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Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space

The Emergence of the Mittani State

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*Adelheid Otto**

The Organisation of Residential Space in the Mittani Kingdom as a Mirror of Different Models of Governance

Analysing domestic space and the organisation of residential space is not as simple as it might appear. Few settlements have been excavated on a sufficiently large scale, and even fewer contain buildings in which enough material has been preserved to reconstruct their use. Most were abandoned and their contents removed and therefore do not allow archaeologists to elucidate the principles of their spatial organisation. But even when there is sufficient evidence, we face the main problem concerning the interpretation of space: what can the outer forms and the inventories of any buildings tell us about past processes, behaviours, and norms? Can domestic space contribute real insights into past polities?

1 The evidence of domestic space concerning past polities

Although it is widely accepted that palaces and other official buildings possibly provide some information concerning the extant political systems, the evidence of private dwellings in this respect is much debated.[1] Houses are evidently linked to social structures; but do they also reflect social systems and polities and their transformations? Certainly, the form, size, layout, and equipment of houses differ distinctly over region and time. But how can we determine which factors were responsible for the differences? Is a large house with many rooms related to financial (e.g. a rich owner), social (e.g. a large family), or socio-political (e.g. high status occupants) factors, or were technical or environmental (availability of space, material and manpower), climatic (adaptation of the architecture to the climate), economic (use for manufacture or trade in addition to domestic residential use) factors at play, or were such features determined by cultural conventions (such as ethnic or regional customs), or by symbolic conceptions (i.e. the perception of an ideal house)?[2]

The idea that the plan, layout, and size of a house are directly linked with its use and that these features thus inform us about its inhabitants is widespread. But the amount of information that can be recovered from an examination of only the structure itself is limited, and consequently functional analyses based on the contents of the houses are also needed. This kind of analysis is painstaking, but much more reliable. D.J.W. Meijer de-

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1 Kent 1990.

2 Sanders 1990; Otto 1996a, 29.

scribed why it is necessary: "The superficiality of form as a tool for analytical classification is obvious, and knowledge of function is indispensible. The latter must be obtained through careful description and analysis of all contents of all rooms."[3]

Certainly the form and the function of a house are correlated. But in order to understand them properly, the underlying determining factors have to be recognised first. With the help of earlier considerations by Rapoport, Sanders and others,[4] T. McClellan[5] proposed that the following determining factors could account for the variations in form and size of Late Bronze Age houses within the investigated region:[6] 1. historical processes and origins; 2. physical environment; 3. economic factors; 4. regional polities; 5. variations in household composition and size; 6. ideology.

We shall see in the following to what extent these factors can be recognised and how often "one dominant explanation cannot be singled out to the exclusion of others."[7] The central issue is the precise study of assemblages in order to reconstruct activity zones that can be used in a subsequent spatial analysis. However, every ancient assemblage has suffered more or less dramatically from decay and destruction resulting from historical events and physical processes. Thus the inventory recovered by excavation, the archaeological inventory, is only a part of the original contents of the building, the systemic inventory.[8] The missing parts, such as valuable goods that were removed by the inhabitants or by looters, and perishable goods such as textiles and other organic materials, have to be deduced with the help of ethnographic analogies and ancient texts from the same period and region.

In order to acquire information from the assemblages about the activities that took place, the people involved in them and the polities they lived in, we depend very much on our knowledge of daily life and society. Luckily, several corpora of cuneiform documents from the same time and region are available (especially sale or inheritance documents) which inform us about daily life and social structures. In the Middle Euphrates area larger groups of tablets come from Meskene / ancient Emar and Tall Munbaqa / ancient Ekalte, and small groups from Tall Hadidi / ancient Azu, Tall Fray, and Tall Bazi / probably ancient Baṣīru.[9]

In this article, the wider framework of the investigated domestic dwellings will be examined first, then the organisation of residential space will be discussed with the help of selected examples, and finally it will be considered whether domestic space can contribute to the main topic of the workshop, the nature of the transition from the Middle Bronze to the Mittani period.

3 Meijer 1989, 233.
4 Rapoport 1983; Sanders 1990.
5 McClellan 1997, 36–46.
6 See Otto 2006a, Chap. 3.
7 McClellan 1997, 47.
8 Clarke 1973; Pfälzner 2001, 47; Otto 2006a, 24–26.
9 Arnaud 1985–7, 1991; Mayer 2001; Dornemann 1980, 218–220; Sallaberger et al. 2006.

2 The frame of domestic space: different models of governance in the Mittani kingdom

As Eva von Dassow points out (this volume, p. 11–32), there were several different systems of government within the Mittani empire. One of them is the palace-based society, which is well attested at Alalakh and Ugarit to the West, where the local kings were placed under the overlordship of the rulers of Mittani. The same system was obtained at the eastern edge of the empire, where the realm of Arraphe was ruled by its own king under the overlordship of Mittani. At the same time, there were collectively governed settlements in the Euphrates valley. In a workshop on "Collective Governance and the Role of the Palace" at the RAI Würzburg 2008, the peculiar structure of the settlements in the area of the Upper Syrian Euphrates was discussed. The elders, the city and the god of the city were particularly strong in this area.[10] Further elements of these corporate structures are the so-called "brothers", who were responsible for settling private legal affairs.[11] Apparently the Mittani king agreed to exercise hegemony over local monarchs as well as collective-governance polities, accepting the extant social structures.

This raises the question of whether the different models of governance within the Mittani kingdom were reflected in the organisation of the settlements? Let us investigate this with the help of selected examples from the western part of the Mittani kingdom (Tall Atchana/Alalakh and Ugarit), the eastern part (Nuzi) and the centre (Emar, Tall Munbaqa/Ekalte and Tall Bazi in the Euphrates region). These sites are chosen because they have been excavated on a sufficiently large scale to provide an image of the organisation of the settlement. Conversely other contemporary sites, such as Tall Sianu, Tall Kazel, Tall Afis, Tall Tweini to the West, and Tall Braq, Tall Fakhariya and Tall al-Hamidiya in the centre, are not taken into consideration here.

The level IV occupation at Tall Atchana/Alalakh in the 'Amq plain has been revealed partly by the old excavations of L. Woolley.[12] The excavated part of the settlement at that time (ca. 1450–1350 BC) showed a dominant official complex made up by the palace and an adjacent building, a quite modest temple and several houses (Fig. 1). The domestic quarters were quite extensive, as is shown by the recent excavations and magnetic surveys by A. Yener.[13] The structure is comparable to that of Ugarit, although the last and best known phase of Ugarit dates from the very end of the Late Bronze Age, the 13th century. However, until more information about the settlement and the domestic structures of Alalakh is published, the house quarters of Ugarit will have to remain the reference point for LBA domestic architecture in the coastal region. This is partly justified by the fact that many Ugarit

10 See Faist 2012; Otto 2012. This is documented for example in real estate transactions at Emar, where the elders and the city god are the sellers in a third of the documented transactions without ever being attested as purchasers. In contrast, the kings of Emar buy and sell like the other citizens; Beckman 1997.

