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The Palace in the Upper City of Hazor as an Expression of a Syrian Architectural Paradigm*

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The Late Bronze Age monumental palace complex in the Upper City of Hazor attests to royal construction on the acropolis and contributes to our understanding of the city's layout. The remains revealed so far offer striking testimony to the Kingdom of Hazor's powerful and eminent position at this time. The architectural character of the complex reflects relations with the neighboring states in the north and with Egypt, evincing the exchange of both ideas and artisans, especially with Syria. The close affinity of the Hazor complex with the architectural traditions of the latter is mainly apparent in the buildings whose functions were ceremonial. In terms of architectural techniques and decoration, they are similar to the palace at Qatna, while the ground plan of Hazor's ceremonial palace resembles that of the palace at Alalakh IV. The recurrence of this master plan at two Late Bronze Age sites suggests that the bit-hilani (normally associated with the Iron Age) had already become the paradigm of ceremonial palaces in the Levant.

INTRODUCTION

The recent excavations in the Upper City of Hazor, under the direction of Professor Amnon Ben-Tor, exposed the remains of a monumental complex from the Late Bronze Age (Ben-Tor 1992; 1993; 1995a; 1995b; 1996a; 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999). Its principal remains were found in Area A (ca. 0.5 ha), in the middle of the tell, south and southwest of the Long Temple (exposed earlier in the excavations of Professor Yigael Yadin; Bonfil 1997: 51–101). Another section was found in Area M (ca. 0.1 ha), on the northern slope. The character and plans of these remains attest to large-scale structures having a public function. They accordingly contribute to our ability to recognize the building methods and location of the royal edifices in the context of the urban planning of the city, which covered the tell's entire surface (fig. 1).

It is important to note that the precincts defined as the Upper City are, in actuality, higher than those of the Lower City, but that the differences in elevation

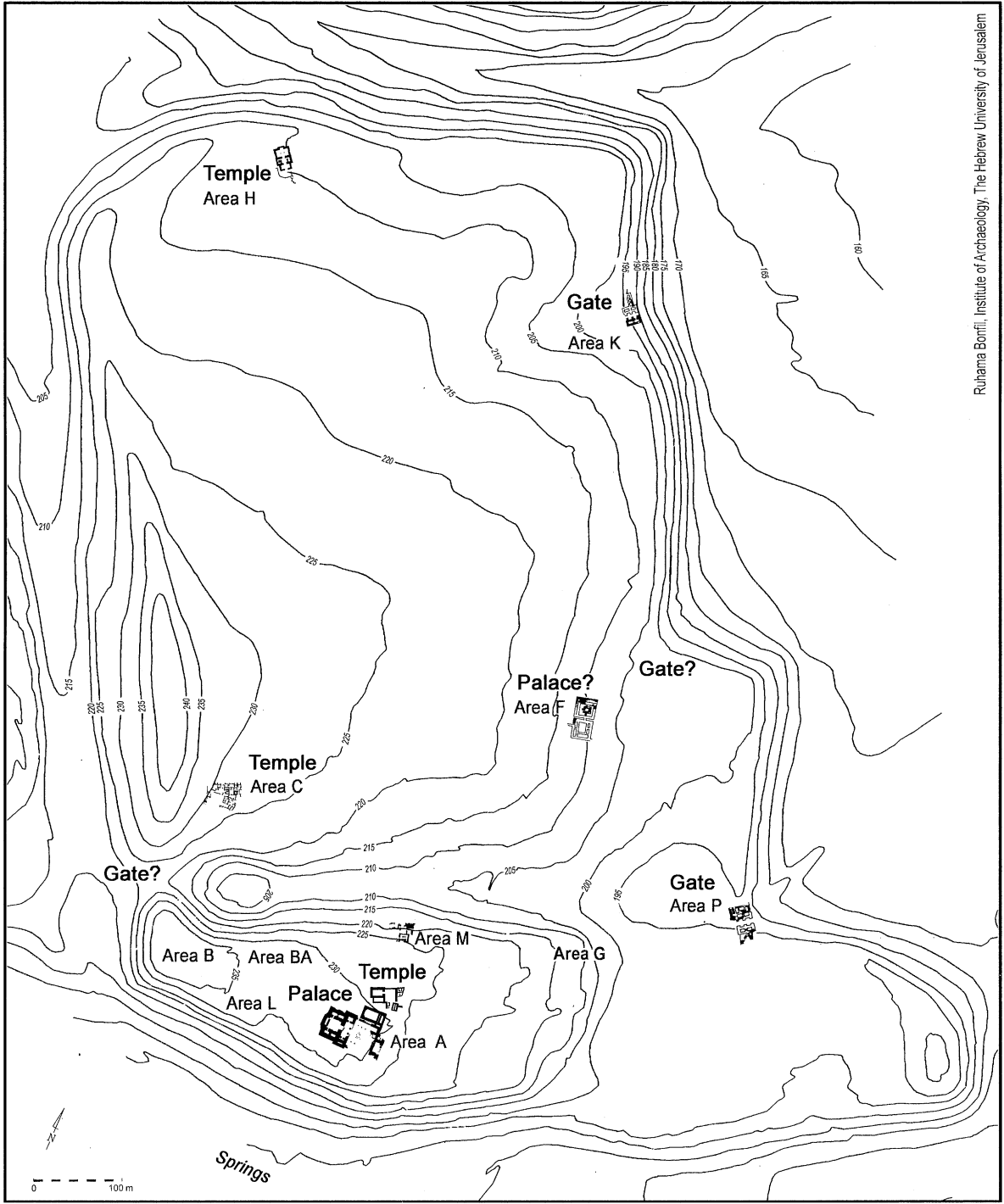
in the Late Bronze Age were much less prominent than they appear today.¹ In Area B, the tell's highest area, the top of the Late Bronze Age remains were about 235.00 m above sea level, that is to say, only 5 m higher than the tops of the contemporaneous remains in Area C, to their north in the Lower City. It appears that the Upper City was distinguished from the Lower City by means of a kind of moat separating their respective precincts (Yadin et al. 1958: 1–2).²

Late Bronze Age Hazor developed from the city founded in MB IIB (for architectural continuity, see

* A preliminary discussion of this topic appeared in two papers presented at the Third International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (3ICAANE) in Paris (Bonfil 2002; Zarzecki-Peleg 2002). The authors of this article served, respectively, as expedition architect (R. Bonfil, in 1990–2003, 2005) and as field archaeologist (A. Zarzecki-Peleg, in 1990–2001).

¹ It should be stressed that the height of today's Upper City results from, among other factors, the ongoing stratification of the settlement in the successive phases of the Iron Age, which were located solely on the acropolis.

² At the western end of the "moat" is a depression of ca. 30 m in length comprising the water system.



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Fig. 1. Hazor in the Late Bronze Age.

Areas F, H, K, and P; Yadin et al. 1989; Mazar 1997). An examination of the MB II material culture in Canaan reveals an urban society whose contours took shape in the region of Syria and along the Lebanese coast at the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E. (Kempinski 1992a: 76–81; 1992b: 97–98). Among the features characterizing this culture were urban planning and architectural standardization, as reflected in the nature of the defensive ramparts and earthen embankments. Such ramparts often created a roughly square enclosure surrounding the city. Ideally, a gate would have been installed in the center of each of the four embankments, and streets proceeding from these gates traversed the city, dividing it into four quarters.

This division is known at Ebla (Tell Mardikh) as early as the third millennium B.C.E. Documents discovered in the archives ascribed to the palace in Area G (Tell Mardikh IIB1) indicate that the city was split into two main areas: the first, called *è-MI+ŠITA*, was apparently the acropolis, while the rest, the lower city, was called “Ebla” proper. The latter was divided into four quarters, each of which was independently administered. These quarters were called after the gates of the city, each of which bore the name of a god (Matthiae 1980: 150, 158, 184, 187–89; Bonfil 1997: 85–86). The exposure of three palaces and five temples ascribed to Ebla (Tell Mardikh IIIA) suggests that the Middle Bronze Age city was already divided into quarters, each maintaining an autonomous administrative system with its own cultic center (Matthiae 1984: 116; 1990: 111; Bonfil 1997: 85–86).

Late Bronze Age Hazor had several gates installed in the earthen embankments. Two (Areas K and P) have already been exposed. Two more can be reconstructed: one near Area F, between Areas K and P; the other south of Area C (fig. 1). Is it possible that streets proceeding from these gates divided the city into quarters, each possessing temples (e.g., Areas A, C, and H) and palaces (e.g., Areas F [Dunayevsky and Kempinski 1973: 19–21] and A [see below])? The construction of cities according to what may have been preestablished plans raises the question as to whether the building types were also standardized. If so, one would expect that the public edifices, especially those serving ritual or ceremonial functions conducted according to what may have been a prescribed procedure, would also exhibit a fixed plan. The Upper City evinced Late Bronze Age remains in Areas A, BA, B, L, and M (fig. 2). Areas BA, B, and

L yielded fragmentary wall segments from comparatively small buildings; it is difficult, however, to determine their relationship to the monumental structures in the middle of the Upper City (Areas A and M).³ The present discussion focuses on the complex of the monumental palace in the middle of the Upper City—Area A (figs. 2–3).

