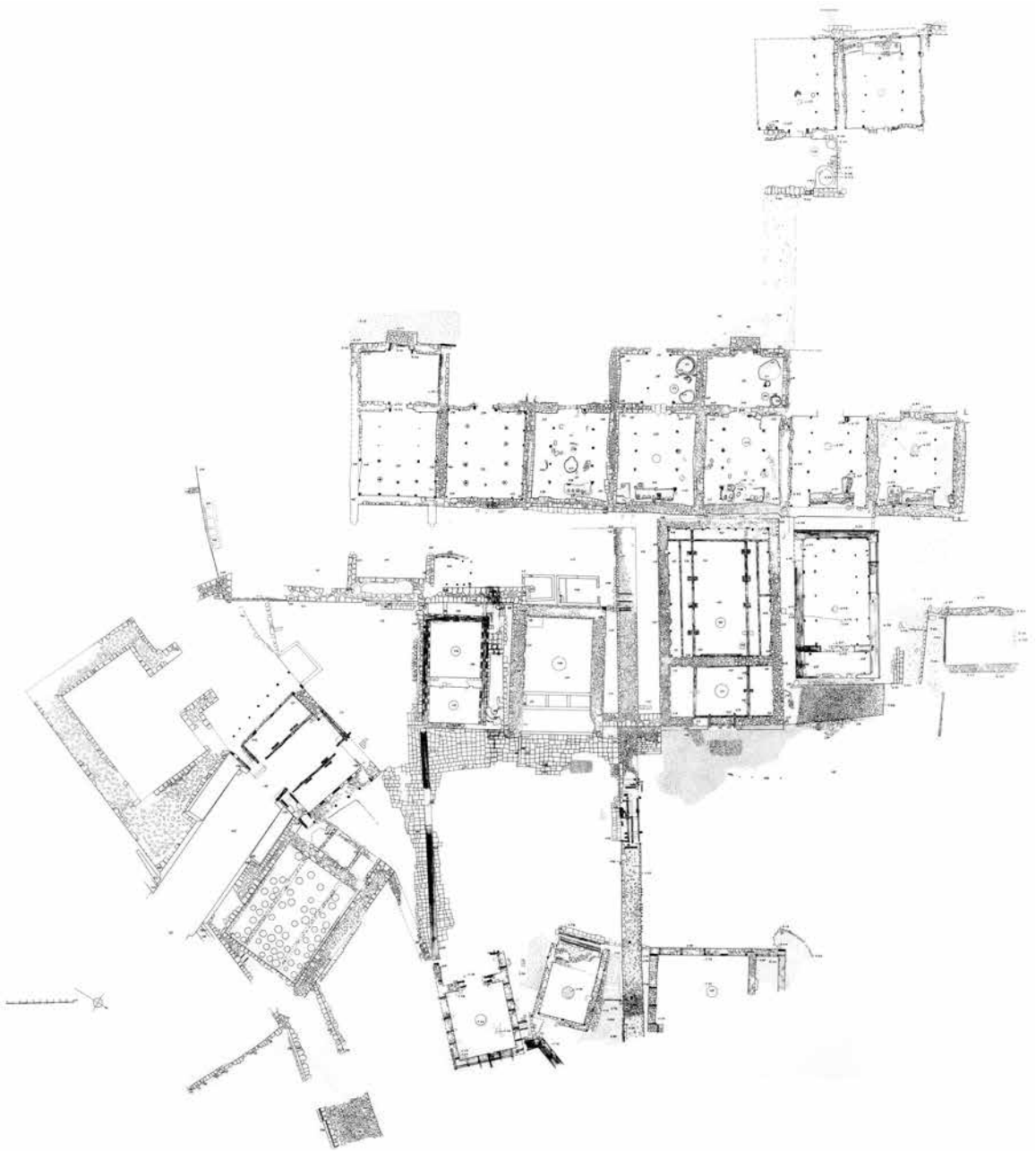


Figure 12.6b. Plan of excavated TB units showing the state of the site in 1965, prior to the excavation of the TB-7 anteroom (TB-7A), TB-8, and CC-3 to the north. The anteroom of TB-2 (TB-2A) was later excavated by Mary M. Voigt during renewed campaigns at the site beginning in 1989. Gordion Archive plan no. 1965-11.

across the units, but in several cases loom weights numbered in the hundreds.⁵⁰ These finds indeed suggest TB users were engaged in intensive industry (weaving and baking) on a large scale, and perhaps by their nature are evocative of the life of drudgery described by DeVries (fig. 12.7).

But the units also contained lots of other things, which have been treated rather more anecdotally: imported foodstuffs such as hazelnuts, a fine necklace, and several ivory-handled knives were scattered throughout the TB units, qualified by DeVries as “a few signs of luxury and relaxed living.”⁵¹ Other such signs include the presence of typically Phrygian bronze fibulae in many TB units, with close parallels in the indisputably elite contexts of the tumulus burials in the site’s hinterland.⁵² In addition to these traces of elite material culture amid the workaday finds, several TB units yielded evidence for other craft activities alongside textile production, such as bone- and woodworking.⁵³ Rather than the spatial concentration of tasks we might expect from a highly centralized organizational context,⁵⁴ whether palatial/institutional or “industrial,” we find these activities distributed throughout TB, not so much at random as apparently at will. The variety of occupations, their repetition across units, and their rather relaxed distribution all hint at a certain degree of autonomy for TB users—a limited capacity to self-organize, to “shape the terms of one’s life with others.”

Clearer patterns emerge from the large ceramic assemblages of the TB units. Each contained hundreds of vessels in a restricted range of shapes that included storage and



Figure 12.7. TB Unit 2 under excavation in 1961, with concentrations of ceramics and loom weights lining the northwest wall of the room. Unlike TB Units 3–8, Units 1 and 2 were not equipped with a grinding bench. Gordion Archive image no. G-3969.

⁵⁰ Burke 2010.

⁵¹ DeVries 1980, 39.

⁵² Vassileva 2012.

⁵³ This evidence came mainly in the form of iron tools, such as registered finds of chisels and awls. The iron from the destruction level is under study by Gareth Darbyshire. On an ivory workshop at Gordion, see Sheftel 1974, 29–30.

⁵⁴ Costin 1991, 2001.



Figure 12.8a. Checkerboard-painted askos (P-2364) from TB-4. Gordion Archive image no. 71922.



Figure 12.8b. Alişar IV-style krater (P-3729) from TB-8. Gordion Archive image no. R873-7.

food preparation but also drinking, dining, and special-purpose types. Some examples are an unusual tubular vessel Young called a “python cothon”⁵⁵ as well as a checkerboard-painted askos from TB-4⁵⁶—both pouring vessels, presumably used for libations; an Alişar IV-style painted krater (TB-8),⁵⁷ usually intended for the mixing and serving of wine or other fermented beverages; and an elaborately painted version of the distinctively Phrygian side-spouted sieve jar (CC-2),⁵⁸ widely interpreted as a drinking vessel for beer (fig. 12.8a–c). Side-spouted sieve jars appeared in most if not all of the TB units—CC-3 contained three, TB-4 at least seven; they otherwise appear in such numbers



Figure 12.8c. Side-spouted sieve jug (P-1270) from CC-2. Gordion Archive image no. 59251.

55 P 2490, Sams 1994b cat. no. 793; see also Young 1962b, 165 and fig. 20.

56 P 2364, Sams 1994b cat. no. 812; see also Young 1960, 242 and fig. 29.

57 P 3729, Sams 1994b cat. no. 932. Sams cataloged two more painted kraters associated with TB-8 (P 4001, cat. no. 933, and P 4165/4166, cat. nos. 935A–E), another from TB-7 (P 3297, cat. no. 931), and one in the TB-4 anteroom (P 2519, cat. no. 934).

58 P 1270; Sams 1994b, cat. no. 832.

only in Megaron 3.⁵⁹ The closest parallels for the painted CC-2 vessel's decoration come from the indisputably elite contexts of Tumulus W, the earliest known burial mound in Gordion's hinterland, and the slightly later Tumulus K-III.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, TB-1 and 2 together contained the remains of six bronze cauldrons, likewise a key element of Phrygian drinking assemblages, as evinced by the tumuli; in TB-2, the cauldrons were associated with iron tripods, of which several examples also occur in TB-4.⁶¹

The overlap among the TB/CC, megaron, and tumulus assemblages already suggests that the strict dichotomies heretofore governing interpretations of these zones are somewhat misleading: leaving aside the issue of physical access to the supposed elite spaces of the Megaron Courts, there is ample evidence within TB for its users' access to elite goods. But even the simple-ware vessels in TB replicate the same set of shapes that occur in tumulus assemblages, where they were clearly used for funerary feasting.⁶² We might thus infer that TB users, too, were at times free to indulge in the group drinking practices this assemblage afforded. It is possible that this inventory was simply stored in TB rather than used there, but the sheer number of vessels, along with their frequent appearance in what appear to be functional clusters—smaller dining shapes such as cups and bowls found within or alongside a large storage jar or krater—suggests regular use by a relatively large community.⁶³

There is reason to believe that this community was diverse, as well as large. Already in 1994, ceramicist G. Kenneth Sams had observed an unusual lack of standardization among the vessels of the destruction level, particularly in the execution of painted decoration; he termed this variety the Phrygians' "creative approach to potting."⁶⁴ Neutron activation analysis has since confirmed that the clay sources of vessels from the Early Phrygian destruction level (most of them from TB) were widely scattered: the study revealed a "diversity of non-local proveniences" that were not limited to a specific type of vessel. Indeed, the clay signatures were so varied that investigators were unable to identify any single "local" source—a phenomenon that ran in sharp contrast to their observations at other Anatolian Iron Age centers, where one or a few local sources predominated. The authors therefore suggested that "elite food practices, potentially feasting, using vessels brought from a broad region, were a significant factor in Phrygian political dynamics."⁶⁵ Given the predominance of small- and medium-sized vessels in the destruction level, a likely scenario is that geographically dispersed individuals or groups brought these vessels into the citadel, with their contents serving as small-scale taxation or tribute for provisioning the center, in addition, perhaps, to their labor.⁶⁶

59 Sams 1994b, 5–6, 67–70: "The sieve jug . . . seems to have been a luxury item of limited circulation rather than an essential component in the daily domestic routine" (p. 67).

60 Sams 1994b, 168; 2012, 58.

61 These details were presented by Maya Vassileva and Gareth Darbyshire in a workshop on the topic of the TBs held at the Penn Museum in May 2017, on the basis of their ongoing publication work on destruction-level bronze and iron objects, respectively.

62 These shapes include round-mouthed jugs, small trefoil jugs, and bowls in large numbers, as well as *dinoi* (which replicate the small metal cauldrons) and "*kantharos* kraters" (Sams 1994b, 5).

63 On these clustering patterns, see Morgan 2018, 182–85; brief remarks in Sams 1994b, 5.

64 Sams 1994b, 41.

65 Grave et al. 2009, 2171; see also Kealhofer, Grave, and Voigt 2022.

66 Heavy reliance on broad fiscal participation in this way has been identified cross-culturally as a key characteristic of political formations that tend more toward corporate organization or negotiated rule by social contract (Blanton and Fargher 2008; see also Feinman and Nicholas, this volume).

Considering the evidence for communal consumption taking place within TB alongside labor, it seems more appropriate to categorize these strategies of attracting people to the Early Phrygian citadel as voluntaristic, rather than coercive.⁶⁷ This aligns well with paleobotanical reconstructions of Gordion's economy in this period, where there is little evidence for intensive cultivation or large-scale storage of agricultural surplus, indicating that some form of structured resource-sharing among groups occupying different parts of the city's hinterland would have been necessary to weather the harsh winters and unpredictable annual rainfall of the Anatolian plateau.⁶⁸ More speculatively, the superficial kind of standardization noted by Sams in the ceramic assemblage overall—broadly shared functional categories of vessels, shared visual referents for decoration, but very different details of execution, both technological and stylistic—hints at a freedom of creative expression and a willingness to experiment on the part of their makers, albeit within the constraints of a functional and aesthetic canon. If feasting was indeed an important political activity in early Phrygia—if “acting politically correct” at Gordion meant taking part in such activities—the high degree of variation exhibited by the visible, physical accoutrements of that practice suggests that both the makers of the vessels and the people using them were endowed with the capacity not merely to participate but also to contribute to “shaping and even changing” its norms.

On what scale should we imagine these feasting events, and how inclusive (or exclusive) might they have been? The time and space for gathering within any individual TB unit was limited, given the many other activities also taking place there. By contrast, the area of the Megaron Courts is predominantly open space. The Inner and Outer Courts are each larger than any of the buildings at Gordion; the Outer Court is roughly 900 m², and the Inner Court potentially larger (it has not been completely excavated). The Outer Court alone could thus have accommodated a crowd of anywhere from 2,000 to more than 8,000 people, depending on density.⁶⁹ Further indications that these spaces were meant to accommodate large groups include a fine flagstone pavement and a monumental drain, as well as a pottery shed, located precisely between TB and the Inner Court, that contained overflow drinking vessels. Ideally situated for distributing to guests in open-air gatherings, the shed contained dozens of pitchers and simple bowls, the latter neatly stacked in (remarkably preserved) reed baskets (fig. 12.9).⁷⁰ The Phrygians' later reputation in classical sources as beer-drinkers, the scale of the grinding operations in TB/CC, and the rare discovery there of germinated grains, necessary for beer production, all reinforce the notion that group activities involving drinking were facilitated in the Gordion citadel, at least sporadically, and may well have served to foster trust and promote cooperation among an ever-larger and more diverse constituency.⁷¹

67 This observation is not to exclude the possibility of coercion but to note that it is not self-evident from the archaeological remains.

68 Marston 2017; on surplus at Gordion, see also Krsmanovic 2017, 262–65; on the broader issue of the Anatolian environment and the relationship between surplus and social stratification and resilience, Frangipane 2010; Morehart and De Lucia 2015; Manning et al. 2023.

69 On crowd-density calculations, see McMahon, this volume.

70 Sams 1994b, 6; see initial description in Young 1957, 323–24.

71 In his *History of Beer and Brewing*, Hornsey (2003, 129) writes that the TB units were “patently breweries”; on early states and inebriation, see Paulette 2021.



Figure 12.9. Stacked bowls, and remains of a wooden basket at left, during the excavation of the TB gateway in 1956. Gordion Archive image no. 59435.

The modular organization of TB hints that, at this early stage, responsibility for preparing and hosting these events may have been distributed among various groups, perhaps organized along kinship or geographic lines. But events of this kind would also have provided opportunities for the negotiation of political authority, the display of wealth, and the accrual of prestige so conspicuously advertised in Gordion's tumuli hereafter.⁷² The (large-*P* and small-*p*) political functions of such events are well attested in the public art and architecture of the contemporary Syro-Hittite states, to which we will now turn; but the materiality of urbanism in those places provides evidence less for busy hands than for faces—of deities, rulers, and citizens alike. The corresponding silence of the Gordion citadel, by contrast, is deafening. This does not mean that a powerful ruler did not exist; but it suggests that, given such a ruler's utter facelessness in Phrygian material culture, political authority was materialized by other means at Early Phrygian Gordion, embedded as it was in a suite of social and spatial structures that advantaged the contributions and participation of a broad constituency.

ACTING POLITICALLY INCORRECT: COUNTER-MONUMENTALITY AT GORDION

The early first millennium BCE was a time of profound sociopolitical change throughout Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean, one that witnessed the resurgence of political complexity after the collapse of the great bureaucratic states of the Late Bronze Age. As at

⁷² See Stephens 2018 for analysis of the organization and chronology of the tumulus fields; he likewise concludes corporate organization or competing elites were likely responsible.

Gordion, in the Syro-Anatolian border region south of the Taurus mountain range, these changes manifested themselves in urban transformations in the capital cities of the small polities located there; unlike at Gordion, the gates, squares, and passageways of those centers were decorated with figural art and inscriptions on a monumental scale.⁷³ The content of these artworks, which depict processions and feasts, makes clear that these public spaces were the settings for civic rituals that would have served to integrate the ethnolinguistically diverse inhabitants of the region into a cohesive political community, in addition to legitimating individual rule.⁷⁴ But these processes were not simple, nor were they always successful: contrary to confirming the air of permanence their materiality affords large-scale stone sculpture and architecture, ongoing excavations at such sites as Karkemish, Arslantepe (Malatya), Zincirli, and Tell Tayinat have revealed that these monuments were manipulated, destroyed, buried, and reused with great frequency.⁷⁵ Successive rulers, rival dynasts, and conflicts internal and external left their mark on the urban fabric through both memorialization and selective erasure. While disruptive, this ability to reshape the urban fabric might constitute what is, by Hayward's definition, the ultimate expression of political freedom: a capacity to act not just within but also upon the physical boundaries that shape the terms of our lives with others.

The explicitly political intent of these interventions is clearest at Karkemish, where historical inscriptions accompany many of the relief-carved orthostats decorating the city's gates and passageways, and the facades of public buildings.⁷⁶ The famed reliefs of the city's Long Wall of Sculpture, which are contemporary with the period of Gordion's rise in the late tenth and ninth centuries BCE, were commissioned by the ruler Suhi II and his successor Katuwa. Their inscriptions describe the suppression of rebellions that threatened their power and the restoration of buildings and sculptures defaced by enemies. In some cases, Katuwa's "restoration" of certain monuments may more accurately be described as appropriation: the house of Suhi, who bore the title "Country Lord," seems to have usurped power from an earlier dynasty of rulers who styled themselves "Great Kings" and claimed descent from the Hittites.⁷⁷ A stela dedicated to Great King Ura-Tarhunza, dated to the late eleventh or early tenth century BCE, was found in the courtyard of a Temple of the Storm God that Katuwa claimed to have built, suggesting an earlier date for the temple's initial construction. By the early eighth century, several inscriptions of Katuwa had in turn been removed from display or rearranged—one was reused to construct a ramp in the King's Gate, such that the masses would literally have trampled him underfoot—and the eunuch Yariri, regent to the scion of the new ruling family, had replaced them with his own image and inscriptions in prominent locations.⁷⁸

This dizzying succession of rulers and dynasties hints at cycles of political upheaval that run starkly counter to the enduring authority claimed by their makers in stone. The discovery elsewhere of monumental ruler-sculptures deliberately defaced, as at Tell

73 See most recently Osborne 2020; also Osborne et al. 2019.

74 Gilibert 2011.

75 Gilibert 2015; Herrmann 2017; Osborne 2017.

76 The full text of inscriptions and translations can be found in Hawkins 2000, 72–124.

77 Hawkins 1995; see also Gilibert 2015; Hawkins and Weeden 2016.

78 Denel 2007, 185 and n. 6; see also Hawkins 2000, 98.

Tayinat,⁷⁹ or carefully entombed, as at Arslantepe-Malatya,⁸⁰ further reveals a diversity of attitudes and outcomes related to these objects. They point to the coexistence of multiple groups or factions with competing notions of legitimacy and the means to express those views, residues of what Osborne has called at Tayinat “a complex series of contested memories not necessarily compatible with the stated goal of the monuments to perpetuate royal legitimacy.”⁸¹ At Zincirli, Herrmann goes further, arguing that, far from an expression of stability, the Syro-Hittite practice of monument creation was “a particularly powerful and flexible tool for navigating disjunctive occurrences . . . an active means of social reproduction that attempted (successfully or unsuccessfully) to adapt existing ‘schemas’ to new conditions in a turbulent and contingent history.”⁸²

At Early Phrygian Gordion, we lack both the rich ideological transcript of contemporary Syro-Hittite cities and the inscriptional record to contextualize such transformations more concretely. We can, however, muster two rather curious examples of counter-monumental practices, all the more important because of the relative rarity of figural art at Gordion.⁸³ The first example comprises the Gordion orthostats, a group of ten fragmentary, relief-carved blocks—made of the soft, yellowish-white local limestone called “*poros*”—that depict humans, animals, and mythical beasts, along with two additional lion-head protomes carved in the round. They were all found in pieces, having been unceremoniously reused as building material, some in pre- and some in post-destruction contexts (fig. 12.10a–d).⁸⁴ The second example comprises the so-called “doodle stones” of Megaron 2, one of the first monumental buildings at Gordion, and one of the longest-lived. Built of the same soft *poros* stone as the orthostats, many of its blocks bear incised drawings evocative, if not of the orthostats themselves, then of a similar range of motifs at home in the Syro-Hittite iconographic repertoire, including birds, lions, stars, buildings, and human figures (fig. 12.11a–d).⁸⁵ Both of these phenomena represent, in their ways, acts of engagement with the built environment and efforts to reshape civic space; whether or not we can resolve the question of when and by whom, their existence hints at hidden currents beneath the silent facades of the Megaron Courts at this, the dawn of the Phrygian state.

The orthostats are the only examples of large-scale figural art to have emerged from the Early Phrygian citadel, and stylistically they are quite unusual: the deeply bored eyes of the lion (fig. 12.10a), the series of incisions around the eyes, and the hatched/checkered detail on its head or mane, along with the finished, raised frame visible in several other fragments as well, find better parallels in ivory than in stonework, suggesting that the artisans who created them may have been attempting to transfer old techniques

79 Denel and Harrison 2017.

80 Manuelli and Mori 2016.

81 Osborne 2017, 182.

82 Herrmann 2017, 267; see also Herrmann 2019.

83 On counter-monumentality, see Young 1992; also Porter, this volume.

84 Sams 1989.

85 Young 1969; Roller 1999, 2009, 2012. Later megarons are built either entirely or partially of mudbrick (Sams 1994a). The variety of construction techniques exhibited across the megaron buildings is consistent with the apparently segmented construction of the fortification walls (Voigt 2013, 192) as well as techniques of ceramic production, discussed above, with all being strikingly variable.



Figure 12.10a. Lion orthostat fragment from Gordion (S-58). Gordion Archive image no. CIAG_2.2a.



Figure 12.10b. Bird-headed genius orthostat fragment from Gordion (S-44). Gordion Archive image no. R328-40.

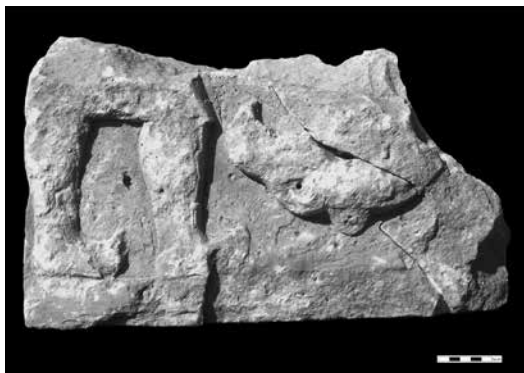


Figure 12.10c. Orthostat fragment from Gordion showing Master-of-Animals scene (S-46). Gordion Archive image no. CIAG_2.2b.



Figure 12.10d. Throne (S-86) orthostat fragment from Gordion. Gordion Archive image no. R554-38.

to a new medium.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, we cannot understand them without reference to Syro-Hittite architectural sculpture. Subjects depicted include several that appear at Zincirli and Karkemish, including the standing bird-headed genius with raised arms (fig. 12.10b), the Master-of-Animals motif (fig. 12.10c), and a furniture element that seems to be part of a throne (fig. 12.10d). Furthermore, the reliefs have been plausibly associated with one of the earliest monumental buildings, and the first megaron-style building, on the citadel, the Post-and-Poros Building (PAP), which was situated adjacent to an early citadel gate

⁸⁶ See Winter's (1989) seminal article on stylistic interactions between luxury goods and "major" arts; Suter 2015 on the pitfalls of current systems of "sourcing"/classifying ivory-carving techniques and motifs.



Figure 12.11a. Photo of “doodle stone” from Megaron 2 depicting hunter with bagged hare (ST-315). Image created by Lynn E. Roller. Gordion Archive Roller no. 44.

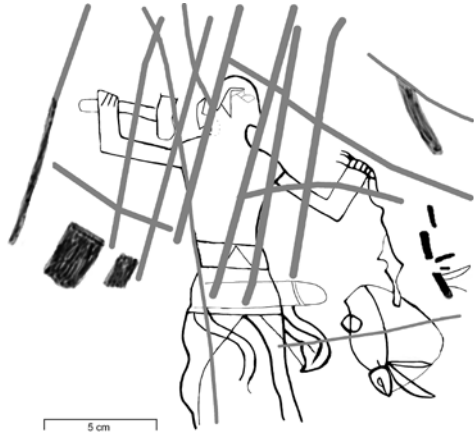


Figure 12.11b. Drawing of “doodle stone” from Megaron 2 depicting hunter with bagged hare (ST-315). Image created by Lynn E. Roller. Gordion Archive Roller no. 44.



Figure 12.11c. Photo of “doodle stone” from Megaron 2 depicting superimposed lion, horse, bird, goat, and symbols (ST-264). Image created by Lynn E. Roller. Gordion Archive Roller no. 10.

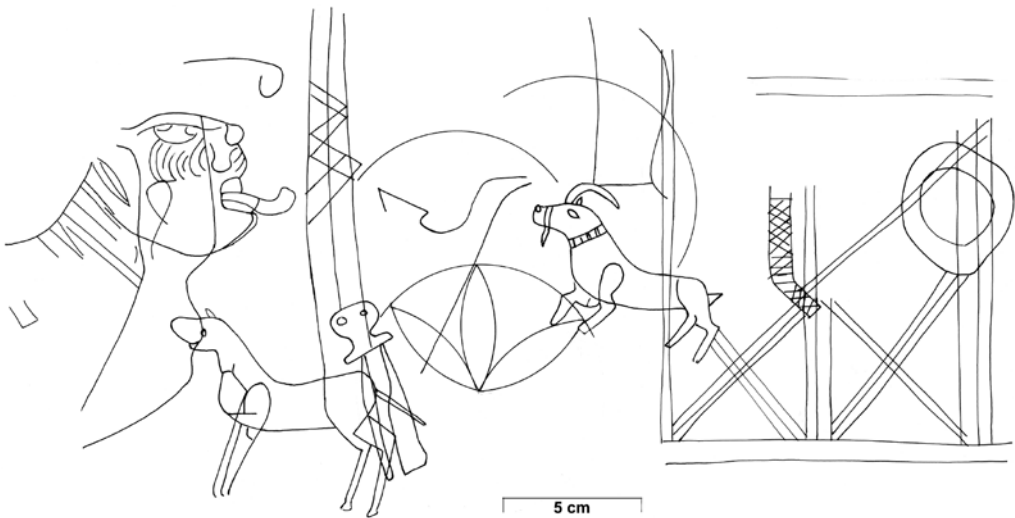


Figure 12.11d. Drawing of “doodle stone” from Megaron 2 depicting superimposed lion, horse, bird, goat, and symbols (ST-264). Image created by Lynn E. Roller. Gordion Archive Roller no. 10.

structure, a location that clearly indicates they were intended for public consumption.⁸⁷ Yet the reliefs cannot have been on display for more than a decade or so, certainly not in their original location: both the PAP and the gate structure (the Early Phrygian Building) went out of use well before the destruction, and their foundations were covered over by the flagstone pavement of the Outer Court (see fig. 12.2, the Gordion phase plan, where these buildings appear in dark fuschia).⁸⁸

Who commissioned their monuments? What was their ideological intent? And why were they so short-lived? Their fragmentary state and poorly understood context have long posed a challenge to Gordion scholars: Roller considered the motifs to have been borrowed from the Syro-Hittite kingdoms in a selective, limited way, to “advertise power but not a distinct cultural identity”;⁸⁹ Voigt, on the other hand, argued that “the adoption of images and styles associated with eastern states suggests a strongly hierarchical social and political system at Gordion” during this, the first monumental building period of the Iron Age city.⁹⁰ Even if in emulation of their Syro-Hittite neighbors, however, the use of orthostats and the selection of motifs must represent an active adoption on the part of their Phrygian commissioners—an innovation, not a passively inherited tradition.⁹¹ Are they examples of the kind of “costly signaling” known to have flared up in Hittite and Syro-Hittite Anatolia at times of political turbulence and intense competition?⁹² They would then be indicative not of a regime at the height of its power but the opposite: one struggling to convince the political community of its legitimacy in the face of those seeking to challenge the status quo. In any case, the reliefs were soon repurposed as building material, signaling their failure to win over a key constituency. Perhaps especially if they were commissioned to advertise power or a specific (new) form of political domination, their highly fragmentary state would appear to be the result of an active and violent rejection of such a regime and its corresponding ideology. Their destruction must have been accomplished by a social group empowered to do so, at least temporarily—to “shape and reshape” the practices and

87 Voigt 2013, 186–89.

88 Sams observed that the orthostats had already been recut/reused at least once before being discarded: see discussion in Sams 1994a; 1994b, 194–95. Note that by the time of the destruction, the flagstone pavement of the Outer Court was itself being disassembled as part of the Unfinished Project (see n. 32 above).