11 See Demare-Lafont 2012.

12 Woolley 1955.

13 Yener 2005, 99–169; www.alalakh.org.

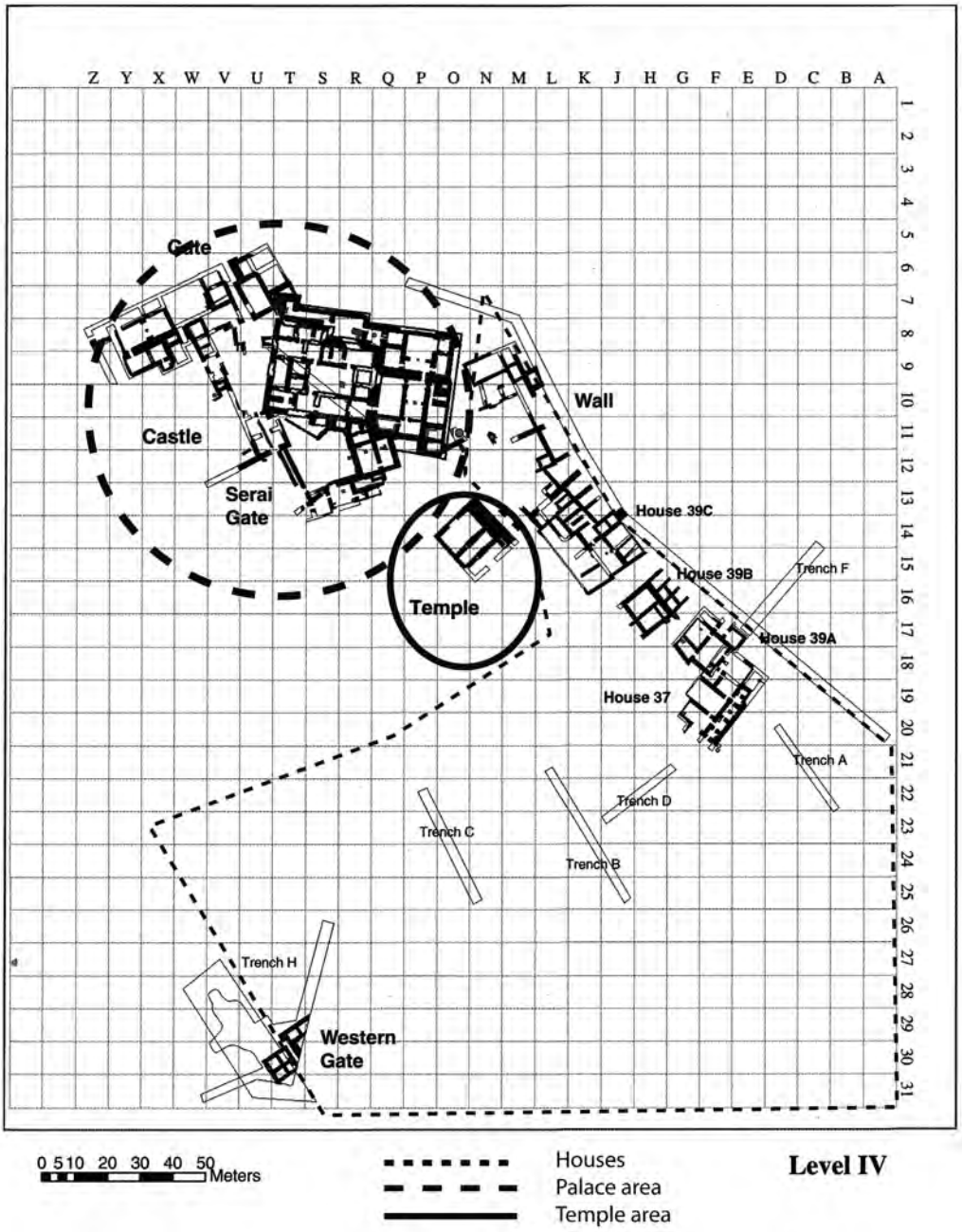

Fig. 1 | Urban structures of Tall Atchana – Alalakh level IV (15/14 cent. BC): Domestic quarters are extended south of the palace and temple area (after Yener 2005, Fig. 4.30).

houses had been in use for a long time and certainly were erected during or even prior to the Mittani occupation period.

The city of Ugarit, a 26.4 ha site, is occupied by the large royal palace and several smaller residential buildings near the western entrance, while the remaining urban area is densely occupied by houses arranged in quarters and two temples of modest size.[14] The monumental complex of the royal palace and the other associated residences, which were 20–100 times larger than the adjacent houses, occupy the upper part of the site. The royal palace is a highly complex system, which served the residential and administrative purposes of the court and its various collaborators and servants, while also being used for production, storage and distribution, and for cultic activities.

At Nuzi (Fig. 2) a large, multi-room palace lies adjacent to a walled temple area and is surrounded by a dense tissue of small to medium-sized houses and larger residences.[15] The residence of Prince Shilwa-teshshup[16] resembles the palace in its layout, the thickness of the walls and the size of several rooms, but is of more modest size. It measured 1200 sqm, while the palace covered more than 8000 sqm.[17] The diversity of the house sizes and the different dimensions of the palace, the residence of Shilwa-teshshup and the other houses resemble the situation at Ugarit and point to a highly stratified society.

Temples and domestic quarters formed the two elements of several Late Bronze Age settlements in the Upper Syrian Euphrates Region. Excavations at these sites have yet to uncover a building that differs significantly from the normal houses or temples and could be interpreted as a palace or major residence. Of course, most of the settlements have been investigated on a limited scale only, so that this absence might be due to the fact that the relevant area has just not been excavated. This could be the case, for example, at Meskene, ancient Emar, where the excavations of J. Margueron and U. Finkbeiner brought to light several parts of domestic quarters and three temples.[18] The twin sanctuary is situated in Chantier E, at the most prominent point of the city; Temple M2 lies in the lower town.[19] The building which Margueron uncovered at the northern edge and interpreted as the palace of the local king with a *'bīt hilāni'*-structure[20] is evidently a domestic unit.[21] But in fact the sur-

14 Galliano – Calvet 2004, 28f.
15 Starr 1937/39; Stein 1998–2001.
16 Starr 1937, plan no. 34.
17 Stein 1993.
18 Excavations from 1972–1976 by a French team under the direction of Jean Margueron, and since 1996 by a German team directed by Uwe Finkbeiner.
19 Beyer 1982; Finkbeiner 2003; Faist – Finkbeiner 2002. The so-called 'temple du devin' is evidently the house of the diviner. Its form and installations, including the altar, correspond to standard Bazi houses. The excavation reports (Margueron 1975, 65–66, fig. 4, pl. VI-4) do not corroborate the reconstruction of a central doorway to the main room.
20 Margueron 1979.
21 This interpretation as a palace has been rejected by philologists, because the archives are of a private, and not a royal character; Dietrich 1990; Sallaberger 2003. McClellan (1997) convincingly demonstrated that the ground plan of Margueron's *'bīt hilāni'* is not different from those of normal houses, although many houses at Emar were considerably smaller. A further argument against its identification as a palace is House 14 in the Weststadt of Bazi,

