

IV. EXCAVATIONS IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE BRONZE AGE PALACE (OPERATION G)

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(with a contribution by Thomas Richter)

1. INTRODUCTION⁹⁷

The German excavations at Tell Mishrifeh have focused on Operation G, which was extended to an area of nearly 1600 m² during the first two field seasons (Fig. 59-62). It is situated in the north-western part of the main mound of Tell Mishrifeh, an area which received the name *Butte de l'Église* by the French archaeologist Robert Comte Du Mesnil du Buisson⁹⁸. Here, a large architectural complex covering a surface of almost 1 ha had been exposed during the four French campaigns between 1924 and 1929⁹⁹.

Du Mesnil du Buisson distinguished three different units within this complex, which he labelled as "Palace" (*Palais*), "Temple of Belet-Ekallim" (*Temple de Nin-Egal*), and "High Place" (*Haut-Lieu*). The reasons for these identifications have not been convincingly understood. Also, the architectural layout and the chronology of the building have remained unclear.

After considering the plan of the formerly excavated architecture one can make the following hypotheses:

1. The three units should belong to one and the same building;
2. This building should be identified as the palace of Qatna;
3. The palace would have been founded in the Middle Bronze Age and would, therefore, have been the residence of the two powerful kings Iš'i-Hadda and Amut-pī-El, known from the Mari archives.

Since the palace of the rulers of ancient Qatna must have been one of the most important Bronze Age buildings of Western Syria, one of the main efforts of the new project is its re-excavation and re-evaluation. This should help to gain a better understanding of the palace, which has been almost neglected in the scientific literature until now.

⁹⁷ All computer-based renderings of plans and inked drawings were made by Gabriele Elsen-Novák (Tübingen), all photographs taken by Konrad Wita (Berlin) and Peter Pfälzner (Tübingen). We would like to thank Diane Kerns for reading and correcting the English text.

⁹⁸ Robert Marie Emile Léon Comte Du Mesnil du Buisson was born on April 19th 1895 in Bourges (France) and died on April 8th 1986.

⁹⁹ The first campaign was conducted in 1924, the following three from 1927 to 1929. Cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1926, 1927a, 1927b, 1928, 1930 and 1935.



Fig. 59 Qatna 1999, ruins of the houses of the modern village of Mishrife with one of the trenches.
الشكل 59 قطنا 1999، خرائب بيوت قرية المشرفة الحديثة مع أحد الخنادق



Fig. 60 Qatna 1999, lime mortar floor of the Bronze Age Palace (Room D) as re-used by the houses of the modern village.

الشكل 60 قطنا 1999، أرضية الملاط الكلسي في قصر عصر البرونز (الغرفة D) أعيد استعمالها في بيوت القرية الحديثة.

With regard to the vast extension of the building, two excavation fields were established in the palace area. Operation H, where an Italian team is working, lies in the eastern part of the actual *Palais* according to the interpretation of Du Mesnil du Buisson¹⁰⁰ and the German Operation G in the western part (including the *Temple de Nin-Egal* and the *Haut-Lieu*).

The problems of the architecture and chronology of the palace, as excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson, shall be briefly discussed in the following section, and some preliminary considerations on the architectural typology shall be presented, before a description of the main results of the new excavations is given.

1.1. On the problems of interpreting the remains of the palace of Qatna

In the area named *Butte de l'Église* three architectural units were excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson (Fig. 63).

Since the methods of excavation and documentation during the 1920s did not conform to modern archaeological standards, the layout plan of the architecture remained obscure: The mud-brick walls had not been recognised in itself and were partly destroyed during the excavations. Only the limestone orthostats along the flanks of the walls and the hard lime floors within the rooms had been observed and helped to establish the alignment of the walls. The inventories of the rooms were documented in just a few cases so that the original distribution of the finds is not reconstructable. As a result, the architecture is still not fully understandable. It can only be suggested that the different parts belonged together and formed one large building, namely the palace.

Neither the dating of the foundation of the building nor that of its destruction were definitively established by the French excavations. Du Mesnil du Buisson suggested that the building should have been founded in the 3rd millennium¹⁰¹ and its main phase should be dated to the 16th or 15th century B.C. The reasons for this dating were, on the one hand, the cuneiform tablets found in the so-called *Temple de Nin-Egal* and, on the other hand, Cypriote and Mycenaean ceramic vessels lying on the floors of the palace. Since the archives from Mari were unknown at the time of the French excavations at Tell Mishrifeh, the only sources for the reconstruction of the history of Qatna were Egyptian and Hittite royal inscriptions and the archives of Tell al-Amarna, all dating to the Late Bronze Age. Du Mesnil du Buisson himself excavated comparable ceramic material to that from the palace of Qatna at Baghuz, a cemetery close to Mari¹⁰². In contrast to the opinion of Du Mesnil du Buisson it is nowadays clear that the burials of Baghuz do not belong to the 15th century but to the Middle Bronze Age II¹⁰³. As to the date of the destruction of the palace, Du Mesnil du Buisson argued for the 14th century, the time when Qatna was conquered by the Hittites.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. BARRO, this volume.

¹⁰¹ Cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 39, tab. 5.

¹⁰² DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1948.

¹⁰³ TUBB 1982: 61ff. NEUFANG n.d.



Fig. 61 Qatna 2000, view from east on Room E (in front), Room D (in background), Hall C (background left) and Room F (background right)

الشكل 61 قطنا 2000 منظر من الشرق للغرفة E في المقدمة، وغرفة D في الخلف والصالة C في الخلف من اليسار والغرفة F في الخلف من اليمين



Fig. 62 Qatna 2000, view from north on Room V (in front), Room G (in center) and Hall C (in background)

الشكل 62 قطنا 2000 منظر من الشمال للغرفة V في المقدمة والغرفة G في الوسط والصالة C في الخلف

