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“The City, Its Gods Will Return There . . .”: Toward an Alternative Interpretation of Hazor’s Acropolis in the Late Bronze Age*

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Introduction

Tel Hazor, located in the upper Jordan Valley, is a prominent site controlling the ancient route leading from the southern region of Israel, through the Jezreel Valley, and to the north into Lebanon and Syria. Ever since the excavation seasons at Tel Hazor led by Yigael Yadin in the 1950s, the site has proven worthy of its biblical description as “the head of all those kingdoms” (Josh. 11:10). Impressive remains of fortifications, temples, and public buildings from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages were unearthed

throughout the huge 80-hectare area of the upper and lower city of Hazor.¹ The renewed excavations at the site, led by Amnon Ben-Tor of the Hebrew University, have concentrated in two areas on the upper tell: Area A, the acropolis, and Area M, on the northern slope of the tell facing the lower city (figs. 1–2).² The Late Bronze Age remains revealed in these two areas contribute significantly to our reconstruction of the site in the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.

The existence of a monumental structure dated to the Late Bronze Age in Area A, the acropolis of Hazor, is known since Yadin’s seasons of excavation on the tell. Knowledge of its presence on the northern slope

*This paper is based on a chapter from my Ph.D. thesis, written under the supervision of Amnon Ben-Tor from the Hebrew University, and was originally submitted for the proceedings of the 3ICAANE held in 2002 in Paris. I wish to thank both Amnon Ben-Tor for his unfailing support throughout the course of my work (despite our disagreements on interpretation of the finds) and his comments on several drafts of this paper, and Nadav Na’aman of Tel-Aviv University, for their encouragement in pursuing the ideas presented above. I also thank the three anonymous *JNES* reviewers, whose careful reading and detailed comments helped me to clarify my arguments.

The plans were drawn by Ruhama Bonfil and Dalit Weinblatt; the pottery was drawn by Yulia Rodman; and the table was arranged by Vladimir Avrutis. Photographs are by Hanan Shafir and Sky Balloon.

¹Y. Yadin, *Hazor* (*Schweich Lectures of the British Academy* 1970) (London, 1972).

²A. Ben-Tor, “Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin: Aims and Preliminary Results,” *Eretz-Israel* 25 (1996): 67–81 (Hebrew); A. Ben-Tor, “The Fall of Canaanite Hazor: The “Who” and “When” Questions,” in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. S. Gitin, A. Mazar, and E. Stern (Jerusalem, 1998), 456–67; A. Ben-Tor and M. T. Rubiato, “Excavating Hazor: Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25 (1999): 22–39; A. Ben-Tor, “Hazor,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land 5: Supplementary Volume*, ed. E. Stern (Jerusalem, 2007), 1769–76.



Figure 1—Aerial view of Tel Hazor and the lower city from the north.

of the tell (Area M), however, was originally based on topographical features of the site, leading to the re-opening of this excavation area in 1990. The renewed excavations revealed the plan and the inner development of the two architectural complexes and uncovered the wealth of material connected with them. From the onset of its discovery, the western building in the Area A enclosure was known as the Canaanite Palace of Hazor. This identification was based on its size, architectural details, and apparent similarity to other Syrian palaces, especially the one of Alalakh IV.³ In a recently published article, Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg defined the complex as a ceremonial palace and compared it to the Late Bronze Age palaces of Qatna, Tel Brak, and other north Syrian royal edifices.⁴ This interpretation will be addressed in detail below.

³Ben-Tor, "Fall of Canaanite Hazor" (1998), 459; Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 29.

⁴R. Bonfil and A. Zarzecki-Peleg, "The Palace in the Upper City of Hazor as an Expression of a Syrian Architectural Paradigm," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 348 (2007): 25–47.

The Area M complex (fig. 3) was initially described as a gateway leading into a paved street and protected by a citadel. The podium area (fig. 4) was interpreted as a cultic area within the gate, corresponding to the well-known Israelite concept of *bamah* within the gate.⁵ These identifications have served as useful working hypotheses in the course of excavation, but a detailed architectural analysis of the Area M complex alters these views considerably and offers a different interpretation of this complex as the northern part of a large residential royal palace.⁶

In the following, I will present an alternative interpretation of the plan of Hazor's acropolis during the Late Bronze Age. On the basis of the ground plan of these monumental buildings, their spatial arrangement and relation to one another, selected assemblages of pottery, and other small finds and other groups of material finds, I will argue that the monumental structure in Area A, the so-called Ceremonial

⁵Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 32–33.

⁶See also S. Zuckerman, "Where Is the Hazor Archive Buried?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (2006): 28–37.



Figure 2—Aerial view of the acropolis from the east: Area A (left) and Area M (right).

Palace, should be viewed as cultic rather than as a civic ceremonial structure.⁷ This building will be referred to henceforth as Building 7050 (after one of its richest loci in the northeastern room), a neutral term that is not biased by our interpretation of its original function. It will also be argued below that the Southern Temple should indeed be understood as a temple,⁸ and that the whole complex is a royal sanctuary, similar in concept to other cultic precincts in Late Bronze Age Levantine and north Syrian cities. Hence, the title of this essay, citing a liver model inscription found in a temple in the lower city of Hazor,⁹ seeks to “bring

⁷Contra Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 30–31.

⁸See also A. Ben-Tor, “The ‘White Building’ Is a Temple: Response to Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 58 (2008): 94–99.

⁹This is the concluding line of an extispicy text inscribed on a clay liver model found at the Area H temple at the lower city of

back” the Canaanite gods and their royal ritual to the heart of Hazor’s acropolis.

The Area M Complex

Excavations in Area M were renewed in 1990 in order to understand the nature of the platform discerned in the middle of the slope of the tell (fig. 1). In terms of topography and location, the area is ideal as a passage between the two parts of the Bronze Age city, and a large section was cut into the slope in order to uncover the nature of this assumed route.¹⁰ The excavations in Area M brought to light an impressive architectural complex (fig. 3) built on top of earlier

Hazor, translated in W. Horowitz, and T. Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem, 2006), 66–68.

¹⁰Ben-Tor, “Fall of Canaanite Hazor,” 459.



Figure 3—Aerial view of the Area M complex (north is to the right of the picture).

remains that were tentatively dated to the end of the Middle Bronze Age or the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age. These remains include a segment of a long channel covered with orthostats, which probably belongs to an earlier monumental building, and a flight of seven wide stairs leading down toward the lower city.¹¹ All earlier elements in Area M were either cut or completely covered by massive foundation walls and constructive earth and stone fills. These were laid

throughout the area when the monumental complex was erected and changed the nature and function of this part of the slope for the rest of the Late Bronze Age. A similar phenomenon was observed in Area A,¹² which suggests that both monumental complexes were part of the same large-scale building project encompassing the whole city.¹³ The Area M monumen-

¹²Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," 30.

¹³S. Zuckerman, "Anatomy of a Destruction: Crisis Architecture, Termination Rituals and the Fall of Canaanite Hazor," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 20 (2007): 12–16.

¹¹Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 32.



Figure 4—The podium area (Area M) from the south.

tal complex shares several architectural features with the Area A Building 7050. These include the use of wooden (cedar of Lebanon) beams incorporated into the mudbrick walls, well-dressed basalt orthostats for lining the walls, basalt slabs serving as stairs, and stepped designs of wall corners that define the entrances to the main spaces.¹⁴ All these features indicate that north Syrian architectural traditions served as a main source of influence for Late Bronze Age architecture at Hazor¹⁵ but are not confined to palaces and royal administrative buildings.¹⁶

In terms of its plan, the Area M complex consists of several distinct spaces, interconnected by a series of openings (figs. 3–4). The main entrance to the complex was from the northeast, up the slope from the general direction of the southern gate (Area P) of the lower city.¹⁷ A well-built drainage channel, reinforced by stone steps and covered by earth fill, marks the assumed course of the road leading through the orthostat-lined entrance into the building (fig. 3).¹⁸

¹⁴Ben-Tor and Rubiato, “Excavating Hazor,” 28; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 39.

