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A Third-Millennium B.C. Elite Mortuary Complex at Umm el-Marra, Syria: 2002 and 2004 Excavations

GLENN M. SCHWARTZ, HANS H. CURVERS, SALLY S. DUNHAM,
BARBARA STUART, AND JILL A. WEBER

Abstract

Excavations at Tell Umm el-Marra, Syria, in 2002 and 2004 revealed that the elite Tomb 1 discovered on the site acropolis in 2000 was part of a mid to late third-millennium B.C. mortuary complex devoted to individuals of high rank. The complex included a sequence of at least six tombs as well as installations with evidence of the ritual sacrifice of equids and perhaps human infants. Mortuary data allow for the consideration of the role of social status, gender, ideology, and other variables in the development of local complex society. It is hypothesized that elite ancestor veneration served to reinforce and legitimize local authority, and tomb disturbances are interpreted as desecrations intended to sever the connection between the interred ancestors and the living community. Following the period of the mortuary complex, a large, circular stone platform

designated Monument 1 was constructed above it, indicating the continued special character of the Umm el-Marra acropolis in the early second millennium B.C. and the uses of social memory by the authorities of that period.*

The Umm el-Marra Project of the Johns Hopkins University and the University of Amsterdam aims to study the emergence and development of complex societies in Bronze Age western Syria through examination of a regional center and its environs.¹ Umm el-Marra (figs. 1, 2) is the largest Bronze Age site in the Jabbul plain east of Aleppo but is relatively small compared to major centers like Aleppo, Ebla, and Qatna.²

Possibly to be identified as ancient Tuba,³ Umm el-Marra was probably a secondary center under the

*We are grateful to the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria, for its support and encouragement. Special thanks go to Abdarrazzaq Moaz, director-general in 2002 and current vice-minister of culture for antiquities and museums; Tammam Fakouch, director-general in 2004; Michel al-Maqdissi, director of excavations; Yusuf Kanjo of the regional directorate of antiquities and museums in Aleppo; our representatives Hekmat Awad (in 2002), Shirin Khidr (2004), and Iyyad Ghanem (2004); and site guard Muhammad Qasem al-Helu. Staff in 2002 included Glenn Schwartz and Hans Curvers, directors; Sally Dunham, site supervisor and small finds analyst; Barbara Stuart, human skeletal analyst, excavator, and object photographer; Susan McCarter, ceramics analyst; Jaafar Fadlallah, conservator; and Scott Ruffolo, William Collins, Francesco di Filippo, Yasmin el-Shazly, Matthew Johnson, James Mabbitt, Sue Ann McCarty, and Elaine Sullivan, site supervisors. In addition to Schwartz, Curvers, di Filippo, Dunham, Johnson, Stuart, and Sullivan, the 2004 staff included Jill Weber, zooarchaeologist and excavator; Franca Cole, conservator; Lydia Grunstra, artist; James van Rensselaer IV, photographer; Salaam Rad and Hanan Saabi, ceramic analysts and excavators; and Brian Brown, John Crawford, Adam Maskevich, Alice Petty, and Juan Christian Rodriguez Bobadilla, site supervisors. Support was provided by the National Science Foundation (Grant BCS-0137513), the National Geographic Society, the Arthur and Isadora Dellheim Foundation, and the Johns Hopkins University. We thank Alfonso Archi, Maria Giovanna Biga, Peter Chomowicz, Marcella Frangipane, Nicolò Marchetti, Thomas McClellan, Peter Pfälzner, Anne Porter, Walther Sallaberger, David Stronach, and two anonymous reviewers for ideas and advice on issues discussed in this article. Macie Hall's help with the illustrations is greatly appreciated. Glenn Schwartz is indebted to Paolo Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, and Nicolò Marchetti for

access to the pottery records from Ebla. Photographs of excavated areas are by Schwartz.

¹ Curvers and Schwartz 1997; Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003. See also the Web site: <http://www.jhu.edu/neareast/uem/>.

² Our estimate of 25 ha. includes ca. 20 ha of walled enclosure plus a possible extension to the north under modern village houses.

³ Catagnoti 1991. Although the ancient identification of Umm el-Marra is not certain, Tuba seems likely. Textual evidence from Ebla suggests that Tuba (or Dub, as written in the Ebla texts) was not far from Aleppo, since the ruler of Tuba was required to swear allegiance to the king of Ebla in the temple of the storm god of Aleppo rather than at Ebla itself (Archi 1999). Middle Bronze glyptic and textual evidence (Collon 1975; Dunham 1997) indicate that Tuba was part of the northern Syrian kingdom of Yamhad centered at Aleppo. The Umm el-Marra Early–Middle–Late Bronze sequence corresponds to the chronological range of textual references to Tuba, and the Iron Age hiatus at Umm el-Marra corresponds to the absence of Iron Age textual references for Tuba. Textual data indicate Tuba was a kingdom in the Early and Middle but not Late Bronze Age, which parallels the evidence at Umm el-Marra, where large-scale public architecture dates to the Early and Middle but not Late Bronze Age. Charpin (2001) has asserted that Tuba was more likely in the western part of Yamhad, near Alalakh, since the geographical scope of the Alalakh VII texts is relatively restricted; he also notes that mention of Tuba is rare in the Mari texts, which would be unexpected if it were located between Aleppo and the Balikh. However, Alalakh VII texts mention several localities well outside the Alalakh vicinity (e.g., Carchemish, Ebla, Tunip, Nuhasshe, Qatna, Alashiya) (Magnez-Gardiner 1994, 39, table 4), and one might not expect frequent references to communities west of the Euphrates in the Mari texts except for Aleppo.

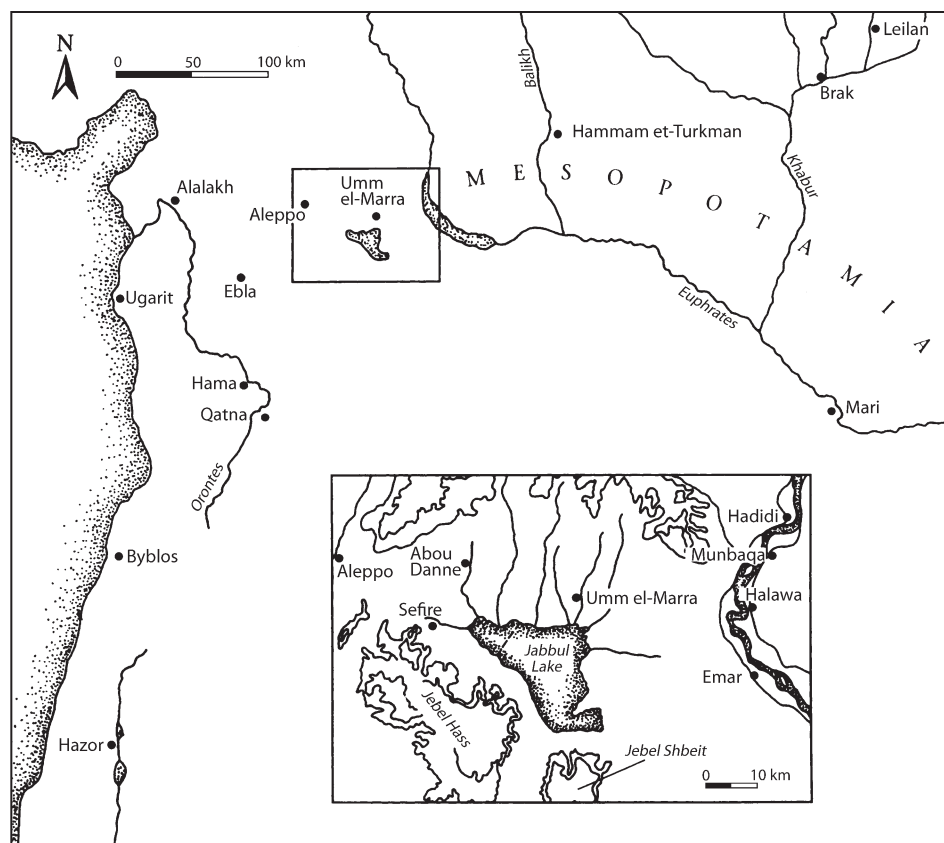


Fig. 1. Syria, with Jabbul plain inset.

domination of greater powers such as Ebla or Yamhad. Founded in the first half of the third millennium B.C., Umm el-Marra was inhabited relatively continuously until the 13th century B.C. and reoccupied in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Thus far, the Umm el-Marra project has concentrated on four main issues: (1) the origins and development of the community as a regional center of the third millennium B.C. (Early Bronze Age); (2) destabilization and reduced occupation in the early second millennium (Middle Bronze I); (3) revival of urban life ca. 1800–1600 (Middle Bronze II);⁴ and (4) absorption of the community into the Mittani empire in the mid to late second millennium (Late Bronze Age).⁵

Since 2000 the project has focused on the early urban period in the mid to late third millennium B.C., largely due to the discovery of the intact elite Tomb 1, dating to ca. 2300 B.C. Located on a high, central point in the Acropolis Center, Tomb 1 contained three layers of bodies that included two young women (in

the most probable reconstruction) placed side-by-side, each with a baby and ornaments indicative of wealth, above two men and an infant with fewer objects, above a single adult individual. The well-preserved and abundant materials from Tomb 1 have allowed for the consideration of issues of ritual, gender, and ideology in the emergence of complex societies in the region.⁶ After Tomb 1 was excavated in 2000, the project aimed to investigate its context. Did this tomb exist in isolation? Was it part of a larger complex? To address these questions, the excavated area in the Acropolis Center was expanded to ca. 800 m² in the 2002 and 2004 seasons, of which ca. 370 m² of third-millennium B.C. remains were exposed.

These excavations have demonstrated that Tomb 1 was part of a mortuary complex that included additional tombs and associated installations. The complex is now providing new details on elite ideologies and mortuary behaviors in the period of western Syria's first urban societies. This article details some

⁴Nichols 2004; Nichols and Weber 2006; Schwartz 2006.

⁵Cooper et al. 2005.

⁶Schwartz et al. 2003.

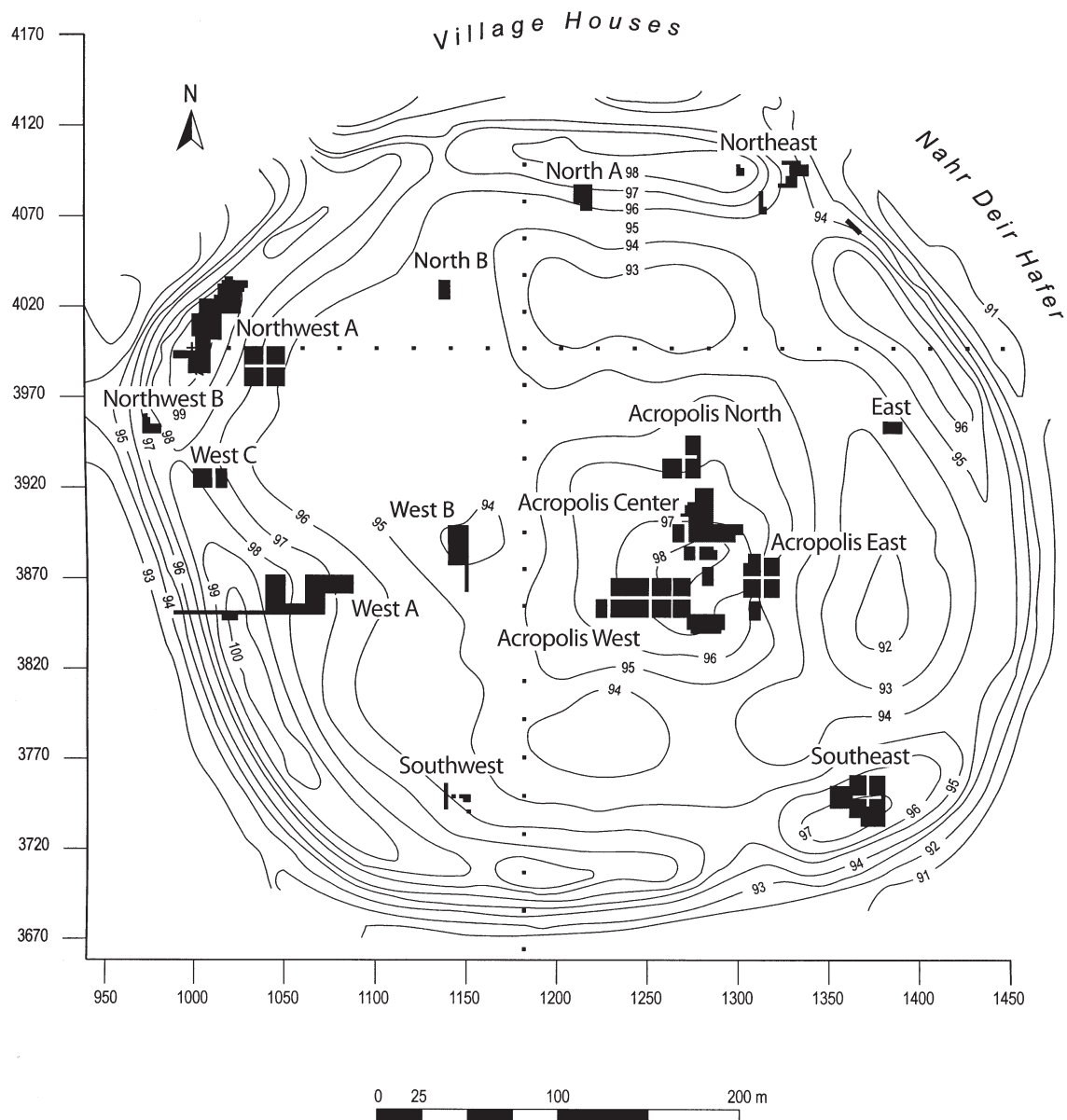


Fig. 2. Umm el-Marra.

of the most salient points learned thus far about the mortuary complex and presents new data on the use of the Acropolis Center in the early second millennium B.C.

AN EARLY BRONZE AGE MORTUARY COMPLEX IN THE ACROPOLIS CENTER

The 2002 and 2004 excavations revealed that Tomb 1 was bordered on the east, west, and south by other

tombs, five of which were investigated (fig. 3).⁷ All of these, with the apparent exception of Tomb 7, were constructed in a manner similar to that of Tomb 1, with a relatively tall rectangular substructure of limestone boulders⁸ originally surmounted by a mudbrick superstructure, the latter indicated by substantial mudbrick collapse inside the tombs and/or by parts of the lowest brick course still in situ. No evidence of stone covering slabs was detected, suggesting that the

⁷Readers will note the absence of a Tomb 2 in the following discussion. Installation B was designated Tomb 2 in the excavation records, but after excavation it became clear that its primary function was not human burial. To avoid confusion,

the designation Tomb 2 will not be employed in publication or assigned to another tomb.

⁸Sometimes the inner faces of the stone walls were partly smoothed to present a relatively flush surface.

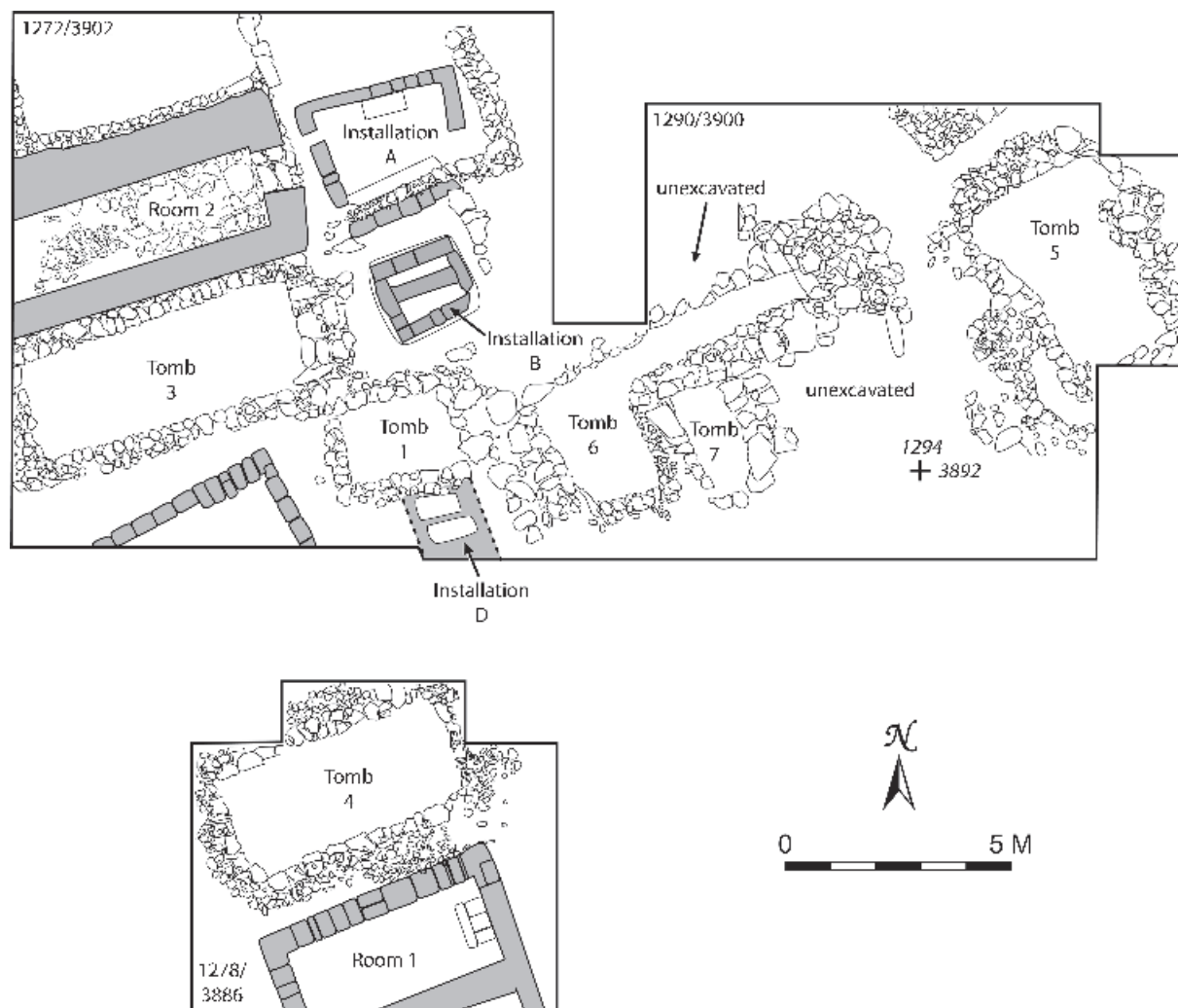


Fig. 3. Third-millennium B.C. mortuary complex, Acropolis Center, Umm el-Marra.

roofs were made either of wooden beams and mud or of a mudbrick vault. All of the tombs exposed in 2002 and 2004 were significantly larger than Tomb 1.

