



JEAN M. EVANS & ELISA ROSSBERGER (EDS.)

in cooperation with PAOLA PAOLETTI

Ancient Near Eastern Temple Inventories in the Third and Second Millennia BCE: Integrating Archaeological, Textual, and Visual Sources

Proceedings of a conference held at the LMU Centre for Advanced Studies,
November 14–15, 2016



MÜNCHENER ABHANDLUNGEN ZUM ALTEN ORIENT

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Umschlagabbildung: Reconstruction of the Kititum-Temple at Iščali (OIP 98, frontispiece). In the foreground (clockwise): necklace from Iščali (OIM A17006, photo: E. Roßberger), mace head from Tell Agrab (OIM A18008), stone statue head from Bismaya (OIM A173), stone statue from Tell Agrab (OIM A18108), cuneiform tablet with temple inventory from Iščali (FLP 1167 Vs., photo: P. Paoletti), terracotta plaque (OIM A9356, photo: E. Roßberger), stone bowl fragment from Nippur (OIM A29448). Design: E. Roßberger; © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the Free Library of Philadelphia (cuneiform tablet).

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The Inventory of the Temple at Tall Bazi¹

BERTHOLD EINWAG AND ADELHEID OTTO

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It was a tragedy for the inhabitants. The enemy conquered not only the lower town of this flourishing city with hundreds of houses of wealthy merchants and urban citizens, but also the steep and heavily-fortified citadel, which was dominated predominantly by the large temple (Fig. 1). The inhabitants were at least able to save their lives and flee, but the enemy did a complete job of destroying their buildings and belongings: they thoroughly looted house by house and room by room and then set fire to the settlement. Of course, the temple was not spared and attracted attention from the conquerors: They took most of the temple equipment away including, presumably, most of the metal objects and other valua-

ble items. Then, they meticulously smashed the remaining objects, which were either too heavy or of too little material value (because they were made, for example, of clay or stone) into tiny little pieces. Finally, they set the temple on fire.

This is the most probable scenario that can be reconstructed from the archaeological remains at Tall Bazi. It is impossible to ascertain who this enemy was, but many indications point to the Hittites on their way to Syria around 1350–1325 BCE. They seem to have eliminated not only Tall Bazi, but also many other powerful and potentially dangerous settlements along the Euphrates that had prospered in the Late Bronze Age I period. They spared only those settlements that they deemed useful for protecting and administering their empire, such as Emar and Carchemish as the administrative centres and Tall Qitar as an important fortification stronghold at the strategically important narrowest point of the Euphrates valley.²

Nevertheless, the temple still contained a part of its former inventory, and that is the reason for this case study. Temples from Syria and Northern Mesopotamia that preserve at least some of their former inventory are rare, since most of them had been either slowly abandoned and emptied, thoroughly looted, or disturbed by later levels.³

1 We thank the organizers of the workshop, Elisa Roßberger, Jean Evans and Paola Paoletti, for the stimulating conference and their efforts with the editing of the volume. Our thanks go also to Peter Werner for his help with the editing process.

We are sincerely indebted to the General Directorate of Antiquities in Syria, especially to Sultan Muhesen, the late Adnan Bounni, Michel Maqdissi and Ahmed Taraqji who generously permitted us to work at Tall Bazi, and the Directorate at Aleppo. Warm thanks are also due to our representative Walid Abd el-Karim, who helped us in any possible way during excavations for many years. We thank also numerous students from the LMU Munich and the universities of Damaskus and Aleppo who assisted in the fieldwork. Special thanks are to those who helped excavate the temple: Christoph Fink, Martin Gruber, Anna Kurmangaliev, Oliver Mack, Hardy Maaß, Frances Sachs, Alexander Sollee and Costanza Coppini. All the work would have been impossible without the help of the villagers from Tall Banat, who were not only excellent excavators but also pottery restorers. We will never forget their hospitality, generosity and friendship. They welcomed us in their village as if we belonged to their families. They lost everything twice—first when the dam was closed in 1999 and the water of the Tishreen lake took their lands and houses and then again since 2010 in the ongoing war.

2 See OTTO 2018b for the discussion of the historical background and the date of the destruction of most of the sites in the upper Syrian Euphrates valley. For Qitar, see McCLELLAN 2018.

3 For a survey of these temples and their remaining inventories, see WERNER 1994, CASTEL 2010, PINNOCK 2013 and OTTO 2013.



Fig. 1: Three-dimensional model of the Temple on top of the Citadel of Tall Bazi in the Late Bronze Age IB (1400 BCE), with the houses of the Weststadt in the foreground.

1. The Temple at Tall Bazi: its situation, ground plan and phases

Tall Bazi is situated today in northern Syria on the east side of the Euphrates River, in Upper Mesopotamia proper. Rescue excavations were permitted generously by the Syrian Antiquities Directorate and granted by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut DAI (1993–1999) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft DFG (2001–2008). They took place under our direction between 1993 and 2010, at which point our research at Tall Bazi came to a sudden end because of the civil war.

After the Tishreen Lake flooded the valley and the lower town of Bazi in 1999, our excavations focused on the 60 m high citadel. The top of this natural hill held a large temple in the middle and a few other smaller buildings (EINWAG/OTTO 2006); the focus of this paper will be the temple.

Unfortunately, the Syrian civil war has been affecting even the remote little village Banat, near Bazi, and the site of Tall Bazi itself since 2011. The Bazi citadel was transformed into a strategic outpost with tank emplacements. To transport and install the tanks, the artificial ditch which had been cut into the rock as part of the Early Bronze Age fortification system was levelled, and the plateau was bulldozed. Consequently, most of the temple, which we had carefully filled in and covered before we had left, was destroyed. The house of our guardian Ahmed, which was where we had lived during the excavation campaigns and where all the finds which were not accepted by the National Museum at Aleppo—among them, hundreds of restored vessels—were stored, was completely robbed by ISIS in 2015. Not a single sherd was left behind. Even the boxes with the animal bones from the temple were taken away. Unfortunately, the bones from the 2004–2008 seasons had not been stud-



Fig. 2: Aerial photo of the Temple as excavated in 2008.

ied.⁴ Presently, we are preparing the final publications of the excavations at Tall Bazi. Our documentation is all that remains. All the finds, except for those stored in the National Museum at Aleppo, which hopefully still exist, are lost.