THE PALACE COMPLEX

The palace complex is a splendid architectural structure, large in its dimensions and monumental in conception. It is unique in the southern Levant of this period. It was erected according to a preestablished plan, which involved the preparation and leveling of the ground, which dipped slightly. The complex comprised a number of units, of which four important ones have been exposed so far (figs. 2–4): (1) the main entrance to the complex; (2) the central courtyard, in front of the chief structure; (3) the “Black Building”—the principal structure, identified as a ceremonial palace; and (4) the “White Building”—a rectangular structure north of the central courtyard. These all appear to serve, principally, official ceremonial functions. Additional wings of the palace—the residential quarters of the king and his attendants, storerooms, and workshops—have yet to be exposed. The Long Temple is located north of this complex (concerning the relationship between them, see below).

The Approach to the Complex

Access to the palace complex was afforded by a route that can be traced in the topography (figs. 1–2). It can be reconstructed as north–south in orientation, and it was reached from the Lower City from two directions: via Area M (Ben-Tor 1998: 462; Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 32–33), in the north; and, in the east, from the city gate in Area P via Area G (fig. 1). It skirted the sacred precincts of the Long Temple in the west (Bonfil 1997: 51–73, plans II.6–II.7). Its continuation in the south has not yet been exposed, but the socket observed in situ alongside Wall 332 (Bonfil 1997: plan II.6) attests to the existence of a

³ It is possible that some were connected with secondary units attached to the main architectural complexes, especially those in Area L, which were located ca. 30 m west of the ceremonial palace (see below).

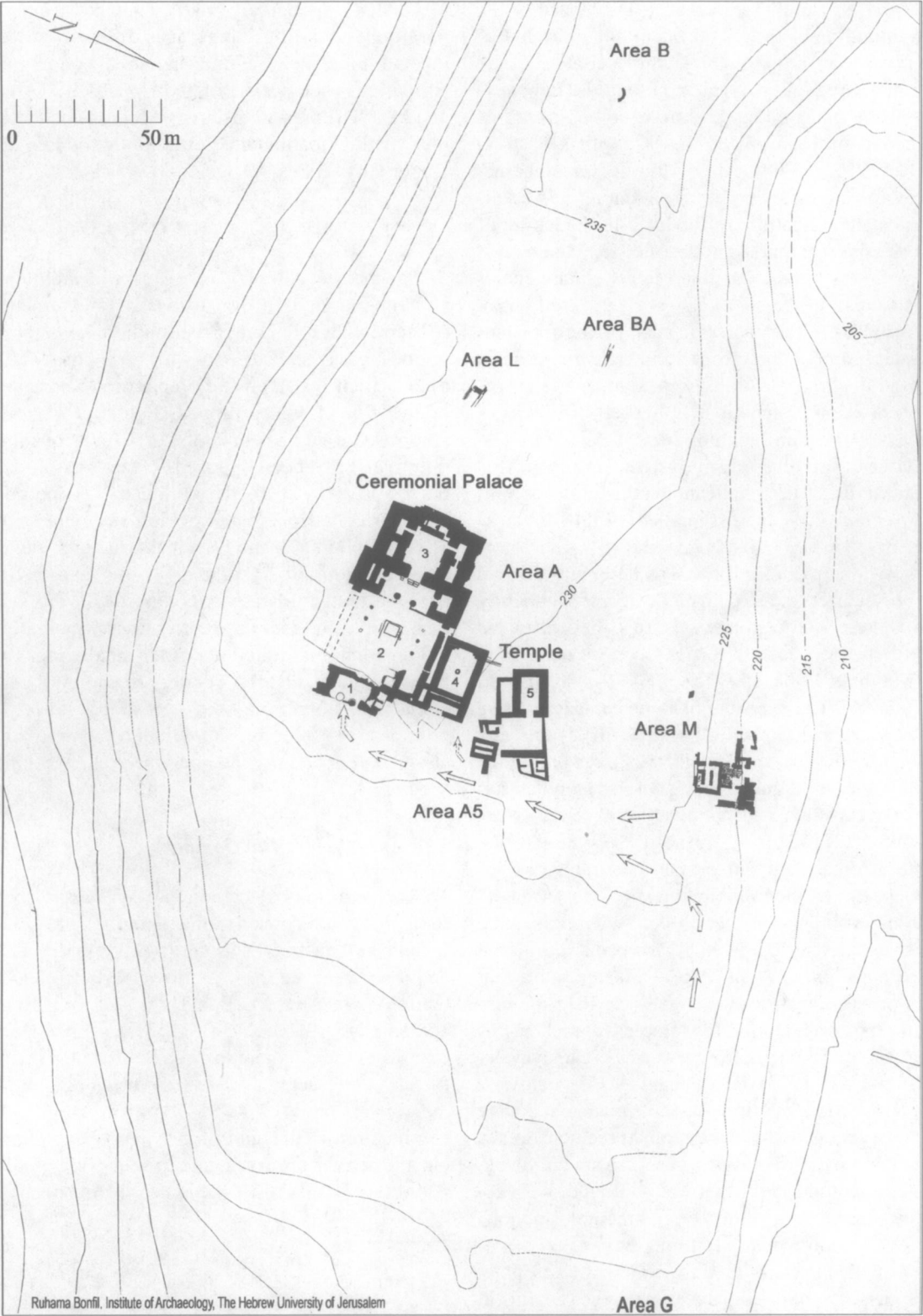


Fig. 2. The Late Bronze Age Upper City of Hazor: (1) Main entrance to the complex; (2) Central courtyard; (3) Black Building; (4) White Building; (5) Temple.

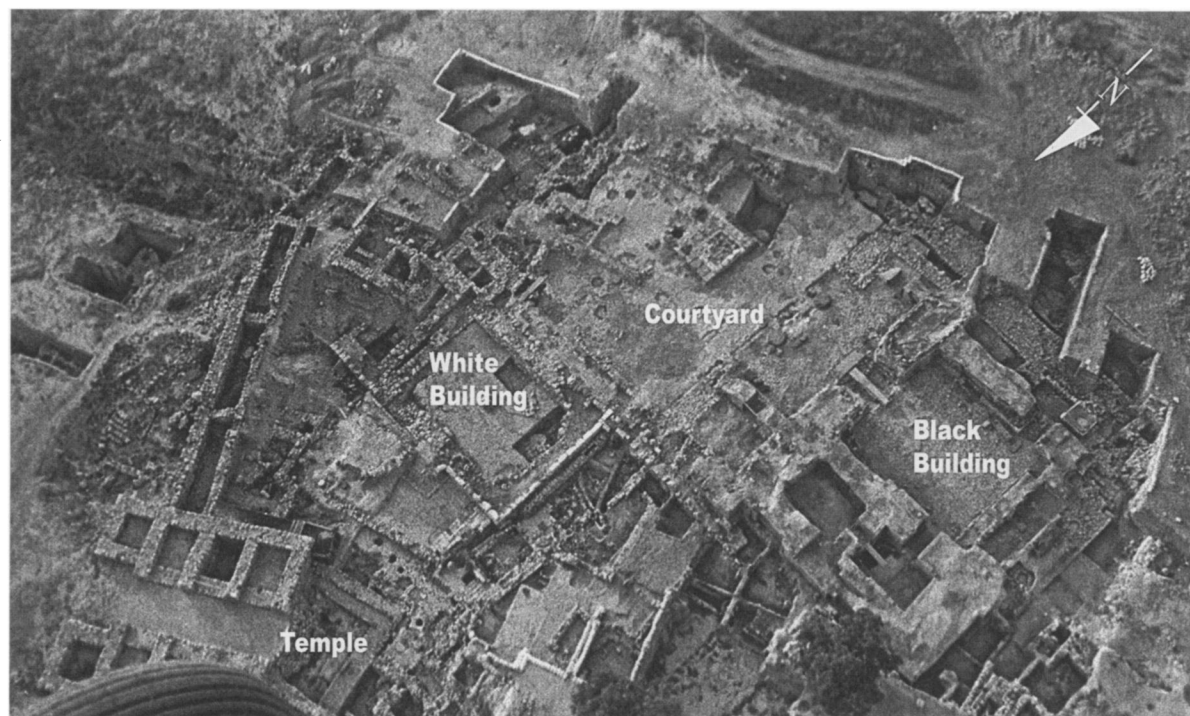


Fig. 3. Aerial view of Hazor palace (photo by Hanan Shafir).

built entranceway (Yadin et al. 1989: 15). A lioness head was found nearby; presumably it flanked the entranceway (Bonfil 1997: 77, 88, 101; Ben-Tor 2006: 4–5). From here it was possible to reach the palace complex via the main gateway, located in the east of the complex, or via the passage leading to the secondary gateway, in the northwestern corner of the courtyard (fig. 2). On the other side of the main route (in the east), there were the fragmentary remnants of monumental walls in Area A5 (Ben-Tor 2000: 246–48; 2002: 257; 2003: 221), including Yadin's Wall 375 in Trench 500 (Yadin et al. 1989: 49–53, plan 16; Bonfil 1997: 163–64). Passage between the lower terrain in the northeast and the raised terrain in the southwest was facilitated by a sloping path and steps (a staircase was exposed in the vicinity of the entrance to the sacred precincts; Yadin et al. 1989: 15, plan 4; Bonfil 1997: plan II.6), and it is reasonable to assume that additional steps were installed on the way to the main gateway.