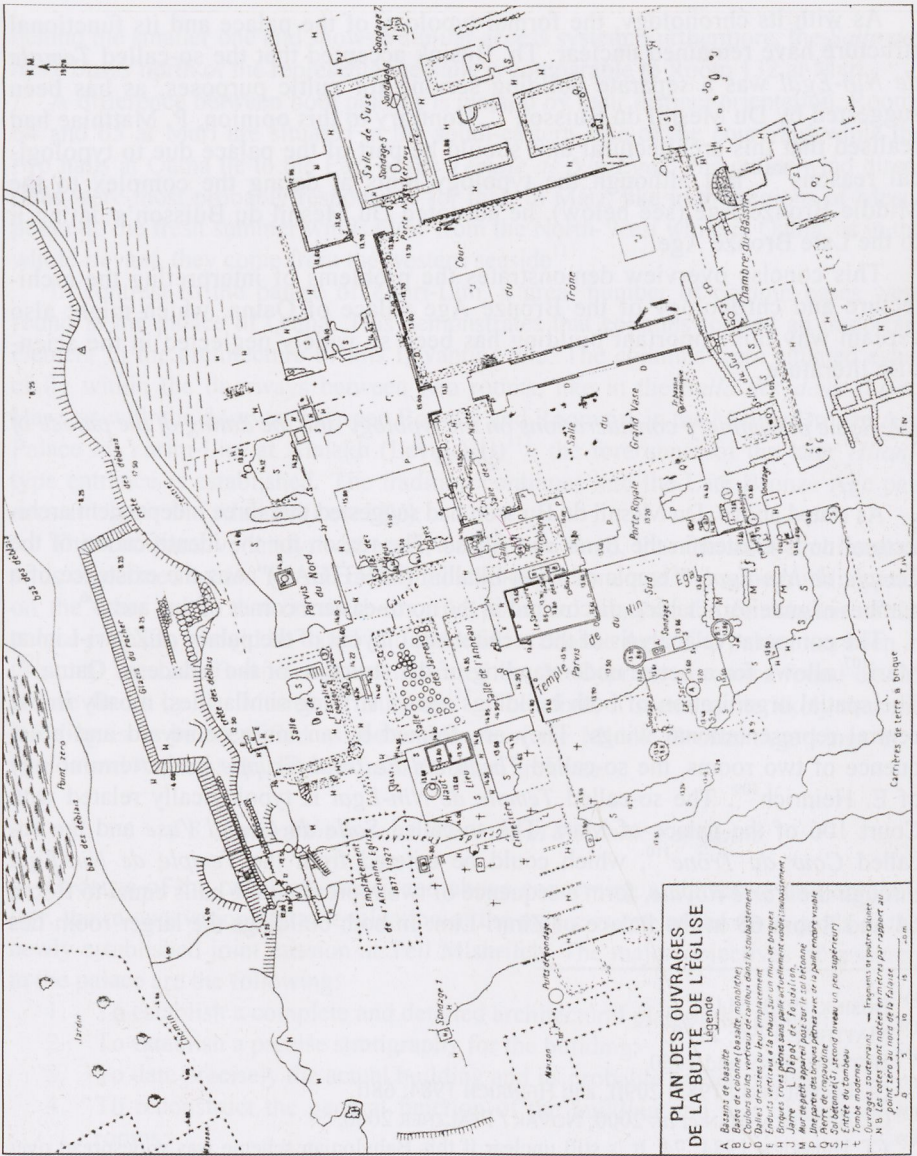


Fig. 63 Plan of the palace of Qatna as published by Du Mesnil du Buisson (1935).

الشكل 63: مسقط
قصر قطنا كما
نشره د. ميسنيل دو
بويسون (1935).

As with its chronology, the formal typology of the palace and its functional structure have remained unclear. Th. Busink accepted that the so-called *Temple de Nin-Egal* was a separate building serving for cultic purposes, as has been suggested by Du Mesnil du Buisson¹⁰⁴. Contrary to this opinion, P. Matthiae had realised that this architectural unit should be part of the palace due to typological reasons¹⁰⁵. But although the typology hints at dating the complex to the Middle Bronze Age (see below), he accepted Du Mesnil du Buisson's dating it to the Late Bronze Age.

This concise overview demonstrates the problems of interpreting the architecture and chronology of the Bronze Age palace of Qatna, which might also explain why this important building has been so widely neglected in the scientific literature.

1.2. Some preliminary considerations on the typology and the dating of the palace of Qatna

As stated above, Du Mesnil du Buisson had suggested that three independent architectural units existed in the *Butte de l'Église*. The reason for the identification of the *Temple de Nin-Egal* "Temple of Belet-Ekallim (NIN.É.GAL)" was the existence of a number of cuneiform tablets discovered in the north-eastern corner of that area¹⁰⁶.

The comparative analysis of the architectural layout of the palace of Zimri-Lim at Mari¹⁰⁷ allows for a better understanding of the structure of the palace of Qatna¹⁰⁸. The spatial organisation of both buildings shows striking similarities, mostly in the central representational wings. They are formed by an inner courtyard and a sequence of two rooms, the so-called *Thronsaal-Festsaal-Gruppe* in the terminology of E. Heinrich¹⁰⁹. The so-called *Temple de Nin-Egal* is typologically related with Court 106 of the palace of Mari. The so-called *Salle du Grand Vase* and the so-called *Cour du Trône*¹¹⁰, which could be entered from the *Temple de Nin-Egal* through the *Porte Royale*, form a sequence of two representative halls equal to Room 64 and Room 65 in the Palace of Zimri-Lim. In both buildings the larger room lies

¹⁰⁴ BUSINK 1970: 511ff.

¹⁰⁵ MATTHIAE 1990: 221ff.

¹⁰⁶ BOTTÉRO 1949 and 1950.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. MARGUERON 1982: 209ff. and HEINRICH 1984: 68ff.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. ABDULRAHMAN *et al.* 2000, NOVAK / PFÄLZNER 2000.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. HEINRICH 1984: 74. It is still unclear if this Babylonian scheme was widespread over Syria (MATTHIAE 1990: 221ff.). While the palaces at Tuttul (STROMMINGER *et al.* 1987: 11, fig. 2) and in Shubat-Enlil (WEISS 1985, WEISS *et al.* 1990) show similar structures, the ones at Alalakh Level VII (WOOLLEY 1955: 91ff.; NAUMANN 1971: 405ff.), at Tilmen Hüyük (NAUMANN 1971: 410f.) and at Ebla (Palaces E, P and Q, MATTHIAE 1990: 211, MATTHIAE *et al.* 1995: 164ff.) have other distinctive characteristics.

¹¹⁰ It is unknown if the two very large rooms in the palace at Qatna were completely covered by a roof. The width of the so-called *Cour du Trône* measures to about 20 m, nearly 2 m more than the throne room in the palace of Babylon. The vicinity of Qatna to the mountains of the Lebanon and to the cedar forests probably allowed the kings of Qatna to acquire wooden beams that were long enough to cover the room.

behind the smaller one and shows a similar access system. Furthermore, the *Salle des deux Bases* north of the representative halls is comparable to Room 132 at Mari.

A difference between both palaces is marked by their distinct orientation. Rooms 64 and 65 at Mari are situated at the south-eastern side of the courtyard while the two halls at Qatna lie to the East of the *Temple de Nin-Egal*. The major wind directions were most probably responsible for that: In Mari, like in the regions of Mesopotamia, the fresh summer winds blow from the North-West while in Qatna, as in the whole Levant, they come from the western seaside¹¹¹.