The temple is 37.6 m long and 15.8 m wide. Its walls were 2-3 m wide and consisted of a 2.5 m high substructure of large ashlar blocks below the mudbrick wall (Fig. 2). The temple was built on top of the palace of the EBA IV period.⁵ It even reused this building in places, e.g. the palace's floor of beautifully polished stone slabs served as the floor in Temple Room A in the first phase. From the second phase onwards, the stone slabs near the altar were covered with mud plaster.

The temple had been erected in the Middle Bronze Age II, around the 18th c. BCE. It was originally a templum in

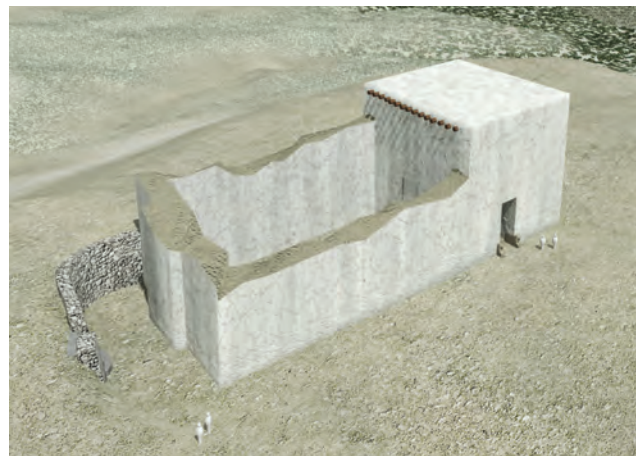
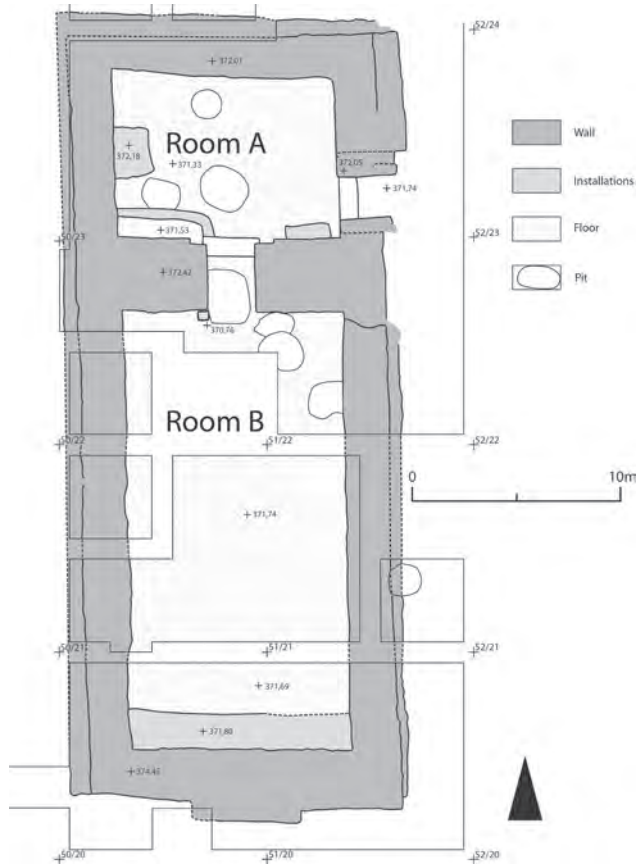


Fig. 3: The Temple on top of the Citadel, Phase 3: Groundplan and 3D reconstruction.

antis, with a single cella and a large open porch. In Phase 2, during the Late Bronze Age IA period, the porch was closed by a front wall in the north and was transformed to Room A; the main entrance was transferred to the east side. Something unexpected must have occurred during phase 2, perhaps an earthquake or another event, which caused the abandonment of the former main room or cella B. In phase 3, even the roof of Room B was removed, and the room was used only as a waste area (Fig. 3). Ma-

4 A. von den Driesch had planned to study them at Bazi in 2005 and again in 2010, but could not come for personal reasons.

5 See EINWAG/OTTO 2012 for the history and the phases of the temple. For the reuse of the EBA palace in the temple, see OTTO/BIGA 2010.

terial from the temple, which was no longer needed or used, was thrown into the room from outside, and the debris accumulated in sloping layers within the former cella.⁶ Only room A continued to be used as the cella in the Late Bronze Age IB period, until the sudden end of the whole settlement around 1350 BC.

2. The Installations of Temple Room A

The inside of cella room A only measured 10.80 m by 7.80 m, but it was still an impressive room. Two life-sized lion sculptures carved from limestone flanked the only entrance in the southeastern corner of the room (EINWAG/OTTO 2012). Additionally, the room was equipped at the front with an altar, a basin-like installation flanked by podiums, each in a corner of the room, and there was also a small mud bench to the left of the entrance (Fig. 4).

The altar was a rectangular block, which had been built from stones and plastered with mud. Only the outer side of the altar had been relatively well built, while the interior was a mixture of various crude stones with mud. The surface must have been covered with polished stone slabs, of which only one survived. There was a concave depression in the centre of the altar, which looked as if some object had originally been placed upon it.

We had not intended to study the inside of the massive altar block, but since the majority of the covering slabs had been destroyed already in antiquity, the inside of the altar was visible. When we cleaned it, we discovered several objects inside which cannot be explained by the normal building process and accidental impurities of the mud mortar: there were the remains of bucrania, consisting of the partially-preserved skull of a bull with horns, some fragments of the antlers of a Mesopotamian fallow deer and of other animal bones, and a few grains of barley, which were also preserved in the mud between the bones (Fig. 5). We wonder if these were the remains of offerings which were covered with mud when the altar was refurbished, or if the objects had been placed inside the altar intentionally when it was constructed.