89 Roller 2007, 215.

90 Voigt 2013, 189. Note the underlying assumption that “eastern states” were universally governed by a “strongly hierarchical social and political system,” one not necessarily borne out by the evidence for upheaval and contestation discussed above. See also Barjamovic 2004; Otto 2012 on collective governance and corporate organization in the Near East in the second and first millennia BCE.

91 A rock relief dated to the Hittite imperial period survives at Gavurkalesi, just 50 km east-southeast of Gordion; the relief depicts, in profile, two standing or striding individuals (probably gods, based on their horned headdresses) approaching a seated figure, possibly a goddess, holding a cup and what may be a bird in each hand. On the basis of the relief and survey work at the site, it has thus been suggested that it served as a religious or royal funerary institution (see Lumsden 2002). It is therefore possible, even likely, that cultural memory of the Hittites did persist into the Iron Age in this region and that the use of Hittite iconography at Gordion was a phenomenon independent of its continued use in Syro-Anatolia. The evidence of Syro-Hittite ivories in the TBs, however, gives a clear indication of interregional interactions between Gordion and Syro-Anatolia in the ninth century BCE (Young 1962b, 166–67 and fig. 24), as does, arguably, the newly discovered Türkmenkarahöyük inscription, dated paleographically to the eighth century BCE (Goedegebuure et al. 2020).

92 Glatz and Plourde 2011.

institutions governing their action, to “affect the boundaries defining for them the field of what is possible.”⁹³

By contrast, the so-called “doodles” on the walls of Megaron 2 represent a quite different mode of counter-monumentality. While later than the PAP, Megaron 2 is held to be one of the earliest monumental buildings at Gordion, and it remained in use until the end of the Early Phrygian period. It was thus one of the longest-lived megarons, and one of the few to be built entirely of stone—the same soft *poros* limestone as the orthostat blocks.⁹⁴ Inside, it boasted an opulent pebble-mosaic floor with an array of geometric patterns rendered in red, white, and black.⁹⁵ On the exterior, the doodles are rendered with shallow, fine lines, predominantly at the back and sides of the building. The drawings are often superimposed, one atop another, making their motifs difficult to see, even more so to parse. Roller, however, observed that they were cut into a finished surface (after the blocks had been cut and smoothed), employed a wide variety of techniques (from less to more skilled), and did not appear to have been covered over with paint or plaster, thus implying a degree of intentionality and a multiplicity of hands.⁹⁶ Remarkling on the “enigma” of “a beautiful, carefully constructed building intentionally and openly covered with casually incised drawings and graffiti,” she suggested “it may be that the boundary between public and private art in Gordion was much more fluid than we are accustomed to seeing.”⁹⁷

Roller concluded that despite the drawings’ strong stylistic affinities with Syro-Hittite art and overlapping subject matter—one of the most recognizable scenes is of a hunter holding a bagged hare extended in front of him, with an upraised mace in his right hand in the familiar smiting position of Hittite deities (fig. 12.11a–b), a scene that also appears, for example, at Iron Age Kültepe—they were still firmly rooted in a local Phrygian tradition, especially the complex geometric patterns and scenes of “daily life” (featuring dogs and Megaron facades) (fig. 12.11c–d).⁹⁸ Though she speculates that the stones may have been reused from an earlier building, the layering of the drawings nonetheless implies that they were produced repeatedly over an extended period, perhaps over the long use-life of this building. Was this an act of defacement of Megaron 2 (or its predecessor)? Its subtlety and repetition hints instead at a gentler but ongoing, and surely meaningful, process of modifying the urban environment. These doodle stones are thus one more reminder of the many busy hands at work in the Early Phrygian citadel, hands that have left so many traces, if we care to see them. The palimpsest of Megaron 2’s walls is a testament to the multiple disordered, experimental processes of monumentalization that resulted in the Early Phrygian citadel—and to the contributions therein of many individuals to “produce and reproduce the field of action of their shared existence,” that is, the city itself.

93 Hayward 2000, 31.

94 See above, n. 85.

95 Only one parallel, recently unearthed, exists for this polychrome pebble mosaic, at the Hittite site of Uşaklı Höyük: there, it is associated with a second-millennium BCE building interpreted as a temple (see Leonard 2020).

96 Roller 1999, 143. It is still rather tempting to reconstruct these drawings as sketches preparatory to painting, as for example at Aktepe tumulus (Baughan 2010).

97 Roller 1999, 151.

98 Roller 1999, 148. The doodles that have garnered the most attention are those that appear to depict decorated megaron facades, on which see, most recently, Rose 2021, 54–56 and fig. 18.

CONCLUSIONS: “THIS IS NOT A MOMENT, IT’S THE MOVEMENT”⁹⁹

The conflicts over public monuments that erupted across the United States in the summer of 2020—our contemporary moment of iconoclasm—cast into sharp relief the disconnect between official discourse and grassroots action. The messy realities of collective existence, and the constant and demanding negotiation of power that it entails, far transcend single events, whether the destruction of an entire city or the defacing of a simple statue; and toppling a monument is not in itself political transformation or even necessarily its harbinger. After the destruction of Gordion’s Early Phrygian citadel, the entire city was covered in a clay layer several meters deep, then built again; the plan of the new, Middle Phrygian citadel was almost identical to the Early Phrygian one (though with several key differences, as noted above). There are thus at Phrygian Gordion strong arguments for continuity and conservatism of the built environment and of the political structures that created and maintained it. But we should not for that reason fail to investigate the data that stray from that narrative, nor should we ignore lives and experiences cast into shadow by the walls we ourselves have built around the political sphere.

The framework of de-facing power is useful for Early Phrygian Gordion because it helps us fit the copious evidence we do have, for the everyday use and experience of the citadel, to the questions we most want to answer about how power worked there and why. It is less an argument against Midas or kingship than it is an argument *for* a more nuanced understanding of the political, as a suite of culturally and temporally specific practices, negotiated and renegotiated by those who performed them over time, within the open spaces of the Citadel Mound. At Gordion, it does not appear to be the case that such practices were the exclusive purview of a chosen few. On the contrary, the walls of Megaron 2 were clearly shaped by the hands of many, while the decommissioned Gordion orthostats demonstrate the ability of some to hold leadership accountable: to embrace certain norms, while rejecting others.¹⁰⁰ As we continue to refine our understanding of Phrygian collective identity beyond that of “the people ruled by Midas”—to define Phrygia and the Phrygians not as an ethnolinguistic group but rather as a complex and evolving sociopolitical formation, buffeted by the same shifting cultural and environmental forces attested across Anatolia and the broader eastern Mediterranean region in the first half of the first millennium BCE, from bureaucratic collapse and increased mobility¹⁰¹ to the rise of empire—we should treat the monumental landscape at Early Phrygian Gordion, however ephemeral, as a potent reminder of the knowledge that “human beings in all times and places do have agency (if agency is consciousness, the ability to make choices, and some degree or kind of power).”¹⁰²

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99 “My Shot,” by Lin-Manuel Miranda, from *Hamilton: An American Musical* (Atlantic Records, 2015).

100 See also Frangipane, this volume.

101 In the sense articulated by Mac Sweeney (2016).

102 Porter 2012, 2.

his help with images, captions, and many other details. Thanks also to Virginia Herrmann and Brian Rose for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Clay Cut Building
M	Megaron
PAP	Post-and-Poros Building
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
RINA 2	Grant Frame, <i>The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> . Vol. 2, <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721–705 BC)</i> . University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2021
SAA XIX	Mikko Luukko, ed., <i>State Archives of Assyria</i> . Vol. 19, <i>The Correspondence of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud</i> . Publications of the Foundation for Finnish Assyriological Research 6. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012
TB	Terrace Building
YHSS	Yassihöyük Stratigraphic Sequence

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13

An Imperial Audience: The Provincial Reception of Assyrian Political Rhetoric

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IN 1970, THE centennial of Lenin's birth was celebrated with ceremonies and tributes across the Soviet Union that materialized the occasion's slogan, "Lenin is always with us." Artists sculpted new statues, mints issued commemorative rubles, the post office unfurled a series of celebratory stamps, factories pressed out Lenin-themed tea-glass holders, Central Asian artisans wove centennial portrait carpets, and auteurs directed films that celebrated Lenin's legacy. Well-attended parades took place in almost every town (fig. 13.1).¹ Soviet citizens responded to this Lenin mania with a number of *anekdoti*, popular but officially forbidden jokes. Perhaps the best-known *anekdot* lists a number of Lenin-themed souvenirs illustrating popular slogans that the state was too stodgy to produce: a new bra (known as "Lenin next to my heart"), a triple-wide bed especially for newlyweds (dubbed "Lenin is always with us"), and condoms in the shape of Lenin's head (the aptly named "Lenin in you").²

This anecdote reminds us of an important feature of political performances in authoritarian states: the role of the audience. Soviet officials may have required public attendance at ceremonies and underwritten the production of Lenin-themed materials, but audiences were as likely to be cynical as credulous. In fact, the saturation of Leniniana during the jubilee turned out to be a "disaster for the credibility of communist propaganda and political ritual," despite the fact that many Soviet citizens at the time probably genuinely admired Lenin.³ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the collapse of the Soviet Union entailed the widespread destruction of Lenin-themed material culture. In the decades since, political conflict in the post-Soviet sphere has continued to play out in the realm of material symbols, with the toppling of Lenin statues (or *Leninopod*, literally "Leninfall") reliably accompanying periods of profound political change from the end of the Soviet Union to the 2014 Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine.⁴

The Soviet example reminds us to be open to oppositional readings of official ideology—a useful lesson when we consider political performances in the ancient world.

1 Tumarkin 1994; Apor et al. 2004.

2 Graham 2004. I am also indebted to Irina and Sasha Feigin for their memory of these jokes.

3 Tumarkin 1994, 262–63.

4 Denison 2009; Forest and Johnson 2002; Pshenychnykh 2020; Avakov 2017.



Figure 13.1. “Lenin is with us.” Photo by Aleksander Tambulov, Tbilisi (Georgia) series, 1970s. Collection of the State Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan. Used with permission.

Here I investigate perhaps the most famous case of state ideology in the ancient Near East, the Neo-Assyrian Empire (fig. 13.2). Despite the abundant studies devoted to this topic,⁵ it is only recently that scholars have considered the question of audience, and few have analyzed reception beyond the Assyrian court and occasional exalted visitors.⁶ Were state rituals directed toward other populations, and if they were, how did different groups within the empire receive, reproduce, or contest this ideology?

This essay investigates how citizens in the capital cities, provincial elites, and commoners across the empire responded to imperial performances. Zainab Bahrani has noted, following Roland Barthes, that “ideology works through the naturalization of the symbolic order into reality.”⁷ I argue that in the ancient Near East, as in the Soviet Union, much of this naturalization occurred first through ritual—those endless Soviet parades—and second through material culture—those Lenin tea-glass holders. We cannot, unfortunately, excavate the satirical anecdotes that Assyrian subjects once told, but careful attention to

5 The bibliography is immense, but Liverani 2017 summarizes much recent literature. See also Karlsson 2017; Bahrani 2008.

6 Studies that have focused on reception have generally considered members of the court, visiting dignitaries, or provincial elites, as in Portuese 2020; Siddall 2018; Reade 1979; Porter 1995, 2000, 2003; Liverani 2017. Portuese 2020 is an admirably complete study of the Assyrian court and its audience. The author argues that the court and the audience for the reliefs were larger than generally acknowledged, but his audiences are still generally either elite or palace servants and would have comprised an extremely small part of the population of Assyria (Portuese 2020, 252–58). Beyond this work, most of the studies have taken a top-down approach by focusing on the messages that scholars and leaders sought to disseminate, as in Winter 1982; Reade 1979; Pittman 1996; Ataç 2010, 2018.

7 Bahrani 2008, 68.

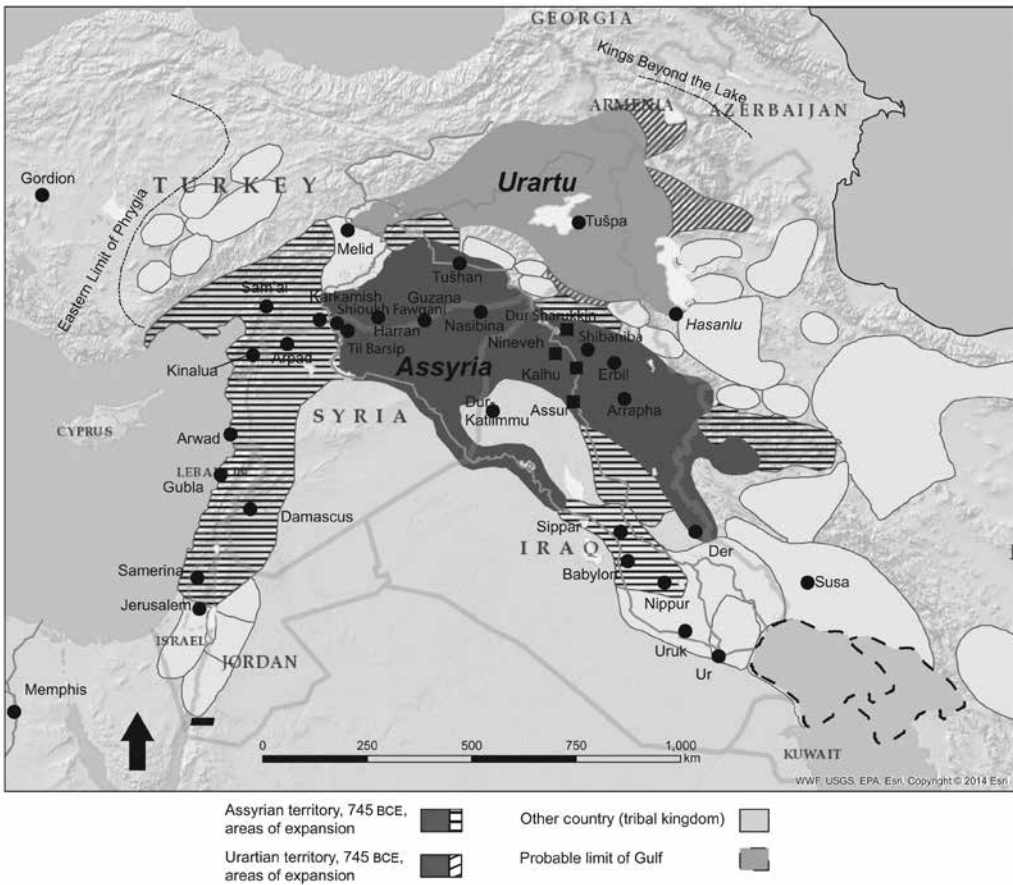


Figure 13.2. The Assyrian Empire about 750 BCE.

the textual and archaeological material can allow us to discriminate some of the messages that were disseminated. Studying reception is more difficult. In what follows, I do so by considering how and to what extent different people in the empire either incorporated ideological material culture into different aspects of their lives or ignored it.⁸

COERCION, CONSENT, AND COMPLIANCE

Lenin tea-glass holders and Assyrian art may seem trivial and far removed from the actual mechanisms of power in both the Soviet Union and the Assyrian Empire. Both empires were built—at least partially—through conquest and maintained through military investment. Moreover, both Assyria and the Soviet Union relied on a repressive internal security apparatus, though it is clear that the Soviet's gulag archipelago was several magnitudes more extensive and effective than anything available to the Assyrian kings. Yet despite their violent underpinnings, these polities both invested considerable resources in an elaborate ideological infrastructure consisting of political ceremonies, triumphal parades,

⁸ On the latter, see also Osborne, this volume.

monumental art, and even memorabilia. This investment suggests the state cults were not just distractions from the power of the army but an important part of how these states maintained control over extensive domains and diverse populaces.⁹

Antonio Gramsci wrote in his prison notebooks that “two things are absolutely necessary for the life of a State: arms and religion . . . force and consent; coercion and persuasion; State and Church; political society and civil society; politics and morality.”¹⁰ No state can govern without both force and some semblance of consent. Force on its own is expensive and difficult to maintain, while persuasion is unlikely to work without the threat of coercion. Violence—and the state’s control over life and death—lies at the heart of sovereignty as it has been understood from Hobbes’s *Leviathan* to Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*. Recently, scholars of early polities have devoted increasing attention to violence—as both ritual and practice—in the creation and maintenance of political authority.¹¹ Here I focus on the other part of the equation, namely, persuasion, or ideology. But the reader should remember that violence—physical, structural, and symbolic—is always present, shaping how people respond to the state’s attempts to persuade.¹² This is particularly the case for Assyria, where so much of our documentation emphasizes the military aspect of the empire.¹³

With Slavoj Žižek, I define ideology as the general material process of the social production of ideas and values that are functional to relations of power.¹⁴ This approach to ideology is admittedly expansive, one that is in line with work in contemporary cultural criticism and political philosophy.¹⁵ Much work on ideology in the ancient Near East has understood it in Marxist terms, at least implicitly, as a falsehood experienced as truth.¹⁶ I acknowledge, instead, that ideology is not necessarily false, nor was it always experienced by a gullible populace as true. It is not necessary for people to believe an ideological statement for it to work as ideology; what *is* necessary is participation. As Louis Althusser pointed out long ago, ideology operates not in terms of belief but in terms of “material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals.”¹⁷

Considering ideology in this way both provides new insight into state rituals and allows us to study reception. In her analysis of the cult of Hafez Assad in the 1990s in Syria, Lisa

9 I have made a similar argument for political rituals elsewhere (Ristvet 2015).

10 Gramsci 1971, Q6 §87, 763.

11 Smith 2011; Campbell 2013, 2018.

12 See, however, Feinman and Nicholas, this volume.

13 Collins 2014; Fuchs 2011.

14 Žižek 1994, 2008, 2009.

15 Recently Artemov (2018), Portuese and Pallavadini (2022b), and Nadali (2022) have all argued that ideology in a Marxist sense should not be applied to the ancient Near East, given its modern (post-French Revolution) formulation. They also criticize the expansive use of the term, arguing that it indicates nothing is outside ideology, thus rendering the concept meaningless. They are right, of course, that expansive definitions make ideology much broader than do mere depictions of the king or the composition of royal hymns. For this essay, that is precisely the point—namely, that considering ideology from a neo-/post-Marxist perspective (in line with formulations by Althusser 2014; Gramsci 1971; Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Žižek 1994, 2009) in the ancient world allows us to understand the functioning of archaic states and opens the study of politics beyond the king.

16 See Bahrani 2008, 65–74, for an extensive bibliography. Note that this definition is still implicit in the essays in Portuese and Pallavidini 2022a, 2022b; Artemov 2018. It is why they find ideology pejorative.

17 Althusser 2014, 186. I have explicated this analysis elsewhere (Ristvet 2015; see also Bahrani 2008).

Wedeen has shown how state ceremonial was effective because it was “a strategy of domination based on compliance rather than legitimacy.”¹⁸ As such, it functioned as a disciplinary device in Foucauldian terms. Syrians did not need to believe that Hafez Assad was, for example, the country’s foremost pharmacist for the cult to be successful; rather, simply participating in the cult *made* citizens complicit. By advertising the regime’s ability to generate compliance even in situations that were patently absurd, Assad displayed and increased his own power. That power existed regardless of whether the regime was actually willing to use coercion to compel the populace to complete each act. Thus the proliferation of photographs of the president, for instance, illustrated how widespread obedience was, while simultaneously creating the conditions for continued obedience. The symbols and trappings of the cult provided grounds for political discourse—including opposition. The same thing could be said for the ever-changing state ceremonial of the Soviet Union, particularly the cult of Stalin during his lifetime and the revival of the cult of Lenin in the Brezhnev era.¹⁹

If we acknowledge that belief is not a precondition for the operation of ideology, then we can study its operation archaeologically by interrogating the remains of various (material) ideological practices. In this essay I consider both how the various political messages directed toward different populaces by the ruling classes of Assyria were materialized—something that has a long history in Near Eastern studies—and how these different messages were taken up by different people within the empire. In other words, I propose to examine not just the royal inscriptions or monumental art as ideological but also how ordinary objects found in houses functioned as part of the same system—in the same way that Wedeen has done in 1990s Syria.

This attention to the ways in which a diverse group of people and materials together are complicit in creating a certain political regime owes much to the work of Elizabeth Brumfiel and Lori Khatchadourian. Much of Brumfiel’s work considers the operation of Aztec ideology across social classes, while Lori Khatchadourian has recently devoted attention to the issue of how everyday practices by a range of people and things helped constitute the Achaemenid Empire.²⁰ I focus on material from provincial palaces, private houses, and graves in the Assyrian heartland and the provinces and analyze wall paintings, school texts, cylinder seals, weapons, and figurines as actively shaping ideological practice. If we consider the evidence we have for reception, we can investigate how subjects selectively reproduced or ignored certain ideological elements, in the process shaping their own authority or sometimes indicating resistance.

THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE (CA. 911–609 BCE)

Assyria, the earliest undisputed empire in the Middle East, expanded from the city-state of Ashur in northern Iraq until it ultimately encompassed much of the region between Egypt in the west to the Zagros Mountains in the east, and from southern Anatolia in the north to Babylonia in the south. Including several territories or peoples who are subservient to

¹⁸ Wedeen 1999, 6; 2008.

¹⁹ Fedor 2013; Tumarkin 1994; Plamper 2012.

²⁰ Khatchadourian 2014, 2016; Brumfiel 1998, 2001, 2006, 2011. Khatchadourian’s work is also inspired very much by the material turn—and particularly Bennett’s work on vibrant matter (Bennett 2010).

a single sovereign authority, empires are by definition large, diverse, and characterized by domination.

Although Ashur had been an important city-state since the third millennium BCE, it emerged as an imperial center only after the fall of Mitanni, a Hurrian-speaking state spanning much of southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq and Syria, around 1350 BCE. From 1300 to 1200 BCE, under a series of forceful kings including Adad-nirari I (ca. 1307–1275 BCE), Shalmaneser I (ca. 1274–1245 BCE), and Tukulti-Ninurta I (ca. 1244–1208 BCE), Assyria conquered the land between the Zagros Mountains and the Euphrates River. Subsequently, except for a brief flash of light during the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (ca. 1114–1076 BCE), much of the history of Assyria is murky until about 900 BCE. It is clear that during this time, the fledgling empire withdrew to its core around the Tigris River.

Beginning just after 900 BCE, Assyrian kings, particularly Ashurnasirpal II (ca. 883–859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (ca. 858–824 BCE), reestablished the empire and undertook military campaigns to the north, west, and east. Although Assyria did not annex territories outside its previous borders, it did establish client states, whose rulers paid tribute to the Assyrian kings. Its powerful armies made it a formidable presence from the Mediterranean to the Zagros for a hundred years. Following another century of retrenchment, the final century and a half of Assyrian rule saw the establishment of a vast state that spanned the Middle East from the southern Levant to western Iran. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon (ca. 680–669 BCE) even managed to conquer Egypt in the early seventh century. Soon after Assyria reached its apogee, however, it fell to a coalition of Medes and Babylonians, formerly subject peoples who united to throw off Assyria's yoke and destroy its capital, Nineveh, in 612 BCE.

I have provided this brief historical outline to underline the difficulties of any study of Assyrian political performances and their reception. We are dealing with a large, culturally and historically diverse area over a long time period. In what follows, I consider only the Neo-Assyrian material, defined here as from about 900 to 600 BCE, with most of my evidence concentrated in the period from Sargon II (722–705 BCE) onward, that is, the last century or so of the empire. My examples are drawn from over much of the empire, at least partly because of the vagaries of publication. For the heartland, I rely particularly on the extensive excavations and excellent publications of graves and private houses in Assur, supplemented by the Chicago excavations at Dur-Sharrukin. For the provinces, the excavations during the last century or so at Tell Shekh Hamad (Dur-Katlimmu), Tell Ahmar (Til Barsip), Tell Halaf (Guzana), Zincirli (Sam'al), Tell Muqayar (Ur), and Tell Billa (Šibaniba) supply important information, as do occasional finds from other places, though much of this material is disconnected in time and space. Nonetheless, this study certainly elides much of the spatial and diachronic variability that existed in the reception of Assyrian ideology. Further excavation, and particularly further comprehensive publication of past excavations, will no doubt change this outline.

ASSYRIAN IDEOLOGY

Ideological statements are often generic and ambiguous, given meaning and intensity by the specific contexts of the associated practices.²¹ Nonetheless, such vague ideas serve as

²¹ Ristvet 2015; Laclau and Mouffe 2001.

the groundwork for elaborate expressions of state power. In the case of Assyria, the royal annals provide a useful place to consider the ideological underpinnings of the empire. Here the prologue to Shalmaneser III's annals asserts the ideological basis for his rule:

When Assur, the great lord, chose me in his steadfast heart and . . . named me for the shepherdship of Assyria, he put in my grasp a strong weapon which fells the insubordinate, he crowned me with a lofty crown, and he sternly commanded me to exercise dominion over and to subdue all the lands unsubmitive to Assur.²²

This abbreviated text contains three important messages: (1) the king was chosen by Assur, (2) the king acts to fulfill Assur's command, and (3) Assur's command is to extend the empire and subdue all lands. All three of these ideas are commonly found in a variety of media—particularly royal inscriptions and monumental art across the three centuries of the empire. This does not mean that all the elements are always present or always explicit; as we will see, different aspects are emphasized for different audiences.

The texts we refer to as the “annals of the Assyrian kings” were written on a number of monuments both in the capital cities—in the palace itself—and in the provinces.²³ The quotation from Shalmaneser's annals above, for example, was inscribed on the Kurkh Stela, found near Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey (fig. 13.3). Other identical statements, however, were present in his palace at Kalhu and even on the bronze gates of Imgur-Enlil. Only a very limited number of people outside the court and state administration could read cuneiform—and fewer in the periphery—and the texts themselves tend to be explicitly addressed to the



Figure 13.3. Kurkh Stela of Shalmaneser III. BM 118884. Used with permission of the British Museum.

²² RIMA 3, 102, 1:11–13. Portuese has recently published a number of articles that focus on the Assyrian kings' pastoral role and discuss this material more fully (Portuese 2017, 2020).

