

Libraries of the Dead: Early Bronze Age Charnel Houses and Social Identity at Urban Bab edh-Dhra', Jordan

Meredith S. Chesson

Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, 11 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

E-mail: mschess@fas.harvard.edu

Received February 4, 1998; revision received July 13, 1998; accepted August 6, 1998

Extensive ethnographic and archaeological research demonstrates that primary and secondary mortuary rituals provide people with a richly textured context to reweave the social fabric of the community following the death of one of its members. The nature, timing, and communal participation in secondary mortuary ceremonies, in particular, allow individuals and groups to reiterate the broader moral and social ethos of the community, while reaffirming, renegotiating, or even severing bonds of social, political, and economic life. Drawing on this anthropological foundation, this study explores the powerful changes in household structures and systems of kinship during the first period of urbanization in Syro-Palestine by examining the skeletal, architectural, and artifactual evidence from the cemeteries at the Early Bronze Age settlement of Bab edh-Dhra', Jordan. Dynamic changes in mortuary practices through time at Bab edh-Dhra', specifically the shift from shaft tomb burials to charnel houses, were associated with the transition from a non-sedentary lifestyle to settled life in a fortified town and a subsequent return to non-urban living. This research demonstrates that each of these profound shifts in lifestyle involved fundamental changes in the societal bonds of the community, particularly structures of kinship. © 1999 Academic Press

Death presents society with a formidable problem not only because it is an obvious threat to the continuity of human relations, but because it threatens the basic assumptions of order on which society rests. To maintain the reality of this socially constructed world in the face of death, mankind often relies on religion or other powerful ideological systems that promise what Lifton (1983) calls a sense of "symbolic immortality"—a continuous symbolic relationship between our finite individual lives and what has gone before us and what will come after.

An anthropological analysis of the mortuary complex must incorporate this crucial dimension and relate it to whatever social, political or economic functions a particular mortuary ritual might have. In fact, this interrelationship between the otherworldly and the more mundane concerns is the hallmark of the mortuary ritual and should be the cornerstone of mortuary analysis. (Kan 1989:15–16)

INTRODUCTION

As Kan (1989:15–16) insightfully notes, mortuary rituals embody an extraordinary

combination of the cosmological and spiritual aspects of human societies and world-views with the mundane fundamentals of everyday life. Mortuary rituals, both primary and secondary, provide complex and highly visible arenas in which the living cope with the cosmological issues of mortality and life at the same time as they reweave the texture of everyday life which has been disrupted by death (Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Weiner (1976:85–86) demonstrates that these ceremonies involve a heavy focus on social relationships, and people reassert and renegotiate their individual and group identities in the process of reconstituting the social order of life abruptly damaged by the death of a community member. In this process of repairing the tears in the social fabric of the community, people assert and contest individual and group identities, and a vast ethnographic body of lit-

erature describes the use of emotional expression, material culture, and the built environment in the display and negotiation of social identity at this pivotal point (Feeley-Harnik 1989; Hertz 1960; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997; Weiner 1976). With this recognition, this paper explores the potential for using this rich ethnographic literature in conjunction with archaeological data to investigate the patterns of material culture, skeletal remains, and the built environment to reconstruct social organizational structures of the early urban community of Bab edh-Dhra' in the Early Bronze Age of the Southern Levant (Fig. 1).

Bab edh-Dhra' provides the researcher with an exciting opportunity to study the social, economic, and political organization of urban communities in the Early Bronze Age because of the extensive excavations of the settlement and the cemeteries, the careful chronological phasing of the mortuary remains through pottery typologies and absolute dating (C14), and the bioarchaeological research on the mortuary population (Bentley 1987, 1991; Rast in press; Rast and Schaub 1974, 1978, 1981; Schaub and Rast 1981a, 1981b, 1984, 1989). In a remarkable way, the researchers at Bab edh-Dhra' have convincingly linked the shifts in settlement, to and from urban life, to the changes in mortuary practices at the site (Rast in press; Schaub and Rast 1989). They employ a multiscalar approach to analyzing the data from the site, attempting to integrate the mortuary data with the artifactual and architectural materials excavated from the settlement. The richness of the mortuary data, in particular, provides a fascinating foundation from which to explore questions of social organization, identity, and kinship structures in the urban community of Bab edh-Dhra' specifically and the Early Bronze Age in general. Furthermore, the very richness of the data challenges anthropological archaeologists to incorporate ac-

tively the large body of ethnographic studies of mortuary practices and the construction of social identity with the analysis of the archaeological material culture found in the cemeteries.

This paper represents a dialogue between the ethnographic and archaeological methodologies of mortuary analysis in an attempt to address difficult questions of the prehistoric past and to understand some of the social organizational structures of the first urban communities in the Southern Levant. This discussion incorporates three related topics to explore these issues. First, I briefly review the anthropological research on mortuary practices and social identity and the distinctions between primary and secondary mortuary rituals. With this theoretical foundation, I turn to the mortuary evidence from Bab edh-Dhra' to examine the evidence of social differentiation and social organization at the site. Lastly, I expand the discussion to consider broader structures of kinship within the process of urbanization. Drawing on the ethnographic foundation as a source of potential analogues for understanding how mortuary rituals may reflect important aspects of social organization, I offer a reconstruction of the fabric of social relations of life in the urban town of Bab edh-Dhra'.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MORTUARY PRACTICES

Recently, many ethnographers concerned with studies of death and mortuary rituals are incorporating a heightened awareness of the issues of social memory and the creation and negotiation of identities into their studies (Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Kan 1989; Weiner 1976). As one facet of this trend, researchers have been exploring how people express group and individual identity in mortuary contexts, in particular through expressions of emotion (e.g., grief, sorrow, stoicism, or pride), in material culture (in the objects placed with or worn by the deceased, and

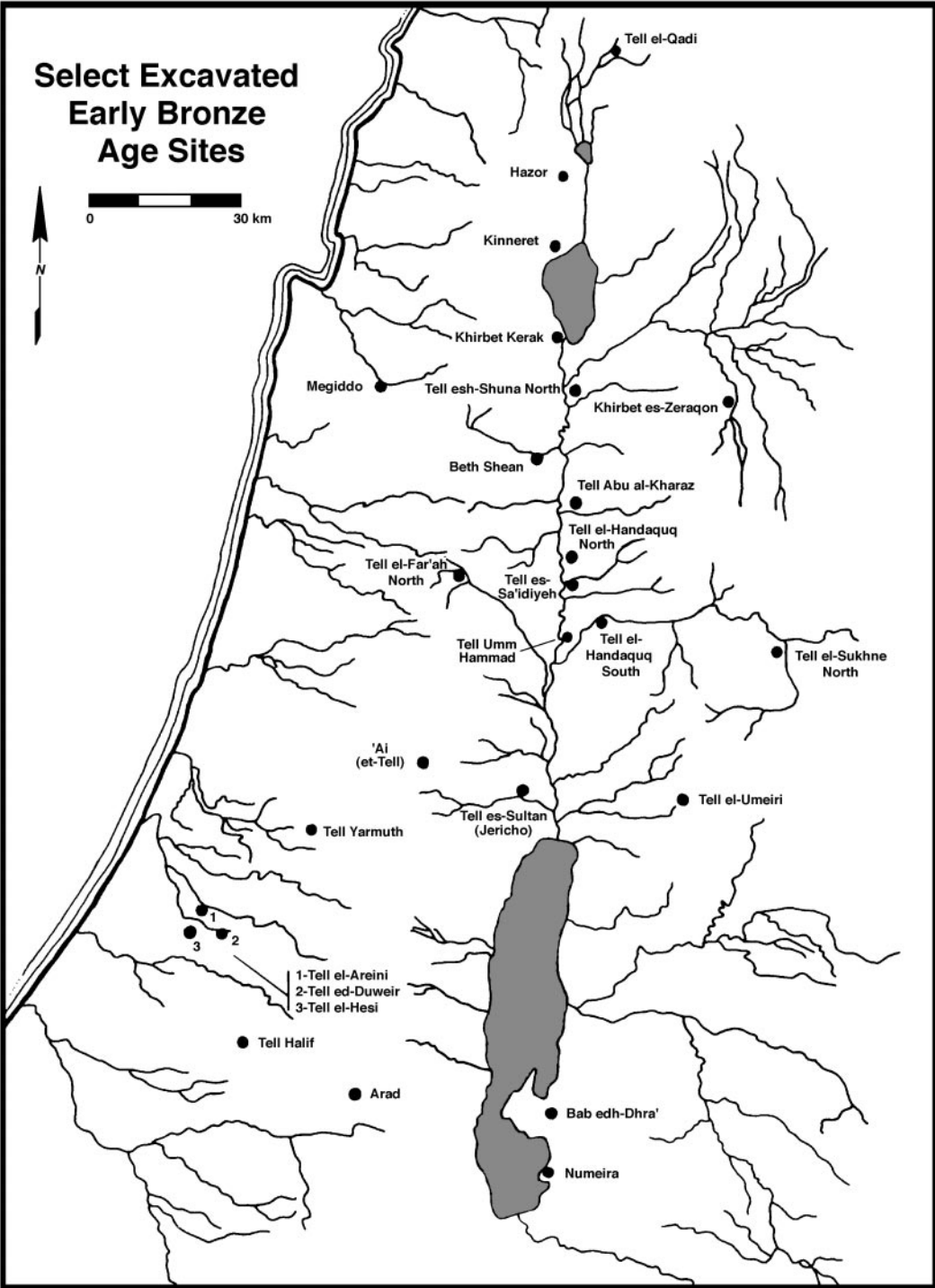


FIG. 1. Map of Early Bronze Age sites in the Southern Levant.

the costume and jewelry worn and carried by the living participants), and with the built environment (e.g., the grave structure or monument). Archaeologists have by necessity always been concerned with especially these last two facets, the material culture and the built environment, for any information they might reflect about expressions of identity (for one example, see McCafferty and McCafferty 1994).

The patterning of these expressions, emotion and identity, at mortuary ceremonies can reflect important structuring frameworks within a particular society. Both group and individual identities are asserted at funerary rites through displays of emotion and through personal adornment of the living and the dead with material culture. Importantly, many ethnographers have successfully demonstrated that expressions of mourning and identity in mortuary contexts are shaped by the structuring forces within a community, such as gender, kinship affiliation, age, and other corporate identity such as a member of a House. Depending on one's status and relation to the deceased, one's mourning and one's relationship to the deceased will be expressed in a "suitable" or "appropriate" manner specific to the culture (Kan 1989:293; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:53).

Displays of emotion and identity can reflect important organizational forces within the culture, illustrating structures of harmony where we see strong social, economic, and political bonds and relationships. Just as importantly, these same patterns can highlight tensions between these social structures, in which ethnographers can identify contradictions in expressions of identity and emotion which may suggest the presence of contested relationships and the continual negotiation of identity, alliances, and oppositions. Annette Weiner's (1976:61) study of the Trobriand Islanders insightfully describes the mortuary ceremonies as "moments of spec-

tacular visual communication. They serve as a vehicle for the financial and political assessment of each participant, and for an instant, through the use of such visual qualities as style, color, and space, they frame the oppositional nature of relationships." Weiner's analysis emphasizes the key elements of performance and social drama inherent in mortuary contexts, as arenas in which people interact in a complex tapestry of performed and contested identities and alliances between individuals and groups, in which relationships and social memories are strengthened, reassessed, and even shattered (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:6).