Judging from the associated material culture, the tombs were built and used sequentially over a period of some three centuries, from ca. 2500 to 2200 B.C. We present the tombs in tentative chronological order.⁹

Tomb 5

The easternmost of the excavated tombs, Tomb 5 in trench 1290/3900 is oriented northwest–southeast, perpendicular to the other tombs, and widens in its

northwestern part, measuring ca. 6.2 x 3.4–4.5 m in area (fig. 4). Its walls were preserved ca. 1.5 m high, with evidence of corbelling on both long walls. A 92 cm wide entrance on the east had been blocked with a substantial collection of boulders.

Tomb 5 was much disturbed in antiquity. No non-ceramic artifacts were identified, and only a few reconstructible ceramic vessels were recovered. Skeletal remains of what is preliminarily identified as an adult male were strewn throughout the tomb, and an incomplete infant skeleton was located in the north-eastern corner.¹⁰

⁹While there may be some overlap in the period of use for certain tombs, a sequence spanning several centuries in the mid to late third millennium is suggested by the associated pottery. Of course, ceramic differences between the tombs may be the result of many other factors besides chronological change.

¹⁰Preliminary assessment of human remains in the tombs was made by Stuart with the assistance of Sullivan and Maskevich. We are also grateful to Susanne Wilhelm for her opinion on these data.



Fig. 4. Tomb 5, looking northwest.

Among the extant pottery was a burnished, reddish-brown “champagne vessel” or fruit stand (fig. 5[1]), a small, thin-walled globular jar with black, spirally painted horizontal bands (see fig. 5[2]),¹¹ globular jars with everted rims (see fig. 5[6, 7]), a flat-based, short-necked jar (see fig. 5[8]), and diverse bowls (see fig. 5[3–5]). Champagne vessels are well known in the Carchemish region in the early to mid third millennium B.C.; the Tomb 5 example belongs to a later type dated to the middle of the millennium that was present in the monumental Tomb 302 at Jerablus Tahtani.¹² The pottery from Tomb 5 indicates a date ca. 2500 B.C., in the so-called Early Bronze (EB) III period (Umm el-Marra period VI).

Compared with the other tombs, Tomb 5 contained few animal bones, probably due to its disturbed state.

Specimens included sheep/goat segments with occasional cut marks, bird bones (duck, geese), and several species unattested in the other tombs (hare, pig, fox).¹³

Tomb 6

The largest of the Early Bronze Age tombs yet documented in the Acropolis Center, Tomb 6 is located west of Tomb 5 in trench 1290/3900 (fig. 6).¹⁴ The central and southeastern parts of Tomb 6 were destroyed by the intrusive Tomb 7. Although no entryway was evident, a doorway may have been situated in the eastern, disturbed part of the tomb, to judge from Tombs 1, 3, and 5. Tomb 6 had a cobble floor with fragments of sheep and goat bone embedded between the cobbles.

¹¹ Cf. Band Painted Ware at Kurban IV (Algaze 1990, pl. 80[F, L]), from Hadidi Tomb E1, said to be of a ware type unusual at that site (Dornemann 1988, 38, fig. 20[17]), and pottery from Chuera (Kühne 1976, pl. 33).

¹² Peltenburg et al. 1995, fig. 27[11]; Falsone and Sconzo (in press). See also examples found recently in graves at Gre Virike (Ökse 2005, fig. 12) and Chuera (Meyer 2004, Taf. 10D). The reddish-orange ware of the Umm el-Marra vessel is paralleled at Tilmen Höyük on the Islahiye plain of southeastern

Anatolia (Alkim 1969; Duru 2003, 54), which may be its point of origin. The examples from Jerablus Tahtani are said to be of a comparable ware (E. Peltenburg, pers. comm. 2005).

¹³ All data on faunal analysis in this article are supplied by Weber.

¹⁴ Ca. 9.6 x 4.8 m est. exterior, 6.4 x 2.9 m est. interior, with the northern wall preserved 2.3 m high with seven courses of boulders.

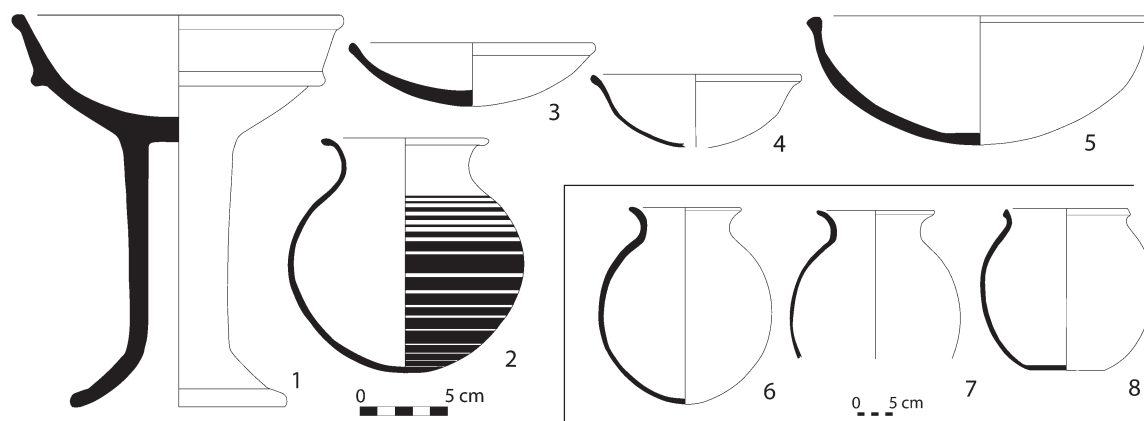


Fig. 5. Pottery from Tomb 5. Fine sand inclusions and wheelmade unless otherwise indicated: 1, exterior/interior reddish brown, core red-brown/gray/red-brown “sandwich,” fine sand/lime, exterior/interior burnished, vertical parallel burnish marks on pedestal shaft; 2, light brown, fine white sand, black paint or wash applied spirally; 3, pinkish brown, fine sand/lime; 4, exterior/interior reddish brown, core gray; 5, light green; 6, yellow-green; 7, exterior/interior light greenish-yellow slip, core light brown; 8, yellow.

In the central western part of Tomb 6 (fig. 7) were traces of black bands ca. 5 cm thick with linear impressions of wood, evidently deriving from the bottom of a wooden coffin whose edges had been coated with bitumen.¹⁵ The bands of bitumen and other impressions in the soil indicated a rectangular coffin 0.96 m wide and at least 1.1 m long that included two rectangular compartments against its northern edge (one with measurable dimensions of 23 x 75 cm). The coffin had been set on top of a bed of stone slabs resting on the cobble floor of the tomb. Inside the area demarcated by the coffin were a human femur, sacrum, humerus, and radius, while other human bones and a skull were distributed outside. All appear to derive from a single individual identified as an adult male.

West of the coffin area in debris above the floor, one gold and one silver toggle pin of the bent spherical-headed variety were found (fig. 8).¹⁶ In proximity to the human bones or scattered elsewhere in the vicinity were 18 lapis lazuli beads, two biconical gold beads, and four carnelian beads. Also recovered inside

and outside the coffin area were 258 small, flat bronze fragments.¹⁷ A few appeared to be pieces of bronze strips, some of which were found with a very small bronze dagger.¹⁸ The function of these fragments is unclear; perhaps they are remnants of metal straps for the coffin.¹⁹

A deposit of sheep/goat bones between the coffin and the western wall was situated above a yellow material that might represent the remains of matting. Below this deposit and above the cobble floor was an additional small bronze dagger.²⁰ While some vestiges of the cobble floor of Tomb 6 were apparent under the Tomb 7 floor to the east, much of the area evidently had been disturbed, and no significant artifacts were found. It seems that those segments of Tomb 6 not completely destroyed by the construction of Tomb 7 still suffered some disturbance, given the scattered distribution of bones and artifacts.

Tomb 6 pottery included a Metallic Ware, globular, round-based jar, fragments of a champagne vessel, everted-rim globular jars, and a ribbed conical cup,

¹⁵Cf. evidence of wooden coffins from Umm el-Marra Tomb 1 (Schwartz et al. 2003, 330), Banat Tomb 7 (McClellan and Porter 1999), and Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 35, 37, pls. 9[1, 3], 45).

¹⁶These two toggle pins are Klein's type I8A3a (Klein 1992, 77–8), which has a sharp bend. Parallels can be found in the Ur Royal Cemetery (Woolley 1934, pl. 231, type 7) and in the elite tombs at Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, pl. 62[2]). The gold pin (fig. 8) is well crafted, with a carefully incised herringbone pattern on its neck and a fluted spherical head. The association of precious metal pins with a male weakens the previous suggestion that such pins are more likely to be with women (Schwartz et al. 2003, 330 n. 26).

¹⁷The few strips with preserved width measured ca. 1 cm; no piece was preserved with the length intact. Here, “bronze” refers to objects of either copper or bronze, pending compositional analysis.

¹⁸UMM04 M-068 (lgth. 7 cm) most closely resembling Philip's (1989) type 27, found in Early Bronze graves in northern Syria, e.g., Bi'a grave 59/78:2 (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, pl. 100).

¹⁹McClellan and Porter 1999, 110.

²⁰UMM04 M-071, closest to Philip's (1989) type 36, another type found in Early Bronze northern Syrian graves, e.g., Halawa Tomb 70, where it occurs with bent-headed toggle pins (Orthmann 1981, pl. 63).



Fig. 6. Tombs 6 and 7, looking north.

all of which suggest a date similar to that of Tomb 5 in the mid third millennium B.C.²¹ The bent, spherical-headed toggle pins imply a similar date.

The great majority of the animal bones from Tomb 6 were sheep/goat, representing cuts of meat from three to four animals, sometimes with evidence of cut marks. Tomb 6 also had the largest number of frog bones of any of the Early Bronze tombs; it is uncertain, however, whether the frogs, weasels, and shrews here or elsewhere entered of their own volition, attracted by materials in the tomb, or whether they were intentional deposits.

In debris ca. 0.65 m above the Tomb 6 floor were the partial remains of a young dog, while 1.5 m above the floor was a scatter of disarticulated human bones apparently from a single individual. We are inclined to date at least the latter feature to the period of Tomb 7, since sherds located near the bones included vertical-rim bowls of a type associated with Tomb 7.

Tomb 3

Tomb 3 in trench 1272/3902 was ca. 7.7 x 3.5 m in area, with walls ca. 1.15–1.35 m high above a prepared floor of earth and pebbles that sloped down from east to west (fig. 9). In the eastern wall was an entryway that



Fig. 7. Tomb 6 with coffin remains and intrusive west wall of Tomb 7, looking southeast.

²¹ Reconstruction of the Tomb 6 pottery is still in progress.



Fig. 8. Gold (*top*) and silver toggle pins from Tomb 6.

had been filled in with boulders, and additional boulders were piled up on the outside of the entryway and against the outer face of the tomb's eastern wall.

The tomb's contents were much disturbed. The abundant pottery was broken into numerous pieces, with fragments from a single vessel often found in disparate areas of the structure. Similarly, the animal and human bone remains were scattered about in disorder, and no nonceramic objects were recovered except for a bone awl and a perforated gazelle horn core. Given the disarticulated character of the skeletal remains, it would appear that at least some of the disturbance occurred after the bodies had decomposed.²² Tomb 3 resembles Tomb 5 in the near dearth of nonceramic artifacts, the blocking of the entryway with boulders, and the disturbed human remains.

Preliminary assessment of the human bones from Tomb 3 suggests the presence of at least one adult and one adolescent. A large quantity and variety of animal bones were recovered, including sheep/goat as the most common type, geese, duck, dog, equid, cattle, weasel, and frog.²³

The pottery in Tomb 3, which included 62 reconstructible vessels, featured a great diversity of types (figs. 10, 11) such as short, flat-based corrugated cups

(see fig. 10[10–12]), painted Euphrates Banded Ware jars (see fig. 11[7–9]), brown spiral-burnished jars with tall, ridged necks (see fig. 10[15, 19]), tripod bowls (see fig. 10[8]), large flaring-neck jars with tripod feet (see fig. 11[2, 3]) (one having zoomorphic feet [see fig. 11(3)]), a feature also found on a large red pot with a false spout [see fig. 11(4)],²⁴ tall-necked jars with long spouts (see fig. 10[13]),²⁵ a squat jar with short spout and corrugated upper body (see fig. 10[14]),²⁶ large round-based jars (see fig. 11[1, 5, 6]), ring-based hemispherical bowls with ledge, triangular bead, or inverted-collar rims (see fig. 10[1–5]), open corrugated forms with pedestal bases (see fig. 10[16–18]), and a small amount of Metallic Ware (see fig. 10[9]). Three vessels in the southwestern and two in the eastern part of the tomb were found at a higher elevation than the rest of the tomb's contents, which were usually located on or slightly above the floor. These vessels may represent later offerings, a feature also noted in Tomb 4.

The Tomb 3 pottery has many parallels to that of Banat Tomb 1, dated to Banat period IV (=EB III),²⁷ but it also has similarities to EB IVA pottery at Ebla.²⁸ A date near the beginning of EB IVA in the 25th century B.C. seems appropriate.

Tomb 4

While not completely intact, Tomb 4 in trench 1278/3886 (fig. 12) was spared the extensive disturbance of Tombs 3 and 5 and contained abundant materials in situ. Measuring ca. 6.80 x 4.25 m in area, the tomb had stone walls preserved ca. 2 m high with evidence of corbelling on the long sides. Tomb 4 differs from Tombs 1, 3, and 5 in the absence of an obvious entryway, the only candidate being a small irregular opening ca. 50 x 50 cm in the northern wall near the northeastern corner that had been blocked with mudbricks. If this was an entry, it was very small and could have functioned only in the tomb's earlier phase; alternatively, it may represent a repair made to

²²An exception is provided by an articulated human hand in the tomb's southwestern corner.

²³A diversity of ages and both sexes are represented among the sheep/goat remains. Several sheep/goat bones had cut marks, and it is likely that "cuts" or portions of animals were placed in the tomb rather than complete individuals. Bones from a single adult equid were found in the eastern part of the tomb, thus far the only Acropolis Center example of an equid interred inside a tomb otherwise reserved for humans. The bones of an apparently complete subadult bovid skeleton were found in the western part of the tomb; subadult cattle are relatively rare in settlement debris, since cattle are far more valuable to keep alive until adulthood. A distal humerus displayed cut marks, suggesting that the carcass may have been dismembered or otherwise divided.

²⁴Similar flaring-neck jars are attested from a tomb at Oy-

lum Höyük (Özgen 1989–1990, fig. 2[1]) and from Banat Tomb 1 (Porter 1995, fig. 11[P11]). A sherd from Jerablus Tahtani described as a zoomorphic spout may more likely be a foot (Peltenburg et al. 1995, fig. 27[1]).

²⁵Cf. Mazzoni (1982, fig. 27[12]) for a parallel from Ebla Palace G. Note also the same type in Tomb 4 (*infra* nn. 38, 79).

²⁶Cf. Mazzoni (1985, fig. 2[28, 29]; 2002, pl. 39[94]) for parallels from Ebla Palace G. Note also the same type in Tomb 4.

²⁷Porter 1995.

²⁸*Supra* nn. 25, 26. For a parallel to fig. 11[1], see Marchetti and Nigro 1995–1996, fig. 5[5]. For other comparanda, see Sweyhat Tomb 5 (Zettler 1997, 63–72) and Hadidi Tomb LI (which also has later types present) (Dornemann 1988, figs. 13–18).



Fig. 9. Tomb 3, looking north.

the tomb wall where stones had fallen out. Gaps in the stonework of the eastern wall may also be relevant to the issue of access but are difficult to interpret at present.

Tomb 4 contained two layers or phases of use, each associated with an earth floor that sloped down from east to west. In the lower layer of Tomb 4 (fig. 13), the remains of three individuals were exposed. Skeleton D, preliminarily identified as an adult male, consisted of bones scattered haphazardly across the northern part of the tomb. Relatively few objects or

ceramic vessels were recovered here, except for an ivory comb found in the northwest near the skull (fig. 14, bottom, UMM04 I-027)²⁹ and seven petal-shaped or triangular inlay segments made of ostrich eggshell. These presumably derived from inlaid rosette motifs on an item of wooden furniture.³⁰ In the southeast was Skeleton E, whose bones were also scattered in disarray; this individual is preliminarily identified as a middle-aged male. Associated with Skeleton E were two small, square gold ornaments with a lattice design (fig. 15),³¹

²⁹ This and similar objects from Tombs 4 and 1 (Schwartz et al. 2003, 333) were probably ornamental combs to be worn on the head, since one was found near the skull of Skeleton D and another near that of Skeleton E, while a third was near the pile of personal ornaments of Skeleton F. The combs from the lower level of Tomb 4 were manufactured from elephant ivory; we would like to thank Catherine Sease, senior conservator, Peabody Museum, Yale University, for this identification. The ivory combs had either two tines at each end or two tines at one end and a slanting end without tines on the other. Both types had pairs of holes (see fig. 14). Only bone combs were found in the upper level of Tomb 4, where just fragments were preserved, and in Tomb 1. The bone combs had two tines at one end and a slanting ridge at the other and were also decorated with pairs of holes.

