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## THOUGHTS ABOUT THE IDENTIFICATION OF TALL BAZI WITH ARMI OF THE EBLA TEXTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Joint efforts of philology and archaeology have resulted in new information about the location of Armi/Armium, a city of prime importance in late 3rd millennium Syria. A new examination of the Ebla texts reveals many hints for the localization derived from itineraries and the reports of military campaigns against Armi. These itineraries will be compared with our knowledge about the contemporary archaeologically identified sites, with the natural resources and possible ways of circulation within the region North-East of Ebla. Further hints for a possible identification with the site of Tall Bazi in the Upper Syrian Euphrates valley are derived from the results of the last excavation campaigns.*

### 1. TALL BAZI-BANAT AND ARMI/ARMIMUM/ARMANUM

This article presents the preliminary results of a joint philological and archaeological effort to answer the question if the site of Tall Bazi and Banat can be identified with the city of Armi or Armium of the Ebla texts.

In 2006 the tentative identification with the well known Armanum of the Naramsin-inscription and with Armi was put forward (Otto 2006, 1-26), the starting point being the peculiar nature of the citadel of Tall Bazi. This citadel, situated in North Syria on the Mesopotamian side of the Euphrates valley, consists of a steep mountain spur that rises 60m above the level of the river plain. It was separated from the adjacent plateau by a forty-meter-wide artificial ditch, and its flanks were fortified with a system of stone walls built immediately on the rock at various heights. The archaeological material indicates that this sophisticated fortification originated in the EB IVA or even earlier.

When searching for parallels for the fortified citadel of Bazi, it became evident that until now no other citadel, situated on a natural mountain spur, is known from the Early Bronze Age. On the other hand, there is a detailed description of a citadel, which has long been known. When Naramsin reports his deeds on his way to the Mediterranean Sea, he describes the conquered citadel of Armanum, which consisted of a natural mountain or hill.<sup>1</sup> He notes the distances between the three ranges of walls

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used: *ARET*=*Archivi Reali di Ebla. Testi*; *ARES*=*Archivi Reali di Ebla*.

which fortified the hill, and the distance from the lowest wall to a river, the name of which is unfortunately not mentioned. By comparison of the mentioned distances with the distances between the major fortification walls at the citadel of Bazi, the identification with Armanum seemed possible, but of course difficult to prove (Otto 2006, 1-26).

The Armanum of the Naramsin inscription was identified with Armi, sometimes called Armium, of the Ebla archives, which is, together with Mari, the most quoted town in the Ebla texts.<sup>2</sup> The question was, if the detailed informations from the Ebla texts would speak in favor of or against the identification with Banat-Bazi. Before, Armi had been located at the Mediterranean coast or in Cilicia, due to the fact that Armi is not listed among the rulers of the area to the east of Ebla which received gifts from the Ebla kings (*ARET I* 1-9), is not mentioned in the Abarsal treaty and in the Enna-Dagan letter, and because of the onomasticon of Armium.<sup>3</sup> Others favored a localization to the northeast of Ebla, even beyond the Karkemiš region, because of Ebla's far reaching military expansions to the North and Northeast at the time of Ibrum, with campaigns against Kakmum and Halsum in the North.

#### HISTORY

Relationships between Ebla and Armi are documented from the very beginning to the end of the Ebla archives and from many texts for the entire period; Armi is one of the most quoted kingdom in the Ebla texts. The texts document intensive commercial and diplomatic relations, several exchanges of gifts among the different kings of Ebla with those of Armi, but also several wars against Armi.