The Main Gateway

The route led to the main gateway, located in the east. It was a monumental gateway adorned by two

columns, of which only the massive basalt bases survive, with a basalt threshold running between them (figs. 2, 6; Ben-Tor 2002: 256). The position of the columns in relation to the central axis of the courtyard and the main structure—the Black Building (see below)—indicates that the principal entranceway into the complex was indirect (figs. 2–3). The gateway passage was lower than the courtyard by nearly 2 m, and one can assume that a staircase or ramp compensated for this difference (Ben-Tor 2000: 246). Its remains were not found, owing to the serious damage incurred by the erection of structures ascribed to the Iron Age.

The Courtyard

The monumental gateway led to a spacious courtyard which lay in front of the Black Building (figs. 2–4). While it is difficult to ascertain its boundary in the east, due to later damage, it appears to have been square in plan (30 × 30 m). Two rows of basalt column bases traversed the space in the north and south. It is possible that a third row should also be reconstructed in the east. The columns were set at intervals of ca. 3.50 m from each other, and one can infer that

each row consisted of five columns.⁴ The architectural division of the courtyard created an unroofed space in the center, with two or three stoas, ca. 5 m in width, adjoining the walls. It can be assumed that the stoas were roofed.

A stepped platform (*bamah*) was erected in the center of the courtyard (Ben-Tor 1995: 285). It stood opposite the Black Building's entrance; both were located ca. 5 m north of the axis leading from the main gateway to the palace complex.

The Ceremonial Palace—The Black Building

The central structure of the complex lay to the west of the courtyard and was raised above it. This structure was approximately square in plan (ca. 35 × 40 m; fig. 4). Its fore corners projected some 3 m from the facade, thus serving as towers flanking the entrance in the middle. A spectator standing in front of the structure would receive the impression of a facade adorned along its length with graded recessions. The superstructure consisted of mudbricks laid over a stone foundation of similar width (henceforth the "upper stone foundation").⁵ The latter was constructed from fieldstones, while a row of basalt orthostats encased its outer surface;⁶ hence the structure's name: the Black Building. The lower stone foundation bearing the orthostats was some 20 cm wider than the upper stone foundation. (This phenomenon was also observed in the walls of the temple in Area H and in the wall bordering the courtyard in front of the temple in Area A; Bonfil 1997: 72–73.) The lower stone foundation descends to a considerable depth and possibly rests on the bedrock (see below). It should be noted that further evidence of the careful planning devoted to the palace's con-

struction is provided by its erection on a flattened surface, whereby the tops of the lower stone foundation, the upper stone foundation, and the orthostats maintain an almost perfectly consistent level from north to south.

The facade of the structure was accentuated by the basalt bases of two monumental columns. They were inset into the raised porch to either side of its entranceway, which was aligned with the courtyard's central axis. The porch was supported by an orthostat-lined wall. It ran along the porch facade and then turned inward at a right angle to abut the columns. The porch was reached by way of a short staircase or ramp (see below) leading to a broad entrance hall. Two rooms were built to either side of this hall. The one on the right possibly served as a storeroom, as suggested by the several complete pithoi found there (Ben-Tor 1996b: 79). The one on the left is identical to the other in terms of its outer dimensions, but its inner layout and function differ. It has been interpreted as a stairwell, owing to its partition wall, which creates two narrow and unequal spaces.

An enormous portal connects the entrance hall with the structure's main room, which is built on the same axis as the courtyard platform and the porch. Measuring ca. 13 × 12.5 m,⁷ the main room is located in the center of the structure and constitutes its core. Service wings are found along three of its sides: the lateral wings include two rooms each, while a third wing is situated behind the rear wall. The entrances to all these wings issue from the back of the central room.

Three niches were set into the walls of the central room: two face each other across its breadth, while the third was located in the room's southwestern corner. It is conceivable that the throne was fixed next to the niche in the southern wall (see discussion below).

The lower portion of the central room's walls was lined with orthostats in the north, south, and east.⁸ The fact that the western wall lacked such orthostats does not suffice to prove that the erection of this wall and the creation of the rear wing constitute an alteration in the building at a later stage. It should be noted that the inner face of the rear wing's western

⁴ In the southern row, the two western column bases were exposed. The continuation of this row in the east was still overlaid by Iron Age remains. In the northern row, two column bases were exposed, the westernmost of which stood opposite the second column in the southern row. This indicates that the rows were symmetrical. The absence of the westernmost column in the northern row can probably be explained by construction ascribed to the Iron Age which cut into the lower strata and damaged the Late Bronze Age remains.

⁵ The southern section of this structure had been badly damaged by later construction largely ascribed to the Iron Age, and most of the upper stone foundation was no longer extant.

⁶ The excavators observed that the outer mudbricks were laid only after the orthostats had been installed and the stone foundation of both the structure's external and internal walls had been completed.

⁷ These dimensions do not include the width of the walls.

⁸ The mode of construction of the eastern wall of the central room was similar to that of the northern and southern walls. One can infer from this that the eastern wall of the throne room was likewise lined with orthostats.

wall also lacked orthostats. Casing of this kind was likewise lacking in the niches set into the northern and southern walls of the central room.⁹ This suggests the possibility that there was not an earlier phase of the throne room as a larger single room (including the bathroom to the west), but rather that the bathroom was built from the first stage of the building and is not a later addition. It appears that the lack of lining in the lower portion of the throne room's western wall arose from another cause.

The rear wing served as a bathroom.¹⁰ Two projections were built in the room's western corners, creating a niche in the middle of the wall resembling that in the rear wall of the White Building (see below). A bathtub was installed in the south of the room.¹¹ It ran along the length of the southern wall and abutted the room's eastern and western walls. Adjoining the bathtub was a huge krater, north of which was a pithos. Since the original floor of this room clearly abutted the bathtub, one can conclude that the latter dates to the initial building stage. It is possible that the drainage channels integrated into the southwestern corner of the structure's foundation wall served to conduct the water from the bathtub outside. If so, these channels provide additional evidence supporting the existence of a bathroom in the structure's original stage (for a discussion of the structure's plan and function, see below).

The Northern Structure—The White Building

North of the central courtyard, a rectangular structure was cleared. It has an inner space (10 × 16 m) and apparently a staircase in its eastern section (fig. 4). Between it and the courtyard, a narrow corridor runs along its full length. The top of the outer stone foundation wall was capped by a row of rectangular limestone blocks; they were smoothly cut and laid horizontally, forming a dado around the structure, for which reason it was dubbed the "White Building."

⁹ During the excavation, we thought that the niches were originally entrances that had been blocked at a later stage. This supposition was checked, but no lines attesting to blocked entrances were discerned in the bricks of the wall facing the rooms in the two lateral wings.

¹⁰ The northern section of the room had been damaged by an Iron Age pit.

¹¹ The walls of the bathtub were composed of coarse pottery, similar to that characteristic of *tabuns*. Stones were embedded in the eastern and western walls. The bottom of the tub was no longer extant. It was apparently established over a stone foundation similar to that underlying all the floors of the room.

Its northeastern corner was exposed in the 1950s by the Yadin Expedition; it was called Building 389 (Yadin et al. 1989: 6–15, 23, plans 2, 4, 7; Strata XVII–XIV, XIII; for the name of the building, see the editor's note in Yadin et al. 1989: 6). The excavators believed that Walls 352 and 353 represented the northeastern corner of a structure dating to the Middle Bronze Age, but one that endured until the end of the Late Bronze Age (Yadin et al. 1989: 6–12, 14, 16, 23). Yadin (1972: 124) deemed it the corner of a palace of the kings of Hazor. The archaeologists of the new expedition initially accepted his conjecture, returning to the site in order to expose the royal Canaanite palace (Ben-Tor 1996b: 67; Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 24, 26–27). Ben-Tor and Rubiato (1999: 27) noted that "After several seasons of hard work, we determined that this large public building was actually the core of the palace that Yadin had discovered a corner of 35 years earlier! Yadin dated the palace to the 18th century BCE (Middle Bronze Age) and identified it as the residence of Ibni-Adu, from a purely archaeological viewpoint; however, his date was based on rather meager evidence—just one corner of the building had been exposed [for a previous discussion see Bonfil 1997: 49–50]. . . . We now date the building to the 14th century BCE, around the time of Abdi-Tirshi, Pharaoh Akhenaten's correspondent" (see also Ben-Tor 1998: 459–62).

Ben-Tor later proposed identifying the White Building as a temple (Ben-Tor 1999: 272–73; 2000: 245, 249); it was called the Southern Temple.¹² The excavations did not produce unambiguous evidence (e.g., pottery vessels, small artifacts, or architectural elements) for this identification, and we are inclined to believe that it derived from three key considerations:

1. The plan of the building—a large rectangular hall lacking internal subdivisions and comprising massive walls. A graded niche (see fig. 4) was built into the middle of the western wall. This plan is reminiscent of the long-room temples, well known during this period in the Levant, including at Hazor (for a comprehensive review of this group, see Mazar 1992; Bonfil 1997: 85–98).
2. The discovery of a lined pit containing numerous pottery vessels in the middle of the main space

¹² It was called the Southern Temple because it was located south of the Long Temple.

(Ben-Tor 1999: 272–73). It was interpreted as a *favissa*, since it apparently reflects the custom of burying cultic objects that have been withdrawn from service in the temple precincts.

3. The exposure of the ceremonial palace (the Black Building)—a closed architectural unit that apparently excludes the White Building from the palace compound.

The three points listed above need to be reconsidered. Although it is possible to find some resemblance between the plan of the White Building and the long-room temples, this does not warrant pronouncing the former a temple, especially since the entrance to temples of this type was necessarily fixed in the wall opposite the one in which the niche was installed (Bonfil 1997: 87–94, plans II.8–II.10; Mazar 1992: 164–73). In the White Building, this is where a stairwell has been reconstructed.