³⁰ At Bi'a, in the elite mausolea under Palace B, 10 pieces of ostrich eggshell inlay in the form of squares, triangles, and eye shapes were found in Grabbau 3, Room 1. The excavators

suggest these might have come from a small transportable object. In Grabbau 5, numerous inlay pieces of shell were found, and in one instance they belonged to a panel of inlaid rosettes with six almond-shaped petals precisely like the inlays in Umm el-Marra Tomb 4 (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 53, pls. 69, 93, 94). At Tell Banat, Tomb 7 contained traces of several pieces of inlaid wooden furniture (Porter 2002a, 19).

³¹ As Kim Benzel of the Metropolitan Museum of Art observed, these lattice designs seem like a simplified version of the designs on the gold sheath of a dagger from Tomb PG580 of the Ur Royal Cemetery (Woolley 1934, pl. 151). She suggested the tiny protrusions around the spaces of the latticework may be intended to imitate gold granulation. Cole, expedition conservator, noted that the protrusions were tiny gold tacks inserted into holes in a gold sheet. The backs of the tacks were planished to hold them in position, then the lattice was cut out (K. Benzel, pers. comm. 2005). Thus, the gold squares may have been part of the decoration of a leather dagger sheath.

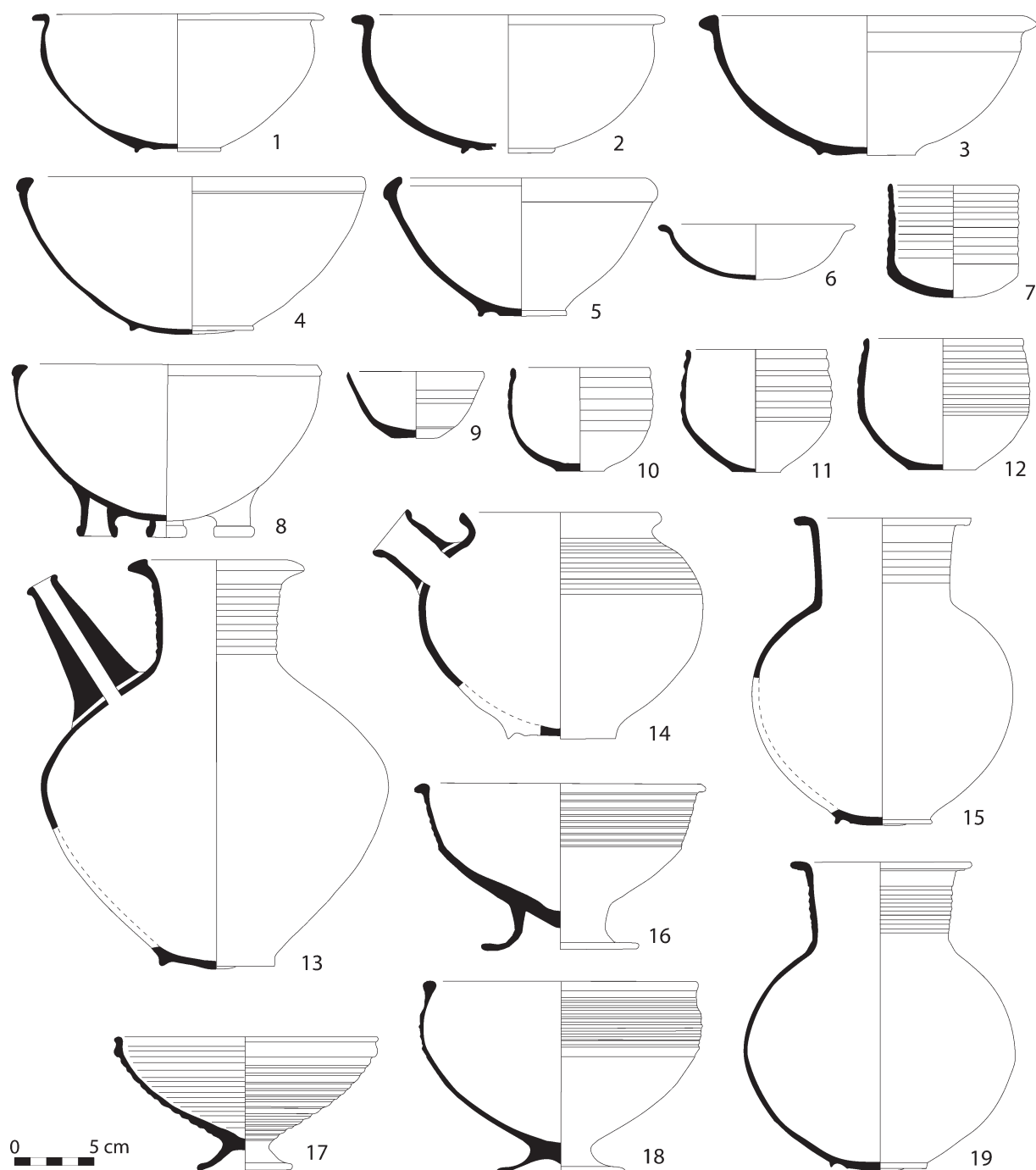


Fig. 10. Pottery from Tomb 3. Fine sand inclusions and wheelmade unless otherwise indicated: 1, pinkish brown, fine sand/lime; 2, exterior upper body light brownish yellow, lower body dark brownish red, interior brown to reddish brown, fine sand/lime; 3, light brown, fine/medium lime; 4, light brown with yellow-brown zones; 5, light brown, fine/medium lime, exterior spiral-burnished; 6, exterior upper body brownish yellow, exterior lower body/interior brown, fine/medium/coarse lime; 7, black, exterior spiral-burnished; 8, exterior upper body green, lower body brownish gray, interior brown; 9, Metallic Ware, dark gray with horizontal red streaks, no visible inclusions; 10, light brownish yellow, fine sand/lime; 11, light brownish yellow except lower exterior light pink; 12, light brownish yellow except lower exterior light pink, fine/medium lime; 13, gray-brown, fine/medium lime; 14, greenish gray, fine sand/lime; 15, light pinkish brown, exterior spiral-burnished; 16, pinkish brown, exterior lower body spiral-burnished; 17, exterior/interior red-brown, core red-brown (exterior) and gray (interior), interior with reserve slip pattern (gray stripes on red-brown background), no visible inclusions; 18, reddish brown, interior spiral-burnished; 19, light brown, fine sand/lime, exterior spiral-burnished.

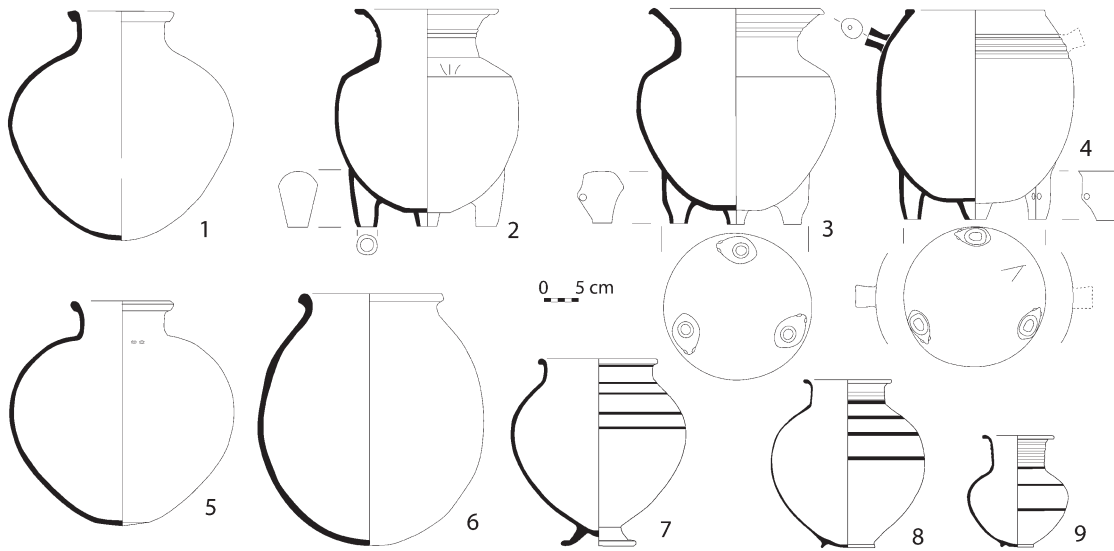


Fig. 11. Larger vessels from Tomb 3. Fine sand inclusions and wheelmade unless otherwise indicated: 1, exterior/interior brownish red, core brownish red/gray/brownish red “sandwich,” exterior spiral-burnished; 2, exterior/interior red-brown to brown, core gray, incised “pot mark”; 3, light brown, fine sand/lime, exterior burnished, tripod feet with appliqué “eyes”; 4, exterior/interior brownish red, core red/brown/red “sandwich,” fine-medium sand/lime, incised “pot mark” on base, tripod feet with appliqué “eyes,” one lug preserved out of possible two; 5, exterior/interior light greenish yellow, core brown, fine sand/lime, exterior lightly spiral-burnished, two impressed circular “pot marks”; 6, exterior light yellow to light pink, interior/core light pink; 7, brown, red paint, exterior spiral-burnished; 8, light brown, red paint, exterior spiral-burnished; 9, brown, fine/medium lime, brown paint, exterior spiral-burnished.

an ivory comb located near the skull, and an up-turned miniature basalt table.³² A small cup (fig. 16[9]) lay next to the mouth of the skull. The character of the remains in the vicinity of Skeletons D and E indicate considerable disturbance in this level of the tomb.

Skeleton F, identified as a female of middle age or older, differed from Skeletons D and E in that the bones were found in a dense cluster ca. 9 cm high, with the skull placed on top, indicative of a secondary burial

in which bones were moved from a previous location within Tomb 4 or elsewhere. The bones gave the impression of having been tightly packed in a container, and the approximately square zone of loose red soil surrounding the bones may represent the remains of a wooden receptacle.³³ Just to the west of Skeleton F were an ivory comb and a collection of metal objects consisting of four silver toggle pins,³⁴ three large bronze toggle pins,³⁵ and two large hollow silver spirals.³⁶

³² Similar miniature basalt tables have been found at Hama (periods J5–J4) (Fugmann 1958) and at Ebla in Palace G and Building P4. An example from Palace G had traces of red ochre, suggesting that it was used for blending pigments or cosmetics (Matthiae et al. 1995, 347). Building P4 contained four miniature basalt tables, two clearly associated with a bronze chisel (Marchetti and Nigro 1995–1996, 18). One of these tables was found in a room devoted to shelf storage of small, precious objects such as an Egyptian diorite bowl and a miniature marble table with carved decoration (Marchetti and Nigro 1995–1996, 18–19). Hence, some of the basalt tables may have been luxury items for elite usage. Certainly, this and two other Tomb 4 examples show excellent craftsmanship, with clean straight lines and a slight inward slant of the legs, giving them a graceful, dynamic appearance. A bronze chisel found in the Tomb 4 lower level discussed below may have originally belonged with one of the basalt tables.

³³ Microscopic examination of this soil by conservator Cole at 20X and 40X magnification indicated that it was likely decayed wood. Perhaps the ostrich eggshell inlays found in this level of Tomb 4 derived from a box or boxes used to store the bones of Skeleton F and/or her group of personal ornaments.

Note that fig. 13 shows only the skull, ulna, and humerus of Skeleton F, not the dense cluster of bones under and in the vicinity of the skull.

³⁴ UMM04 M-044 and M-052 (lgth. 15 cm) have hemispherical heads, Klein type I9A1a (Klein 1992, 83–4, pl. 14), and UMM04 M-033 and M-034 (lgth. 10.1–10.2 cm) have long, straight or slightly oval heads, Klein type I6A1a (Klein 1992, 64, pls. 12, 79).

³⁵ UMM04 M-049 (lgth. 27 cm) has a bent conical head, Klein type IA3a (Klein 1992, 98, pl. 15; cf. van Loon 2001, fig. 4A.7A[16–17] [from Wreyde]) and UMM04 M-056 and M-057 (lgth. 21 cm ea.) have bent spherical heads, Klein type I8A3b (Klein 1992, 78, pl. 13).

³⁶ UMM04 M-031 and M-055 (ht. 3.2 cm, max. diam. 4.5 cm). The better preserved weighs 18 g. Large, hollow silver spirals have been found in Early Bronze tombs at Wreyde (Orthmann and Rova 1991, 37, Abb. 26[W66.23, W66.24, W66.25]), Selenahiye (van Loon 2001, 4A.183, Tomb U), and Bi’a (Strommenger and Kohlmeier 1998, 42–3, pls. 49, 165[5, 8], Grave 25/48:5). On both sides of the skull in the Bi’a grave, small silver spirals were arranged in a vertical line over a large hollow spiral.



Fig. 12. Tomb 4, looking west-southwest.

Northwest of Skeleton F was an abundance of smashed pottery, and in the tomb's southwestern corner was a group of vessels with some specimens stacked in two tiers. Against the western wall of the tomb, adjacent to the pottery stack, were two miniature basalt tables, one standing on top of its slightly larger counterpart, the latter in turn standing atop a large flat stone placed on the tomb floor (fig. 17). Of possible relevance to these tables and the specimen situated

near Skeleton E is an inverted basalt grinding stone found near the southern wall of the tomb between Skeletons E and F. Also located between these skeletons were two ivory combs and an ivory comb fragment.

A peculiarity of the Tomb 4 lower level was a small, squarish shaft ca. 90 x 80 cm sunk 56 cm below the level of the floor in the northwestern corner. This shaft had a stepped configuration, with a higher step to the south and a lower one with a cobble floor to the north. In the upper debris of the shaft was a small bronze chisel; in the debris of the lower step were two inlay eyes of shell and dark stone of the type used for statues in this period.³⁷

The pottery corpus of the lower level of Tomb 4 (see fig. 16)³⁸ included short, flat-based corrugated cups (see fig. 16[11–14]), shallow ring-based bowls with a short ledge or bead rim (see fig. 16[15–19]),³⁹ spouted jars (see fig. 16[3, 4]), tall-necked jars (see fig. 16[1, 2, 5]), one painted Euphrates Banded Ware jar, and one small, brown, globular bottle (see fig. 16[6]). Inside several jars were small cups (dippers?) (see fig. 16[7]). While this ceramic group shares some characteristics with the pottery of Tomb 3 (e.g., short corrugated cups, a tall-necked jar with a ridged neck [see fig. 16(2)], Euphrates Banded Ware), it lacks the tripod vessels and bowl forms common to that tomb. Therefore, the pottery of the lower level of Tomb 4 may be slightly later than that of Tomb 3, perhaps belonging to an early to mid EB IVA time frame, ca. 2400 B.C.⁴⁰

In the scatter of smashed pottery northwest of Skeleton F, a specimen of a large jar represented only by sherds from its upper body bore a cylinder seal impression on its shoulder.⁴¹ The seal had been rolled one and a half times vertically so that the main representation, a boat scene, was flanked by the subsidiary figures on either side (fig. 18, UMM04 G-003). The boat has high ends and contains three jars with convex-topped stoppers.⁴² Above the boat are two seated human fig-

³⁷The eye inlays were made of solid pieces of white shell with black stone pupils set into black stone sockets that formed a black outline around the eye as seen from the front. Each eye (inclusive of socket) measured 1.3 (wd.) x 0.7 (ht.) x 0.8 (d.) cm. Whether the eyes were buried alone or belonged to a statue of perishable material, such as wood, is uncertain. The latter possibility exists, since an unplundered tomb at Chuera contained loose statue eyes and the remains of an over-life-sized bronze-covered statue head to which they belonged (Krasnik and Meyer 2001). Plundered elite tombs at Mari (Margueron 1990) and Banat (Porter 2002a) contained eye and eyebrow inlays for statues, and, in the latter case, a stone wig. In shaft graves at Selenkahiye and Wreyde, crude stone statues were sometimes found (Orthmann and Rova 1991; van Loon 2001). The purpose of these statues is uncertain, but the eyes and wig in the Banat tomb and the eyes in the Umm el-Marra

tomb may be remnants of an elite version of this custom. Such a connection is also suggested by the similarity of the small step trench of Tomb 4 to the arrangement of a shaft with one or more side chambers in the shaft graves at the Euphrates sites; cf. Orthmann and Rova 1991.

³⁸A total of 55 vessels were identified in the lower level of Tomb 4. For spouted vessel types also present in Tomb 3, see fig. 16[3, 4].

³⁹For Ebla parallels, see Mazzoni 1991, fig. 6[15, 16].

⁴⁰See also the ceramic parallels to Ebla IIB1 (Mazzoni 2002).

⁴¹For the jar type, see Schwartz et al. 2003, 340, fig. 24[1]. The impression is 6.6 x 2.5 cm.

⁴²The convex outlines of the outer two jar stoppers are clear, but the outline of the middle one is difficult to ascertain because the damaged edge of one sherd occurs here.

ures facing each other and holding long oars whose ends protrude diagonally below them, forming an upper frame to the boat scene.⁴³ Boat scenes are rare on Early Bronze Syrian seals and are usually considered to be borrowed from the Early Dynastic glyptic imagery of southern Mesopotamia.⁴⁴ In the southern Mesopotamian scenes, however, people are always shown in the boat, not over it.⁴⁵ This difference between UMM04 G-003 and the Early Dynastic boat scenes is probably a conscious adaptation of a Mesopotamian motif to a specific purpose. While we cannot know the exact details of this objective, we can appreciate that by making the scene taller and symmetrical, the seal carver enhanced its visual importance within the composition.