The work to study the complex and long relationships between Ebla and Armi is a work in progress<sup>4</sup> and it is closely related to the work for a reconstruction of an increasing precise relative chronology of the Ebla texts, year by year and month by month. After a long work we have already been able to establish a sequence of the annual texts for metals, which can now serve as the framework with which the monthly records for textiles can be correlated and which we may now consider to be relatively certain.<sup>5</sup> However, I would like to stress that this framework could not be produced merely on the basis of the documentation relating to metals, which would not have permitted us to create a chronological sequence since too many elements are missing in this type of text. Many events and prosopographical data are provided only by the contemporary textile documents.<sup>6</sup> And we still need to correlate a large number of monthly textile documents which contain information that is important also for

*Studi*; t.=textile/s. For the texts quoting Armanum s. *RIME* 2, Naram-Sin E2.1.4.26, 27; Kraus 1948: 81-92; Foster 1982: 27-36.

2 Bonechi 1993: 52-55.

3 Bonechi 1990: 15-37; *id.* 1993: 52, 55. These arguments have been dealt with in Otto 2006, 18-21.

4 Archi and I are collecting all the quotations of Armi in the texts of the Ebla archives.

5 See Archi, Biga 2003: 8-9.

6 For the reconstruction of the relative chronology of the Ebla texts see Biga 2003: 345-367.

evaluating the relationships between Ebla and Armi. We are still making a lot of joins which result in certain texts having to be moved within the relative chronology.<sup>7</sup>

From the very start of the texts, Ebla has already created a vast trade network and maintained friendly relations with a series of states with which exchanges of gifts and possibly also trade were conducted, although this latter factor emerges less frequently from the texts. Among these states there is Armi/Armium.

In the texts of the time of king Irkab-damu and vizier Arrugum *Ar-mi/Ar-mi-um* is quoted very often; the relationships between Ebla and Armi seem to be good<sup>8</sup>.

Text 75.G.10219 (it will be published by F.Pomponio in *ARET XV/2*) proves that at that time Armi was in very good relationships with Ebla and was trying to strengthen its relationships with the kingdom of Ebla. The king (or a representative of the king) of Armi, Mazaum, came to Ebla with the gift of two heads of two kings perhaps not faithful to Ebla and received textiles as a precious gift from the king of Ebla.<sup>9</sup> In the same text the same personage of Armi, Mazaum, comes to Ebla to swear allegiance in the temple of the god Kura.<sup>10</sup> The text quotes other kings (or their functionaries) of the region, the kings of Nirar, Ra'ak, Munutium, coming to Ebla in that month to swear the allegiance with Ebla.

The kings of the states which were Ebla's closest allies but also the kings of important regional states as Mari and Nagar came to the temple of Kura to swear allegiance. From this fact it may not be supposed that they were in some manner subordinate to Ebla, because Mari for example was never subordinate to Ebla. On the other hand we can be almost sure that the king of Ebla never went to swear allegiance to a king in another temple out of the Eblaite kingdom; he never received fabrics to do such a trip. It is difficult to know if Kura is a divinity worshipped through at least northern Syria and if he was considered the most important deity by many kingdoms including Harran and Nagar of Upper Mesopotamia and Mari on the middle Euphrates. Possibly he was a transnational divinity venerated in all of Syria and Upper Mesopotamia.<sup>11</sup>

During the reign of king Išar-damu and the vizier Ibrum, Armi is not included in the list of Ebla's closest allies that are Nirar, Ra'ak, Kakmium, Imar, Dub, Garmu, Lumnan, Burman. All these states are surely not too far from Ebla and some probably around Ebla<sup>12</sup> and others east of Ebla towards the Euphrates on which Emar lies.

7 For some new joins on the Ebla tablets see Biga 2009: 37-40

8 See the texts of *ARET XV/1*.

9 See Archi 1998: 386-396.

10 75.G.10219 ( king Irkab-damu, vizier Arrugum, month MAXGĀNAtenū-sag) obv. I 4-15: textiles (1,1) *Ma-za-um Ar-mi-um*<sup>ki</sup> in ud sag en *Zu-ne-du*<sup>ki</sup> ù sag en *Za-ma-rúm*<sup>ki</sup> šu mu-“tak”: “2 textiles to Mazaum of Armium when he delivered to Ebla the head of the king of Zunedu and the head of the king of Zamarum”; obv. XII 4'-9': textiles (1,1) *Ma-za-um* in ud nam é<sup>d</sup>KU-ra: “ 2 textiles to Mazaum when he went to swear in the temple of the god Kura”.