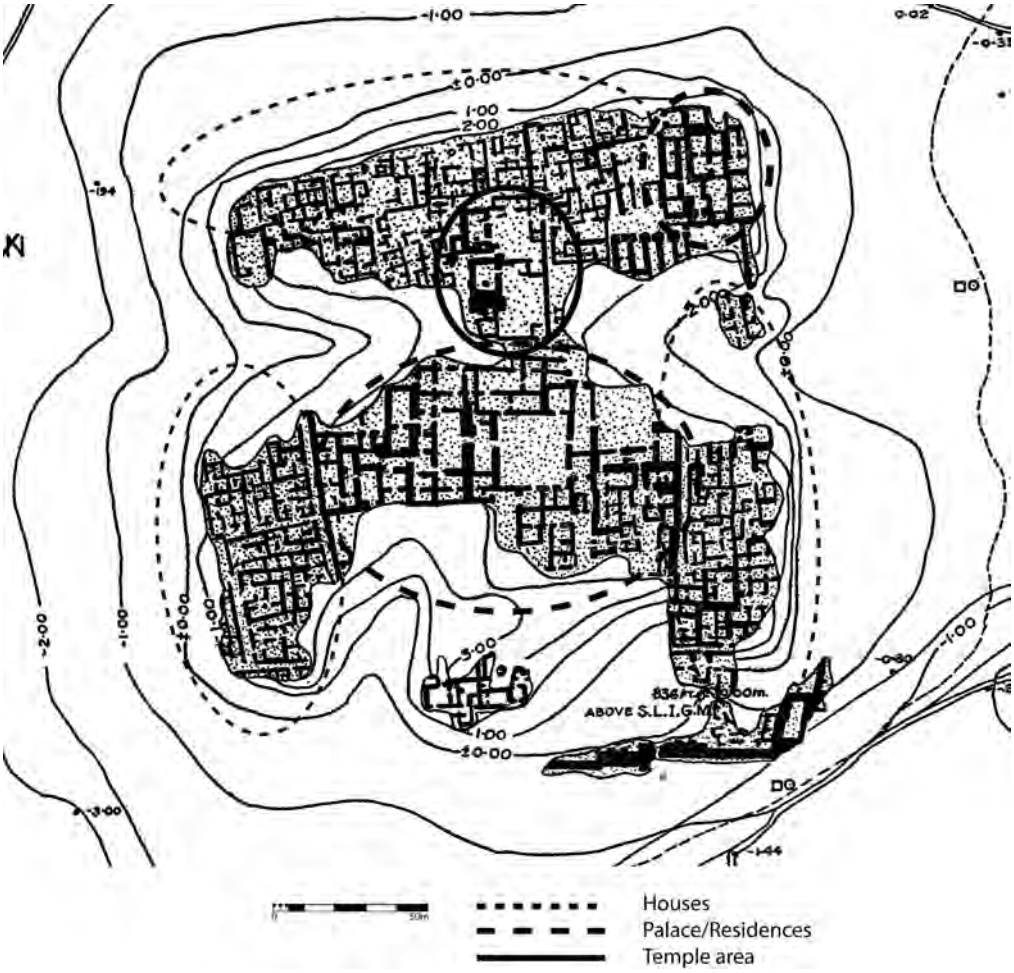

Fig. 2 | Urban structures of Yorgan Tepe – Nuzi (15/14 cent. BC): Domestic quarters and large residences are arranged around the royal palace and the temple area (after Starr 1937, Plan No. 2).

face of the walled city of Emar was much larger than the parts excavated, and a considerable part of Emar will never be excavated because it is flooded by Lake Assad. Therefore it can be argued that the palace just has not been found.

There is, however, one site which has been investigated on a large scale: Tall Munbaqa, ancient Yakaltum (MBA) or Ekalte (LBA). When the excavated area and the area investi-

which is not only similar in plan, but also larger (201 sqm; the building in Chantier A has an area of 144 sqm). House 14 was one of the three largest houses in the Weststadt and may have been the residence of a rather wealthy family, but not necessarily of a ruling monarch (Otto 2006a, 168–171).

gated by geophysical surveys are taken together, almost the complete LBA settlement has been traced[22] (Fig. 3). Three temples occupied the most prominent, elevated point of the city bordering the Euphrates, while a fourth temple was situated near one of the city gates.[23] The remaining area inside the city wall was densely covered by housing quarters. The houses, arranged along planned circulation ways, show a fairly homogenous layout and function.[24]

The texts from Ekalte show that the mayor (*hazannu*) and the Elders collectively governed the city, and that there was a king. W. Mayer interprets the two kings mentioned in the texts, named Addu-kabar and Yahsi-Ba'la with his son Zu-Ba'la, as kings of Emar, and supposes that Ekalte was dependent on the authorities in Emar.[25] However, the kings mentioned in Ekalte could not have been predecessors of the attested Emar kings for several historical reasons. An additional archaeological argument is that the sealings on the tablets from Emar and Ekalte are clearly contemporary.[26] A further argument is the mention of the palace in one text from Munbaqa (no. 62), which documents a property transaction by the city and the god (1000 shekels of silver should be paid to Ekalte's city god Ba'alaka and to the palace as a penalty).[27] A seal, which is identified on another tablet as the "seal of Yahsi-Ba'la, the king", is impressed on the same tablet.[28] It was a fairly small seal with a simple seal design, common for private seals, it bears no inscription and was apparently not fitted with metal caps, and therefore lacks the characteristics of a royal seal. There is therefore strong evidence that there was a king and even a palace at Ekalte that operated in parallel to the powerful collective structures.

In my opinion, there is no space for a palace within the whole area of Ekalte (see Fig. 3), unless this palace was not much larger than a house. If we take into consideration the fact that the king's role seems to have been not much more than that of a *primus inter pares*, we may suppose that the king of Ekalte possibly resided in one of the houses, and that his house differed from other houses – if at all – only slightly in its size or in the quality of its furnishings.

Could a similar situation have existed in Emar? Several texts from Emar testify that a king and a palace existed there from at least the 14th century onwards, that is, before the Hittite presence (contrary to Adamthwaite's suggestion that the palace at Emar was first estab-

22 See map in Werner 1998, cover inside, and Becker et al. 1994, Beilage.
23 Blocher et al. 2007.
24 Machule 1995, 418f.; Werner 1998.
25 Mayer 2001, 14; similarly: Pruzsinszky 2004. This view has not been generally accepted, Werner 2004, 21–24.
26 U. Seidl (Seidl 2004) showed that a large part of the Syrian type of Emar tablets is contemporary with or even earlier than the Ekalte sealings.
27 Mayer 2001, 128f.; M. Yamada in N.A.B.U. 1994/1,1 and Beckman 2008, 218 rightly doubts Mayer's interpretation of a scribe who mistakenly wrote É.GAL instead of Ekalte.
28 Werner 2004, 21f.

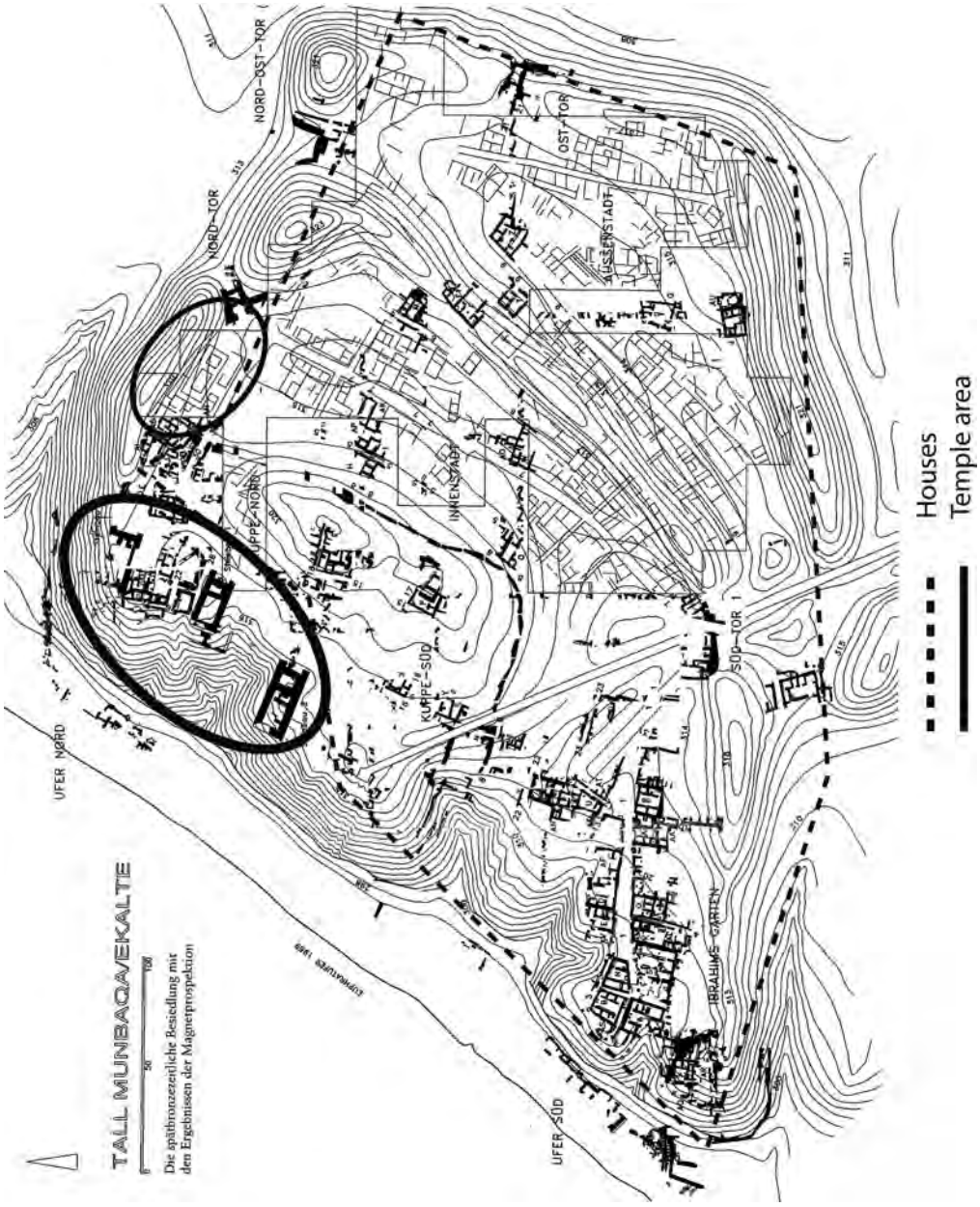

Fig. 3 | Urban structures of Tall Munbaqa / Ekalte (15/14 cent. BC): Except 3 temples at the most prominent point and one close to the NE gate, the city is covered by living quarters (after Werner 1998, cover inside).