Two other installations had been added to the room in its last phase: An elongated basin, 4.5 m long and 1.2 m wide, had been erected in the southwestern corner of the room in a very crude manner with rough fieldstones placed carelessly one above the other and stuck together by mud mortar. The basin had a rounded edge at its eastern side near the door towards the former Room B.



Fig. 4: The western half of Room A with the altar, the basin and scattered objects around the altar, partly destroyed by two Late Roman pits.



Fig. 5: The remains of a bucranium and grain mixed with mud and stones inside the altar.



Fig. 6: The concentration of animal bones inside the basin in the southwestern corner of Room A.

6 For cultic vessels in the debris of Room B, see OTTO/EINWAG in press.

The base of the basin was plastered, except for an area of 1 × 1 m at the eastern edge, where the stone slabs of the floor formed the base of the basin. Interestingly, the interstices between the slabs were coated with bitumen, which points to some activities with liquids. At the lower edge of the basin, there was a little hole in the floor, as if to allow a liquid to drain off. The remaining area of the basin showed the largest concentration of animal bones in Room A. Hundreds of large and medium-sized bones were found lying there, mixed with a few goblets (Fig. 6). We concluded from this that the basin served for depositing meat offerings and possibly also for some libation purposes.

There were two shallow podium-like platforms on both sides of the altar. The southern one was 1.4 m wide and 1.2 m deep and covered the area between the basin and the altar. Above this platform, mixed material consisting of broken ceramics, mud, fragmentary mudbricks and some carbonized wood was especially heavily burnt. Several levels of debris containing pottery lay there one above the other, up to a height of 0.4 m. We wondered whether there had been wooden shelves, which had collapsed with the pottery arranged on them.

The other platform covered the whole space between the altar and the northern wall. Unfortunately, it had been largely destroyed by the foundations of a Late Roman wall. Interestingly, the mud plaster of the wall behind this podium in the northwestern corner of the room contained a quantity of barley grain that had clearly been embedded intentionally. The grain was preserved in a carbonized state because this corner had fallen victim to an extremely heavy fire, which had turned the colour of the usually buff mud plaster reddish. Since the wall plaster had not been preserved along the other walls of Room A, we do not know if all the plaster in the room had contained barley or just this area. But we can claim with certainty that not a single house of the Weststadt showed plaster containing grain. Even though we do not know precisely why the barley had been added to the plaster of the wall and to the mortar of the altar, some sort of cultic explanation seems to impose itself.

3. The Inventory of Temple Room A

The archaeological inventory of Room A represents just a small part of the original systemic inventory.⁷ The living inventory had been reduced in three major stages. The

first was the enemy, presumably the Hittites, who took away all the precious material, smashed the remaining objects as careful as possible, and finally set fire to the room. Massive carbonized roof beams and large pieces of the collapsed burnt mudbrick walls were lying in many places on top of the broken pottery and other equipment. However, the debris was not similar everywhere. In some places, only tiny little pieces of charcoal and mudbricks, mixed with rather small sherds, form a more homogenous debris. This—in our opinion—derives from the looters, who dug tunnels into the debris of the collapsed temple while searching for precious objects. When they had finished, they refilled the excavated material into the holes, which resulted in a finer consistency of debris. This looting must have occurred sometime between 1350 BC and the Late Roman occupation. The last disturbance of the material in Room A was caused by the Late Roman building which was placed directly on top of the temple.⁸ Several large pits, which were dug down from the Late Roman level, destroyed even the large solid stone slabs of the floor (see Fig. 4).

The surviving archaeological inventory consisted mainly of smashed pottery and animal bones. In addition, a few other objects such as cylinder seals, cuneiform tablets, weapons, jewellery, figurines and other items were left behind (Fig. 21). In the following sections, the objects will be described, and then we will attempt to interpret their use.

In places, hundreds of animal bones were concentrated and mixed with only a few potsherds. This was the case in the elongated basin with rounded edge in the SW corner, which seems to have been the main area where meat had been displayed (see above).⁹ In other places, numerous beakers and pots were found mixed with only a few animal bones. The largest concentration of pottery was around the altar. Some of the plates and bowls still contained carbonized organic material, including sesame, olives, grapes and barley (Fig. 7). Since the plant remains are still under study by R. Neef and shall be published in the final report, it suffices to say that diverse foodstuff, mainly meat but also vegetables and fruit, had apparently been concentrated in and near the south-western basin and near the altar.

⁸ EINWAG/OTTO 2006, OTTO/EINWAG 2007.

⁹ As mentioned before (footnote 4), the animal bones from the 2004–2008 seasons have unfortunately not been studied.

⁷ We follow the terminology of SCHIFFER 1972.



Fig. 7: Plates and pots in the debris in front of the altar a few centimeters above the floor. The large plate still contained the remains of a meal with some animal bones.

3.1 Pottery vessels and stands

The largest concentration of pottery, animal bones and objects was found on the floor in front of the altar and on the platform between the altar and the basin (see Fig. 21). It was quite a task to restore the more than one hundred pots of Room A, the more so since the jars had clearly been destroyed deliberately and scattered all over the room. Some sherds, which joined with pots from inside the cella, were even found outside the entrance to Room A. Luckily, our superb team consisting of students from Germany and villagers from Tall Banat managed to restore and document all the pottery of Room A during the study season in summer 2010, before it was destroyed forever.

The pottery of Room A has been published recently by presenting a few examples of each pottery type, totaling 42 pieces (EINWAG/OTTO 2018). The pottery shows many shapes which are also attested in the houses of the Weststadt. But larger shapes such as medium-sized and large jars, large bottles, and large storage jars are definitely less frequent. The large beer brewing vat and cooking pots are completely absent. Also, many pots are of much older date than the Late Bronze IB and must have been kept for centuries.

Considerable numbers of goblets or beakers were found (Fig. 8). They measured only approximately 5–10 cm in height and 3–8 cm in diameter. More than half of them were clearly miniature vessels, compared to the goblets which were found in the houses. It is noteworthy that only very few goblets were similar in shape, size, fabric and colour; the majority instead were distinct from one another. Clearly, they were not part of a homogenous pottery set that had been kept in the temple



Fig. 8: 32 goblets and miniature goblets from Room A.

for repeated use. More likely, these goblets had been brought there by different individuals, who obtained their ceramics not from the same potter's workshop but instead came presumably from different sites.