11 For some example of foreign kings coming to Ebla to swear the allegiance s. Catagnoti 1997: 49-55; Biga 2003: 302-304.

12 These kingdoms are quoted all together in several texts; for some examples. Biga 2008: 294-295

All of them must have been quite close to the borders of the Eblaite kingdom. Armi did not belong to them, which points on the one hand to its position a little beyond the Eblaite borders; on the other hand it refers to the strong political position and autonomy of Armi.

Other states with good relationships with Ebla are north of Ebla and are part of a zone where the highest political power was the *badalum*; they were around the state of Harran and included Ursaum, Utigu, Iritum, Harran, Sanapzugum, Gudadanum, Sarhu, Arhadu, Hutimu (Fig. 1).

At the time of king Išar-damu and vizier Ibrium a military campaign against Armi is attested, a clear prove of a deterioration of the relationships.

The military campaign against Armi is quoted in the text 75.G. 1790, that must be inserted more precisely in the relative chronology but that is to be dated to the period of vizier Ibrium, after his ninth year as vizier. The text registers textiles given to soldiers of Ebla who participated to the campaign. The text does not, however, furnish any information regarding a possible itinerary to Armi. The battle took place near the city of Batin. A messenger arrives in Ebla bringing the news that Armi has been defeated near the town of Batin. The quotation of Batin is very important. Apparently, from this text, the army of Ebla didn't do a long trip from Ebla to defeat Armi's army. There are not many data about Batin from the Ebla texts and the exact location of this town remains unknown but it seems quite possible a location north-east of Aleppo.<sup>13</sup> This location of Batin fits very well with the proposition to consider Armi = Tall Bazi-Banat. Ebla's army was not too far from its territory. Some men of Batin, possibly merchants, are quoted in the text *ARET XIII 14*, a text apparently related to trips in the region of the Euphrates.<sup>14</sup>

The text 75.G.1790 quotes a long list of 200 personal names of 200 people of Ebla; each of them received an ib-cloth when they went to the campaign against Armi. It is difficult to know if these two hundred citizens of Ebla were all leaders of individual contingents of 20 people each (an *é-duru*,<sup>ki</sup>=20 people) and the army had 4000 people or if only 200 people moved from Ebla against Armi.

After this military campaign Ibrium conducted year by year a series of military campaigns, including a punitive expedition against the unfaithful allied king of Kakmium and two expeditions, one against the state of Halsum (year 13 of Ibrium as vizier) and the other one against the state of AN'arum (year 14 of Ibrium as vizier), both states probably to be placed in the *badalum* region, in the area north-east of Ebla, northern Syria and towards the Euphrates and beyond, to Harran.<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes there is a coalition of kings alongside Ibrium and it includes the kings of Ra'ak, Dub, Burman, Garmu, Lumnan, Imar, constant allies of Ebla and most

13 Astour 1988: 154 identified Batin with classical Batna, modern Butnan, 3 km NE of Al Bab, in the region nord-east of Aleppo. Bonechi 1993: 70 seems to agree with Astour and in any case considers Batin in the region controlled by Ebla. For Batin s. also *ARES II*, 175; I thank G.M. Schwartz for his suggestions.

14 For Batin in this text see *ARET XIII*: 153-154.

15 For all these military campaigns s. Biga *in press b*.

probably from the area around Ebla and of the Euphrates bend.<sup>16</sup>

After the death of Ibrum, his first son Ibbi-zikir assumes the role of vizier.