Anthropological archaeologists have been interested in material culture and identity in mortuary contexts to varying degrees throughout the history of the field. At first, archaeologists were looking toward the "grave furniture" and the skeletal remains to determine the biological sex, age, occupation, and even status of the deceased individual (e.g., see Binford 1972; Saxe 1970). More recently, they have incorporated ethnographers' awareness of the how identities of both the dead and the living participants can be asserted, challenged, and renegotiated all within the context of mortuary ceremonies (e.g., see Cannon 1989; Gillespie 1997; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994; O'Shea 1997; Parker-Pearson 1982). Most importantly, archaeologists have recognized the crucial nature of the living mourners in portraying the identity of the dead, and how it is just as important to consider the actions, identities, and relationships of the mourners and the living (Joyce 1997; Kuijt 1996).

This study incorporates many of the elements of the processual "Binford-Saxe approach" (e.g., the attention to patterning in distributions of goods, materials, grave construction, and furniture) and some aspects of the broadly defined post-processual critique (awareness of the importance of ideologies, power relations, and peoples' ac-

tions, desires, and interactions in shaping and manipulating material culture and the built environment to negotiate identities and relationships between individuals and groups). At the foundation of this study lies the recognition that we must acknowledge the primacy of peoples' actions in the past. Kus (1997:209–210) eloquently encourages archaeologists to recognize this connection between the archaeological record and people as “sensuous human practice,” in which

meaning is embedded in cultural materials, is crafted by experience, both ordinary and extraordinary, and is grafted onto body and soul. This material nature of symbols whose meaning for the individual is produced, at least in part, by a slow and persistent sedimentation of experience, means that such symbols are not easily coopted. Such symbols are based on a powerful mix, if not imbroglia, of abundant and redundant metonyms of daily routine and dramatic metaphors of ritual and personal experiences that carry further entailments for thought and action. Consequently issues of local knowledge are not trivial and the ideological manipulation of symbols and experience ... is neither easy nor straightforward but, once manipulated, can become incredibly persuasive.

In many ways, primary and secondary mortuary rituals embody this complicated interplay between peoples' experience, desires, social structures, and the use of material culture. The vessels and objects placed in mortuary contexts, like the Bab edh-Dhra' shaft tombs and charnel houses, hold multiple significances, evoking memories and powerful meanings of their use in the contexts of origin, household, settlement, and tomb. Ultimately, the patterning that we observe in mortuary contexts may reflect several significances at any one time; as archaeologists, we must appreciate, and even enjoy, this complexity as we attempt to interpret and understand the archaeological past of human communities.

The examination of ethnographic and archaeological studies of mortuary rituals demonstrates a substantial degree of overlap in the types of data both sets of re-

searchers record. Archaeological material correlates of mortuary ceremonies include three basic categories:

- *the processing and/or elaboration of the deceased's body*, such as cremation, use of ochre, removal of parts of body for curation or burial elsewhere, and embalming;
- *the deposition of material culture with the deceased* which may include textiles, costume ornaments, insignia of authority, funerary offerings of food, vessels, and other objects; and
- *a distinction between primary and secondary mortuary rituals and practices*, whose examples include the skull plastering and caching in the Levantine Neolithic (Kuijt 1996) and the use of charnel houses at Early Bronze Age Bab edh-Dhra'.

Ethnographers have illustrated many of these same types of actions in mortuary ceremonies throughout the world, identifying patterns of human behavior that transcend the archaeological past and the ethnographic present. For example, researchers have explored the nature of secondary mortuary rituals in asserting individual and group identities in the sphere of houses, community, and nationality (Feeley-Harnik 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997). In these studies, mourners' identities and affiliations are expressed through the level and nature of their participation in the ceremonies, as well as by choices in personal adornment. Elaboration of the deceased's body and of the funerary monument and the localization of these rituals in a particular circumscribed space are also crucial components of ethnographic studies of mortuary practices, in which researchers have documented the wrapping of bodies and skeletons in particular textiles and the inclusion of insignia or ornaments of authority with the deceased (Feeley-Harnik 1989; Schiller 1997). The focus on material culture and the built environment in archaeological and ethnographic studies emphasizes the fundamental links between these two anthropological approaches in

studying the creation, maintenance, and contesting of individual and group identities during the memorialization of the dead.

Secondary and Primary Mortuary Practices

The shape, scope, and nature of ritual memorializations of the dead obviously are contextually and culturally specific to individual societies. Structurally, however, anthropologists broadly categorize mortuary practices into two groups: primary and secondary (Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Both primary and secondary mortuary rites enact a society's confrontation with the often highly disturbing and disruptive force of death within a community. The very purpose and effectiveness of these rituals rely on their ability to dynamically reconcile the grief over the loss of a loved one, the fear of mortality present in all members of the community, and the social, political, and economic gaps created by the abrupt removal of an individual from the rich tapestry of life in the community. Quoted at the beginning of this paper, Kan's (1989:15–16) recognition of "symbolic immortality" as a key element in mortuary rituals provides the framework from which community members must grapple with the concepts of mortality, social cohesion, and community in the face of death, while simultaneously reaffirming the social bonds of daily life in a community that continues on even after the death of one of its members (Hertz 1960; Schiller 1997; Weiner 1976)

Several researchers have identified many of the key characteristics of and distinctions between primary and secondary mortuary ceremonies (Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:97, 119). Primary mortuary rites involve the immediate set of activities and behaviors following the death of a member of the community. These rituals may include the processing of the body in preparation for primary interment, feasting, or gatherings, and the initial placement of the body or remains in the primary location. All of these primary

rites occur during the days or sometimes weeks immediately following the death. Secondary rituals, on the other hand, involve ceremonies in which the living memorialize the dead as an integral process in repairing the tear in the social fabric of the community (Hertz 1960; Joyce 1997; Kan 1989; Weiner 1976). Secondary ceremonies, which may be conducted months or years after the death of the individual, often require a greater amount of planning than primary rites to ensure cooperation and participation of a large number of people from within and outside of the community. These rites often involve the transport or modification of the remains of the deceased, and can also include the elaboration of the funerary monument or receptacle in which the remains are housed. Due to the scale of a memorial rite involving kin and non-kin participants, often including inhabitants of several surrounding settlements, and to its timing well after the death of the individual, secondary mortuary rites can embody the act of communication, aptly described by Weiner (1976:61) as "moments of spectacular visual communication" in which participants can assess, strengthen, and renegotiate their relationships in the context of reasserting the structures and worldview of the living community.

The communication at mortuary events focuses on reweaving and simultaneously renegotiating the social fabric of the community damaged by death. Numerous ethnographic cases illustrate how primary and secondary ceremonies offer the living a rich arena in which to negotiate identities and alliances, while enhancing and augmenting the social history of the living community in the memorialization of the dead (Feeley-Harnik 1989; Hertz 1960; Kan 1989; Schiller 1997; Weiner 1976) For example, Kan's (1989) exploration of the Tlingit potlatch as a secondary mortuary ritual eloquently illustrates how members of the community used these events as

opportunities to reaffirm or bolster their status and position, as well as to reiterate the worldview and ethos governing the lives and actions of the individual members of the community (Kan 1989:288–9).

One of the defining features of many cultures in which people practice secondary mortuary characteristics, such as the Tlingit and the Trobriand Islanders, is the emphasis on ancestors and the past (Huntington and Metcalf 1991; Kan 1989; and Weiner 1976). Both Weiner and Kan describe the path of an individual's life history, from birth until after the death, with the emphasis on the treatment of death as a complex process involving several stages in which the deceased person slowly transforms from an individual, with desires, social ties, and personal agendas, to a member of the collective ancestral community. To facilitate this final transformation of the dead individual into the ancestral collective, the living must complete the mortuary rituals in a way that is recognized by the community ethos as moral and responsible (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:149). To successfully complete this path fulfills a moral obligation, while simultaneously recognizing and emphasizing how the relationship between the ancestors and the living can embody a crucial element in an individual's or group's identity and status in the living community. The ancestors themselves hold power, and one's relation to these powerful ancestors, and the ability to claim and demonstrate these ties, can be a fundamental element in the assertion of status and authority among the living community (Gillespie 1997; Kan 1989; Feeley-Harnik 1989; Kuijt 1997; McKinnon 1991; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997).

Because mortuary rituals require the living to act in a moral fashion, consistent with the societal tenets of both cooperation and competition between individuals and corporate groups, such as Houses, the deceased individual embodies a powerful structuring force in reaffirming the com-

munity's values. The individuals who are responsible for the mortuary rituals, as well as the participants, are encouraged, by the society's emphasis on the veneration of the ancestors, to "be on their best behavior." In this way, people tend to maintain the sanctity and process of mortuary rituals through time, as well as use the opportunity to reinforce the social fabric of social, economic, and political relationships between individuals and groups.

URBANISM AND MORTUARY PRACTICES AT BAB EDH-DHRA'

This theoretical foundation, emphasizing the dynamic and powerful negotiations and social affirmations enacted in primary and secondary mortuary rituals, offers an alternative perspective with which to examine the mortuary practices of Early Bronze Age (EBA) urban Bab edh-Dhra'.¹ Bab edh-Dhra' (Fig. 2) provides a richly textured example of mortuary practices, which can be correlated to the different phases and scales of occupation at the site (Rast in press) (Table 1). Very briefly, the placement of disarticulated individuals into shaft tombs, similar to those found at Jericho (Chesson 1997; Kenyon 1960, 1965; Schaub and Rast 1989), was used in the pre-urban phase (EB IA) at the site, for which the excavators have found no evidence for a permanent settlement (Rast personal communication, 1998). During the period of urbanization (EB IB and early EB II), the inhabitants shifted their ritual focus, using both shaft tombs and small, circular charnel houses, and the

¹ The Early Bronze Age chronology at Bab edh-Dhra' (Bentley 1987; Schaub and Rast 1984:36) is EB IA: c.3150 B.C.–3050 B.C. [period may begin earlier than 3150 B.C. (Schaub and Rast 1984:36)]; EB IB: 3050–2950 B.C.; EB II–III: 2950–2300 B.C.; EB IV: 2300–2150 B.C. For the purpose of this paper, the period of urbanism extends from the transition of the EB IB to EB II through the end of the EB III at Bab edh-Dhra'.