lished during the Hittite occupation).[29] D. Fleming in 1994 described the "limited kingship" of the king of Late Bronze Age Emar, who did not play a prominent role either in property transactions or in rituals. In his paper at the RAI in Würzburg[30] he concluded that the king at Emar was "of considerable wealth and power" mainly because of his enormous contributions to the *zukru* festival. Nevertheless, he calls the king of Emar "no more than the head of the town's leading family". It cannot be excluded that there existed a palace at Emar in the lower town, which was covered by the medieval city of Balis and is now submerged, but the case of Munbaqa could also suggest that the palace was literally no more than a large house, i.e. possibly one of the largest houses of the settlements in question.

The considerable economic and political role of towns like Emar and Ekalte and the existence of a king and a palace argue against the explanation that collective governance was mainly restricted to less powerful or dependent settlements. At the same time, the single attestation for a palace and the paucity of references to a king at Ekalte suggest that other nearby sites also may have had kings, even if they are not mentioned in the few written documents we have.

At Tall Bazi, probably called Baṣīru during the Late Bronze Age, the citadel housed a large temple and the lower town consisted of several quarters containing similar domestic dwellings. With the help of large-scale excavations and geophysical surveys considerable parts of the city were revealed, but only domestic, industrial and cultic buildings have been discovered.[31] Indeed the two tablets discovered do not suggest that there existed a king at Bazi in the Mittani period, because the Mittanian kings Saushtatar and Artatama made grants to the "Sons of Baṣīru", i.e. the elders in the Mittanian king's view.[32]

In my opinion this shows that collective governance was not mainly restricted to the lower levels of the political hierarchy in the sense of Liverani,[33] who attributes collective traditions in Late Bronze Age Syria mainly to the rural communities within a powerful kingdom. The settlements in the Euphrates area were economically strong and politically stable communities. Indeed they were subject to an external political power – during the Late Bronze Age first the Mittani and later the Hittite king – but the same is true for the other, more stratified societies within the Mittani kingdom.

29 Adamthwaite 2001, 201–203. The existence of a palace and a king at Emar at the time of Idrimi has often been denied because he fled from Alalakh to the elders of Emar.

30 Fleming 2012.

31 Otto 2006a; Einwag – Otto 2006; Otto – Einwag 2007.

32 Sallaberger et al. 2006.

33 Liverani 1975.

3 The use of domestic space at different sites within the Mittani kingdom: Ugarit, Nuzi and Tall Bazi

The evidence presented above suggests that the form, size and use of the houses could have been quite different within the various regions of the extensive Mittani kingdom. Are the differences simply due to the fact that the more complex a society, the greater the functional differentiation within settlements, houses and rooms, as has been proposed by Kent,[34] or do other factors have to be taken into consideration? Let us once again compare examples from the west, east and centre of the Mittani kingdom:

Houses at Ugarit:

Various groundplans and sizes of individual houses exist in the last occupation phase, because most of the houses had been changed, rebuilt and enlarged several times at the expense of neighbouring plots or buildings (Fig. 4). The size of the houses in the "Ville sud", which were particularly well investigated by Olivier Callot,[35] varies between 38 and 290 sqm on ground level.[36] But the original size of the plots, before adjacent units were incorporated into large compounds, differed much less. The use of the houses can be deduced mainly from the remaining installations: wells and installation for water evacuation point to activities linked with water; some houses contained tombs below the floor. A staircase leads to the upper storey (or storeys?). Weights and seals testify to trade activities. Strangely, there seem to have been no hearths or ovens on the ground floor; they are thought to have been on the second storey.[37] Callot even thinks that no ground level of any house served for living, but rather for storage and various private and perhaps even professional handicraft activities.[38] However, it has to be emphasized that the function of the rooms was not derived from the inventory and therefore has to be treated with caution. Moulds for the production of metal tools and weapons were found in the houses, and even ingots are reported from the same quarter (exact location unknown). But because no other proof of metalworking, especially furnaces, was encountered, Callot interprets the moulds as having been stored, but not used in the houses.[39] Tools like sickles from wood and flint testify that the inhabit-

34 Kent 1990b.
35 Callot 1994.
36 In some instances there may arise some doubt as to the separation of units, but we refer here to the results of O. Callot.
37 Calvet – Castel 2004.
38 Callot 1994, 156–196.
39 Callot 1994, 187. This is contrary to earlier interpretations of the "Ville sud" as handicraft quarter, where metal workers and goldsmiths, seal cutters and stone sculptors were working: Courtois 1979a, fasc. 52, col. 1264; ead., 1979b.