The subsidiary motifs of UMM04 G-003 can be seen to the right and left of the boat scene, but in neither place are all the details completely clear. In the upper left is a six-petaled rosette with a border outlining its shape. Below it is a scorpion with bent forelegs.⁴⁶ To the right of this scorpion is a rearing long-horned goat.⁴⁷ Rosettes similar to the one depicted here are a familiar motif in EB IVA–B Syrian glyptic on sherds, jar sealings, and cylinder seals.⁴⁸ The arrangement of the scorpion below the rosette and next to a rearing animal is perhaps an imitation of similar small scorpions beneath an inscription panel in Early Dynastic IIIB Mesopotamian contest scenes.⁴⁹ In these scenes, however, the scorpion is next to a rearing animal in combat with an adversary. The rearing goat on UMM04 G-003 has no adversary and appears awkward in relation to the boat scene. This situation is probably the result of the seal carver using a “contest” motif out of

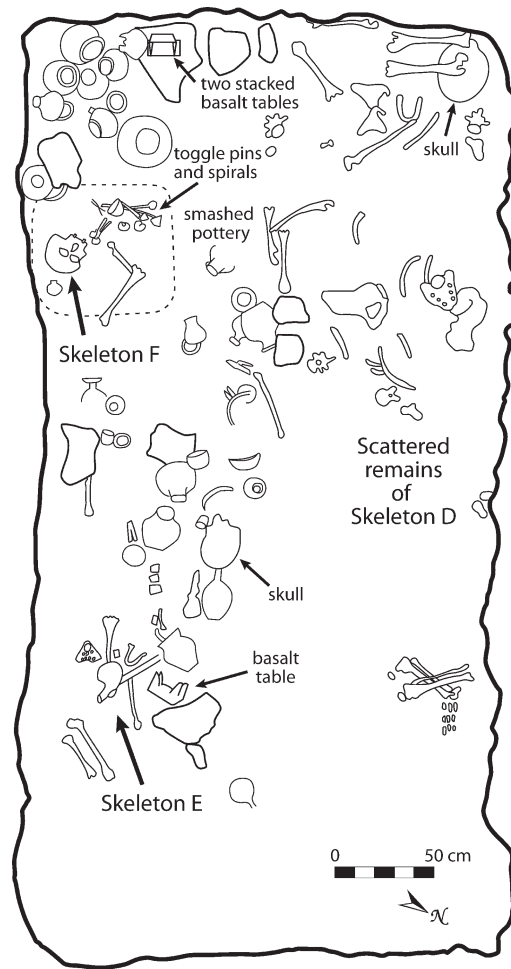


Fig. 13. Tomb 4 interior, lower level. Dashed line around Skeleton F indicates area of red/brown soil.

⁴³ Presumably these human figures are meant to be rowing the boat. They are very schematically rendered, and the one on the right is somewhat unclear due to damage to the sherd's surface.

⁴⁴ Mazzoni 1992, 103; Matthews 1996, 125; 1997b, 110.

⁴⁵ Frankfort 1955, nos. 324, 823; Amiet 1980, pl. 91.

⁴⁶ While the scorpion's tail cannot be seen on the representation to the left because this figure is too near the edge of the impression, the damaged scorpion figure to the right of the boat appears to have a bulge extending to the left, which would be its tail. A thin wavy line to the right of the scorpion may be a snake, since scorpions can be shown with snakes in third-millennium glyptic of both Syria and Mesopotamia (Frankfort 1955, no. 320; Moortgat 1967, 42, Abb. 29).

⁴⁷ The details of the head and forepart of this “goat” look strange, with a hump below the horn and what looks like a beak in front of the eye, but these are probably due to distortion caused by uneven rolling of the seal. On the impression's right side, the profile of the goat's back is much smoother. Between the goat and the boat is a flat, curving form that could be a snake, since snakes can appear with goats in Early Bronze Syrian glyptic (Matthews 1991, no. 14 [=Matthews 1997b, no. 502] [Tell Brak]; Parayre 1990, fig. 28[4] [Tell Leilan]).

⁴⁸ E.g., Parrot 1967, pl. 75, no. 2917; Orthmann et al. 1986,

23, Abb. 8; Mazzoni 1992, tav. 6, 13: impression A15; tav. 32: B88; tav. 33: B95, B96; tav. 34: B105, B106, B107; van Loon 2001, pl. 12.13a.

⁴⁹ Mackay 1925, pl. 6, no. 14 (Kish); 1929, pl. 41, nos. 3, 4 (Kish); Heinrich and Andrae 1931, pl. 56i (Fara, with inscription); Watelin 1934, pl. 35 (Kish); Frankfort 1955, nos. 320, 332, 502, 554 (Khafaje and Tell Asmar); Buchanan 1966, nos. 161 (Kish), 197 (Umm el-Jir); Matthews 1997b, nos. 156, 159 (Brak, impressions). While the seals from the Diyala region and Kish have been considered to exemplify a style of the early ED IIIA period (Boehmer 1969), two examples from Khafaje and one from Tell Asmar were found in ED IIIB contexts (Houses 2 at Khafaje; Houses Vb at Tell Asmar), while another from Tell Asmar was in an Akkadian level (Northern Palace main level); for dates, see Porada et al. 1992. Four of the Kish seals derived from Cemetery A, which Hansen notes could have begun only in the later part of ED IIIA and certainly continued into ED IIIB (Porada et al. 1992, 110, and references cited there). The impressions from Brak come from an Akkadian context (Matthews 1997b, 239; Oates et al. 2001). Matthews (1997b, 134 n. 20) considers that all the southern Mesopotamian examples could have been made in ED IIIB (ca. 2500–2350 B.C.).



Fig. 14. Ivory combs, Tomb 4 lower level: *top*, UMM04 I-031; *center*, UMM04 I-032; *bottom*, UMM04 I-027.

context to express an idea that in older Syrian glyptic images was conveyed by various combinations of one rosette, goat, scorpion, and snake.⁵⁰ Indeed, this seal was likely a local product of the Jabbul or the middle Euphrates area, since a similar mixture of Early Dynastic motifs (e.g., rearing animals) and Syrian traditions (e.g., large scorpions and rosettes) can also be seen in impressions on sherds at Selenkahiye on the middle Euphrates.⁵¹

The upper layer of Tomb 4 (fig. 19) consisted of skeletal materials and artifacts deposited above an earth floor ca. 50 cm higher than the lower floor, installed atop the soil that had accumulated or was deliberately deposited over the contents of that floor. As in the lower level of the tomb, the remains of three individuals were identified. In a relatively well-preserved state in the southwestern corner of the tomb was Skeleton B, identified as an adult female of advanced age. Oriented parallel to the tomb's southern wall,⁵²

⁵⁰ These are seals and seal impressions belonging to the "Chuera Style," named by Matthews (1997a, 156–7; 1997b, 114), and "Early Syrian Common Style," by Marchetti (1998, 119). The style is dated to ca. 27th–26th centuries B.C. (= Early Jezireh II [Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 236, fig. 8.2]) in Syria and the end of Early Dynastic I and the beginning of Early Dynastic IIIA in southern Mesopotamia (Porada et al. 1992, 103–10, figs. 4, 5). E.g., Frankfort 1955, no. 256; Moortgat 1967, Abb. 29; Moortgat and Moortgat-Correns 1978, 24, Abb. 24; Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1988, 143, fig. 33[M1 167]; Moortgat-Correns 1988, 20, Abbs. 7, 8; Parayre 1990, fig. 28[4]; Matthews 1991, no. 14 (=1997b, no. 502).

⁵¹ Van Loon 2001, 12.496–97, pl. 12[12, 13]. The adaptation of southern Mesopotamian motifs for Syrian purposes

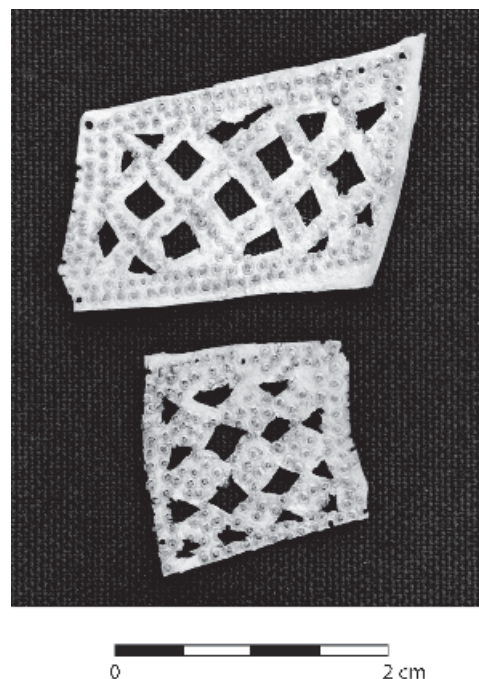


Fig. 15. Gold ornaments with lattice design, Tomb 4 lower level.

the skeleton was resting on a surface of tiny pebbles with its legs contracted. The upper body was partly enclosed by a thin U-shaped line of black material, probably the remains of a rectangular receptacle surrounding the individual.⁵³ Occasional white plaster traces were noted under the body, suggesting that the rectangular enclosure was lined with gypsum plaster, as had been the case in the two upper levels of Tomb 1. A yellow, fibrous substance west of the skull may be the residue of a wrapping around the body.

Jewelry had been placed in back of the skull and neck of Skeleton B on or near the right shoulder. Included in this collection were two crisscrossing gold toggle pins (fig. 20), one of an unusually large size,⁵⁴ a

has been discussed by Collon 1987; Mazzoni 1992, 1993; Matthews 1997a; Marchetti 1998.

⁵² Note also the east–west orientation of the bodies in Tomb 1, as well as in the one undisturbed burial in the Bi'a elite tombs (Grabau 6, Raum 2) and the skeletons in the Til-Barsib hypogeum (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936; Strommenger and Kohlmeier 1998).

⁵³ Conservator Cole tentatively concluded that the black material marking the edge of the enclosure was vegetal, non-woven, and made up of only one layer, perhaps being grass or reed.

⁵⁴ Both toggle pins were found on the shoulder and may have been worn on the body. These two spherical-headed toggle pins, UMM04 M-009 (lgth. 26.5 cm) and UMM04 M-

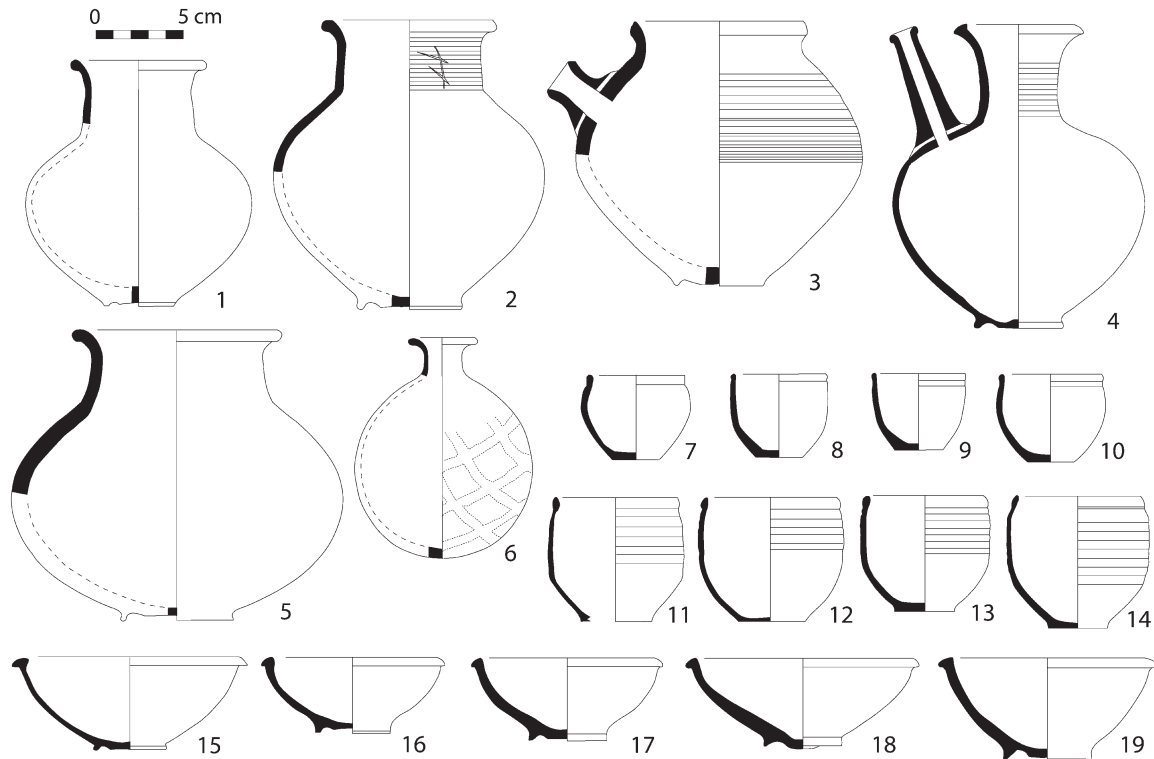


Fig. 16. Pottery from Tomb 4 lower level. Light yellow with fine sand inclusions and wheelmade unless otherwise indicated: 1, exterior with dark brown streak on shoulder, pink above, light brown below, pinkish-brown interior/core, fine sand/lime, spiral-burnished; 2, fine sand/lime, incised "pot mark"; 4, exterior/interior brownish red, core red/gray/red "sandwich," fine white sand, exterior lower body spiral-burnished; 5, exterior/interior light green, core light brown; 6, brown, fine sand/lime; 7, found inside no. 3; 11, pinkish brown; 12, light brown; 13, light brownish pink to yellow; 14, pinkish brown; 15, exterior/interior light brown to brownish red, core light gray, exterior/interior spiral-burnished, fine sand/lime; 16, pinkish brown; 17, exterior/interior yellow green slip, core light brown; 18, pinkish yellow; 19, exterior pink to yellow, interior pink.

thick tubular silver bracelet⁵⁵ found enclosing a silver rosette frontlet⁵⁶ that was attached to a fragmentary silver headband, a silver spirally twisted torque,⁵⁷ and a shell disc with lead (or lead-silver alloy) attachments.⁵⁸

Traces of a yellow, fibrous, organic material lying flat in the vicinity of the silver bracelet and rosette may represent the plant-derived material of a container for this group of objects. In addition to the above items

014 (lgh. 8.9 cm), are Klein's type I.8A2a (Klein 1992, 76, pls. 13, 89–91), a type represented by two silver examples in the Treasure of Ur at Mari (Parrot 1968, pl. B[4]). Both pins were decorated with incised lines around the shaft under the head and over and under the hole, which fit within the shaft width. The dark coloring in fig. 20 is a reddish fugitive layer that was nonpowdery and slightly thick and opaque in some spots. This layer is likely the result of impurities in the gold, which can react with minerals in the groundwater or soil to form a film on the surface of the metal. A study of the red film on several ancient Egyptian objects in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Frantz and Schorsch 1990, 138–42) showed it to be either a silver-gold sulfide or an iron oxide. Ogden (1982, 22) reports that if gold contains impurities of iron and is buried in soil that contains iron in its groundwater, the iron will precipitate out as an oxide that can be thick and shiny. We thank Jean-François de Laperouse, conservator at the Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation, The Metro-

politan Museum of Art, for advising us on this matter.

⁵⁵ The bracelet (UMM04 M-010) (diam. 3.5 cm) consisted of a hollow tube (diam. 1.1 cm) and enclosed a circle (diam. 7.8 cm).

⁵⁶ UMM04 M-010 (diam. 3.5 cm), similar to the example found in the middle layer of Tomb 1 (Schwartz et al. 2003, fig. 20).

⁵⁷ The torque (UMM04 M-021) is only 3–4 mm thick and is tightly twisted along its entire length. It most resembles a silver torque found at Göltepe (Yener 2000, fig. 23). The bronze torque from Umm el-Marra Tomb 1 was much less tightly twisted (Schwartz et al. 2003, fig. 17).

⁵⁸ UMM04 I-019, a flat shell ring 4.8 cm in diam. with a hole of 1.5 cm diam. in the middle. The lead attachments are three rectangular bands (wd. 9 mm) spaced evenly around the outer edge. A similar shell disk without metal attachments was found in Umm el-Marra Tomb 1 (Dunham 2003, 183, no. 121a).



Fig. 17. Miniature basalt tables in situ, Tomb 4 lower level, looking south.

were 41 beads found near the skull, presumably from one or more necklaces in situ. Included were numerous examples of lapis lazuli and carnelian as well as shell, quartz, faience, silver, and one gold specimen.⁵⁹ Five small ivory cylinders were also located in the vicinity of the skull: in front, below, and inside it. These small cylinders (ht. 1.8–2.02 cm, outside diam. 1.8–2.0 cm) were closed at one end, giving the appearance of miniature cylindrical vessels. The purpose of these curious objects is uncertain.⁶⁰

Several other objects were associated with Skeleton B. A small, ribbed, conical cup was placed on her chest (fig. 21[12]), while under her thighs were a small silver spiral and silver loop. Just to the north of the black-lined enclosure for the body were two groups of bone comb fragments. Also near Skeleton B were pieces of a second silver bracelet and a silver rosette found atop a stone between the southern wall of the tomb and the black rectangle enclosing the body. Lines that might

have been the residue or imprint of reeds or other vegetal material were noted on this stone.

Skeleton C, north-northwest of Skeleton B, consisted of a dense group of disarticulated bones found in very soft soil against the western wall of the tomb.⁶¹ These bones appear to derive from a single individual preliminarily identified as an adult male who had been

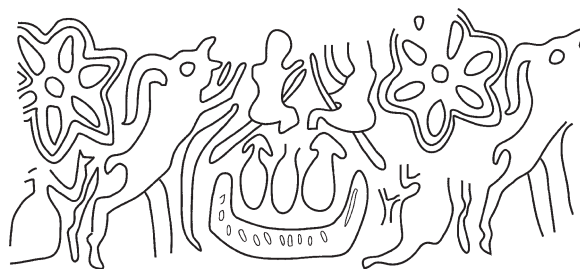


Fig. 18. Seal impression on jar, Tomb 4 lower level.

⁵⁹ Among the shell beads or bead fragments is an example of an *Arcularia* shell, the columella from a gastropod (sp. not identifiable) and a pierced *Engina mendacaria* shell. We are grateful to David Reese, Peabody Museum, Yale University, for these identifications.

⁶⁰ Suggested ideas include plugs for orifices in the skull (five

cylinders—two eyes, two ears, and a mouth) or containers for small amounts of oil or perfume. The cylinders are made of elephant ivory; we thank Sease for this identification.