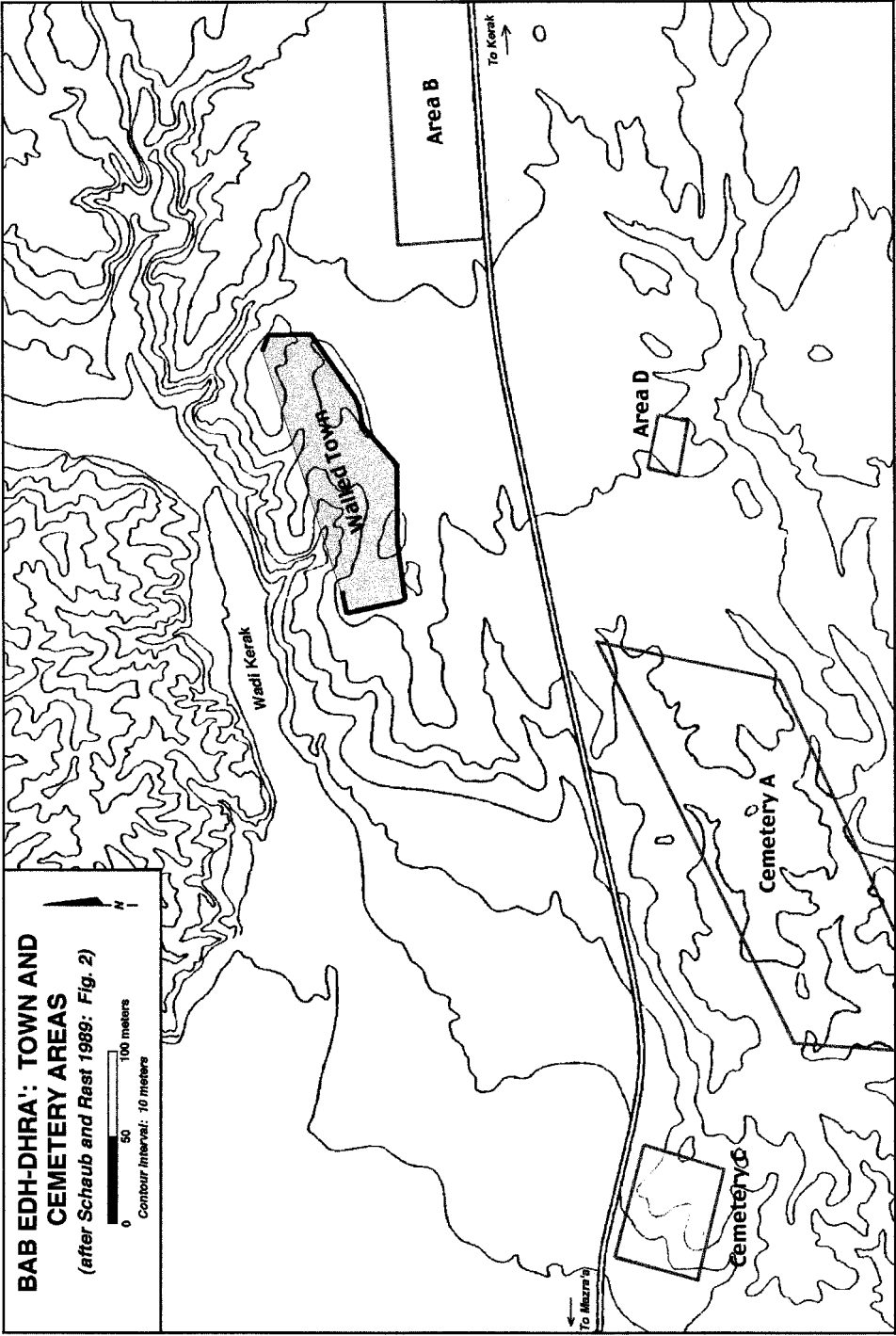


FIG. 2. Plan of settlement and cemeteries at Bab edh-Dhra'. Reprinted, with permission, from Schaub and Rast (1989: Fig. 2).

TABLE 1
General Characteristics of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices at Bab edh-Dhra'

Time period	EB IA	EB IB	Early EB II	EB II–III	EB IV
Nature of occupation at Bab edh-Dhra'	No evidence for sedentary occupation at the site	First evidence for architectural structures and sedentary occupation at the site	Growing sedentary occupation at the site	Walled, urban settlement at the site	Sedentary, non-urban occupation at site after hiatus at end of EB III
Fundamental social unit(s)	Household unit	Household unit	Household unit	Household unit and house/lineage	Household unit
Mortuary structure	Shaft tombs with one or more chambers (Fig. 6).	Shaft tombs with single chambers, shallow pit graves, circular charnel house (G1) (see Fig. 3)	Circular charnel houses of mudbrick with stone-lined doorways (Rast and Schaub 1981: Fig. 18)	Rectilinear charnel houses (see Figs. 4, 5)	Shaft tombs, with stone-lined shafts (exception is D1, simple shaft tomb) (Schaub and Rast 1989: Figs. 277, 280)
Range of MNI	Generally 4–5, and no more than 10 individuals	1–15 individuals	9–15 individuals	41–200 individuals	4–7 individuals
Range of size (area)	1–5 chambers per shaft, chambers range from 1.4 to 3.85 m ²	Single shaft tomb chambers range from 3.6 to 7.0 m ² ; charnel houses range from 3.6 to 33.2 m ²	Charnel houses range from 3.6 to 4.2 m ²	Charnel houses range from 13.4 to 120.9 m ²	Single shaft tomb chambers range from 3.5 to 5.6 m ²
Nature of burial practice	Secondary burials: skull and postcranial elements separated into distinct piles	Primary and secondary burials with articulated individuals, piles of skulls and bones mixed	Primary and secondary burials with articulated individuals, skull piles, bone piles	Secondary burials of cremated remains of individuals; during final stage of use some primary burials found	Secondary and primary burials; some skulls removed in articulated burials
Material culture in tombs	Pottery and stone vessels, costume items (beads, pendants, shells, bracelets), clay human figurines, matting, wooden vessels and objects, bone objects, maceheads, textiles	Pottery vessels, costume items (pins, beads), bone objects, macehead (2 in A88L)	Pottery and stone vessels, costume items (beads, shells, bracelets)	Local and non-local pottery vessels, stone vessels, wood vessels, costume items (beads, pendants, shells, bracelets), metal weapons, maceheads, stone palettes, textiles, wooden objects	Pottery vessels, costume items (beads, pendants)
Mortuary structure numbers	A1, A3, A5(S, E), A6(E, N), A7(S, E), A9, A10, A11, A12, A45, A47, A65 (S, N, W), A66, A67(E, N), A68(N, S, W, SE, E), A69, A70, A71(N, S, W), A72(NE, W, S), A75, A76(E, W), A77, A81(S, N, E), A78(NW, NE, SW), A79(N, S, W), A80(N, S, W, E), A82(E, SE, SW), A83, A85, A86(NE, SW, SE), A88, A89(NW, NE, SE), A100(S, E, W), A101, A102(S, W, E, NE), A103S, A105(NW, NE, SE), A106S, A107(N, S, W, E), A108(N, NW, NE, SW, SE), A109(N, S, E), A110(NW, NE, SE), A111(N, W, E), A112(S, E), A114N, A120S, A121N, G4, C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C9, C10, C11	Shaft tomb (A43, A100N, A88Lower), shallow pit grave (A13), circular charnel houses (A53, G1)	A4, A56, and A73 (anomolous shallow pit grave)	A55, A42, C4, A8, A44, A20, A41, A21, A51, A22	D1 (transition EB III–IV), A52, A54

Source. Bentley (1987), Rast (in press), Rast and Schaub (1978, 1980, 1981), Schaub and Rast (1984, 1989).

disarticulated² and articulated skeletal remains are found within these transitional mortuary contexts (Fig. 3). Within the fully urban phase at the site during EB II–III,³ the community stored the disarticulated remains of individuals in large, rectilinear, mudbrick charnel houses (see Fig. 4), which were located south of the settlement in the cemetery in which the earlier shaft tombs were located. Finally, in the EB IV, post-urban period, the inhabitants of Bab edh-Dhra' buried their dead in

shaft tombs with stone-lined shafts (Schaub and Rast 1989:473–489, Fig. 277). For this discussion, I concentrate primarily on the transitional EB IB/II and the EB II–III urban periods, to attempt to understand how these changes reflect the social organization of the site with the shift to urban life.

Transitional Shaft Tombs and Circular Charnel Houses of the EB IB and Early EB II

² The definition of disarticulation and the positioning of skeletal elements in mortuary structures are key issues in this discussion. Kenyon (1960:85–86) interprets the “occasional little groups of vertebrae in articulation,” a scarcity of long bones, and the presence of scattered, sometimes broken and incomplete skulls as the result of “a practice of the burial of the complete bodies, with a subsequent removal of the greater part of the bones” to ensure space for the new resident(s) of the tomb. Rast (in press) believes that the positioning of skeletal materials in the EB IB tombs at Bab edh-Dhra' is also the result of earlier burials being repositioned after defleshing to make room for new arrivals. There may be an alternative explanation: bodies may have been stored elsewhere for the decomposition of the flesh, and buried in the tombs or charnel houses as partially articulated or disarticulated skeletons during a secondary ceremony. Regardless of whether the body defleshed within the tomb or charnel house and the remains were moved to the side at a later date, or the body was stored elsewhere and the remains were buried in the mortuary structure after decomposition, the living were still storing the remains of the deceased in these structures. The maintenance of these burial structures, particularly the charnel houses, ensured that the remains of the ancestors were accessible to the living inhabitants. In this paper I suggest that these repositories acted as libraries of the ancestors, securing access to knowledge, authority, and power through the caching of ancestral remains, and physically and tangibly representing any claim to authority through the ancestors by the living.

³ While the excavators found no evidence for permanent occupation of the site during the pre-urban phase, the urban settlement at the site included a large (approximately 4 ha) walled town. The results of the excavations of the town site, and the neighboring town site of Numeira, are in the final phases of publication (Rast personal communication, 1998). It will be particularly interesting to compare the results of this study with the architectural and artifactual data from the settlement sites.

The transition to urban, sedentary settlement at Bab edh-Dhra' is reflected in the change in mortuary practices, in which the shaft tombs of the pre-urban phase are replaced with charnel houses. Several mortuary structures and tombs from this transitional period demonstrate less standardization in mortuary practices during this phase of settlement and demographic movements, in comparison with the earlier EB IA shaft tombs (Bentley 1987, 1991; Rast in press; Rast and Schaub 1980, 1981; Schaub 1981; Schaub and Rast 1989). The majority of shaft tombs from the EB IB/EB II period at Bab edh-Dhra' were created during the transition to urban settlement at the site, and resemble in construction the earlier, pre-urban EB IA shaft tombs (the exception being Tomb D1, which is dated to the late EB III, and represents the shift to the use of shaft tombs in the EB IV) (Table 1). In general, these tombs exhibit a transitional element in their construction or grave goods. Tomb A100 North provides a clear example of the characteristics of these shaft tombs (Rast and Schaub 1981:58–61) (Fig. 3). The builders of this tomb paved the floor of the tomb with large flat stones, which appears to anticipate the cobbled floors of the charnel houses in the next period. The excavators found one fully articulated individual, as well as partially articulated skeletal remains from two subadults. The remains of the partially articulated individuals were stacked with