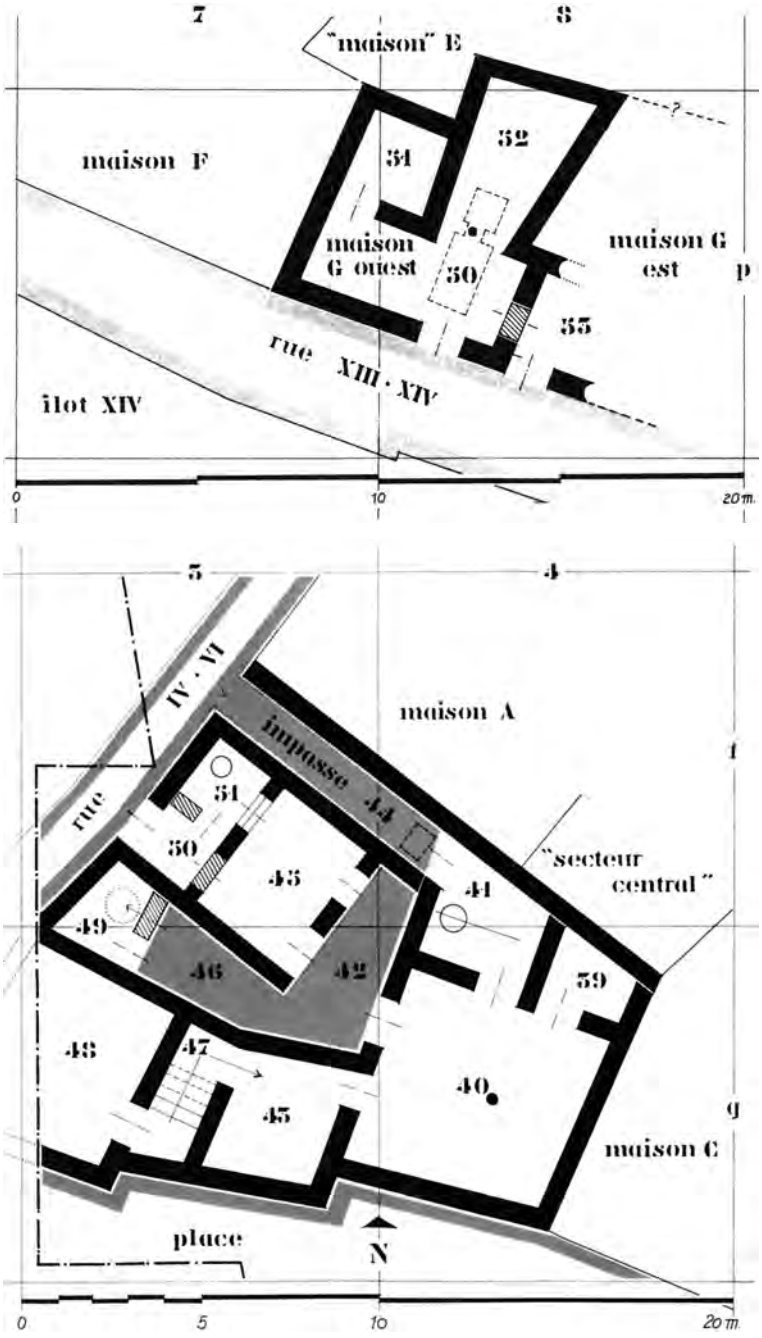

Fig. 4 a, b | Groundplans of a small and a large house at Ugarit:
a) House G, îlot XIII (50 sqm) (Callot 1994, fig. 201);
b) House D, îlot VI (180 sqm), clearly composed from originally separate units (Callot 1994, fig. 80).

ants were involved in agricultural activities.[40] But the only agricultural production activity that left clear traces in the living quarters is oil production, which is indicated by oil presses (e.g. in house D, îlot VI, locus 41; see Fig. 4b). The production of oil was not only for subsistence, but also for commercial purposes.[41]

More recent excavations of approximately 12 houses in the centre of the city[42] documented the inventory better. But even then the use of the ground floor is not too evident. Wells, silos and installations for the evacuation of water were encountered, and abundant pottery is interpreted as serving for storage and various domestic purposes. But it seems questionable to assert that the ground floor did not serve for living purposes at all, in view of the presence of fine pottery, jewellery and figurines. Closer to the palace existed larger houses of high-ranking people, e.g. the House of Rapānu, scribe of the king, with 300 sqm, and even larger residences of more than 1000 sqm.

Houses at Nuzi:

The size of the houses (including thick walls; the surface of the floors accounts only for about 50 %) varies considerably between 70 and 416 sqm (Fig. 5). The number of rooms is between 5 and 18, on average the houses have 10 rooms, ranging from small to large.[43] M. Novak,[44] who established a typology of the houses, reconstructed the room functions mainly with the help of the installations, e.g. he calls an area with an oven a kitchen, but it seems impossible to progress much further. Novak stated that considerable differences in size, building traditions, installations and equipment and of the households existed in the three excavated domestic areas, possibly pointing to differences in status, social structure and wealth.[45]

Houses at Tall Bazi, Weststadt:

A functional analysis of houses based on the inventory makes sense if, in the ideal case, the settlement was burned or suddenly destroyed by other catastrophes, and if a series of contemporary houses was investigated. These rare conditions were found in the Weststadt of Tall Bazi. Fifty houses were excavated, which were in use at the same time and were all de-

40 Coqueugniot 1991, 159–170.
41 The house in îlot I had an oil press at its disposal. A tablet, found in the same house, testifies to oil commerce; see Callot 1994, 196.
42 Yon 1987.
43 Novak 1994, 374–380.
44 Novak 1994.
45 The results of M. Novak differ slightly from the conclusions reached by Starr, who considers the regularity, the quality of construction and the room size as important markers of status.

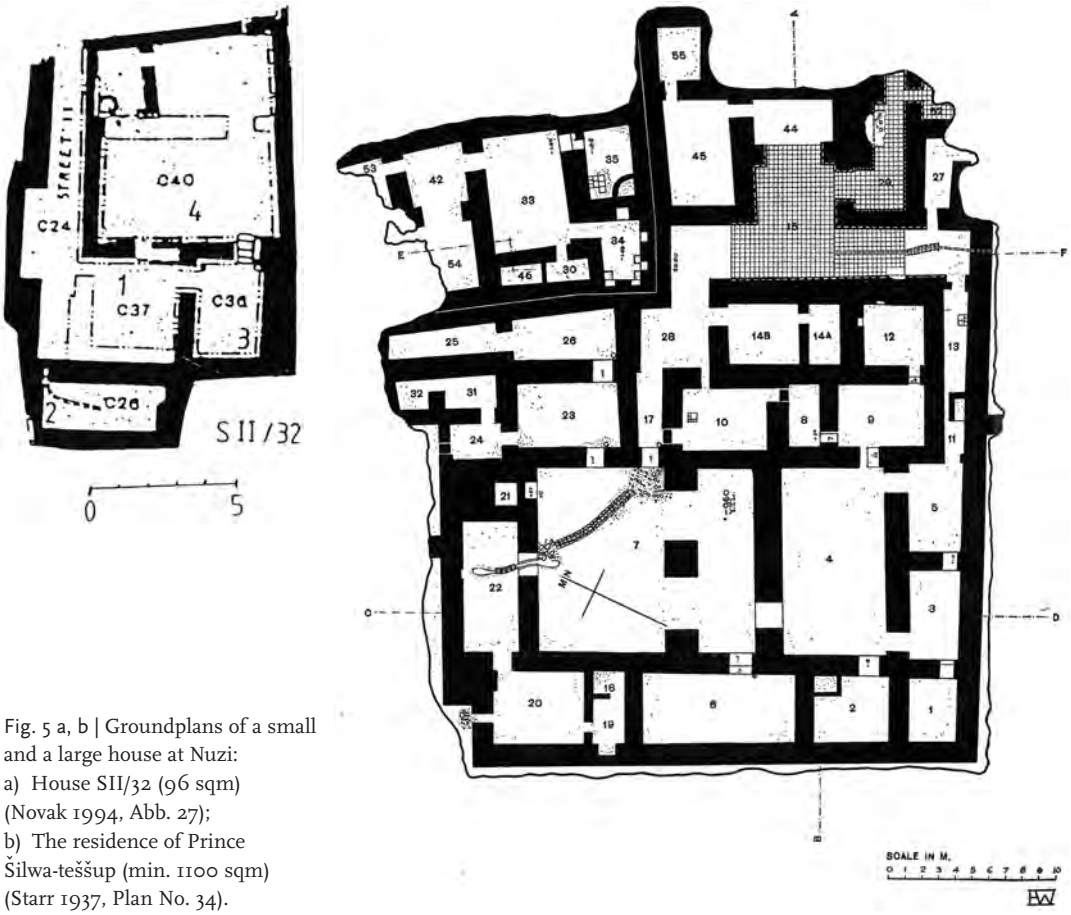

Fig. 5 a, b | Groundplans of a small and a large house at Nuzi:
a) House SII/32 (96 sqm) (Novak 1994, Abb. 27);
b) The residence of Prince Šilwa-teššup (min. 1100 sqm) (Starr 1937, Plan No. 34).

stroyed by fire. After the excavation of the houses was completed, the Tishreen lake flooded the Weststadt and other parts of the lower town in 1999. Since then, many similar houses with similar inventory have been washed free. They indicate that several hundred houses existed in the lower town during the last phase of Late Bronze Age Tall Bazi.

In what follows, the size, form and function of a house, the various domestic, economic and social activities within the houses will be summarized.[46]

The size of the houses:

The sizes of the original plots show little variation. 90% measured between 100 and 200 sqm in the first phase, the standard size of the 50 known plots was between 110 and

46 See extensively Otto 2006a.

170 sqm, and about 60 % varied only about 20 % in size (128–159 sqm).[47] The plots were arranged along planned streets, which were built before the plots were laid out (measured in cubits) and apportioned to different families.[48] The differences in house size increased during the two phases, corresponding to the two to three generations which were observed. At the end of phase 2, the smallest house then measured 40 sqm, the largest 240 sqm (Fig. 6a). But these differences can be explained by economic developments and property division as a result of inheritance. The majority of the houses still varied only slightly in size (Fig. 6b), which indicates a society which was well organized, but which had no strong horizontal stratification.