In contrast to the palace of Zimri-Lim, a great number of column bases were found in the palace of Qatna. This demonstrates that columns formed an important element in the architecture of this Levantine site. The columns were situated especially within the doorways between two rooms, like in the *Salle des deux Bases*. Here, as with the doorway between Room 5 and Room 5A in the Middle Bronze Age Palace of Yarim-Lim at Alalakh (Level VII)¹¹², the forerunner of the later *Hilani*-type entrance is established. The tradition continues into the Late Bronze Age palaces at Ugarit and Alalakh (Level IV).

This comparative analysis stresses, on the one hand, that the three architectural units as defined by Du Mesnil du Buisson belong to one and the same building and, on the other hand, that on the basis of typological analysis the foundation of the palace probably should be dated into the Middle Bronze Age. The palace has been in use until the Late Bronze Age, as indicated by the Cypriote ceramics found on the palace floors by Du Mesnil du Buisson¹¹³. Therefore, it seems quite likely that the building is to be identified as the residence of the Middle Bronze Age kings Iš'i-Hadda and Amut-pī-'El, known from the Mari archives.

1.3. Aims of the new excavations in the palace of Qatna

Because of the problems mentioned above concerning architecture and chronology, the re-excavation and re-evaluation of the palace is one of the main goals of the newly established joint mission at Tell Mishrifeh. The major objectives of research in the palace are the following:

1. To establish a complete and detailed architectural plan of the palace;
2. To establish a precise stratigraphy for the building;
3. To date precisely the actual building and its probable earlier phases;
4. To reconstruct the general function of the building and that of each of its rooms;
5. To understand fully the socio-political and economic role of the palace.

The opportunity to work in the palace was made possible through the complete abandonment of the modern village that had covered the whole western part of the ancient settlement site. The resettlement of the inhabitants to the modern town of

¹¹¹ WIRTH 1971: 77.

¹¹² NAUMANN 1971: 406ff.

¹¹³ GERSTENBLITH 1983: 46.

Mishrifeh in 1982 was initiated by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

The ruined houses still standing on top of the ancient ruins of the palace have already been partially removed during recent excavations.



Fig. 64 Wall M 65 between Room B and Hall C.
الشكل 72 الجدار M 64 بين الغرفة B والقاعة C.

2. ARCHITECTURE, CHRONOLOGY AND STRATIGRAPHY OF THE PALACE (Pls. 1 and 2)

2.1. Localisation of the re-excavated rooms of the palace

The area of the Bronze Age Palace had been re-occupied by houses of the modern village after the end of the French excavations. Therefore, the first task was to localise the ancient building below the ruins of the abandoned houses.

The first indication of what lay beneath the modern village was found in Operation H, where a jar inserted in a mud-brick podium in Room A could be excavated. This was known from the French reports as being located in the northern part of the *Cour du Trône*.

Shortly afterwards, two foundation pits were found in Hall C in Operation G. It turned out that they belonged to two column bases excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson in the northern part of the *Temple de Nin-Egal*. The basalt bases themselves had been subsequently taken away. Their substruction consisted of deep round pits with a diameter of about 3.5 m, which were lined by a wall of stones. These pits were intentionally filled up completely with pebbles (Fig. 72).

Room F, lying to the North of Hall C, had been labelled *Haut-Lieu* ("High Place") by Du Mesnil du Buisson. Here, the massive lime mortar floor, which is up to 40 cm thick, the canalisation channels and a deep hole in the floor were excavated during the first weeks of work in 1999. The hole had been identified by Du Mesnil du Buisson as the place of a "Holy Tree of Ashera", the channels as inlets of stone slabs (Fig. 65).

On the basis of these results it has been possible to re-excavate during the second season a number of rooms in the western part of the Bronze Age palace that had formerly been excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson between 1924 and 1929 (Fig. 66). The activities focused on the following rooms: Room B (*Salle du Grand Vase*), Hall C (*Temple de Nin-Egal*) (Fig. 64), Rooms E (*Salle de l'Anneau*), F (*Haut-Lieu*), G (*Salle des Jarres*), L (*Salle de la Pierre noire*) and Q (*Parvis du Nord*). Furthermore Rooms D (West of the *Salle de l'Anneau*), K (West of the *Haut-Lieu*) and W (South of the *Temple de Nin-Egal*) as well as the Corridors V (North of the *Salle des Jarres*) and S (North of the *Haut-Lieu*) and the newly discovered Rooms N, O and U in the north-western part of the building were partly investigated.

In connection with the results of the Italian team in Operation H, a large part of the area excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson was re-discovered. In Operation H the Rooms A (*Cour du Trône*), H (North of Room A), T (*Salle de Suse*), Y, Z, AA, AB, AC, AD and AE (all East of Room A) were localised (see below).

2.2. *Stratigraphy and chronology of the palace*

The stratigraphic sequences are correlated between Operations G and H, so that the labels for relevant Phases in G and H correspond to one another (Fig. 67).

Phases G 1– G 4: Modern

Phase G 1 is marked by the actual surface of the mound covering the ruins of the modern houses.

These houses represent **Phase G 2** and belong to the modern village of Mishrifeh. They were constructed in the area of the former excavations after 1929 and abandoned in 1982, when the whole village was resettled to the West of the archaeological site.

The traces of the excavations of Du Mesnil du Buisson between 1924 and 1929 mark **Phase G 3**. They consist mostly of trenches and soundings but also of restoration works.

Those parts of the modern-time village, which predate the French excavations, belong to **Phase G 4**. The village was founded about AD 1850 by Christian settlers and was owned by the Tabets.

Phase G 5/6: Iron Age

As had already been observed by Du Mesnil du Buisson, an Iron Age occupation of the palace area existed. This is now labelled **Phase G 5**.

In neighbouring Operation H, two Iron Age levels can be distinguished. Therefore, **Phase G 6** was defined, although it is not yet confirmed in Operation G.

The ceramics that were found in some pits hint at a date for the Iron Age Phases G 5 and G 6 in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

Phase G 7: Late Bronze Age

Phase G 7 dates to the Late Bronze Age and is until now only found in Room G. Therefore, it remains obscure if contemporary floors existed in other rooms, which had probably not been recognised and thus had been destroyed unintentionally by Du Mesnil du Buisson. It is more likely, however, that the hard lime mortar floors of Phase G 8 remained in use in many rooms of the palace up to the time of Phase G 7. The fact that there was just a simple mud floor in Room G from the older Phase G 8 may support this theory. Here, it was necessary to renew the floor after a while.

In the neighbouring Room E a sequence of at least four floors was recorded. Probably one of those may belong to Phase G 7 although it has not yet been proven.

The ceramic inventory of Phase G 7 in Room F dates to the early part of the Late Bronze Age. This corresponds with the chronological evidence that has been established by the French excavations. A number of objects found within the palace dates to the time span between the sixteenth and the fourteenth centuries B.C., as for example the cuneiform tablets with the Inventory of the Temple of Belet-Ekallim¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁴ BOTTÉRO 1949 and 1950; cf. also KLENGEL 2000: 247.