Nor is the deep lined pit holding numerous vessels reason in itself to designate the structure a temple. It should be noted that it was customary to dig *favissae* in the temple courtyards, but outside the actual temple walls. Pits such as those at Hazor, however, have been observed inside buildings, both public and private, of various kinds, in roofed and sometimes very small rooms, in spacious open courtyards (e.g., Ta'anach, Lapp 1967: 21–24; Yokne'am XIXa, Ben-Ami 2005: 154, plan III.5), as well as beyond the borders of Canaan (e.g., in Syria: Alalakh, Woolley 1955: 114). They served as storage pits for food or water and were sometimes connected with the drainage system. In the Lower City at Hazor (Areas E and D), one should note, the Yadin Expedition discovered a number of pits (e.g., Loci 7021, 9017, 9024, 9027; Yadin et al. 1958: 127–40, 147–52) similar in character to the so-called *favissa* in the White Building. These bottle-shaped pits with straight sides reached down to a considerable depth (up to 9 m) and contained several layers of fill. Some yielded a rich and varied assemblage of pottery vessels (including a ceramic mask) and animal bones, and some even featured human burials.

In our opinion, the White Building is not a temple; rather, it served some specific function within the palace complex (for a discussion of its plan and purpose, see below). It is therefore advisable to return to Yadin's original proposal, whereby Building 389 was the northeastern corner of the palace complex. The Black Building, featuring a throne room, comprises, we believe, only part of this complex, serving as the center of the ceremonial palace.

SYRIAN BUILDING TRADITIONS IN THE HAZOR PALACE COMPLEX

By dint of Hazor's powerful and prominent position in the Late Bronze Age, it entertained relations with the kingdoms of the north and with Egypt (Malamat 1991: 91; 1999: 43–44; Horowitz 1997: 192–97; Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 226; Na'aman 2004: 96; Luciani 2006: 32–34). The royal precincts offer testimony to traffic in both ideas and commissions among architects, artists, artisans, and musicians who wandered from one court to another at the behest of the rulers. It is conceivable that these exchanges served as a token of politico-economic relationships already in existence between the respective states, as exemplified by a letter sent by the king of Aleppo to the king of Mari, in which the king of Ugarit asks that his envoy be allowed to visit the palace of Zimri-lim: "Say to Zimrilim, Hammurapi your brother says: The ruler of Ugarit has sent me a message saying 'Introduce me to see the house of Zimrilim.' Hence I am now sending you his servant" (Postgate 1995: 141; after Dossin in Schaeffer 1939: 15–16). Further demonstration of this interchange is afforded by the Minoan frescoes at Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt (Aslanidou 2002; Brysbaert 2002), as well as at major sites in the Levant (e.g., Qatna, Alalakh, and Kabri; Knapp 1998; W.-D. Niemeier and B. Niemeier 1998; B. Niemeier and W.-D. Niemeier 2002; Novák and Pfälzner 2002a: 95; 2002b: 226–31).

The Black Building as an Early bit-hilani Type

The palace complex of Hazor contributes substantially to our understanding of the development of the *bit-hilani* and its appearance in the southern Levant. The fact that it shares the following features with Niqmepa's palace in Alalakh IV (fig. 4; Ben-Tor 1993: 256; 1995a: 67; pl. 5-b; Woolley 1955: 110–31; figs. 44–45) helps elucidate the origin of the *bit-hilani* type:

- Both palaces were built on a podium with a wide courtyard in front of the main buildings.
- The facades of the ceremonial palaces are similar. Two column bases in the middle define the entranceway. A staircase or ramp, rising to the gap between the columns, afforded access to the level of the porch. Short, orthostat-lined walls ran along the outer edge of the porch; proceeding from the

opposite sides, they veered at a right angle to abut the respective columns.

- Both had a broadroom vestibule with a room or rooms to either side; these included a stairwell on the left.
- The large reception hall was located in the center of the building; its focus—presumably the throne—was in one of the lateral walls, at right angles to the entrance.
- The reception hall was surrounded by rooms. Two were located in each of the lateral wings; they communed with one another, while the single entrance to each of the wings was situated near the rear of the hall.
- A bathroom was installed behind the reception hall.
- Annexes, such as a “reception suite” or dwelling units, were erected near the central building as part of the palace complex.

H. Frankfort (1952: 129–31) designated Niqmepa’s palace in Alalakh IV as the prototype of the Neo-Hittite *bit-hilani*. Most of the elements cited by him and other scholars as characteristic of this type are present in both palaces (for a general discussion, see Frankfort 1952; Busink 1970; Naumann 1971; Margueron 1979; Zarzecki-Peleg 2005; Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg 2006; among others). But two important elements, hallmarks of the Iron Age *bit-hilani*, occur at Hazor, but not clearly at Alalakh: the independent unit and the straight axis, which runs from the central courtyard through the entranceway of the ceremonial palace and finally reaches the rear wall of the reception hall.¹³ At Alalakh, the reception hall was (presumably) entered through a lateral opening by way of a room to the side, which was typical of Syrian and Mesopotamian architecture. However, it is also possible to reconstruct its plan whereby the hall was entered through an opening in the middle of the front wall. The ceremonial palace at Hazor, by contrast, diverges from the Syro-Mesopotamian pattern, in that its reception hall is not a conventional broadroom.

We believe that Hazor’s magnificent ceremonial palace was built according to a more elaborate design than its counterpart at Alalakh. This conclusion

suggests the existence of a master plan for *bit-hilani* constructions in Syria during the Late Bronze Age; it served as an inspiration for imposing edifices as at Alalakh and Hazor. It differs from the master plan employed for the ceremonial palace at Qatna, which shows affinities to the Mesopotamian palaces of the Amorite period (Margueron 1987b: 142, 150–51; Novák and Pfälzner 2002a; Novák 2004: 305–6; for Mesopotamian palaces, see Margueron 1982: 209–309; Heinrich 1984: 68–81). The Late Bronze Age palace at Hazor indicates that the prototype of the Iron Age *bit-hilani* was known in northern Canaan as early as the Late Bronze Age.

The White Building: Plan and Function

Large, central, rectangular spaces have been cleared in numerous palaces, both Middle and Late Bronze Age in date, in the Syrian domain. The center of the room is sometimes emphasized by a pit or some other architectural feature as a raised hearth or a stone basin—e.g., at the Northern Palace (P) at Ebla (Tell Mardikh IIIA–B), Room 4038 (Matthiae 1990: 221, fig. 6); at Alalakh VII, Room 9 (Woolley 1955: 92, 101, fig. 35); and at Qatna, *Parvis du Nord* (du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: pl. 16; Barro 2003: 78). Scholars have differed in their interpretation of these spaces. Some have identified them as open courtyards (e.g., Alalakh VII: Woolley 1955: 92), even when traces of columns have been found, which, one assumes, supported roofing, at least over part of the area (Woolley 1955: 101; Tilmen Hüyük, Palace IIc3: Orthmann 1966: fig. 47). Others have considered them roofed structures serving some function within the palace context, but have assigned them divergent roles. In Alalakh IV, Woolley (1955: 112–13, 127–28, figs. 44–45) identified a spacious rectangular hall (Room C1, ca. 5 × 9 m, occupying some two-thirds of the throne room; see fig. 4) as part of the “kitchen wing” situated north of the courtyard of Niqmepa’s palace. His proposal was based on the hearth in the middle and the character of the finds, both in the hall itself and in the adjacent room in the east. In the east of the hall, it should be noted, there was a stairwell (Room C4), located like that reconstructed in the White Building at Hazor. Room C1 at Alalakh was adjoined by additional rooms in the north and west, whereby the buildings at Alalakh and Hazor differ from each other. The stratigraphic connection between the unit to which Room C1 belongs and Niqmepa’s palace can be inferred from a stretch of

¹³ It is possible that the alteration in the position of the entranceway represents a late stage in the development of the type. This process is reflected in the structure at Fakhariyah, where the main entranceway was shifted from the side to the middle of the wall (cf. McEwan 1958: pls. 6 and 7).

mudbrick flooring that surrounds the courtyard and abuts both the southern wall of Room C1 and the palace facade (Woolley 1955: 114). The excavators, noting the contrasting orientation of the respective units, reached the conclusion that the palace erected during Niqmepa's reign was incorporated into an earlier unit which was oriented differently (Woolley 1955: 110–14, 127–30).

Similar halls have been observed in other palaces. In some, one of the shorter sides is emphasized—e.g., in the palace of Yarimlim in Alalakh VII¹⁴ (Woolley 1955: fig. 35), and in Tilmen Hüyük Palace IIc3 (Orthmann 1966: figs. 47–48), where the side is accented by a graded projection (for a discussion of the architectural elements designed to emphasize the room's focus, see below). In the earlier examples, the space was located in the center of the palace, and it led to the various wings via openings installed near the ends of the longer walls. Here it appears that the rectangular space served as a kind of boundary between the ceremonial and residential zones of the palace.