Form and function of the houses:

The houses, their installations and the movable equipment were so standardized that it was possible to reconstruct an idealized typical house and its use.[49] It was made up of a long room flanked by a row of secondary rooms (2–6, on average 4), which were all accessible from the main room. A staircase led to the roof above the main room and to the rooms of the upper storey above the secondary rooms (Fig. 7). The comparison of every individual house with this ideal typical house allows differences in form or use to be recognised immediately.

On the ground floor level, the main room was used for food preparation, cooking and baking, brewing, social gathering, eating and drinking; domestic activities such as spinning; handicraft activities, business; domestic cult; assemblies; circulation and access to the roof. The secondary rooms were used mainly for the storage of provisions, vessels, tools, equipment and perishable materials. Additional rooms existed above the secondary rooms. The roof area above the main room served as an open courtyard for the house. The fallen debris from the upper storey indicates domestic activities, food preparation, storage and more.[50]

Relation between the size and function of a house?

The analysis of the houses revealed the importance of conducting a painstaking activity analysis with the help of the inventory. For example the social status of a house owner cannot be derived from the size of the house or the number of rooms, as House 29 neatly demonstrated:[51] House 29 is one of the smallest within the Weststadt (97 sqm) and has only

47 Otto 2006a, 252–258.
48 Otto 2006a, 254. The walls bordering the streets were clearly erected first and the remainder of the house walls built up against them.
49 Otto 2006a, 41–45, figs. 23a–c.
50 Otto 2006a, 233–250.
51 Otto 2006a, 197–200.

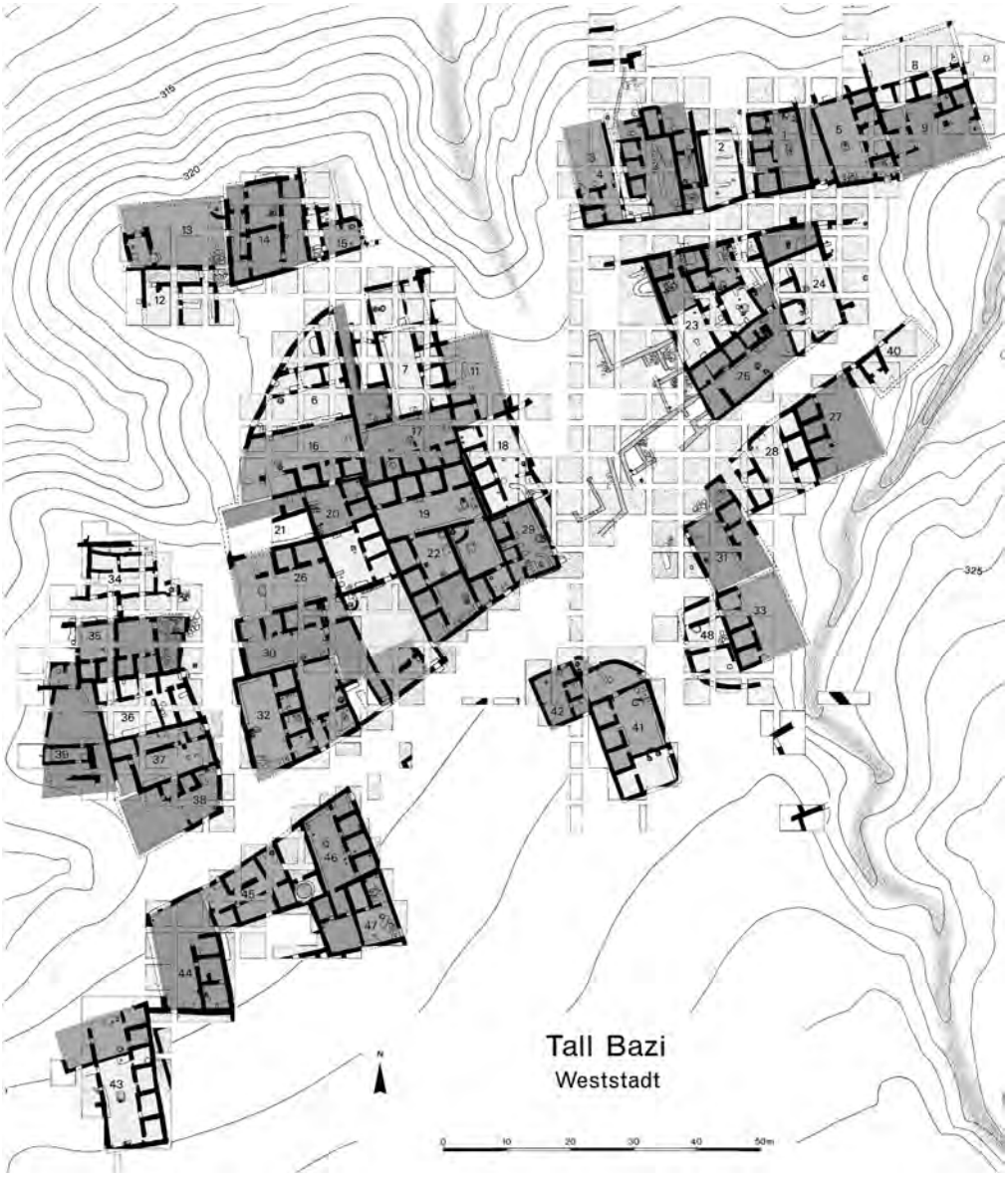

Fig. 6 | The houses of the Weststadt at Tall Bazi in its last phase (Phase 2); the various shadings illustrate different households.

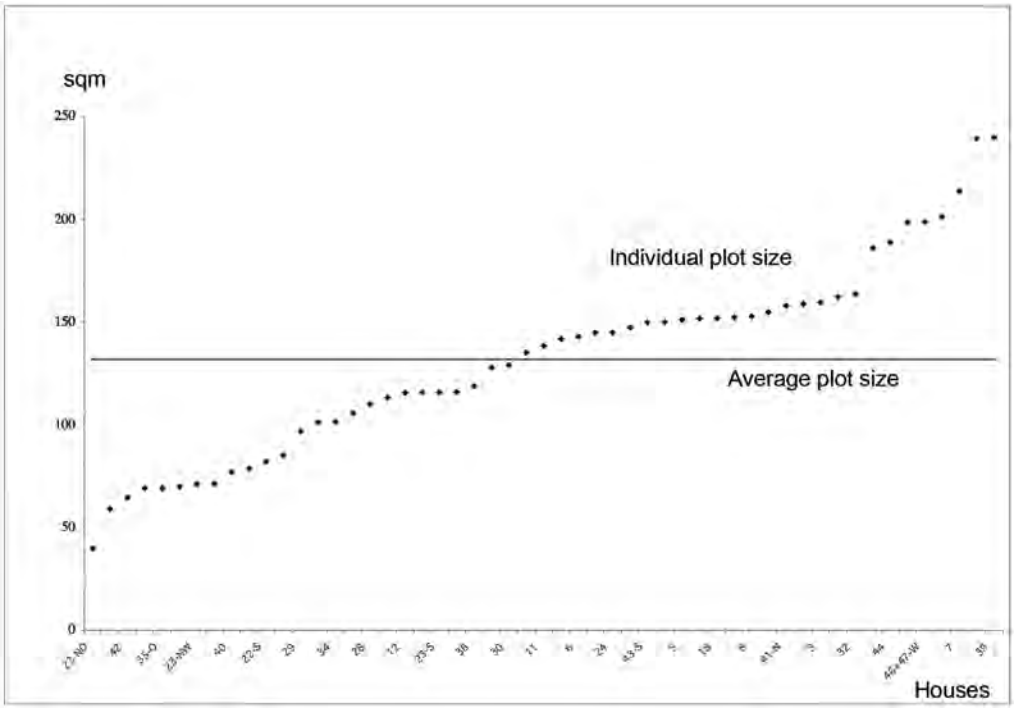

Fig. 6 | The size of the plots of the Weststadt at Tall Bazi in its last phase (Phase 2); the majority of the plots shows little deviation from the average size.