²³ See RIMA 3 for all exemplars.

gods and future kings.²⁴ Moreover, there is no clear evidence that they were read aloud.²⁵ Yet aspects of messages (1) and (2)—the idea that the king was chosen by Assur and enacted his will—were widely disseminated through other media, not least in the iconography of the king as worshipper that often accompanied these texts and the ritual occasions that were probably enacted nearby that provided context (see below). Royal titulary, inscriptions, and representations on material from seals to stelae emphasized that the king was Assur’s representative and his actions were subordinate to the gods’ commands. As both text and images were understood as performative rather than mimetic, these media also worked to create this reality in the empire.²⁶

The idea expressed in the second message—that Assyrian kings (and by extension their administrations and armies) carried out the will of the gods on earth—is not mere verbiage. Instead, determining the desire of the gods—through divination—and then enacting it were essential parts of the ideological and practical work of the administration and the military, even if many of the arcane details of these procedures were understood by only a very limited number of practitioners.²⁷ Work on the tablets recovered from Ashurbanipal’s palace has revealed an enormous literature on divination; indeed, this science was perhaps the greatest scholarly achievement in this period. Although it is difficult to categorize the contents of Ashurbanipal’s famous library, given its still fragmentary state, at least three-fifths of the texts written in Babylonian deal with divination, as do more than half the commentaries.²⁸ The correspondence illustrates that divine approval was sought before military campaigns, individual battles, and even specific strategic actions. In fact, given the overwhelming focus of the library on divination for royal activities, Eleanor Robson has suggested recently that we can no longer consider this collection

24 The question of the extent of literacy in the Neo-Assyrian period has been subjected to a great deal of debate (see Parpola 1997; Radner 2021; Veldhuis 2011 for very different opinions). It should be noted, however, that even Parpola and Radner, who argue for relatively high levels of literacy, do so only for officials, who learned how to read and write even if they were not scribes, and for scribes, priests, and scholars—not for the great numbers of farmers and artisans who made up most of the population. Portuese 2020 has recently argued that functional literacy was more widespread than has been previously recognized based on SAA 16 65; SAA 15 17; and ARAB 2 86. This argument is a useful addendum to our suppositions about literacy during this period and supports Parpola’s and Radner’s ideas of increased literacy, but it should be noted that SAA 16 65 and SAA 15 17 concern either officials or members of a royal household (i.e., a goldsmith to the queen in SAA 15 17) and not people outside the state system. Frame’s recent editions and translations of Sargon II’s inscriptions no longer support Luckenbill’s restoration/translation of the first three signs in line 53 as “scribe” (ARAB 2 86) but instead read the extant sign as AK instead of DUB and translates it as *waklu* (“overseer”). As a result, RINAP 2 008 line 53 can no longer be interpreted as indicating that scribes were dispatched to conquered cities to teach people how to fear Assur and the king (presumably through writing).

25 Siddall 2018, 60; Porter 1995.

26 This performative quality of writing and image making is fundamental to any understanding of Mesopotamian politics (see Bahrani 2003, 2008; Bottéro 1992).

27 I suspect that a limited number of scholars/priests in the royal capitals and the old scholarly centers of Babylonia were the only people who had mastered the range of scholarship that divination and its commentaries comprised during this period. As I argue below, this material was not necessarily comprehensible in all imperial centers (see Bahrani 2008, 182–83; Fuchs 2011).

28 Robson 2019, 113–14.

a “universal” library; instead, the king acquired and preserved tablets related to his royal interests, namely, divination.²⁹

The explicit link between Assur’s will and the king’s campaigns expressed in message (3) meant that war was depicted as both holy—ordained by the gods—and just, often predicated on claims of violation of oaths across the empire. The purpose of war was not only to subdue enemy lands but also to add them to Assyria. As Ashurbanipal’s coronation hymn enjoins the new king, “May (the great gods) give him a just scepter to extend the land and his people!”³⁰ In practical terms, extending the land meant transforming non-Assyrian cities and villages into Assyrian ones. Sargon II described this process for Samaria in his annals: “I enlarged that city, and I populated it more than before: I settled people from the lands that I had conquered. I installed one of my eunuchs as governor over them, and I imposed tax and tribute upon them like that of the Assyrians.”³¹ Incorporated cities received Assyrian names and were in this sense ritually refounded (e.g., Til Barsip became Kar Shalmaneser; Harhar became Kar-Sharru-Kin). Becoming part of the land of Assur—an Assyrian province—also entailed sending regular payment to the temple of Assur, recognizing Assur’s paramountcy, as well as taxes to the king.³² Of course, Assyrian conquest did not entail forced conversion, but Assyria’s victories did demonstrate Assur’s power. Images of gods were taken from conquered cities and brought to Assur either as a sign that the gods had abandoned their cities (thus allowing for the Assyrian victory) or to increase Assur’s glory.³³

There were enormous practical consequences to this idea of divinely ordained conquest that affected the differential reception of this ideology in the provinces. Sargon II notes that many of the “new” Assyrians who populated these cities were settled from previously conquered lands—a description of the policy of cross-deportation, in which different peoples were moved around the empire.³⁴ The presence of cremation burials at elite residences in Dur-Katlimmu and Ziyaret Tepe have been attributed to resettled populations who had risen to become Assyrian officials in these provincial capitals,³⁵ while Petra Creamer has made a similar argument for the cremation burials at Billa.³⁶ Deportees were also settled in cities and villages in the heartland. Excavations at Assur have revealed houses probably belonging to Aramaic and Luwian speakers, with inscriptions in these languages and specific burial types.³⁷ Cross-deportation disrupted the crucial connection between a city and its people, “the primary locus of identity and allegiance,” substituting a new, multiethnic population with no connections to a place, its history, or its gods.³⁸ This

29 Robson 2019, 126–27.

30 Pongratz-Leisten 2015; SAA 3 11:17.

31 Annals 15–17, quoted in Liverani 2017, 183.

32 Postgate 1992; Pongratz-Leisten 2017.

33 Liverani 2017.

34 Oded 1979.

35 Wicke 2013; Kreppner 2014.

36 Creamer 2021.

37 Hauser 2012.

38 Bahrani 2008, 180.

policy thus had transformative effects that would have influenced both the legibility of Assyrian performances and their reception outside the Assyrian heartland.

IN THE HEARTLAND: TRIUMPHS, LETTERS TO THE GODS, AND PERFORMANCES

In the capital cities, public festivals emphasized all three aspects of Assyria's core ideology. Regular cultic performances—such as the ritual cycle celebrated each year during the months of Shebat, Adar, and Nisan that culminated with the *akītu* festival—other festivals, and extraordinary occasions such as coronations, *tākultu* rituals, and triumphal parades all elaborated different aspects of this core message, though not all aspects were equally highlighted or equally comprehensible to all audiences.³⁹ The extensive excavations of houses and graves in Assur give us the ability to consider how these performances were received, or rather, to what extent these ideological messages were reflected and incorporated into aspects of everyday life and death. Most of what follows has been reconstructed for the reigns of Sennacherib and his successors, given the chronological distribution of the ritual texts.

Each year, the king spent several months in Assur, the original capital of the empire, to perform a series of elaborate rituals that lasted for nearly three months. The first set of rituals, which took place in the months of Shebat and Adar, began with a celebration of the warrior deity Ninurta, the god whose role most closely parallels that of the Assyrian king, and culminated with a series of rituals in which the king was crowned with Assur's diadem, transforming him into an extension of the all-powerful god.⁴⁰ During these celebrations, which lasted more than a month, the king regularly moved between his palace, the Assur temple, and the *bīt Dagan*, probably located in the Old Palace. His ritual movement means that although the priestly families and high officials were the main audiences for the performances, at least some of the pomp would have been widely visible to many inhabitants of the city, who may have attended the processions. Some of these performances took place in the “semipublic sphere” of the outer courtyard of the temple, which would also have increased visibility.⁴¹

The second set of rituals comprised the *akītu* festival, in which the god's journey to the *akītu* house, outside the city, and triumphant return symbolized the victory of the forces of order over chaos. It is unclear precisely when this Babylonian festival found a home in Assyria; scholars have suggested that Adad-Nerari III, Sargon II, or Sennacherib introduced this rite.⁴² In the process, much of the mythology of the paramount Babylonian god, Marduk, was transferred to the god Assur.⁴³ Most of our information for specific celebrations of the *akītu* comes from the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, but it can be difficult to tease out precisely when and where the festival was celebrated.

39 Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 2017.

40 Pongratz-Leisten 2017, xliv–l.

41 See McMahon, this volume.

42 For Adad-Nerari III, see Frahm 2000; for Sargon II, see Barcina 2016; for Sennacherib, see Ahmad and Grayson 1999.

43 For the festival in Assur, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 1997; for the building of Assur's *akītu* house in Nineveh, see Ahmad and Grayson 1999.

The *akītu* festival took place in several important cities in Assyria—particularly the capitals, including Assur and Nineveh, but also several provincial capitals, located near the borders.⁴⁴ Like other ceremonies, the *akītu* took place in both secluded areas of the temple and more public spaces. Indeed, the climax of the performance was a procession of the gods and king through the city to the *akītu* house, located outside the city walls, thus symbolizing the city god’s victory over chaos, as well as over the periphery in general.⁴⁵ In some cases this ritual was celebrated sequentially in different cities: Hayim Tadmor suggests that following the *akītu* of Arbela, the ritual proceeded to Assur, and then returned to Nineveh.⁴⁶

The *akītu* festivals of Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela were often the setting for triumphal parades that included the punishment of defeated enemies in front of a mocking public (fig. 13.4). Such was the case for Esarhaddon’s torture of Sanduarri of Kundi and the execution of Abdi-Milkutti of Sidon, which were held, respectively, during the spring and fall *akītu* festivals in Nineveh.⁴⁷ As Esarhaddon put it, “To show the people the might of Aššur my lord, I hung [the heads of Sanduarri and Abdi-Milkutti] around the necks of their nobles, and, with singer and lyre, I paraded in the squares of Nineveh.”⁴⁸ As part of one *akītu* festival in Nineveh, Ashurbanipal tells us that he had the deposed kings of Elam—Tammariṭu, Pa’e, and Humban-haltaš—and the deposed king of Arabia, Uwaite’, “take hold of the yoke of (my) processional carriage . . . [and pull it] up to the gate of the temple while I was seated above them.”⁴⁹ During another such festival in Nineveh, Ashurbanipal had the defeated kings Dunanu and Samgunu wear the heads of their allies: the king of Elam, Teumman, and the king of Hidalu, Ishtarandi.⁵⁰

Other ceremonies occurred irregularly. In some cases, triumphs could also take place on other occasions that may have been ritually



Figure 13.4. *Akītu* festival, triumph. BM 136773.
Used with permission of the British Museum.

44 Pongratz-Leisten 1997; May 2012; Portuese 2020, 87–90, 248–50.

45 May 2012; Nadali 2013; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 1997.

46 Tadmor 2004; Barcina 2016.

47 Tadmor 2004.

48 RINAP 4 1 3 32–38, no. 2.

49 RINAP 5/1 11 x29–x30.

50 Weissert 1997; May 2012.

significant.⁵¹ The letters to Assur, for example, record triumphal parades in which victorious soldiers marched through the streets of Assur displaying prisoners and captured booty. During this ceremony, the text of the king's letter may have been read aloud to both the god and the populace.⁵² Other public observances included chaining conquered kings like dogs to the citadel gates of Nineveh and displaying the skins, heads, and bodies of defeated enemies in Nineveh and Arbela.⁵³ An image of a similar display may be depicted on Band L6 of the Balawat Gates. There, a man whose hands and feet have been severed is impaled in front of a city wall ornamented with the heads of the slain (fig. 13.5); another image in the same series shows the king receiving tribute, perhaps as part of a ceremony at Imgur-Enlil.

Similarly, the *tākultu* rites may have taken place either regularly throughout a king's reign or perhaps only as part of the coronation festivities. If the latter, they were probably celebrated in several cities. As part of this ceremony, which included a sacred meal, the king presented sacrifices to all the gods of the empire, beginning with those of the heartland and including deities associated with Urartu, Anatolia, and West Syria. These sacrifices—and the sacred meal—thus performatively prefigured an alliance between local



Figure 13.5. Balawat Gates Band L6, probably depicting enemy heads adorning the city wall of Imgur-Enlil. BM 124656.

51 Collins 2014, 635; Reade 2005.

52 Liverani 2014, 380–83; 2017; but compare Siddall (2018), who argues that this reading aloud is unlikely, given the fact that the letter is written in Standard Babylonian so would not have been comprehensible to most of the populace.

53 Liverani 2017, 86–87.

gods, Assur, and the king.⁵⁴ As part of these rites, the king and his entourage proceeded through the cities to visit the temples of each honored deity in Assur and Nineveh. Again, this part of the *tākultu* would have been publicly accessible.⁵⁵

The coronation ceremony, which took place just once during each reign, also worked to establish the authority of Assur as king and the Assyrian king as his steward. This ceremony had a different audience from that of the heartland celebrations we have considered thus far, since all of it took place outside public view. The audience, however, was made up of heartland officials, priests, and provincial governors, as the ceremony reconfirmed their positions. As a result, the ritual celebrated the king as well as the officials, thus illustrating their own authority within the empire. The ceremony could also have served as a model for other ceremonies in the provinces that have not been recorded, though this possibility is pure speculation.

Many of these events—both the rituals and the triumphs—were recorded in texts and imagery, including on prisms, obelisks such as the White Monument, palatial bas-reliefs, and the bronze bands of the Balawat Gates. Of course, the audiences for these depictions were variable—only the scholars who composed them and the gods could read the prisms; palatial obelisks and bas-reliefs were generally accessible only to court officials and occasional guests, such as provincial governors or client kings; while the Balawat Gates would have been visible to anyone in Imgur-Enlil. Other public art would have reinforced the sacred elements of kingship: perhaps most importantly this art includes the protective figures—lions, *šēdu*, and *lamassu*—that were set up at the gates of the palace (fig. 13.6) and would have been familiar parts of the urban landscape of an Assyrian city.⁵⁶

To sum up, the public festivals and associated monuments within the heartland emphasized firstly the religious underpinnings of the king's authority and secondarily



Figure 13.6. Relief with *lamassu*. BM 124938. Used with permission of the British Museum.

54 Pongratz-Leisten 2017, xxxvii–xxxviii.

55 SAA 20 40, 41.

56 RINAP 1, nos. 47, 29'.

Assyrian success in war. Much scholarship has assumed that the depictions and descriptions of battle or torture served the role of deterrence and that the reliefs were “a sharp reminder of what happened to those who did not submit to Assyrian domination or who attempted to throw off the Assyrian yoke.”⁵⁷ As Barbara Porter has noted, however, many of the reliefs depicting the most violence were displayed in restricted areas of the palace inaccessible to visitors, while the same holds true for many of the more detailed inscriptions.⁵⁸ It is possible that provincial governors in town for the coronation or client kings making their occasional visit to the capital understood them in this way. But foreign kings or even governors were hardly the main audience for most reliefs, as several other scholars have noted.⁵⁹ Instead, the usual audience for these depictions of violence were the king, his court, and the gods. Rather than serving as deterrence, more likely the reliefs generally provoked feelings of pride, nostalgia, or self-satisfaction in the noble Assyrians whose exploits the reliefs celebrated, as even lowly palace officials were part of the greater Assyrian war machine.⁶⁰ The palace reliefs could have functioned to establish solidarity between the king and his officials and hence deter revolt.

The artistic depictions of violence visible to citizens beyond the court in the heartland were much less monumental—like the diminutive figures on the bronze bands of the Balawat Gates. The spectacles in the capital city, on the other hand, reached a much wider audience, as presumably anyone in the capitals could have witnessed these parades or the grisly displays of heads and prisoners. We can better understand the purpose and audience for these triumphs if we consider them in the context of the other ceremonial entrances recorded in the reliefs, these entrances being the triumphal entry into the Assyrian camp following victory. Slabs 5–7 in Ashurnasirpal’s Southwest Palace at Nimrud, for example, depict chariots carrying standards of the gods, while the king, soldiers, musicians, and dancers follow behind. In other depictions, the procession approaches the king in the military camp. Musicians are an important component of these victory celebrations—and are shown in later reliefs as well. Ritual texts and hymns dated to Ashurbanipal’s reign record music and dancing in honor of Ištar at ceremonies of triumph. The music may have represented the battle, while performers dressed in lion skins or feathered headdresses also took part. There was probably an orgiastic character to these performances, as Davide Nadali has pointed out. On the slabs in Ashurnasirpal’s throne room in Room XXIII of Nimrud’s Southwest Palace, soldiers throw the severed heads of their enemies into the air, perhaps as part of a victory dance.⁶¹ Mario Liverani has argued that sadistic displays were intended to assuage both soldiers’ fear of death and their repugnance at killing fellow human beings. By dehumanizing the enemy and emphasizing the religious and righteous aspects of war, victory celebrations would have provided useful outlets of the mixed emotions and

57 Curtis and Reade 1995, 32–33; but this idea of “calculated frightfulness” is widespread in the literature. For a survey, see Porter 2003, 80–83.

58 Porter 2003, 84.

59 Liverani 2014, 2017, with literature. See also Porter 2003; Siddall 2018.

60 Brumfiel has proposed a similar interpretation for the reliefs in the Eagle House in Tenochtitlan. She suggests that most of the violent reliefs here and in the Templo Mayor were actually meant to celebrate imperial military valor for the younger sons of the nobility, who might otherwise constitute a threat to the king (Brumfiel 1998, 8–10).

61 Nadali 2013, 79; Russell 1999, 175, fig. 62.

doubts of the soldiery. In this case, the triumphal entrances into the capital cities dehumanized the enemy to emphasize the religious nature of Assyrian warfare and Assyria's divinely ordained victory. This message was directed at the population generally because of the general requirement that Assyrian men serve in the army.⁶² Given this requirement, it was important that the populace as a whole supported the military.⁶³ But the different level of participation of ordinary citizens in the military and the state meant that they, unlike the palace officials, need not view constant reminders of military violence.

I suggest that one way to investigate the reception of these messages may be to consider material culture relating to religion and military ideology in domestic contexts in the Assyrian capitals. A positive reception of the role of the king as priest—messages (1) and (2)—could be reflected in religious art and pertinent mythology depicted on cylinder seals. Similarly, the lavish celebrations of war and the power of the Assyrian army (message 3) might be expected to promote military ideology among residents of the heartland, in much the same way that American participation in the second Iraq war led ordinary Americans to put yellow-ribbon magnets on their cars and wear flag pins.⁶⁴

A review of the material from houses and graves in Assur and Khorsabad shows that many Assyrians, particularly the elite, did reproduce elements of religious ideology at home. The clearest evidence of the importance of religion in the public and private lives of the highest officials comes from the elaborate wall painting in Residence K that depicts the house's owner (probably one of the highest officials in the kingdom) assisting the king in a ritual. This frieze included winged genies, rosettes, and other imagery rich in Assyrian religious symbolism. Fragments of other wall paintings in Residences L and M also contain religious iconography (fig. 13.7). The rosette—a very fragmentary example of which was also found in Residence M (fig. 13.7, nos. 30–32) is usually interpreted as a symbol of Ištar. As Pauline Albenda notes, it is the most common subject in Neo-Assyrian art and is often associated with both the king and his courtiers. It certainly seems possible that the rosettes forming a checkerboard pattern on the threshold recovered from Residence L should be interpreted in the same way.⁶⁵ She also suggests that the square with incurved sides—an example of which was found in Residence L—represents the four quarters of the universe and is thus linked to royal ideology. Both of these motifs cite symbols that were widespread in wall paintings and other media in palaces and temples.⁶⁶ The painted fragments from Palace F and Residence J were too incomplete to be reconstructed, but it seems likely they were similar to the material already discussed.⁶⁷ The owners of the elaborate houses on the citadel surrounding Sargon's imposing palace were some of the most powerful men

62 Liverani 2014, 380–83.

63 Richardson (2016, 44–45) seems to propose a similar sort of mechanism, whereby “Assyrians” or the Assyrian elite can be defined both narrowly and expansively. He also notes that elite competition was pervasive—another reason to celebrate Assyrian elites in their military role on the reliefs.

64 Smith 2015, 1–4.

65 Albenda 2005, 86 (for the rosettes in Residences K and L), 90–92 (for interpretation of the symbolism). For the threshold, see Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 36, a.

66 Loud and Altman 1938; Albenda 2005.

67 Albenda 2005, 40; Loud and Altman 1938, 64. Numbers 30–32 come from Residence M. Based on this relief, Winter (2010, 131 n. 21) suggests that the owner of Residence K might be the crown prince. Loud and Altman (1938, 65) speculate as to the owners of Palace F.



Figure 13.7. Painted-plaster fragments from Residences K, L, and M in Khorsabad/Dur-Sharrukin. Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 91.

in the empire; the inscribed threshold from Palace L tells us that this mansion belonged to Sinahusur, royal vizier and brother of Sargon II. The same goes, of course, for Palace F in the Lower Town, which was presumably occupied either by the queen or the crown prince.

Assyrian seals and sealings found in houses and graves at Assur suggest that people beyond this royal circle also incorporated religious imagery into their daily lives. The glyptic iconography found in domestic spaces at Assur resembles that present in public spaces, particularly in their inclusion of imagery related to the god Assur.⁶⁸ Moreover, several “priestly dwellings” in Assur contained foundation deposits of apotropaic figures, believed to embody divine protective spirits (fig. 13.8). Elsewhere in the empire, the practice of burying such figurines was restricted to official buildings.⁶⁹ The presence of these figurines in private houses could have shown acceptance of the principles of official apotropaic rituals for people other than the king, an understanding that priests also performed the will of the gods.

On the other hand, there is little evidence that either elite or ordinary Assyrians celebrated their role as soldiers in the Assyrian army. There is no evidence for decorative wall paintings in any elite houses that reproduce messages associated specifically with violence. The imagery most closely tied to military might and violence—siege scenes and lion hunts (which seem to have been part of the rituals at the close of a campaign)—is



Figure 13.8. Neo-Assyrian house with foundation deposit. Preusser 1954, table 28b.

68 Compare Herboldt 1992; Klengel-Brandt 2014.

69 Rittig 1977.

present on seals in official contexts but absent from houses at Assur (fig. 13.9).⁷⁰ Weaponry (beyond knives, which may have been used as tools) was rarely stored in houses and is not accorded any prominence. In contrast, most Assyrian weapons have been recovered from Neo-Assyrian palaces or other official contexts, including Fort Shalmaneser.⁷¹

Grave goods provide another avenue for research. Funerary remains indicate that ordinary people rarely celebrated military status in death. This finding seems meaningful particularly in the context of what we know about royal graves, as well as contemporary Iron Age practices. A text describing a royal burial lists weaponry, indicating that military paraphernalia were included in royal graves, as was true during many periods of Mesopotamian history.⁷² Analysis of the Assur graves, however, identified few weapons. Of 681 Neo-Assyrian burials, only 29 (4.3% of all the burials) contained either weapons or metal fragments (fig. 13.10).⁷³ This scarcity contrasts greatly with the situation found at other, non-Assyrian Iron Age cemeteries. In the cemetery at Hasanlu, for example, of the 20 male burials dating to Period IVb, 8 (or 40%) included weapons,⁷⁴ while weapons are commonly found at other Iron Age cemeteries in the Zagros Mountains,⁷⁵ along the upper Euphrates River,⁷⁶ and in western Syria.⁷⁷

IN THE PROVINCES: ASSYRIAN STELAE AND IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGES

If royal triumphs, exemplary punishments at the *akītu* festival, and representations of military campaigns and cultic actions on the Balawat Gates brought foreign campaigns home to the Assyrian capitals, then royal *narū*—stelae or rock reliefs—established Assyrian kingship in the periphery. There, unlike in the heartland, Assyrian rituals and public monuments generally celebrated the king’s religious role, with little or no attention to the military in the iconography, though descriptions of conquests are present in some texts.⁷⁸

The “standard” Neo-Assyrian royal stela in the provinces depicted the king with his right hand raised in the *ubāna tarāṣu* gesture, indicating submission to the divine symbols arrayed before him.⁷⁹ *Narū* were erected in public positions in newly conquered cities—in

70 Klengel-Brandt 2014. For lion-hunt imagery, see Nadali 2013, 79–80.

71 Curtis 2013; Curtis et al. 1979.

72 Kwasman 2009.

73 Hauser 2012, fig. G6.

74 Cifarelli 2016.

75 Amelirad, Overlaet, and Haerinck 2011.

76 Tenu 2015.

77 Riis 1948.

78 Two stelae of Esarhaddon from Til Barsip and one from Zincirli are notable exceptions, but they do not overwhelm the general pattern. It may well have been that the might of the Assyrian army was understood so viscerally in the provinces, particularly in newly conquered territories, that public art deliberately invoked the king as the steward of the gods (Porter 2000, 2003). Also Siddall (2018, 63) cites RINAP 3/2 230, an inscription on stone tablets from Sāmarrā’ in which Sennacherib describes setting up the Halulê stela: “I reaped their skulls like withered grain and piled them (up) like pyramids. I had a stela made, had all the victorious conquests that I achieved over my enemies with the support of the great gods, my lords, written on it, and I erected (it) on the plain of the city of Halulê” (RINAP 3/2 230 112–14).

79 Reade 1979, 340.

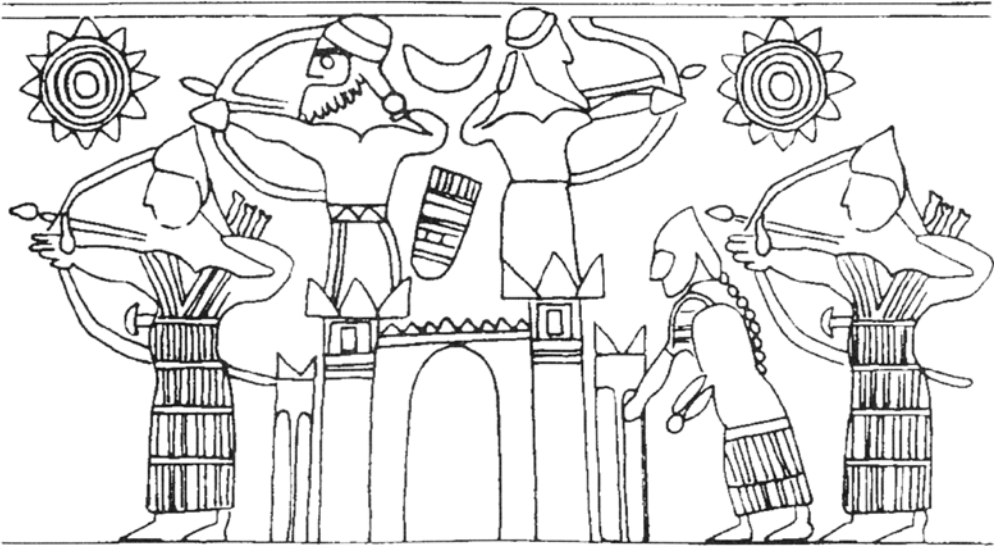


Figure 13.9. Siege scene from Nineveh. After Herboldt 1992, n. 5.