In the third year of Ibbi-zikir as vizier a military campaign against the city of Bagara is attested. This campaign has left most traces in the documentation, in the AAM 75.G.10088+75.G.10182+75.G.5291 and some related monthly documents of textiles. Reading together all the texts regarding the military expedition against Bagara and considering the fact that on some occasions the scribe quotes a military expedition against Armi while he is speaking of the military campaign against the town of Bagara allows interpreting this campaign as a campaign against Armi.

We may suggest that the conquest of the town of Bagara, a town probably to be located close to the Euphrates, was the result of an act of aggression on Ebla's part so as to expand the territory under its control and, thus, extend its trade to the disadvantage of Armi, still the great rival to the east.

In fact in the text 75.G.2435+*ARET* XII 34+75.G.10140 (month še-kin-II), completely incentrated on the campaign against Bagara and after several quotation of this military campaign, the scribe in rev. IV 8-12 writes: "... ..because he went to the campaign against Armi". And after some mentions of Ibbi-zikir back from the campaign against Bagara the scribe registers "1,1,1 textiles to Kundaban delivered in exchange of ....to Ibbi-zikir who is back from the campaign against Armi".<sup>17</sup>

Few years later Ibbi-zikir conducted another expedition against Niligau, documented by several texts of the year 10 of vizier Ibbi-zikir. Bagara was probably an outpost for then reaching Niligau so as to finally attack Armi itself. It is possible to interpret the campaign against Bagara as the taking of a centre perhaps laying at the borders of the kingdom of Armi or in the kingdom of Armi itself, that is conquered by Ebla and then used as a base for the campaign which Ibbi-zikir will conduct a few years later against Niligau, before undertaking an expedition against Armi itself, assisted by the king of Nagar. It may be deduced that these settlements were much smaller than Armi, which seems to have been the center of the region, and possibly dependent from it. Apparently these conflicts did not injure the capitals themselves. As a consequence, no traces like destruction horizons have to be found necessarily in the archaeological record of the capital cities.

Despite the intensive commercial exchanges and many merchants of Ebla active in the Armi region and viceversa<sup>18</sup>, during the reign of king Išar-damu and vizier Ibbi-zikir, the relationships between Ebla and Armi are rather ambiguous and there is a marked deterioration of the relations. Several other texts of the time of vizier Ibbi-

16 See. Biga 2008: 313-316.

17 For all the texts of the third year of Ibbi-zikir as vizier, quoting the military campaign against Bagara see Biga *in press a*.

18 See for example 75.G.1703 (to be better placed in the relative chronology) registering wool from Ebla destined to the equipment of equids of the king of Armi and other personages of the kingdom; 75.G.1703 (king Išar-damu, vizier Ibbi-zikir, month *i-ba-sa hu-lu*) rev. XII' 21-XIII' 5: 1 "KIN" siki *hu-lu* bir-BAR.AN en *Ar-mi*<sup>ki</sup> 1 "KIN" siki *hu-lu* bir-BAR.AN *Da-gú-ra Ar-mi*<sup>ki</sup> 1 "KIN" siki 2 nig-anše-ak 2 ma; *Hal-za-um* du-du *Ar-mi*<sup>ki</sup>.

zikir quote a military expedition against Armi as for example 75.G.1729;<sup>19</sup> Ibbi-zikir receives linen textiles for the military campaign against Armi. But all these texts must be better placed in the relative chronology.

The complicated and rather ambiguous relationships between Ebla and Armi are very similar to those with Mari but they are even more complicated.

Some states like Burman, Lumnan, Harran, Dulu were linked to Ebla by blood, princesses of Ebla sitting on their thrones; in the last years of the life of Ebla there were two interdynastic marriages with the son of Nagar's king and that of Kiš, the great regional states of the period. Despite the extremely frequent relationships between Ebla and Armi an interdynastic marriage is never attested, a clear prove of the ambiguous relationships. With Mari too, the important trading partner of Ebla, an interdynastic marriage is never attested, because relations were often tense and interests frequently in conflict.