Samples for residue analysis were taken from every ceramic container in the temple and were analysed by M. Zarnkow.¹⁰ The results were stunning: Many of the goblets or beakers, even the miniature ones, were proven positive for oxalate, i.e. very probably they had once contained beer (ZARNKOW/OTTO/EINWAG 2011). But the miniature beakers have the capacity of a schnapps glass—that is, only ca. 0.1 l. One wonders who would enjoy this tiny little amount of beer. Therefore, we suggest that they were not intended to be used as vessels for a meal which was consumed there, since much larger amounts of beer, at least one litre, were consumed during feasts. The Emar texts, which describe the feast for the installation of the high priestess (FLEMING 1992), note a litre of beer and a piece of bread for every person during the festival. Instead, they seem to represent individual offerings of tiny amounts of beer, which were brought there by various worshippers.¹¹ A completely outstanding drinking vessel, compared to the local varieties, is the unique example of a Nuzi-beaker at Bazi—clearly an imported object (EINWAG/OTTO 2018: 163, fig. 9: 1,7).

The next most frequent form is the small jug with a handle and a trefoil spout (EINWAG/OTTO 2018: 163, fig. 9: 4). Since several examples of this shape tested positive for tartrate through residue analysis, it seems that they had been used for serving or pouring wine. A number of small bowls (dm. 10–14 cm) and small- and medium-sized plates, ranging from 10 to 33 cm in diameter, also occur (EINWAG/OTTO 2018: 163–164, figs. 9:7, 10:8, 10:10). Since some of them still held some barley, sesame, olives, fruit,

¹⁰ We thank Dr. Martin Zarnkow, Lehrstuhl für Brau- und Getränke-technologie der TU München, Freising-Weihenstephan, for the analyses and his continuous cooperation over the years.

¹¹ OTTO 2012a; SALLABERGER 2012.

pulses or meat when they were found, it seems that these open vessels had served to present food offerings.

There were several small- and medium-sized pot stands, varying between 9 and 15 cm in height. Most were plain and simple; about half of them had round or triangular openings as the only decoration (EINWAG/OTTO 2018, 167, fig. 13). The stands also show a great variety of forms and shapes which might indicate that they had also been brought as individual offerings. Two very large potstands are outstanding due to their size and decoration. One is 37 cm high and decorated with a horizontal band with applications, incisions and oval openings (EINWAG/OTTO 2018: fig. 13: 23,4). The second one is presented here for the first time (Fig. 9; Bz 51/23:281). It was equally 37 cm high, but a bit broader than the other; it measured 25 cm in diameter and had thick walls varying from 1.5–3 cm. It was decorated in a slightly different way: there were no openings, but three horizontal zig-zag lines, incised with a comb, were framed by six applied and grooved bands. This kind of a large, heavily-decorated stand has not been found in any of the Bazi houses, and as far as we know, it is also unattested in domestic contexts at any other Late Bronze Age site. The only other stand, which was decorated in a similar way, was found in the Temple, Building 10, at Qitar (McCLELLAN 2018: 124, fig.12: 6093). It seems that this kind of heavily-decorated large stand was produced uniquely for—and used in—temples.

Not only is the decoration of the Bazi stand outstanding but also the way it was destroyed. Although the wall of the stand is unusually thick, measuring 1.5–3 cm in width, and although the clay is hard and well fired, the stand was found broken into more than 80 pieces, and some pieces were missing. Some fragments were tiny,

and the stand was broken not only at the thinner points, but even at the thickest points, where the outer bands should have increased its stability. Clearly, the stand was not broken by chance but had been destroyed with eagerness. The different kinds of colour, changing between buff, reddish and blackish, testify that the stand had been broken into pieces before the temple had burned. The largest concentration of sherds was near the altar (Fig. 21: 1), but some fragments of this vessel were found literally all over the room. Careful examination of the exterior revealed some traces of heavy tools with which the stand had been smashed into as many little pieces as possible (Fig. 9a, b). This is, in our opinion, clear proof that a certain value was ascribed to this stand. Since the value must have been an immaterial one, we can only assume that either the objects which had been carried by the two stands had some meaning, or that the position of the two stands near the altar added some special value to them. Apparently, their cultic function was evident, or their prominent place on the altar or nearby was sufficient to ascribe a special function to them.

The same is true for a rectangular terracotta basin with figurative decoration (Fig. 10). This exceptional basin, approximately 55 cm long, 28 cm wide and 20 cm high, has been described elsewhere in detail (OTTO 2019). It had quite thick walls but was apparently worthy enough to be destroyed meticulously. Already, the ordinary pottery in Room A showed an unusual degree of fragmentation and scattering. But the basin as well as the decorated potstands were clearly destroyed with more effort than the other pottery. After the purposeful destruction with the help of heavy tools, traces of which were still visible on some sherds of the basin, the fragments were scattered all over the room (Fig. 21, red cross-