Historical sources confirm that Qatna was a small, less important vassal-state under the control of the kingdom of Mittani during this period¹¹⁵. It is mentioned several times by Egyptian kings who passed by the city during their campaigns to Syria¹¹⁶. At that time, the city was inhabited by Amorites and Hurrians, as is attested by the onomasticon of the “Inventory” texts¹¹⁷.

The last known king of Qatna was Akizzi, who wrote four letters to the Egyptian king Akhnaton (Amenophis IV, 1349-1333 B.C.¹¹⁸) with the request for support against the aggressive Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I (ca. 1343-1318/6 B.C.¹¹⁹). The Hittite sources mention the siege and destruction of Qatna during the campaign of 1338/6 B.C.¹²⁰. Although there is some evidence of an occupation of the site after this event¹²¹ it is obvious that Qatna had lost its importance. There is just one possible appearance of the toponym of Qatna in the tablets of Emar that date to the thirteenth century B.C.¹²².

Phases G 8 and G 9: Middle Bronze Age

The main occupation of the palace is characterised by hard lime mortar floors in many rooms. They belong to **Phase G 8**. The chronology of this Phase is established by a number of seal impressions that were found during the field season of 2000 in Room L (see below). Due to stylistic and iconographical reasons, all sealings date to the second half of the Middle Bronze Age (“Old Syrian II”¹²³ or “Middle Bronze

¹¹⁵ KLENGEL 2000: 247ff.

¹¹⁶ KÜHNE 1982: 203ff. King Thutmose III avoided attacking Qatna during his campaigns, although the city appeared to be an enemy of the Egyptian troops (HELCK 1971: 157). Instead of Qatna, the cities of Tunip and Qadesh are mentioned as the main opponents in central Syria. For the significance of Tunip as a religious centre in the 3rd millennium, cf. BONECHI 1993: 114. For the early 2nd millennium, cf. GRONEBERG 1980: 239f. and NASHEF 1991: 124.

¹¹⁷ KLENGEL 2000.

¹¹⁸ For the chronology cf. VON BECKERATH 1997.

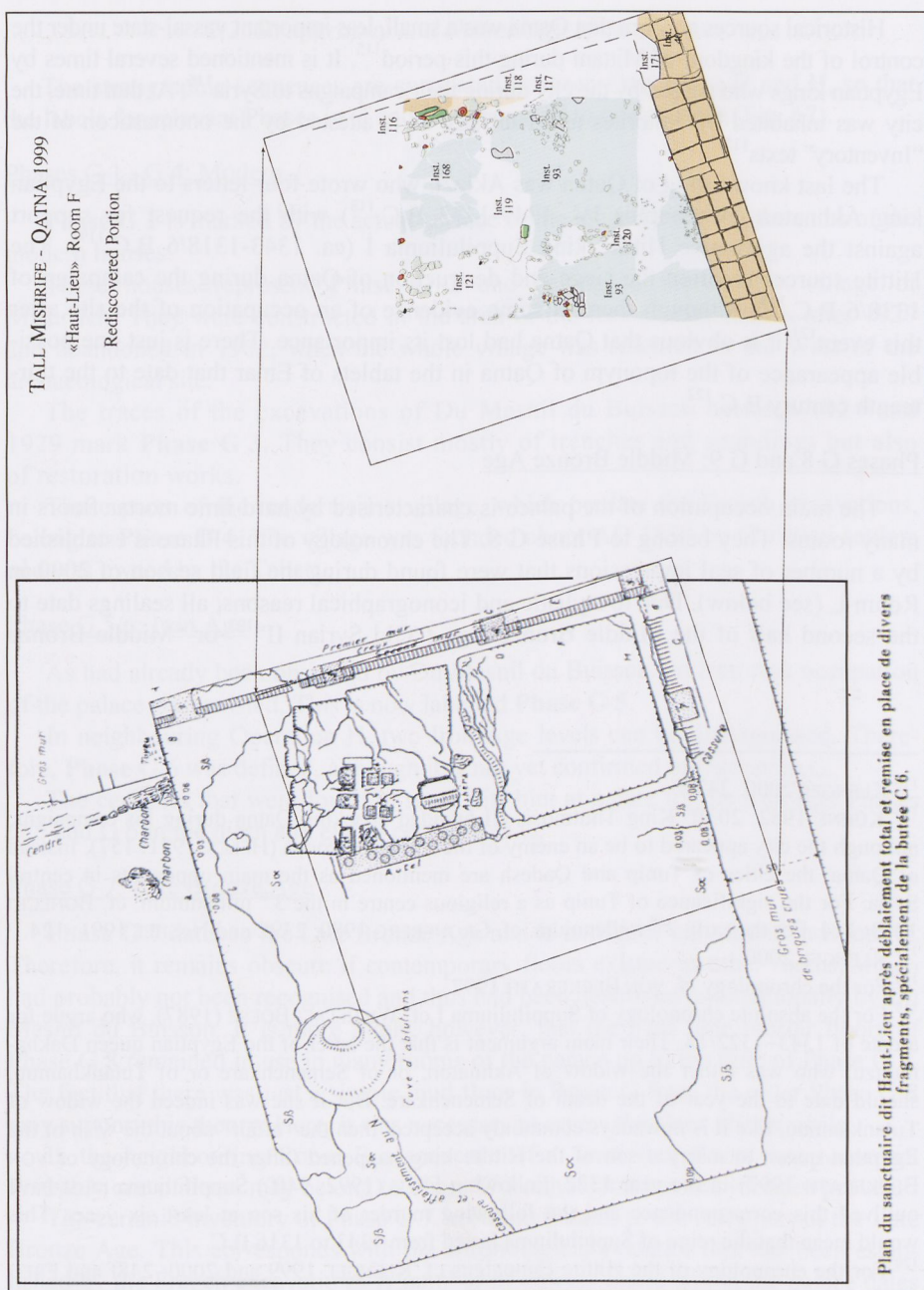
¹¹⁹ For the absolute chronology of Šuppiluliuma I cf. WILHELM / BOESE (1987), who argue for a date of 1343–1322/18. Their main argument is that the letter of the Egyptian queen Dakhamunzu, who was either the widow of Akhnaton, or of Semenckare or of Tutankhamun, should date to the year of the death of Semenckare. But if she was indeed the widow of Tutankhamun, like it is nowadays commonly accepted, then the “affair” about the wish of the Egyptian queen to marry a son of the Hittite king happened (after the chronology of VON BECKERATH 1997) in the year 1322. Following FREU (1992: 94ff.) Šuppiluliuma must have outlived this correspondence and the following murder of his son at least six years. This would mean that the reign of Šuppiluliuma lasted from 1343 to 1316 B.C.

¹²⁰ For the chronology of the Hittite campaigns cf. KLENGEL 1999 and 2000: 248f and FREU 1992: 94.

