

CHRONIQUE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE EN SYRIE

SPECIAL ISSUE DOCUMENTING THE ANNUAL EXCAVATION REPORTS
CONCERNING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA

EXCAVATION REPORTS OF 2008

AL-BASSEL CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING
THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF ANTIQUITIES AND MUSEUMS
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Design and production: Mary OZON

Cover design: Mary OZON

ARABE COVER PICTURE

From left to right:

- Mishirfeh, royal tomb.
- Tell Gindaris, remains of building.
- Kherbet Al-Mataroon, stone relief.
- Dja'de el mughara, wall painting.
- Tell Hassake, part of cathedral.

ENGLISH COVER PICTURE

From right to left:

- Tell Shir, area L-O 20-21.
- Palmyra, area of tomb.
- Tell Chuera, area K.
- Qasr al-Hayr al-sharqi, secteur E.
- Tell Afis, area of temples.

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Printed in the Press of the Ministry of Culture

Damascus-Syria

CHRONIQUE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE EN SYRIE

«Chronique archéologique en Syrie» is an archaeological and historical revue, published by Al-Bassel Centre for archaeological, and training and research- The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums- Ministry of Culture in the Syrian Arab Republic. It aims to publish the excavations and investigations reports of the national, foreign and joint missions working in the archaeological sites in Syria, in order to contribute in publishing the latest discoveries and making the scientific subjects in the hands of the researchers.

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EXCAVATIONS AT TALL BAZI 2008

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THE TEMPLE OF TALL BAZI

The 2008 campaign focused mainly on the temple in the centre of the uppermost plateau of the citadel. It was discovered first in 2004 and consists of two rooms measuring 38x16m it belongs to the big-size temples of Bronze Age Syria.

The northern third of the temple is occupied by room A, which was completely excavated between 2004 and 2007. It was heavily burned and contained the traces of various activities such as the remains of meals and offerings beneath a huge amount of smashed pottery and animal bones which were covering the floor. In the debris two royal documents of the Mittanian kings Saushtatar and Artatama I (15th/14th cent. B.C.) were uncovered.

In this documents the kings donate places and fortresses to the «sons of Ba $\bar{\text{I}}$ ru» (Sallaberger, Einwag, Otto, ZA 96, 2006, 69-104)). The large room B has only been investigated in outlines so far.

LEVELS AND HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

PHASE 1: ORIGINAL TEMPLE PHASE

The temple was erected on a large plot in the middle of the citadel. The plot was carefully prepared by levelling the area and by levelling and cutting the extant structures. The building of the Early Bronze Age IV which lay in this area was thus levelled, its walls were robbed and its carefully hewn stones were reused in the temple. The walls were 2.8 m wide and consisted of a socle of large ashlar stones which was 2 m high and a mudbrick superstructure above it. The original floor of the temple was revealed in several soundings. It consisted of a thin layer of mud plaster above a carefully levelled floor of limestone gravel. The southern end of Room B showed a podium from stones and was partially stepped. Only the lowest layer of it survived the robbery of the temple.