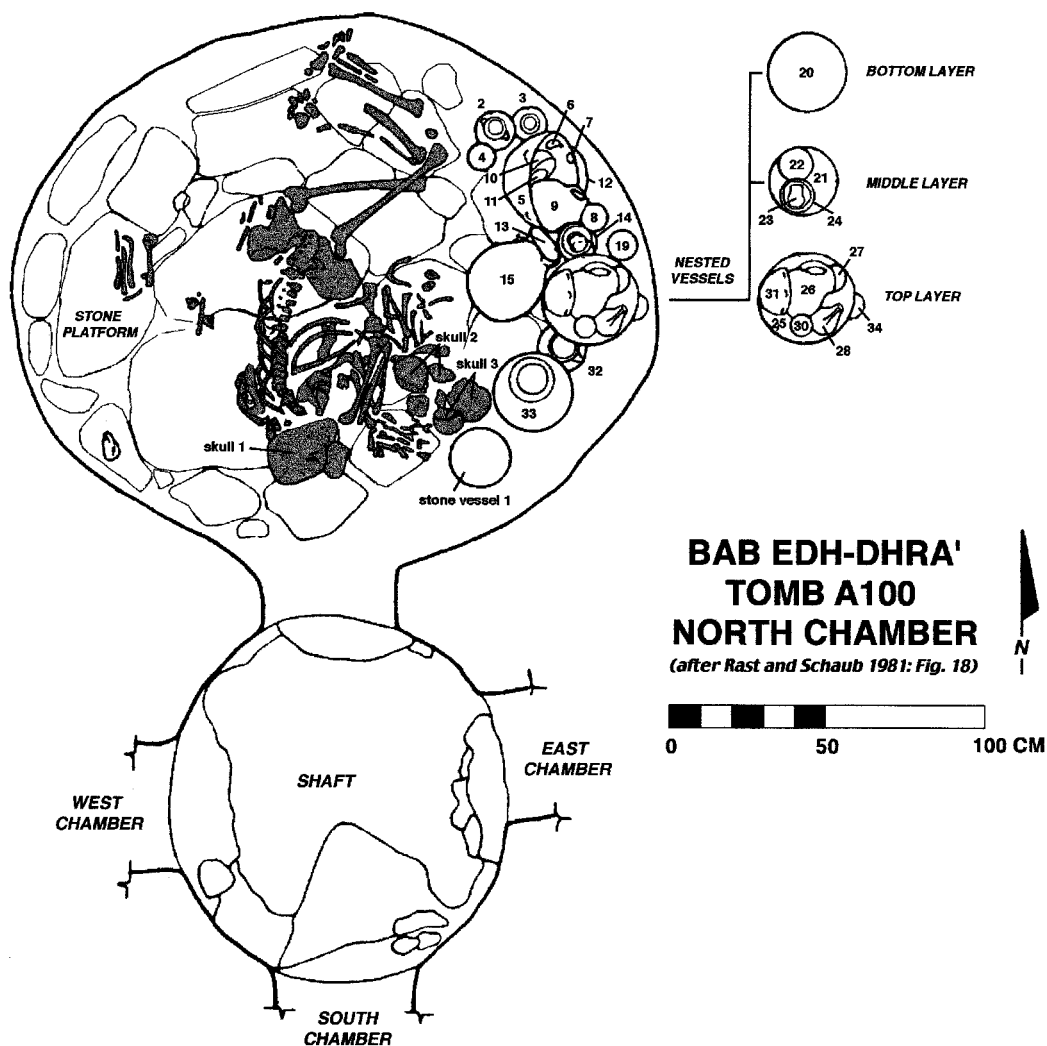
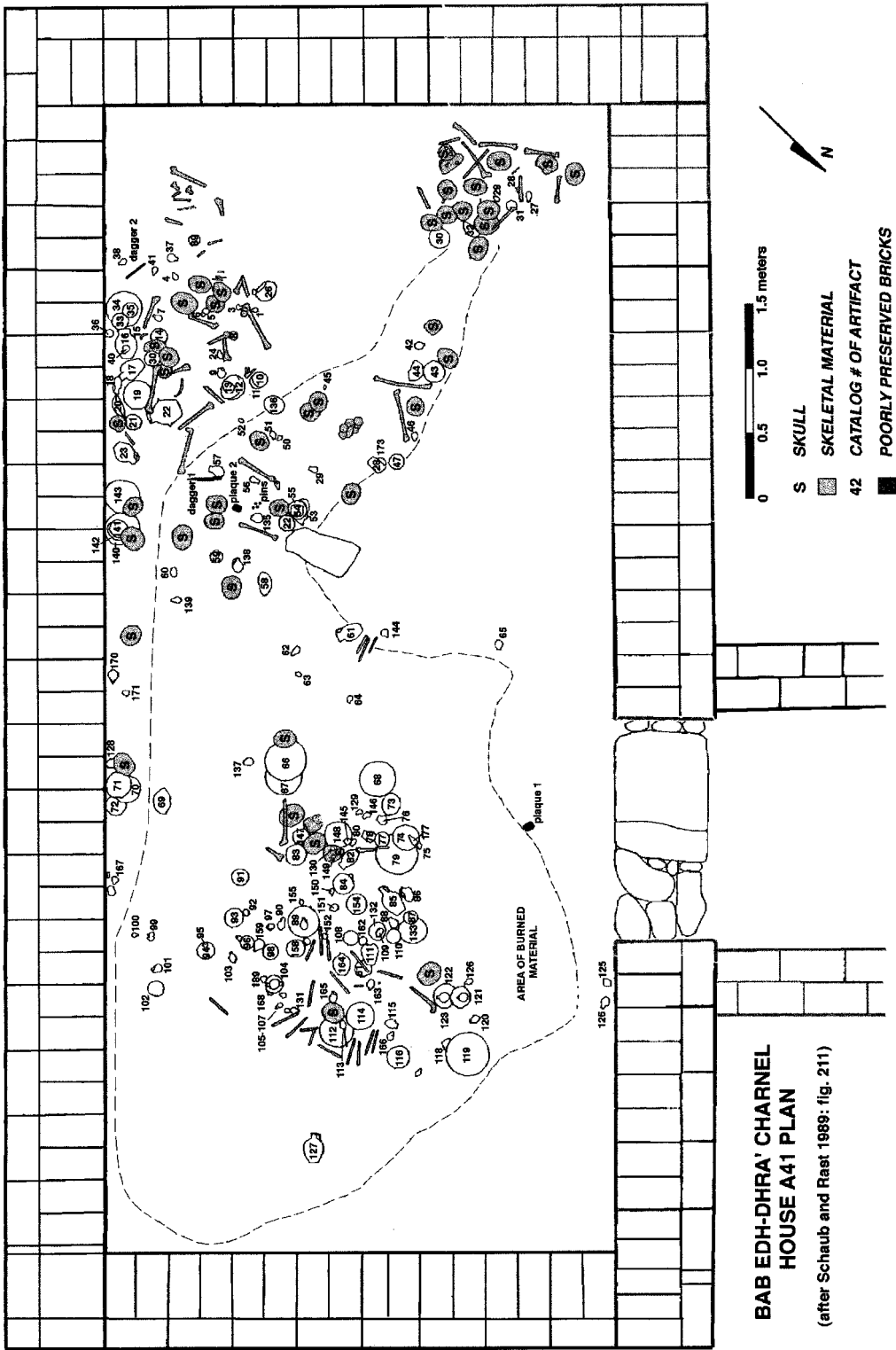


FIG. 3. Plan of EB IB shaft tomb A100North, Bab edh-Dhra'. Reprinted, with permission, from Rast and Schaub (1981: Fig. 18).

the pottery and other grave goods to the east of the articulated skeleton. Like earlier EB IA shaft tombs, pottery was placed around the edge of the tomb, but the placement of the skulls and the presence of the articulated individual do not fit with the standard practice of the EB IA [generally, the bone pile of disarticulated elements was located near the center of the chamber, often on a bed of woven matting; skulls were placed to the left, often in a line around the bone pile; and vessels

were stacked at the edge of the chamber (Schaub and Rast 1989)]. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the skeletal, grave goods, and tomb construction data of these shaft tombs. While the discussion of the broader EB IA mortuary remains is beyond the chronological scope of this study, it is crucial to understand the place of EB IA/EB II shaft tombs as transitional elements, reflecting the shift to (and in the singular case of Tomb D1, from) an urban settlement at Bab edh-Dhra'.



BAB EDH-DHRA' CHARNEL HOUSE A41 PLAN
(after Schaub and Rast 1989: fig. 211)

FIG. 4. Plan of EB II-III charnel house A41, Bab edh-Dhra'. Reprinted, with permission, from Schaub and Rast (1989: Fig. 21).

TABLE 2
Construction Information on Bab edh-Dhra' EB IB/II Shaft Tombs and Circular Charnel Houses

Tomb/charnel house	Type	Area (m ²)	Flooring (if recorded)	Date	Preservation/comments
G2	Shaft	4.6	Marl	Early EB IB	
A100 north	Shaft	5.0	Paved stone	Early EB IB	Shaft used with earlier (EB IA) burial chamber A100 east; transitional period—early urbanization
A88 lower	Shaft	7.0	Unfinished	EB IB	Transitional period—early urbanization
A73	Shallow pit grave?		Unfinished	EB II	Plan unpublished
A13	Shallow pit grave		Unfinished	EB IB	Plan unpublished
A43	Shaft	3.6	Unfinished	EB IB	Shaft used with earlier burial A45
D1 east	Shaft	3.7	Unfinished	Late EB III	Unrobbed; associated with a building, whose wall seems to be built to incorporate the shaft of D1
D1 west	Shaft	5.6	Unfinished	Late EB III	Robbed clean; associated with a building, whose wall seems to be built to incorporate the shaft of D1
G1	Circular charnel house	10.8		EB IB	Cut by later construction (southern half affected)
A53	Circular charnel house	33.2	Huwwar	EB IB	Tomb robbers tunneled into entrance, small number of vessels removed; wooden board and pole impressions may indicate roofing material of shelving (Rast nd)
A4	Circular charnel house	3.6		Early EB II	
A56	Circular charnel house	4.2		Early EB II	Two distinct layers of deposits

Another aspect of this transition is seen in the two circular charnel houses from both the EB IB and early EB II (Rast and Schaub 1981:62–65; Schaub and Rast 1989: 209–232). Together, these four structures herald the appearance of the rectilinear charnel houses of the urban EB II–III period. In both of these structures, excavators found a circular structure of mudbrick with an entrance lined with stone slabs. Excavators noted the presence of articulated and disarticulated skeletal remains, with piles of human bone and crania placed against the wall of the chambers. Pottery vessels were also found clustered near the bone piles (Rast in press:12). Rast notes that the presence of

articulated burials at the site occur first in these EB IB mortuary contexts, and correspond to the evidence for the first permanent sedentary occupation of the settlement. These charnel houses contained a greater number of individuals than the previous shaft tombs, and Rast suggests this pattern may indicate a broadening of the formal kinship relationships to include a greater number of people to be buried together (Rast in press). With their circular plan, their mudbrick construction, and the inclusion of more individuals, these charnel houses clearly represent the transition to the use of the rectilinear charnel houses and urban settlement at Bab edh-Dhra'.

TABLE 3
Vessels in Bab edh-Dhra' Early Urban Shaft
Tombs and Circular Charnel Houses

	EB	Area (m ²)	MNI	No. of vessels
Tomb				
G2	IB	4.6	2	30
A100N	IB	5.0	3	35
A88L	IB	7.0	3	97
A73	II	Unknown	1	3
A13	IB	Unknown	0	20
A43	IB	3.6	4	74
D1 east	Late III	3.7	Unknown	4
Charnel house				
G1	IB	10.8	Unknown	11
A53	IB	33.2	15	30
A4	II	3.6	11	15
A56	II	4.2	9	36

Charnel Houses of the EB II and EB III

The 10 urban-phase charnel houses that have been published to date combine results from the excavations directed by Lapp from 1965 to 1967 (A8, A20, A21, A41, A42, A44, A51, C4), and those excavated in the following decade (A22, A55) (Schaub and Rast 1989). Analysis of the material culture demonstrates that these charnel houses are associated chronologically with the urban settlement of Bab edh-Dhra'. The excavation plan of Charnel House A41 illustrates some of the important defining characteristics of charnel houses at the site (Fig. 4, Table 4). The structure was constructed of mudbricks, with a stone-paved threshold. The builders cobbled the floor with wadi cobbles, and also built an entry way, slightly off-center on the long wall. Charnel House A41 contained 231 vessels and a minimum number of 42 individuals. Also recorded was the areal extent of burned debris (wood, cloth, and ashy bone and brick), which can also be identified in the profile (Schaub and Rast 1989:Fig. 212). Importantly, there was no evidence of articu-

lated skeletons, although one femur was found resting in a pelvis socket.