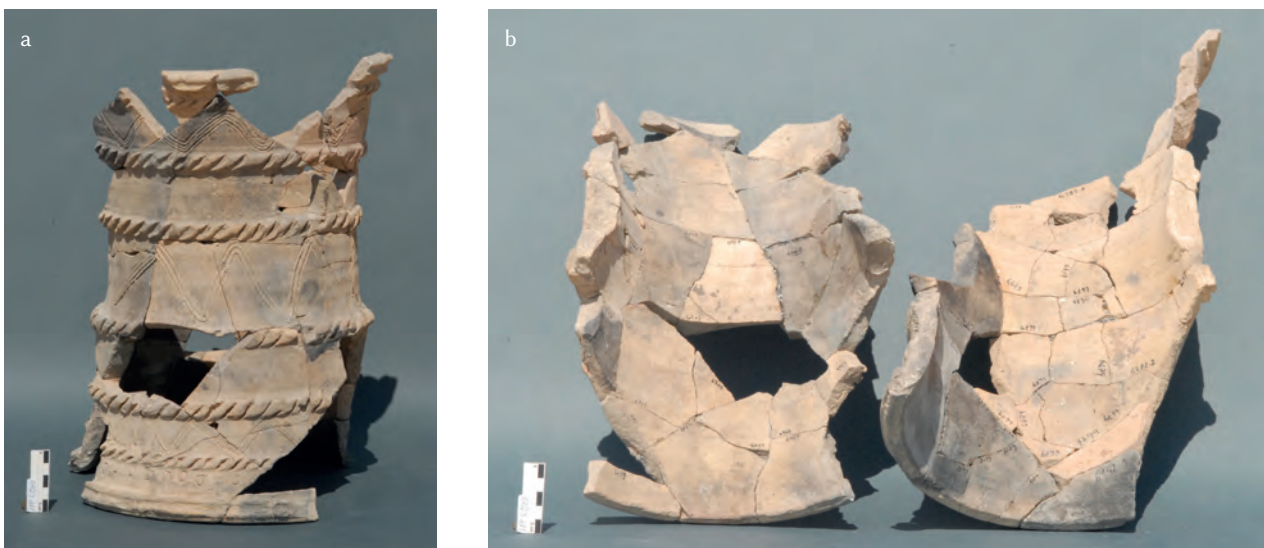


Fig. 9: The large decorated potstand Bz 51/23:281; a) as restored, front side; b) inside.

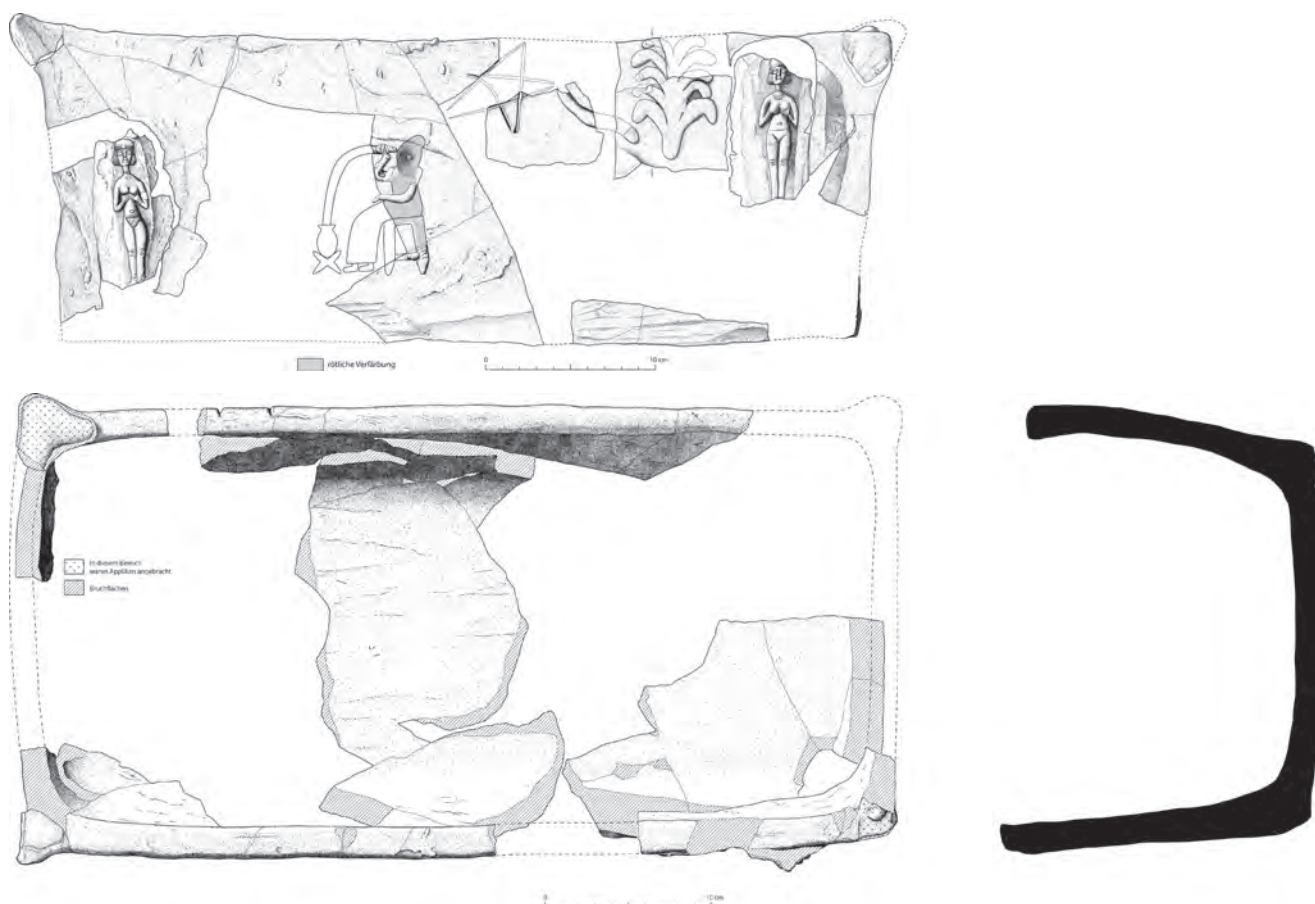


Fig. 10: Rectangular decorated terracotta basin; a) obverse; b) view from above and section.

es). According to the findspot of most fragments, it must have once stood close to the altar. We assume that some fragments are missing because many pits destroyed the debris in this area.

The front side of the basin was decorated with two naked women, a tree and a snake, and a sitting man drinking beer from a jar with the help of a drinking tube. The motif resembles the banquet scenes on stone basins in several Ebla temples and on contemporary cylinder seals.¹² Rectangular basins evidently belonged to the standard equipment of Syrian and north Mesopotamian temples in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, and are attested from temples at Ebla, Alalah, Emar, Ekalte and Tall Bazi (Otto 2018d). Since they were frequently found in the innermost room of a temple, their ritual purpose seems clear, but their precise use (for ritual ablution or offerings) has been debated. Similar rectangular, although smaller, basins with and without decoration have also

been attested in houses at Tall Munbaqa/Ekaltē, where their position close to the altar in the main room points to their use in the house cult (CZICHON/WERNER 2008: 315, Pl. 273).