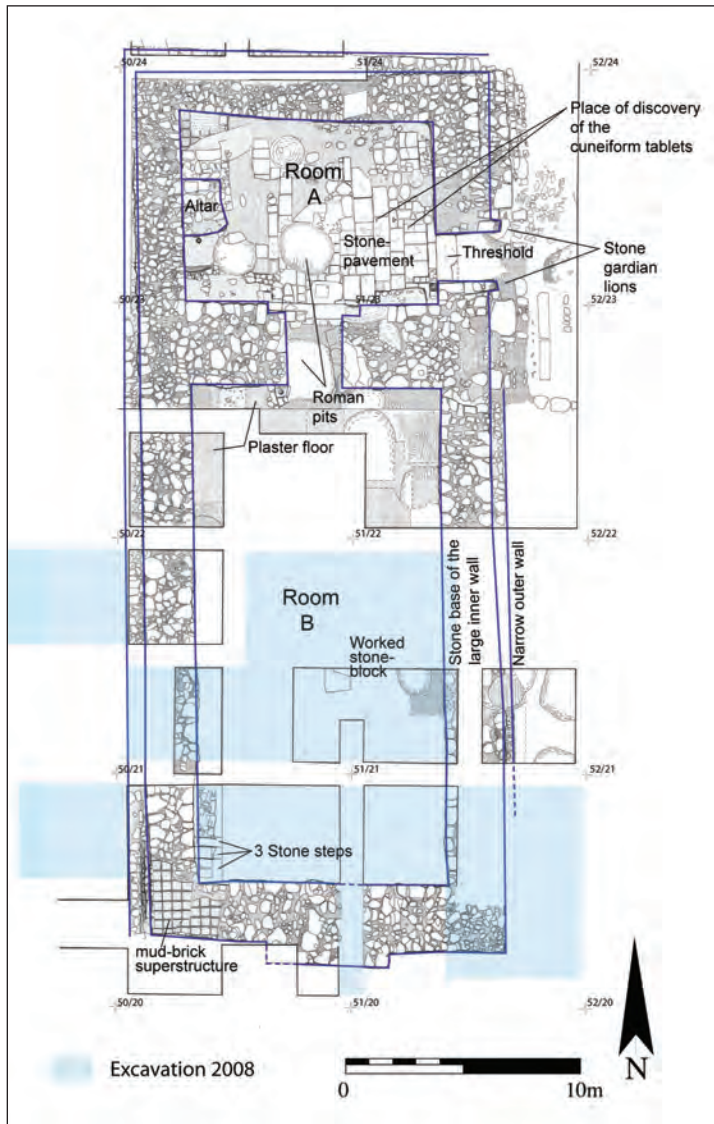


Fig. 1: Plan of the temple (Building 1) on the citadel of Tall Bazi with the excavation areas in 2008 marked.



Fig. 2: Southern wall of the temple room B with the remaining rests of a stone podium and the altar of phase 2 (stone setting in the middle).

The walls were covered with a thick white plaster. Remains of it survived at the southwest corner, many fragments were found collapsed in the debris.

This phase ended in a violent fire. Traces of this fire were found in 50/21SW where burnt mudbricks and a burnt wooden beam were collapsed and fallen on the floor. There is not much material left for the dating of this phase, but the pottery seems to indicate a date in the Middle Bronze Age period. C14 samples are in process.

PHASE 2: REUSE OF THE TEMPLE

After a gap of unknown duration the temple was again prepared for being reused. Thorough building activities cleared large parts of the floor, filled the area in with clean material and lay several successive floors on top of it. Several new installations belong to this phase: In the middle of Room B there was a stepped podium consisting of 2 large limestone stone blocks. The podium measures about 1,0 by 1,2 m.

In the middle of the main podium a square, altarlike stone was erected. 1,5m north of it a podium from mudbricks. During this phase Room B was probably accessible from Room A. The door between Rooms A and B shows a huge door socket. A multitude of floor levels one above the other makes it probably that Room B was used as a large courtyard. Several remains of fire places, for example a fire place of 2m in diameter in the southeast corner of Room B, indicate that it was used for different purposes.



Fig. 3: Aerial view of room B of the temple with the podium and the altar at the southern wall (right part of the picture).

PHASE 3: LAST PHASE OF THE TEMPLE AND FINAL DESTRUCTION

In the last phase of the temple only room A remain in use while room B was abandoned surving as a large debris area. Room A has an excentric access from the east, a large doorway flanked by stone gardian lions (fig. 1). The original stone pavement was partly reused, partly covered with mudplaster. Several installations were added, as a bench of mudbricks in the southeast corner and an central altar and other podiums and basins at the west wall. In the debris of the final destruction the above mentioned royal documents of the kings of Mittani were found.

Room B shows a continuous sequence of layers in which the debris accumulated during a long time, caused by wind and rain. In the middle of the room these layers are accumulated horizontally, but towards the southern end these layers become more and more sloping. In the southwestern corner of the temple there was an accumulation of more than 2 meters of heavily sloping debris containing waste pottery and animal bones all dating from the Late Bronze age. Among the pottery there are several outstanding pieces like kernoi (hollow ringjars with 7 beakers and a zoomorphic spout) and jars with zoomorphic and geometric applications, a jar handle with an applicated nude women. Between the sherds several beads, mainly of glass and faience, and a cylinder seal of the Mittanian Common style were found.



Fig 4: Cylinder seal (Mittanian Common, Frit).



Fig 5: Female figurine (Late Bronze Age).

Apparently Room B has had no roof during this phase dating to the Late Bronze Age, why the level of Room B rose constantly due to airblown waste and rain. The debris seems to have been also washed in from the ancient Tall which was adjacent to the temple at its southwestern corner.

THE AREAS ADJACENT TO THE TEMPLE

The original temple floor was carefully cleaned and few dating objects were lying on it. Therefore the excavation of the adjacent areas is of prime importance. In squares 49/20 and 49/22 SO the levels outside the temple which are contemporary with the building phase, were uncovered. It is an open area which presumably served for circulation outside the temple during phase 1. This outside area is securely dated by pottery to the Middle Bronze age. The levels contemporary to phase 2 and 3 belong to the Late Bronze Age.

The reuse of the temple during roman time and the „phase of the pits“

Several phases of occupation during roman time were uncovered. The northern part of the temple was apparently reused in a first phase. Several still standing ancient walls served as foundations, a floor overlies immediately the debris of the last Late Bronze Age level of the temple. Apparently, parts of the building had still been visible then. The southern part of the temple was used then as an open courtyard. Several parts of stone altars discovered in the past campaigns, point to cultic activities in this area.

Unfortunately, many pits have destroyed some parts of the temple area. They date mostly from the second phase of the roman time occupation and from the Islamic period. During this time at the highest point of the citadel stood a single building which may be characterized as a watch-tower.