Unfortunately all the numerous quotation of wars against Armi are in texts which do not give great prominence to the military expedition; there is not a group of texts totally related to an expedition against Armi as we have for the expedition against Mari, which permitted to know many details about this great expedition.<sup>20</sup>

During the last years of Ebla, however, a major conflict between Ebla and Armi is reported. By means of an alliance with Nagar and Kiš, the most important cities to the East, Ebla manages to defeat Armi and occupied Armi afterwards. Enzi-malik, the son of vizier Ibbi-zikir, resides in Armi. This is probably the last military expedition quoted in the Ebla texts.

Again the reports are not so detailed that we could deduce from it, if a reflex of this military conflict should be expected in the archaeological record or not.

The last expedition against Armi quoted in the Ebla archives is documented especially by two texts (75.G.1249+*ARET* III 937+75.G.10082, 75.G.1250+*ARET* XII 874+75.G.10081). They give more prominence to the marriage of the Eblaite princess Tagriš-damu with the son of Nagar's king<sup>21</sup> instead of to the war against Armi. There is not a monthly account of deliveries of textiles written on the occasion of the expedition against Armi and totally dedicated to this expedition.

It is still difficult to recognize all the texts of the last years of the life of the kingdom of Ebla; many texts are fragmentary, the last annual accounts of deliveries of metals are poorly preserved. Many monthly accounts of textiles can pertain to this period and a more precise relative chronology for these texts must be obtained with more prosopographic studies. Several texts are very fragmentary and the month is missing and it is difficult to order these texts year by year and month by month to understand how many years they cover. For this reason it is difficult to know exactly the events

19 75.G.1729 (king Išar-damu, vizier Ibbi-zikir, month MAXGĀNAtenu-gudu<sub>4</sub>) obv. II 3-11: 3 gada-TÚG mu<sub>4</sub>-mu I-bi-zi-kir si-in níg-kaš<sub>4</sub> Ar-mi<sup>ki</sup> Bù-da-i maškim I-bi-zi-kir šu ba<sub>4</sub>-ti, "3 linen-textiles for clothes for Ibbi-zikir going to the military campaign against Armi Budai the maškim-functionary of Ibbi-zikir received".

20 See Archi, Biga 2003: 1-44; Biga 2008: 322-331.

21 See Biga 1998: 17-22; 2008: 309.

of the last years of Ebla and also how many years after the military campaigns against Mari and Armi Ebla itself was sacked by a yet unknown enemy, possibly coming from not too far... [M.G.B.]

### 3. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Frequently messengers, troupes, and others seemed to have passed by Armi during the conflict; therefore it seems highly probable that Armi was situated on the direct route from Ebla to Nagar (Fig. 1). The geomorphological conditions in North-Syria allow only for a few potential routes. The first one would have reached the Euphrates near Emar, would follow the course of the Euphrates until the Balikh area, and then turn northeast towards Nagar. However, this southern route certainly had to be avoided during the conflict, because the area around Tuttul was controlled by Mari.<sup>22</sup>

There are not too many possible routes north of Emar. In the area between Emar and Karkemiš, an easy crossing of the Euphrates is only possible in few places. One is situated at Banat-Bazi, where the easy crossing was used by Max Freiherr von Oppenheim in 1899.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, to traverse the area between the Euphrates and the Balih was not too easy, because of the dry conditions in the south and the basaltic heights in the North (see Einwag 1993). Only a few natural routes exist between the Euphrates and the Balih, the southernmost one starting a little north of Banat-Bazi. A route which started north of Karkemiš would have required a considerable detour on the way from Ebla to Nagar. This is a further argument why Armi should be located in the area between Emar and Karkemiš. One of the reasons why Ebla had so intensive relations with Armi and later even occupied Armi could be its role as an important transit point on the strategic route from Ebla to the Habur region and further to the East, avoiding the Mari territory.

### 4. HOW CAN THE HISTORICAL INFORMATION BE RELATED WITH THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FACTS AT BANAT-BAZI?