¹²¹ NOVÁK / PFÄLZNER 2000: 257.

¹²² ADAMTHWAITE 1995: 94. But it is unclear, however, if the place Qatna mentioned there as having been attacked by Aramean tribes should be identified with Qatna (Tell Mishrifeh) in central Syria or with Qatni (Tell Fadgami or Tell aš-Šamsani) in the Khabur-region.

¹²³ On this terminology, cf. ORTHMANN 1975: 114ff.



Plan du sanctuaire dit Haut-Lieu après déblaiement total et remise en place de divers fragments, spécialement de la butée C.6.

Fig. 65 Qatna 1999, plan of the installations found in Room F (Haut-Lieu) in relation to the plan of the same room as published by Du Mesnil du Buisson (1935).

الشكل 65 قطنا 1999، مستقطق الإنشاءات التي وجدت في "البيكل المرفوع" بإعلاقه مع الغرفة ذاتها كما نشرها لو مينييل (1935).

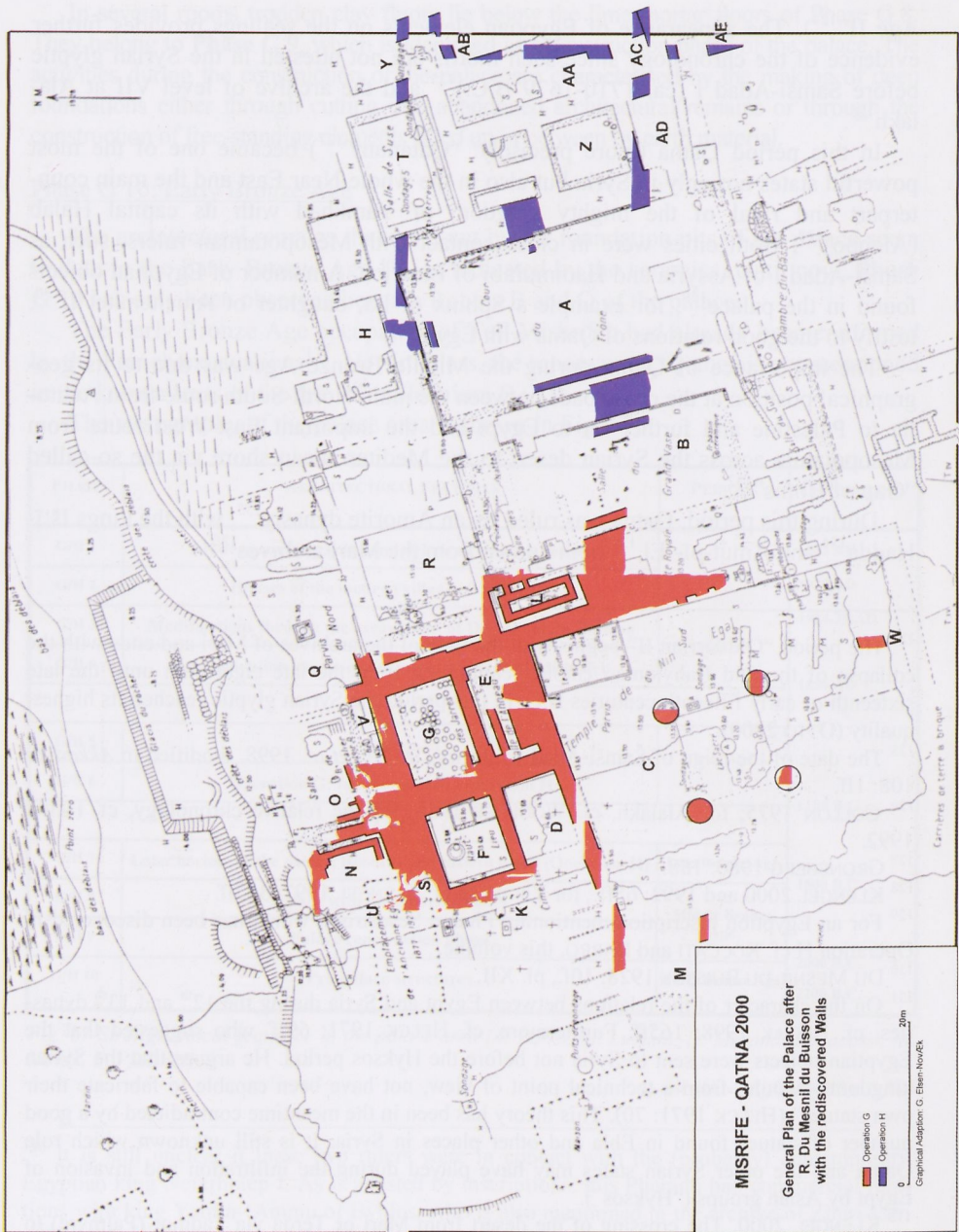


Fig. 66
Qatna 2000,
plan of the
rediscovered
walls of the
Bronze Age
Palace in
relation to the
plan as pub-
lished by Du
Mesnil du
Buisson (1935).

الشكل
66
قلطنا 2000،
مخطط جدران
قصر عصر
البرونز التي أعيد
اكتشافها، بالعلاقه
مع المخطط كما
نشره دو مينيل دو
بويسون (1935).

Age II"¹²⁴). The appearance of Egyptian elements on the sealings provides further evidence of the chronology since such motifs are not attested in the Syrian glyptic before Šamši-Adad I (ca. 1710-1679 B.C.)¹²⁵ and the archive of level VII at Alalakh¹²⁶.

In this period Qatna (more precisely: "Qatanum"¹²⁷) became one of the most powerful states not only in Syria but also in the whole Near East and the main counterpart and rival of the mighty kingdom of Yamkhad with its capital Halab (Aleppo)¹²⁸. Both cities were in close contact with Mesopotamian rulers, such as Šamši-Adad I of Assyria and Hammurabi of Babylon. A number of Egyptian objects found in the palace¹²⁹, for example a Sphinx of Ita, daughter of Amenemhet II¹³⁰, testify to the good relations of Qatna with Egypt¹³¹.

The importance of Qatna during the Middle Bronze Age was due to its geographical position at the crossroads between the main North-South route from Anatolia to Palestine and further on to Egypt and the important East-West route from Mesopotamia across the Syrian desert to the Mediterranean shore via the so-called "Gap of Homs"¹³².

During this period, Qatna was ruled by an Amorite dynasty¹³³, with the kings Iš'ī-Hadda¹³⁴ and Amut-pī-'El,¹³⁵ both known from the Mari archives¹³⁶.

¹²⁴ The period "Old Syrian II" begins with the time of the archives of Mari and ends with the collapse of the Old Babylonian empire, continuing from the late eighteenth until the late sixteenth or early fifteenth centuries B.C. In this period the Syrian glyptic reached its highest quality (OTTO 2000).