The terracotta basin from Tall Bazi is the only one which has been analysed with the help of residue analysis. It tested positive for oxalate—a strong argument that the basin had once contained beer. Since also many of the small and miniature goblets in Room A—some of them lying close to the scattered sherds of the basin—tested positive for oxalate, there could have been a connection between the goblets and the basin. Either the tiny goblets could have been emptied into the basin, or the goblets could have been filled with the beer which was contained inside the basin and consumed on the spot.¹³ Another possibility is that the beer was poured over the altar or over a special object which stood on the altar, and that the beer trickled down into the basin, which

12 See OTTO 2019 for comparisons to this motif which remained popular in north Mesopotamia in the second millennium BCE.

13 SALLABERGER 2012 and OTTO 2012a both reconstructed possible rituals in the temple and the houses.

stood at the foot of the altar. Since every single goblet is different in shape, size and fabric, the most plausible explanation so far is that many individual worshippers offered tiny little bits of beer by performing a libation ritual near the altar and the basin.

In sum, the large amount of goblets and other pottery vessels and large quantities of animal bones, some of them still articulated, show that large portions of meat, liquids and other comestibles had been brought into the temple. It seems also that the more exceptional a vessel and stand, the more carefully it was smashed. Obviously, the last people entering the temple had unkind intentions and were not content with simply plundering and torching, but deliberately smashed everything in bits and pieces and scattered them all over the room, first and foremost the objects with special ideological and ritual value.

3.2 The silver vessel, the cuneiform tablets, the cylinder seal and figurines

The area along the western edge of the room between the altar and the basin was covered by extremely heavily burnt material containing masses of pottery. The degree of burning was so exceptionally high that we suppose there had been wooden shelves on which the vessels had been set along the wall. When we removed the mass of burnt material and pottery, a greyish rim became visible below the lowest layer of bones and pottery. It turned out to be the upper end of a silver vessel,¹⁴ which was set into the floor (Fig. 11; Fig. 21: 3). It was only 12 cm high, but extremely heavy, since it was filled with scrap silver. It weighed 1050 g, which corresponds to 111 Syrian shekels of 9.4 g or 126 Babylonian shekels of 8.4 g. It is astonishing that this highly valuable amount of silver was still *in situ*, although the whole room had been thoroughly looted by an enemy. We suppose that the fairly small vessel was simply overlooked by the looters since it was partly embedded into the floor and was covered by offerings consisting of vessels and meat.

Two cuneiform tablets were also found in Room A (Fig. 12; Fig. 21: 4, 5). They were both royal documents of the Mittani Great Kings Sauštatar and Artatama, respectively, sealed with the dynastic seal of Sauštatar (SAL-LABERGER/EINWAG/OTTO 2006). It seems that these documents were of prime importance for the “Sons of Bašīru,” who collectively governed the settlement. Since the texts



Fig. 11: The silver vessel filled with scrap silver.



Fig. 12: The cuneiform tablets from Sauštatar and Artatama.

from Emar and Munbaqa indicate that the elders together with the city god were the supreme institution in the cities along the Euphrates, we assume that the meetings of the elders with the city god took place here in the temple, which constitutes the only official building at Bazi. Both tablets were found lying directly on the floor, but both had been broken in antiquity. The two parts of one tablet were lying several meters apart (Fig. 21: 4). The second part of the other tablet (Fig. 21: 5) has not been found, either because the looters took or destroyed it, or because the Roman pit next to it had damaged it. In any case, both tablets must have been damaged already by the looters, since their fragments were covered by the sherds and the debris of the collapsed walls. It seems that these fragments of two tablets are but the humble

14 Bz 50/23:403 (h. 12 cm; w. 12.5 cm).

remains of the city archive which had been kept in the temple and was therefore of prime importance for the looting enemy.

One cylinder seal (Fig. 13) was found in Room A in the debris immediately below the Late Roman wall (Fig. 21: 6). It is a typical Old Babylonian seal depicting two standard scenes: The victorious king standing opposite the suppliant goddess and a contest scene between the heroes *lahmu* and *kusarikku*.¹⁵ The seal had certainly—due to stylistic reasons—been manufactured in Babylonia. But its material was goethite, a natural source of which is attested near Bazi.¹⁶ It was also clearly an antique piece, at least 400 years old when the temple was destroyed. Whether it was already an antiquity when it was offered there or whether instead it had been kept inside the temple for centuries has to remain an open question.



Fig. 13: The Old Babylonian cylinder seal of goethite.

Three anthropomorphic figurines were found in Room A, one in the basin (Fig. 14b; Fig. 21: 7b), one in the north-eastern corner (Fig. 14c; Fig. 21: 7c) and one near the entrance door (Fig. 14a; Fig. 21: 7a).¹⁷ Two of them (Fig. 14a, c) were mould-made figurines of naked females supporting their breasts. They correspond to the most frequent type of figurine of that period and region.¹⁸ The third one (Fig. 14b) was handmade and shows a simple



Fig. 14: Three female figurines.

15 Bz 50/23:300 (h. 2.3 cm; dm. 1.12 cm; wt. 8.2 g).

16 Interestingly, the material proved to be goethite and not haematite, which was the most frequently used material for seals in the second millennium BCE (MELEIN 2018). Since goethite sources are attested around Tall Bazi (FINK 2012) and seem to have been one reason for the economic wealth of the settlement, it is even possible that the raw goethite had been exported to Babylonia, and that the finished object had been re-imported there later and offered to the city's deity. Unfortunately, it is pure speculation to imagine that a merchant who was involved in the trade between Bazi and Babylonia offered it, but it could explain the rather rare material for an Old Babylonian seal.