As noted in Fig. 4, the plan of A41 illustrates that the skeletal material, burned debris, vessels, and other grave goods tend to be clustered in groups. Additionally, the excavators indicated that they found postholes in several other charnel houses (A20, A21, A44), and they have tentatively suggested that shelving units may have been present in the charnel houses. Based on the stratigraphy in A41, it is possible that the similar shelving units may have been present in A41 (Schaub and Rast 1989:343–364). The collapse of the shelving units, onto which people probably had placed the remains of the dead and the grave goods, would have resulted in the mixing of some of the materials and the deposition on the floor in clusters.

Based on the area of the structure, number of individuals, number of vessels, and range and number of local and non-local artifacts found in each charnel house (Table 5), two broad groups can be distinguished (with the exception of A55, for which the results are not yet fully published). The first group at Bab edh-Dhra' (A42, C4) includes tombs that contained only 20–30 ceramic vessels, no twin vessels, and only one potentially non-local vessel.⁴ In addition, the area of these charnel houses is half that of the smaller structures in the second group, and the range and amounts of costume articles, weapons, and other goods are strikingly smaller than those of the second group. For instance, no metal weapons, maceheads, stone palettes, or pendants were recovered from either A42 or C4, while charnel houses in the second group contained multiple examples of all of these types of items. For easy reference in the remainder of this paper, I name the charnel houses of this first group as Lesser

⁴ Rast (personal communication, 1998) notes that they are unsure whether this vessel is a non-local, Khirbet Kerak vessel.

TABLE 4
Construction Information for Bab edh-Dhra' Charnel Houses

Charnel house	Area (m ²)	Floor	Comments on preservation	Date	Comments
A55	13.4	Cobbled		EB II–III	C14 BP dates on charcoal: (1) SI2499 (from floor): 4015 ± 75 BP; (2) SI2874 BP (from doorway): 4320 ± 65 (Rast and Schaub 1980:Table 3)
A42	15.1	Huwwar	West side probably weathered	EB II–III	
C4	15.5	Packed earth	Badly eroded	EB II–III	
A8	35.3	Cobbled	Burning most severe of all charnel houses; latest phase affected by burning	EB II–III	C14 date M-2036 (burnt cloth from entrance): 4160 ± 180 B.P. (calibrated with 1SD: 3035–2533 B.C.) (Schaub and Rast 1989:443; Rast and Schaub 1980: Table 3)
A44	36.8	Cobbled		EB II–III	Evidence for shelving (stratigraphy)
A20	46.1	Cobbled	Weathered	EB II–III	Evidence for shelving (stratigraphy)
A41	53.6	Cobbled		EB II–III	
A21	65.6	Cobbled		EB II–III	Evidence for shelving (postholes and stratigraphy)
A51	67.3	Cobbled	Under threat of pothunting; worked quickly	EB II–III	Mapping incomplete, due to threat of robbers C14 date M2037 (burnt cloth and wood from floor): 4350 ± 180 B.P. (calibrated with 1 SD: 3365–2790 B.C.) (Schaub and Rast 1989:443; Rast and Schaub 1980:Table 3)
A22	120.9	Cobbled	Several pits by pothunters	EB II–III	Building bisected by small N–S wall; eastern half dated to slightly earlier on EB II–III continuum by virtue of ceramics; western portion contained approximately twice number of pottery vessels (scale of pothunting could affect these numbers)

Charnel Houses and those of the second group as Greater Charnel Houses.

In contrast, the second group of Greater Charnel Houses (A8, A20, A21, A22, A41, A44, A51) includes those charnel houses that contained a wider range and larger number of materials, and were much larger in size, than those of the Lesser Charnel Houses. The number of vessels found in these structures ranged from 46 to 783, and three of the charnel houses contained possible imitations of non-local Khirbet Kerak ware (A8, A21, A44). All of these structures contained faience, shell, stone, and bone beads, and all but one contained carnelian beads, while A22 and A41 contained gold

jewelry, and the excavators recovered a pendant of mother of pearl in A8. Metal weapons were artifacts common to all of the Greater Charnel Houses, and A21 also contained an alabaster macehead. Lastly, A21, A22, A41, and A51 all contained multiple stone palettes, another type of non-local artifact. The combination of local and non-local goods (or local imitations of non-local Khirbet Kerak Ware), in conjunction with a larger number of goods and vessels, suggests a greater access to these types of craft goods in comparison to the contemporary Lesser Charnel Houses.

The vast majority of skeletal material from the Greater Charnel Houses is all

TABLE 5
Grave Goods Present in Bab edh-Dhra' Charnel Houses

Channel house information					Weapons		Palettes figs.		Bone objects		Pendants		Assorted beads and gold jewelry (foil, leaf, beads, and spacers)																
CH# Channel house No.	EB	Area (m ²)	MNI	No. of vessels	MtW	Mh	StnP	Fig	CBC	P	Mo	SB	Car	Met	Ost	Fai	B	Ala	B	Car	Lap	Cry	B	Cal	B	Sh	StB	B	Gold
Insufficient information published currently																													
Lesser channel houses																													
CC ^a																													
Greater channel houses																													
1																													
A8	II-III	35.3	unk	121	Y											25													
A44	II-III	36.8	41	142	1(r)										1?	28				3				4	37	9			
A20 ^b	II-III	46.1	unk	46	Y										3	1	3			6				4	9	6			
A41	II-III	53.6	42	231	2		2					2				2			2				2		1+	4			1
A21	II-III	65.6	53	516	1(r)	1(A)	1	1	CC ^a			1	1	4		61			40					4	56	76			
A51	II-III	67.3	200	783	7		4							2		13+	1		49		1+			2	5+	81			Y
A22 ^c	II-III	120.9	170	450+	2		1							Y															

Categories of objects: MtW, metal weapons; Mh, macehead; StnP, stone palette; Fig, Figurine; CBC, carved bone cylinder; P/IB, pierced, incised bone object; MotP, mother of pearl pendant; SBSP, stone, bone, or shell pendant; CarP, carnelian pendant; MetB, metal bead; OstB, ostrich egg bead; FaiB, faience bead; AlaB, alabaster bead; CarB, carnelian bead; LapB, lapis lazuli bead; CryB, crystal bead; ShB, shell bead; CalB, calcite bead; SIBB, stone or bone bead; Gold, gold bead or foil.

Classification of objects: unk, unknown quantity; Y, present, quantity unknown; (r), rivet on metal weapon; (A), material of macehead is alabaster.

^a CC pierced and decorated cylinder.

^b Charnel House A20 had been looted, and therefore the number of vessels does not correlate with size of structure, as in all other cases.

^c Costume elements not completely published: reported as several pieces of gold leaf jewelry and one necklace of gold beads and spacers.

disarticulated, with the exception of one partially articulated individual in A20 and one femur still resting in a pelvic socket in A41. Charnel House A22 also contained nine articulated skeletons, but six of these had been placed in the structure after it had been abandoned and destroyed by fire. The excavators argue that the remaining three articulated individuals were among the last bodies deposited in the charnel house, and were probably associated closely in time with the destruction of the building by fire (Schaub and Rast 1980:34–39). In all of the charnel houses where the excavators could determine MNI, the number of individuals present ranged from 41 to 200. The MNI correlates with the size of the structure, as well as the number of vessels recovered, with Greater Charnel Houses containing more people and more vessels than Lesser Charnel Houses, and all charnel houses containing greater numbers of people and items than the previous shaft tombs and circular charnel houses (Table 1). Only in Charnel House A20, where an MNI could not be established, does the pattern not hold: the areal extent of A20 is 46.1 m², but the excavators recovered only 46 vessels. The excavators note, however, that this charnel house had been visited by pot-hunters, and that “Local tomb robbers had gouged several large holes in the area occupied by this charnel house” (Schaub and Rast 1989:336). So the paucity of vessels in Charnel House A20 in relation to the size of the structure may very well be the result of the activities of the members of the illegal antiquities market, rather than the mortuary activities of the urban Bab edh-Dhra’ community members.

The stratigraphy and the nature of the deposits in all of the charnel houses consistently suggest that the mortuary rites of the urban inhabitants of Bab edh-Dhra’ involved the defleshing of the individual’s body and the subsequent storage of the remains in the repositories (charnel

houses) along with the grave goods. The decomposition and storage of remains as primary and secondary stages of mortuary rituals are not uncommon among communities whose practices involve multiple phases in the mortuary rites, in some cases separated by weeks or even years, in the proper treatment of the deceased (Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997). Although we cannot determine how long a period separated the initial decomposition and the deposition of the remains within the charnel houses of Bab edh-Dhra’, these patterned data do inform us about the social, political, and economic organization within the urban community.

BAB EDH-DHRA’ MORTUARY PRACTICES AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

The stratigraphic, artifactual, and skeletal data from Bab edh-Dhra’ suggest the use of the charnel house as a secondary mortuary context, in which community members placed the remains of their dead into these structures to complete a necessary step in the treatment of the dead. Primary and secondary mortuary rites involve different scales of planning, of participation, and of focuses of emotional involvement. Primary mortuary rituals are, by their nature, abruptly planned and carry with them the immediate and intense depth of emotion that does not necessarily dominate the later stages in the mortuary rites (Kan 1989:294–295). Additionally, the unexpectedness of death, even in the cases where an individual has been ill for an extended period, influences the number of people who can travel to the primary mortuary ceremonies, effectively limiting the scale of participation as well as planning. In contrast, secondary stages in the mortuary cycle may occur weeks or months after the initial rites. The immediacy of the shock and loss has been lessened by the passage of time, and

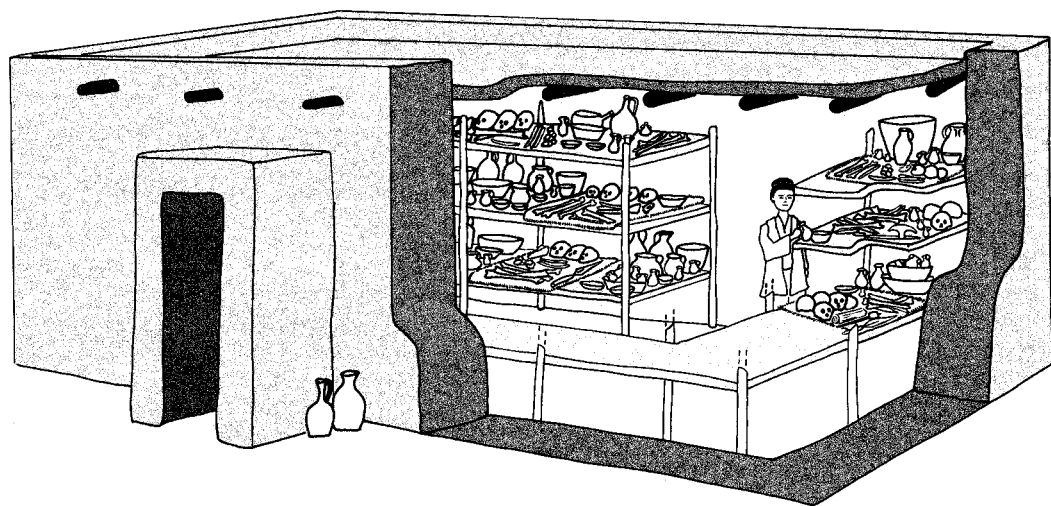


FIG. 5. Reconstruction of EB II-III charnel house, Bab edh-Dhra'.

therefore the focus of the rites shifts from the primacy of expressing grief to the completion of the mortuary cycle, the mending of the social fabric of the community damaged by the death of an individual, and the renegotiation of the social, economic, and political bonds that once linked the deceased with other members of the community. The timing of secondary rituals also involves a longer period for preparation and facilitates the participation of a much larger group drawn from a wider sphere from within the community and the surrounding region.