In the later examples, dating to the Late Bronze Age, the “reception suite” was an important component of the palace complex, and it became an independent architectural unit, separate from the throne room (for a discussion of this wing, see Matthiae 1990; Pinnock 1994: 191–98; 2001: n. 7). It is customary to identify it on the basis of its vestibule and the reception room, which was often decorated with two columns in the entranceway. It should be noted that these spaces were adjoined by a spacious rectangular room, perhaps an “audience hall,” and a stairwell. The wing of the reception suite was located alongside or near the wing in whose center was the throne room: e.g., Niqmepa's palace in Alalakh IV (fig. 4) and the wing of Room 2A at Qatna (fig. 5).¹⁵

¹⁴ Margueron had already raised the possibility that the projection in the space in the palace of Yarimlim was extant from the beginning, challenging the excavators' supposition that it represented the blockage of the original entrance.

¹⁵ In both cases, the rectangular hall is left of the central hall of the reception suite. Nevertheless, the halls occupy “opposite” positions in relation to the throne room wing. In Alalakh IV it is adjacent to this wing; at Qatna, by contrast, it is the reception room that borders this wing, while the rectangular hall is located on the other side, at the end of the palace precincts. Concerning the possibility that the two wings at Qatna belong to different periods, see Dardaillon 2000: 86–87. The palace there enjoyed a long period of existence—from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age (Barro 2002: 119; 2003: 83–87, 92; Novák and Pfälzner 2002a: 65, 68–69, 72–73; Novák 2004: 309, 311).

It follows that these two palace wings performed separate and mutually exclusive functions. Nevertheless, they were closely linked and situated in proximity of each other. At times they were joined by a passageway.

The White Building at Hazor differs from the above examples in that it is a separate structure and detached from other rooms, save in the east. In this context it should be noted that, in contrast to the other examples, Palace 2041 in Megiddo VIII has a vestibule and a reception room adjoining the shorter side of the rectangular hall, and they even continue beyond its width (Loud 1948: 25, fig. 382; Nigro 1995: 136). The staircase is built alongside them, albeit on the longer side. In Stratum VIIB the reception unit changes; its width in the west area adjoining the rectangular hall is exceptionally narrow (ca. 5 m; Loud 1948: 29, fig. 383). The White Building at Hazor can conceivably be reconstructed along similar lines.

Thus, the information at our disposal allows us to propose more than one reconstruction for Hazor's White Building. It either was an audience hall and formed part of the reception suite wing, which was plainly in the ceremonial palace; or, like building C1 in Alalakh IV, it constituted a structure possessing another function. Only further clearance of the complex will provide a clearer answer.

Building Techniques and Decorative Architectural Elements

The splendor of the palace complex in Area A is further expressed by its dimensions, its building techniques, and its decorative architectural elements, all unusual in Canaan. Several of its characteristics reveal strong northern, mainly Syrian, influence; in particular, they are similar to the palace at Qatna (see below). In order to erect the complex, an enormous effort was expended on preparatory groundwork. This included the construction of massive revetment walls, apparently established on bedrock.¹⁶ They measured 3–4 m in width, and their foundations were

¹⁶ The bedrock, which determined the tell's original shape, was discovered in Area A at the height of 224.50–224.00, underneath the northeastern corner of the White Building (Yadin et al. 1989: plan 1), and in Area L (Garfinkel 1997: plan III.22a), west of the palace (fig. 3), at the height of 225.30 m. Thus, the bedrock surface dips by only 1 m over a distance of ca. 95 m.

sunk to a considerable depth (sometimes more than 5 m).¹⁷ They form subterranean boxes (Ben Tor 2000: 246–47), some of which are invisible on the surface. Test pits excavated under the floors of the Black and White buildings, as well as under the courtyard (fig. 3), showed that most of the underneath stuff was artificial, filled with consecutive layers of earth, gravel, or stone. This phenomenon is familiar from Syria (Barro 2002: 115; 2003: 83; Novák 2006) and Egypt (Tell el-Dab'a—Palace G; Bietak, Dorner, and Janosi 2001; Bietak and Forstner-Müller 2003).

Some of the walls were constructed using a technique involving two stone foundation walls built against each other and surmounted by a single wall of mudbricks (e.g., the lower foundations of the two corners of the Black Building's facade). This technique is attested in other structures at Hazor and in various sites in Syria, e.g., at Hazor in the foundation wall in which an entranceway was fixed in the temple in Area H (W.2114; Yadin et al. 1989: plan 39), and the longer walls in the temple in Area A (Bonfil 1997: 86, 96, plan II.6), and at Ebla (Tell Mardikh), in the temple in Area D (Matthaie 1980: fig. 30).

Along the inner walls of the pair of rooms in the northern and southern wings of the throne room there were trenches ca. 40 cm in width. These were filled with numerous small sherds of pottery (including hundreds of bowl fragments) and with gravel (Ben-Tor 1996a: 264). Similar gravel-filled trenches along the walls were observed in several rooms in the palace at Qatna (fig. 5); du Mesnil du Buisson called them *coulours de cailloux* (1926: 24, 26–27, 313–16; 1928: 13; 1935: 72–73, pl. 16, etc.; for recent discussions, see Aurenche 1977: 75; Dardaillon 2000: 71–74; Barro 2002: 115; 2003: 83–84; Novák 2006: 66–69).

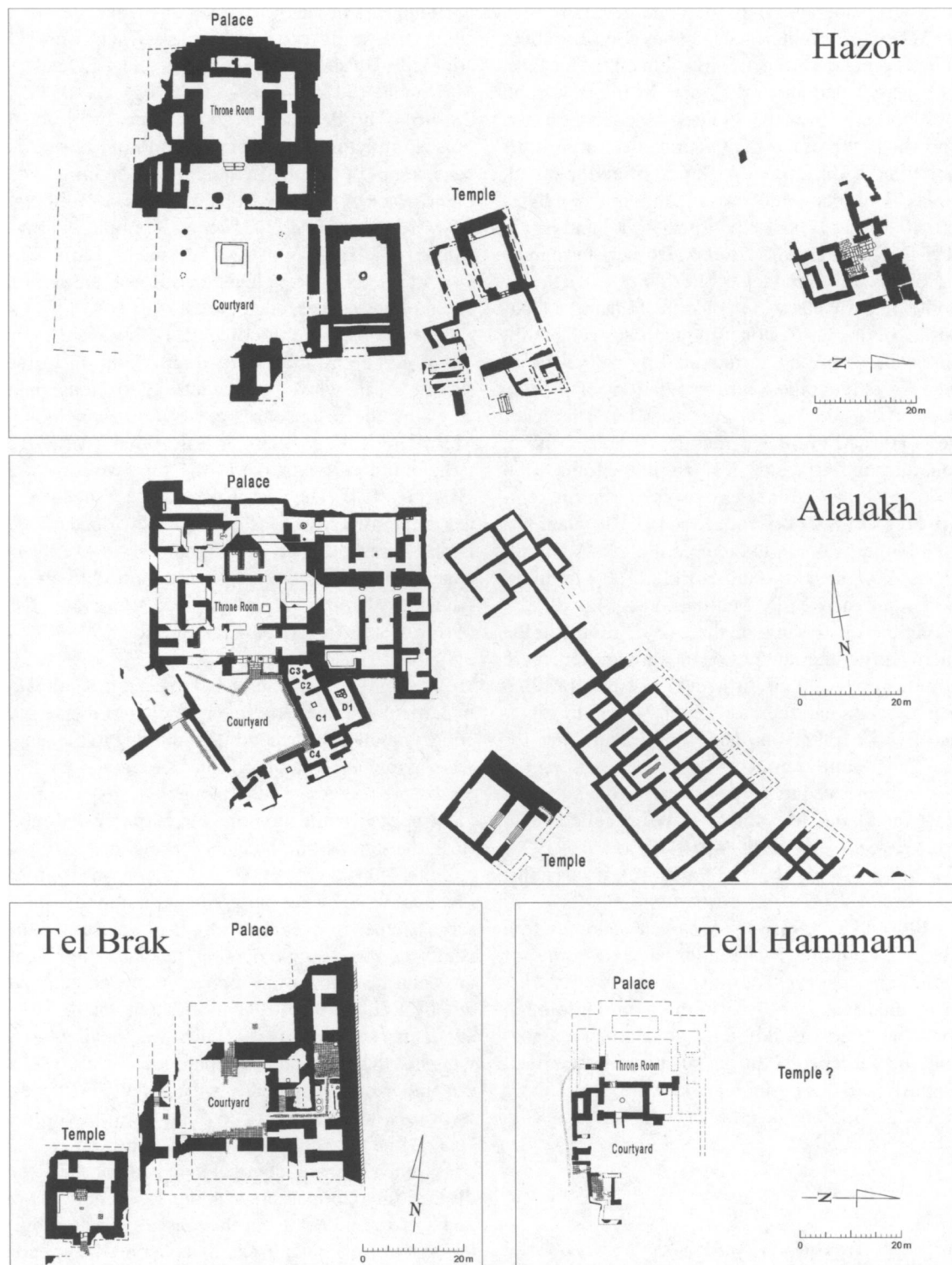
The main building was emphasized by being set on higher ground or by adorning its outer walls. This latter method was employed in the main building at Hazor—the Black Building—and in other palaces beyond the borders of Canaan, such as the outer wall in the back of the ceremonial palace at Qatna (fig. 5; Barro 2002: 119; Novák 2006: 70). At Tell Brak (fig.

4), it appears in the outer walls of the palace, as well as in the walls of the temple, which were also adorned with semicircles in relief (Oates, Oates, and McDonald 1997: 2–4, 13–14, 30, figs. 8, 10, 12, 27, 28, 46). The decoration of the outer walls distinguishes structures of particular importance (e.g., palaces, temples) already in the third millennium B.C.E., e.g., Palace A and the “Plano-Convex” Building at Kish (Moorey 1978: 34, 57), and Temple A at Nuzi (Starr 1937–1939: Vols. I: 87, II: pl. 14; for a discussion of the common characteristics of temples and ceremonial palaces, see below).