3 secondary rooms on the ground floor (Fig. 7a). However, the amount of pottery vessels points to a household of average size, and the quantity and quality of imported luxury goods indicates strong economic activities. Contrary to the habit common to many other households of carefully protecting the main room against view from any public space, House 29 was entered from an area of high circulation, namely the main road and central place, which probably served as a marketplace. The modest size of the house was apparently tolerated for the benefit of the economically ideal situation at the central place.

Handicraft and economic activities:[52]

To what extent private handicraft and trade existed in the Ancient Near East, or whether it was organized and controlled by the palace or the state is a widely debated question.[53]

52 Otto 2006a, 282–290.
53 Liverani 1979; Renger 1996, 220.

Fig. 7a | House 29, one of the smallest houses of the Weststadt, economically ideal situated at the central place.

Within several houses at Bazi the remains of handicraft activities were found: a smith's workshop in House 20,[54] stone cutting activities in House 1, 5, 28(?), 31, 43-S, bone/wood handicraft in House 25, and several others.[55] The activities took place in the same rooms as the domestic activities – a strong hint at private handicraft, in which the family members were involved. Furthermore, small stone weights (presumably for weighing silver), which were found in nearly every house and at the central place, point to private trading and exchange activities on the part of the inhabitants.

Social processes: division of houses as result of inheritage division(?)

Several houses were divided in the second phase by a wall in the main room (e.g. House 14, 20, 22, 23, 41, 43, 47). The division, which resulted in the reduction of the living space, could be interpreted in different ways, e.g. as the result of the impoverishment of the so-

54 Otto 2006a, 246f., figs. 162f.
55 Otto 2006a, 246–249.

ciety (e.g. Adamthwaite 2001, 227–232). But in some instances it is evident that the division was caused by normal social processes:

In House 41 a new altar was installed in the larger, northern part of the house, when the house was divided (Fig. 7b). The most plausible explanation seems to be that the heir had to install a new altar for the gods and ancestors when he divided the house. Both parts of the house were well functioning domestic units. The southern part was small (60 sqm), but had all necessary installations and equipment, though not many vessels, including many old and recycled ones. Apparently the inhabitant had full legal capacity, as weights and cylinder seals, stored in the secondary room e, testify (Otto 2006a, 215–220).

Inheritance documents from Emar show that when the head of the family died, the eldest son inherited the main house (*bītu rabû*) with its gods and ancestors; his brothers and sisters received other real estate or moveable property. The share of the widow consisted of precious objects, but not the main house. The texts do not mention where she lived, but it must not have been too far away, because the children had to care for her until she died. Sometimes her right of abode in the house is explicitly mentioned (Arnaud 1985–7, text 176), or half a house is given to the widow, the other half to a son (Arnaud 1991, text 31). House 41-South could well be the part of the house where the widow of the former house owner lived, while House 41-North was the "main house", where the heir had to install a new altar for the gods and ancestors.

Social gatherings and meetings in the houses and in the temple:

In a few houses important domestic activities were transferred from the main room to an additional room. House 7 is one of the earliest houses of the Weststadt, and one of the largest (214 sqm). The main room has a bench the length of the long side (13 m), on top of which lay only a basalt tripod vessel, and in front of it eating and drinking vessels. In the area of the altar lay the remains of a bull's skull. Domestic activities like cooking, baking and brewing had been transferred to the additional room f in the second phase, and even the spinning must have taken place here. Could the reason for this transfer of women's activities be that the main room was used for ceremonies?

Some texts from Emar and Ekalte inform us that private legal affairs were settled among the "brothers", a public institution with legal competences.[56] Apparently they assembled in the house of one of the "brothers", as can be deduced from the formula "PN let the brothers enter" or "PN let the brothers sit down". During their meeting they broke the *hukku*-bread and anointed the table.[57] There are several reasons to locate this assembly in the main room of the private houses: the main room of most houses had an altar-like table

56 Démare-Lafont 2012.

57 Mayer 2001, Nos. 11. 19. 20. 51. 54; Beckman 1996, 59.

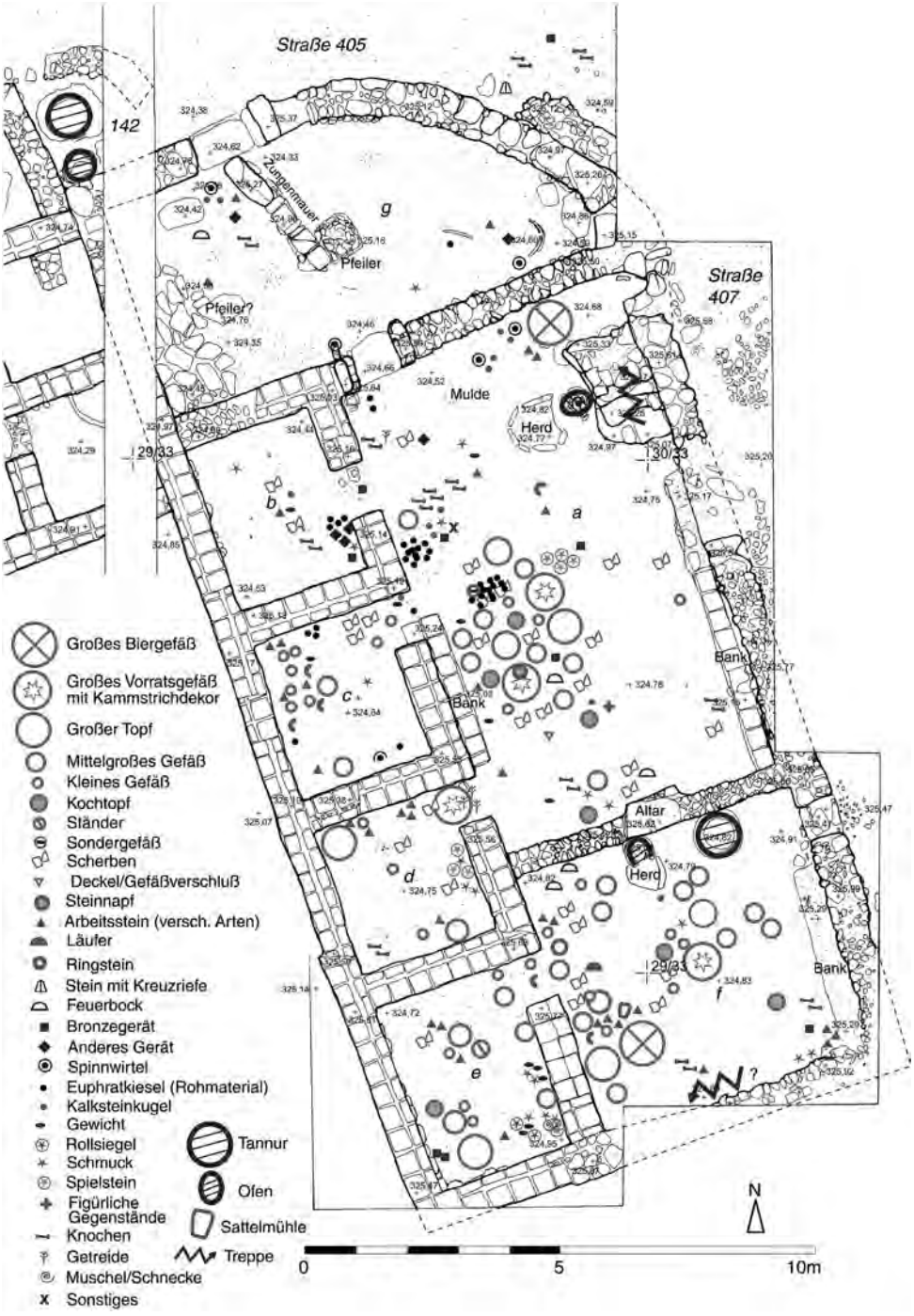

Fig. 7b | House 41, divided probably as a result of an inheritage division.

opposite the entrance and a long bench along one side. The bench clearly served for sitting or reposing as is indicated by the remains of animal furs on it; the fine tableware jugs and plates in front of it prove that meals and drinks were consumed here. The altar seems to have been the social, cultic and economic focal point of the house: close to it were found ordinary vessels containing food as provisions for the ancestors and gods, cultic vessels for libation, figurines and jewellery, but also weights.[58]

The similarities between the layout, size and installations between the main room of a house and the main room of a temple in settlements of the same region are striking. The texts inform us, that the elders of the city together with the city god collectively managed the settlements. Therefore it has been argued that the temple served as a place that was used collectively for administrative purposes, as did the houses at a lower level.[59] Certain administrative and social functions, which may have been outsourced to official buildings in the palatial societies in the West and East, must have taken place in domestic dwellings and temples.