¹⁵Ben-Tor and Rubiato, “Excavating Hazor,” 28–32.

¹⁶Cf. Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 34–38, citing these among the points of resemblance between Hazor and Syrian palaces.

¹⁷A. Ben-Tor and R. Bonfil, eds., *Hazor V: An Account of the Fifth Season of Excavation, 1968* (Jerusalem, 1997), plan V.8; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” fig. 1.

¹⁸Ben-Tor and Rubiato, “Excavating Hazor,” 32.

The podium area, the first architectural space encountered upon entering the complex, is named after the huge basalt podium set into a niche in its rear wall (fig. 4). Its walls are white-plastered and its floor is paved with basalt orthostats in secondary use. Four round depressions, arranged in a 50 × 50 cm square, were drilled into the top of the upper slab forming the surface of the podium. Several portable basalt vessels, as well as a horseshoe-shaped feature incorporated into the floor in front of the podium, are additional noteworthy features.¹⁹ Two openings lead from the podium area to the east and to the west, into the other spaces belonging to the same complex. To the left of the eastern entrance is a niche in which we found a rounded, smoothed limestone (fig. 4). The unique features of this stone, as well as its conspicuous location, point to its possible identification as a *baetil* (a naturally-shaped stone used as a cultic object).²⁰ A cavity drilled into the large basalt slab on top of the eastern niche might hint to certain rituals connected with the *baetil*.²¹ The western, orthostat-lined entrance leads, by means of five basalt stairs, to a pebble-paved space whose western limit is still unknown.²² A series of massively built drainage channels, part of the sophisticated drainage system of the Area M complex, was found under the floor of this large courtyard (fig. 3).

An opening in the southeastern corner of this courtyard leads into the southern wing of the Area M complex. This wing is roughly square in plan and consists of two small rooms and a larger hall, which is divided in two by means of a low partition wall. This wall is lined by two pairs of nicely cut basalt blocks, which form the lintels of two openings into the northern room of the building. A series of interconnected pits and drainage channels was discovered under the floors of the building (fig. 3). These channels drained the still unexcavated rooms to the south of the building and eventually joined the eastern

¹⁹Ibid., 33.

²⁰For a definition and discussion of the term see P. Warren, “On Baetyl,” *Opuscula Atheniensia* 18 (1990): 193–206.

²¹C. Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (London, 1985), 378, 430–31; T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm, 1995), 115–34.

²²See S. Zuckerman, “Late Bronze Age Scoops: Context and Function,” in *Up to the Gates of Ekron: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin*, ed. S. W. Crawford (Jerusalem, 2007), 315, fig. 2.

channels toward the slope. The eastern wall of the southern wing continues south outside the excavation limits. All these features suggest that the Area M complex is the northern part of a much larger building, whose southern and western parts are still outside the present boundaries of Area M. The exposure of these remains is the goal of the current excavations in the southern part of Area M.²³

The Area M complex is located on the very edge of the tell, facing the lower city, and approached from the northeast (fig. 1). As far as we can ascertain, this part of the tell was not fortified during the second millennium B.C. It was, however, protected by a huge moat separating the upper and the lower city, preventing direct passage between the two parts of the city.²⁴ In the next section I will offer an interpretation of the nature and special function of the Area M complex, especially those of the podium area.

The Podium Area as a Royal Portal

Contrary to the initial interpretation of the podium area as part of a citadel guarding the road leading up to the acropolis, I argue that the podium area in Area M is a royal portal, forming part of a royal residential palace of Late Bronze Age Hazor.

The term “portal” is imbued with theological and symbolic meaning, summarized in the following definition from the *Encyclopedia of Religion*: “gateway or doorway, insofar as it elicits ritual actions or becomes a locus of concentrated architectural symbolism. It is a space framed to call attention to spatial transition; thus it has characteristics of both a path and a place . . . it is both a termination and a beginning. As a structure that is both inside and outside the same zone, and one that attracts dangerous as well as beneficent forces, it is a site of considerable ambivalence.”²⁵ All these meanings and functions should ideally find material expression in architecture and be expressed by the finds within such liminal contexts. In the following I will present the archaeological evidence for the context of Area M.

²³A. Ben-Tor and S. Zuckerman, “Hazor – 2007,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 57 (2007): 211–15.

²⁴Yadin, *Hazor (Schweich Lectures)*, 53; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 25.

²⁵R. L. Grimes, “Portals,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York, 1986), 11: 452–53.

The podium area is entered via the road leading up from the lower city, and it is the first feature encountered by anybody walking up this road. This space, which is open on three sides, is well suited for controlling the entrance and directing traffic into and throughout the building (figs. 3–5). It serves as a liminal space and a threshold, not only for the monumental building it forms a part of, but also for the whole acropolis of the city.

The most conspicuous feature of the podium area is its pavement of basalt orthostats, which, to the best of my knowledge, is unique not only in Hazor but in the ancient Near East. Pavements of ashlar stones are very rare in the architectural traditions of the second millennium B.C. and are seldom found in courtyards and entryways of monumental buildings.²⁶ A relevant example is the official entrance (a) and courtyard (I) of the royal palace of Ugarit (fig. 5).²⁷ These guided the visitor from the royal plaza, located just inside the city gate, into the throne room and further into the other parts of the palace.²⁸ Basalt and stone orthostats were, however, often laid as thresholds in the entrances of public buildings. These include palaces, such as the palaces in Alalakh VII and IX²⁹ and Nuzi,³⁰ and temples such as Hazor Areas H and A,³¹ and the Alalakh temple of stratum IB.³²

The unique use of basalt orthostats to pave the floor of the podium area creates an overwhelming impression of a threshold writ large. This space should

²⁶G. Hult, *Bronze Age Ashlar Masonry in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 66 (Göteborg, 1983), 40, 73–74 (Ebla Palace E); P. Matthiae, *Ebla: An Empire Rediscovered* (London, 1980), fig. 3.

²⁷M. Yon, *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra* (Winona Lake, Ind., 2006), 38–39, figs. 20–21.

²⁸J. Margueron, “Le Palais royal d’Ougarit: Premiers résultats d’une analyse systématique,” in *Le Pays d’Ougarit autour de 1200 av. J. C.*, Ras Shamra-Ougarit, ed. M. Yon, M. Sznycer, and P. Bordreuil, (Paris, 1995), 11: 183–202.

²⁹L. Woolley, *Alalakh: An Account of the Excavations at Tel Atchana in the Hatay, 1937–1949* (Oxford, 1955), 92–93, 110–131, figs. 44–45, pl. 13.

³⁰R. F. Starr, *Nuzi: Report on the Excavations at Yorgan Tepe Near Kirkuk, Irak* (Cambridge, 1939), 125, pl. 4B.

³¹A. Ben-Tor et al., *Hazor III–IV: An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavation, 1957–1958* (Jerusalem, 1989), pls. 37–38; R. Bonfil, “Area A,” in *Hazor V: An Account of the Fifth Season of Excavation, 1968*, ed. A. Ben-Tor and R. Bonfil (Jerusalem, 1997), 55, photo II. 27.

³²Woolley, *Alalakh*, 85–87, fig. 34.