As a secondary mortuary practice, we can expect that participation in these rites included inhabitants of Bab edh-Dhra' and neighboring communities. This heightened involvement would have created an ideal arena for the assertion of identities in these communities (Hertz 1960; Kan 1989; Feeley-Harnik 1989; Schiller 1997). The combination of a more inclusive participation in this community-wide event and the sense of moral responsibility to conduct the multiple stages of ceremonies provides an opportunity for individuals and groups to assert claims for status, specific identities, and authority. As discussed earlier, the assertion of identity in human societies can be subtly (or

not so subtly) represented by material culture and the built environment. These secondary mortuary ceremonies focused on rituals involving defleshed remains of individuals, their placement into large repositories or body libraries, and the safekeeping of these remains of the dead and the ancestors (see Fig. 5). In the reconstruction of the archaeological past, our record relies on the material culture, skeletal remains, and the built environment; therefore in the case of Bab edh-Dhra' we may be in the unique position to reconstruct certain elements of the social organization of these early urbanites.

The data from the Greater and Lesser Charnel Houses of Bab edh-Dhra' suggest the existence of status differentiation and, possibly, of two broadly defined status groups, represented by varied degrees of differentiation in access to goods and resources, the minimum number of individuals present in the charnel house, and the size of the structures themselves. I define a status group as a collection of people who, due to the interweaving of several potential factors, such as age, birth order, kinship, ancestry, gender, occupation, and achievement, may command a greater or lesser degree of privilege and authority

TABLE 6
Characteristics of Lesser and Greater Charnel Houses at Bab edh-Dhra'

	Area (m ²)	MNI	No. of vessels	Weapons	Figurines	Stone palettes	Costume items
Lesser charnel houses	15.1–15.5	Unknown	20–30	None	None	None	Beads of stone and bone
Greater charnel houses	35.3–120.9	41–200	46–783	Maceheads and metal weapons	1 found in A21	1–4 found in four charnel houses	Pendants of shell, bone, stone and carnelian Beads of metal, ostrich egg, faience, alabaster, carnelian, lapis, crystal, calcite, shell, stone, bone, and gold

within a community [compare with Brumfiel's (1992) concept of "factions"]. I argue that these data illustrate a situation of gradual differentiation between Greater and Lesser Charnel Houses in terms of quantities of goods, types of materials, size of structures, and minimum number of individuals to create a potentially fluid border between two generally defined status groups (Table 6).

People associated with the Greater Charnel Houses, possibly related by kinship (see Bentley 1987, 1991 for discussion of EB IA shaft tombs; Rast in press), may have successfully claimed higher status in the community, and thus may have maintained greater access to craft goods, both mundane and ritual. Greater Charnel Houses contained a much greater variety of local and non-local goods, including beads, weapons, stone palettes, Khirbet Kerak vessels, and locally produced pottery and stone vessels. While excavators did not recover many of the non-local items in the Lesser Charnel Houses, they did find similar pottery vessels, one potentially nonlocal Khirbet Kerak vessel (or an imitation), and one carved bone cylinder. The presence of the potential or imitation Khirbet Kerak vessel and the carved bone item as well as several pottery vessels in the Lesser Charnel Houses empha-

sizes the qualitative, rather than quantitative, difference between the two groups. This is not a case of the "haves" and "have nots," but rather one of greater and lesser access to local and non-local craft items and, by extension, to status and authority in the community.

HOUSES OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

In her analysis of EB IA skeletal populations in Bab edh-Dhra' shaft tombs, Bentley (1987, 1991) demonstrated a close genetically based relationship between individuals within any single tomb. She has interpreted this patterning as an indication of the use of specific tombs by kin groups. Following Rast (in press), I believe that this same association between burial groups and kinship can be extended into the urban period at the site, and that charnel houses contained the remains of a larger network of kin. In this framework, I argue that the people in a charnel house may be related by kinship, and furthermore that these two broad groups of charnel houses may represent a meaningful distinction in EBA society, potentially reflecting the differentiation between houses and kin groups in their claims for

authority and status in the urban community.

Secondary mortuary rites and the reverence of ancestors are often fundamental characteristics of many House Societies (Lévi-Strauss 1983; Waterson 1995). The *Sociétés à Maison* model, first proposed by Lévi-Strauss, offers a richly textured and flexible foundation for conceptualizing societies in which Houses and kinship systems are important organizational structures for the members of the culture. In this organizational model, membership in a House is conceptualized in terms of kinship, fictive or real, and this membership requires active participation in the social and economic perpetuation of the immaterial and material wealth through several generations. In many cases, tangible and intangible symbols of membership are represented in a sense of a House memory, through ancestral ties and heirlooms. The continual elaboration of House structures and the embodiment of House history and status in material culture often symbolize the rights of House members to claim power and authority and to maintain and strengthen these structures over generations (Fox 1993 and references therein; McKinnon 1991, 1995; Waterson 1990, 1995).

In a sense, the Bab edh-Dhra' charnel houses themselves, and their contents, may have acted as heirlooms of a House, physically reminding people of the connection between a corporate House group and a set of ancestors and housing many of the House's important artifacts and symbols of authority, specifically the bones of ancestors and insignia of power, such as the metal weapons and mace-heads and the non-local jewelry and pottery. With many of the charnel houses containing the remains of more than 100 individuals, it is likely that each of the structures was affiliated, and used by, a particular kin group and/or House, and served as a repository, or library, for the

House's tangible links with the ancestors and as a locus for important House rituals, such as mortuary rites. Based on the numerous ethnographic analogues of secondary rites (e.g., Kan 1989 or Weiner 1976) the secondary mortuary ceremonies at Bab edh-Dhra' likely would have involved the participation of members of the neighboring settlements, such as Numeira, whose inhabitants may have been related to those from Bab edh-Dhra' through blood, marriage, fosterage, or economic ties. Most importantly these gatherings offered the opportunity to reinforce the social framework of an urban life, as well as the arena in which to reaffirm ties between kin groups and individuals, as well as the stage to form new social, economic, and political alliances. If we postulate that the social organization of EB II-III Bab edh-Dhra' can be modeled as a House Society, then it is likely that the House of the deceased held the responsibility for planning and executing the ceremonies. Significantly, when considering the size of charnel houses, numbers of individuals stored, and nature and amount of material goods placed with dead, members of the deceased's household and kin group or House may have been able to bolster their status and authority in the community through the successful planning and implementation of these well-attended secondary ceremonies.

If we continue with this assumption, that each House or possibly a kin group maintained a repository for their deceased, then the patterning in the data holds some very interesting implications for the consideration of urban social life. First, most of the tombs contain gifts and costume elements associated with the skeletal remains. The costume ornaments, including the metal and stone beads, plaques, pendants, and textile garments, represent a multidimensional act of asserting a particular identity for each de-

ceased individual. The ornamentation represents not only the self-inscribed identity of the deceased, assuming that the living have dressed her or him in personal garments and jewelry, but also, and in some ways more importantly, the costumes and clothing worn by the deceased, together with the grave goods, represent the actions of the living who have prepared the body for the ceremonies. We must recognize that the personal adornment and the gifting of grave goods were the actions of the living, and therefore the identity of the individual which was announced to the participants of the ceremonies dynamically syncretized the self-inscribed identity of the deceased with the concept of personhood crafted by the living.

Part of this crafting of the deceased's identity reinforces the social relationships linking the dead individual to different members of the community, as well as the social, economic, and political status of the deceased's kin or House members. The act of "beautification" frames the assertion of identity in terms of personal or group fame, or potency (Joyce 1997; Munn 1986). The types of ornamentation and the materials of the grave goods reflect particularly powerful statements concerning the individual's and the House's access to non-local or scarce materials, as well as status and authority within the community. For instance, the metal weapons found in some of the mortuary structures at Bab edh-Dhra' may signify a differential access to particularly rare and non-local materials and objects, as well as the probable differential status in the settlement where some individuals carried the authority to wear such items. The relatively rare occurrence of metal weapons, as well as the maceheads made from non-local materials like alabaster, most likely reflected not only the restricted or episodic access to these items, but more importantly the social and political authority

to carry these ideologically charged items of power. Importantly, the active link of storing these remains in an accessible and visible structure, in these body libraries, communicated a particular House's or kin group's access to the power of the ancestors and the legitimacy of the authority and status in the living community.

The differentiation between the Lesser and the Greater Charnel Houses may indicate that individual Houses at Bab edh-Dhra' may themselves have been ranked according to age, ritual knowledge of the members, numbers of daughter houses, and location within the community. Just as we see the assertion for claims of status within houses between individuals, houses themselves may embody a particular ranked status and members of that house may assert claims for increased status and authority on the behalf of the house. Tanimbarese society provides an excellent example of ranking between houses (McKinnon 1991, 1995), in which the communities contain Named (older and holding more status) Houses and Unnamed Houses (younger, affiliated with a Named House), in which Named and Unnamed Houses assert claims for status and authority within the community.

Tanimbarese Named Houses actually express real and distinctive identities, while Unnamed Houses are related to Named Houses through kinship and marriage ties. For instance, consideration of the relative permanence of their "forest" and "village" estates of both Named and Unnamed houses demonstrates that estates of Named Houses include the land tracts and the trees, while the estates of the Unnamed Houses include only the trees. Named Houses are inherently permanent due to their more direct ties to the ancestors and, thus, a stronger relation to the founding of the fixed order of the cosmos. They possess heirlooms and valuables, as well as ritual furniture, such as altars, and insignia. For instance, a Named

House may possess the rights to certain ridgepole insignia, as well as the ability to hold ritual offices in the community. Due to their profoundly permanent relation to the founding ancestors, Named Houses are conceptualized as more weighty, enduring, and more valuable. By comparison, Unnamed Houses' relations with the ancestors are established through the mediation of the related named House, and therefore are perceived as impermanent, with fewer claims to status and value in the community (McKinnon 1991:97–104).