⁶¹ The matrix of soft soil might indicate that the bones had been placed in a small pit; alternatively, it could be the remains of a container, as with Skeleton F, although the soil was not

moved from another location after decomposition, from either a different part of Tomb 4 or elsewhere.⁶² Several objects were located in the vicinity of Skeleton C, some of which were probably associated with that individual, such as the fragment of a bone comb adhering to the pelvis (UMM04 I-006) and a bone comb tine south of the skeleton (UMM04 I-007).⁶³ Also likely to belong with Skeleton C, found underneath the bones, were two pieces of silver wire,⁶⁴ a small, flat, silver handle,⁶⁵ two silver bowl fragments,⁶⁶ and a silver toggle pin (UMM04 M-013). Since the latter object compares closely to two silver toggle pins found just to the north of Skeleton C, it is likely that all three formed a set.⁶⁷

Seven silver vessels (fig. 22) were also found in this area, along with fragments of two or three other silver vessels and one bronze bowl. Near Skeleton C but at a higher elevation was a silver bowl (UMM04 M-007) by the western wall, while a silver bowl (UMM04 M-016) and a bronze (or copper-silver alloy) bowl (UMM04 M-011) were discovered together between Skeletons B and C (see fig. 19). Under Skeleton C, as noted above, were two silver bowl fragments;⁶⁸ farther below, under a ceramic vessel, was a silver goblet (UMM04 M-015). North of Skeleton C, among the many ceramic vessels deposited in that area, were a small, silver, spouted jar (UMM04 M-024), bowl (UMM04 M-019), and cup (UMM04 M-023), while another silver cup (UMM04 M-022) had been placed amid the pottery ca. 60–70 cm to their east.⁶⁹

Not directly adjacent to Skeletons B or C was a diversity of nonceramic artifacts, including several toggle pins. Two silver pins (UMM04 M-008 and M-

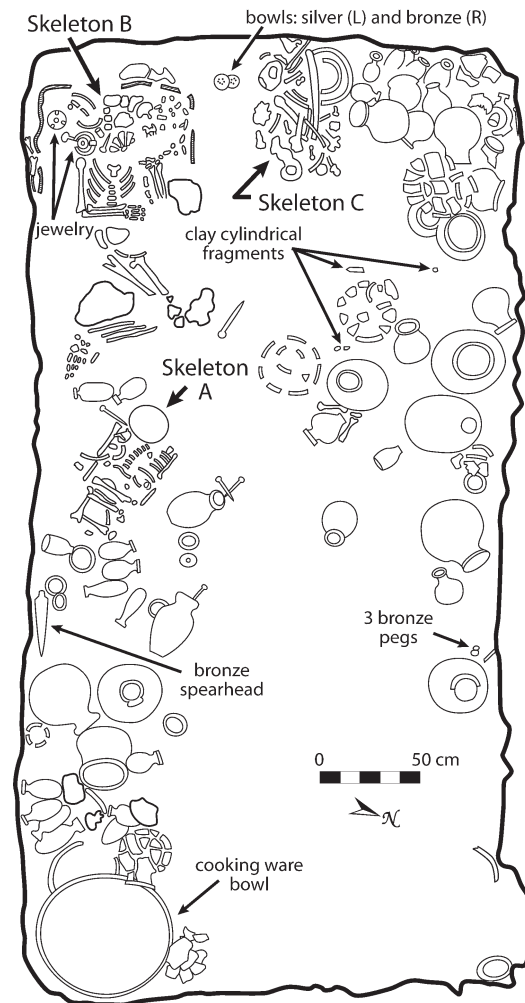


Fig. 19. Tomb 4 interior, upper level.

red as in the latter case. Given the discovery of a set of three toggle pins close to the bones, one might propose that the body had been wrapped in a cloth fastened with these pins.

⁶²Skeleton C was resting on soil, various vessels, and other objects ca. 9 cm above the floor of the upper layer of Tomb 4, indicating that it was deposited in this spot after the Skeleton B individual and associated objects were placed on the tomb floor. Given the relatively modest amount of deposit between Skeleton C and the floor, it is likely that the Skeleton C individual was installed not long after Skeleton B was interred.

⁶³It is likely that a group of bone comb fragments, UMM04 I-011, found in the vicinity of toggle pin UMM04 M-018 (*infra* n. 67) also belonged to Skeleton C.

⁶⁴UMM04 M-020, two fragments of a curving silver wire 1.3 mm thick.

⁶⁵UMM04 M-002 (lgth. 4.25 cm, 0.15 cm thick). The object has one end rolled over in a loop, so that it could be hung (possibly on the silver wire M-020), while the other end splays out but is broken. Perhaps it was a small mirror or another personal grooming instrument. Sets of small personal grooming instruments in copper, gold, or silver that could be hung on a loop were found in the Ur Royal Cemetery (Woolley 1934, 245).

⁶⁶*Infra* n. 68.

⁶⁷UMM04 M-013 (lgth. 8.15 cm) has a flat, lentil-shaped head, Klein's type I.4A1a (Klein 1992, 49–50, pls. 10, 68). As was the case with the gold pins of Skeleton B, this pin has incised lines under the head and over and under the hole. The two pins just to the north of Skeleton C, UMM04 M-017 (lgth. 9.3 cm) and M-018 (lgth. 7.5 cm), are extremely similar to M-013. A silver toggle pin (UMM04 M-062, lgth. 9.4 cm) found in the northwestern corner could be the same type but has not yet been cleaned.

⁶⁸UMM04 M-036, two small-rim sherds from a round silver bowl with a splayed, flat rim like UMM04 M-019 (fig. 22, lower left).

⁶⁹In fig. 22, the goblet UMM04 M-015 in the upper right corner has a close parallel at Troy period IIg (Tolstikov and Treister 1996, pl. 103). The long-spouted jar in the upper left, UMM04 M-024, appears to be modeled on larger long-spouted jars found in southern Mesopotamia, where numerous representations attest to their ritual use (Müller-Karpe 1993, 13–25, pls. 2–6, 170–71). Although groups of metal vessels in burials are rarely preserved, a Syrian tradition of including them in tombs is attested by the mid third-millennium Tomb 300 at Mari, which contained a set of bronze vessels including a spouted jar and bowls (Jean-Marie 1990, 307–10, pl. 15).

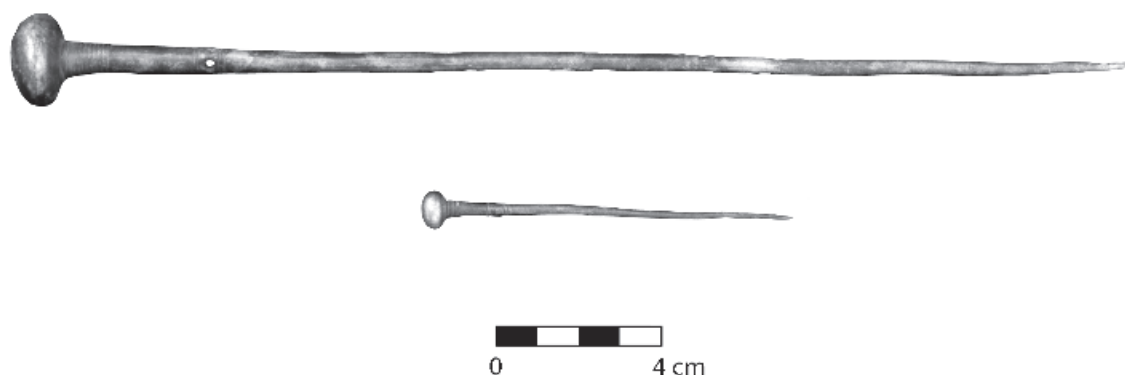


Fig. 20. Gold toggle pins, Tomb 4 upper level.

028) lay flat on the floor east of Skeleton B, not far from her feet. Another silver toggle pin (UMM04 M-030) was found on the floor just northeast of the legs of Skeleton B, and a crisscrossing pair (UMM04 M-059 and M-060) was located farther away in the south-center, also flat on the floor.⁷⁰ Four of these pins, M-008, M-030, M-059, and M-060, are identical in style to the gold toggle pins of Skeleton B, with the same spherical head, very small shaft hole, and incised rings around the shaft above and below the hole. The fifth silver pin, M-028, has a dome-shaped head but also has incised rings around the shaft above and below the hole. Perhaps such similarities indicate that these silver pins constituted a set together with the two gold pins on the body of Skeleton B. Farther to the east were a bronze toggle pin and the fragment of another (UMM04 M-051 and M-054). One might suggest that these toggle pins were originally placed in the tomb along with associated garments, recalling the textiles and toggle pins sent as gifts for funerary purposes or offered to royal ancestors by the Ebla palace.

A bronze spearhead (fig. 23, UMM04 M-012) was found on the floor along the southern wall at the east end of this area of toggle pins and Syrian bottles. Measuring 30.5 cm in length, the spearhead had a short, square tang and four slots on its blade. Although slotted blades with two slots occur in Early Bronze northern Syrian sites, they are more common in Anatolia, where they date from the mid third to the mid second millennium B.C.⁷¹ Slotted spearheads with a short, square tang are known from northwestern Anatolia, including Troy, and the Aegean.⁷² Four slots are extremely unusual, however; the only known example is the inscribed spearhead of the ruler Anitta at Kültepe.⁷³ With its royal inscription, this was surely a ceremonial weapon. Indeed, UMM04 M-012 also may have been reserved for ceremonial purposes, since it had never been sharpened before being put in the tomb.⁷⁴

In the north-center of the tomb, three large bronze bolts or pegs with a loop at one end and very blunt points at the other (fig. 24) were positioned vertically, just to the west of a large jar.⁷⁵ To their west were a

⁷⁰ Toggle pins UMM04 M-008 (lgth. 12.5 cm), M-030 (lgth. 14.3 cm), M-059 (lgth. 12+ cm [broken]), and M-060 (lgth. 14.5 cm) are all of the same type as the gold toggle pins of Skeleton B (M-009, M-014)—Klein's type I.8A2a (Klein 1992, 76, pls. 13, 89–91). Pin UMM04 M-028 (lgth. 17.3 cm) is Klein's type I.4A1a (Klein 1992, 49–50, pls. 10, 68).

⁷¹ Philip 1989, 81–2; McDonald et al. 2001, 237.

⁷² Stronach 1957, 111–12, type 3; Branigan 1974, 18, type 2, pl. 9.

⁷³ Özgüç 1956.

⁷⁴ As noted by the expedition conservator.

⁷⁵ Pegs (lgth. ca. 11.7 cm, 1 cm thick). The top example in fig. 24 had been hammered very hard on its loop end, perhaps to fit tightly into something. One possibility could be that these were linchpins for vehicle wheels. Linchpins are rarely preserved, but two from a tomb in Susa dating to the early second millennium B.C. have similar dimensions to these (Tallon 1987, 306–7). Given the presence of numerous

equid burials in the mortuary complex and the importance of equid-drawn vehicles for military and ceremonial purposes as attested in the art and texts of this period (e.g., the glyptic representations from Beydar, Brak, and Mozan [cf. Matthews 1997b, 136; Jans and Bretschneider 1998; Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2000, 226–27; Emberling and McDonald 2003, 44–48]) and the mention of wheeled vehicles in funerals of royal women of Ebla (Archi 2002, 172–75), the inclusion of a part of a “chariot” to serve as a *pars pro toto* seems possible (Meyer 2000, 29). Note the presence of an elaborate rein ring in the hypogeum at Til Barsib (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936, pl. 31). In the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid periods, linchpins on royal chariots had anthropomorphic decoration suggesting an apotropaic, protective function, since they kept the wheels from falling off the axles (Calmeyer 1980). If further discoveries support the identification of the pegs in Tomb 4 as linchpins, one is tempted to see in them a similar purpose.

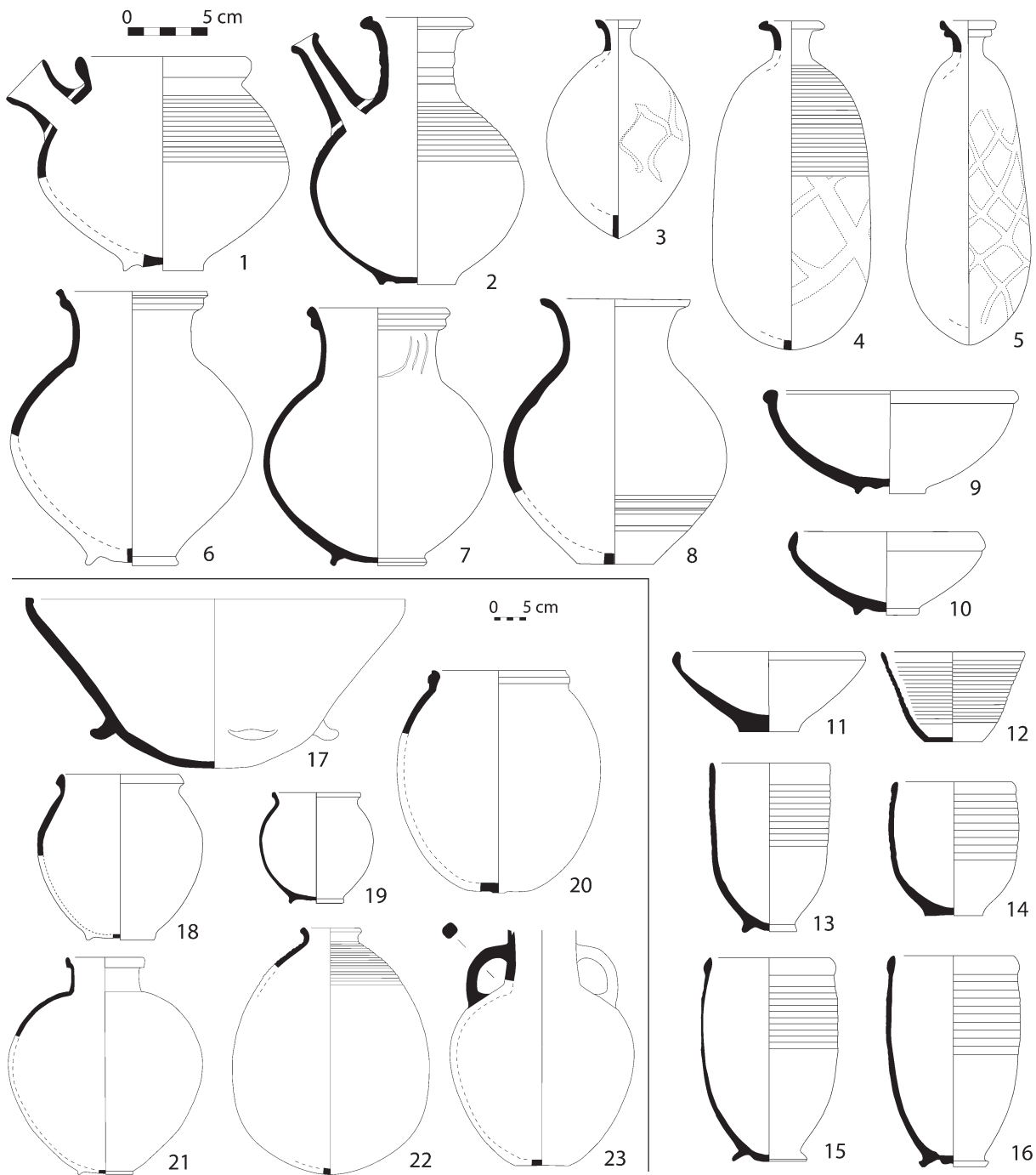


Fig. 21. Pottery from upper level of Tomb 4. Light yellow, with fine sand inclusions, and wheelmade unless otherwise indicated: 1, exterior pinkish-yellow slip, interior and core pinkish brown; 2, pinkish brown, fine white sand; 3, gray, exterior spiral-burnished; 4, yellow-brown; 5, gray, exterior spiral-burnished; 6, light brown to yellow, exterior spiral-burnished; 7, light pink-brown, exterior spiral-burnished, incised "pot mark"; 9, gray, fine sand/lime; 10, pink-brown to yellow; 12, light brown and pink, interior and exterior corrugated, no visible inclusions; 13, light brownish yellow to pink, fine sand/lime; 14, pinkish brown; 15, pink, fine sand/lime; 16, exterior light yellow to pinkish brown, interior and core pinkish brown, fine sand and lime; 17, cooking ware, exterior/interior brown, core brown (interior) and black (exterior), dense medium-white sand, handmade, two exterior lugs; 19, light yellow exterior/interior, core pink-brown; 20, exterior light yellow (slip?), interior pinkish brown; 21, light greenish yellow; 22, pink-brown, fine sand/lime; 23, exterior/interior pinkish red, core red/gray/red "sandwich," neck wheelmade, rim missing (old break).