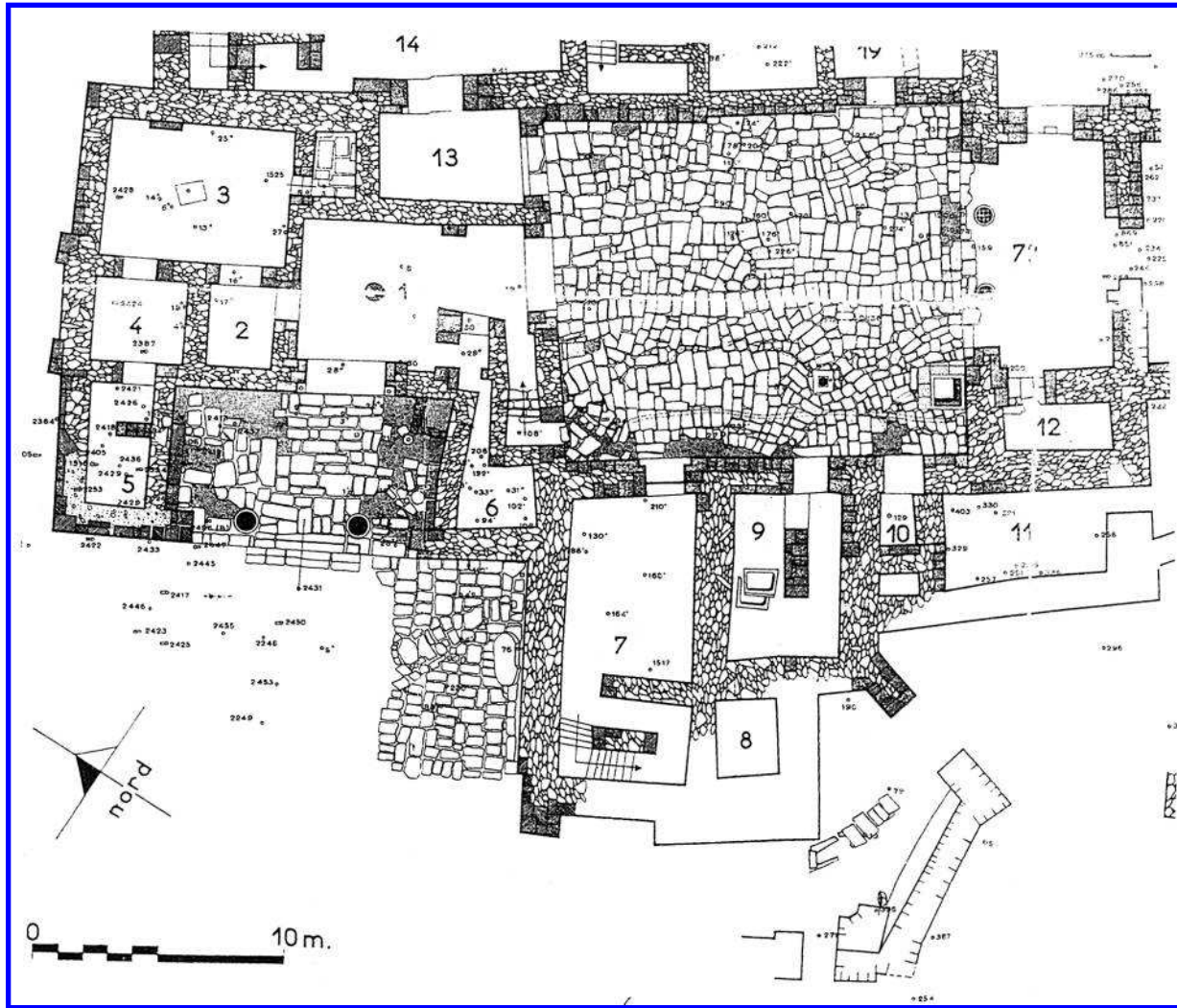


Figure 5—Schematic plan of the western part of the royal palace at Ugarit (after Schaeffer, 1962 Depliant I).

thus be viewed as an architecturally defined liminal area, carrying a clear message of a passage between opposing spheres: the lower city and the acropolis, the common people and the ruling elite, and possibly also the secular and the divine. The podium area is a clear example of monumental architecture in the sense that its scale and elaboration, as well as the amount of energy invested in it, far exceed the practical functions it is intended to perform and present a clear case of conspicuous consumption.³³ It is, paraphrasing Wilson's words, a rite of passage, materialized and petrified,³⁴

whose aims are to demonstrate royal power and the ability to control human and material resources, thus reinforcing the kingly image and promoting propaganda to strangers. The podium area should thus be defined as a royal portal, standing for the entire palace and the king and fulfilling all the functions of such an architectural feature. The same definition would also fit the above-mentioned official entrance of the royal palace of Ugarit.³⁵

The similarity between the official entrance into the royal palace at Ugarit and the podium area is the basis of my reconstruction of the Hazor Area M complex as a part of a spacious palatial building. The plan of an entrance zone, leading into a large inner courtyard, and from there to the other wings of the

³³B. Trigger, "Monumental Architecture: A Thermodynamic Explanation of Symbolic Behaviour," *World Archaeology* 22 (1990): 119, 124–29.

³⁴P. J. Wilson, *The Domestication of the Human Species* (New Haven, 1988), 134.

³⁵Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 38.

building, is obvious in both Hazor and Ugarit (cf. figs. 4 and 5). It is noteworthy that the size of the entrance area and the inner courtyard, as well as the architectural details such as guardrooms and liquid-related features are very similar in both cases. It is also of interest to note the similar relative location of both these structures, close to the edge of the tell and not on its highest point, an area that was reserved for the city's religious institutions.³⁶ Both royal portals were protected: in the palace of Ugarit by a city-wall and a monumental gate,³⁷ and in the Area M complex at Hazor by the moat and the fortified lower city.

A similar spatial arrangement is also discernable in the Late Bronze Age palace at Megiddo.³⁸ Palace 2041 of strata VIII–VIIA was located on the edge of the tell, close to the city gate. L.3091, a unique shell-paved room with a large stone basin and drainage channel, leads through a stone threshold into the main courtyard and from there to the other wings of the palace. Room 3091 was interpreted as an ablution chamber, a bathroom, a guardroom, and a forecourt by the various scholars who analyzed the plan of the Megiddo palace.³⁹ The main contribution of the Megiddo example is in the reconstruction of the activities that took place within these royal portals, activities that involved the use of liquids for ablution or libation rituals often connected with entrances and passages.⁴⁰ The existence of liquid-related features, such as drainage channels, wells, and stone basins, in all three contexts lends support to this interpretation. Especially significant are the scoops, a unique bowl type that was found in both Megiddo and Hazor.⁴¹ Late Bronze Age scoops are found in two distinct groups based on their find context. The first group is characteristic of temples, such as Fosse Temple III at Lachish, Beth-Shean VII, Tel Sera X–IX, and maybe

also Tel Mevorakh.⁴² The second group is connected with royal monumental buildings, such as those found in the royal portals at Hazor Area M and Megiddo Palace 2041. Scoops were also found at Ras ibn-Hani and are said to be found in relatively large numbers at Ugarit, but no stratified example has yet been published.⁴³ The vessels of the second group were probably used for rituals of ablution or libation, performed as part of entering the palace and the city.⁴⁴

How does the main feature of the podium area at Hazor, the podium itself, fit into this picture? The four depressions described above are an important clue, pointing to the existence of some object that originally stood on top of the upper basalt slab. The location of these depressions, close to the rear wall and the niche, might suggest that this object was a chair or a throne with an attached footstool. The size of the square created by the depressions accords well with the measurements of some Egyptian royal chairs from the New Kingdom, such as the one found in Tut-Ankh-Amen's tomb.⁴⁵ The diameter of each depression is the same as the diameter of the drums under the legs of these chairs. The existence of actual Egyptian chairs in Canaan, sent as gifts from the pharaoh to his vassals, is well attested in the Amarna letters.⁴⁶ Several fragments of ivory, probably belonging to an inlaid piece of furniture, were found close to the podium in Area M. These might be the remains of the chair that was removed from its original location before the final destruction of the whole complex.