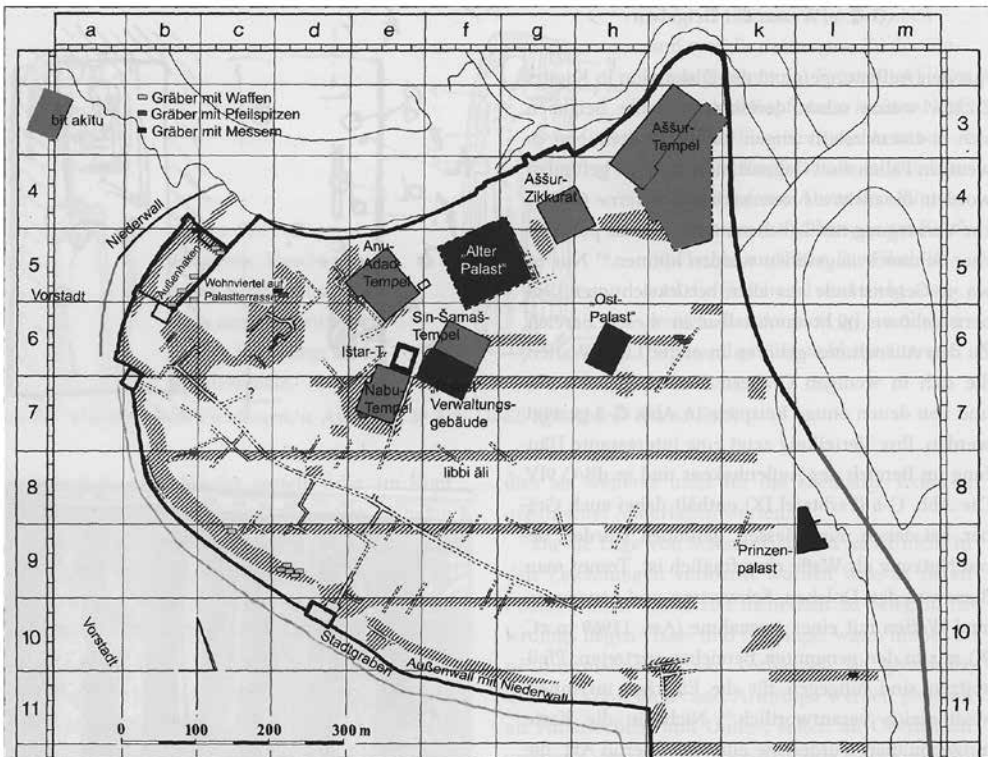


Figure 13.10. Assur: graves with weapons denoted by white rectangles; graves with arrowheads denoted by gray rectangles; graves with knives denoted by black rectangles. After Hauser 2012, fig. G.

palace and temple courtyards, at city gates, and in plazas—as well as in “symbolically charged places,” such as rocks by battlefields, cliff faces, stone quarries, and near river sources.⁸⁰ Examples of such stelae include, among others, a number of Sargon II, including a complete one erected in Cyprus and several fragments from Najafehabad, Acharneh, Tayinat, Ashdod, Til Barsip, Carchemish, and Samaria; a stela of Adad Nirari III from Tell ar-Rimah; stelae of Ashurnasirpal II and Šamši-Adad V from Kalhu; and one of Shalmaneser III from Kurkh. *Narû* affirmed the religious justification of Assyrian kingship by establishing the king’s presence in provincial cities and sacred places. These images, usually called *salam šarrutiya*, “image of my kingship,” “acted as the king’s double, an indexical representation of the king’s corporeality, fully endowed with the efficacious powers of the king’s body.”⁸¹ The installation of a *narû* was the occasion for rituals, sacrifices, and feasting, while cultic activity probably continued intermittently in its presence, performing Assyrian religion and imperial power for a provincial audience (fig. 13.11).⁸²

Given the cultural differences between the Assyrian heartland and outlying provinces, we must question whether and to what extent provincial audiences would have understood these monuments and the associated ceremonies. The materiality of the stelae—which were several meters tall and extremely heavy—indexed the power and authority of the ruling state everywhere, providing clear evidence of Assyrian might. In the western provinces, we do have some evidence from local art indicating that audiences would have recognized the king’s divine role. Both Dirk Wicke and Virginia Herrmann have recently analyzed examples of Syrian art that sought either to imitate or to adapt Assyrian conventions.⁸³ The Malpınar rock relief, for example, dated to the end of the eighth century BCE, depicts Atayaza almost as an Assyrian king in a similar posture to that portrayed on the stelae. Similarly, an orthostat from Zincirli in the ninth century depicts King Kulamuwa in this pose. And the funerary stela of the priest Sîn-zêr-ibni of Neirab shows that this bodily posture was diffused beyond court circles.⁸⁴ In sum, the large number of sculptures in Syria and Anatolia that adapt elements of this iconography show that the image was probably legible, at least to the political and religious elite and their artisans.



Figure 13.11. Line drawing of Balawat Gates, with Band 1 showing ceremonies at the installation of a *narû*. Shafer 2007, fig. 5.

80 Harmansah 2007, 190.

81 Harmansah 2007, 191.

82 Shafer 2007.

83 Herrmann 2017a; Wicke 2015.

84 Wicke 2015.

Yet the different histories and cultural experiences of people in the provinces clearly affected their engagement with these messages, indicating that a range of audiences may have interacted with them differently here than in the heartland. Deities identified explicitly as Assyrian are present in the iconography in the provinces and beyond the empire but tend to be depicted in local styles. Aššur-dūr-panīya, probably a governor of Til Barsip, dedicated a stela depicting Ištar of Arbela, but, despite her being so designated, the imagery of the weapons on her back and her position atop a lion clearly draw on Neo-Hittite pictorial traditions.⁸⁵ In other cases, local gods—the storm god, for instance—take on limited Assyrianizing features, though they continue to be depicted in a Syrian style.⁸⁶

Unlike in the heartland, where political performances sought to instantiate the king as Assur's representative and celebrate the cruelty of the Assyrian war machine, political performances and iconography in the provinces stressed the king's religious role rather than his military one. The reason for this difference may be obvious: provincial cities had already experienced the worst Assyrian military could do, and in some cases they had experienced it recently. This situation may also explain why there is a divergence between the sometimes violent rhetoric of the inscriptions and the static imagery of the king as worshipper before the divine symbols. The descriptions of conquest were directed toward the only segment of the population that had access to them: the small proportion of Assyrian officials who could read and write. Confining this discussion of violence to the Akkadian text would have served a similar purpose as the depiction of violent imagery on palace walls did for Assyrian officials in the heartland, reminding Assyrians stationed in the provinces that they were part of a mighty empire. The imagery, on the other hand, which was more widely visible, was directed toward both the conquered populace and their conquerors. In this case, the stylization of the figure of the king and the ambiguity of the divine symbols before which he stood may have been intentional. These stylistic choices served to make the image legible to an audience that might be unfamiliar with the intricacies of Assyrian religion, but understood and could relate these symbols to local deities.⁸⁷

As we have done for the heartland, we will now consider evidence from seals and sealings, tablets, and wall paintings to discover whether there is any sign of a positive reception of the role of the king as priest and Assur's power. To understand the extent to which these ideological messages were understood, we will also investigate a private library from Huzirina, a small city 15 km from Harran. A comparison of material from administrative buildings with that from domestic contexts indicates that provincial elites used and disseminated Assyrian religious iconography in administrative and public contexts, but not elsewhere. Nor is there any sign that provincial elites incorporated into daily life Assyrian ideas of valor on the battlefield. As is the case in the heartland, there are almost no examples of graves with weapons, weapons in private houses, or violent imagery in provincial contexts.⁸⁸ Seals and seal impressions show that Assyrian religious iconography, which

85 Ornan 2001, 242–43. For further discussion of this statue, see Wicke 2015; of Aššur-dūr-panija, see Radner 2006.

86 Schwemer 2001; Wicke 2015.

87 Ornan 2005.

88 Compare Curtis 2013, which indicates few finds of metal weapons outside official contexts in heartland cities. Neither do the graves at Dur-Katlimmu contain any weapons (see Kreppner 2014).

may have had an apotropaic value for the seal owner,⁸⁹ was common in Assyrian provincial centers, though many motifs were not found in as high frequencies as they were in the heartland. A study of the 539 motifs attested on cylinder seals, stamp seals, and scarabs and their sealings at Dur-Katlimmu found no evidence for any royal seals or other official seals connected to important personages (such as the crown prince or queen).⁹⁰ As in the Assur neighborhoods, the lion-hunt and siege scenes—so clearly linked to military ideology—were missing, showing that like their counterparts in the capitals, provincial officials also eschewed these depictions of violence. A few other important religious scenes with close ties to imperial ideology were also missing, including the struggle between Ninurta and the Anzu bird, hunting scenes with a kneeling bowman, libation scenes, and scenes with griffon-headed geniuses. All these scenes are common in the capital cities and present in residential contexts in Assur; their absence here might reflect a further attenuation of the reception of military and royal ideology in the provinces.⁹¹ This corpus of material from private residences shows that people in the provinces did use seals with a wide range of Assyrian religious motifs and figures, including the sacred tree, winged geniuses, and scenes of the adoration of divine symbols.⁹²

In general, the Dur-Katlimmu material indicates that residents of this city, a provincial capital, employed a number of specifically Assyrian religious scenes alongside more generic imagery. Elsewhere in the provinces, at Halaf, Carchemish, and Gezer, the number of motifs attested is more limited, with few specifically Assyrian religious images (such as the geniuses or the sacred tree) and many more examples of generic religious imagery, such as the divine symbols.⁹³ This situation may, of course, be the result of the low number of examples, but interestingly, it reflects the emphasis of divine symbols on the stelae that we have already seen. And it may constitute a further indication that the provincial elite were less receptive to specifically Assyrian religious imagery.

The provincial library found at Sultantepe, perhaps ancient Huzirina, suggests that literate officials within the provinces probably received a different education and hence had a different understanding of Assyrian religion than did their counterparts in the royal capitals. If the analysis of the *ašipu*-priest Baba-šumu-ibni's archives has already suggested that the priests of Assur tended to be excluded from accessing the full scholarly knowledge required by the royal scholars, a study of the Huzirina archive shows that provincial scholars and officials had even less access.⁹⁴

Excavations in 1951 and 1952 at the high tell of Sultantepe revealed a library of 407 tablets and fragments. The tablets were found outside a house in what appeared to be a hiding place beneath an offering table. They were surrounded by wine jars and stones.

89 Klengel-Brandt 2014, 108.

90 Fügert 2015.

91 Compare Herbordt 1992, 151–52; Klengel-Brandt 2014.

92 Compare Fügert 2015; Klengel-Brandt 2014.

93 Herbordt 1992.

94 Much of what follows has been informed by Robson's analysis and argumentation, particularly in Robson 2019, 134–38.

The well-built house had a courtyard paved with baked bricks and stones. It presumably housed Qurdi-Nergal, a scribe attested in the tablets, and his family.⁹⁵

The colophons on many of the tablets list the people who wrote them and include members of Qurdi-Nergal's family, plus several unrelated junior scribes, who prepared tablets for Qurdi-Nergal's "viewing."⁹⁶ These scribes include various sons of midlevel Assyrian officials, such as the son of a scribe of the Turtanu, the highest military official. Qurdi-Nergal probably ran a small scribal school for the children of provincial officials. This school may not have been a particularly prestigious learning establishment, given the poor quality of the writing attested there and its location far from the center of the empire, but it trained a number of people who likely became provincial officials.

The Huzirina library contains a large percentage (15%) of literary works, including myths and epics directly related to Assyrian ideology—works such as Gilgamesh, the Anzu epic, and Enuma Elish—all of which were referenced during the annual rituals of kingship in Assur. Other texts include an inscription of Shalmaneser III, which describes a probably fictional campaign to Urartu, and eponym lists (catalogs of the officials that served as the Assyrian yearly dating system). Memorizing and copying these texts probably gave the students, in Eleanor Robson's words, a "thorough grounding in the classics of their culture" as well as an appreciation of the glorious history of the empire.⁹⁷ Not all the texts were propagandistic. A student copy of the Poor Man of Nippur—a humorous Akkadian tale about sticking it to the Man—suggests that students may have had a more complicated response to the power of officials, one that allowed for a certain amount of resistance, or at least satire.

In terms of the reception and reproduction of state ideology, what is absent from the Huzirina library may be as important as what is present. Unlike in libraries in the heartland, very few divination texts were found there—just 7 percent of the library, as opposed to 27 percent of the library at the Ezida in Kalhu and perhaps somewhere between 33 and 60 percent of the texts in Ashurbanipal's library (based on comparisons with the composition of the Babylonian texts and commentaries).⁹⁸ A denunciation letter sent to Esarhaddon accuses a goldsmith in the queen's employ of teaching his son extispicy and introducing him to Enuma Anu Enlil.⁹⁹ This communication indicates that access to knowledge about divination was closely guarded and probably only available to scholars and scribes working closely with the king.¹⁰⁰ It may also suggest that even scribes in the provinces did not fully understand all the elements of the elaborate divination system that underlay Assyrian royal ideology. This ignorance could be one reason why we have not found any apotropaic figurines in the houses of provincial elites or priests. Unlike their counterparts in Assur, they either knew less about apotropaic practices or knew that such rituals were forbidden to them.

95 Lloyd and Gökçe 1953, 36.

96 Robson 2013, 49–50.

97 Robson 2013, 50.

98 Robson 2013, 43.

99 SAA 16 65.

100 I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this document to my attention and suggesting this interpretation.

The tantalizing discovery of a handful of scholarly texts in the Neo-Assyrian temple in Tayinat shows that elsewhere in the empire, the cultural and scholarly context of divination was even further divorced from the royal milieu. Jacob Lauinger has argued that the eleven tablets found during the 2009 excavations of the inner sanctum of Building XVI there should be understood “not as an archive or a library but as a display collection.”¹⁰¹ These tablets included a copy of the famous vassal treaty of Esarhaddon, but the largest group of tablets were part of the scholarly series *Iqqur īpuš*—often characterized as an almanac—and noted which months and days were favorable for different activities. This series has been preserved in several formats. Lauinger argues that the tablets at Tayinat are in the normally rare tabular format because they were not written for later consultation. Two of the tablets—one of which was in an unusual cruciform (amuletic) shape—preserve evidence of piercings that would have allowed them to be hung on the walls of the cella. On one tablet, the conservator even discovered what may have been evidence of the rope from which this text was once suspended.¹⁰²

Why were these tablets displayed in this temple? *Iqqur īpuš* is obviously part of the divinatory knowledge of Assyrian scholars, but unlike the more abstruse areas of that corpus, it is the single best-preserved literary text from ancient Mesopotamia, present in more than fifty-nine manuscripts, and used by ordinary people as well as priests and kings.¹⁰³ Yet internal evidence indicates that scholarly consultation may not have been the reason this almanac was preserved here. When hung, one of the tablets would have had its text rotated 90 degrees, making it quite difficult to read. Indeed, attention to their display as well as to the materiality of the tablets—particularly their unusual, amulet-like shape—suggests these tablets may have mattered more as ritual objects than as texts: perhaps they were votive offerings or objects of devotion. In any case, we are quite far from the center of Assyrian scholarship—and particularly the erudite commentaries on divination texts that the royal scholars were composing.

Finally, the evidence from domestic assemblages shows that at home, even elite families engaged less with Assyrian ideology than did their counterparts in the heartland. The paintings in private houses at Dur-Katlimmu, Til Barsip, and Arslan Tash are monochrome and feature mostly geometric motifs (fig. 13.12a–c). The paintings at Dur-Katlimmu included geometric and floral motifs, as well as two representational scenes: a frieze of ostriches and a stylized garden (fig. 13.12c).¹⁰⁴ At Til Barsip an elite house in Area E, Building E1, was decorated with a pattern of targets, along with a possibly figurative scene (fig. 13.12b).¹⁰⁵ None of the patterns are obviously religious. The same is true of other materials found within most provincial houses, including pottery, which seems to vary geographically and not always with respect to Assyrian identity (with the exception of the Upper Tigris and “palace ware”), and burials, which often depart from Neo-Assyrian customs such as the

101 Lauinger 2011, 11.

102 Lauinger 2016, 232.

103 Livingstone 2013; on its use by an ordinary citizen of Sippar, see Waerzeggers 2012.

104 Albenda 2005, 25–29.

105 Bunnens speculates that this scene may possibly be religious and feature Ištar’s lion, but the surviving fragments are too sparse to support this suggestion reliably (Bunnens, Hawkins, and Leirens 2006, 68). For more discussion of the geometric designs and publication, see Abbate 1994; Albenda 2005.

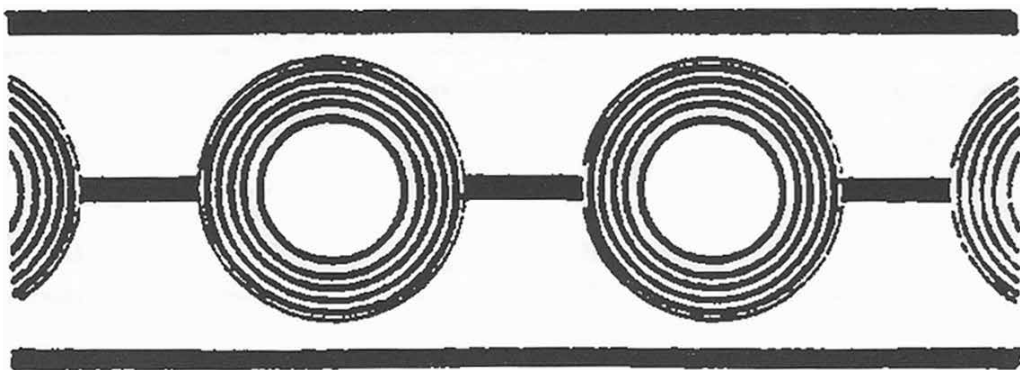


Figure 13.12a. Wall painting from Arslantash. After Thureau-Dangin 1931, pl. XLVIII: 2.

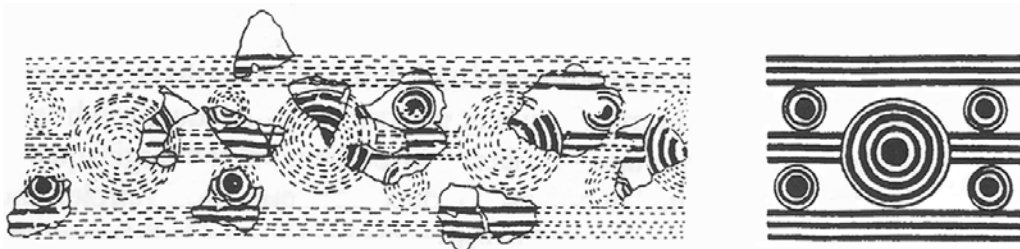


Figure 13.12b. Wall painting from Til Barsip. After Albenda 2005, fig. 4c.

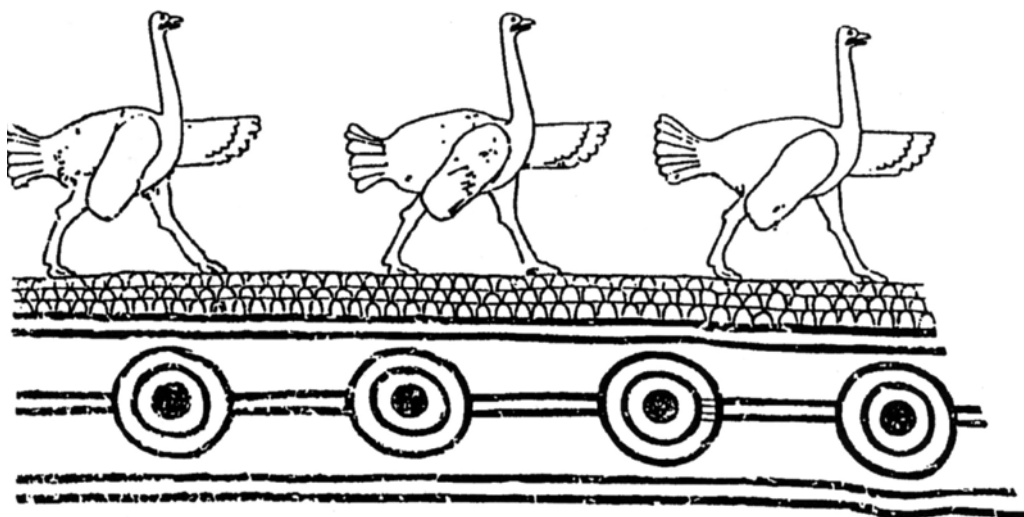


Figure 13.12c. Wall painting from Dur-Katlimmu. After Albenda 2005, fig. 5c.

cremations at Dur-Katlimmu, Tell Gomel, and Tushan.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the small amount of weaponry in graves across the empire illustrates that men did not adopt a warrior identity in death. This finding is striking, particularly given the weapons found in the graveyard from Tell Shioukh Fowqani, which probably just predates the Assyrian conquest.¹⁰⁷

In general, it seems that officials in the provinces engaged with the rituals foregrounding ideology in different ways than their counterparts in the heartland did. There is some evidence from the seals, and particularly from the Sultantepe archive, that some Assyrian religious ideas were common knowledge and perhaps implicitly accepted by many officials. But the lack of emphasis on divination and the absence of apotropaic figurines from residential contexts suggests that provincial officials may have ignored or rejected this aspect of the imperial mission.

BEYOND THE ELITE: GRAVES AND FIGURINES IN THE PROVINCES

But what about people living in the Assyrian Empire who were not involved in the administration and were too poor to own seals or painted houses? How did the nonelite interpret Assyrian imperial messages? There is little evidence from nonelite houses in the provinces of any material culture that reproduces or materializes specifically Assyrian religious ideology, making this class of people different from those we have considered already. So here I consider a class of material culture that is found in a wide range of elite and non-elite domestic and public contexts across the empire: figurines. Work on figurines found in Assyria and Babylonia during the imperial period illustrate that two traditions existed within cities: foundation deposits of apotropaic figurines associated with male priests, and a vernacular tradition of female figurines probably made and mostly used by women.¹⁰⁸

As I have already noted, apotropaic figurines form foundation deposits at a number of official buildings across the empire but occur only in elite, probably priestly, residences in Assur and at Residence K in Khorsabad; otherwise they are found in palaces and temples, from Zincirli to Ur.¹⁰⁹ These figurines were believed to embody divine, protective spirits—including the fishskin-clad *apkallū*, the bird-headed *apkallū*, the *mušhuššu* dragons, the scorpion-men *girtablullū*, the bull-man *kusarikku*, and the six-locked hero *lahmu*—that also appeared in other media (palace reliefs and seals) and are referenced in ritual texts. Recent analyses of both the figurines and the associated ritual texts have suggested the figurines themselves may have been conceptualized as divine. Texts suggest that priestly specialists buried them to guard the king, palaces, temples, and some elite Assyrians.¹¹⁰

106 Wicke 2013; Kreppner 2014; Morandi Bonacossi 2018. For palace ware, see Hunt 2015.

107 Tenu 2007, 2009.

108 Amrhein 2021a.

109 Nakamura 2004, 2008; Green 1983; Rittig 1977.

110 Feldt (2015, 66–70) makes this argument. It seems likely that these rituals emerged out of the long-term practice of burying foundation deposits in temples—and indeed these deposits are first seen in temple contexts in the late Middle Assyrian period. In the beginning of the Neo-Assyrian period, this practice moved into royal palaces, while from the eighth century onward it spread to administrative buildings elsewhere in the empire and to elite houses. In some ways, this process might be seen as similar to what happens in the first millennium in terms of other domains of religious activity—as in the development of horoscopes in the Late Babylonian period, when celestial omens move from being important only for

Interestingly, these official figurine types remain quite distinct in manufacture, use, and iconography from the local traditions of figurine production throughout the empire. Geographically based figurine-making traditions persisted parallel to the introduction of these figurines, with bell-shaped, handmade female figurines dominating Assyria and the Levant and moldmade female figurines found in Babylonia. A few figurines characteristic of certain traditions are found in unusual places—heads characteristic of Megiddo found at Assur, and Babylonian-style moldmade plaques found at Billa; but these items probably index their makers' forceful resettlement by the Assyrian kings. Most of the figurines are of ordinary, human women, as they show no divine attributes. Using fingerprint analysis techniques drawn from criminology, Anastasia Amrhein has demonstrated that all the first-millennium figurines were made by women, including both official and vernacular types.¹¹¹ Similarly, Victoria Clayton has argued that the association of the figurines with weaving paraphernalia in large households at Til Barsip indicates that many of them were used by (possibly dependent) women.¹¹² The female imagery of the figurines contrasts greatly with official Assyrian art and inscriptions, in which few women are described or depicted. Both Amrhein and Clayton have argued that, in the context of the Assyrian Empire in which forced resettlement sought to dilute regional identities and women were absent from the official record, the manufacture and use of vernacular figurines could be seen as an act of resistance.

We can take this argument one step further. It seems possible that women made and used these figurines in domestic spaces for vernacular magical rituals. We know a good deal about what authorities across the Neo-Assyrian Empire—from the palace to more lowly domains—thought of witchcraft, as anti-witchcraft texts have been found in libraries across the Assyrian Empire, including those at Assur, Nineveh, Sultantepe, Babylon, Sippar, Nippur, Uruk, Ur, and Kish.¹¹³ These texts label certain figurine practices by women or foreigners as “witchcraft,” emphasizing their illegitimacy, while the same procedures became “anti-witchcraft” actions when undertaken by authoritative and expensive male *ašipu*-priests or doctors (*asû*).¹¹⁴ The fact that both official and vernacular figurines continued to be made by women hints that women continued to practice magic despite the attempts by male *ašipu*-priests (and to a lesser extent male doctors or *asû*) to monopolize these practices. These figurines do not seem to be of the type used by *ašipu*-priests, for texts typically prescribe the ritual destruction of such figurines. In contrast, vernacular figurines recovered from Ur, Assur, and elsewhere are usually baked and sometimes even repaired with bitumen, indicating long-term use. James C. Scott has noted that witchcraft is “the classical resort of vulnerable subordinate groups who have little or no safe, open opportunity to challenge a form of domination.”¹¹⁵ We cannot know, of course, whether

the land/king to becoming important to individual Babylonians (see Rochberg 2004). Another example of this general phenomenon can be found in calendrical changes (important for scheduling rituals) from the Neo-Assyrian to Seleucid periods (Ristvet 2015).

111 Amrhein 2021a, 2021b.

112 Clayton 2014.

113 Abusch and Schwemer 2010; Abusch 2002, 2015.

114 Rollin 1983; Abusch 2002.

115 Scott 2008, 144.

the women who made, stored, and repaired these vernacular figurines in houses throughout the empire thought of themselves as witches. But the large corpus of texts to counter witchcraft makes it likely that priestly authorities would have characterized them as such—and that these officials feared their abilities.

The increasing impoverishment of ordinary people in the empire provides a context for this possible hostility. Mario Liverani has hypothesized that increasing alienation of land during the empire led to sharp disparities in wealth. Nicholas Postgate has suggested that the increasing mobilization of wealth at provincial capitals would have decimated second-order cities, a pattern that may be borne out by excavations at Qatna, in western Syria.¹¹⁶ Virginia Herrmann has demonstrated the transformation of a neighborhood in Zincirli from small houses to large estates, a transformation culminating during Zincirli's time as a provincial capital. Work at Dur-Katlimmu shows a similar process:¹¹⁷ poorer households probably moved to suburbs outside Dur-Katlimmu, to the southern part of Zincirli, and to the city gates at Ziyaret Tepe.¹¹⁸ Analysis of animal remains at Ziyaret Tepe shows that wealthy Assyrians ate a much better diet than did their poorer neighbors and had access to better cuts of meat and diverse wild species.¹¹⁹ The rise of elite houses thus entailed the increased presence of dependent labor within the city and the increasing marginalization of smaller households. As has been well documented for more recent empires, it seems likely that Assyrian agricultural and administrative policies led, somewhat paradoxically, to the “development of underdevelopment.”¹²⁰

The analysis of graves at Assur and Billa supports this hypothesis of increasing economic inequality. Petra Creamer's study of the graves at these sites has shown that, at both, the number of poorer burials increased from the Middle Assyrian to the Neo-Assyrian period, with an increasing disparity in wealth. At Billa these trends are more pronounced, with most graves appearing much poorer than those at Assur but with a few wealthy ones.¹²¹ If the Assyrian core experienced this economic change, these trends were probably even more pronounced in the provinces. Indeed, Mario Liverani attributes the fall of Assyria to its “excessive exploitation of the conquered periphery,” which led to declining population and economic production.¹²² These conditions might help explain why there is so little evidence that people outside the circle of heartland elites or provincial officials possessed the material trappings of Assyrian ideology.

CONCLUSION

The central administration directed different messages to different populations, emphasizing Assyrian military might and the religious role of the king in the heartland and,

116 Morandi Bonacossi 2009; Postgate 1979.

117 Matney et al. 2017; Kühne 2011; Herrmann 2017b.

118 Herrmann 2017b.

119 Greenfield 2015.

120 Ristvet 2012; Rosenzweig has made a related argument regarding the potentials of agriculture for subject making at Ziyaret Tepe (Rosenzweig 2016, 2018; Rosenzweig and Marston 2018).

121 Creamer 2021.

122 Liverani 2001, 387.

more simply, the king's religious role in the provinces. Class, gender, and distance from the imperial heartland probably affected how different audiences responded to Assyrian ideology. Elite officials in Assur tended to subscribe to and reproduce many of the religious messages of the court, but few private individuals emphasized violence or military prowess. In the provinces, at Dur-Katlimmu, for example, rich people propagated a more generic (and less "Assyrian") religious message by choosing Assyrian imagery for their seals but decorating their houses using local Syrian scenes. Outside official circles or the capital cities, there is little evidence that people subscribed to Assyrian ideas regarding the will of Assur, fully understood the importance of divination and associated apotropaic rituals, or internalized respectful allegiance to the army. Instead, the use of traditional figurine types at Ur, Assur, and Til Barsip shows the persistence of vernacular and local practices across the empire and may indicate one "weapon of the weak"—against a backdrop of increasing impoverishment. The presence of the satirical Poor Man of Nippur demonstrates that even provincial elites used humor to mask political criticism.