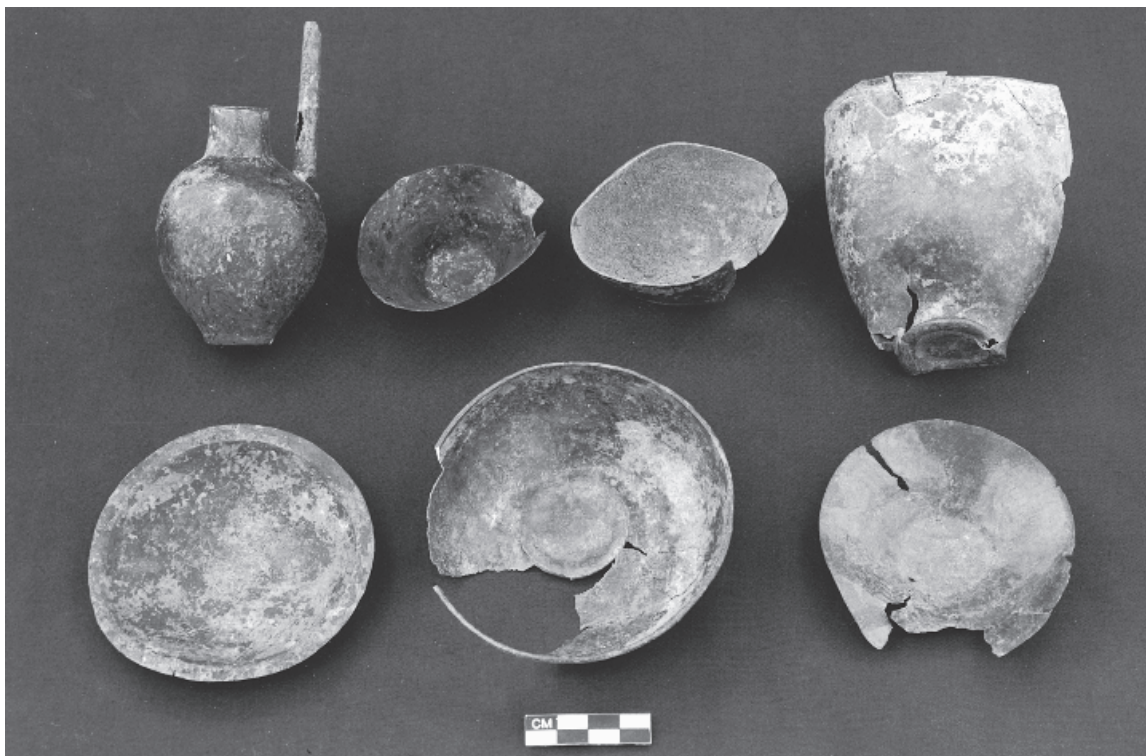


Fig. 22. Silver vessels, Tomb 4 upper level: *top* (from left to right), UMM04 M-024, 023, 022, 015; *bottom*, M-019, 007, 016.

pair of ostrich eggshell eye inlays and two bone comb fragments.⁷⁶ In the northwestern corner of the tomb, a silver toggle pin (UMM04 M-062) was located next to the wall behind a spouted vessel.⁷⁷

Somewhat enigmatic are four fragmentary, slightly tapering cylindrical objects of lightly baked clay bearing incised symbols found on the floor in the northwestern part of the tomb (fig. 25, UMM04 O-003). Two of the four (the bottom two of fig. 25) bear what appear to be the same characters. Each object had a hole ca. 2 mm in diameter lengthwise through its center, as if it had been strung on a line or cord. While the character and number of the marks suggest that these are written symbols, no other attestations of this noncuneiform writing system have yet been identified.⁷⁸

Deriving from a somewhat later date than the materials deposited directly on or near the floor of the upper level were the remains of a child (ca. 4–5 years old)

designated Skeleton A. Located in the south-central part of the tomb ca. 21 cm above the floor, the skeleton had contracted legs and was found with a small silver spiral near the pelvis and a small jar north of the body. Not far away, by the southern wall, fragments of a bone comb had been discovered at a higher level (ca. 40 cm above the upper floor surface), as were other bone comb segments, a miniature bronze chisel, and pottery including a cup, bowl, and corrugated goblet. Perhaps the latter items and the silver bowl found by the western wall (UMM04 M-007) represent offerings made subsequent to the original placement of the interred individuals.

The upper level of the tomb yielded 79 ceramic vessels found primarily against the southern wall to the east or against the northern wall, with a dense cluster in the tomb's northwestern corner (see fig. 21).⁷⁹ While some examples of the short, flat-based corrugated

⁷⁶ The ostrich eggshell eye inlays (UMM04 I-009) are very small, lozenge-shaped pieces (0.95 x 0.65 x 0.15 cm) with a hole surrounded by a sunken area for the placement of the pupil. At Tell Bi'a, numerous eye-shaped inlays like these, said to be of shell, were found in Grabbau 5 of the Early Bronze elite mausolea (Strommenger and Kohlmeier 1998, 72, pls. 93, 169–70).

⁷⁷ *Supra* n. 67.

⁷⁸ Of possible relevance are the “pot marks” found on vessels in this period. We are grateful to Jesper Eidem for this suggestion.

⁷⁹ For spouted vessel types also present in Tomb 3, see fig. 21[1, 2].

goblets characteristic of Tomb 3 and the lower level of Tomb 4 were identified (see fig. 21[14]), a new and common type in this level were tall, ring-based corrugated goblets of the variety well known from Mardikh IIB and other EB IVA–B contexts (see fig. 21[13, 15, 16]). Other new types making their appearance are the elongated “Syrian bottle” or alabastron (see fig. 21[4, 5]), most often gray and spiral-burnished,⁸⁰ and jars with tall necks and grooved rims (see fig. 21[6, 7]). While the pottery of the upper level of Tomb 4 resembles that of Tomb 1 in many respects (e.g., tall corrugated goblets, Syrian bottle alabastra, tall-necked, grooved-rim jars), there are differences such as the presence of short corrugated cups—not found in Tomb 1—and the absence of the Tomb 1 bowl with a vertical, collared rim.⁸¹ Therefore, Tomb 4 probably dates to a slightly earlier period than the late EB IVA horizon of Tomb 1, perhaps mid to late EB IVA, mid 24th century B.C.

Unlike the situation in Tomb 1, where Syrian bottles were found only on or next to the interred bodies, the upper-level Tomb 4 examples did not rest directly on the skeletons and were sometimes located at a considerable distance from them. Most of the bottles, regardless of shape or ware, had evidence of a crisscross or net pattern encrusted in salt on the lower body (cf. fig. 21[3–5]), the likely vestiges of a string bag for the vessels.⁸² An unusual vessel type was a very large cooking ware bowl with two lugs on the lower body found in the southeastern corner of the tomb (see fig. 21[17]). This vessel might be indicative of a shared funerary meal, although it is difficult to ascertain whether the other pottery can be interpreted along the same lines.

The animal bones from both levels of Tomb 4 indicate the same range of animal species as that of Tomb 3,⁸³ but there were fewer bones of most species except for sheep and goat. The sheep and goat were generally younger than those of Tomb 3 and usually subadult. Cut marks were observed on some bones of older individuals, perhaps indicating that meat cuts or portions of older animals were placed in the tomb along with complete younger animals.

⁸⁰ The discovery of a globular bottle in the lower level of Tomb 4 (see fig. 16[6]) predating the alabastra in the upper level may support the proposition that alabastra were introduced after a phase in which only globular Syrian bottles were in use (Oates et al. 2001, 159–60).

⁸¹ Schwartz et al. 2003, fig. 23[3].

⁸² These data support Zimmermann’s (2005) hypothesis that Syrian bottles were wrapped in net bags for carrying or suspending. Note also the painted crosshatch patterns on light-colored Syrian bottles from Amuq phase I and Hama



Fig. 23. Bronze spearhead, Tomb 4 upper level.



Fig. 24. Bronze pegs, Tomb 4 upper level.

Tomb 7

Tomb 7 (trench 1290/3900) refers to the subterranean chamber intruding into the south-central part of Tomb 6 (see fig. 6). The bottoms of the Tomb 7 walls were ca. 20 cm higher than the cobble floor of Tomb 6. Preserved 1.75–1.9 m high, the Tomb 7 walls consisted of an inner core of relatively regular limestone boulders with a packing of rough boulders and cobbles piled against them. Unlike the other Early Bronze tombs, there was little evidence of mudbrick

phases J2 and J3, perhaps similarly intended to recall the net bags in which the vessels were kept (Fugmann 1958, fig. 93, 3A674 no. 1/H11, fig. 98, 3A879; Braidwood and Braidwood 1960, 415, fig. 318[2]). Residue indicating a net pattern was also observed on painted Euphrates Banded Ware jars from Tomb 1 at Banat (Porter 1995, figs. 15, 16). The small bottle from the lower level of Umm el-Marra Tomb 4 (see fig. 16[6]) likewise had a net pattern on its exterior.

⁸³ Sheep/goat most common, followed by bird (geese, duck), bovid, canid, equid, frog, and shrew.



Fig. 25. Inscribed(?) clay cylinders, Tomb 4 upper level.

collapse inside the structure, suggesting that it did not possess a mudbrick superstructure. An open space covered by a large flat slab ca. 50 x 100 x 25–35 cm, an apparent lintel, was noted in the eastern wall of Tomb 7, indicating a doorway leading to another chamber still to be investigated.

Tomb 7 contained a white lime-plastered floor sloping down from northwest to southeast. In the southeastern corner were human skeletal remains identified as those of a child or young adolescent found with several broken vessels. Just above the tomb floor were a bone cylinder, a bronze nail, and the pointed end of a silver toggle pin.

The vessels from Tomb 7 include examples of vertical-rim bowls datable either to late EB IVA (late

Umm el-Marra period V) or EB IVB (Umm el-Marra period IV)⁸⁴ as well as EB IV tall, ring-based corrugated goblets. We conclude, therefore, that Tomb 7 dates to a period either partly contemporaneous with or subsequent to the construction and use of Tomb 1.

Equid Installations

A set of features adjacent to Tombs 1 and 3 in trench 1272/3902 proved to contain the remains of animals and, on occasion, human infants.⁸⁵ North of Tomb 1 was Installation A, a rectangular room with mudbrick benches against the northern and southern walls and a blocked doorway on the east (fig. 26). The room contained the skeletons of four equids and the skull and partial postcranial remains of a human in-

⁸⁴Schwartz et al. 2000, fig. 4[8]; 2003, fig. 23[3]; Schwartz 2001, pl. 5A.2. For examples at Ebla IIB1–IIB2, see Matthiae 1981, fig. 17, top row, fig. 21, top row. Sherds of clear EB IVB type were found in the upper debris of the excavated Tomb 7 chamber and in debris of the incompletely excavated parts of the tomb to the east.

⁸⁵Although one might suggest that the infant remains in

Installations A–D derived from subfloor burials of a later level, this possibility can be ruled out because the human remains were often stratigraphically sealed by animal bones, there was no sign of an intrusion, and there was no trace of Middle Bronze Age domestic architecture above the installations from which such burials could have originated.



Fig. 26. Installation A with equid skeletons, looking west.

fant. In the upper debris of the structure was a large flat slab of the same size and shape as that found atop the entry to Tomb 1,⁸⁶ perhaps originally deriving from Tomb 3 to the southwest. Also in the upper debris were several sherds of a cylindrical ceramic stand with incised decoration⁸⁷ and a complete ring-based corrugated goblet with yellow horizontal bands on a red-brown background, a ware designated White on Black at Ebla.⁸⁸ These special artifact types may have been used in the rituals associated with the deposits in this installation.

South of Installation A was Installation B, a subterranean brick feature 1 m deep divided into two compartments (fig. 27). Inside each compartment was the skeleton of an equid missing its skull. Judging from the position of the bones, the animals had been standing upright facing the western wall of the structure, each straddling a brick buttress against that wall. At the top of the western wall was a gap in the uppermost brick course, leaving a ledge where two equid

skulls and a spouted jar had been placed. Presumably these skulls belonged to the headless individuals below. Also identified in each compartment, probably added subsequent to the equids, were the skeletons of three puppies, while the southern compartment also contained the skeleton of a human infant. Some extraneous bones of sheep/goat and cattle were also found in the structure, perhaps included as joints of meat, as well as the skull of a third equid.

Excavation below the floor of Tomb 1 revealed the northern part of a rectangular mudbrick feature of earlier date designated Installation C (fig. 28). Placed inside a rectangular trench like Installation B, the structure contained the skeleton of a headless equid standing upright. Excavations south and west of Tomb 1 at a similar elevation revealed additional equid bones as well as a dog skeleton, probably also part of Installation C.

Installation D is located south of Tomb 1 at a higher elevation than Installation C. Against the southern

⁸⁶ Schwartz et al. 2003, 330.

⁸⁷ See similar stands from Chuera (Moortgat 1962, figs. 22–6) and Brak (Oates et al. 2001, fig. 462, no. 1594).

⁸⁸ See also goblet type GII at Hama (Ingholt 1940, 30).

While Mazzoni (2002, 77) terms the ware “White on Black” at EB IVA Ebla, she also describes white-on-red specimens that recall our example.



Fig. 27. Installation B with equid skeletal material and two equid skulls and spouted jar on ledge, looking west.



Fig. 28. Installation C with headless equid skeleton, looking south.

wall of Tomb 1, two equid skulls, a spouted jar, and a jar containing the skeleton of a human infant were excavated in 2000.⁸⁹ These materials appear to have been placed directly against the stones of the tomb wall and in some cases were intermingled with stones collapsed from that wall. Excavation east of these items in 2004 revealed a rectangular brick feature bisected by a partition wall. In this feature, the skeletons of a minimum of six equids of apparent advanced age were identified, accompanied by five equid skulls, as well as fragments of a human infant skull and, in the southern compartment, a spouted jar.⁹⁰

A single equid was placed against the eastern wall of the partially excavated room west of Tomb 1. This animal is the largest and youngest of the equids found thus far in the Umm el-Marra tomb complex, the only complete skeleton of an equid not fully adult. The skull was missing, due either to intentional removal or to disturbance by a Late Bronze Age pit.

Adjacent Architecture

Just south of Tomb 4 in trench 1278/3886 was the rectangular Room 1, built of gray-white mudbricks atop a stone substructure. Although its dimensions and orientation were comparable to Tomb 4, this structure was not a tomb and apparently formed the northernmost room of a building containing at least one additional room to the south. Room 1 had two lime-plastered floors, the earlier of which had burned debris on it that included terracotta spindle whorls and EB IVA pottery in situ (fig. 29);⁹¹ a white, lime-plastered mudbrick podium used in both phases was located against the eastern wall. Given the proximity of this structure to Tomb 4, as well as its similar dimensions and orientation, it may well have been functionally related to the tomb. Considering our suggestions of ancestor veneration, one might even hypothesize that this structure, with its podium (altar?), served for the presentation of offerings to venerated indi-



Fig. 29. Sherd from Room 1 with seal impression possibly depicting the Anzu bird.

viduals, but more data are needed to confirm such a proposition.

North of Tomb 3 in trench 1272/3902 was a portion of a building whose southernmost wall was adjacent to and parallel with the northern wall of Tomb 3, indicating that either Tomb 3 or the structure to the north was built with reference to the other. An east–west corridor paved with limestone slabs had a blocked, possibly vaulted, doorway on the east leading to Installation A. In the upper debris of the corridor, a jar was found with an incised, four-lugged alabaster bowl (UMM04 S-035).⁹²

Trench 1264/3900 to the west of Tomb 3 yielded remains that had no mortuary character and were probably located outside the zone of the mortuary complex; whether or not a formal limit of the tomb complex existed must await excavation of the 4 m balk

⁸⁹Schwartz et al. 2003, 338.

⁹⁰In each chamber were the remains of three equid skeletons: one complete and two with partial remains, one above and one below the complete example. Perhaps the upper skeletal remains in each chamber derive from the same individuals as the two skulls identified in 2000. Two skulls in the southern compartment bore evidence of decapitation, but the others had no obvious signs of the procedure.

⁹¹Among this pottery was a 1.3 cm thick, light red sherd with part of a seal impression depicting a stylized, frontal bird (UMM04 G-004). Only the broad, diamond-shaped body, the tail, one leg, and part of one wing are preserved. Birds with similar spiky wings, tail feathers (sometimes indicated by concentric triangles), and feet can be seen on Early Dynastic III cylinder seals from Khafaje and Tell Asmar (Frankfort 1955,

nos. 371, 384, 416, 420) and on Brak-style seals at Tell Brak (e.g., Matthews 1997b, nos. 232, 233). These examples, however, show a bird with its head in profile on a very slender body. A broad body like that on UMM04 G-004 is seen only on depictions of Anzu, the lion-headed eagle, shown with a frontal face (Matthews 1997b, nos. 225, 231). Thus, UMM04 G-004 probably also depicted a lion-headed eagle. As with UMM04 G-003, UMM04 G-004 was likely a local product, since seal impressions found at Munbaqa show a similar, very angular style (Werner 2004, nos. 4497, 4499).

⁹²One lug has a groove and is, therefore, a pouring spout. Similar alabaster bowls have been found in graves at Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 19, pl. 216, 40, pl. 47) and Mari (Parrot 1956, pl. 52, no. 635; Jean-Marie 1999, 112, 115–16).

between 1264/3900 and 1272/3902. A complex of rooms with lime-plastered features dating to EB IVB (Umm el-Marra period IV) had floors whose elevations were ca. 0.7–1.5 m deeper than the lowest floors of the EB IVA Tombs 1 and 3 to the east. This result accords with the observation that the Early Bronze tomb area was located on an eminence well above the rest of the community.⁹³

The remains of the EB IVA (Umm el-Marra period V) phase underneath were much damaged by the foundations of the EB IVB architecture, but there appeared to be three rooms in the southern part of the trench. One of these was burned with complete vessels in situ, including a large painted jug with crosshatch triangles on the shoulder and vertical wavy lines on the lower body⁹⁴ and a large ring-based bowl with horizontal lugs.⁹⁵ Preceding the EB IVA occupation were phases with small-scale architecture and pottery of EB III type (later Umm el-Marra period VI) including simple rim cups, open vessels with inverted, thick bead rims, and everted-rim, simple ware jars.⁹⁶

CHRONOLOGICAL, ARCHITECTURAL, AND SOCIO-CULTURAL RAMIFICATIONS

The evidence from the Umm el-Marra Acropolis Center reveals a set of tombs and associated installations dating to the mid to late third millennium B.C. Given the pottery and other objects found inside the tombs, it appears that the tombs were largely built and used in sequence, although some (e.g., 5 and 6, 1 and 7) may have been partly contemporaneous. Tombs 5 and 6, dating to the mid third millennium (EB III), are the earliest; these are followed by Tomb 3 (early EB IVA), Tomb 4 (middle EB IVA), Tomb 1 (late EB IVA), and Tomb 7 (late EB IVA or EB IVB).⁹⁷ The tombs'

period of use coincides with the first era of urbanism and societal complexity in Syria and terminates in the period of instability following the destruction of Ebla Palace G in the late third millennium. This is consonant with the dating of other elite or monumental tombs known from Early Bronze western Syria, which are also restricted to the EB III–IVA period, with no clear examples from EB IVB (ca. 2300–2000 B.C.). During this era, Syria was composed of an array of urban-based polities of varying size and influence competing for power and resources, a state of affairs significantly altered by the incursions of the Sargonic conquerors from southern Mesopotamia in the 23rd century B.C.⁹⁸

The tomb architecture consists of rectangular stone substructures below mudbrick superstructures, with the exception of the latest, Tomb 7, which had no evidence of a brick superstructure. In the three cases (Tombs 1, 3, and 5) where an entryway was evident, it was located on the east. The tombs and adjacent features were constructed with reference to one another, with similar orientations and alignments; for example, the northwestern corner of Tomb 1 was aligned with the southeastern corner of Tomb 3. The only exception to this pattern is the latest addition, Tomb 7, which intruded into Tomb 6 and destroyed much of it in the process.