Artistic depictions of similar chairs are well known in Late Bronze Age Syria. They are commonly connected with gods, such as in the El Stele from

³⁶Cf. Yon, *City of Ugarit*, fig. 1, and Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," figs. 1–2.

³⁷Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 31–37.

³⁸G. Loud, *Megiddo II* (Chicago, 1948), 16–33.

³⁹Ibid., 25; A. Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City State and Royal Centre in North Israel*, *Materialien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie* 40 (Bonn, 1989), 159; A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York, 1990), 244–45; E. Oren, "Palaces and Patrician Houses in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel*, ed. A. Kempinski and R. Reich (Jerusalem, 1992), 108.

⁴⁰Grimes, "Portals."

⁴¹Zuckerman, "Scoops," figs. 2–4.

⁴²S. Gitin, "Scoops: Corpus, Function and Typology," in *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel in Honour of Moshe Dothan*, ed. M. Heltzer, A. Segal, and D. Kaufman (Haifa, 1993), 101–102, 113–16, table 3; see also Zuckerman "Scoops."

⁴³A. Bounni, E. Lagarce, and J. Lagarce, *Ras Ibn Hani I: Le Palais Nord du Bronze Récent: Fouilles 1979–1995, synthèse préliminaire* (Beirut, 1998), 38, n. 5.

⁴⁴For a similar situation in the Minoan palaces, see L. A. Hitchcock, *Minoan Architecture: A Contextual Analysis*, *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature*, Pocket Book 155 (Jonsered, 2000).

⁴⁵G. Killen, *Ancient Egyptian Furniture I* (Warminster, 1980), 54, fig. 87.

⁴⁶W. Moran, *Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992), 366: EA 369, to Milkilu of Gazru.

the acropolis at Ugarit⁴⁷ or a bronze figurine from Byblos.⁴⁸ In the case of the Byblite figurine, its throne and footstool are placed on top of two square podia, perhaps reflecting an architectural feature similar to the Hazor podium. Several basalt statues of enthroned figures, identified either as gods (Area C) or as kings (Area H), were found in the temples of Hazor.⁴⁹ In many cases, the enthroned figures are depicted holding cups or other vessels connected with liquids.⁵⁰ Thus the connection between gods or kings, elaborate thrones, and a ritual or ceremonial use of liquids is well rooted in the Late Bronze Age Canaanite cultural milieu.⁵¹

Who sat on the throne in the podium area and on what occasions? Several iconographic depictions of enthroned Canaanite kings are known from the Late Bronze Age. The best known is the ivory plaque from the treasury at Megiddo VIIA, showing the king sitting on a high-backed throne with a footstool, drinking from a bowl and tended by his servants.⁵² The scene probably represents a banquet held for the victorious king, shown on the opposite side of the scene returning from battle accompanied by soldiers and captives. Similar banquet scenes, showing the king sitting on a throne, are quite common in the Near East, beginning in the third millennium B.C.⁵³ In some cases, such scenes are found in the context of gates

and entrances, as is the case with the well-known reliefs of the water gate at Carchemish.⁵⁴

Against this background, a fuller reconstruction of a royal portal at Hazor, as well as those in Ugarit and Megiddo, can be suggested. These spaces served as royal and official gateways to the palatial buildings of which they are a part. Their shared architectural features and related ritual activities should be viewed within the framework of the lively international connections between the ruling elites during the Late Bronze Age.⁵⁵ These royal portals were probably not open to the public, but served royal emissaries, foreign merchants, and other privileged functionaries who were received there by the king or his high officials in order to participate in a series of ritual activities such as libation or ablution, and were then led into the royal palace itself.⁵⁶ Two fragments of inscribed objects found within the Area M complex lend support to this interpretation. A fragment of an Egyptian statue/offering table bearing the inscription of a certain vizier from the time of Ramses II was found in the destruction layer of the courtyard. The dedication of this object is probably connected to the highest level of Nineteenth Dynasty diplomatic activity in Asia.⁵⁷ A fragment of a huge stone bowl, bearing an Akkadian cuneiform inscription, was found a few meters from the Egyptian fragment in the same destruction layer. The inscription refers to the dedication of a large basin by a certain high-ranking official to an unknown god.⁵⁸ These finds attest to the importance of the Area M complex during the fourteenth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries B.C., until its final destruction.

On the basis of its location, the reconstruction of its plan, its building materials and architectural

⁴⁷M. Yon, "Stèles de pierre," in *Arts et industries de la pierre*, Ras Shamra-Ugarit, ed. M. Yon (Paris, 1991), 6: 305–307, fig. 7:10, pl. 169.

⁴⁸O. Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 171, fig. 55.

⁴⁹Y. Yadin et al., *Hazor I: An Account of the First Season of Excavations, 1955* (Jerusalem, 1958), pl. 31: 1; Y. Yadin et al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956* (Jerusalem, 1960), pl. 197; Y. Yadin et al., *Hazor III–IV (Plates): An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations, 1957–1958* (Jerusalem, 1961), pls. 330, 336–37; Yadin, *Hazor*, 94; P. Beck, "Stone Ritual Artifacts and Statues from Areas A and H," in *Hazor III–IV*, ed. A. Ben-Tor, 322–26.

⁵⁰See, e.g., the famous banquet scene incised on an ivory from Megiddo VIIA discussed below.

⁵¹N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and His Colleagues* (Sheffield, 1998), 167–68, 348–53, 417.

⁵²G. Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories*, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 2 (Chicago, 1939), pl. 4: 2a–b.

⁵³H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (London, 1954), 158–59; I. Ziffer, "From Acmehöyük to Megiddo: The Banquet Scene in the Art of the Levant in the Second Millennium BCE," *Tel-Aviv* 32 (2005): 133–67.

⁵⁴L. Woolley, *Carchemish II: The Town Defences* (London, 1921), 104, 109–10, pl. 16.

⁵⁵M. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600–1100 B.C.* (Padua, 1990); M. Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE* (Chicago, 2006).

⁵⁶Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 38.

⁵⁷J. P. Allen, "A Hieroglyphic Fragment from Hazor," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 15 (2001): 13–15; K. A. Kitchen, "An Egyptian Inscribed Fragment from Late Bronze Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* 53 (2003): 20–28.

⁵⁸W. Horowitz and T. Oshima, "Two More Cuneiform Finds from Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* 52 (2002): 179–83; Horowitz and Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 85–86.

features and the finds attributed to it, the podium complex should be reconstructed as the northernmost part of a monumental structure, the royal residential palace of Hazor. It belongs to a group of Late Bronze Age Syrian-style courtyard palaces, such as those uncovered at Megiddo, Kamid el-Loz, Alalakh, Nuzi, Ugarit, and Ras Ibn Hani.⁵⁹

Building 7050 (The Ceremonial Palace) in Area A: An Alternative Interpretation

Identifying the Area M podium complex as a residential royal palace of the fourteenth century B.C. poses a challenge for the interpretation of the other monumental complex at the site (fig. 7). If indeed it turns out that the northern part of the acropolis is occupied by the residential palace, what is the most plausible interpretation of the monumental structures comprising the ceremonial precinct covering the central part of the city? In the following, a reconstruction of this area as a cultic precinct, dedicated to the royal cult and ritual of Late Bronze Age Hazor, will be suggested and discussed.