This analysis has implications for our understanding of hegemony during the period of the Assyrian Empire. William Roseberry has defined hegemony, *sensu* Gramsci, as "a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination."¹²³ Hegemony can manufacture consent within a population and is as important to the maintenance of political authority as the possibility of violence. Lack of consent in the Soviet Union after the 1970s—embodied in satirical *anekdoti*, lack of enthusiasm for Marxist-Leninist classics, and rejection of Leniniana—was one factor underlying the sudden and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the lack of consent of commoners to Assyrian religious ideology may help explain the sudden and near-total collapse of Assyria after 612 BCE, after the Babylonians and Medes, who had, after all, been subject to the empire for centuries, laid waste to Nineveh. Rather unusually, these attacks left the center of what had been the Near East's most powerful empire bereft of cities—and turned one of the richest and most intensively cultivated landscapes in West Asia into pasture. Indeed, when the Ten Thousand crossed this region 200 years later, Xenophon saw deserted cities and ruined fortresses, their names and histories already forgotten."¹²⁴

ABBREVIATIONS

- ARAB D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927
- RIMA 3 Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II (858–745 BC)*. Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Period 3. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996
- RINAP 1 Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011
- RINAP 2 Grant Frame, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721–705 BC)*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 2. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2021

123 Roseberry 1994, 361.

124 Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 3.4.7-13; Liverani 2001, 374.

- RINAP 3/1 A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC), Part 1*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012
- RINAP 3/2 A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC), Part 2*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/2. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014
- RINAP 4 Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011
- RINAP 5/1 Jamie Novotny and Joshua Jeffers, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627 BC), and Sin-šarra-iškun (626–612 BC), Kings of Assyria, Part 1*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 5/1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2018
- SAA 3 Alisdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*. State Archives of Assyria 3. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989
- SAA 15 Andreas Fuchs and Simo Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II. Part 3, Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*. State Archives of Assyria 15. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2001
- SAA 16 Mikko Luukko and Greta Van Buylaere, *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. State Archives of Assyria 16. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2002
- SAA 20 Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts*. With contributions by Karlheinz Deller, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, and Stefania Ermidoro. State Archives of Assyria 20. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2017

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14

New Forms of Political Expression and Ideological Manipulation at the Dawn of State Formation: The Evidence from Fourth-Millennium Arslantepe, Turkey

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ARSLANTEPE IN THE fourth millennium BCE was the theater of precocious, far-reaching changes in the forms of exercising and expressing power that may have also involved the conception and perception of its legitimacy by both those who embodied the authority and those who were subordinate to it. These changes are revealed by the rapid and radical overturning in the political system manifested at the site immediately after the middle of the fourth millennium BCE, that is, about 3400 BCE (the beginning of Period VIA), when a completely new public area was built adjacent to an abandoned temple area of the end of the previous period (VII).¹ This radical and precocious change at the end broke the continuity of the process of state formation that had conversely characterized, though with a certain degree of fluctuation, the majority of Mesopotamian societies.² The peculiar features of this new political system are clearly visible in the archaeological record at the site, which so far makes it unique for studying the crucial phenomena of the emergence of secular-based, centralized government systems.

The most recent discoveries in the fourth-millennium Arslantepe palace have not only confirmed that it was indeed a palace in all respects, built many centuries earlier than the better-known Near Eastern palaces, but also revealed a tangible, radical transformation in the way power was exerted and displayed.³ This transformation involved the forms and also the substance of the relations between the authority and the public, the nature of power and its legitimation, and the ways in which the public paid tribute to this authority, which are clearly evidenced in the archaeological record.

1 Frangipane 2016, 2019b.

2 Adams 1966; Pollock 1999; Wright 2006; Emberling 2016; Frangipane 2018.

3 Frangipane 2019b.

A BIPARTITE HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY AND THE USE OF CEREMONIAL PRACTICES TO EXERCISE “SUPREMACY” IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE FOURTH MILLENNIUM BCE (PERIOD VII, LATE CHALCOLITHIC 3–4)

The excavations in the levels belonging to the period preceding the palace’s construction (Arslantepe Period VII, LC 3–4, 3900–3400 BCE) have brought to light a sequence of fairly imposing buildings erected in the upper part of the old mound, along its western edge, whose functional and architectural features suggest they must have been elite buildings.⁴ The earliest level brought to light so far shows a series of similarly oriented parallel buildings with thick mudbrick walls, sometimes decorated with paintings in red and black on white plaster, and with round mud “columns” (or pillars or bases) standing close to some of the walls (fig. 14.1). These buildings, adjacent to one another, consisted mostly of large, elongated rooms, sometimes flanked by smaller quadrangular rooms, and formed part of a sort of residential quarter distinct and separated from the common dwellings, which were built in the lower and peripheral areas of the mound (fig. 14.2).⁵ High-ranking families seem to have been a privileged group at the top of society and distinct from the rest of the community even in the separate, easily recognizable location of their houses within the settlement. No public or community activities appear, however, to have been performed in these houses.

Toward the end of Period VII (3500–3400 BCE), the southern part of this area changed functionally by becoming a place intended for ceremonial activities. Two large cultic buildings, very likely two temples (Temple C and Temple D), were built one after the other on part of the area previously occupied by the elite residences (fig. 14.3). We do not know whether ceremonial public buildings of this kind had already existed in the earlier phases of Period VII in other parts of the mound still awaiting excavation, but in the area we have opened so far, they appear to have represented a novelty and reveal the adoption by the authorities—perhaps embodied in one or more of these high-ranking families—of a way of wielding power that, as in Mesopotamia, revolved around a religious-ceremonial institution. Even the architecture of the two temples follows the tripartite pattern of Mesopotamian temples, and the activities performed in these buildings, particularly in the more recent and better preserved of the two (Temple C), were essentially the public consumption of meals—almost certainly ceremonial redistributions of food carried out through administrative control over the “withdrawals”—according to a typically Mesopotamian practice.⁶ The materials found inside these buildings indeed almost exclusively comprised thousands of mass-produced bowls and hundreds of *cretulae* bearing seal impressions (with 383 well-preserved fragments coming from the two temples): in Temple C, the bowls and *cretulae* were found mainly in the side rooms, both on the ground and in the collapse debris of what might have been an upper story, where they must have been stored ready for use; in Temple D, on the other hand, the same types of items were found dumped, in even larger quantities, in an abandoned stairwell as discarded remains of redistribution activities

4 Frangipane 2016; Balossi Restelli 2019.

5 Palmieri 1978; Frangipane 2016, 2018; Balossi Restelli 2019.

6 Nissen 1974; Helwing 2003; Pollock 2012.



Figure 14.1. Arslantepe, Period VII: the elite residences on the western side of the mound.

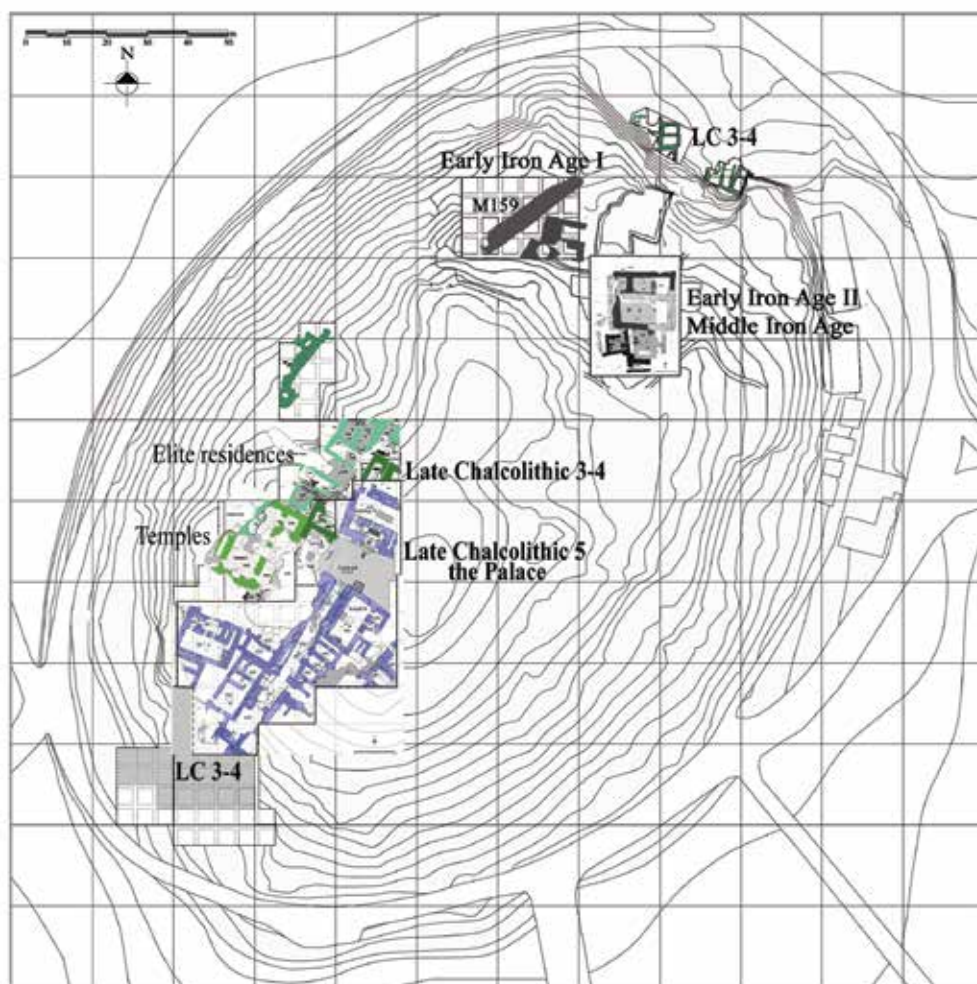


Figure 14.2. The Arslantepe mound with the location of the main buildings belonging to the Late Chalcolithic 3-4 (in green) and 5 (in blue).

and their related administrative transactions.⁷ The stratigraphic relations between the two buildings⁸ and the finding of the impressions of the same six seals in both structures suggest the *cretulae* dumped in Temple D most probably came from the activities performed in Temple C when Temple D had lost its original ceremonial function.

Notwithstanding the close similarity with the Mesopotamian world in these temples' architectural layout, organization, and socioeconomic function, all the pottery, objects, and wall decorations found within them were based on local traditions, indicating the Arslantepe elites' high degree of autonomy and the originality of their cultural identity.

⁷ Frangipane 2019a.

⁸ Temple C was built after Temple D, though the two structures may have been in use simultaneously for a while.

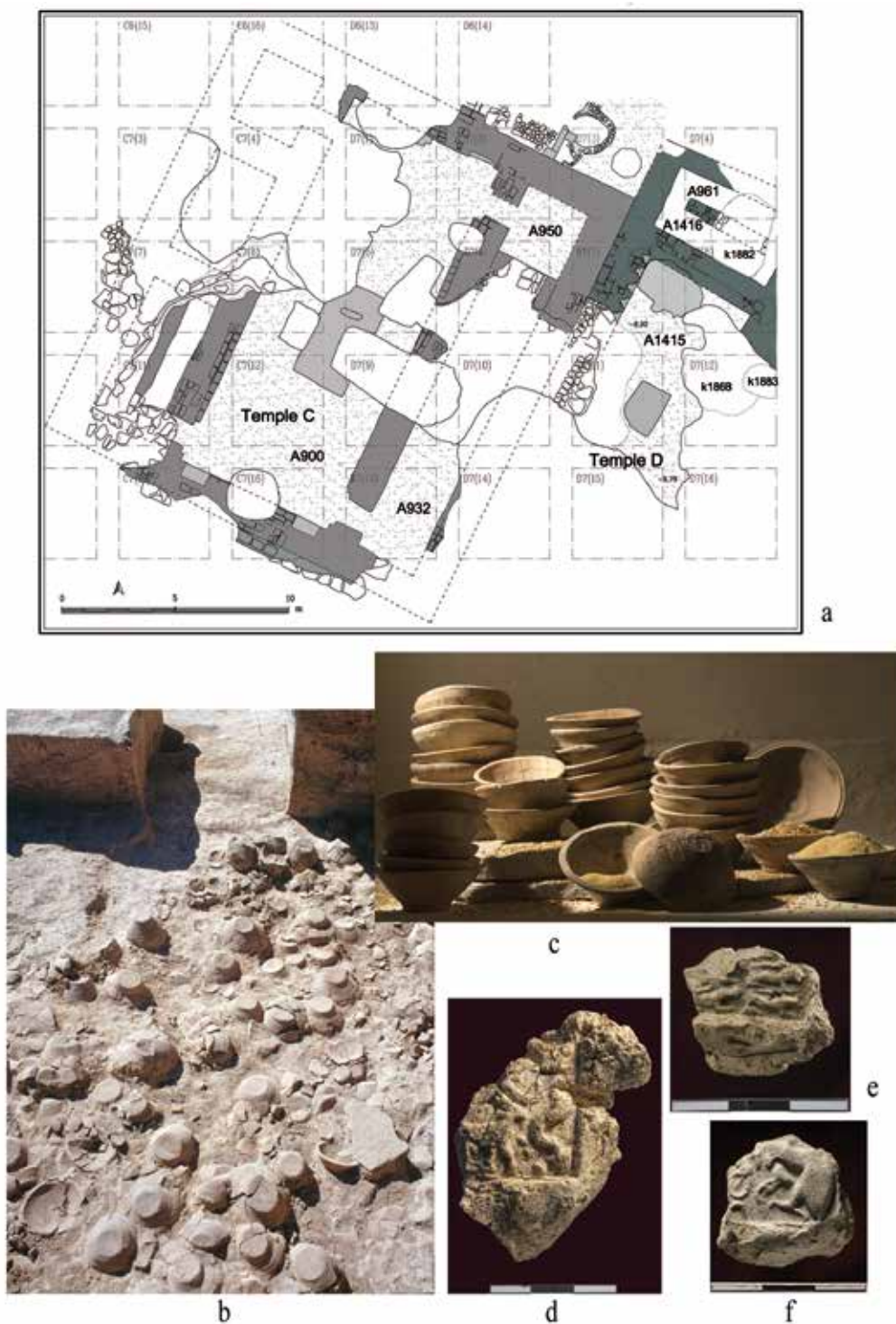


Figure 14.3. Arslantepe: *a*, Temples C and D from the end of Period VII; *b–c*, thousands of bowls found in the temples; *d–f*, *cretulae* from Temple D (*d–e*) and Temple C (*f*).

THE ARSLANTEPE PALACE AND THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW
 “SECULAR” POWER AT THE END OF THE FOURTH MILLENNIUM
 (PERIOD VIA, LATE CHALCOLITHIC 5, 3400–3200 BCE)

In about 3400 BCE the temples were abandoned, and in their place a complex of public buildings and spaces, completely different in form and function, were built partly cutting into the eastern side of Temple D (fig. 14.4). The entire change must have taken place over a very short span of time, according to the new carbon-14 dating of the two groups of public complexes, which almost overlap.⁹ Their near-overlapping would suggest the change was rapid, deliberate, and probably intended to meet the new demands of the new leaders, who now felt able to express the legitimacy of their authority directly, without any formal religious or cultic mediation. The precocity of this phenomenon may perhaps have had its roots in the social and cultural origins of the leadership at Arslantepe, which had already been displayed as an established social reality in Period VII through the prominence given to the elites’ residences, distinct from the common dwellings of the rest of the population because of their imposing architecture and separate location in a district of their own. The far-reaching changes that occurred in the political performances at the beginning of Period VIA, however, must have been driven mainly by the increasingly expanding political and economic control exercised over the population by the Arslantepe leaders—control that enabled them to gain consensus without the mediation of sacred or cultic practices and without any explicit reference to the religious sphere in their political acts.

The seat of power was no longer the “temple”; rather, the core of the new public complex was an imposing building, completely shorn of explicitly religious connotations (no more altars, podiums, or evidence of cultic practices), that opened onto a great courtyard (A1414), where the people would gather upon arriving via a short, painted, decorated corridor (figs. 14.4 and 14.5).¹⁰ The main building (Building 37) was linked to this courtyard by a 2 m wide opening, which was not really a door as such, but a large entryway leading to a small, rectangular room (A1397) almost entirely occupied by a platform with three steps, built against the back wall between two windows (fig. 14.5). There was no easy, direct entrance to the inner part of the building, which was accessed through a small side room that inhibited entry by the public, who had to remain outside in the courtyard. Two low, clay bases were aligned in front of the main platform, one exactly at the entrance and one outside, in front of a stone ramp leading to the room. These two bases probably served as markers, placed at different distances from the “seat of power,” for people presenting themselves to the authority to be heard or to pay tribute.

Scattered on the main platform were some small pieces of charred juniper wood, each about 8–9 cm in diameter, which differed from the pine, oak, and ash beams that had collapsed from the ceiling into the room and may well have been part of a piece of furniture, likely a chair or “throne.”¹¹ Nearby, on the same platform, was a twig of *Rosacea Prunoidea*, which, according to the project’s botanists, had been cut when it was in bloom. It is

⁹ Vignola et al. 2019.

¹⁰ Frangipane 2016, 2018.

¹¹ Frangipane, Manuelli, and Vignola 2017, 77–81.

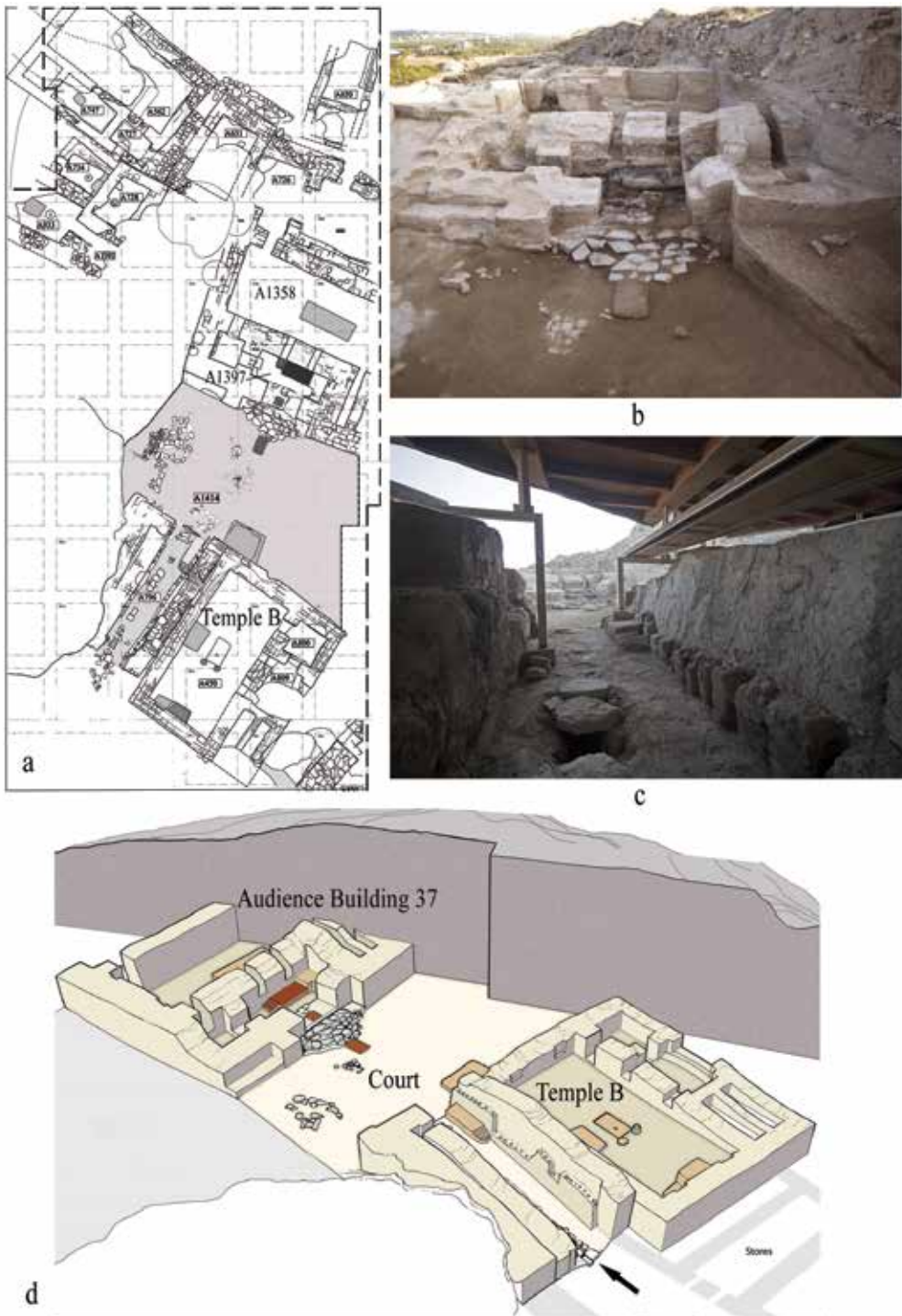


Figure 14.4. Arslantepe, the first core of the palace (early Period VIA): *a* and *d*, plan and 3D drawing of the building complex (by C. Alvaro); *b*, the “Audience Building” 37; *c*, the decorated corridor leading to the courtyard and the Audience Building.



Figure 14.5. Arslantepe, Building 37: the Audience Room (A1397) with the main, three-step platform and the two low, clay bases in front of it.

therefore possible that it was a flowering sprig used to decorate the platform and embellish this special place where the authority presented itself to the public.

The palace greatly expanded over the course of time by extending the entrance corridor, adding a monumental gate, and creating new sectors intended for different purposes: storerooms, other courtyards, and different kinds of representation buildings (fig. 14.6a, c). The platform, and whoever was sitting on it, would have been visible from the entrance to the palace even after it had been enlarged so much (fig. 14.6b). The visibility of this place, therefore, played a very important role in presenting and flaunting authority in the eyes of the public and must have been quite carefully borne in mind when the new sectors of the palace were added, the corridor being arranged in such a way as to prevent the new buildings from blocking the view.

The public space radically changed from being a welcoming and inclusive ceremonial place where the public would enter and take part in ceremonies and other events through which power was shaped, manifested, and expressed, to being a place in which people were welcomed but kept at a distance and excluded from any real participation in the performances of the new political reality. People gathered in the large court A1414, where they probably did not carry out any particular activity but simply waited to be received by the ruler or performed as an audience for him, as the analyses of the floor have confirmed (see Cereda appendix below). The building in which contact was made with the public appears to have been an “audience building.” The platform on which the possible seat/“throne” stood was visible from the main courtyard and the corridor, but the public could approach it only from a distance, thus creating a sense of detachment, which also expressed subservience. The different positions of the two low, clay bases, probably used as position markers for the persons presenting themselves to the authority, may also have indicated different degrees of distance from which individuals might have approached the seat of power, perhaps according to their rank in the hierarchy or to the type of events taking place. But no one would have been allowed to enter the building and play any real part in public events. The place to welcome the public was the courtyard, which was indeed an “outside” space.

This principle also applied to the two smaller temples in the palace complex—particularly the oldest one, Temple B, to whose cultic room only a few authorized and privileged individuals would have been allowed entry, while the people would have had to look on from the outside through two windows (fig. 14.7d). Food redistribution did not take place on a large scale in this building, in contrast to the temples of the previous period (VII), but there was a consumption of special food (as indicated by the higher-than-usual number of adult cattle bones found in Temple B¹²) that seems to have been reserved for a few—probably the elite members.¹³ Even the wall decorations, consisting of impressed and painted geometric motifs, were no longer inside the cultic room, as they were in the temples of the previous period (VII) (fig. 14.7a–b), but outside it, in the side rooms, beyond which the audience could not go (fig. 14.7c).

Food redistribution took place in the storerooms and adjacent courtyards, probably as remuneration for labor and therefore a much more routine and nonceremonial activity

12 Bartosiewicz 2010.

13 D’Anna 2012; D’Anna and Guarino 2010; Frangipane 2016.

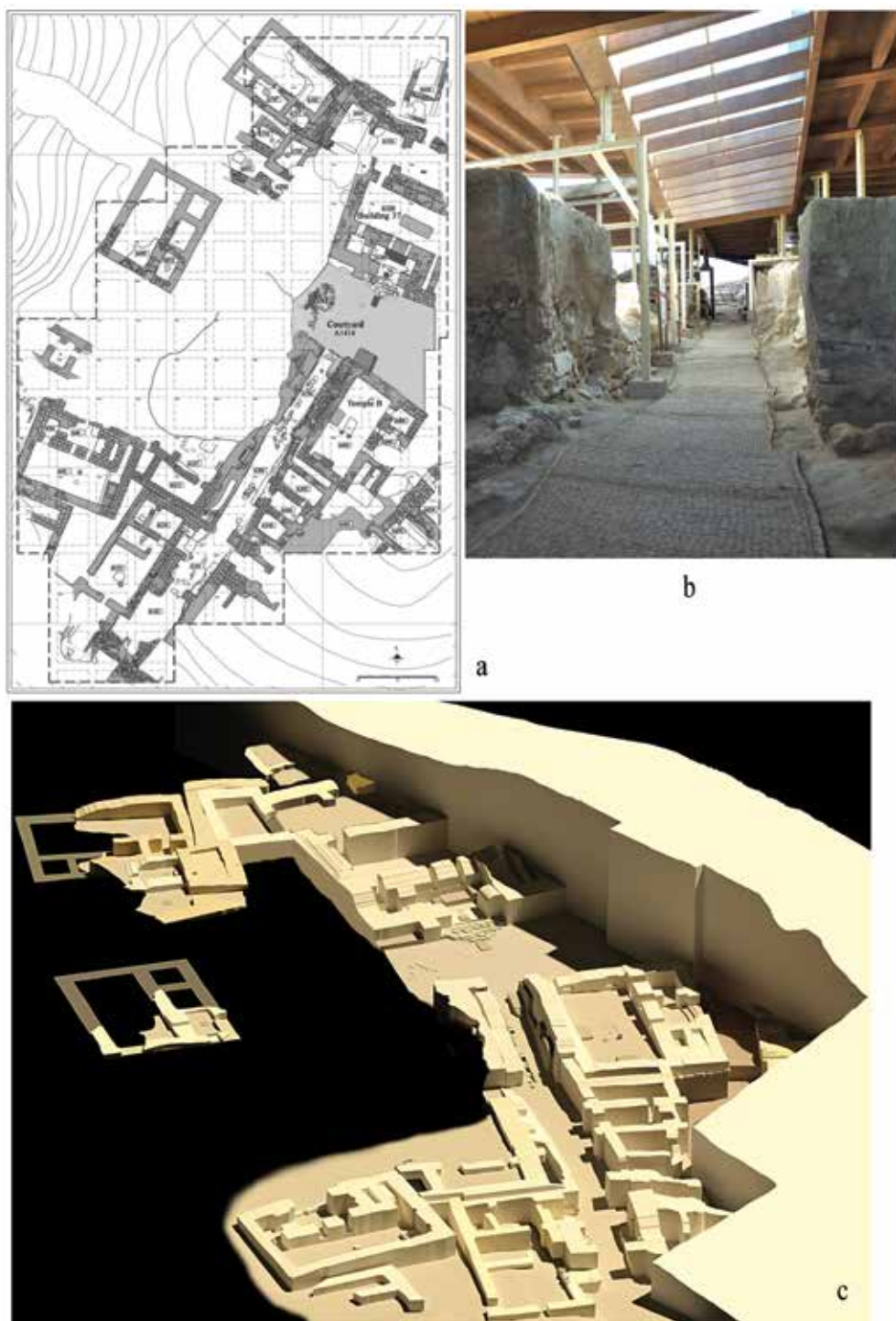


Figure 14.6. Arslantepe: *a* and *c*, the expanded palace complex occupying more than 3,500 m² in the area brought to light so far; *b*, the corridor leading to the Audience Room, which was visible from the very entrance.