A persistent question has been whether the tombs constructed prior to Tomb 7, which was clearly subterranean, were aboveground or subterranean. Arguments for either possibility can be advanced.⁹⁹ Perhaps it is most likely that some of the tombs were completely aboveground while others were partly subterranean, with the mudbrick walls aboveground and the stone substructures sunk into earlier deposits.¹⁰⁰ Whether or

⁹³ Schwartz et al. 2003, 338.

⁹⁴ Cf. Mazzoni 1982, fig. 26[10], fig. 27[15]; 1985, fig. 3[1, 3]; Hempelmann 2001, Taf. 15[A].

⁹⁵ Cf. Mazzoni 1982, fig. 31[5].

⁹⁶ Cf. Qara Quzaq period IV (del Olmo Lete 1994; del Olmo Lete et al. 2001) and Mardikh IIA (Mazzoni 1991, fig. 5).

⁹⁷ Dating the equid installations is, as yet, more difficult, given the relative paucity of ceramics associated with them and the ambiguity of their stratigraphic relationships, but most if not all are likely to be of EB IVA date. Installation C is probably the earliest and clearly precedes Tomb 1.

⁹⁸ Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 233–87; Archi and Biga 2003.

⁹⁹ Several observations support the conclusion that the tombs were aboveground. First, the tombs were constructed with reference to one another, a difficult task if they were hidden underground. Further, they do not appear to disturb any adjacent architecture, which would be expected had they been sunk into earlier deposits. On the contrary, the two walls north of Tomb 3 and the stone-paved passageway between them are parallel to the walls of Tomb 3, and the architecture

south of Tomb 4 is also parallel to Tomb 4 and has approximately the same length. Further, equid skeletons of Installation D south of Tomb 1 were packed directly against the southern wall of the tomb, with occasional bones lying under stones fallen from the tomb wall, implying a freestanding wall. While it might be suggested that the equid installations south of Tomb 1 were deposited in a pit next to the tomb, evidence for such a pit has not been detected. Tombs 1, 3, and 5 had doorways at floor level without evidence of ramps leading out of the tombs, and the blocking of the Tomb 3 doorway involved not only filling it with stones but packing additional boulders outside of it. Finally, despite continual scrutiny, no trenches for the tombs were noted horizontally or in section. In favor of the tombs' subterranean character are the rough outer faces of the tombs' stone walls in contrast to the smoother, partially worked inner faces, suggesting that the outer walls may not have been visible and, therefore, did not require finishing. Also relevant is the apparent absence of an entryway for Tomb 4, implying access from above.

¹⁰⁰ In that case, the tombs' upper architecture would have been visible, and subsequent tombs could have been oriented

not the tombs were completely aboveground, it is clear that the complex was located on a high point at the center of the acropolis, as the elevations of the EB IVB floors in trench 1264/3900 to the west demonstrate. Evidence indicates that Tombs 1 and 3 were located at the highest point of the complex.¹⁰¹

It is probable that the individuals interred in the Umm el-Marra mortuary complex and/or the survivors who interred them belonged to the highest social rank in the community. The consistent inclusion of objects of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli, highly valued materials in third-millennium Syria associated with the elite, supports this interpretation.¹⁰² In addition, the central location and raised position of the complex argue for the importance of the persons interred within. Their special status is likewise indicated by the absence of adult burials dating to the Bronze Age elsewhere on the site, which implies that adults were buried off-site except for extraordinary cases such as the individuals interred in the Acropolis Center. While it could be argued that prestige goods might be indicative of aspirations to elite status rather than a direct reflection of social standing, the location of the complex and its prolonged use indicate a special position for those interred within and their survivors.

If Umm el-Marra functioned as a regional center, it would follow that the highest-ranking persons at the site also exercised political power over the surrounding region,¹⁰³ and the mortuary complex might plausibly be construed as a “royal” cemetery. Other complexes that may be interpreted similarly have been excavated at Bi’a and (perhaps) Banat in third-millennium Syria and from Kish and the staggeringly wealthy Royal

Cemetery of Ur in third-millennium Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁴ Alternatively, it could be proposed that the occupants of the Umm el-Marra mortuary complex were heads of important kin groups (“elders”), religious specialists,¹⁰⁵ or members of other influential factions.

Given the relatively small number of individuals interred in each tomb and the sequence of tombs represented, it seems possible that the tombs were built and used by a succession of families or dynasties, with perhaps a generation or two represented by each deposit. The tombs support Stein’s observation that Syrian Early Bronze Age elite burials tend to contain multiple interments, as opposed to elite burials of southern Mesopotamia, which contain a single high-ranking individual.¹⁰⁶ Stein proposes that the emphasis on group burial among the Syrian elite reflects the importance of kin or clan relations in structuring Syrian society.¹⁰⁷

The recurrence of specific object types in the tombs suggests the existence of sets of objects commonly intended for elite burials and, perhaps, regalia meant as elite markers.¹⁰⁸ These include gold or silver toggle pins, ivory or bone combs, silver or gold headbands with frontlets, silver bracelets, silver or bronze torques, silver vessels, beads of stone, shell, and metal, and shell disks (table 1). The objects’ stylistic parallels to materials from the Ur Royal Cemetery in Mesopotamia as well as elite contexts in Mari, Bi’a, and Anatolia¹⁰⁹ imply that high-ranking persons at Umm el-Marra were part of a network of West Asian elites who communicated their status through possession and display of goods manufactured in similar styles from similar exotic materials.¹¹⁰ Two examples of how elite goods

with respect to previous ones as deemed appropriate.

¹⁰¹ The floor of Tomb 3 was 1.0–1.4 m higher than the lower floor of Tomb 4 to the south, despite its likely temporal precedence, and the lowest floor of Tomb 1 was ca. 1.25 m higher than the upper floor of Tomb 4. The floor of Tomb 3 was 0.4–0.8 m lower than the lowest floor of Tomb 1.

¹⁰² Ross 1999; Casanova 2000.

¹⁰³ Note that Tuba had rulers designated as “EN” (king) in the Ebla texts (Archi 1999).

¹⁰⁴ See Marchesi (2004) on the royal identity of the individuals interred at Ur.

¹⁰⁵ *Infra* n. 115.

¹⁰⁶ Stein 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Bonechi 1997.

¹⁰⁸ Trigger 2003, 143. Although Trigger refers to the role elite markers played in life rather than death, material representations of high status may have been similar for both states of being in third-millennium Syria, since the same types of gifts were given to elite women by the Ebla palace for marriage (or, for priestesses, ordination) and for death (Archi 2002, 161).

¹⁰⁹ Umm el-Marra objects with close similarities to items in

the Royal Cemetery at Ur include the gold and silver toggle pins from Tomb 6, the gold plaques found with Skeleton E in Tomb 4, the silver bowls and spouted vessel in the upper level of Tomb 4, and a gold pendant with filigree work from Tomb 1 (Dunham 2003, 181). In the so-called Treasure of Ur at Mari were two silver toggle pins almost identical to the two gold toggle pins found near Skeleton B in Umm el-Marra Tomb 4 as well as to four of the silver toggle pins to the east of that skeleton. Also found in the Treasure at Mari were two gold flanged beads that closely parallel a gold flanged bead from Umm el-Marra Tomb 1. Both the Mari and the Umm el-Marra beads may themselves be variations of a type found at Alaca Höyük in Anatolia (Dunham 2003, 181–82). Anatolian connections are also implied by the silver goblet UMM04 M-015 and the bronze spearhead UMM04 M-012, both of which have close parallels at Troy. Parallels with Alaca Höyük and Troy are also found among the beads from Tomb 7 at Banat (Porter and McClellan 2003, 185). Comparanda to objects in the Bi’a elite mausolea include the gold and silver toggle pins from Tomb 6 and ostrich eggshell inlays from Tomb 4.

¹¹⁰ On the use of craft goods and exotic styles and materials for prestige purposes, see Helms 1993.

Table 1. Nonceramic Artifacts in Tombs 1, 4, 6, and 7.

Item	Tomb 1						Tomb 4						Tomb 6	Tomb 7	
Skeleton	uncertain	A	B	C	D	E	uncertain	A	B	C	D	E	F	*	*
Sex ^a	–	F	M	M	F?	?	–	C	F	M	M	M	F	M	C
Personal ornaments															
Gold/Silver															
Toggle pins/pins	–	X	–	–	X	X	X	–	X	X	–	–	X	X	X
Bracelets	–	–	–	X	X	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–
Torques	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–
Beads	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	X	–
Pendants	–	X	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Plaques	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–
Frontlets, headbands	–	–	–	X	X	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–
Spirals	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	X	–	–	–	X	–	–
Bronze															
Toggle pins/pins	X	X	X	–	–	X	X	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–
Bracelets	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Torques	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Spirals	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Crescent	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Nonmetal															
Beads	–	X	X	X	–	X	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	X	X
Pendants	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cylinder seal	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Shell disk	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bone star	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bone/ivory combs	X	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	–	–
Other artifacts															
Cosmetic shells	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dagger	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–
Spearhead	–	–	X	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Silver vessels	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
Silver handle	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–
Basalt tables	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–
Clay cones	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bronze pegs	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Inlays	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Chisels	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

* no letter designated to these skeletons

^a adults only; C=child

moved interregionally in this network are provided by the rich dowries given to Eblaite princesses married to the king of Harran and the prince of Nagar.¹¹¹

According to administrative texts from Ebla, the royal palace regularly donated gifts for the funerals of high-ranking persons in Ebla and elsewhere,¹¹² and the kinds of metal objects mentioned for funerary purposes are often the same as those found in the Umm el-Marra tombs (e.g., toggle pins, torques, headbands, frontlets, bracelets, beads, and small vessels of precious metal). It may be, therefore, that some personal ornaments in the Umm el-Marra tombs were donated by a central authority at Ebla, Umm el-Marra, or elsewhere for funerary use, rather than being personal possessions of the individuals in life. Gifts to members of the elite by the central authority may have been bestowed partly to ensure loyalty to the crown and/or to illustrate and implement the central authority's involvement in the important passages of life. Such gifts were presumably also meant to express the high status of the deceased person and his/her family. Harder to ascertain is the precise funerary function and symbolism of such gifts or other objects in the tombs, whether for use by the interred person in the afterlife, presentation to underworld deities, or other possibilities.¹¹³

At Umm el-Marra an interpretation of funerary donations from a central institution is perhaps best supported by the pairs of matching toggle pins found east of Skeleton B in Tomb 4. The Ebla texts refer to gifts of multiple garments accompanied by pairs of

toggle pins made of precious metal, and these "extra" pins in Tomb 4 may be indicative of such sets. Another possibility is that the toggle pins and the garments they presumably accompanied were gifts to elite female ancestors, a practice also mentioned at Ebla.

Most object types in the Umm el-Marra tombs are not associated exclusively with individuals of one sex: combs, toggle pins, beads, metal headbands with frontlets, metal bracelets, and shell disks are all located next to the remains of males or females. Although weapons were found with men in several cases (middle level of Tomb 1, Tomb 6, and perhaps Skeleton E in Tomb 4),¹¹⁴ an additional case (Tomb 4, upper level) is ambiguous.¹¹⁵ A similar situation applies in the graves at Bi'a and Kish, where males often have weapons but both sexes are otherwise associated with the same kinds of grave goods.¹¹⁶

Despite the relative uniformity of grave goods with respect to sex, there is an important sex-related difference in the distribution of objects: in the best-preserved tombs, 1 and 4, women are found with many more objects than men. This pattern is also evident in the lists of funerary gifts at Ebla.¹¹⁷ It is unlikely that the rich assortments of funerary objects for elite women signify greater power or wealth than that possessed by elite men, since men were the pre-eminent political office holders and main actors in the public realm at Ebla.¹¹⁸ It may be that women's grave wealth was intended to illustrate the power and status of their husbands or families.¹¹⁹ In any case, we must rethink our earlier hypothesis that the adult

¹¹¹ Archi 2002, 166–70, 172–73.

¹¹² Archi 2002. See also references to funerary gifts from rulers in early second-millennium B.C. Eshnunna (Whiting 1987, 49–50, 60).

¹¹³ Cooper 1991; Meyer 2000. For further discussion of mortuary ritual at Umm el-Marra, see Schwartz (in press).

¹¹⁴ That men were not always provided with weapons is evinced by the case of Skeleton C in Tomb 1.

¹¹⁵ Whether the slotted spearhead UMM04 M-012 in the upper level of Tomb 4 belongs to a specific skeleton is uncertain. It is not located near Skeleton C, which one would expect if it belonged to his burial. Since it is closest to the set of toggle pins that match the gold pins of Skeleton B, it might be argued that both the toggle pins and the spearhead were associated with Skeleton B, but there is no certain instance elsewhere of a woman buried with a weapon in third-millennium Syria or Mesopotamia. The burials at Kish and Ur cited by Rehm (2003) as women with weapons must be discounted, since Mackay sexed the pertinent Kish skeletons on the basis of the other grave goods (Mackay 1925, 13; Moorey 1978, fiche 1), while Woolley's identification of the Ur example (PG 1054) has recently been questioned (Lawler 2005). See Molleson and Hodgson (2003) for the most recent assessment of the Ur skeletal material. Whether the female found with spearheads in an Early Bronze tomb at Qara Quzaq was alone is uncertain, because the final report of the physical anthro-

pologist also identified male skeletal material in this tomb (del Olmo Lete et al. 2001). Nevertheless, Dunham (2005) has considered the possibility that the Tomb 4 spearhead was the symbol of a deity important to the community and was placed to indicate Skeleton B's role as priestess of this deity. At Ebla, royal women could be priestesses of important deities (Archi 1998; 2002). Skeletons B and F are both very carefully buried and are placed in the same area of the tomb in different levels, suggesting that F was B's predecessor. In the Late Bronze Age, the installation of the high priestess at Emar was a multiday ceremony in which the "divine weapon" (an axe) of the god Baal was used in processions, carried behind or in front of the priestess, carried by the priestess, or held by the priestess' father (Fleming 1992, 48–59). While the suggestion that Skeletons B and F may have been priestesses does not contradict the concept of ancestor worship but only adds another dimension—that of participation in the cult by the ruling elite—it remains only a tentative one.

¹¹⁶ Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 130. At Kish, only 24 of the burials in Cemetery A were reliably sexed (Moorey 1978, fiche 1), but the males in this group may have silver headbands, earrings, cosmetic shells, and sets of metal vessels.

¹¹⁷ Archi 2002, 181.

¹¹⁸ Archi 2002.

¹¹⁹ McHugh 1999, 34.

males in the middle level of Tomb 1, relatively “poor” compared to the women buried above them, were lower-ranking individuals, since the results from Tomb 4 suggest that males generally received fewer objects than females.¹²⁰

The presence of infants and children in the Umm el-Marra tombs indicates that very young individuals were considered suitable for burial in these elite mausolea and were not interred separately from the adults, as is often the case in Bronze Age Syrian contexts. However, the children were treated differently than the adults, receiving few if any grave goods; the infants in Tomb 1 had no obvious associated objects, and the child in Tomb 4 had only a small silver spiral and a small jar. The infants found in the “equid” installations may have been the victims of ritual sacrifice.

While commonalities among the tombs are clear, including architecture and contents, we can also observe changes in burial treatment through time. As noted above, Tomb 7 differs significantly from earlier tombs in its intrusive and subterranean character as well as in its multiroom plan and its lack of a mudbrick superstructure. In the period prior to Tomb 7, the size of the tombs—and possibly the energy expended on them—decreases through time, from Tomb 6, the largest, to the slightly smaller Tombs 3 and 4, to the most diminutive, Tomb 1. Peculiar to the later tombs (4 and 1) is the installment of discrete levels of bodies,¹²¹ while major disturbance of the tomb and blocking of its entry is restricted to the earlier tombs (5 and 3).

The presence of secondary burials appears unique to Tomb 4, although evidence for secondary burial in Tombs 3, 5, and 6 may have been obscured due to their disturbed state. In Tomb 4 each level has a secondary burial (one female, one male) out of three interred individuals. Perhaps these secondary burials represent individuals who were moved aside to make room for subsequent burials. Alternatively, they may represent individuals whose interment in the tombs did not take place until the bodies had decomposed. Such a scenario may have occurred due to the need to wait for the ritually proper time to open the tomb, the desire to wait until enough resources had been accumulated for an elaborate funeral, or the necessity

for several stages of treatment of the body in preparation for its role as ancestor.¹²²

The conspicuous character of the tombs in an elevated, (at least partly) aboveground, and central location indicates that the interred individuals remained part of the community after their death.¹²³ These data, considered together with evidence for offerings made to deceased kings at Ebla,¹²⁴ have led us to hypothesize that the tomb complex was the locus of rituals for the veneration of elite ancestors.¹²⁵ Further support for this interpretation includes indications of offerings brought to Tombs 3 and 4 after the interment of the individuals within, a possible sign of ancestral veneration.¹²⁶ The installations near the tombs might also be interpreted as venues for ceremonies honoring ancestors.¹²⁷

Similar conclusions of elite ancestor veneration have been drawn for monumental tombs at contemporaneous sites in the Euphrates valley such as Jerablus Tahtani, Banat, Bi’a, and Ahmar, tombs that were also conspicuous and located in the centers of their communities.¹²⁸ Umm el-Marra illustrates the variability involved in these practices, given the unusually large scale of its mortuary complex, the sacrificial installations, and the relatively long sequence of elite tombs, factors not observable at the Euphrates sites.

We posit that the Early Bronze elites of Umm el-Marra and western Syria used the veneration of ancestors to reinforce and legitimize their newly acquired authority and status. When deceased members of high-ranking families are interred in conspicuous monuments and are the subjects of continued veneration, surviving members of the elite acquire and maintain prestige through their association with the revered dead. The past is used to legitimize the social order, whose inequalities are presented as natural and inevitable.¹²⁹ The mortuary complex at Umm el-Marra can be understood as a materialization of elite ideology, in which conspicuous and long-standing monuments communicated the centrality and durability of social hierarchy and the political status quo.