No complete plan of Hazor's Canaanite acropolis (Area A) could be drawn following the first excavation seasons directed and published by Yadin due to the wealth of Iron Age structures overlying the Bronze Age remains in Area A.⁶⁰ The publication of the 1968 season partly amended this situation, by revealing the plan and stratigraphic development of the Late Bronze Age temple in the northeastern part of Area A.⁶¹ The renewed excavations in the western and southern parts of Area A further cleared the picture. The identification of the Area A precinct as a Late Bronze Age royal palace was initially suggested by Ben-Tor.⁶² This identification was based on the similarity between the structure plan (then only partially known) and that of the core of the Alalakh IV palace, the use of basalt orthostats and wooden beams of Lebanese cedar in

the construction, the finding of cuneiform tablets, and a wealth of precious, elite objects in the destruction layer of the complex. Ben-Tor later iterated this view and opposed the identification of the structure as a royal sanctuary.⁶³ His interpretation of the palace core was recently supported by Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, who identified Building 7050 and the southern temple as parts of a ceremonial palace, built according to a north Syrian paradigm and used for ceremonial, administrative, and judicial purposes.⁶⁴

In this essay, I argue that both Building 7050 and the southern temple, as well as the courtyard between them, are actually part of a monumental royal cultic precinct, similar in plan and location to other such sanctuaries known in the Levantine coast and north Syria. The size of this precinct is unprecedented among its Bronze Age contemporaries, but, otherwise, it is located, constructed, and used according to the same architectural and cultural principles effective in other sites of the period.

In essence, my interpretation is based on the following arguments.

1. The conspicuous location of the royal precinct, in the central part of the upper city, conforms to the location of the major cultic precincts of other sites in the Levantine and northern Syrian realm. A similar arrangement of the city's royal and religious institutions is also attested at both Ugarit and Megiddo in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. At Ugarit, the royal palace is located on the outskirts of the city, close to the city gate so as to control and regulate the traffic into the city.⁶⁵ The two monumental tower-temples of Ba'al and Dagan are located on the highest point of the tell, possibly serving as landmarks meant to be seen from afar.⁶⁶ At Megiddo, the palace is located near the city gate, and the highest point of the tell is reserved for the

⁵⁹Oren, "Palaces and Patrician Houses," 105–20; W. Adler and S. Penner, *Kamid el-Lōz 18: Die spätbronzezeitlichen Palastanlagen* (Bonn, 2001); Starr, *Nuzi*, 123–79, plans 2, 13; Woolley, *Alalakh*; Margueron, "Palais royal," 183–202; Bounni, Lagarce, and Lagarce, *Ras Ibn Hani I*.

⁶⁰Yadin et al., *Hazor I, Hazor II, Hazor III*; Ben-Tor, "Hazor Excavations."

⁶¹Yadin, *Hazor*, 124–25; Bonfil, "Area A."

⁶²Ben-Tor, "Fall of Canaanite Hazor"; Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 26–32.

⁶³A. Ben-Tor, "Ceremonial Palace, Not a Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (2006): 8, 78–79; cf. Zuckerman, "Where is the Hazor Archive?"

⁶⁴Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," 40–42.

⁶⁵Yon, *City of Ugarit*, figs. 1, 13, 15.

⁶⁶M. Yon, "Ougarit et ses dieux (travaux 1978–1988)," in *Resurrecting the Past: A Joint Tribute to Adnan Bounni*, ed. P. Matthiae, M. Van Loon, and H. Weiss (Istanbul, 1990), 325–43.

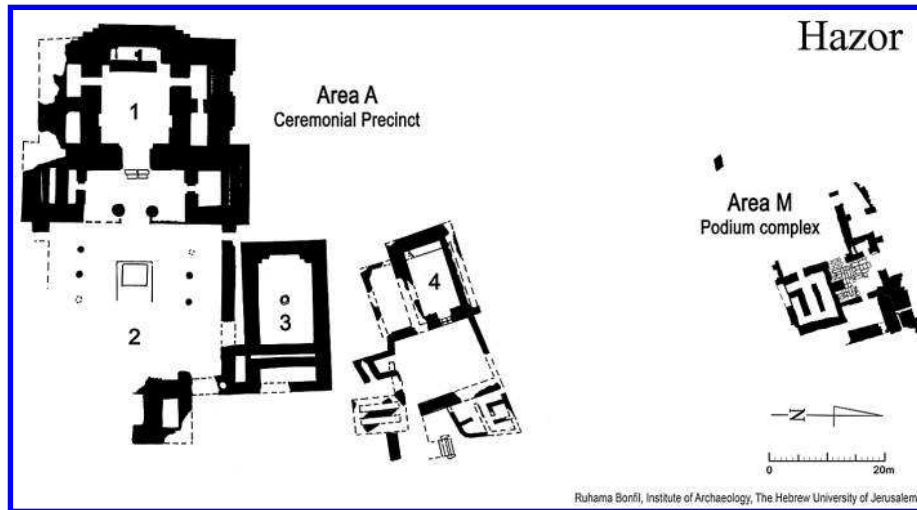


Figure 6—Late Bronze Age structures on the acropolis: Building 7050 (1), its courtyard (2), and adjacent temples (3–4); the podium complex (right) (after Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg 2007, fig. 4).

monumental Temple 2048.⁶⁷ A general trend discerned in sites in this region is the relocation of the palatial buildings, from the central part of the acropolis in the Middle Bronze Age, to the edge of the site and closer to the fortified entrance of the city during the early part of the Late Bronze Age.⁶⁸ This phenomenon was observed in southern Levantine sites such as Megiddo and Tel Gerisa⁶⁹ and in sites belonging to the wider cultural sphere such as Alalakh,⁷⁰ Emar,⁷¹ and probably also Ugarit on the Syrian coast.⁷² One possible cause of this change was the influence of Hurrian elements on the culture of Canaan during this period, leading to a profound change in the concept of kingship and its relation to divine legitimacy.⁷³ Whatever the cause or causes of this change, its effect on Canaanite and northern Syrian cities was obvious and long lasting, altering their spatial organization for centuries—until the end of

the Bronze Age. The spatial arrangement of cities, and especially their public elite areas, reflects underlying social, political, and even theological concepts and should be analyzed within such a framework.⁷⁴ The interpretation of Hazor's acropolis in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. should be viewed against the background of similar trends discernible in other contemporary sites belonging to its cultural and chronological sphere.

2. The ground plan of Building 7050 has several obvious characteristics, some of which are unique to Hazor, while others find parallels in contemporary sites and structures. Several architectural features set Building 7050 apart from other Syrian palaces such as those at Mari, Qatna, Alalakh, and Nuzi, and these must be clearly presented and emphasized before any interpretation of the structure's nature and function is suggested. The most obvious features, in terms of the ground plan of the Hazor edifice and its related structures, are the pronounced axuality, its strict symmetrical arrangement, and its independent and isolated nature (fig. 6).⁷⁵ These are the characteristic architectural guidelines in the

⁶⁷Loud, *Megiddo II*, figs. 380–83.

⁶⁸Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City State*, 157–61.

⁶⁹Z. Herzog, *Archaeology of the City: Urban Planning in Ancient Israel and Its Social Implications* (Tel-Aviv, 1997), 165–69, 183.

⁷⁰Compare Woolley, *Alalakh*, plans of strata VII and IV.

⁷¹J. Margueron, "Architecture et urbanisme," in *Meskéné-Emar: Dix ans de travaux 1972–1982*, ed. D. Beyer (Paris, 1982), 24–29.

⁷²Yon, *City of Ugarit*, although the location of the Middle Bronze Age palace is unknown.

⁷³Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City State*, 167–68.

⁷⁴K. V. Flannery, "The Ground-Plans of Archaic States," in *Archaic States*, ed. G. M. Feinman and J. Marcus (Santa Fe, 1998), 15–57.