¹²⁵ The date of the reign of Šamši-Adad I follows GASCHÉ *et al.* 1998, modified in *Akkadica* 108: 1ff.

¹²⁶ COLLON 1975; for Alalakh, cf. WOOLLEY 1955; for the relative chronology, cf. HEINZ 1992.

¹²⁷ GRONEBERG 1980: 188.

¹²⁸ KLENGEL 2000 and 1992: 65ff.; for Yamkhad cf. KLENGEL 1997: 363ff.

¹²⁹ For an Egyptian inscription mentioning Pharaoh Sesostri I, which has been discovered in Operation H cf. ROCCATI and BARRO, this volume.

¹³⁰ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: 10f., pl. XII.

¹³¹ On the character of the relations between Egypt and Syria during the 12th and 13th dynasties, cf. BIETAK 1998: 165ff. Furthermore, cf. HELCK 1971: 69ff. who suggested that the Egyptian objects were sent to Syria not before the Hyksos period. He argues that the Syrian kingdoms "would, from a technical point of view, not have been capable to fabricate their own statues" (HELCK 1971: 70). This theory has been in the meantime contradicted by a good number of statues found in Ebla and other places in Syria. It is still unknown which role Qatna and the other Syrian states may have played during the infiltration and invasion of Egypt by Asian groups ("Hyksos").

¹³² KLENGEL 2000. The crossing of the desert from Mari or Terqa via Tadmor (Palmyre) to Qatna took 10 days, as stated in the letter ARM I 66. For the caravan route, cf. KLENGEL 1997: 365f.; ISMAIL 1996: 129f.; ABDALLAH 1996: 131ff.; and MAR'ī 1996: 137.

¹³³ For the Amorites and their significance in the 2nd millennium, cf. BUCCELLATI 1990: 229ff.

¹³⁴ For the correct transcription of this name (commonly written "Iškhi-Addu"), cf. STRECK 2000: 190.

¹³⁵ Cf. STRECK 2000: 319.

In several rooms trodden clay floors lie below the lime mortar floors of Phase G 8. They belong to **Phase G 9**, which is identified as a construction phase of the palace. The activities during the construction of the palace are characterised by the making of deep foundations either through cutting into abandoned architectural remains or through the construction of free-standing elements filled up in between by earth material.

Phase G 10: Early Bronze Age

The architectural remains that were cut by the foundation pits of the palace seem to date to the Early Bronze Age IV, as indicated by the ceramics. Until now, **Phase G 10** has only been observed beneath Rooms B and O of the palace.

The Early Bronze Age occupation of Tell Mishrifeh had already been confirmed by the French excavations¹³⁷. Nevertheless, the toponym of “Qatna” is not mentioned in the known texts of the late 3rd millennium B.C.¹³⁸.

The stratigraphy of the palace area is shown in Fig. 67:

PHASE	ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES	PERIODS	CHRONOLOGY	
G/H 1	Modern surface, ruins and debris of modern houses	↑ Modern	1982 AD	
G/H 2	Houses of the modern village of Mishrifeh		1929 AD	
G/H 3	Modifications through the excavations of Du Mesnil du Buisson		1924-29 AD	
G/H 4	Pre-excavation houses of the modern village of Mishrifeh		1850 AD	
H i a t u s				
G/H 5	Operation H	Iron Age	1100 B.C.	
G/H 6	Operation G: foundation pit; Operation H			
H i a t u s (?)				
G/H 7	Later horizon of the palace; Room G and eastern <i>glacis</i> (Operation H)	Late Bronze Age		1500 B.C.
G/H 8	Palace with lime mortar floors	Middle Bronze Age		
G/H 9	Palace construction phase			
G/H 10	Pre-palace structures	Early Bronze Age	2000 B.C. 2200 B.C.	

Fig. 67 Stratigraphical sequence in the palace area (A. Barro, M. Luciani, D. Morandi Bonacossi, M. Novák, P. Pfälzner)

الشكل 67 التتابع الطبقي في منطقة القصر.

¹³⁶ It is still unclear if these two rulers were in contact with the (probably) contemporary Egyptian king Neferhotep I. As is attested by inscriptions, this Pharaoh had commercial relations with king Yantin-‘Ammu of Byblos, who is also mentioned in the archive of Zimri-Lim of Mari (HELCK 1971: 64).

¹³⁷ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935; ABOU ASSAF 1997: 35f.

¹³⁸ A city called *Gudadanum* is mentioned in the texts of Ebla. Its location is still obscure; it may either be identified with the later Qattani on the Khabur or localised in the plain of Harran. Cf. ARCHI 1988: 1f.; BONECHI 1993: 162f.; MEYER 1996: 165. It can, nevertheless, not be rejected that this may have been the ancient name of the 3rd millennium town below the later Qatanum / Qatna.

2.3. Pre-palace occupation (Phase G 10)

During the field season of 2000 a number of architectural remains beneath Rooms O and B of the palace were discovered which antedate the construction of the palace (Fig. 68). They have been either cut or covered by the foundations of the palace. The orientation of the walls, their width, and the size of their bricks differ markedly from those of the palace.



Fig. 68 Walls of Phase G 10 below Room O.
الشكل 68 جدران الحقبة G 10 أسفل الغرفة O.

There is no information yet as to the function or the exact chronology of these buildings. The large amount of ceramics dating to the Early Bronze Age IV (e.g., the so-called "Hama-Beakers") may, however, indicate that these buildings should be dated to the late 3rd millennium B.C.

In some cases the foundations of the palace were put into deeply cut foundation trenches, in other cases they were constructed above the ground, so that staircases, construction floors and filling material were necessary. This fact demonstrates that the area was not plain in the time of the construction of the palace but more likely had the appearance of an uneven ruined site or a *tell*. The existence of an older mound may indicate that the older settlement of the 3rd millennium B.C. was situated at the edge of a natural spur below the later palace, sloping downward to the North and to the West.

2.4. The construction level of the palace (Phase G 9)

Below the lime mortar floors of Hall C and Room D (Phase G 8) several trodden



Fig. 69 Staircase of Phase G 9 below Hall C.
الشكل 69 درج الحنية G 9 تحت القاعة C.

mud floors were discovered. In 1999 they were identified as older floors used in the palace that predated Phase G 8¹³⁹. Astonishingly enough, no installations and no inventory were found on top of these trodden floors of Phase G 9. Furthermore, the material deposited over the floors was very “sterile”: no broken bricks, no material from collapsed walls. It consisted of alternating horizontal layers of grey loam and reddish mud.

It was discovered during the 2000 field season that the trodden floors are not situated at comparable elevations between the rooms and even within the rooms. These observations led to the conclusion that the floors of Phase G 9 must be interpreted as “construction floors”. They served as surfaces during the construction of the foundation walls of the palace in those

areas where they were erected above the ground.