While elite ancestor veneration can be employed to sanction the authority of high-ranking living individuals, some ancestors may not be treated with consistent reverence. Unlike the other excavated tombs, Tombs

¹²⁰ Schwartz et al. 2003, 340. One must still account for the burial of two young women, each with a baby, above two men, all in an apparently simultaneous interment in the upper layers of Tomb 1.

¹²¹ Although it is possible that the disturbances suffered by the earlier Tombs 3, 5, and 6 obliterated traces of such levels, complete devastation is probably unlikely.

¹²² Bloch 1971; Porter 2002a.

¹²³ Peltenburg 1999; Meskell and Joyce 2003, 42.

¹²⁴ Archi 2001.

¹²⁵ Schwartz et al. 2003, 338–40.

¹²⁶ Lau 2002.

¹²⁷ Despite the evidence of elite ancestor veneration, it must be conceded that rites honoring dead ancestors need not have been conducted at their tombs (Whitley 2002); the Ebla texts are ambiguous on the location of the rituals of royal ancestor veneration.

¹²⁸ Peltenburg 1999; Porter 2002a, 2002b.

¹²⁹ Milner 1984; McAnany 1995; Salomon 1995; Yoffee 2005, 40.

3 and 5 were substantially disturbed, robbed of non-ceramic artifacts, and had their entrances blocked. We hypothesize that these alterations were intentional acts on the part of powerful individuals who wanted to sever the connection between the living community and the deceased individuals buried in the tombs. The people interred in Tombs 3 and 5 may have belonged to families, regimes, or eras with which later ruling factions did not wish to be associated. We suggest that a process of “transformational reentry” was in play: the objects found in the tombs were destroyed or removed, the bones and pottery smashed and scattered, and the entry blocked so that future veneration or provision of offerings was impeded.¹³⁰ Had it been a case of avaricious tomb robbing, thieves would not have taken the trouble to block the tomb entry. In a case of the reverential removal of tomb contents, we would not expect the human bones to be extant or scattered and broken.¹³¹

Another case of disturbance is offered by the intrusion of Tomb 7 into the remains of Tomb 6. Since the eastern wall of Tomb 1 with its entryway was built atop the stone substructure of the Tomb 6 western wall, Tomb 6 must have been bereft of its brick superstructure and filled in with debris by ca. 2300. It may be, on one hand, that the Tomb 7 builders were unaware of the identity of Tomb 6, which had fallen into ruin. On the other hand, the builders of Tomb 7 may have been cognizant of Tomb 6 but unconcerned about its partial destruction. Perhaps the political instabilities of Syria at the end of EB IVA resulted in ideological disjunctures wherein new tombs on the Umm el-Marra acropolis no longer respected the boundaries of previous ones and connections to earlier elite ancestors were no longer maintained.

An extraordinary aspect of the mortuary complex at Umm el-Marra is the attention given to the sac-

rifice and interment of equids and other animals and, perhaps, human infants. Given the evidence of Installations A–D, these sacrifices must have been integral to the funerary rituals or to the veneration of individuals already buried inside the tombs; the presence of spouted jars suggests the importance of libations in these rituals.¹³² The inclusion of equids in human burials is not unusual in third-millennium Syro-Mesopotamia, with examples at middle Euphrates sites such as Halawa and Bi’a and numerous attestations in southern Mesopotamia, including “chariot” burials at Kish.¹³³

However, the interment of equids in discrete burial installations and the separation of the skulls from the bodies at Umm el-Marra are, as far as we are aware, unique. The animals in the Umm el-Marra installations might have been employed as sacrificial offerings to deities, to the elite ancestors buried nearby, or to deceased elite individuals at the time of burial. Alternatively, the equids might have been understood as transportation in the afterlife.¹³⁴ Whatever their immediate function, it is probable that the ritual importance of equids in elite graves was connected to their association with an elite social milieu. It has been suggested that the donkey or mule was symbolic of royalty and sovereignty in Bronze Age Syria, and the inclusion of equids in an elite mortuary complex is likely to be relevant to their status as animals of prestige.¹³⁵

In her analysis of the faunal remains, Weber notes that the equids have characteristics of both onager and donkey. As a result, she hypothesizes that the equids in Installations A–D are hybrids of those two species.¹³⁶ Such an identification would complement contemporaneous textual sources referring to a highly valued equid designated as *anše-BAR.AN*, also interpreted as a hybrid of onager and donkey.¹³⁷ The *BAR.AN* equids were extremely expensive, much desired by the elites

¹³⁰ Chase and Chase 2005.

¹³¹ Alternatively, one might suggest a scenario in which thieves burglarized the tomb and authorities sealed it off to prevent further tampering. A looted tomb may have been considered unsuitable for further rituals of veneration, hence the acceptability of blocking the entrance.

¹³² On libations and other uses of spouted vessels, see Winter 1999.

¹³³ Zarins 1986. Note also Brak Akkadian period ritual deposits (Oates et al. 2001, 327–38) and the mid third-millennium area TC mass burial of seven humans and two or more donkeys, where the equids lack hind legs and the heads seem to have been separated from the bodies prior to deposition (Emberling and McDonald 2003, 47–8).

¹³⁴ The placement of sets of equids in Installations A, B, and D might imply teams used to pull a wheeled vehicle, but no trace of such a vehicle has yet been identified. However, the inclusion of possible linchpins in Tomb 4 might be representa-

tive of a wheeled vehicle (supra n. 75).

¹³⁵ Lafont 1998; Heimpel 2003, 23 nn. 69, 593 (s.v. “rider of donkeys”). See also the apparent elite associations of equids at Banat (Porter 2002b, 170).

¹³⁶ The animals were clearly domesticated and had performed strenuous labor throughout their lives. A relatively severe overbite manifested by the majority of the equids in the complex is indicative of a shared genetic relationship as well as human intervention in breeding. However, morphological traits, in addition to limb size and proportions, signal that these animals are probably not donkeys, and their size is inappropriate for identification as horses. Instead, each skeleton has a combination of traits consistent with donkey and onager, possibly suggesting the mixture of these two taxa through hybridization. Preliminary comparison of bones from the burial complex with examples from known hybrid specimens offers tentative support for such a conclusion.

¹³⁷ Postgate 1986.

of Ebla and elsewhere in Syro-Mesopotamia, and the preferred animals for pulling wheeled vehicles. It has been suggested that the breeding of onager with donkey produces an animal superior to both in that it can be tamed, unlike the onager, and is stronger, faster, and more attractive than the donkey.¹³⁸ The use of the *anše-BAR.AN* for funerary purposes is mentioned in the Ebla texts, which record the disbursement of harnesses for the burials of high-ranking persons.¹³⁹

Equids are also found in funerary contexts in the Middle Bronze Age Levant, where burials of humans also include donkeys or, occasionally, donkeys are buried in pits by themselves.¹⁴⁰ The symbolic importance of equids in the early second millennium B.C. is also evident in their sacrificial use in the conclusion of treaties and in the donkey festival at Aleppo.¹⁴¹ At Umm el-Marra itself, equid bones were interred in the stone substructures of domestic architecture in period III.¹⁴² These data indicate a degree of continuity in ritual and symbol between Early and Middle Bronze Age.

In addition to the equids, Installations A–D contained human infant remains in three cases. While the babies might have died from natural causes, their inclusion in features dominated by sacrificed animals may imply that they, too, were sacrificed. Human sacrifice is often practiced in early complex societies in association with elite burials, especially in newly emerging states like Shang China and Dynasty I Egypt.¹⁴³ Stavrakopoulou proposes that some biblical references to child sacrifice concern offerings made to deceased Judean kings, perhaps as a way to ensure perpetuation of the dynasty.¹⁴⁴ It remains to be seen whether the infants in the Umm el-Marra equid installations were ritually killed and whether this practice was connected to rituals of elite ancestor veneration.

A MIDDLE BRONZE AGE MONUMENTAL PLATFORM IN THE ACROPOLIS CENTER

Following the period of the mortuary complex on the Acropolis Center, there is only limited evidence of Early Bronze Age activity in the area. Assigned to EB IVB (Umm el-Marra period IV) on the basis of associated ceramics are the rooms in trench 1264/3900 noted above, the corner of a room jutting out of the north balk of trench 1290/3900 and, possibly, Tomb 7.

Much more substantial were the remains of Middle Bronze activity, mainly represented by an extensive stone construction designated Monument 1.¹⁴⁵ The best-preserved part of this structure found thus far was its northern face, which stood ca. 2 m high and consisted of limestone boulders with interspersed cobbles (fig. 30). This face had a curvilinear plan, suggesting a very large, round monument with a diameter ca. 37 m (fig. 31). The extant top of the northern edge consisted of stone slabs, implying that this was the original top of the structure and that the monument served as a platform or as a foundation for an additional structure. On top of the northwestern part of the monument was a line of boulders extending north–south with a relatively straight eastern edge; the southern extent of this line was not flanked by other cobbles or boulders, and it appeared to be sunk into a foundation trench.

The eastern section of trenches 1272/3902 and 1278/3910 (fig. 32) revealed that the bottom of Monument 1 sloped up from north to south, and it is likely that the structure was built as a cap above the mound formed by the Early Bronze mortuary complex. The top was flat, the outer edges served as a retaining wall ca. 2 m high, and the bottom sloped up toward the center, with the structure standing only ca. 0.5 m high above the topmost part of the Early Bronze necropolis mound.

Monument 1 was disturbed by numerous pits, some very large, including an example in the south containing Late Bronze Age sherds.¹⁴⁶ Presumably, later inhabitants of the site used the monument as a source of building material. An open space with an earth floor ca. 3 x 3 m in area was located in what appears to be the center of the structure. Large sherds of Middle Bronze Age cooking pots and storage jars rested on the floor, as well as *tammur* fragments. Since 35 cm of soil separated the floor from the stones at the bottom of the monument, the feature may not have been contemporaneous with the original use of the structure and may have been dug into it.

The precise date of Monument 1 is yet to be determined, but its construction probably dates to early MB II or late MB I. Many sherds of inverted-rim bowls and other MB II types were found in the debris north of the monument, but some MB I sherds were also noted in the lowest strata.¹⁴⁷ In addition, a sizable deposit of

¹³⁸ Gray 1954; Oates et al. 2001, 286.

¹³⁹ Archi 2002, 180.

¹⁴⁰ Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992; Wapnish 1997.

¹⁴¹ Durand 1988.

¹⁴² Schwartz et al. 2003, 345–46.

¹⁴³ Trigger 2003, 476–85.

¹⁴⁴ Stavrakopoulou 2004, 294. In Inca society, in contrast, children were seen as effective messengers to the spirit world and were sacrificed for that purpose (Hastorf 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Schwartz et al. 2003, 345.

¹⁴⁶ Ostensibly the absence of any trace of Monument 1 in the area above Early Bronze Tomb 1 may also be attributed to intrusive activity (Schwartz et al. 2003, 341).

¹⁴⁷ Curvers and Schwartz 1997, fig. 24[5]; Nigro 2002, pls. 52[67], 54[74]. Also found in debris north of the monument was an agate double-eye bead (UMM04 B-014) with alternating layers of brown and gray translucent stone. One of the brown layers had been cut away to leave a circular eye with a



Fig. 30. Monument 1 north facade, looking south (excavated Early Bronze Age remains in background).

thick-walled sherds from large vessels was discovered between the stones of the monument near the southern balk of 1278/3910. Whether these were inserted as part of the construction material for practical purposes or were intended as a ritual deposit is uncertain.¹⁴⁸ Although this pottery was primarily of EB IVB type, a few Middle Bronze rim sherds were included, supporting a Middle Bronze date for the construction of Monument 1.

In later MB II (Umm el-Marra period IIIa–c), a set of small rooms of domestic appearance was built against the northern face of Monument 1, with the bottoms of the room walls placed against the uppermost stone boulders of the monument. This construction may imply that Monument 1 was no longer in use by late MB II times.

The function of Monument 1 is uncertain, but its unusual character, scale, central location, and proximity to the third-millennium mortuary complex indicate its special status and probable communal and ritual significance. It may have served as a platform for

curving eyebrow above it set against a gray background. A part of a second eyebrow was extant, but the second eye had broken off. The bead measured 2.5 x 2.0 x 1.0 cm and had a hole 2 mm in diam. drilled through it horizontally.

¹⁴⁸ A comparable phenomenon is a 75 cm thick layer of

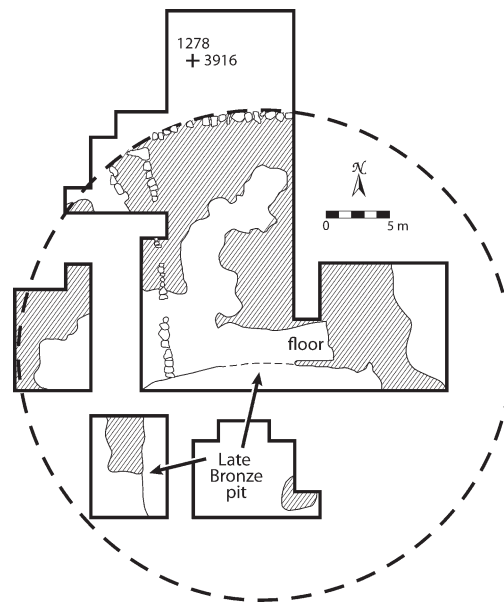


Fig. 31. Excavated segments of Monument 1 (hatching), with hypothetical reconstruction based on 37 m diam.

cobbles dating to either MB I or EB IVB in the northeastern part of trench 1258/3936 (Acropolis North), excavated in 2000, containing large numbers of EB IVB sherds and Early Bronze terracotta figurine fragments (Petty 2004).

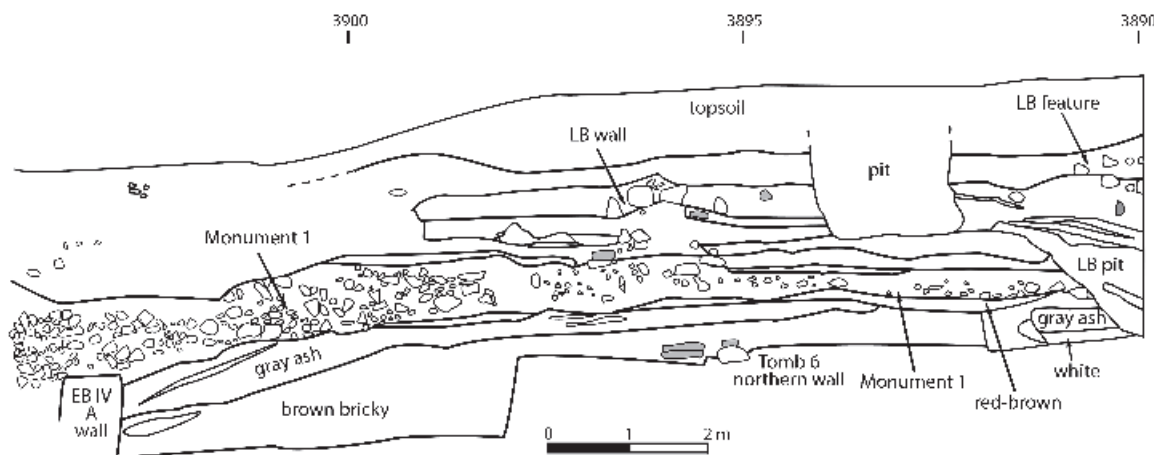


Fig. 32. East section, trenches 1278/3902 and 1278/3910 (southern part only), prior to excavation of Tomb 6.

ceremonial activities, although its preserved top was uneven and would not have offered an easy surface to walk on. No traces of burning related to sacrificial offerings were detected. It is not unlikely that the enclosure wall built around the Umm el-Marra acropolis was largely contemporaneous with Monument 1 and was intended as a protection for it or as demarcation for its precinct.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps a point of comparison is Monument P3 at Ebla, also of uncertain function; while rectilinear, this Middle Bronze Age monument also consists of a large, solidly packed, flat expanse of boulders and cobbles (52.5 x 42.0 m in area).¹⁵⁰

The placement of a monumental structure above the earlier tombs in the Umm el-Marra Acropolis Center may indicate the persistence of the sacred character of this part of the site and the use of social memory by Middle Bronze Age rulers referring to predecessors to reinforce their authority.¹⁵¹ Such reference may well have been negative, with Middle Bronze rulers emphasizing the newness of their regimes by attempting to eliminate the memory of earlier rulers, “paving over” the area of their tombs.¹⁵²

CONCLUSIONS

Excavations on the Acropolis Center at Umm el-Marra have yielded a complex of elite tombs spanning several centuries, accompanied by sacrificial installations indicative of the rich ritual world of the Syrian ruling classes. Details on gender, animal sacrifice,

tomb objects, and other issues allow for observations and the formulation of hypotheses on the nature of rulership and ritual in early urban Syria. Further, the derivation of these data from a secondary center such as Umm el-Marra allows for the consideration of the role and influence of such communities.

While other Early Bronze Age Syrian monumental tombs are similar to those of Umm el-Marra in their intramural character, conspicuousness, and contents, the Umm el-Marra complex stands apart in its unusually large scale, equid sacrificial installations, and relatively long sequence of elite tombs.¹⁵³ Whether this variability in elite mortuary treatment is the result of differing local traditions and customs, contrasting political strategies, or other factors remains to be determined.¹⁵⁴ Clearly there is much need for further analysis and interpretation of these results, but we hope that the new evidence from Umm el-Marra will help broaden our understanding of funerary behavior and elite ideology in the period of Syria’s first complex societies, providing new information on the ways that the emergent elites acquired and retained their power.

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¹⁴⁹ Curvers and Schwartz 1997, 213, fig. 10; Schwartz et al. 2003, 341–42, fig. 28.

¹⁵⁰ Matthiae 1997, 391–94.

¹⁵¹ Van Dyke 2003.

¹⁵² Connerton 1989, 13. It is also possible, however, that the builders of Monument 1 took advantage of a high point on

the site and were not concerned with the significance of earlier structures.

¹⁵³ See, however, the recent excavation of a complex interpreted as a sequence of tombs at the specialized site of Gre Virike on the Euphrates north of Carchemish (Ökse 2005).

¹⁵⁴ Porter 2005.

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