⁷⁵Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," figs. 2 and 4.

construction and use of the well-known group of symmetrical monumental temples, the typical cultic structures of Middle and Late Bronze Age Syria and the Levant.⁷⁶ Building 7050 shares several other features with the plan of the Syrian temples, features that are usually not found as guiding principles of the ground plan of ceremonial multi-roomed structures, even those attributed to the *bit-hilani* type.⁷⁷ These features include the existence of a (sometimes recessed) niche in the rear wall opposite the entrance, a niche that is sometimes concealed by a narrow partition wall,⁷⁸ a bench attached to the rear wall of the main hall of the structure opposite the entrance,⁷⁹ and auxiliary niches in the side walls of the main hall. Although most of the symmetrical monumental temples are massively built, one-room structures, at least one of them—the Area H temple of Hazor 1B—has two auxiliary rooms attached to its central hall (fig. 7). One of these, to the left of the entrance, is thought to be a staircase leading up to a second story or the roof of the temple.⁸⁰ In most temples, and in

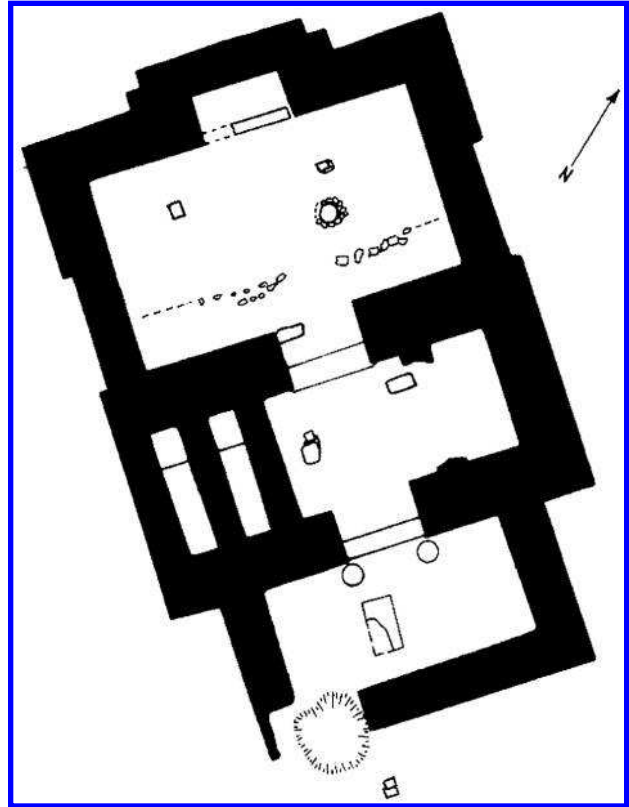


Figure 7—Schematic plan of the Late Bronze Age temple of Area H in the lower city (redrawn after Ben-Tor, 1989, Plan XL).

⁷⁶For discussions of this type and comparative tables of various temples, see P. Matthiae, “Unité et développement du temple dans la Syrie du Bronze Moyen,” in *Le Temple et le Culte* (Istanbul, 1975), 43–72; P. Matthiae, “The Reception Suites of the Old Syrian Palaces,” in *De la Babylonie à la Syrie, en passant par Mari*, ed. Ö. Tunca (Liège, 1990), 210; A. Mazar, “Temples of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages and the Iron Age,” in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel*, ed. A. Kempinski and R. Reich (Jerusalem, 1992), 161–87.

⁷⁷J. Margueron, “Un ‘Hilani’ à Emar,” *AASOR* 44 (1979): 153–76, and “Architecture et Urbanisme,” 24–29.

⁷⁸See, for example, Hazor Area H Stratum 2 (Yadin et al., *Hazor III–IV*, pl. 109: 1, 5; Yadin, *Hazor*, fig. 19); Hazor south temple (A. Ben-Tor, “Tel Hazor, 1999,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 [1999]: 269–74 and “Tel Hazor, 2000,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 50 [2000]: 243–49); Tel Brak (D. Oates, J. Oates, and H. McDonald, *Excavations at Tell Brak, Vol. 1: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian Periods* [Cambridge, 1997], 13, figs. 12, 28–29); Emar northern (Astarte) temple (Margueron, “Architecture et urbanisme,” figs. 4 and 6); Ebla Temple D (Matthiae, “Unité et développement,” plan 3, and *Ebla: An Empire*, fig. 30).

⁷⁹E.g., for Tel Brak, Oates, Oates, and McDonald, *Excavations at Tell Brak, Vol. 1*, 13, figs. 12, 28–29; for Ebla Temple B1, Matthiae, “Unité et développement,” plan 8; for Temple N, idem, *Ebla: An Empire*, fig. 27.

⁸⁰Yadin, *Hazor*, 83–87; Ben-Tor, *Hazor III–IV*, 1989, 240–57, plan 39, fig. 5.

none of the palaces or *hilani*-type ceremonial buildings cited by Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg as parallels to Building 7050 of Hazor,⁸¹ the straight axis is strictly applied. In all of the palatial structures, the throne room unit forms part of a multi-room complex that differs in every aspect from the Hazor independent edifice.⁸² The technical details of Building 7050’s construction, such as the laying of artificial fill as a foundation platform on top of earlier remains, the raising of the structure above its surroundings,⁸³ the extensive use of wooden beams in walls and floors, the incorporation of basalt orthostats as wall linings, the use of mats and carpets, and the

⁸¹Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” fig. 4 and *passim*.

⁸²Margueron, “‘Hilani,’” 153–76.

⁸³Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City State*, 182; Bonfil, “Area A,” 85–101.