In the eastern part of Hall C at least two subsequent “construction floors” are observable, the upper one lying about 20 cm above the lower one. Both about a staircase (Fig. 69), which leads up to the foundation wall M 65 near the *Porte Royale* separating Hall C and Room B. The staircase is covered by the lime mortar floor of Phase G 8 and probably served to transport bricks up to the top of the foundation wall under construction. After construction had been completed, the staircase as with the whole area, was filled up and covered with earth.

The eastern side of the same foundation, wall M 65, was set into a trench, which cut the remains of older buildings. Within the trench another construction floor was discovered, situated at a depth of about 1.5 m below the floor of Phase G 8. A number of mud-bricks were lying on that floor, which obviously were left behind after the completion of construction.

¹³⁹ NOVÁK / PFÄLZNER 2000: 271 ff.

2.5. The palace in Phase G 8

As previously mentioned, the upstanding walls of the palace had been removed by the inhabitants of the abandoned modern village of Mishrifeh. Nevertheless, the architectural remains of Phase G 8, the original phase of use of the palace, are still very impressive. The original floors of the palace consisted in most rooms of a very hard lime mortar with a thickness of sometimes just a few centimetres and other times of nearly 40 cm. After the excavations of Du Mesnil du Buisson, they have been partly re-used as floors of the modern houses and are therefore well preserved. The foundations of the walls were constructed of solid mud-brick. They reach a depth of nearly 4 m below floor level and are extremely broad, in one case about 10 m. The so-called *Couloirs* are added to them for the purpose of drainage. These narrow "corridors" flanking the foundations and closed on the other side by thin mud-brick retaining walls are completely filled with stones. They were originally covered by the floors of the rooms. With the analysis of these architectural remains, the layout of the palace can be precisely reconstructed.

The largest room of the building was the monumental **Hall C**, known as the *Temple de Nin-Egal*, which covered an area of 36 m x 36 m. Here, a large portion of the floor of Phase G 8 was re-excavated. This large hall, which may have been a kind of assembly hall, was apparently covered by a roof. The ceiling must have once been supported by four columns that rested on basalt bases. These had already been discovered by Du Mesnil du Buisson. The column bases are now missing, presenting then the opportunity for studying the foundation pits of the bases (Fig. 72). These round and very deep pits were lined with a circular protection wall of large-sized lime stones, with the inside completely filled with pebbles. Thus, the construction is extremely solid, which proves that the columns were conceived to carry enormous weight.

Only the central part of Hall C within the rectangle of four columns was obviously open to the air and could have thus functioned as an *impluvium*. In its centre the so-called *Lac Sacré*¹⁴⁰, a circular monolithic basalt basin of 1.60 m in diameter was re-excavated (Fig. 70)¹⁴¹. Within the *impluvium* two subsequent floors were distinguishable. The two floors were raised in level compared to the floor in the rest of Hall C and sloped down towards the basin in the centre so that rainwater could be gathered inside. A jar was inserted into the floor about 3 m to the South-East of the *Lac Sacré*¹⁴². It was re-discovered *in situ*.

In the north-eastern corner of Hall C Du Mesnil du Buisson had found the cuneiform tablets with the Inventory of the Temple of Belet-Ekallim¹⁴³ and other objects such as an Egyptian sphinx of Ita, daughter of king Amenemhet II¹⁴⁴ of the 12th dynasty¹⁴⁵. Since this part of the hall was separated from the rest by two channels, Du Mesnil du Buisson labelled it the *Sanctuaire* of the temple (Fig. 71). Both channels could be re-discovered. They are about 15 cm deep and 30 cm

¹⁴⁰ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935, pls. XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII.

¹⁴¹ The basin was partly broken in ancient times, with its western part missing. Du Mesnil du Buisson restored it with concrete, which is still preserved.

¹⁴² DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935, pl. XVII.

¹⁴³ BOTTÉRO 1949; for the other tablets found at Qatna, cf. BOTTÉRO 1950.

¹⁴⁴ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: 10f., pl. XII.

¹⁴⁵ For the distribution of the objects, cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928, pl. VII.

broad¹⁴⁶. Their original function is still unknown.

Adjoining the *Sanctuaire* to the East is a small chamber, which was inserted into the thick eastern wall of Hall C, named **Room P**, the so-called *Saint des Saints*. Although the upstanding walls no longer exist, the former position of the chamber can be determined¹⁴⁷.

All surrounding walls of Hall C were discovered either in test trenches or in the larger excavation area. At the flank of the northern wall is a fragment of a limestone slab, which was re-discovered *in situ*. Such slabs with a thickness of about 15 cm had been found by Du Mesnil du Buisson in many rooms of the building, as in Rooms A (*Cour du Trône*), B (*Salle du Grand Vase*) and C. It is still unclear whether they served purposes other than decoration. Since these rooms seem to have been covered with a roof, the slabs cannot have been intended to be used as protection for the walls against rainwater. Comparable slabs are known from the palace of Yarim-Lim in Alalakh (Level VII) where they were also applied within roofed rooms¹⁴⁸. There, they were placed on top of stone foundations. In Qatna, some of the foundation walls were protected on the outside by a covering of stones. Perhaps, the stone protections may have served at the same time as a basis for the slabs¹⁴⁹.

Room W is adjoined to the South of Hall C, **Room M** to the west. Both rooms were not known from the French excavations and could be localised in two test trenches. They prove that at least one further row of rooms flanked the hall to the South and to the West.

At its eastern side, Hall C was separated from Room B by a 10 m thick substruction wall (M 65). It formerly supported the *Porte Royale*, which has been completely destroyed through the activities of the inhabitants of the modern village (Fig. 64). The foundation wall (M 65) was built of mud-bricks and extended down to nearly 4 m. On its eastern side it was flanked by a so-called *couloir*, a drainage "corridor"¹⁵⁰ filled with stones, and a thin retaining wall. At its western side a series of small buttresses was situated at the face of the foundation wall at regular distances. Wooden

¹⁴⁶ Du Mesnil du Buisson identified these channels as inlets for slabs. They would have separated the *Sanctuaire* from the rest of Hall C (DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 73, pls. XVI and XXI). A modern pit with the diameter of ca. 2 m situated in the centre of the *Sanctuaire* is the place of "Base no. 5" (DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935, general plan and pl. XVII, and 1928: pls. IV and VII). To the West is another pit, which is clearly a sounding made by Du Mesnil du Buisson (DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 123 and pl. XXXV).

¹⁴⁷ The reconstructed chamber is shown in DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pl. XV.

¹⁴⁸ NAUMANN 1971: 82.

¹⁴⁹ Most of the slabs were robbed by the inhabitants of the modern village. Some pieces were found within an entrance of a modern house (Phase G 2).