17 Fig. 14a) h. preserved: 5.8 cm, w. 3.6 cm, t. 2.3 cm; 14b) h. preserved: 7.1 cm; w. 5.4 cm; t. 4.3 cm; 14c) h. preserved: 4.7 cm; w. 3.3 cm; t. 2.2 cm.

18 Werner in CZICHON AND WERNER 1998, 307–332.

cylindrical body and slightly concave base; two small dots were incised above the bent arms which indicates that a woman is depicted. Probably this figurine dates back to the Middle or Early Bronze Age.¹⁹ All figurines were broken either at the neck or at the pubic triangle.

3.3 Metal tools, jewellery and other objects

Nineteen bronze objects were found. These are a lance-shaped spearhead, which was lying close to the altar and the silver vessel (Fig. 15; Fig. 21: 8a); five conical filter tips of drinking tubes from perforated metal sheets (Fig. 16a, b), lying in the basin, near the basalt tripod north of the entrance, and elsewhere (Fig. 21: 8b–d); and six nails or splints with a hemispherical or flat head (Fig. 17a). Because some of them were found attached to wooden boards (Fig. 21: 9a, b, d), they may have been the remains of wooden boxes. Furthermore, a bronze needle (Fig. 21: 9c), a bracelet, an earring, and several wires and hooks were lying on the floor. The number of five filter tips does not seem too high at first sight but is nevertheless significant if compared to the Weststadt houses, where not more than one such filter tip was usually found in a house. It is evident that goblets or bowls were used for everyday beer drinking in the houses, while drinking beer through tubes was correlated with ritual feasting in the houses on special occasions, or in the temple (ZARNKOW ET AL. 2006; OTTO 2012).

Three astragali were found (Fig. 18²⁰), two of them lying between a mass of sherds directly in front of the altar (Fig. 21: 10a, 10b). Numerous small fragments of ostrich egg shell were found scattered in the room, with a concentration in front of the bench (Fig. 21: 10d).²¹



Fig. 15: The bronze spearhead.



Fig. 16 a, b: Bronze filter tips of drinking tubes.



Fig. 17: Bronze nail.

Twenty-one beads from various material—carnelian, rock crystal, faience, glass, shell—(Fig. 19a–d²²) were found lying in different areas, with a slight concentration on top and in front of the bench (Fig. 21: 11a, 11b) and in front of the altar (Fig. 21: 11d and without number). All the beads are common at Bazi; similar ones were found in the Weststadt

19 CZICHON AND WERNER 1998: 40-47, Taf. 61-66.

20 Fig. 18: Bz 50/23:444 (l. 2.9 cm; w. 1.9 cm; t. 1.2 cm; wt. 4.8 g).

21 For other beads or fragments of ostrich eggs at Bazi, see HERLES 2009.

22 Fig. 19a: Bz 51/23:114. Disc-shaped carnelian bead (dm. 1.18 cm).

Fig. 19b: Bz 51/23:114. Globular white glass bead (dm. 1.18 cm).

Fig. 19c: Bz 50/23:249. Frit bead with incised decoration, triangular in section (h. 1.5 cm, dm. 0.7 cm).

Fig. 19d: Bz 50/23:180. Shell, *Glycymeris violacescens* (l. 2.9 cm, w. 2.85 cm, t. 0.3 cm).

houses. Noteworthy is only the rare type of decorated faience bead with a triangular section (Fig. 19d), but a nearly identical bead was found in House 28 of the Weststadt.

An exceptional and certainly imported object at Tall Bazi is a small, cylindrical faience pot with turquoise glaze (Fig. 20²³). Four fragments of it were found scattered on top of the altar (Fig. 21: 12a), and another fragment was found near the eastern edge of Room A (Fig. 21: 12b), which is further proof for the thorough destruction and deliberate scattering of the remains in the temple.



Fig. 18: Astragalus.



Fig. 19: Four beads from carnelian, faience and shell.

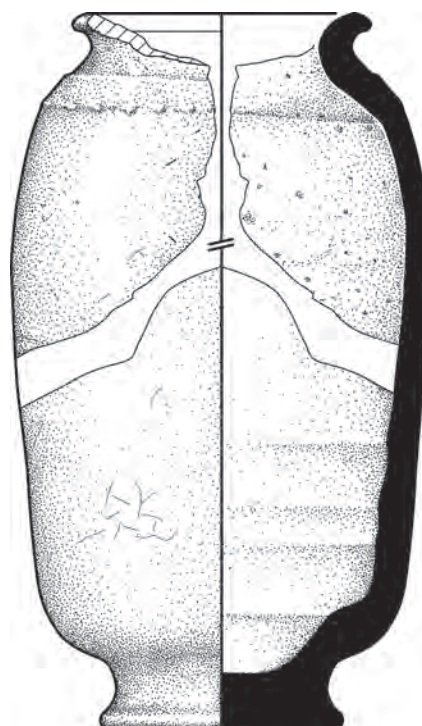


Fig. 20: Small faience pot with turquoise glaze (photo and drawing).