The citadel of Bazi is in fact only the uppermost part of a much larger site which includes also Tall Banat and Tall Banat-North, excavated by Ann Porter and Tom McClellan.<sup>24</sup> Tall Banat was bordered by the Euphrates on the West side. A massive town wall protected its northern and eastern sides and enclosed also the citadel of Bazi to the south. This so-called site 'Banat-Bazi' was occupied from about 2600-2200 B.C., in the Early Bronze Age III and IV.<sup>25</sup> Banat-Bazi measures altogether about

22 Archi, Biga 2003: 11.

23 von Oppenheim 1901: 69-99.

24 McClellan 1998: 243-271; Porter 2002a: 1-36; Otto 2006: Fig. 5.

25 For the dating see extensively Porter 2007: 69-115. A part of the site was settled again in the Late Bronze Age. The settlement complex of the Early Bronze Age is called Banat-Bazi and the one of the Late Bronze Age Bazi-Banat. Since 2000 Banat has disappeared in the Tishrin-lake.



40 ha and thus constitutes one of the largest Early Bronze age sites in the area of the Upper Euphrates.<sup>26</sup> The only city along the Euphrates which was certainly larger is Mari. This seems to fit the impression that Armi was, not unlike Mari, a strong, autonomous power and rival of Ebla.

In Banat several bits of domestic and industrial areas, for example a potters' quarter, have been excavated, further on a residence-like structure in Area C, all belonging to Banat periods IV and III, corresponding mainly to the EB III-IV period.<sup>27</sup> Associated with the residence in Area C is Tomb 7, an extraordinarily fine chamber tomb.<sup>28</sup> Although looted in antiquity, it still contained some precious objects which point to far reaching connections of the site. Several of the objects such as the steatite wig of a figurine definitely resemble examples from Ebla.<sup>29</sup> The impressive 'Banat-the cone', possibly a monumental tumulus of high-ranking persons, was situated a little outside the town.<sup>30</sup> A contemporary templum in antis was discovered at nearby Tall Kabir.<sup>31</sup>

The EB levels of the citadel of Bazi have so far been investigated on a limited area only (Fig. 2). The excavations from 2004-2008 revealed structures around the cistern in the NW corner (Building 3 and the staircase), at the eastern flanks of the plateau, at the artificial ditch in the south (Building 2), and in the center of the plateau below the MB/LBA temple (Building 4). In the following an overview is given in order to get more insights into the nature of the buildings on top of citadel.

### *Building 2*

Building 2 is built at the slopes of the artificial ditch. It consists of a central chamber gate, flanked by massive, 10 m wide walls with triangular niches, which perhaps served for defensive purposes. The building has several levels: In the first phase, level 9b, it was a compact, towerlike structure. A wall and the corners of two rooms, which were found approx. 35 m north of the entrance in 2008, belong probably to the northern wall of the building. In the second phase, level 9a, Building 2 was enlarged at least in the west and the east. The remains of 11 rooms have been found so far. The material corresponds to Banat Period III or Mardikh IIB1. The building is attached to the uppermost fortification wall which runs around the citadel. Not only this wall, but the whole defensive system of the citadel with the circular walls and the artificial ditch seem to originate in the EB III-IV.

Phase 2 of Building 2 was violently destroyed in a considerable military event, which is attested by thousands of clay bullets and several lancet-shaped flint arrowheads

26 McClellan 1999: 413; Cooper 2006: 56-58. Banat measures about 30 ha and Bazi about 10 ha. At Tall Hadidi, a long-living site of ca. 56 ha, it is not clear how large the EB settlement was in fact. In comparison: Ebla measures approx. 50 ha.