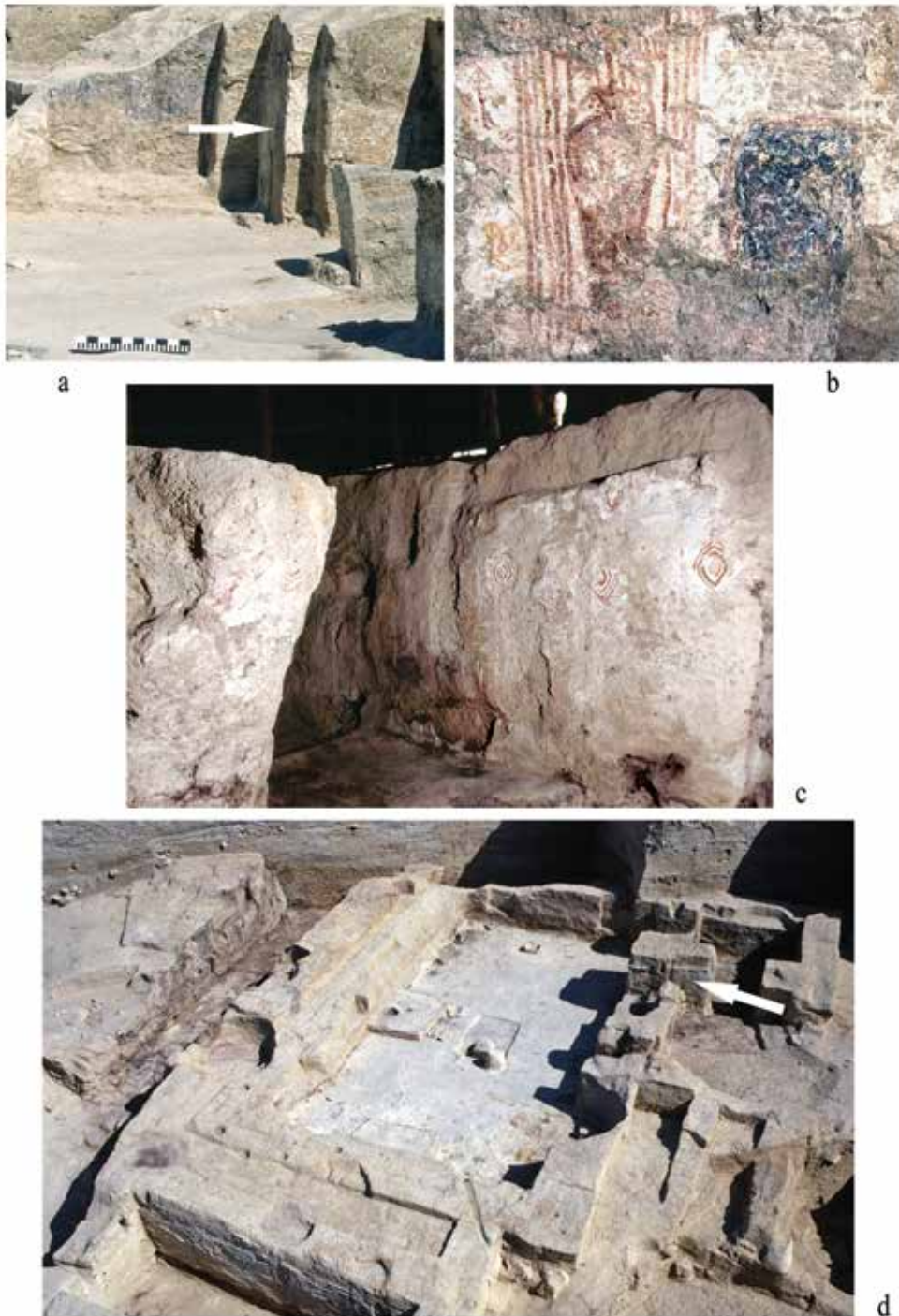


Figure 14.7. Arslantepe: *a–b*, Period VII, wall painting and niches in the large central hall of Temple C, with arrow indicating the position of the painting; *c*, Period VIA, impressed and painted geometric motifs in the side room of Temple B, close to the window but outside the main cult hall; *d*, Period VIA, Temple B, with arrow indicating the location of the wall decoration.

(fig. 14.8).¹⁴ Here, too, those who went to receive food remained outside in the courtyard: the storerooms were very small and closed off, so while the people there were acting as subjects by withdrawing goods (more than 100 bowls and 130 sealings were found in distribution storeroom A340), they were not really allowed to enter the places where the acts were performed—once again they remained outside, thus further emphasizing their “dependence” on the central authority.

In all probability, the ideological linkage between the rulers and the divine or sacred sphere had probably never died out, as we know also from later periods in Mesopotamia, where the traditional ideology of kingship linked to the divine merged with the new principles of secular power fully established in the third millennium BCE.¹⁵ But what is observed at Arslantepe is that, already at the end of the fourth millennium, religion or cultic ceremonies no longer seemed to form the main object of public events in which the rulers’ strategies for obtaining consensus were played out, and, as has already been pointed out, the general populace no longer appears to have played an active part in these events.

However, in an archaic political system of this type, in which law and military apparatus were probably still in their embryonic stages, obtaining consensus from the population must have been crucial and required that people feel somehow involved in the public sphere—namely, called to attend some symbolically meaningful events performed in public spaces. So if they were not really taking part themselves, how might they have been able to feel a link with the authority ruling over them?

The link was probably still ideological, but it had to be based on the perception of distance rather than closeness, thus creating a sense of subservience and dependence. Nevertheless, some form of symbolic and ritual bond must have existed between the people and their rulers that made this distance and submission ideologically tolerable.

LOOK BUT DON’T TOUCH—EXCLUSION VERSUS INCLUSION: NEW SYMBOLISMS AND EXPRESSIONS OF POWER IN THE ARSLANTEPE PALACE

Important evidence of the development of a new symbolism supporting the new type of “secular” power has been provided by a functional study of the large room A1358, located behind the “throne” room (A1397) in the inner part of the Audience Building (Building 37) (figs. 14.4 and 14.9a). This space was a long hall inaccessible to the public; it featured a low, elongated, rectangular clay platform, with a round hearth at one end, that stood in the middle of the room, slightly displaced toward the east (fig. 14.9b). The hearth’s plaster had been renewed several times and showed numerous replasterings, consisting of thin layers of mud alternating with ash, therefore suggesting this feature may have been used intensively for cooking. For this reason, as well as for reasons of comparison with similar architectural traits in the Mesopotamian palaces of later periods, I originally interpreted this room as a kind of dining or banqueting hall reserved for the elite or the ruling family.

To investigate possible traces of past activities trapped in the mud floors, micromorphological analyses and chemical spot tests (phosphates, carbohydrates, carbonates, and

¹⁴ Frangipane et al. 2007; Frangipane 2010, 2018.

¹⁵ Steinkeller 2018, 2019.

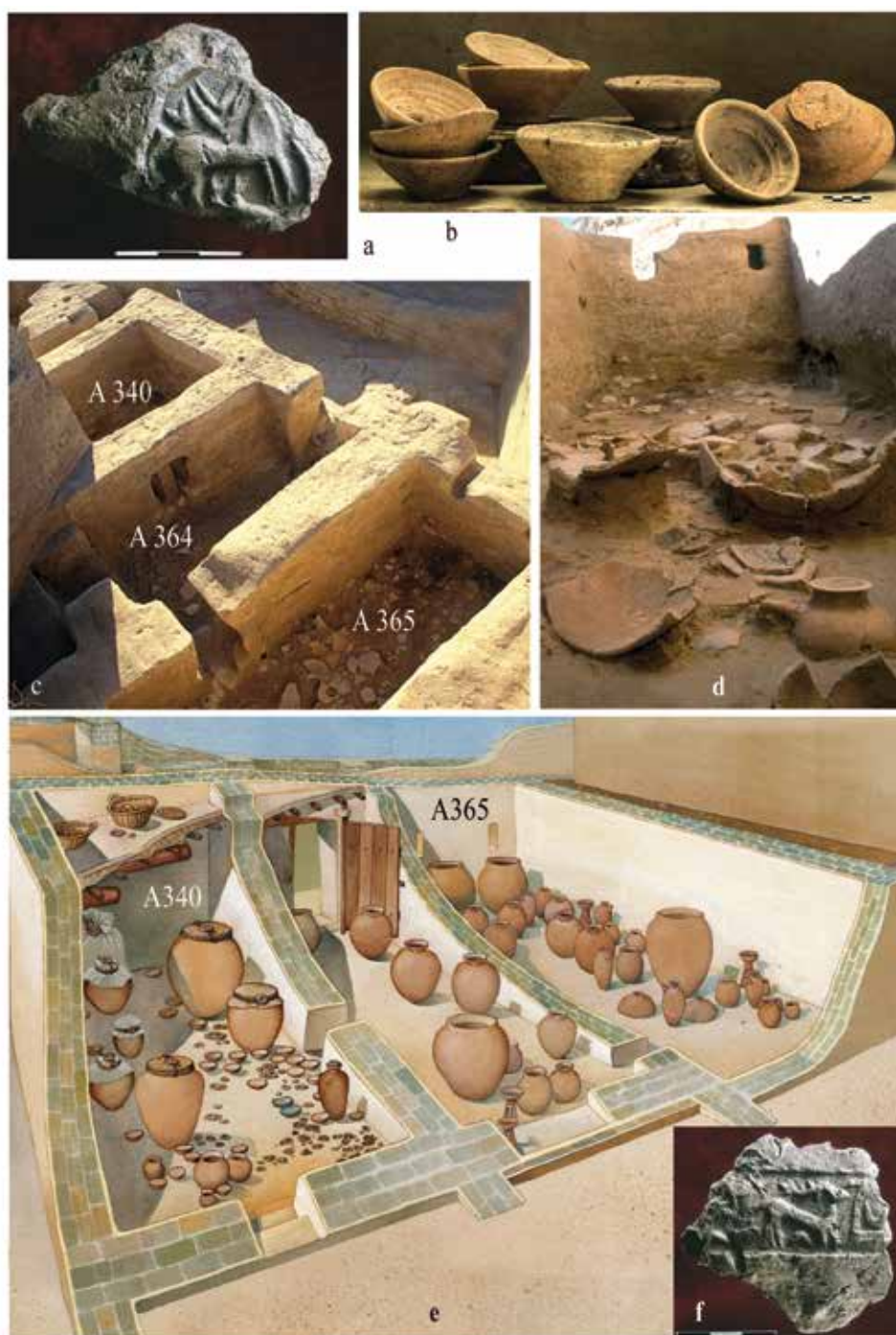


Figure 14.8. Arslantepe, Period VIA, the storerooms in the palace: *a–b, f*, *cretulae* and mass-produced bowls from the redistribution storeroom A340 (photo by R. Ceccacci); *c*, the storeroom complex; *d*, the interior of room A365 with materials *in situ* on the floor; *e*, reconstruction of the original position of vessels and objects in the rooms based on the findspots of the materials and sherds combined to recompose the pots (drawing by T. D’Este).



a



b

Figure 14.9. Arslantepe, Audience Building 37: *a*, view from above; *b*, interior of the long room A1358 with the platform and fireplace.

proteins) were carried out on the plastered floors of room A1358, on the coating of the platform, and on the numerous plaster layers refreshing the hearth. Surprising results were obtained (see Cereda appendix below).

Here, only rare anthropogenic materials were found. Few inclusions were seen in the westernmost corner of the room, but the area of the platform remained by far the cleanest and best maintained. Interestingly, the same scarcity of anthropogenic residues was noted also in the hearth itself, despite the indication of this feature's intense use, as testified by the sequence of repeated replasterings alternating with concentrations of ash. The cleanliness of all these layers, together with the type of stratification, suggests that every time the fire was lit, the hearth was replastered, as though to avoid the risk of any contamination of the new fire by earlier ones. Spot-test results build a picture consistent with the micromorphological observations, showing almost no trace of organic enrichment in the fireplace area.¹⁶ Thus, if processing and consumption of food took place in this room, it did not occur in the area of the central platform or in the fireplace, whose repeated and clean fires may have served other purposes.

Obviously, hearths can also provide heating; but if this fireplace was intended for heating purposes, why build it at one corner of the long platform and not in its center and in the middle of the room? And how can one explain its extreme "cleanliness" and its continuous, intensive replastering? Obviously there is no certain interpretation, but the existing data suggest the high likelihood that the answers have to do with some kind of ritual acts. The sacred fire of the Zoroastrians springs to mind, for example, though with all due precautions and without pretending any direct comparison—rather, it is only an inspiration to understand a possible connection between the lighting of a repeated fire, the care taken in keeping it very clean, and some symbolic, sacred function.

The fire at that particular point was in view through one of the windows that opened to the Audience Room, at the back of the "throne" platform and of the person sitting there; and through this window the fire must have been visible by anyone approaching this place from the courtyard or arriving from the corridor (fig. 14.10). If this interpretation is correct, the ruler would have been seen as sitting with a (sacred?) fire blazing behind his back. This fire was in view but out of reach—once again, an imposing image of an event (lighting fire) that people had to see but could not approach, thereby further symbolically emphasizing distance, separation, and perhaps also submission.

Based on the evidence that has emerged and the possible interpretations we might build around it, I have also reconsidered the two painted figures in the entrance room to the palace storerooms (fig. 14.11):¹⁷ the strange, wavy, red and black lines sprouting from the heads of the two figures, lines that had been tentatively interpreted as hair or headdresses, now, on closer inspection and through new eyes, more convincingly seem to resemble flames. And the table with the raised edges placed in front of (or behind) the two figures in the lower part of the image might be a representation of the chair/"throne," or in any case some wooden furniture of the kind that must have stood on the platform in the Audience Building. If this interpretation is correct, the two figures painted in the entrance room giving access to the storerooms would have represented the palace authorities and

16 Cereda, appendix to this essay, fig. 14.17.

17 Frangipane 1992.



Figure 14.10. Arslantepe, Building 37: reconstruction of the fire lit in room A1358 and the possible visual effects it may have produced. Graphic elaboration by A. Siracusano.



Figure 14.11. Arslantepe, Period VIA palace: wall paintings in the room (A364) leading to the two storerooms.

the symbols connected with them, since the figures would have been seen from the viewpoint of anyone entering the palace.

This interpretation would suggest that also a ceremonial element existed in this relationship between the rulers and the public; but perhaps the ceremony and pomp were not of a strictly religious type, or at least of a type that differed in kind from the inclusive religious practices we find in the Period VII temples and throughout the whole of Mesopotamia. In this case, it would have been a rite that excluded, with the public merely as on-lookers and, in a sense, “undergoing” the event as spectators and no longer as participants.

This type of ideological imposition reinforced a real domination based on economic control over primary production, as Arslantepe has clearly shown with the discovery of the central storerooms with thousands of *cretulae* and mass-produced bowls, and a sophisticated administrative system regulating the transactions.¹⁸ All this evidence substantiated control over the labor force, who were remunerated with food in the context of routine activities, with little or no evidence of any feasting practices or religious ceremonials.

Confirmation of the ability of the palace rulers to condition the staple economy has come from recent analyses of stable isotopes conducted on vegetal remains, revealing that irrigation may have been introduced to grow cereals, including barley.¹⁹ Since the Malatya Plain was an area in which rain-fed agriculture could be practiced without any problem, this temporary introduction of irrigation (the evidence for which disappeared following the collapse of the palace and its centralized system) must have been aimed at boosting production rather than making production possible. Another likely example of central intervention in the primary economy may be inferred from the huge increase in sheep and goat rearing in this period, with a particular focus on sheep. This increase suggests specialized pastoralism, whether resulting from direct intervention or by encouraging the nomadic pastoralists entering the Euphrates Valley, whose products certainly joined the principal commodities managed by Arslantepe’s centralized economic system.²⁰

In the iconography, too, the symbolic or “ostentatious” aspects at Arslantepe were always bound up with more secular expressions of the ideology of power. In addition to the possible “sacred fire” burning behind the head of the one sitting on the “throne” were the human figures painted in the entrance room to the storerooms—figures each depicted as holding a tool, which, at least in the case of the male figure on the right (fig. 14.11b), might be construed as an “indented key” used to fit into wooden locks, identified among the impressions of sealed objects left on the *cretulae* from the main dump A206 in the Arslantepe palace (fig. 14.12).²¹ And those rooms must have indeed been closed with locks of this kind, as there are no traces of pegs on the walls, which are preserved high enough to show such marks (door pegs being the other door-closing mechanism identified on the *cretulae* at Arslantepe and the most common type throughout the Near East). If this interpretation is correct, the two images must have shown, on the one hand, a ritual-sacred element (the fire) and, on the other hand, an object representing an instrument of economic power (the key). This development in the fundamentals and display of power, precociously manifested

18 Frangipane et al. 2007.

19 Vignola et al. 2017.

20 Bartosiewicz 2010; Palumbi 2010; Porter 2012.

21 Ferioli and Fiandra 1992, figs. 1–5; 1993.

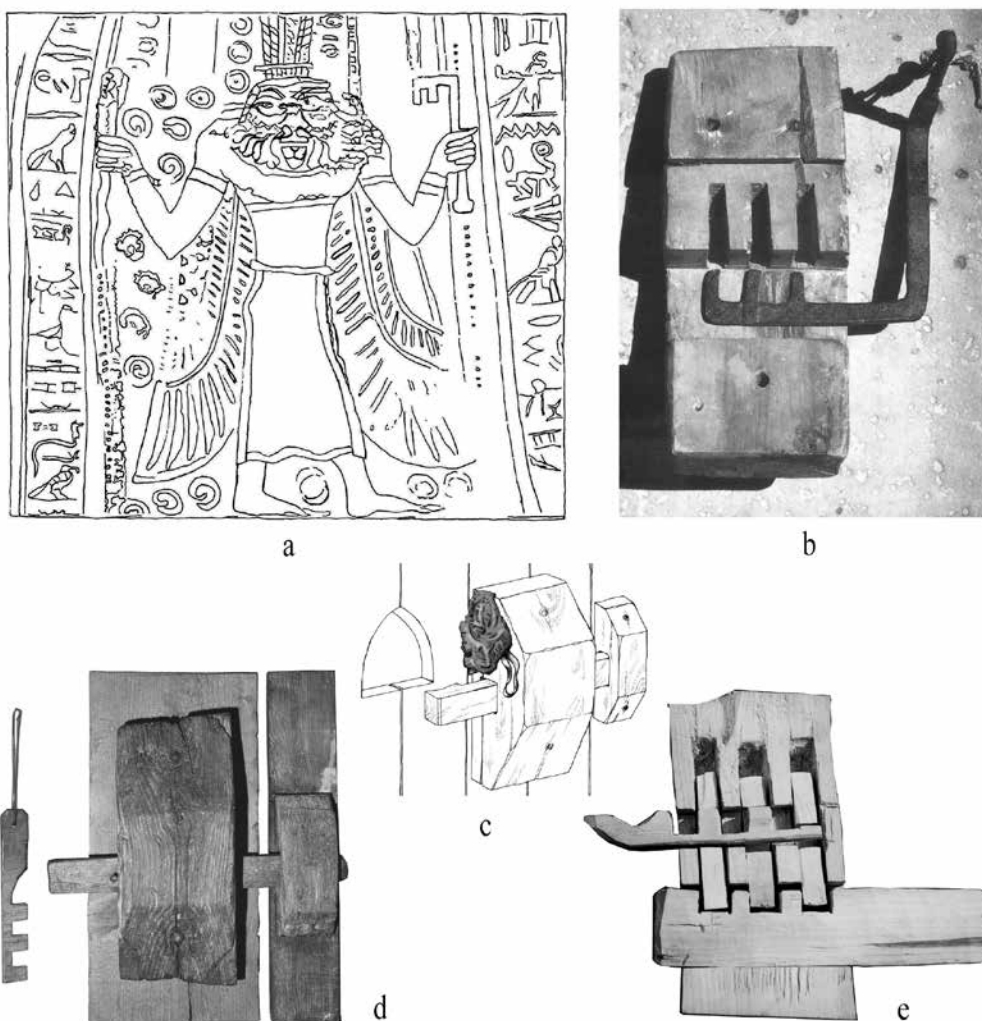


Figure 14.12. Various objects: *a*, winged Bes holding two keys (Egyptian section, Königliches Museum, Berlin) (Ferioli and Fiandra 1992, fig. 3); *b*, wooden lock with iron key (Zliten Archaeological Museum, Libya) (Ferioli and Fiandra 1992, fig. 5); *c*, reconstruction of sealed wooden lock from impressions on the Arslantepe *cretulae* (Ferioli and Fiandra, in Frangipane et al. 2007, fig. II.27); *d-e*, modern lock in use in Eastern Anatolian villages (*d*) and its internal mechanism (*e*) (Ferioli and Fiandra, in Frangipane et al. 2007, fig. II.28).

at Arslantepe, therefore seems to show a combination of ritual and secular aspects in denoting political authority. The combination is reminiscent of a similar evolution in power expressions in third-millennium Mesopotamia, where the original ideology of leadership based on the divine dialectically met and clashed with an increasing and pressing desire to affirm the secular side of power.²²

The same emphasis on the dual nature of power can be seen in two scenes on another wall painting in the internal sector of the palace corridor leading to the large courtyard

²² Steinkeller 2017.

A1414 (fig. 14.13c–e) and on a well-known cylinder seal impression, depicting a plowing scene and a threshing scene, respectively, in a ceremonial setting (fig. 14.13a–b) and suggesting an important relationship between power and agricultural practices.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the marked difference between the most frequently recurring images on Uruk-Warka glyptics and the few seal designs depicting human figures on the *cretulae* of Arslantepe: they stress the different way in which both power and ordinary people were represented and conceived in the two contexts. At Uruk, the leader is usually depicted as either a religious leader connected with the temple or a political leader in scenes where he makes use of force on subjugated individuals (fig. 14.14a–c).²³ These subjects are virtually never found represented on the Arslantepe glyptics, and in the few cases in which human figures are depicted, they are always linked to everyday activities, mainly agriculture. And so, while at Uruk ordinary people were depicted as bringing offerings to the temple, at Arslantepe they are shown in a static, nonnarrative way or in the act of performing activities linked to work and daily life (e.g., carrying sacks, holding a pitchfork, or with animals) (fig. 14.14d–g).²⁴

At Uruk, too, the distance between the leaders and the people was very strongly emphasized; but while the power of the leader was constantly flaunted, the people seem to have been required to take an active part in public events (with temples depicted as the main recurrent public buildings and temple offerings depicted as given by commoners, meaning that they took part in the rituals). Conversely, in Arslantepe Period VIA the power of the leader was not exhibited in the imagery; the leader himself was quite rarely represented, and even then he was shown in his role of guiding economic activities. A stronger ideological legitimacy had, however, to accompany the image of a ruler encouraging agricultural production, and perhaps it was precisely the fire burning behind him and seen from a distance that represented the supernatural, mysterious aspect of this ideology of power.

I believe the exclusion of the people from taking full part in the public and symbolic events occurring in the Arslantepe palace—while at all events attending as subordinates and “workers”—deprived them of an active role in shaping their relationship with the rulers, whose power, on the other hand, increasingly interfered in the population’s economic life. This relational distancing must have caused fragility and weakness in the structure of power, leading in the long run to a high level of instability in the system.

In about 3200–3150 BCE the palace was utterly destroyed by a violent fire. It could not have been caused by a natural or accidental occurrence, as evidenced by the fact that the complex was never again rebuilt, thus leading to the permanent demise of the entire system.

²³ Brandes 1979; Boehmer 1999.

²⁴ Frangipane 2021.

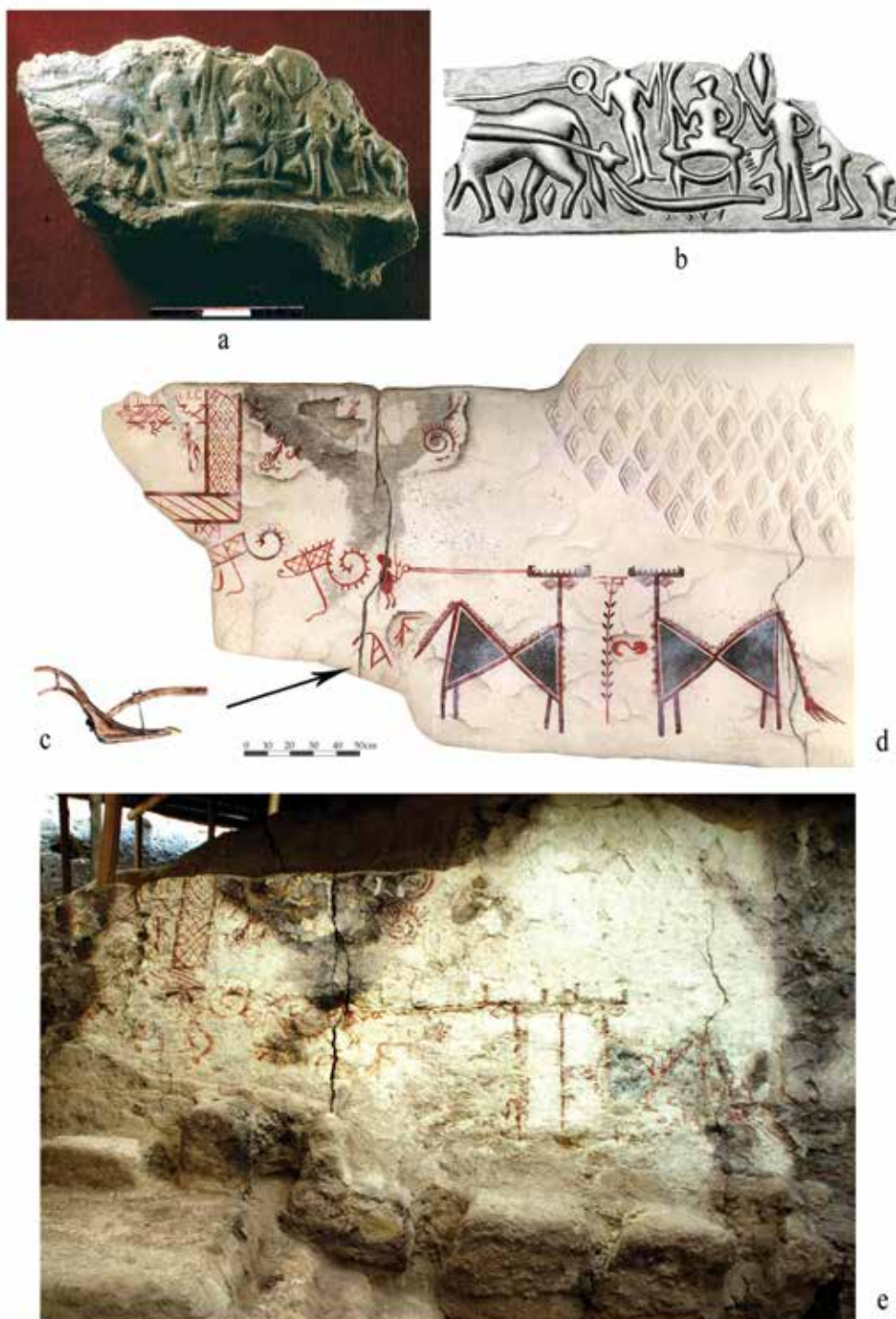
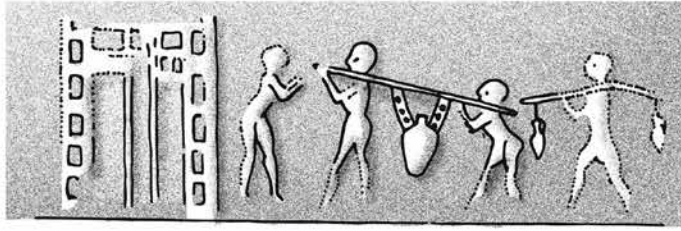
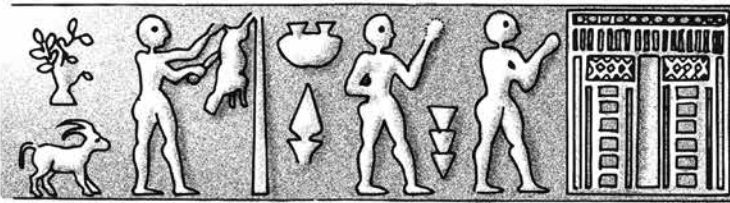


Figure 14.13. Arslantepe, Period VIA palace: *a–b*, seal impression and design depicting a high-rank personage on a threshing sledge; *c*, traditional wooden plow; *d–e*, drawing and photo of wall painting in the corridor leading to the courtyard and the Audience Building.