The orthostats in the Black Building were ca. 65–70 cm in height; their length varied, but most measured ca. 1 m, while a few reached 2 m (in the palace at Qatna the orthostats were 68 cm in height [du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: 86]; in Alalakh VII: 70 cm in height; and in Alalakh IV: 72 cm [Woolley 1955: 101, 116–17]). The use of orthostats, either embodied in the lower sections of the walls or occurring as jambs, thresholds, or steps (Ben-Tor 1993: 256), is characteristic of the Syrian building tradition—e.g., Alalakh (Woolley 1955: 116–19, 224, fig. 44, pl. 13-c) and Qatna (du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: 71–79, pls. 16, 19-1).

The complex in general and the ceremonial palace in particular show a strong tendency to preserve bilateral symmetry, while carefully adhering to the lengthwise axis. For example, in the ceremonial palace at Hazor, the respective sides along this axis mirror each other perfectly: the monumental entrance is symmetrical; the stairwell is situated opposite the pithoi room to either side of the vestibule; in the throne room two identical wings were built, each containing a pair of rooms across from each other (fig. 4). Access to them is afforded by a single opening in each wing; it joins the central room to the western room of each pair, etc. In addition, the throne room offers the illusion of symmetry on every wall. Since the openings to the wings in the north and south are located at the western end of the room, niches were installed in the east, creating a sense of symmetry and balance within the space. In fact, the northern and southern walls of the throne room are identical in appearance. They are divided into comparable segments, whereby the distance of the niches from the corners of the room in the east corresponds to the distance of the openings to the lateral pair of rooms from the corners of the throne room in the west. One observes a similar balance in the room's western wall. By this means, symmetry was preserved between the room's eastern and

¹⁷ Yadin's excavations already revealed that the foundations of the northeastern corner of structure 389—the White Building—reached a depth of ca. 3.50 m and rested on bedrock. The foundation trenches were dug approximately to the width of the walls, which were built from the bottom up, and thus it proved difficult during the excavations to determine the extent to which these trenches cut into the earlier strata.



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Fig. 4. Late Bronze Age palace complexes and adjacent temples, at Hazor and in Syrian sites. Alalakh IV, based on Woolley 1955: figs. 44–45, pl. 14 (courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London); Tel Brak, based on Oates, Oates, and McDonald 1997: fig 12; Tell Hammam, based on Meijer 1988: pl. 46 (courtesy of the Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul).

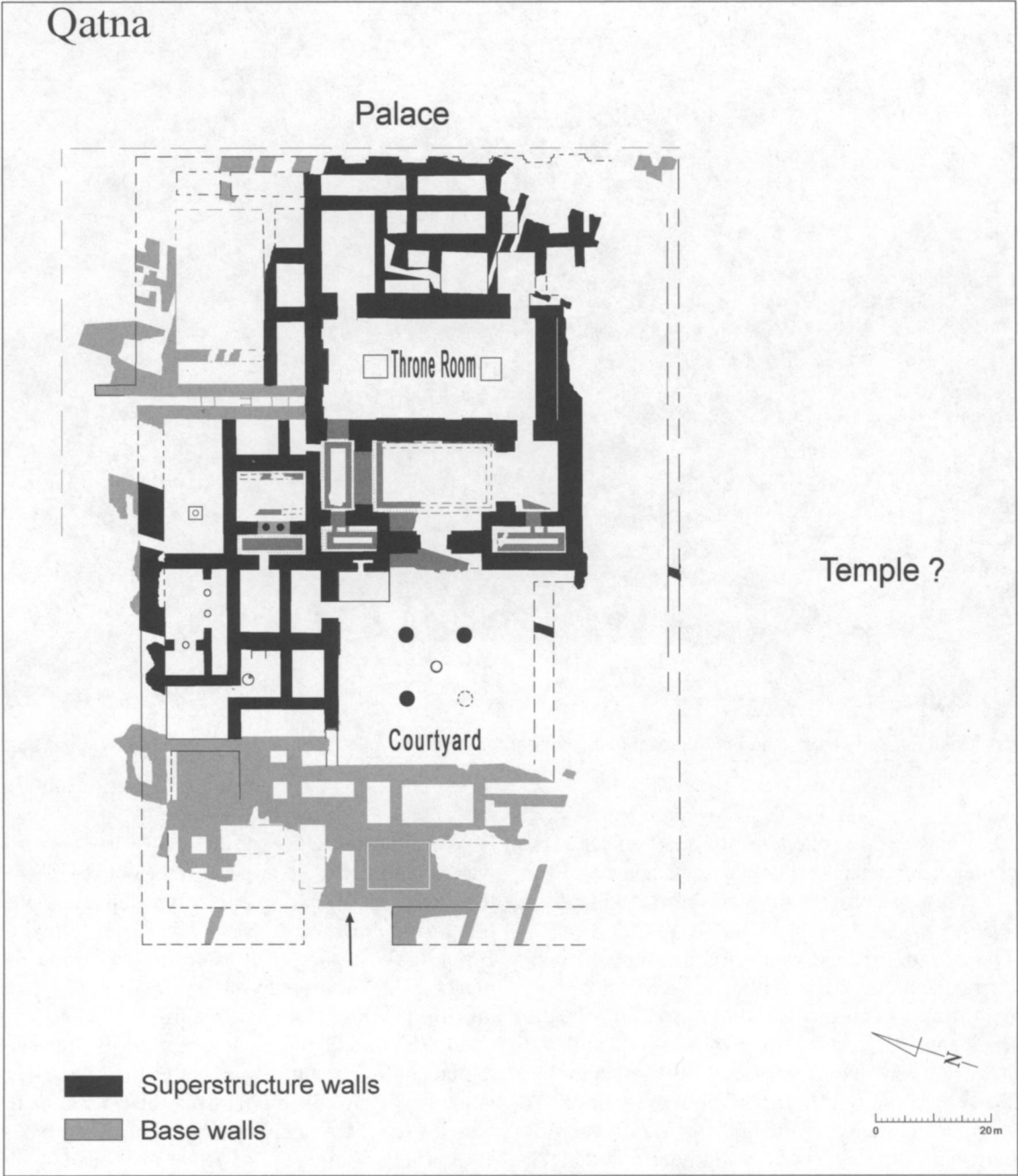


Fig. 5. Qatna Middle/Late Bronze Age palace complex (based on Novák 2004: fig. 3; 2006: fig. 9) (both illustrations courtesy of Dr. Mirko Novák).

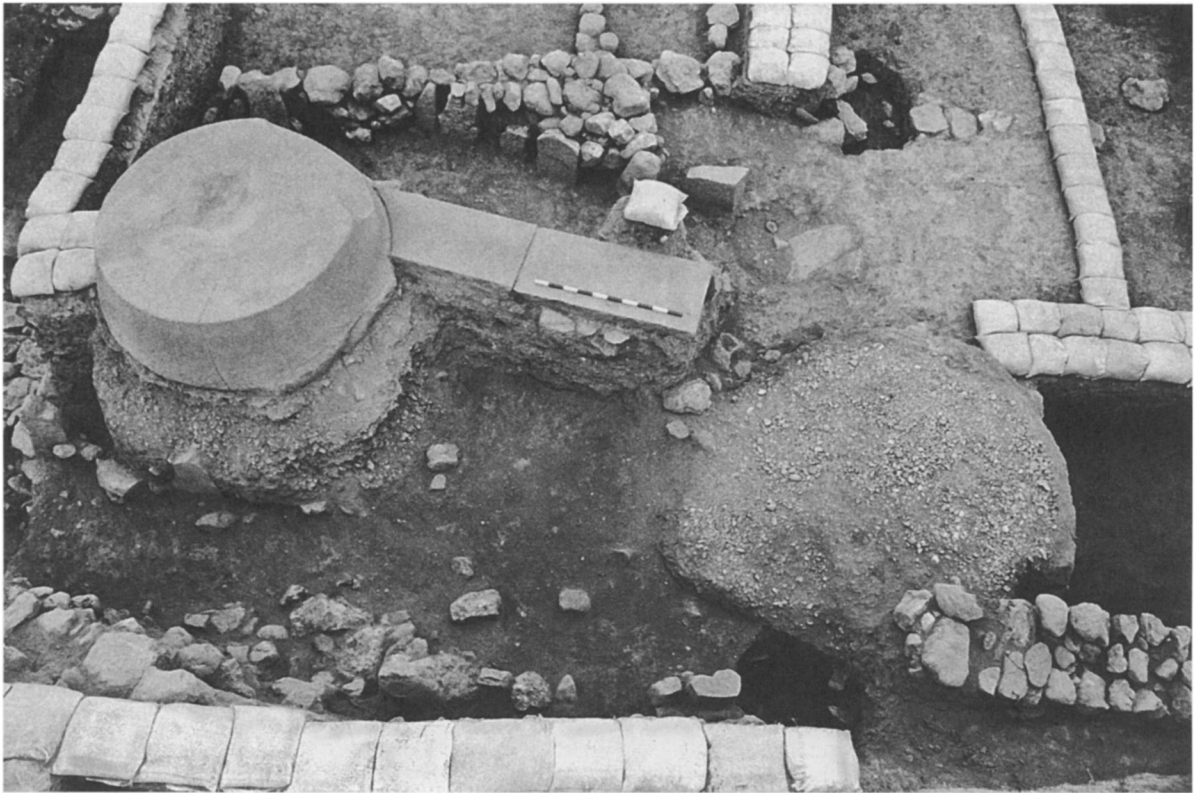


Fig. 6. Column bases established on a gravel foundation at the main entrance to the complex (photo by Hanan Shafir).

western halves. This phenomenon may reflect Mesopotamian influence, as in Mari's palace (e.g., the northeastern corner in Court 106; Parrot 1958a: figs. 86, 93).