27 Cooper 2006: 128-130, 191-198.

28 Porter 2002a; 2002b.

29 Aruz (ed.) 2003: n. 109d; compare at Ebla: Matthiae *et al.* 1995: nn. 63-67, 70, 87-90.

30 McClellan 1998; *id.* 2004.

31 Cooper 2006: 155-158.

lying in and around the building. After this destruction the building was restored, the rooms were filled in to a height of about 2 m and the floors of the third phase (level 8) laid upon this fill. Shallow installations of white plaster on the floor are characteristic of level 8. But also this last phase of Building 2 was destroyed. A part of the inventory lay smashed on the floor. The vessels are comparable to those in Mardikh IIB2-levels at Ebla and in Akkadian levels at Tall Bia and Tall Chuera.<sup>32</sup> Apparently the building was reused in Akkadian times, but after a short while destroyed, too. Building 2 never recovered from the second destruction and was covered by completely different structures in levels 7e-f, small rooms and crudely paved alleyways. The material is comparable to the one in nearby Tall Kabir level 7 (Banat Period II).<sup>33</sup> Similar small-scale occupation without fortification purpose continues in the following MB I levels.

#### *Building 4*

Building 2 apparently served as a monumental gate-building to protect the weakest point of the Citadel's defensive system. It suggests that there existed certain structures on the plateau of the Citadel which deserved this sophisticated fortification system. This was the starting point to investigate the Citadel's plateau during the last campaigns (2006-2008). Because the excavations had to concentrate on the MB/LB temple in the center of the plateau (Otto and Einwag 2007), the EB levels could not be investigated on a large surface. But wherever the trenches went down to the rock, there were the remains of carefully made floors of thick white plaster (‘Estrich’) above a levelling gravel layer on top of the uneven bedrock, and mudbrick walls covered with a thick white plaster. Many of the walls were robbed and levelled or reused by the following occupation. Some of the floors were cut by the walls of the Middle and Late Bronze Age temple, but some were even reused by the temple. A floor made up of large rectangular stone slabs was reused as the floor of Room A of the temple (Fig. 3).

Pottery associated with the final occupation is contemporary to Banat Period III or Mardikh IIB1. It was impossible to excavate the building on a large surface, but the remains of several rooms of different size have been recovered over an area of at least 25 by 45 m. A 2.5 m wide door with a carefully worked stone threshold may have served as the entrance from the west. The number and the arrangement of the rooms, the building techniques, the situation in the center of the highly fortified citadel and the protection by contemporary buildings in the North-West and South, point to a non-domestic purpose of this building.

#### *Building 3*

Another part of the elaborate EB building program on top of the Citadel was the cistern

32 Strommenger, Kohlmeyer 2000; Orthmann *et al.* 1998: 121-170 (Bauschicht 1).

33 Porter 2007: 73-78.

at its northwestern corner. It was carved out of the natural rock and gives the citadel its characteristic appearance. A broad mudbrick wall was visible on the surface at the cistern's southern edge. When we investigated the area in 2006, it turned out to be part of a building consisting of several rooms between two massive gravel platforms on either side. The gravel platforms or bastions were built as stepped terraces, on which numerous slingbullets were lying. The western bastion continues into the glacis which covers the citadel's flanks. Building 3 was built on top of the rock which is sloping down into the cistern. It probably served to defend the cistern and the western edge of the plateau. The using phases and the destruction of Building 3 seem to be contemporary with the ones of Building 2.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Although only fragments of several EBA buildings on top of the citadel have been hitherto excavated and their functions cannot yet be determined with certainty, it is evident that the citadel housed an important multiroom building in the centre and several other buildings with probably strategic value along the edges. They were in use during the EB IVA period, approximately at the same time as the Ebla archives. Apparently they were of such an importance, that they caused the earliest known fortified citadel on a natural hill to be built. All the buildings testify a massive destruction in a military event, from which hundreds of sling bullets were left over. Because the ceramic material is scarce, it is still difficult to tell, if the destruction was caused by the same enemy who destroyed Ebla, or if it occurred a bit later, perhaps corresponding to the conquest by Naram-Sîn.