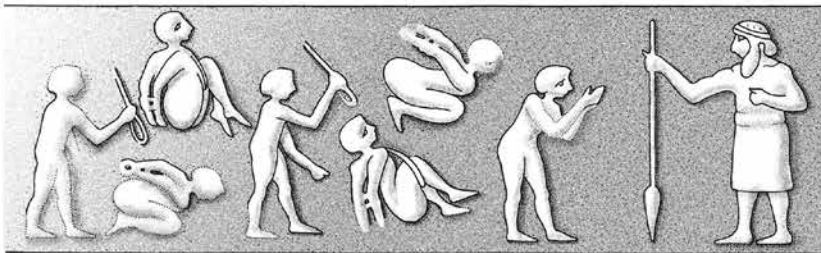
URUK-WARKA



a



b



c

ARSLANTEPE



d



e



f



g

Figure 14.14. Seal designs reconstructed from seal impressions: *a–c*, seal designs from Uruk-Warka, Late Uruk period (redrawn by A. Siracusano from Amiet 1961 and Brandes 1979); *d–g*, seal designs from Arslantepe Period VIA (Frangipane et al. 2007).

APPENDIX: MICROARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA FROM BUILDING 37 AND COURTYARD A1414

To understand better the nature of Building 37, as well as the use of space in this complex and in the nearby courtyard A1414, a microarchaeological investigation was carried out on their surfaces and some of their fixtures. Specifically, a total of eighteen sediment blocks were taken for micromorphological analyses²⁵ from three areas—A1358, A1397, and A1414 (fig. 14.15), while sixty-four bulk samples were collected for chemical spot tests²⁶ from room A1358 only.

According to the micromorphological analysis, both rooms A1358 and A1397 present generally well-maintained and compact surfaces, characterized by the occurrence of many superimposed fine laminations (fig. 14.16a–b). Rather than resulting from proper replastering episodes, these layers were obtained by smoothing and burnishing the floors to reduce their porosity and increase their hardness.²⁷ This effect could be reached by rubbing the surfaces with a certain degree of pressure and possibly by sprinkling some water on them to make them more pliable.²⁸

The care spent on the maintenance of the floors is accompanied by their remarkable cleanness and general scarcity of everyday debris. While a few more remains can be identified in room A1397 (fig. 14.16e–f)—possibly because of its proximity to courtyard A1414 and a higher input of “dirt” from the outside via the soles of the feet of people who had access to the sacred spaces—anthropogenic inclusions in room A1358 are mainly represented by finely trimmed charcoals, most probably originating from the primary hearth.

The result obtained from the sample taken on the fireplace is particularly interesting (fig. 14.16, sample 55/16), since it shows not only the same careful and constant maintenance of the floors—with several superimposed coatings—but also the same scarcity of activity remains. Nonetheless, indications of an intense use of this combustion feature are testified by the frequent occurrence, in clean concentrations, of ashes between the thin plastering layers (fig. 14.16c). The absence of phytoliths or spherulites, together with the often-distinguishable rhombohedral shape of the ash calcite crystals, suggests that the preferred fuel used in this combustion feature was wood.²⁹

25 Micromorphology involves the study of sediment profiles—previously ground to the standard petrographic thickness of 30 μm —under optical polarizing microscopes through transmitted plane-polarized light (PPL) and cross-polarized light (XPL). The aim of these analyses is to reconstruct the microstratigraphy of deposits, as well as to identify the nature of their constituents, their spatial arrangement, and the postdepositional changes they underwent (Courty, Goldberg, and Macphail 1989; Goldberg and Macphail 2006; Karkanas and Goldberg 2018).

26 Spot tests are quick, semiquantitative analyses aimed at identifying the presence and distribution of different chemical compounds—such as phosphates, carbohydrates, carbonates, and proteins, together with the pH values (Barba 2007). Small quantities of loose sediment were taken from the floor at regular intervals of 50 cm and then processed at the Laboratorio de Prospección arqueológica of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México by Dr. Luis Barba Pingarrón and Dr. Agustín Ortiz Butrón.

27 Amadio 2018, 443.

28 Minke 2012, 96.

29 Canti 2003; Gur-Arieh et al. 2014.

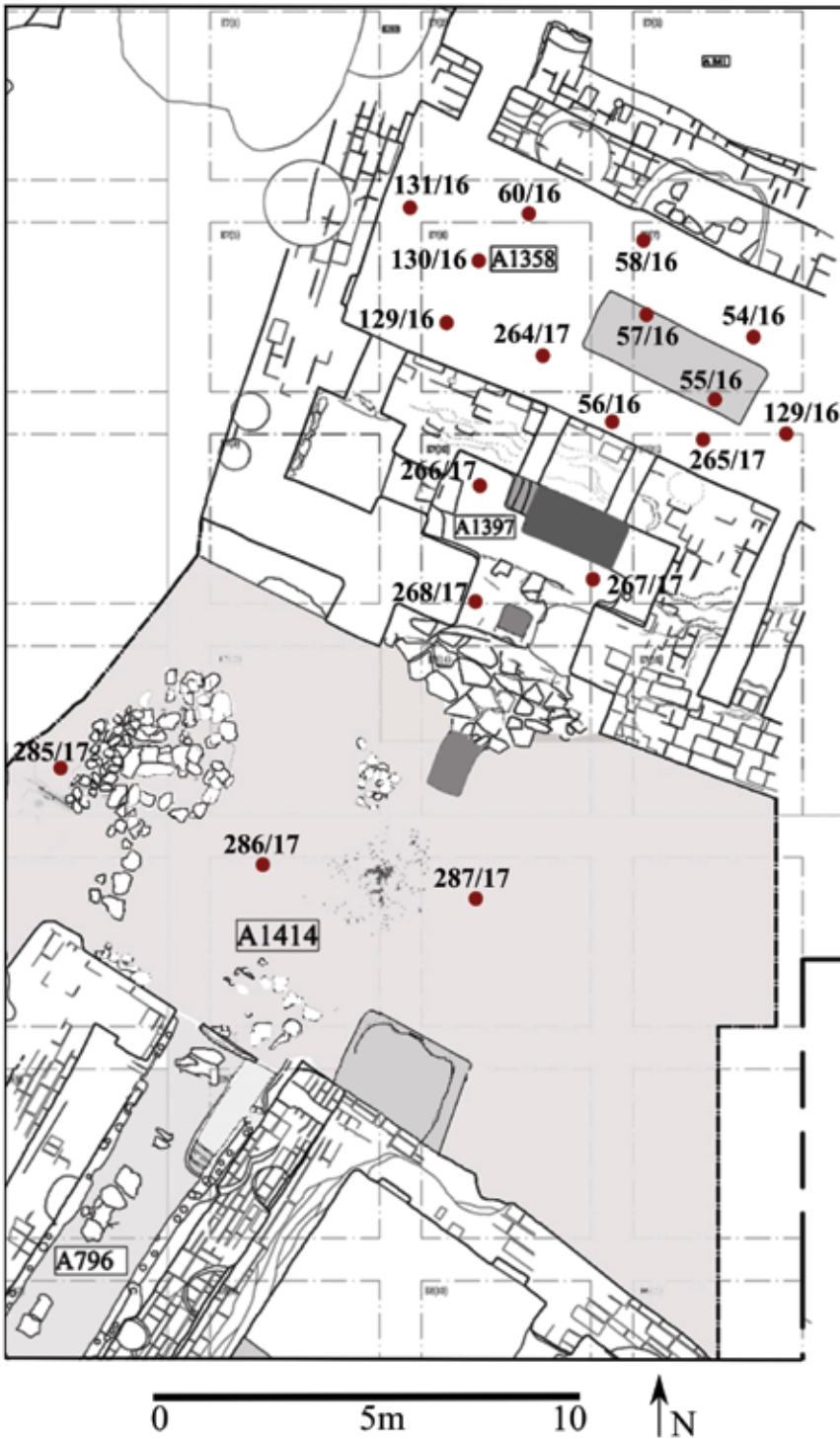


Figure 14.15. Location and sample number of the sediment blocks collected for micromorphological analyses in rooms A1358 and A1397 and courtyard A1414. Modified from MAIAO Archive.

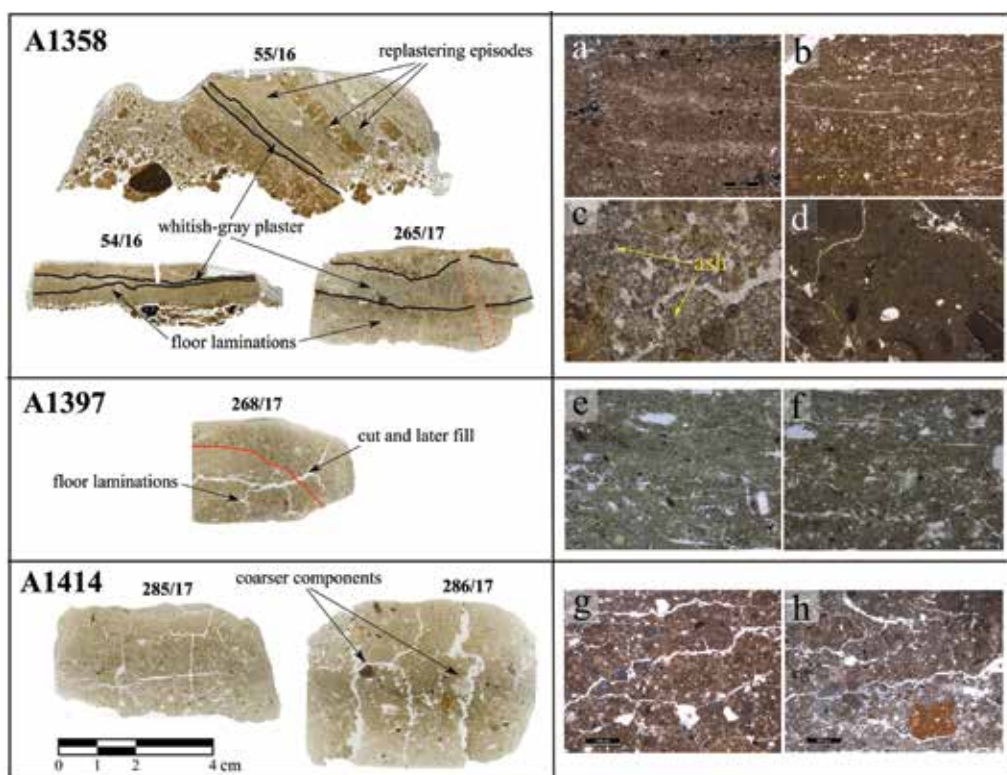


Figure 14.16. Selection of micromorphological thin sections from the three investigated contexts with photomicrographs of representative features: *a*, very dense laminations with diffuse boundaries and almost no activity debris, from sample 54/16 (XPL); *b*, very dense laminations with diffuse boundaries and almost no activity debris from sample 265/17 (PPL); *c*, detail of ashes occurring in clean accumulations between the plastering layers of fireplace 55/16, with the rhombohedral shape of the crystals recognizable, as indicated by the arrows (PPL); *d*, detail of the whitish-gray, fine calcareous plaster covering the surface of samples 54/16, 55/16, and 265/17, as indicated by the arrows in the image of the scanned thin sections (PPL); *e–f*, floor laminations from sample 268/17, showing a few more aggregates trapped between the maintenance episodes as compared with room A1358 (PPL); *g–h*, homogeneous and coarser groundmass—as indicated also by the arrows in the image of the scanned thin sections—characterized by a well-developed fissural porosity, with subhorizontal orientation of voids (PPL).

Although the lack of occupational debris could be in part related to the use of rugs/mats above the surfaces,³⁰ the chemical spot tests of room A1358 present a picture consistent with the micromorphological observations (fig. 14.17). Indeed, the different organic signatures—carbohydrates, phosphates, proteins—that are normally considered features of food-preparation or food-consumption areas³¹ show a concentration toward the western side of the room, away from the platform and the fireplace and in connection with

³⁰ The rugs'/mats' possible existence was occasionally inferred from organic stainings in the groundmass of floors and from the presence of horizontally oriented phytoliths, though the latter are rather isolated and do not occur in thickly layered lenses (Matthews 1995, 60–61).

³¹ Pecci, Barba, and Ortiz 2017.

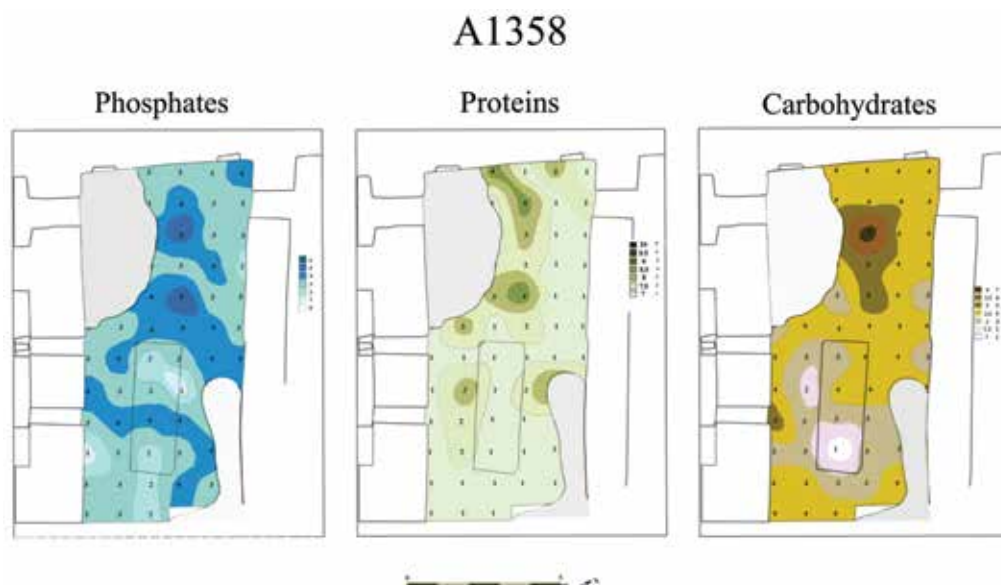


Figure 14.17. Distribution map of chemical spot tests in room A1358, with interpolated values of phosphates, proteins, and carbohydrates. Map elaboration by Luis Barba Pingarrón and Agustín Ortiz Butrón.

a burned accumulation identified *in situ*, but they are marginal in the fireplace area.³² In conclusion, if the processing and consumption of food took place in this room, it did not do so in relation to the central platform or the fireplace, whose repeated and clean fires must have served other purposes.

A further aspect that should be mentioned about room A1358 is the occurrence of a different type of plaster—a whitish-gray, very fine micritic material—covering both sides of the platform and the fireplace (fig. 14.16d). This plaster was found also in other ceremonial buildings at the site, either on their entire surface or selectively covering specific fixtures—such as thresholds, altars, and their immediate surroundings—and it possibly highlighted the liminal/symbolic value with which these elements and spaces were imbued.³³ Thus the presence of this finishing layer, together with the frequent plastering episodes and the layers of clean ash, seems to reinforce the exceptional nature of this installation.

As for courtyard A1414, samples from the surface of this open space are very similar to one another and reveal no significant spatial variations. Their relatively uniform ground-mass may be connected to the fact that sediments of courtyards experience more intense reworking and homogenization through trampling.³⁴ Further indications of trampling can be recognized in the frequent, well-developed, thin horizontal and parallel cracks across the surface³⁵—as well as in the occurrence of coarser inclusions inside these cracks—or next

³² Given the presence of organic matter mixed in the floor preparation, the scattered phosphate trails seen on part of the platform rather represent “background noise.”

³³ Cereda 2020.

³⁴ Matthews 1995.

³⁵ Karkanas and Goldberg 2018, 147.

to vertical desiccation cracks (fig. 14.16g–h). Altogether, these elements suggest higher foot traffic in this space compared to the roofed contexts described earlier. Courtyards are considered generally dirtier than house interiors,³⁶ but in this case, though anthropogenic debris was more abundant here than in the floors of Building 37, remains do not appear in concentrations that point toward the performance of specific activities—for example, animal penning, food processing and preparation, or craft activities. This departure from the norm may be explained by the nondomestic/public nature of the whole complex and therefore the different function of this area, which was probably intended for public gatherings rather than the kinds of everyday activities carried out in “regular” open areas.³⁷

ABBREVIATIONS

LC	Late Chalcolithic
PPL	plane-polarized light
XPL	cross-polarized light

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³⁶ Karkanás and Goldberg 2018, 210.

³⁷ Frangipane 2018, 36–37.

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PART IV
RESPONSE

15

Political Performance: A Theory Response

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POLITICAL “PERFORMANCE”: POTENTIAL AND PERIL

By framing politics as performative and performance as political, this volume has the advantage of beginning beyond the usual no-man’s-land where the existence of a politics in the ancient Near East must be argued for in the first place. We can skip the bombed-out terrain where we usually have to dispute fantasies about Oriental despotism, religious thrall, or other ideas about these societies as pre- or apolitical. Such fantasies only enable the intellectual laziness of assuming that the institutions and actors we see in our evidence operated in some uniquely frictionless world such that we can arrange them like little figures in a tableau to “explain” how power and politics worked—and that all that needs to be explained is what is documented.

But if we begin by understanding our evidence to speak for a multilogue between the rulers, the ruled, and those who mediate, we have a whole new ball game. Performance necessarily implies audience, authorship implies reception, and agents imply subjects—an interplay that is not merely illustrative but *generative* of political authority. What we can really study, then, are not only historically particular instances of authorities and subjects but also discourses of authorization and subjectivity. This line of analysis responds both to a social-history approach to read history-from-below, drawing a much wider circumference for the political arena than just a ruling class and its elites, as well as to a postmodern imperative to “read” political displays as contingent truth claims that aim to bring political relations into being rather than as simply true-or-false propositions.

But “performance” as a topic also carries unique theoretical perils, since disenchanted modernity has semantically booby-trapped the word with the buried potentiality of “falsehood.” A political performance is something we distinguish from the real—a simulacrum—something imitative and empty. The same overtone of falsity pertains for almost all the words we use to describe how political life is enacted, that is, when we call it “theater” (as Frangipane calls Arslantepe right away), a “drama,” a “show,” an “act,” “staging,” “narrative,” “spectacle,” “appearance,” and so forth. The deeply ambivalent coding of performance as simultaneously descriptive of practice and objectively false means that we miss all the senses in which performance—and, indeed, only performance—produces *all* political relations and communities, including those of antiquity. A presumption of falsity is all the

more problematic given that our own experience of modern political performance is such a highly mediated and passive one. Primarily because up-to-the-minute news keeps us more quickly and directly engaged with facts and events than ever before, this presumption is false even though we may be convinced that the democratic societies we inhabit are inherently participatory. This paradox produces a deep cognitive dissonance: we imagine the nature of politics to be something substantially *other* than the performances we see and the modern, lived, civil-society experience as profoundly more engaged than that of impoverished antiquity; yet much of what we see of politics is perceived to be fake. On these grounds, we moderns are poorly positioned to appreciate and evaluate the ancient performance of politics as impactful, immediate, personal, and real—enacted by and before participants *in vivo* and *in loco*. We ought to proceed, therefore, with some humility about our ability to analyze and understand this ancient world.

But analyze is what I have been asked to do: to reflect on the essays presented in this volume and to throw some analytic light on them as a whole. I address four theoretical issues the papers excite, namely, the capacity of performances to distribute and ground political authority and subjectivity spatially; leverage political authority through the ambiguation and sublimation of other authoritative domains (e.g., religion, class, scholarship, community); create and police relations of power through didacticism, role-play, and shared experience; and produce and maintain differences in status and access to power.

These issues are not always the main or exclusive interests of the essays as they are conceived and voiced, either individually or as a group, nor are the themes evenly distributed; but they are issues that assert themselves throughout. And it seems more profitable to assess them through this kind of theoretical lens than to thematize the disparate and distinct ritual, archaeological, and historical evidence from which the essays argue. As a “reaction” response, this essay is written from an unavoidably individual perspective, and I expect others will make different connections.

TO MARCH AND TO STAND: PERFORMATIVE SPACE

I hardly understood how felicitous the title of this conference was when I agreed to participate, because the words “pomp” and “circumstance” turn out to answer to the paramount theoretical concern the essays show for the spatial dimension of political performance. The former term derives from the Greek πομπή (*pompê*), “procession,” and the latter from the Latin *circumstare*, “to encircle” (literally *circum* “around” + *stō*, “to stop, to stand”¹)—thus together roughly “marching and standing.” The first connotes translative movement across space, the bringing of political messaging from one place to another, and the latter, the boundary-making that defines authoritative space. If “going” and “not going” is

1 The meanings of “procession” for “pomp” and “encirclement” for “circumstance” are archaic meanings in English. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com>, accessed August 2019) gives meanings for “pomp” as a procession (meaning 2a–b) for the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, excepting a few early twentieth-century uses that were deliberately archaizing (e.g., by J. R. R. Tolkien). The senses in which “circumstance” connotes that which ceremonially “stands in surround” are similarly restricted to pre-twentieth-century uses (meanings 1a, 2a, and 7a); its necessary and constitutive meaning for ceremonial performance stands in stark contrast to the opposite, present-day sense of a “circumstance” as an accidental or nonessential detail.

something of a truistic merism for performances and rituals—descriptive of all and exclusive of none—it is nevertheless illustrative of their spatial mechanics: they transform the ground across which they move and demarcate the loci where power abides. Their movement was thus not merely the covering of this or that ground, or the drawing of any specific circle; performance produced belief in an inseparable holism of space and authority. This holism was the consonance of political validity and ground—the essential territorial sovereignty that early states had to work ceaselessly to produce because it was hardly an obvious or given condition.²

Two separate but related arguments should be given prominence. First, there is the distinction between “spectacles” and “rituals” made by Feinman and Nicholas as performances having substantially different purposes: “spectacles” enact nonnegotiated legitimation of authority; “rituals” allow for more mediative processes and collective expression. Second, McMahan draws a contrast between the display emphasis of movable spectacles with stationary audiences—where authority presents itself and subjects are relatively passive—and the more participatory nature of stationary performances in spaces designed to hold rather than control.³ Though the authors do not necessarily argue to the same point, these observations show that it is possible to “read” and distinguish performances for very different kinds of political cultures and intentions depending on the type of space, forms of movement, and roles of participation. Thus, in essays leading us from Ur to Teotihuacan to Rome to Crete, we find performance credited as “a reminder of hierarchy and exclusion” (McMahan); variably keyed to “the degree of governance collectivity” (Feinman and Nicholas); a “means of claiming urban space” and “a new sense of imperial unity with . . . divine protection” (Andrews); and “asserting similarity and sharedness at formative regional scales” (Anderson). In short, structured attention to the formal aspects of performances is crucial to analysis, because performances, like the political cultures in which they take place, *are not all the same*.⁴

Two other essays then follow on this point: Osborne’s, which considers the paradox of an unobservable but indubitable political experience in nonelite contexts (what we might call the “Osborne Paradox”), and Frangipane’s, which proposes two radically different political cultures in quick succession (an astonishing contrast even if she is only half right). It is thus both the inescapable fact of politics as a dimension of social life and the unavoidable differences politics entail and reproduce (since it exists precisely to mediate difference) that make the topic so worthwhile.

Most of the essays here deal with spatial concerns in one way or another, if at three different scales: whole polities, local landscapes, and specific spaces.⁵ Two essays deal with the larger spaces of whole state or even imperial territories, between centers and subject

2 On this concept of “consonance” as “an identity between authority and territory,” see Richardson 2021, 45–47.

3 Note also Osborne’s attention to the social effects of the symmetry/asymmetry and distributedness/nondistributedness of built spaces (Osborne, this volume).

4 As Feinman and Nicholas (this volume) put it, these outcomes are of “a specific array of structural conditions and socioeconomic mechanisms.”

5 The essays and sources discussing imperial settings engage issues of space to some lesser degree: the Hittite and Egyptian rituals that are the topics for Mouton, Gilan, and Goebis are more concerned with temporality and personnel than with the places in which performances are to be set.

communities, where central authority was disseminated by homologous rituals, symbols, and messages—what we might call *distributive* performance. The geographic representation of territories/peripheries by centers is already well recognized in, for example, the “gazetteer” of cities in the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi, the Egyptian *heb-sed* festival, and Neo-Assyrian display campaigns and boundary stelae.⁶ But here we are speaking of something else: the reproduction of the center *in* the periphery.

The essays of Ristvet and Kearns take this larger framework into consideration, while also putting state ideology into dialogue with local identity in its performance at (in Kearns’s words) “locally salient scales.” This tension, ambivalence, and blending of core/periphery identities, sometimes at cross-purposes, will be familiar to scholars of colonialism or borderlands studies, where the dialogues produced by states, mediating elites, and subjects could produce dissonant and confusing signals.⁷

What is most striking from Kearns’s discussion is that not only does politics happen “even” in very small and far-away places but also that it *must* happen there: it is precisely to less-controlled spaces that it is so essential for centers to communicate power. Places we may think of as “border(land)s” most of all required the construction and reinforcement of political norms and community, both for their own conceptual autonomy and to become the governable places knowable to centers. Notably, Kearns asserts that the corollary must also be true: because of the preponderance of heterodox peripheries such as Kalavassos *Skourka*, there could be no entirely hegemonic central-state messaging in premodern times.

Much the same disparities and ambiguities are noted by Ristvet, though she deals with a more complete historical record. Comparing the kinds of performances conducted in the imperial Assyrian center with those of its peripheries,⁸ she can on the one hand contrast their differing degrees of and grounds for political subscription—buy-in, understanding, and belief—yet on the other hand point to examples of variance with state forms in those places—yet on the third hand posit that “simply participating in the [state] cult *made* citizens complicit.” That is, materiality and performativity need not be indexes of political subscription when they are facts of engagement and daily life; state peripheries are places where hegemony *and* autonomy may (must?) coexist.⁹

We are again reminded of how performance in space fuses political authority with the terrain over which it proposes operable sovereignty. But we are also shown how a decentered landscape is an equally unavoidable and permanent fact of the state fabric, since ritual sites of performance grounded and defined even the smallest communities. At this level, it matters less what, exactly, was being done at the “shrine of the slag” and more *that* it was being done—just as a Veterans’ Day parade in the smallest town takes on a significance for local identity outsized to its population because it ties it all the way up to

6 See also Corti 2018.

7 Compare with Porter (this volume), who writes of a more local-scale case that the White Monument is “a powerful source of attraction—for the powerless because it is a place they can see, and be, without power’s control; for the elite because it is a symbol that echoes the center, asserting likeness, and thereby offering all the center can offer, while yet asserting its innate superiority.”

8 Here one can compare with Gilan’s discussion of Hittite rituals to be carried out in Kizzuwatna and Kummanni and at the Māla River, where it was crucial for the king to appear in person.

9 The question is closely related to the concept of “active nonparticipation” examined by Osborne.

the national political category. To pay attention to the perpetual animation of performative politics distributed across the whole landscape, and not only at the center, complicates in very welcome ways the policentric model of de Polignac: in Kearns's words, to "challenge assumptions about sacred spaces outside the city."

Other essays engage with "dialogic monuments" (Porter's term) in medium-scale landscapes, where the spatial positioning of symbols of conflict, comparison, and consensus come into play across large and urban (but withal and importantly, visible) landscapes: they are *regulative* political spaces. The essays of Morgan, Andrews, Porter, Smith, Mouton, and Feinman and Nicholas all engage this cross-site scope of space. The processions discussed by Andrews recoded nodes of the old Roman imperial city with new religious-historical meaning; Smith follows her subjects through complex cityscapes, where individual knowledge of space allows agents to refashion their own cosmopolitan identities; Mouton notes the "festival of haste" in which the king and military personnel enter Hattuşa from without. Feinman and Nicholas make a comparison between the role of performance in different Mesoamerican polities. The rituals at the "site core" of Teotihuacan were "to be followed, copied, and synchronized at dispersed locales across the site"; by contrast, ritual spaces within the less integrated layouts of Classic Maya cities were "limited and restricted," where performance was unlikely to be reproduced elsewhere unless it was organized from the top down.