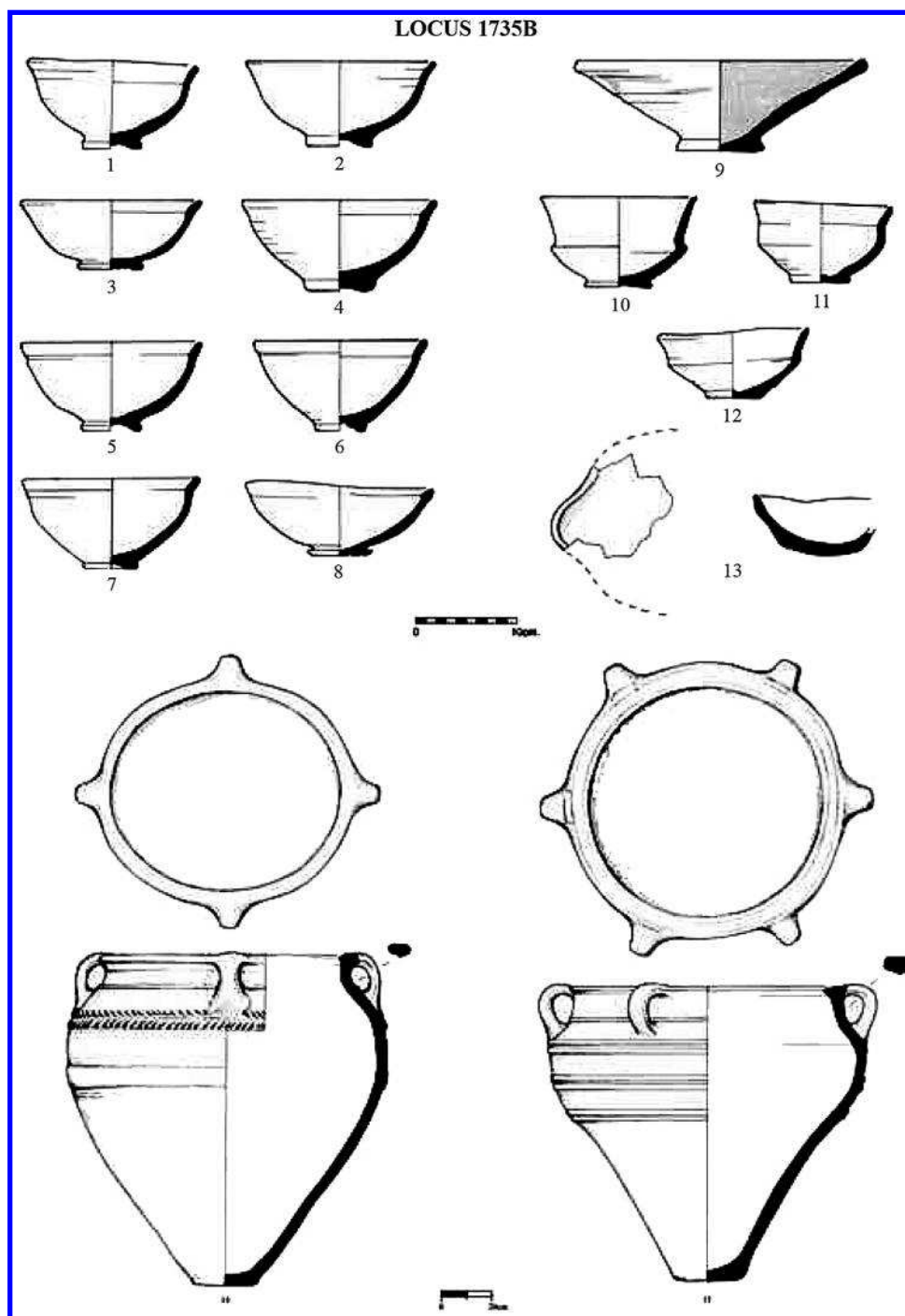


Figure 8—Ceramic assemblage from the rear unit of Building 7050.

plastering of walls,⁸⁴ are all common features of the north Syrian architectural tradition of monumental construction and are found

⁸⁴Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 29–34. Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," 34–40.

in both palaces and temples throughout the second millennium B.C.

3. The identification of the feature located in the rear unit of Building 7050 as a bathroom is not unequivocal. The description "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 extant⁸⁵ hints at a different type of installation than that usually defined as a bathtub, even if the drainage channels integrated into the southwestern corner of the structure were connected to it. Real clay bathtubs are a recurring feature in Near Eastern and Aegean palaces of the second millennium B.C.⁸⁶ and are unknown in temples attributed to this period. The installation at Hazor, on the other hand, can be interpreted as a libation or ablution receptacle, connected to the use of oil rather than water. Such libation rituals are well known in the written records of the period.⁸⁷ The large basins found in Syrian temples, sometimes in the back of the cella, probably served the same function.⁸⁸ The pottery found close to the installation, including a pithos and two pithoi kraters (fig. 8) of the same type found in the holies of the contemporary temple in Area H, further strengthens this identification.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," 31, n. 11.

⁸⁶Tel Brak (Oates, Oates, and McDonald, *Excavations at Tell Brak, Vol. 1*, 5, figs. 22, 212: 617 and 619), Nuzi (Starr, *Nuzi*, pls. 24:A, 82:E), Pylos (C. W. Blegen and M. Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia* (Princeton, 1966), 185–90, figs. 36–37, 422).

The "bathroom" in the Qatna palace, with its thick mortar floor, drainage pits, and a system of drainage channels is totally different in character: see M. Novák and P. Pfälzner, "Excavations in the Western Part of the Bronze Age Palace (Operation G)," in *Excavating Qatna I*, ed. M. Al-Maqdissi et al. (Damascus, 2002), 85, figs. 75–77.

⁸⁷For Ugarit, see J. N. de Tarragon, *Le culte à Ugarit* (Paris, 1980), 85–86, 141–42; B. A. Levine and J. N. de Tarragon, "The King Proclaims the Day: Ugaritic Rites for the Vintage (*KTU* 1.41//1.87)," *RB* 100 (1993): 80; G. Olmo Lete, "Royal Aspects of the Ugaritic Cult," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, vol. 55 (Leuven, 1993), 51–66; N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilkū and His Colleagues*, *The Biblical Seminar* 53, (Sheffield, 1998), 351–52, n. 35. For Emar, see D. E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*, *Harvard Semitic Studies* 42 (Atlanta, 1992), 174–79.

⁸⁸Matthiae, *Ebla: An Empire*, 125–32, fig. 127.

⁸⁹Yadin et al., *Hazor III–IV*, pls. 121–22, 280:11–12, 303:9–10.

4. One of the most conspicuous features of the Area A ceremonial precinct is the pillared square courtyard lying to the east of Building 7050 and forming the center of the whole precinct.⁹⁰ A noteworthy feature is the stepped platform, located just in front of the entrance to Building 7050, exactly on the symmetrical axis of the structure. The construction of a podium on the axis of the straight entrance is a common feature in the cultic architecture of the second millennium B.C., found at Hazor Area H stratum 2⁹¹ and in north Syrian temples such as the Ba'al Temple at Ugarit. Temple courtyards were usually the primary locus of cultic activities, including animal sacrifice, libations, and offerings.⁹² In the Area H temple the finds in the courtyard, on and around the central podium, were interpreted as remains of ritualized slaughter held around the altars, followed by communal cultic meals.⁹³ A similar interpretation was suggested by Lev-Tov and McGeough for the courtyard in front of Building 7050 in Area A based on the rich faunal debris found scattered and piled all around the well-built podium in the middle of this large open space.⁹⁴
5. The pottery assemblage of Building 7050, sealed by the destruction layer of the structure, consists of hundreds of restorable vessels found scattered in the various rooms. This assemblage is dominated by open and carinated bowls, as well as smaller quantities of other types of serving vessels.⁹⁵ The number

⁹⁰Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Excavating Hazor," 28–29; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, "Palace in the Upper City," 29–30, figs. 2–3.

⁹¹Ben-Tor et al., *Hazor III–IV*, plan 38, fig. 4.

⁹²Bonfil, "Area A," 86–98; see also B. Bergquist, "Bronze Age Sacrificial *Koine* in the Eastern Mediterranean? A Study of Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, vol. 55 (Leuven, 1993), 35–36.

⁹³Ben-Tor et al., *Hazor III–IV*, 229.

⁹⁴J. Lev-Tov and K. McGeough, "Examining Feasting in Late Bronze Age Syro-Palestine through Ancient Texts and Bones," in *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*, ed. K. C. Twiss (Carbondale, 2006), 85–111.

⁹⁵S. Zuckerman, "'... Slaying Oxen and Killing Sheep, Eating Flesh and Drinking Wine . . .': Feasting in Late Bronze Age Hazor," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 139 (2007): 197–99.

of storage pithoi found in the various rooms of the structure is not large (around thirty), and the amount of olive oil these could have held does not seem to exceed the immediate needs of the complex itself for the activities conducted within the precinct. The less than 5,000 liters stored in these vessels⁹⁶ could hardly be considered as representing royal storerooms serving as a symbol of the independence of Hazor and “the king’s ability to rule his kingdom proudly and extend his authority over the tax-payers.”⁹⁷ Such storerooms are yet to be located somewhere on the acropolis of Hazor. It must be emphasized that the storage of certain amounts of agricultural goods is a common feature in the inventories of major temples, documented both in the written sources and in the archaeological record.⁹⁸ The wealth of precious objects found in Building 7050, especially in the main hall and the northern wing, can be explained along similar lines. These include clay house models, Canaanite and Egyptian statues, incised ivory and bone plaques, ceremonial weapons, jewelry, cylinder seals, and faience vessels.⁹⁹ The main temples in Near Eastern cities served also as repositories of luxury objects and precious metals, donated by the kings and elites for the symbolic nourishment and maintenance of the

city gods.¹⁰⁰ None of these storage functions necessarily rules out the identification of the structure as a temple rather than a royal palace.¹⁰¹

6. Several cuneiform tablets were found in Building 7050 and its surroundings.¹⁰² This corpus, the second largest one in the southern Levant, attests to the important status of Hazor within the ancient Near East throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. However, as contemporary north Syrian archives were found in both royal and cultic contexts,¹⁰³ the contribution of these tablets for the interpretation of the structure in and around which they were found is limited.