23 H. 7.1 cm, dm. 5.3 cm, rim dm. 3 cm.

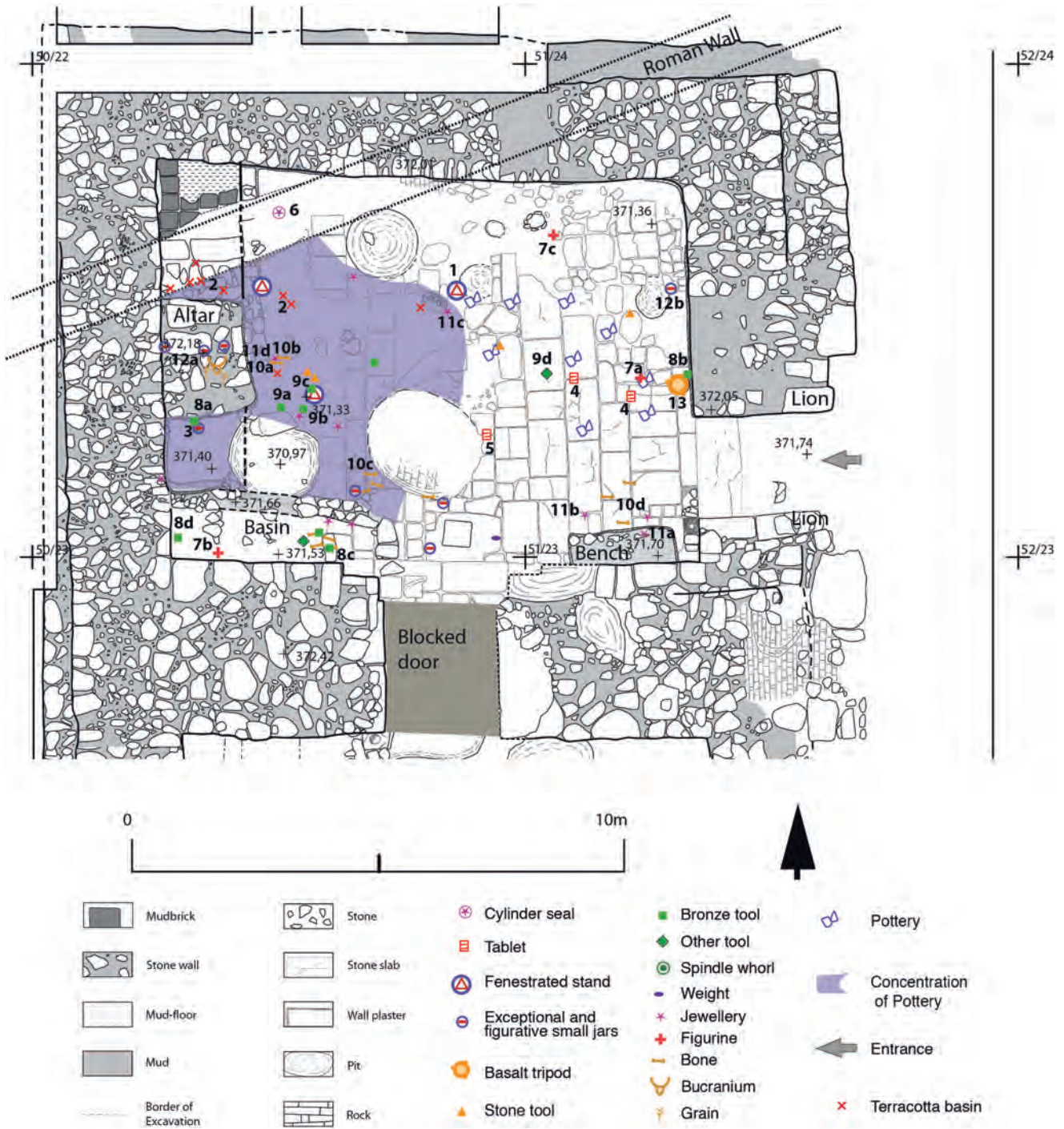


Fig. 21: Plan of Temple Room A with the remains of the inventory.

4. Summary

The Temple on top of the Citadel was heavily looted before the enemy set fire to it. Nevertheless, a few bronze objects, some scattered beads, and especially the silver vessel which had clearly been overlooked by the looters because it was covered with sherds give a faint impression of the treasures which had once been kept in Room A. The large amount of remaining objects, however, were masses of pottery, animal bones and the remains of other edibles. But why were these objects in the Temple and how did they arrive there? In the following, we attempt an interpretation of the nature and purpose of the temple material.

Some of the mentioned objects were items of a high material value, which had clearly been offered to the venerated deity. To these belong first and foremost the silver vessel with scrap silver, but also the bronze wires and rings seem to represent material value only. Some of the objects were antiquities already when they were offered, e.g. the Old Babylonian cylinder seal and the handmade female figurine. A few objects were clearly imported such as the glazed pot, the position of which on the altar underlines further the value of this exotic object. The remains of several wooden boxes indicate that these containers of no material value had been left behind after their contents were stolen. We wonder if jewellery could have been kept in some of the boxes, or how else can we explain the beads which seem to be scattered all over the room?

The interpretation of the plain pottery is more difficult. Most forms are similar to those which were used in the houses, and especially drinking vessels and bowls or plates for eating were common. They could have served for commensal purposes, e.g. during feasts or when the elders assembled with the city god in the temple, which—as the only official building at Bazi—was also used as the Senate.²⁴ Also, the drinking tubes could have been used in Room A during commensal drinking with a number of people.

Other vessels, especially the miniature goblets, were most probably brought there by individuals as offerings. It is certainly not by chance that the highest concentration was near the altar, that many of them contained beer, and that the terracotta basin, which was decorated with a banquet scene and had once contained beer, was nearby. Therefore, we are inclined to interpret most of the goblets as offerings which were put near or poured over the altar or the basin close to it.

Meat and other edibles can also be interpreted either as the remains of commensality which took place in the temple or as offerings which were deposited there. The fact that the largest concentration of animal bones was found in the oval basin in the southwestern corner, a bit distant from the altar, could indicate that they had been placed there as meat offerings.

In summary, most metal objects, jewellery, exceptional vessels, the decorated basin for libation purposes, the exceptionally large and decorated potstands and also the plain pottery were found near the altar. This emphasizes the ritual importance of the altar, which either supported a cult image or symbolized the divine presence. That the altar itself was considered an exceptional, ideologically important structure is underlined by the bucrania and the grain which was integrated with it.

The use of Room A was probably manifold: On the one hand, it held and stored numerous offerings of material and immaterial value, which had been brought there by countless individuals—locals as well as foreign pilgrims. On the other hand, the Temple clearly fulfilled functions which we would today label as profane, such as the archiving of the royal documents from the Mittani great kings, which were crucial for the city, and the assembly of the elders of the city. But this is certainly too modern a thinking, since this temple was literally the house of the deity, and the deity together with the elders governed the city: so why should she or he not house the assembly and receive gifts at the same time?

²⁴ This idea has been explored further in OTTO 2012b.

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