4 Continuity or discontinuity within the development of domestic space in the Upper Syrian Euphrates Area from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age?

The layout of the Late Bronze Age houses in the Euphrates area slightly varies from site to site, but the basic organisation is the same, namely a main room and one or two rows of secondary rooms.[60] Has this form already been attested earlier or is there a distinct change between the Middle and Late Bronze Age? J. Margueron, who interpreted Late Bronze Age Emar as a new, Hittite foundation, thought that the front room houses were imported by the Hittites from Anatolia[61].

However, this form already existed in the Middle Bronze age, as McClellan clearly demonstrated.[62] Relatively few houses are known from MBA levels of the same region. The best evidence comes from Tall Halawa A, Bauschicht 2 (MBA I): the remains of planned housing quarters with a high building density (remains of ca. 80 houses excavated) were found on a surface of approximately 5000 sqm[63]. The houses of 25–40 sqm consist of a main room, often with a tannur or a plastered working surface. Two, or occasionally one or three, secondary rooms were accessible from the main room. Public buildings and fortifications seem to be missing in the settlement. J.-W. Meyer – puzzled by the uniformity of form and

58 See extensively Otto 2006a, 67–71. 75. 234. 241–244. For a peculiar weight, located together with other weights and beads at the foot of an altar, see Otto 2008.
59 Otto 2006b.
60 McClellan 1997.
61 Margueron 1980, 36.
62 McClellan 1997, fig. 17.
63 Meyer 1989, 20–32, Abb. 6.

inventory and the fact that large storage jars are nearly completely missing – suggested that a socially fairly equal population of workmen and their families, who were dependent on a central authority, lived in these houses.[64] The evidence of Halawa could, however, be interpreted in a quite different way. The form corresponds to the smaller type of Late Bronze Age houses, e.g. attested at Tall Fray or at Emar, and the enlarged standard house type is simply a duplication of this form. It could be a hint that a low degree of hierarchy and strong collective governance was already present in the Middle Bronze Age in this region.

The excavations at Emar by U. Finkbeiner and his team revealed a continuous sequence of domestic units which persists without any major breaks from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age.[65] The ground plan of the MBA houses is not yet evident, but it is conceivable that they resembled the contemporary houses at the neighbouring site Tall Halawa. The smaller house form, the "front room house", could have remained in use in the LBA, while larger house forms developed at the same time, possibly derived from two joined front room houses. Some scholars have interpreted the differences in the sizes of the houses as indicators of the social or economic position of the households. The small houses at Emar have even been interpreted as the homes of day labourers who had to work for family businesses that were situated in the large houses.[66] But without considering the material in the houses, such conclusions are rash. As we saw before, size alone is no sound indicator of the social position of the house owner, but other factors such as physical environment, economy, and variations in household composition can be determinant. It is more convincing to conclude that corporate political structures were already strong in the MBA.

Daniel Fleming (2004) spoke of "Democracy's Ancient Ancestors" in this respect. As long as powerful kings such as Samsi-Addu, his son Yasmaḫ-Addu and his successors (e.g. Zimrī-Lim in Mari) in Upper Mesopotamia and the rulers of Yamḫad in Syria were in control, the power of these corporate political structures was inevitably limited. With the collapse of these kingdoms, however, the collective structures seem to have gained much power, at least in the Euphrates valley. The texts are not very informative in this respect, and therefore the archaeological sources are of special importance. We know relatively little about what became of Mari after it was destroyed by Hammurapi of Babylon, but at Tall Bi'a / ancient Tuttul an interesting transformation can be observed: The main mound E had housed the political and administrative centre of the city at least from the Early Bronze Age III onwards. A series of palaces formed a mound approximately 10m in height. The last palace was destroyed by Zimrī-Lim, when the Upper Mesopotamian kingdom of Samsi-Addu disappeared.[67] Above the remains of the last palace, still the most prominent point in the

64 Meyer 1989, 32; Akkermans – Schwartz 2003, 308.
65 Finkbeiner 2003.
66 McClellan 1997, 44.
67 Unlike what has been claimed in Miglus – Strommenger 2003, the palace was never used by Zimrī-Lim. Numerous fragile sealings and tablets, dated to Yasmaḫ-Addu, which were scattered on the uppermost floor, testify that the palace was last used under his regency.

Fig. 8 | Late Bronze age houses overlie the uppermost palace of King Yasmaḫ-Addu at the "palace mound" E in Tall Bi'a / Tuttul (map combined from Miglus – Strommenger 2002, Tafel 99, 1.2., and Miglus – Strommenger 2003, Beilage 6).

city, several houses were erected in the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 8). They resemble the well known house types from Tall Munbaqa, Tall Bazi, etc. Apparently, the main impact of Tuttul in the LBA lay in its role as the main cultic centre of the god Dagan, but not as a royal residence.[68] Tuttul was situated outside the kingdom of Mittani. Therefore it is improbable that collective governance was particularly strong in the Euphrates area *because* the Mittanian king was the overlord and did not allow for other kings. Rather it seems that the local models of organisation functioned independently and were stable in themselves.

68 Krebernik 2001, 14.

Conclusions

The organisation of residential space can be deduced only at sites where considerable parts of the archaeological inventory have been preserved and where a series of contemporary houses has been investigated. A careful analysis of the assemblages and the use of space leads to the definition of activity areas. Their interpretation, concerning the social or economic status of the household, can be put forward with the help of contemporary texts. Until now these conditions have not been met in the western and eastern parts of the Mittani kingdom, and therefore it is difficult to decide whether different models of governance are reflected not only in the extant elements of the settlements, which differ distinctly (palaces, residences and houses as major elements in the West and East, and houses and temples as major elements in the Euphrates region), but in every domestic dwelling, too.

A considerable difference between the regions consists in the diversity of house size. In settlements with a palace-based society the margin between modest houses and spacious residences is much larger than in the collectively governed settlements, where the layout and size of the houses varies only a little. Another difference may exist in the activities which took place in the houses (although this is difficult to judge without an accurate activity analysis of the Alalakh, Ugarit or Nuzi houses). In the houses of the Middle Euphrates region social, economic, and handicraft activities certainly took place. There is evidence of several handicrafts and even metal working in the houses, whereas the moulds in the Ugarit houses seem to have been stored, but not used on site. Could this strange situation be explained by the fact that metal handicraft in particular was supposed to be in the hands of the palace?

S. Kent (1990) proposed that the functional diversity of settlements, houses and rooms increased parallel to the complexity of society. Therefore McClellan (1997) supposed that in Inner Syria the highly centralised kingdoms of the MBA were replaced by more loosely organized political and socio-economical systems in the LBA. He thought that this process began at the end of the MBA parallel to the decrease of sedentarism. The simpler social structures and the local, less tightly organized political systems would have been an easy victim of the Mittani and Hittite Empires. However, there is no reason to suppose that this model of collectively governed settlements functioned only in strongly dependent polities. On the contrary, it proved to be a more stable system than the kingdoms of the Middle Bronze Age.

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