The use of niches as an architectural element stressing the focus or foci within a space is also characteristic of the northern building tradition. In the space identified as the throne room at Hazor, two niches were installed; they faced each other on an axis crossing the width of the room at an angle of 90 degrees in relation to the hall's entranceway. Adjoining the southern niche was a large, charred block of wood (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: photo p. 26), which, we propose, can be reconstructed as part of the base of the throne. This arrangement of the principal space is a hallmark of the throne room in the Syro-Mesopotamian architectural tradition. A transverse axis exhibiting two foci appears in the main room of the Mari palace (Room 65): at one end was the base of the throne; at the other was *la tribune surélevée* (Room 66), which was integral to the throne room unit (Parrot 1958a: 111–44). The latter

is a lateral space; its exceptionally wide doorway was provided with a staircase, at the bottom of which the statue of Mari's ruler, Ishtup-ilum, was found lying face downward (Parrot 1958a: 131, fig. 140; 1959: 1–5). A similar division of the throne room unit was also observed in Mari's *Petit Palais Oriental* (Margueron 2004: 350–53, figs. 330–34).

In the White Building at Hazor, the niche was integrated into the shorter wall in the west. Its wide and graded style of construction was also familiar from temples (e.g., the temple in Area H at Hazor; Yadin et al. 1989: plan 39). The focus or foci of a space were sometimes stressed by the opposite method, namely, by the construction of an “offset” (a projection) rather than an “inset” (a niche)—e.g., the projection in the throne room in the palace at Qatna, Room A (fig. 5); in Alalakh VII, Room 9 (Woolley 1955: fig. 35),¹⁸ and at Tilmen Hüyük Palace (Orthmann 1966: figs. 47–48).

¹⁸ See n. 14.

There are also points of resemblance in other architectural details appearing both at Hazor and in palaces in the Syrian domain. The following are worthy of note:

Massive Column Bases as a Decorative Element.

Two pairs of exceptionally large column bases (ca. 2 m in diameter) were found at Hazor (fig. 4; Ben-Tor 2002: 256), in addition to those standing in the courtyard (ca. 1 m in diameter on average; see discussion above). One pair was located at the entrance to the complex, the other in the facade of the ceremonial palace. The bases, carved from basalt, were trapezoidal in cross-section. The use of basalt bases is characteristic of Syrian construction, but alien to the building tradition of the Old Babylonian palaces (Margueron 1987b: 157; Novák 2004: 305). The two columns at the entrance of the complex were established on a gravel foundation which reached to a considerable depth (Ben-Tor 2002: 256; fig. 6). This technique of placing column bases on a thick underpinning of permeable material (gravel, sand, etc.) is associated both with the north (the palace at Qatna; Novák 2004: 303) and with Egypt (the palace of the 13th Dynasty at Tell el-Dab'a (F/I, Stratum d/1), and the palace of Ramses II at Qantir; Eigner 1996: 75). A striking resemblance obtains between the bases at Hazor and those at Qatna, both in terms of shape and in the method of their mounting (du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: 75–76, pls. 5–a, 17–3: grand base, 18–1: base No. 7; Novák 2004: fig. 3); a similar base shape appears also at Alalakh (Woolley 1955: 103, fig. 42).

A Ramp or Staircase at the Entrance to the Ceremonial Palace. The ceremonial palace at Hazor is slightly higher than the other structures of the complex. At its entranceway, between the two column bases, there was probably a ramp. The raising of the ceremonial palace and its separation from the other structures or wings in the complex is a phenomenon familiar from other palaces, where the approach to the raised structures was enabled by a staircase—e.g., Alalakh IV (Woolley 1955: 116)—or a ramp—e.g., Tell Hammam¹⁹ (Meijer 1988: 89, pls. 45b, 46,

48a–b; fig. 4; see the discussion of the *bit-halani* above).

The Extensive Use of Cedar of Lebanon. The palace of Hazor is notable for its extensive use of this wood (Ben-Tor 1996a: 264; 1997: 262; Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 31), both as raw material and as a decorative element. For example, wooden beams were incorporated into the mudbrick walls, the ceilings, and the jambs; they were also used as sills in the entranceways; they were also employed as joins between the top of the orthostats and the mudbrick walls surmounting them. This phenomenon is common in the architecture of the north, but less so in Canaan (for Syrian and Mesopotamian examples, see Alalakh [Woolley 1955: 227–28]; Qatna [Dardaillon 2000: 75, 80, fig. 5a]; and Mari [Parrot 1958a: 85, fig. 89]). Cedar was also used in furnishing the palace (e.g., the charred remains of wood which can be reconstructed as the base of the throne; see below).

The Use of Mats or Carpets. We infer that the floor of the throne room in the palace of Hazor was covered by some perishable material, such as straw mats, carpets, or some other organic substance, whose traces were clearly visible at the time of the excavations: a thin and almost uniform deposit of ash over the room's entire floor surface. The hand impressions in the plaster coating the walls of the throne room indicates that the surface had no applied finish. This suggests to us that these walls were covered with tapestries or mats, as was customary in the palace guest rooms. Their use in the guest rooms or residential quarters is known, for example, from Ebla (Tell Mardikh; Matthiae 2006: 41) and Mari (for wall paintings in the style of tapestries, see Parrot 1952: 376; 1958b: 53; Moortgat 1952: 92–93).

In this context, one should note the letter sent by Zimri-lim to a senior palace administrator: "Say to Mukannišum, your lord says: I have heard your tablet, which you sent to me. About the first-quality Yamhadian tapestry on the subject of which I wrote to you before, you wrote: 'I have sent(?) that tapestry . . . to Babylon . . . ' . . . that tapestry . . . another tapestry . . . [damaged passage] . . . and that tapestry is (still) left in your hands. Now send that tapestry to me quickly. And about the ibex-horns and the birchwood on the subject of which you wrote to me, I will request them from Bunu-Ištar and send them to you" (Postgate 1995: 143; after Rouault 1977: no. 12).

¹⁹ In our opinion, the approach to the principal space should be reconstructed from the opposite direction to that proposed by the excavators. That is to say, a ramp led from the wide open courtyard to the palace's ceremonial area, and thence to the lateral rooms.

A PALACE OR A TEMPLE COMPLEX?

The palace complex comprises a number of structures and wings designed to serve different functions, including the residential quarters of the king and his retinue, storerooms, and workshops (yet to be excavated at Hazor), alongside spaces connected with the court's ceremonial activities. Some of these ceremonies were conducted in the royal precincts and reflected the various functions performed by the sovereign in his role as head of the government and of his kingdom's administrative and judicial organizations (for buildings or palatial wings ascribed to representational or official ceremonial functions in Syria and Mesopotamia, see, e.g., Frankfort 1952: 124; Margueron 1979: 170; 1982: 544–45, 554; Novák 2004: 305, and others). The two assemblages—the ceremonial palace and the temple—exhibit common characteristics in terms of their spatial organization, notably in the erection of a main building linked to a ceremonial courtyard in the front and to various service wings. At first sight, the palace compound could be construed as a temple complex comprising a main building, fronted by a courtyard with its central platform, and several annexes (Margueron 1982: 545; 1987a: 25–26; for temples complexes, see Bonfil 1997: 86–98). There are, moreover, additional similarities in terms of plan and building techniques between the complex in Area A and the temple in Area H at Hazor (e.g., the graded niches and graded exterior walls; see discussion below). The similarity between the plans (e.g., at Hazor and Alalakh) arguably reflects the correlation between the king and the deity (see below). It is accordingly not surprising that these respective precincts share certain features, such as spaces with analogous functions—those, for instance, in which judgments were pronounced. There is no word in Akkadian for court of justice; the term in use implies that the case was brought before a judge or a bench of judges who sat at the gate or in the temple courtyard (Nemet-Nejat 1998: 222–23). In Mesopotamia, the king was the supreme judicial authority (Nemet-Nejat 1998: 222–23; Postgate 1995: 150), and one can assume that his judgments were delivered in the palace courtyard, corresponding to the temple courtyard.

Nevertheless, several considerations counter the interpretation of the new structure in Area A as a temple, and support our identification of it as a palace.

The disposition of the rooms or wings surrounding the main hall—the throne room—is characteristic of palace complexes; it is lacking, however, in most temples (e.g., at Hazor itself and at Alalakh; fig. 4).