I argue that a similar organizational structure may have been present at Bab edh-Dhra', and this structure is reflected in the Greater and Lesser Charnel Houses. EBA mortuary contexts suggest that there were two general types of treatment of the dead, with one group of tombs containing more grave goods (costume items, weapons, and vessels) and people than the other group (for a discussion of a similar pattern in the EB II–III tombs at Jericho, see Chesson 1997). The Greater Charnel Houses at Bab edh-Dhra' display a correlation between a greater number of goods, the wider range of materials, and the minimum number of individuals deposited in the mortuary structure. Tanimbarese society, with its distinction between Unnamed and Named Houses, may provide an explanation for this patterning in the mortuary practices. The urban community at Bab edh-Dhra' may have been organized into higher status, Named (or Greater) Houses and affiliated, lower status, Unnamed (or Lesser) houses, which may explain the patterning of two groups in the charnel houses.

The greater number of individuals in the Greater Charnel Houses may reflect the potential actions of members of Unnamed Houses to attain higher status for themselves as well as their House, through marriage, alliance, or some form of affiliation with the Greater House. Inclusion in the mortuary complex of a Greater House

would likely associate that individual with the prestigious and high-status traits of a Named House: permanence in the cosmos, greater access to knowledge, and a strong and eternal relationship with the ancestors. Even if an individual could not attain higher status in life, death still presented that person with the ability to attain the higher status for her- or himself with the honor of inclusion in the higher status group in death (McKinnon 1991, 1995; Waterson 1990; compare Grove and Gillespie 1992). Importantly, Bentley's (1987, 1991) analysis of the EB IA shaft tombs at Bab edh-Dhra' indicates a probable close genetic relationship between the deceased, most likely based on actual blood-kin relations. Resting on Rast's (in press) extension to the urban period, I interpret that each of the Greater Charnel Houses may have represented the heritage and link to the ancestors of a high-status corporate House and, therefore, contained members of that House and possibly as well as certain members from the related Lesser Houses.

The patterning of material culture, the size of the charnel houses, and the numbers of individuals in each of the charnel houses also suggest tensions within the two status groups. For instance, among the Greater Charnel Houses (Table 5), we see a difference in the distribution of certain items, such as stone palettes, pendants, and beads of various materials. In examining the beads, almost all of the Greater Charnel Houses contained beads of faience, shell, stone, bone, and carnelian; in contrast, half or fewer of these charnel houses held beads of alabaster, metal, ostrich egg, lapis, crystal, or gold. Stone palettes were recovered in four of the eight charnel houses (the four largest houses), and these same four charnel houses were the ones that contained the gold, crystal, alabaster, and lapis beads, as well as the only alabaster macehead in the assemblage. These differences within the status groups, particularly within the

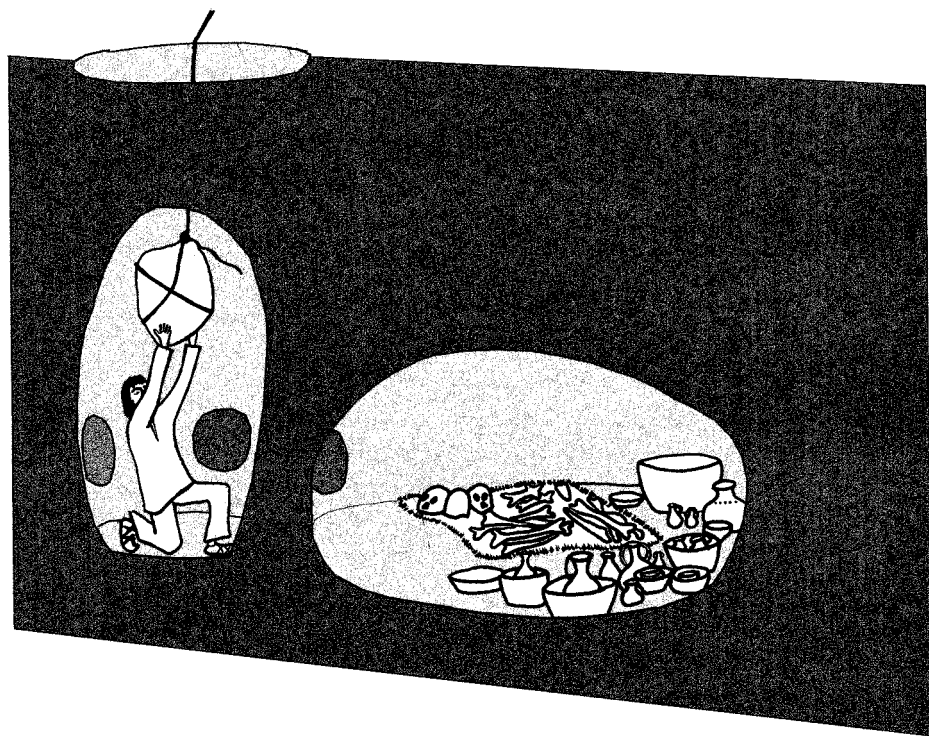


FIG. 6. Reconstruction of EB IA shaft tomb, Bab edh-Dhra'.

Greater Charnel Houses, may reflect the actions of specific groups (lineages, Houses) expressing group and individual identities through material culture. In Tanimbarese Society, McKinnon (1991) describes how Houses exchange goods in interactions that continually reshape and redefine identities and relationships between Houses. I suggest that in the Bab edh-Dhra' material, we may also be witnessing the exchange and circulation of goods and wealth objects between Houses or lineages, as these groups actively negotiated their identities and relationships in opposition and through cooperation with each other.

URBANIZATION, KINSHIP, AND HOUSES

Based on this evidence, I believe that one of the greatest transformations in the process of urbanization was the reconcep-

tualization and broadening of the structures of kinship (see also Rast in press). This ideological shift in defining kinship relations is reflected in mortuary practices before, during, and after the urban settlement system at Bab edh-Dhra' (Table 1). In the EB IA shaft tombs, one to five individuals were placed in a single chamber, and shafts contained anywhere from one to five chambers (Fig. 6). By these figures, the largest tomb group may have housed up to 25 people; Bentley's (1987, 1991) analysis has persuasively demonstrated that these individuals were likely related by blood relationships. I propose that during the EB IA one of the fundamental ordering structures in the pre-urban society was the extended family unit, or the "household" productive unit. Households in this context would have included the multigenerational residential unit whose members interacted in the daily subsis-

tence chores and tasks to provide a living, and who were likely related by blood.

In the transitional EB IB and EB II mortuary contexts, we see a shift in the inclusion of more individuals into the chambers (Table 1). The circular charnel houses, the first above-ground mortuary structures, may mark a more communal nature to the mortuary rites. With the interment of more individuals, the above-ground chambers may have facilitated a greater participation in the ceremonies. Greater participation in the ceremonies potentially embodied a stronger social impact in the community in terms of crafting individual and group identities, and may reflect the growth and consolidation of Houses and lineages as fundamental structures in the society. I suggest that the ability to involve more people in the mortuary rites and the greater number of individuals buried in these structures reflect a broadening of the kinship units to include related households and, therefore, more than one extended family. This change in mortuary practices to include more of the living and the dead occurs simultaneously with the settlement of Bab edh-Dhra' and the process of urbanization.

With the rectangular charnel houses of EB II–III, we see an increase in the numbers of craft goods and local and non-local resources along with the numbers of individuals. The inclusion of more craft goods, both local and non-local, holds important implications for the relationship between urbanization, craft production, and exchange relations in the region, a series of complex issues that lie at the foundation of the process of urbanization and ruralization in the region. Several researchers have explored the complicated interplay between the establishment, growth, and eventual abandonment of walled towns and the nature, scope, and direction of trade and exchange between urban settlements within the region and with foreign

partners, particularly Egypt (Amiran and Gophna 1989; Ben-Tor 1991, 1992; deMiroshedji 1989; Esse 1989, 1991; Joffe 1991, 1993; Kempinski 1989; Levy et al. 1995). While further discussion of these issues clearly lies beyond the scope of this study, the mortuary data from Bab edh-Dhra' shaft tombs and charnel houses do suggest a greater investment of resources into craft production and long-distance exchange relations during the urban, EB II–III period. Whether this trend is related specifically to the secondary mortuary rituals and charnel houses or is also represented in the settlement data has yet to be investigated. Additional exploration of these issues with the settlement data offers tremendous potential for examining the complex relationship between craft production, urbanism, and long-distance trade relations in the region.

The EB II–III charnel houses represent more than the settlement and growth of the settlement at Bab edh-Dhra' and the flowering of the urban society: they reflect the profound shift in the ideological construction of kinship. These large buildings, housing as many as 200 individuals and hundreds of funerary items, reflect the broadest defining structures of kinship relations in the Early Bronze Age (Fig. 5). During this period, I argue that one of the fundamental units in the urban community was the House, both Greater and Lesser, whose membership included a lineage of multiple extended families related through ties of marriage, affinity, and exchange. I suggest that Gailey's (1987) definition of kinship, which emphasizes the presence, tone, and dynamic nature of the relationship, rather than the descriptive label which may, or in some cases may not, be appropriate, provides a good foundation for reconstructing the kinship structures underlying the Greater and Lesser Houses of urban Bab edh-Dhra':

Kinship indicates a social relationship—fictive, blood, or both. What is important is the content of the relationship, rather than its source or how it is phrased. The connection may or may not be seen as kinship: it might include such institutions as age groups and age sets, trade-friends, and other persons entering into a nexus of labor claims and expectations of reciprocity. In this definition, kinship involves reciprocal support, in the form of goods, services and aid in life transitions. This support is generally not an equivalency; instead, the inequalities are offset through time, or through claims established by other relationships. Kinship relations are many-faceted and encompass functions that would be housed in separate religious, economic, and political institutions in our own society. (Gailey 1987:x)

By focusing on the nature of the relationship, rather than the label, it is possible to consider the definition of membership in a House, the broader issues of reciprocity, negotiation and maintenance of economic, political, and social ties throughout the community, and finally how these relationships may have strengthened, or in time weakened, Houses and social structures in Bab edh-Dhra'. The Greater Charnel Houses, especially, reflect this broader definition of kinship and affiliation, and their size, contents, and numbers of dead signify the completed transition that we begin to see in the EB IB and EB II mortuary contexts. Both the Greater and Lesser Charnel Houses would have provided a setting in which an extensive network of family, friends, and allies could have participated in secondary mortuary rituals and other important House ritual ceremonies. As noted before, mortuary rites, particularly secondary rituals, provide an arena for reaffirming and strengthening social, economic, and political bonds between individuals and groups. In the case of urban Bab edh-Dhra', ceremonies at the charnel houses probably afforded members of Houses an ideal moment to assert claims for authority and group identity within the community, at the same time as they were able to reiterate the boundaries of membership

within a House. In contrast to the earlier periods, Houses functioned as one of the fundamental organizing structures in the community, and membership in a House was based on a broader ideological sense of kinship.

With the abandonment of the urban lifestyle at Bab edh-Dhra' in the EB IV, the inhabitants returned to the practice of interring their dead in shaft tombs. Once again, we witness a smaller number of people buried in a below-ground structure, signaling a more restricted participation in funerary ceremonies, and I argue that this restriction reflects a changing sense of membership in the kinship groups in society and the fissioning of House bonds and group identities. These shaft tombs contain one chamber, have stone-lined shafts, and house four to seven individuals. The character of the EB IV settlement at Bab edh-Dhra' changes, and people are no longer living within a physically bounded community. In fact, some EB IV structures at the site were built on top of the ruined EB III fortifications walls, while the majority of the post-urban structures were located outside the urban settlement (Rast and Schaub 1981: 31–34). For these reasons, I suggest that we see a return to the primacy of the household, with the extended family, as one of the basic structuring forces in this post-urban society. The primacy of the corporate House has eroded with the abandonment of the urban lifestyle, and the shift back to shaft tombs and away from urban living reflects the changes in peoples' fundamental ideological and social structures.