The studies of Porter and Morgan both find not only competing monuments within the landscapes they examine at Tell Banat and Gordion (respectively) but also significant variances in the kinds of political communications they seem to invoke—different constituencies or kinds of community appealing to separate bases of social power within the same urban area. At Banat, Porter examines major mortuary monuments that differed in their appeal to historical memory, degree of visibility/access, and emphasis on corporate versus individual focus as a community value. The specific nature of the contrasts between these monuments is unclear: were these multiple communities within cities in competition, conflict, or simply different? Elites and a general population? Two factions of elites? Two lineage groups? The answer is probably lost forever, but (as Porter puts it) "when two such claims are monumentalized . . . it is inherently conflictual." Yet the fact of distinction alone, and the reenactment of funerary performance at these sites over many generations in a "descent-scape," show the intentionality of that dialogue; even its gnomic quality allows us to focus on the principle that political differences, in the abstract and materialized in their *lieux de discorde*, were and remain unavoidable consequences of humans-living-in-cities. Morgan carries this notion further to analyze the array of megarons and other monuments at Gordion, where the decades-long search for the central palace from which "power-with-a-face" would project authority has been complicated by the multiplicity of gathering and work spaces (cf. Kearns's "small-scale ritual activities" as "placemaking practices"). Rather than assuming the presence of an autocratic ruler with an as-yet-unlocated palace, what seems possible is that the city's spaces were affordances for a diverse constituency of actors, all of whom played a role in exercising political power, both constrained and enabled by the places that communicated social boundaries.

Still other essays pay attention to specific, circumscribed ritual spaces defined by performance, partly through operations of inclusion and exclusion (whatever the size of the audience), and *constitutive* of authoritative space: the studies of Anderson, McMahon, and

Frangipane. Anderson's essay deals with what she calls "sociospatial" contexts: the discursive generation of social space through the "active relations" of objects and users in "their character and realization over time," in tombs and other family and community spaces. In this, she seeks to pry open the kinds of private social worlds that Osborne intuits.

The latter two essays deal with performances and processions that might include hundreds or even thousands of people—where the defined space was not necessarily intimate or hidden but a singular place where admission and participation were controlled (which situation points directly to the fourth theme I deal with below: differences in access to status and power). But for Frangipane, it is more the degree of participation than the scale of the performance that is important for understanding the change from Arslantepe Period VII to Period VIA: not so much the shift from a temple to a "secular" authority and the concomitant changes in the central public spaces, but the reconfigurations of access, separation, and visibility that created a less inclusive space "in which people were welcomed but kept at a distance and excluded from any real participation in the performances of the new political reality." McMahon pays the most direct attention of all to space by quantifying audibility, audience capacity, viewsheds, and the staged approach to performative space at Ur. Her conclusion is a bit startling, but persuasive: despite what we might assume of the monumental ziggurat of the Nanna temple at Ur and its equally monumental surrounding courtyard spaces, it is unlikely that the space was meant to be filled to capacity or allow every audience member direct access. The visibility of the ziggurat was limited within the city until one actually entered the courtyard space, and limits of audibility suggest that audiences were kept substantially smaller than full capacity and/or ranked into partially obstructed positions. The vertical and horizontal dwarfing of relatively small crowds, in tandem with the hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion that determined their makeup, created the political tension used by many an exclusive club: gratitude for inclusion mixed with anxiety about position. Coupled with this result is an aspect overtly considered only by Osborne, namely, the capacity that smaller-scale spaces lend to comparison and surveillance; hence the importance of the private house's hermeticism.¹⁰

Though scalarity affects the kinds of politics entailed at these different places, with a wide range of possible messages and functions, the dialogic dimension of performative spaces is irreducible. Distributed, grounded, or bounded, the tombs, temples, courtyards, and cityscapes where performances were set materially conditioned the political conversations.

THE AMBIGUATION OF AUTHORITATIVE DOMAINS

A second core problem taken on by many of these essays is that the performances they describe implicate two ideational domains simultaneously. Often, the domain being blurred into political performance is that of religion, but we also see historical memory, community identity, or even concepts of administrative ideology entering the picture. Take, for instance, Mouton's discussion of the "bread allotments" given to performers within a cultic

¹⁰ Note also Osborne's attention to the surveillant position of upper towns over lower towns and then palaces over upper towns; this aspect extends even to the superficially beneficent passage in the Karatepe inscription, which de facto admits that the authorities have knowledge over where men and women walk.

context (excerpt 14). Bread is broken by the king and distributed to officials and officers. The ritual uses concepts from the administrative and commensal domains to further an essentially political end, such that Mouton concludes: “Sharing bread makes these people equals; it also makes them closer to the Hittite sovereign.”

In these cases, the *domains* of performance are not made clear. But are these acts essentially religious or political? Indeed, it is not entirely clear what a “purely” political performance might be anyway. We could dispose of this question by insisting that this question is a modern one that has no relevance to an ancient world in which such domains were by nature inseparable. But I don’t buy it. The uses of religious and other elements in political performances were deliberate maneuvers and show an awareness of their categorical distinctiveness. When, for instance, the Hittite king is dressed in the clothes of a deity, whereby (as Mouton puts it) “the king and the god become one and the same body,” something specific, different, and deliberate is being done; the ritual requires the recognition that both categories had autonomous and distinct natures. So a better question than asking how to define or explode the classifications altogether is asking how the mixing of domains was thought to work—what it hoped to achieve.

Gilan presents these issues with great clarity. We may think we know what processions, audiences, and spaces do—the theater is built, as it were—but he brings us up closer to the question of what, exactly, spectators were being asked to do by performers. Answering this question is challenging enough when one must fight through both cuneiform and Hittite to grasp the basic description. But we also come face to face with the essentially mysterious content of what is being performed. We are confronted with the perennial question of whether ritual performances were thought effective for the religious and theological premises on which they were based, or more indirectly, for the enactment of the procedures themselves—whether religion was something in which people “believed” or something they “did.”¹¹

Gilan calls our attention to what is contradictory between the religious and the political domains, with their sometimes competing or conflicting goals (what he calls the “Šuppiluliuma conundrum”). I may think too cynically that political authority gains when it ambiguates its power by suggesting a religious basis in unspecific terms. The ambiguation works not only on the thematic level but on an epistemological one as well: whereas politics may have been about “validity” and effectiveness, the method of ritual was all about rules and correctness.¹² Thus, blending religion and politics persuaded not only via misdirection (to put it crudely) but also by suggesting there were justified premises for

11 This question is a common one asked about religions of the ancient Near East, especially in comparison to the confessional “religions of faith” of later antiquity and the medieval period. Yet the literal sense of “religion” was originally a distinctly performative idea in Christian thinking, though it is unclear whether “religion” derives from *relegere* (“to go through again,” in reading, thinking, praying, etc.) or *religare* (“to bind fast [an obligation],” in the sense of vows), both senses describing acts to perform, not thoughts to “believe.” Thus the exclusive distinction we often think we can impose between ancient Near Eastern religions of action and later religions of “belief” is to some extent unwarranted until historical arguments theologially foregrounded and juxtaposed faith versus action.

12 In Roman usage, the effectiveness of a rite (*ritus*) could be proven or determined to be correct; see Richardson 2020a.

how a spectator could believe a performance to be “true”: both because it satisfied *and* because it was “right.”

Such questions are posed in myriad ways by other essays. The visible proximity of the Hittite king to both the gods and martial force was core to the performances Mouton analyzes; Ristvet shows how Assyrian ideology “directed different messages to different populations,” especially in the restriction of military themes to propaganda in the heartland; Andrews writes on “fear of god” as a religious concept being repurposed and “required for political success.” The zoomorphic(?) vessels considered by Anderson have nothing, in her opinion, if not protean abilities to “hover across identities,” across domains of religious, community, and domestic life. As noted above, Kearns disambiguates the functionality of performances and messages by noting how even “shared cultic practices and norms” might “stitch hinterlands to the state” while at the same time “reproducing independent networks of community.” For Anderson and Kearns, apparent similarities of form can be chimerical, or at least multivalent, because different audiences will read performances in different ways.

Three essays stand out for their very direct attention to domain ambiguation. Goebis tackles it through the topic of ritual error, wherein the ruler acts as an arbiter or manager precisely because he is above and outside the authoritative domains invoked (see further discussion below).¹³ Morgan, following Hayward, sees power mechanisms as spheres of action that “constrain and enable action for all actors” rather than as instruments used by exclusive agents. In this sense, authoritative domains of political, religious, and social power exist partly as delimiters but also as semipermeable membranes through which performers could borrow, refashion, and repurpose symbols.

And Frangipane emphasizes the importance of domain ambiguation in performance by pointing to the apparent exception found at Arslantepe Period VIA, where rulers were able “to gain consensus *without* the mediation of sacred or cultic practices and *without* any explicit reference to the religious sphere in their political acts” (emphasis mine). This degree of consent is all the more remarkable given that both “law and military apparatus were probably still embryonic” in archaic times and that a sudden, perhaps shocking,¹⁴ political “distance” was established between elites and subjects—a rare and important moment of hypercoherence, when the transparency of the “purely political” was the crucial message to be communicated within state society. In both cases, what is striking is the need for political authority not merely to draw on different strands of authoritative discourse to consolidate and effect its power but even to suggest that it supervised, regulated, or even created those domains. At this most apical point in the discourse of power, the king shows that if he “ambiguates” or blurs the boundaries of different forms of social power,

13 Goebis’s analysis reminds me of my own conclusion about the jurisdictional role of the Babylonian king as seen from the Code of Hammurabi: “Situated thusly, the king’s legal powers need not have been paramount (jurisdictionally, hierarchically, or on appeal), because they were not mere rule-making. The king was categorically different: he was the entire domain generating the discourse of law in the first place, permitting it to exist. He was responsible for the order that made rule-making possible, a position that was, as it was with his claims to universal power and divine favor, unassailable partly because it was unfalsifiable” (Richardson 2017, 40).

14 On this kind of shocking interruption of authoritative domains in archaic states (via, e.g., the mass inhumations at Ur and retainer sacrifice in First Dynasty Egypt), see especially Smith 2003.

it is because—above and beyond his various rhetorical and tactical maneuvers—he makes the metaclaim that he is the generative source of them all. This move is most successful when, as Mouton quotes from Catherine Bell, “the values and forms of social organization to which the ritual testifies are neither arbitrary nor temporary but follow naturally from the way the world is organized.” This processual chain will continually test our ability to understand what in the social world of the ancients was emically understood as “natural.” But it also leads us to see that ambiguation (or integration) works most powerfully when it achieves the naturalizing effect of discourse.

DIDACTICISM: EMULATION, ROLE-PLAY, AND SHARED EXPERIENCE

Here I begin by focusing on Andrews’s discussion of audience as a way to vivify how performative role-play and shared experience impart didacticism and inclusivity. Andrews insists on both “spectators” and “participants” as the audience for the Marian processions, even sometimes (as with the account of Stephen II) comprising “the entire people.” Here we have another dynamic, namely, that participants must be counted among the recipients of the messages they themselves disseminate. Indeed, distinguishing between spectators and participants can be a rather artificial exercise, since each actively engages in performance as a whole. Were spectators really so passive as the name “audience” suggests? We should better call them, for all their muteness in the sources, “witnesses” rather than “spectators.”

But what are witnesses doing when they witness? We often read (including in these essays) that what performances and displays do is “legitimate” political authority. But if that statement is not already semantically circular,¹⁵ it would be better to say that what witnesses do (conventionally as well as technically) is “validate” rather than “legitimate.” What is the difference? In semantic terms, what is “legitimate” is *lawful*; what has been “validated” is *effective*. Few ancient cultures grounded their political legitimacy in law; rather, performance appealed to the sense of validity (from *valeo*, “to be efficacious”), which can emerge only from serial demonstrations of authority that are *satisfying* as narratives, where subjects subscribe more to the discourse of the story-world than to any coherent system of rule-making and rule-following.¹⁶

That which is “valid” requires demonstration and display. And politics (as we might sense from experience) is a matter of persuasive effectiveness rather than the maintenance of normativity (see below, however, on the discursive power of rules in the operation of “ritual”). Indeed, “to perform” has two separate but related core senses in English: “to present (to an audience)” and “to effect (actions, work, duties).” The semantic nature of both senses stems from an etymology that is difficult to intuit from the English “perform.” The word comes from an Old French root, *fournir*, “to provide, supply,” with *par-*, “thoroughly.” Thus, although “perform” was apparently altered by its near-homonym to *forme* (“form”), the word originally conveys the sense of “providing thoroughness”—not, as we might think,

15 For “authority” is that which has already been recognized; it is perhaps only “power” that might require “legitimation.”

16 In other words, that which is “legitimate” would be grounded (in Weberian terms) in some codified standards, thus proving the fidelity of authority to explicit and transparent laws; see Richardson 2020a.

of “giving shape to.” This sense is more in line with conceptual roots of validity than of rules. Politics is about senses of wholeness and homology, not about correct behavior.

Andrews’s discussion of the Marian processions in Rome focuses on the features that make performativity so effective: plurimediality and seriality, animation of historical memory, and production of embodied experiences (and docile bodies) for witnesses and performers. By these means, staged performances inscribed and reinscribed social relationships through each evocation. There is a habituation to certain political roles, for which performance is role-play. In exposure to or participation in these roles, the assimilation of subjects to authorities is achieved through affective and embodied sympathies that were also shared experiences (praying together, hearing together, witnessing together, etc.). The cognitive-behavioral effects of participation even lived on beyond performances themselves insofar as emulative action carried over into other authority–subject interactions: the payment of taxes, participation in civil life, and the rendering and receipt of services; these acts, too, were kinds of performances.¹⁷ Even when performance is carried out with a complete lack of real belief, as Ristvet argues, the role that is emphasized is complicity *despite* a lack of subscription;¹⁸ thus, even passive complicity is a kind of political subjectivity. Or, in the case considered by Osborne, lack of participation still becomes a kind of engagement, revealing that the dyad of political compliance and noncompliance mooted by state ideologies is in fact a spectrum along which varying degrees of participation must have existed.

So to observe only that performances are didactic and stop there seems inadequate: the instructional intent is clearly written into the DNA of such displays. It is the surface-level intent of many ancient politico-religious displays: royal processions at early Ebla, Amarna, and Hittite Anatolia, the *akitu*-festival at Babylon¹⁹—the list is almost endless. To call these moralizing, celebratory, and hortative performances “theatrical” could only be shorthand to explain that these festivals worked by activating and assimilating social relations, memories, bodies, senses, and narrative satisfaction. Through these channels, even the most passive spectating entails a degree of participation, through which clients, citizens, and dependents validate and reproduce authority’s prerogatives and their own subjectivity via role-play, emulation, awareness of shared experience, and the suggested harmony of performance’s *operanda* and *recitanda*. Behind this seeming paradox of “passive activity” is an imperative of inclusion: performances must invite subjects in and permit them to share and understand certain kinds and degrees of social knowledge with authority; this dimension is “positive,” what we often think about when we think of “audience.”

But if this assertion seems surpassingly obvious, what is also fascinating is that these inclusive elements stand in tension with an equal and opposite “negative” imperative: that performance must simultaneously *exclude* in order to be effective. That is, at the same time that performances bind subject participants to authority, they must also draw boundaries, display hierarchies, and justify the superiority of that authority on the basis of exclusive

17 See Richardson 2018 on political subjectivity; 2020b on taxation as performance.

18 Ristvet (this volume): “It is not necessary for people to believe an ideological statement for it to work as ideology; what *is* necessary is participation.”

19 For Ebla, see Archi 2015; for Amarna, see Accetta 2013; for Anatolia, see Corti 2018; for Babylon, see Lambert 1997.

criteria, whether by virtue of privileged knowledge, divine mandate, personal heroism, and/or more (on all of which, see the following section).

Enacting both sets of messages at once can be a tricky balancing act. One might look at this challenge in one of two ways. On the one hand, we could take a zero-sum approach and try to evaluate the relative weight of the inclusivity/exclusivity imperatives to tell us about the types of state societies using them, as Feinman and Nicholas, McMahon, Porter, and Frangipane do. From this point of view, we see a wide range of performances on a sliding scale from broadly communal and consensual political relations, with a high degree of sharing and inclusion, all the way to the kind of social remoteness and political secrecy characteristic of imperial cultures. For Feinman and Nicholas, there is the contrast already drawn about “spectacles” and “rituals.” Spectacles involve “high levels of sensorial arousal . . . promoting emotional states that constrict the potential for rational thought”; rituals “stimulate evaluative thought” with “intervisibility, kinesthetic emulation, and public signaling that reaffirm commitment to a group’s collective goals.”²⁰

On the other hand, at no point along the spectrum can any performance achieve pure exclusivity or inclusivity: one need only envision the impossibility of a performance with only performers or only an audience to obtain the absurdity of the idea.²¹ Accepting, then, that both imperatives were always in play, if in different measures, one might think about the functionality of this ambivalence, because a performance becomes a set of messages always winking and suggesting, never fully including or excluding but always hinting that everyone’s positions are endlessly contingent. In this eros of power, performance continually lures the audience in with promises of greater belonging and benefit made more potent by the threat of exclusion. Power must advertise itself as something people want and might possibly get, while simultaneously reminding them that they want it *because* they do not have it—and continually stand in danger of losing what little they do have. We always speak of political power in terms of carrots and sticks; one may prefer to think of the wink and the little smile—and then the brush-off and the cold shoulder.

This ambivalence may be discerned in the discussion of Frangipane, who analyzes the change from a relatively “welcoming and inclusive ceremonial place” at Arslantepe to a place where people were “welcomed but kept at a distance and excluded from any real participation”; they were engaged, but with “a sense of detachment, which also expressed subservience.” McMahon, too, works within the framing of collective versus hierarchical signaling, contrasting gathering spaces with those that isolate and intimidate individuals. Her main contribution is to show us that such questions are empirically testable, and she proceeds to prosecute her case: the result is that, while models are helpful, the potential for partial audibility and limited visibility suggest both satisfaction of belonging and vulnerability to exclusion.

To consider the aspect of instruction and didactics: every single one of the essays takes into account, in one way or another, questions of audience, performers, and the degree of their interaction; the evaluation of participation is a key to understanding potentially very

20 If the authors are clear in articulating the poles of the model, however, they also aver that a “volunteerism–coercion dichotomy” is ultimately “too restrictive.”

21 Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood Fourth of July parade, however, comes awfully close to the former situation: the running joke is that there are so many people in it that there’s nobody left to watch it.

different kinds of performances. Gilan's essay is a nice place to start, because the rituals for temple personnel are quite literally called "instructions." One may compare this case with the one discussed by Smith, for whom the kinds of modeling and role-playing involved are about a more diffuse kind of belonging, depending on standards of behavior and "subtle movements of the body" demonstrating knowledge of social space as a performance of self.

The Neo-Assyrian political landscape detailed by Ristvet, meanwhile, is somewhat divided: different performances involved different audiences, with some in the heartland and others in the provinces. Priestly families and high officials were involved in some rituals; city inhabitants could view parts of triumphal parades; other messages were more tightly restricted to audiences of court officials and provincial administrators. Each circle of belonging was limited, but the didactics are fairly clear: the "mocking public" was taught to vilify political disloyalty and celebrate militarism; provincial officers were to emulate a distinctly textual and religious Assyrianism; soldiers were indoctrinated into violence as a virtue. Mouton similarly identifies smaller and larger audience circles, from "peaceful (crowds)" to elite collegia. One intriguing possibility here lies in how chains of authority may also have transmitted senses of inclusion: for each ritual in which a "chief" participated, his soldiers would have learned about his participation—and so forth.

Some essays deal with performances that had relatively little inclusivity. For Porter, the distribution of evidence at Tell Banat seems to indicate belonging in groups, but in contrasting and competing ways, which makes performances more about distinctions *between* those groups. Morgan sees similar possibilities for "diverse constituencies," which "fostered trust and promoted cooperation" at Gordion, and fewer of the radical power asymmetries long assumed for the place. Kearns cannot determine the answers to these questions at the ritual site she studies—"whether private and exclusive to outsiders or more public is difficult to discern without more evidence"—and what is observable has more to do with its local character. The rites studied by Goebis *prima facie* present perhaps the lowest quotient of inclusivity, but she masterfully resituates the relatively depopulated ritual texts by using the *Tale of Sinuhe* to illustrate how knowledge of even the most hermetic procedures could radiate out to larger segments of state society: to pharaoh's advisers, "friends," nobles, priests, family, and even beyond to "towns and villages throughout Egypt."²²

I return repeatedly to think about Osborne's essay, because he turns the question on its head. By focusing on the contingent possibility of private household space—a world "deliberately closed from participating in elite political supervision and control," its door firmly shut to political performance—he inverts the inclusivity/exclusivity paradigm altogether. We now must consider not only a one-way flow of power, in which individuals and groups continually try to gain access to centers of power (whether institutions, lineage groups, cities, etc.), but also where the centers of power are limited in their ability to reach into private spaces to demand fealty or recruit clientele. Set against the political backdrop of the Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex, where "political authority does not seem to have extended far beyond the monumental temple into the lower city," Osborne provides the

²² Goebis in full: "The audience of such accounts, be they the court or the wider literate elite, had to be convinced. As regards the significance, if any, of such inscriptions for the lower echelons of society we can only speculate. One possible scenario is that such texts were read out to illiterate visitors by priestly guides, another that copies were distributed on other media, which were perhaps read in towns and villages throughout Egypt."

ground against which the figure of power dynamics takes place—a ground all too often invisible to us from an evidentiary point of view, and thus too often forgotten. As with Ristvet’s reluctant Soviet citizens, what is visible to us should be modeled against the “fifth voice” always absent from the record: the jokes, the kitchen-table talk, and the grumbling. They, too, are political voices, by definition unperformed because they must be hidden from power.

THE PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF DIFFERENTIAL STATUS AND ACCESS TO POWER

Fourth and finally is the dimension corollary to the above discussion of inclusivity and teaching: one of the things authority must paradoxically “teach” (or at least suggest) is that it knows things that subjects do not (and sometimes cannot) know. Thus, at the same moment that power invites audiences in, it also must show that it holds privileged knowledge which may sometimes be partly seen or heard but may not be held, examined, or shared. As Frangipane succinctly says, “Look but don’t touch.”

Since some of what is important about performance’s capacity can be inferred already from the foregoing discussion,²³ I will keep this section relatively brief, with attention to just a few examples. But I think, for instance, of Gilan’s descriptions of the Hittite king’s indispensable role in many rituals and his unique access to many gods as structurally designed not to inform but to exclude or even intimidate. Andrews’s essay also touches on this point, namely, that *contrition* was the primary purpose of the Marian processions—or, put by Ristvet another way, that creating a sense of viewers’ inferiority and insignificance is itself a kind of political subjectivity. These observations reach out to Gilan’s point, insofar as the creation of subjectivity and sovereignty coincides with, or is even produced by, the subordination or even the intimidation of the individual and/or individualist ethos. Through such operations, the purpose of ambiguated domains becomes clear: subjects could not transparently perceive the basis on which they were subjected, or to whom, even as they themselves were required to be knowable to authority.²⁴ It may sound overly suspicious to think of domain ambiguations as deliberate political maneuvers; for what it is worth, I believe there was little historical consciousness of those moves, because they were held to be “traditions,” but this paucity in no way reduced their effectiveness.

This fourth theme of the essays thus highlights that part of the purpose of performances was to advertise that the actors/performers/ritualists had proprietary knowledge the audience was being told it could not possess, a fact to which it must acquiesce. Therein, the differential access to knowledge through the (rule-based) “correctness” of ritual denoted

23 For example, consider the points of McMahon, Morgan, and Mouton (among others) about performances as instantiations of hierarchy; Frangipane’s opinion that, even under the more inclusive temple-based regime, “few authorized and privileged individuals would have been allowed entry” to the cultic room; issues of restricted access and visibility discussed by Feinman and Nicholas and by Porter; Ristvet’s argument about the Nineveh “library” as a claim of exclusive state knowledge; and so forth.

24 This principle is, of course, that of Bentham’s panopticon—namely, that subjects were made visible to observers who could not be seen by them; this motif, of course, became central to Foucault’s disciplinary state. For this sense of “being known” to power, see Scott 1998, *passim*; for an argument that “power likes ambiguity,” see Richardson 2014, 75–78.

the exclusive mark of validity to rule. What was only partly displayed or heard (see McMahon's essay), what was explicitly secret or hidden, and what a priori distinguished privileged actors (whether religious or political) from mere subjects by dint of professional knowledge all constructed and maintained hierarchies by denial of access.

So where Gilan speaks to the problem of "cultic neglect," Goebis goes to an even stronger boundary, when privileged actors (in this case, pharaohs) put performative *failure* center stage—when audiences were invited to the edge of the ritual process and its open manipulation as a mode of convincing them of its validity and correctness in the hands of a privileged actor. Identifying the king's power to intervene in the ritual arena emphasizes his unique agency; his unique possession of knowledge allows him to identify problems and act, emphasizing his power relative to other ritual actors. Correcting failed rituals proves the king to be the best politician and scholar, an indispensable intervenor and not an empty vessel. As Ute Hüsken has written, episodes of ritual failure and their correction are themselves narratives that "prove the existence of decisive norms for ritual actions," shoring up the entire category of the theater.²⁵ So to prove that performance belongs to the category of the real, we must be shown that it can fail—that something indeed was at stake and contingent on specific interventions. It is impossible to instruct and "prove" the validity of performers or performance without failures to correct; "political correction" takes on the additional didactic sense that positions the actor and audience asymmetrically as teacher and student, respectively. In this sense, the opportunities that ritual texts make to permit displays of distinctive professional expertise are functional: the *ezib* clauses of Neo-Assyrian oracles, the multiple alternative remedies of medical texts, even the cautionary tale about Naram-Sin in the Cuthean Legend, when he casts aside the oracle of the gods to trust in his own judgment. Such narrative and ritual mechanisms bear the subtext of not only this or that particular form of knowledge but also the metatruth that only a few people had it, and subjects did not; a condition of subjectivity is an acceptance of these premises.

CONCLUDING A CONCLUSION

I close with a call for future attention to ancient performance in three specific respects. First, and most briefly, is that the scholarly attention brought to this point should be continued in conversation with colleagues who work in and with bodies of theory related to theater. We will surely gain from them and not have to reinvent every wheel and rethink every thought.

Second, like other forms of ideological messaging, performance is a *persuasive* mechanism. It may create power by any of the verbs we choose to describe it, but it does not *dictate* it: it is dialogic and negotiatory, and it requires assent. Like many other kinds of persuasion, it may entail representational strategies that make their own truth-claims and can themselves become objects of study. These claims may depart from theoretically objective understandings of what is represented in myriad ways—all of which we may dispute, document, and dissect—but which in all cases require influence to be effective; that part is not optional.

²⁵ Hüsken 2007, esp. 337.

Third, and following closely, it is not only the discourses of meaning “behind” performances that may be explored but also the ambiguations performance itself deploys and depends on that may become subjects for our attention. The essays in this volume point to the domain confusion between religion and politics; the limited but significantly partial access of spectators to sight, sound, and venue; the asymmetrical access to knowledge of actors versus audience; the unsettling or uncanny positioning of subjects as spectators, participants, or witnesses vis-à-vis the “fourth wall.” In all such respects, subjectivity is created through an eros rather than a command of power; there is a luring in, then a boundary drawing, then a promise of more—if one participates, assents, bows the knee. As much as performance has the potential to confirm and reconfirm the efficacy of power through the satisfaction of its narrativity, together its seriality, repetition, and affectivity also creates and recreates subjects, continually suspending them between satisfaction and desire.

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