The integration of bathrooms or ablution rooms into palace complexes is well attested—e.g., at Qatna—the *Haut Lieu* (du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: fig. 35; Barro 2003: 78); Mari—Rooms 38, 45, 7, 3, 77, 69, etc. (Parrot 1958a: 171–73, 178–80, 202–5, 215, 222–30); Tell Hammam (Meijer 1988: 89–90, pl. 46); Tell Brak (Oates, Oates, and McDonald 1997: 4–5); and Tell el-Dab'a—Palace G (Bietak, Dorner, and Jánosi 2001: figs. 34a, 34b, 36–39). And, as at Hazor, they are located in the ceremonial wing behind the throne room—e.g., Alalakh IV (Woolley 1955: 118, 120); and the palace of the 13th Dynasty at Tell el-Dab'a (Eigner 1985: 19–21, 23, figs. 2–3; 1996: 75, 78, fig. 1); see also the discussion of the *bit-hilani* (above). Thus, it is perhaps permissible to assume that the bathrooms in these wings served in ceremonies taking place in their vicinity. Bathrooms never appear in temple structures. In Canaanite and Syrian temples, the position occupied by the bathroom at Hazor would correspond to the Holy of Holies.

An exceptional find comprising a basalt statue (ca. 1.10 m in height) attached to a large tripod krater (ca. 0.85 m in diameter) was found in the main hall of the Black Building at Hazor (Ben Tor 1998: 462, fig. 5; 2006: 6). Large tripod kraters of basalt were recovered from structures identified as palaces at Qatna (du Mesnil du Buisson 1928: 10, pls. 13:P 8, 14:2) and Ebla (Tell Mardikh; Matthiae 1994: 167–72, 177). All the fragments of the four or five such vessels supported by three figures at Ebla (Tell Mardikh) came from the throne room of the Northern Palace (Palace P). Matthiae suggested that they were ceremonial objects used exclusively in royal reception halls. Thus, the discovery of a comparable artifact at Hazor reinforces our identification of the main hall in the Black Building as a throne room.

The function of these enormous basins is still unexplained. They evidently served in palace rituals comprising banquets or other ceremonies. It is conceivable that the pithoi (Ben-Tor 1996a: 264; 1996b: 79, fig. 14; Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: drawing p. 25, photo p. 27), found in most of the palace's various rooms, including the main hall (fig. 7) and the vestibule, are also related to these events. Most adjoin the corners of the room nearest the doorways. It should be noted that the pithos, common in the ce-



Fig. 7. Pithoi in situ in the northwestern corner of the throne room (photo by Ilan Sztulman).

ramic repertoire at Hazor, is absent from the temple assemblages in the city.²⁰ The pithos, which can hold large quantities of produce, was no longer in use in the cities of Canaan south of the Upper Jordan Valley in the Late Bronze Age, possibly because most of the Canaanite kingdoms were under the sway of Egypt, and paid tribute to their overlord (Weinstein 1981; Liverani 1983: 46–56; Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 320–25). But it appears that the Hazor kingdom governed its own affairs and amassed supplies for its own use (Bonfil 1992: 31–33). If so, one can assume that this vessel symbolized the wealth and independence of Hazor and its sovereign. The storerooms signify the king's ability to rule his kingdom proudly and extend his authority over the taxpayers. This also applies to other palaces in the ancient world (Dolce 1994: 302–6), many of which contained magazines with an abundance of storage

jars and/or pithoi. They were constructed as a separate architectural wing, and many featured long, narrow corridors (e.g., Mari [Parrot 1958a: 281–305]). It should be noted that, in addition to the large storerooms, the palaces had other spaces indistinguishable in their dimensions from ordinary rooms, and only their contents attest to their usage for storage—e.g., the Northern Palace at Ebla (Tell Mardikh; Matthiae 2006: 40); Qatna—*la Salle des Jarres* (du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: 95, fig. 26); and Mari—Rooms 116, 78, and 80 (Parrot 1958a: 146–47, 155–56). They adjoined or surrounded the throne room, and their contents reveal part of the function of the ceremonial palace. A room of this type—the pithos room (see above)—was exposed in the Black Building, north of the vestibule. The large storeroom has yet to be located at Hazor, but one can assume that a wing of this type was included within the palace precincts.

Prestige items (including bronze statues, jewelry, ivories, seals, etc.) were stored in the small rooms adjoining the throne room, at least in those on the north

²⁰ Only the upper part of one such vessel was found outside the temple in Area H, where annexes were built in front of the courtyard.

(Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 35). A similar phenomenon was attested in the rooms close to Room A at Qatna, in which precious objects, such as Egyptian alabaster and stone vessels, were recovered (Barro 2002: 117).

All the above considerations support the identification of the Hazor complex as a palace, the Black Building being a ceremonial palace rather than a temple.

The Architectural Paradigm of the Palace

The royal compound at Hazor had numerous characteristics corresponding to its counterparts in the Syrian domain during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. The construction of palaces within a well-defined, enclosed compound is characteristic of Syria. They included, among other structures, buildings with a ceremonial function. These complexes consisted of a central courtyard fronted by the compound's structures, such as Alalakh IV, Qatna, Tell Hammam, and Tell Brak (figs. 3–4). The palace itself was erected on a large-scale podium raised over its surroundings. The architectural assemblage was well defined, and its precincts were clearly delimited by the outer walls of the structures themselves or by enclosure walls. A principal route, sometimes passing through successive openings, led to the compound, and an impressive gateway signaled the main entrance. This gateway led into the central courtyard, usually via an indirect passage affording access to the different wings. Separation from the surroundings was stressed by architectural elements, such as walls decorated with “reliefs” (i.e., the interplay of niches and projections) and stone casing (orthostats and ashlar), as well as by means of a circumferential street or of surrounding open areas.

There were various structures outside the compound that were nonetheless linked to the palace—e.g., those excavated to the north of the compound, including those at the edge of the tell (Area M). Similar structures were observed in Alalakh IV (see fig. 4, noting the structures subdivided by means of one or more freestanding walls in the two sites adjoining the slopes of the tell). It also appears that the ceremonial palaces were linked to the temples outside the complex but in its vicinity—e.g., Alalakh IV, Tell Brak, and Ebla (Tell Mardikh; see figs. 3 and 4; Matthiae 1995: 166). The erection of the temple outside the palace compound is a phenomenon also familiar

from Mesopotamia (for a general discussion and a special consideration of Mari, where it is possible that the palace was exceptional in having a cultic wing inside the palace complex, see Margueron 1982: 545–47; 1987a: 25–26; 2004: 375, 501–6). This phenomenon continues into the Iron Age, occurring, for example, in the Neo-Hittite palace complex at Tell Tayanat (Haines 1971: pls. 103, 106) and in the Neo-Assyrian palace complex—e.g., Dūr Šarukīn (Khorsabad) and Nineveh (Heinrich 1984: figs. 88, 108). The route leading to the royal complex at Hazor also proceeds to the Long Temple in Area A. A secondary lateral entranceway joined the temple precincts and the central courtyard of the royal complex.

It is important to note that the temple at Hazor was oriented differently than the palace compound²¹ (fig. 4). In fact, there are many examples of deviation in the orientation of the palace precincts and the adjoining temples, whereas the units within the palace compound usually adhered to the same orientation—e.g., Alalakh VII and IV (Woolley 1955: pls. 14 and 22) and beyond the borders of Syria (e.g., Mari [Parrot 1958a: table de Illustration 1]). Even if this deviation reflects construction at different times or results from topographic or religious considerations, one should not preclude the possibility that it has some symbolic significance. It is conceivable that the divergence in the respective orientation of the palace and temple complexes represents a distinction between the secular and divine institutions, and reflects a desire to emphasize their reciprocal independence, even if they were linked. The comparison between the king and the gods is well attested in Mesopotamian culture, and both exhibited the same attributes (Halla 1988: 60–64; Postgate 1995: 266–68). This linkage is confirmed by the Akkadian proverb: “Man is the shadow of a god, and a slave is the shadow of a man; but the king is the mirror of a god” (Lambert 1960: 281–82).

CONCLUSIONS

In our view, the assemblage exposed in Area A represents the complex of the ceremonial palace of

²¹ This fact was cited in the past in support of a reconstruction whereby the two complexes were erected at different times (Bonfil 1997: 49–51, 75). However, in view of the considerations raised here, it now seems that both complexes coexisted, without one precluding the other.

the kings of Hazor. It consists of an artificial podium, large-scale and well defined, adjoined by a temple, and includes wings corresponding to the various functions performed within the palace precincts, whether for the king himself, his retinue, or those to whom he granted an audience. The residential quarters of the king and his attendants, as well as the large storerooms and workshops, have not yet been exposed. Those that have been are linked to the court's ceremonial activities, including those performed by the king in his capacity as head of the government, the administration, and the judiciary.

The complex at Hazor was a monumental royal enterprise built according to a preestablished plan. In terms of building techniques and decorative architectural elements, its characteristics bear a strong affinity to the architectural tradition of the Syrian domain, in particular with the palace at Qatna. The ceremonial palace, containing the throne room, was erected according to the master plan of the earlier *bit-hilani*, and resembles the palace at Alalakh IV. Its occurrence at Hazor supports the conjecture that by the Late Bronze Age this plan was already considered the archetype of ceremonial palaces.

The circulation of artisans and their ideas among the various kingdoms resulted in the appearance of similar elements in palace complexes separated by thousands of miles and otherwise belonging to very different cultural and religious traditions. The complexes were adapted to the lifestyles and customs (ceremonial, administrative, and judicial) of the courts, which were similar throughout the Syrian domain, and which were in contact with Mesopotamia, with Egypt, and possibly even with the Aegean world. The excavation of the impressive palace complex stresses Hazor's status and repute in the Levant and in the ancient world in general in the Late Bronze Age, earning it the epithet: "Hazor, the head of all those kingdoms" (Joshua 11:10). Its fame remained engraved on the collective memory for centuries after its destruction.

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