Conclusion

This article presents an alternative reconstruction of the spatial configuration of the acropolis of Late Bronze Age Hazor. The Area M podium complex is interpreted as the northern part of a large monumental building, most of which still remains unexcavated (fig. 3). The ground plan of this part is reminiscent in plan and architectural features to the western part of the royal palace of Ugarit and to the southern part of Palace 2041 in Megiddo. All three were termed royal portals, buildings encompassing both cultic and civic activities and functions. If this interpretation is correct, then the royal residential palace of the kings of Hazor during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries

⁹⁶I would like to thank Avshalom Karasik for these estimates of storage capacity. For significantly larger quantities stored in contemporary storage facilities, cf. P. S. Keswani, “Gas Chromatography Analyses of Pithoi from Kalavassos—*Ayios Dhimitrios*: A Preliminary Report,” in Kalavassos—*Ayios Dhimitrios* 1991, ed. A. K. South, *RDAC* (1992), 141; and D. Pilides, *Pithoi of the Late Bronze Age in Cyprus (Nicosia, 2000)*, 35–36 for Cyprus; and K. Christakis, “Pithoi and Food Storage in Neopalatial Crete: A Domestic Perspective,” *World Archaeology* 31 (1999): 1–20 for Crete.

⁹⁷Contra Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 41.

⁹⁸W. G. Lambert, “Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, vol. 55 (Leuven, 1993), 191–201; Fleming, *Installation of Baal’s High Priestess*, 145–46; P. Neve, “The Great Temple in Boğazköy-Hattuša,” in *Across the Anatolian Plateau: Readings in the Archaeology of Ancient Turkey*, ed. D. Hopkins, *AASOR* 57 (2000), 77–97.

⁹⁹S. Zuckerman, “Fit for a (Not Quite So Great) King: A Faience Lion-Head Cup from Hazor,” *Levant* 40 (2008), 115–25.

¹⁰⁰J. Bottéro, “Les Inventaires de Qatna,” *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’Archéologie Orientale* 43 (1949): 1–40; O. Tufnell, C. H. Inge, and G. Lankester Harding, *Lachish II: The Fosse Temple* (New York, 1940); M. Metzger, *Kāmid el-Lōz 7: Die Spätbronzezeitlichen Tempelanlagen. Stratigraphie, Architektur und Installationen* (Bonn, 1991); and *Kāmid el-Lōz 8: Die Spätbronzezeitlichen Tempelanlagen. Die Kleinfunde* (Bonn, 1993), to cite only a few examples.

¹⁰¹Contra Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg, “Palace in the Upper City,” 41–42.

¹⁰²See Horowitz and Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 65–87, for an up-to-date comprehensive bibliography.

¹⁰³O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500–300 BC* (Bethesda, 1998), 260–66. For Emar, see W. Pitard, “The Archaeology of Emar,” in *Emar: The History, Religion and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. M. W. Chavalas (Bethesda, 1996), 17–21; and Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries*, 61–68; For Nuzi, see *ibid.*, 15–20, and for Hattuša, 44–56.

B.C. should be sought in Area M, rather than in Area A on the highest point of the tell.

Building 7050, the center of the Area A ceremonial precinct, was previously interpreted on the basis of its ground plan and architectural features as a ceremonial palace in the north Syrian tradition. However, a fuller appraisal of the structure, including the analysis of its rich ceramic assemblage and the wealth of finds attributed to it, attest to its cultic and ritual rather than civic ceremonial nature. I agree with Ben-Tor, Bonfil, and Zarzecki-Peleg that Building 7050 was built according to a north Syrian master plan, but I argue that the monumental symmetrical temples served as the blueprint for Late Bronze Age Hazor's architects, rather than palaces of the so-called *hilani* type. The Area A enclosure on the acropolis should, in my opinion, be interpreted as a royal ritual complex, the locus of cultic activities on a large scale in the most prominent point of the city. It has been argued elsewhere that the rearrangement and rebuilding of Hazor's acropolis was part of a large-scale project initiated by royal authority, aimed at redesigning the city as a dynastic center during the zenith of Canaanite culture in the fourteenth century B.C.¹⁰⁴ An important aspect of this project might have been the legitimization of the royal dynasty through the reinforcement of the city's main deities and their most ubiquitous material expression—their temples in the lower city and on the acropolis. This phase represents the implementation of what may be termed the royal strategy, designed to validate the power of the king and the court and to reassert its dominating ideology through the reshaping of the urban landscape by royal authority.¹⁰⁵ The construction of monumental public buildings, temples, and ritual spaces was accompanied by the intensification of ritual and cultic activity. This is indicated by the rich faunal remains of the royal ceremonial precinct on the acropolis reflecting traces of ritual feasts and communal meals.¹⁰⁶ It seems that Hazor's elite turned to religion and ritual in an effort to integrate the kingdom and legitimate its rule in the face

of mounting economic and social conflicts of fourteenth- and thirteenth-century B.C. Canaan. A similar strategy was adopted by other contemporary rulers: most noteworthy is the major rebuilding of temples at the Hittite capital at Hattuša in its last phase.¹⁰⁷ The initially successful effort of Hazor's elite to implement its royal strategy explains the unique status of Hazor during the Amarna period. This is vividly reflected in the Amarna archive, where Hazor is the southernmost city, and the only one in the southern Levant included in the range of the northern Levantine "First-Tier Greetings sphere." Hazor is then ranked among the Syrian metropoli of Tunip, Qatna, Irqata, and Ugarit in the Greeting-Formula system,¹⁰⁸ but this success had profound social and political consequences and lasted for less than a century, until the first half of the thirteenth century B.C.

The size and magnitude of the Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct are unrivaled in other Canaanite cities of the Late Bronze Age, as might be expected from the largest Canaanite kingdom in the southern Levant. Both buildings, erected at the beginning of the fourteenth century B.C., are impressive material expressions of Hazor's royal and religious dominance at its peak. The Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct went through several phases of existence. The last phase is one of gradual decline, consisting of meager walls and installations built inside the monumental buildings.¹⁰⁹ The final destruction marks the end of the outstanding Canaanite kingdom of Hazor and should probably be dated, based on its associated pottery assemblage, to the first half of the thirteenth century B.C. It is a vivid example of the violent end of the mighty kingdom of Hazor and its Canaanite way of life, echoed in the menacing prophecy inscribed on the liver model found at the Orthostat Temple of Hazor: "A king will subjugate a king; an enemy will rise against the land; . . . a slave will rebel against his master."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷T. Bryce, "Last Days of Hattusa: The Mysterious Collapse of the Hittite Empire," *Odyssey* 8 (2005): 33–51.

¹⁰⁸E. F. Morris, "Bowing and Scraping in the Ancient Near East: An Investigation into Obsequiousness in the Amarna Letters," *JNES* 65 (2006): 186, fig. 1, table 4.

¹⁰⁹Zuckerman, "Anatomy of a Destruction," 17–23.

¹¹⁰Horowitz and Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 66–68.

¹⁰⁴Zuckerman, "Anatomy of a Destruction," 15–16.

¹⁰⁵A. T. Smith, *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Politics* (Berkeley, 2003), 215–31.

¹⁰⁶Lev-Tov and McGeough, "Examining Feasting"; Zuckerman, "Feasting."