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the mortuary data from Bab edh-Dhra', I have explored how patterns of differentiation in the expression of mortuary practices may reflect social, political, and economic structures in the urban community. In this analysis, I

present a picture in which not all chanel houses, and by assumption not all kin groups or Houses, controlled the social, political, and economic resources to incorporate greater amounts of items into the mortuary complex to reflect the kin group's or House's collective identity in life and in death. I believe that this differential distribution of materials, and by extension, status and authority, supports the reconstruction of urban culture at Bab edh-Dhra' as a House Society, in which different corporate groups, or estates, would have cooperated and competed with other Houses to bolster and maintain their relative status within the greater community. The differential distribution of non-local and rare materials, as well as the varying sizes of mortuary structures, and the different scales of grave goods, all reflect the potential presence of tensions within the urban community Greater and Lesser Houses, as kin groups and individuals may have asserted their own claims for status within the heterarchical social tapestry of the Early Bronze Age urban society (Chesson 1997; Crumley 1987).

In this framework, individuals, kin groups, and Houses may have simultaneously asserted their active and moral participation as members of the greater cultural group of EBA urban dwellers. As mentioned earlier, in ethnographic contexts people maintain traditional elements of mortuary rites, costumes, and rituals, and the dead can act as powerful moral and ethical monitors (Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Weiner 1991). The presentation of individual or group identity, through the act of beautification, would probably emphasize characteristics believed to be ethically and morally powerful in a society, as well as politically and economically potent. In this way, a group's or individual's fame would enhance their potency, as well as reiterate their membership as active and upstand-

ing members of a House and the greater urban community and society.

I also believe that these shifts in mortuary practices reflect transformations of the ideological structures of kinship and social identity with the development of the urban lifestyle in the EB II-III. The EB II-III chanel houses provide spectacular testaments to the more inclusive nature of kinship in the urban community, and are all the more striking for their circumscribed use in association with the urban occupation of the walled town at Bab edh-Dhra'. Before and after the period of urban life at Bab edh-Dhra' the mortuary practices reflect a narrower conceptualization of kinship in society, and with the demographic shifts and new patterns of life inherent in the first urban period in the Southern Levant, these practices flowered into more inclusive rituals which would further define and display membership and identity within the larger urban community at Bab edh-Dhra'.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper expands on sections of my dissertation research, and I thank the following members of my committee for their support and critical comments: C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Ofer Bar-Yosef, and Bob Preucel. The following institutions have provided support that has furthered this research: Mellon Foundation; Department of Anthropology, Harvard University; American School for Prehistoric Research; Cora DuBois Trust; Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, where I worked as an Exchange Scholar for 2 years; the British Institute in Amman for Archaeology and History; and the National Science Foundation (Grant SBR-9411400) and Wenner-Gren Foundation, whose predoctoral grants supported my field research. Earlier drafts of this paper have benefited from the insightful comments of Walt Rast, Tom Schaub, Hermann Genz, Timothy Harrison, John O'Shea, Rosemary Joyce, Bob Preucel, Ofer Bar-Yosef, Danny Bar-Yosef, Ian Kuijt, and two anonymous reviewers. I bear the sole responsibility for any errors and all interpretations within the paper.

REFERENCES CITED

- Amiran, R. and R. Gophna
 1989 Urban Canaan in the EB II and EB III periods: Emergence and structure. In *L'Urbanisation de la Palestine a l'age du Bronz Ancien*, edited by P. deMiroshedji, pp. 109–116. British Archaeology Reports, International Series, Oxford.
- Ben-Tor, A.
 1991 New light on the relations between Egypt and Southern Palestine during the Early Bronze Age. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 281:3–10.
 1992 The Early Bronze Age. In *Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, edited by A. Ben-Tor, pp. 81–125. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT.
- Bentley, G. R.
 1987 *Kinship and Social Structure at Early Bronze Age IA Bab edh-Dhra'*, Jordan: A Bioarchaeological Analysis of Mortuary and Dental Data. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.
 1991 A bioarchaeological reconstruction of the social and kinship systems at Early Bronze Age Bab edh-Dhra', Jordan. In *Between Bands and States*, edited by S. Gregg, pp. 5–34. Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.
- Binford, L.
 1972 Mortuary practices, their study and their potential. In *An Archaeological Perspective*, edited by L. Binford, pp. 208–243. Seminar Press, New York.
- Brumfiel, E. M.
 1992 Distinguished lecture in archeology, breaking and entering the ecosystem—Gender, class, and faction steal the show. *American Anthropologist* 94:551–567.
- Cannon, A.
 1989 Historical dimensions in mortuary expressions of status and sentiment. *Current Anthropology* 30(4):437–458.
- Chesson, M. S.
 1997 *Urban Households in Early Bronze Age Communities of Syro-Palestine*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University.
- Crumley, C. L.
 1987 A dialectical critique of hierarchy. In *Power Relations and State Formation*, edited by T. Patterson and C.W. Gailey, pp. 155–169. Am. Anthropological Assoc., Washington, DC.
- DeMiroshedji, P.
 1989 Le processus d'urbanisation en Palestine au Bronze ancien: chronologie et rythmes. In *L'Urbanisation de la Palestine a l'age du Bronz Ancien*, edited by P. deMiroshedji, pp. 63–80. British Archaeology Reports, International Series, Oxford.
- Esse, D. L.
 1989 Secondary state formation and collapse in Early Bronze Age Palestine. In *L'Urbanisation de la Palestine a l'age du Bronz Ancien*, edited by P. deMiroshedji, pp. 81–96. British Archaeology Reports, International Series, Oxford.
 1991 *Subsistence, Trade, and Social Change in Early Bronze Age Palestine*. Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Feeley-Harnik, G.
 1989 Cloth and the creation of ancestors in Madagascar. In *Cloth and Human Experience*, edited by A. B. Weiner and J. Schneider, pp. 73–116. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
- Fox, J. J., Ed.
 1993 *Inside Austronesian Houses: Perspectives on Domestic Designs for Living*. Australian National University, Canberra.
- Gailey, C. W.
 1987 *Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands*. Univ. of Texas Press, Austin.
- Gillespie, S.
 1997 *Social Memory, Identity, and "Mortuary Ritual" among the Ancient Maya*. Presented at 96th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.
- Grove, D. C., and S. D. Gillespie
 1992 Archaeological indicators of Formative Period elites: A perspective from Central Mexico. In *Mesoamerican Elites: An Archaeological Assessment*, edited by D. Z. Chase and A. F. Chase, pp. 191–205. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Hertz, R.
 1960 *Death and the Right Hand*, translated by R. Needham and C. Needham. Free Press, Glencoe, IL.
- Joffe, A. H.
 1991 Early Bronze Age I and the evolution of social complexity in the Southern Levant. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 4(1):3–58.
 1993 *Settlement and Society in the Early Bronze Age I and II, Southern Levant: Complementarity and Contradiction in a Small-Scale Complex Society*. Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Joyce, R. A.
 1997 *Burying the Dead at Tlatilco: Social Memory and Social Identities*. Presented at 96th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.

- Kan, S.
1989 *Symbolic Immortality*. Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC.
- Kempinski, A.
1989 Urbanization and metallurgy in Southern Canaan. In *L'Urbanisation de la Palestine a l'age du Bronze Ancien*, edited by P. deMiroschedji, pp. 163–168. British Archaeology Reports, International Series, Oxford.
- Kenyon, K. M.
1960 *Excavations at Jericho*, Vol. 1: *The Tombs Excavated in 1952–1954*. British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, London.
1965 *Excavations at Jericho*, Vol. 2: *The Tombs Excavated in 1955–1958*. British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, London.
- Kuijt, I.
1996 Negotiating equality through ritual: A consideration of Late Natufian and prepottery Neolithic A period mortuary contexts. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 15:313–336.
1997 *Meaningful Masks, Death, Social Memory, and Levantine Neolithic Community Identity*. Presented at 96th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.
- Kus, S.
1997 Archaeologist as anthropologist: Much ado about something after all? *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 4(3/4):199–213.
- Lévi-Strauss, C.
1983 *The Way of the Masks*. Jonathan Cape, London.
- Levy, T. E., E. C. M. v. d. Brink, Y. Goren, and D. Alon
1995 New light on King Narmer and the protodynastic Egyptian presence in Canaan. *Biblical Archaeologist* 58(1):26–35.
- McCafferty, S., and G. McCafferty
1994 Engendering Tomb 7 at Monte Alban: Re-spinning an old yarn. *Current Anthropology* 35(2):143–166.
- McKinnon, S.
1991 *From a Shattered Sun, Hierarchy, Gender, and Alliance in the Tanimbar Islands*. Univ. of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
1995 Houses and hierarchy: The view from a South Moluccan society. In *About the House, Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*, edited by J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones, pp. 170–188. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.
- Metcalf, P., and R. Huntington, Eds.
1991 *Celebrations of Death*. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.
- Munn, N. D.
1986 *The Fame of Gawa*. Duke Univ. Press, Durham.
- O'Shea, J. M.
1997 *Villagers of the Maros: A Portrait of an Early Bronze Age Society*. Plenum, New York.
- Parker Pearson, M.
1982 Mortuary practices, society, and ideology: An aspect of the relationship between social hierarchy and culture change. In *Symbolic and structural archaeology*, edited by I. Hodder, pp. 99–113. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Rast, W. E.
in Society and Mortuary Customs at Bab edh-Dhra'. To be published in Albert E. Glock Memorial Volume.
- Rast, W. E., and R. T. Schaub
1974 Survey of the Southeastern Plain of the Dead Sea, 1973. *Annual of the Department of Antiquities, Jordan* 19:5–53.
1978 A preliminary report of excavations at Bab edh-Dhra', 1975. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 43:1–32.
1980 Preliminary report of the 1979 expedition to the Dead Sea Plain, Jordan. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 240:21–61.
1981 The Southeastern Dead Sea Plain Expedition: An interim report of the 1977 season. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 46.
- Saxe, A. A.
1970 *Social dimensions of mortuary practices*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.
- Schaub, R. T.
1981a Patterns of Burial at Bab edh-Dhra'. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 46:45–68.
1981b Ceramic sequences in the tomb groups at Bab edh-Dhra'. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 46:69–118.
- Schaub, R. T., and W. E. Rast
1984 Preliminary report of the 1981 expedition to the Dead Sea Plain, Jordan. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 254:35–60.
1989 *Bab edh-Dhra', Excavations in the Cemetery Directed By Paul W. Lapp (1965–1967)*. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN.
- Schiller, A.
1997 *Small Sacrifices, Religious Change and Cultural Identity among the Ngaju of Indonesia*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.
- Waterson, R.
1990 *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in Southeast Asia*. Oxford Univ. Press, Kuala Lumpur.
1995 Houses and hierarchies in island Southeast Asia. In *About the House, Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*, edited by J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones, pp. 47–68. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.
- Weiner, A. B.
1976 *Women of Value, Men of Renown*. Univ. of Texas Press, Austin.