Banat-Bazi is one of the largest EB sites of the upper Syrian Euphrates region, and it must have been the seat of a powerful kingdom, to judge from the quality and quantity of prestigious buildings. Additionally, it is situated at the most direct route from Ebla towards the Habur triangle, where an easy crossing of the Euphrates was possible.

Taken into consideration the importance of Armi for Ebla, its possible localization east of Ebla and on the way to Nagar, and its intensive relationships with Ebla during all the time covered by the archives the identification of Tall Bazi with Armi seems indeed to be quite possible. We hope to get more proves through the continuation of this interdisciplinary cooperation and further excavations of the EB remains on top of the citadel of Bazi.

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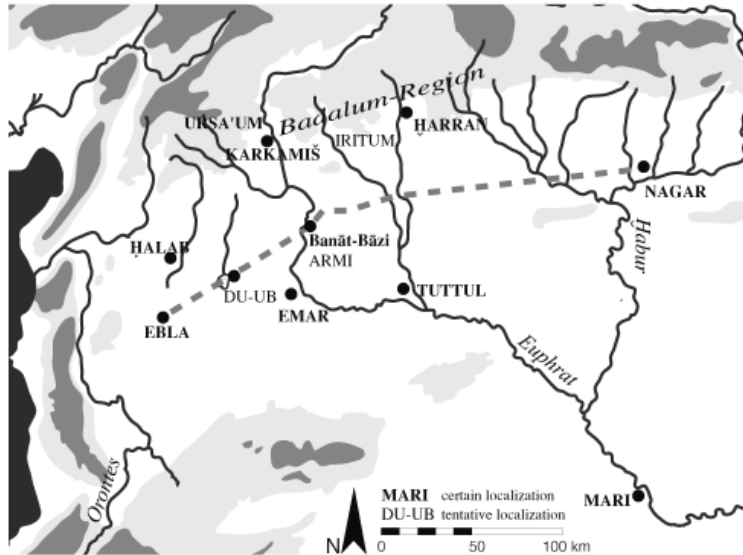


Fig. 1: Map of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria at the time of the Ebla archives with proposed route from Ebla to Nagar

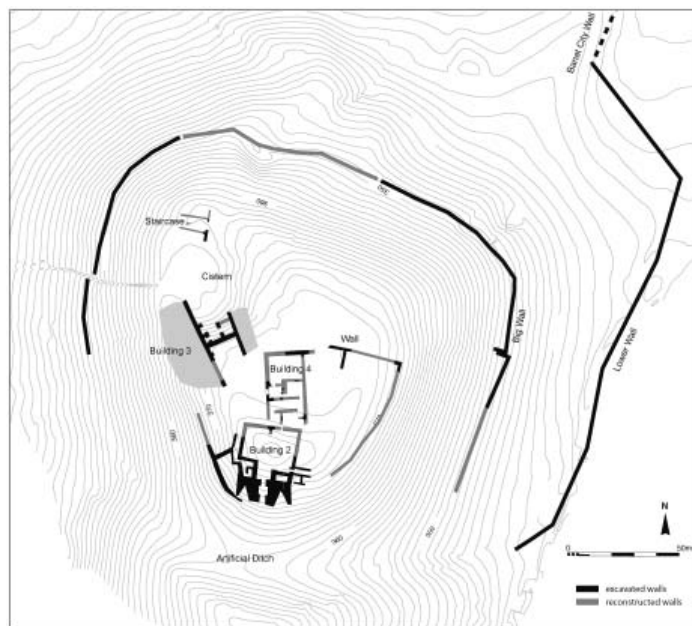


Fig. 2: The EB remains of the Citadel of Tall Bazi, preliminary reconstruction (state 2008)



Fig. 3: Carefully carved stone slabs as pavement of EB Building 4, reused by the MB/LB temple (left), and the EB floor of white plaster covered by the temple wall (right)