¹⁵⁰ The idea that the *couloirs* served as protection against moisture and as drainage channels is supported by an observation made by one of the inhabitants of the modern village. He reported that a street was situated on top of the ancient foundation wall. Because of the mud-bricks of the wall the rainwater could not run off. One of his neighbours, therefore, dug a pit and found a "subterranean tunnel, filled with stones". At that moment the water was drained through it. The villagers could not find out where the water then flowed. This story might indicate that there exists an extended system of such *couloirs*.



Fig. 70 Basalt basin
(the so-called Lac
Sacré) in the centre of
Hall C

الشكل 70 حوض بازلتي
(المسمى "البحيرة المقدسة")
في مركز
القاعة C.



Fig. 71 Hall C from North-West with the so-called Sanctuary.
الشكل 71 القاعة C من الشمال الغربي، مع ما سمي بـ "الحرم" (Sanctuaire).

beams had been inserted vertically into each buttress. The function of both buttresses and beams remains unclear since they occurred below the floor level. Perhaps they belonged to a kind of stabilisation system and were linked to horizontal "anchor beams" made of wood¹⁵¹.

¹⁵¹ This is the hypothesis of Dr. Bushra Farah-Fougères. For the existence of wooden "anchor beams" within mud-brick walls, cf. NAUMANN 1971: 91ff.

Room B, the so-called *Salle du Grand Vase*, rests to the East of wall M 65. It is the first of two large rooms that form together the so-called *Thronsaal-Festsaal-Gruppe* (see above). Below the floor, which was destroyed in most parts of the room, the burial of an infant was found. The skeleton was found within a cooking pot, which dates to the Middle Bronze Age¹⁵². The pot was closed by stones and partly plastered with lime mortar.

Room L was situated on top of wall M 65 and to the North of the *Porte Royale* (Fig. 73). It had been labelled as *Salle de la Pierre noire* by Du Mesnil du Buisson because of a black stone, which was found in the south-eastern corner of the room¹⁵³. He discovered a basalt column base in the centre of the room¹⁵⁴ and a number of objects such as the bronze head of a donkey statue and Aegean ceramics¹⁵⁵.

Four surrounding *couloirs* and a deep rectangular opening in the centre of the foundation wall were rediscovered in 2000. The *couloirs* indicate the position of the former walls of Room L. Below the doorway that connected this room with Room B (*Salle du Grand Vase*) via the *Salle des Nattes*¹⁵⁶ are two small rectangular pits, probably the trenches for the door jambs. Their fills contained a number of clay sealings with seal impressions (see below).

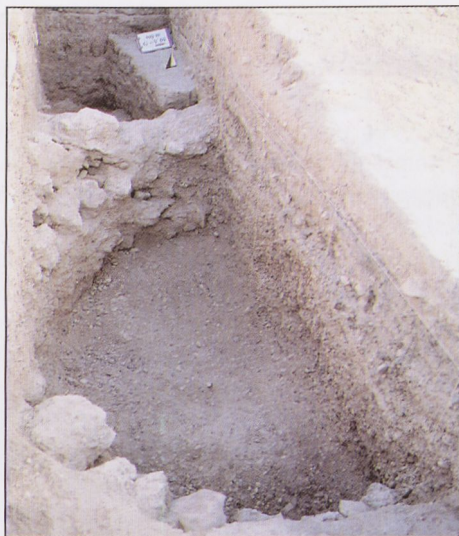


Fig. 72 Qatna 1999-2000, foundation pit of a column base in Hall C.

الشكل 72 قطنا 1999-2000، حفرة أساس قاعدة العمود في القاعة C



Fig. 73 Room L with installations.

الشكل 73 الغرفة L مع منشآت.

¹⁵² For a comparable burial found in Hall C, cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1930: pl. XXIX.2.

¹⁵³ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: pls. IX.6 and VII.

¹⁵⁴ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: pls. VII and X.2.

¹⁵⁵ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: pls. XVII and XVIII.

¹⁵⁶ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: pl. X.



Fig. 74 Room E with couloirs.
الشكل ٧٤ الغرفة E مع "الدھاليز" (couloirs).

As with Room L, the neighbouring **Room X** (the so-called *Galerie*) to the North is situated on top of the foundation wall M 65. Here, a *couloir* also cuts into the foundation. This indicates the alignment of the vanished walls of the room. If the plan published by Du Mesnil du Buisson is correct, the *Galerie* served as a circulation node between Rooms G (*Salle des Jarres*) and E (*Salle de l'Anneau*) to the west, Room Q (*Parvis du Nord*) to the North, and Room R (*Salle des deux Bases*) to the East.

Room G adjoins Room X to the west. It was used in the following Phase G 7 as a storage room and was labelled *Salle des Jarres* by Du Mesnil du Buisson on the basis of its ceramic inventory (see below). The floor of Phase G 8 in Room G was discovered only in the western part of the room. It was, in contrast to those in the neighbouring rooms, a simple trodden mud floor. No inventory belonging to Phase G 8 could be found. Therefore, a functional analysis of the room in Phase G 8 is not possible.

Room E (*Salle de l'Anneau*) seems to have connected Room X with Hall C (Fig. 74). The inner limits of the room are marked by two *couloirs* existing alongside the northern and the eastern walls. As attested in the eastern part of the room, this area had been subsequently equipped by at least four lime mortar floors. This piece of evidence indicates that the palace was in use for a long period.

In **Room D** the preserved part of the floor was rediscovered belonging to Phase G 8. The south-western quarter of the room had been destroyed by a large pit, probably dating to the Iron Age.

Room F, the so-called *Haut-Lieu*, was completely re-excavated in 1999 and 2000 (Figs. 65 and 75). The installations on top or within the thick lime mortar floor were interpreted by Du Mesnil du Buisson as having served cultic purposes¹⁵⁷. He identified the area as a “High Place” with a sanctuary for the goddess Ashera and a number of *masseboth*-stelae (Fig. 76). A hole within the room was interpreted as the pit of a “Holy Tree” dedicated to Ashera¹⁵⁸. A system of channels in a rectangular outline was thought to be traces of slabs inserted into the floor and separating the area of the “Holy Tree” and the area of the *masseboth*-stelae¹⁵⁹ from the rest of the room as a type of indoor enclosure. To the West, a big monolith with a great deal of circular mouldings was found by Du Mesnil du Buisson inserted in the floor¹⁶⁰. This stone is now missing. It must have been robbed by the inhabitants of the modern village.

To the West of these installations is a circular lime basin with a diameter of nearly 1.60 m (Fig. 77)¹⁶¹. As it presently appears, the basin consists of at least 15 layers of replastering. In its eastern half there is an oval depression, which probably served as an outlet. This installation was identified by Du Mesnil du Buisson as an “ablution basin”.

The re-evaluation of the installations in Room F does not support the idea that the room served sacred purposes. On the contrary, all of the rediscovered installations can be interpreted as features of a bathroom with a toilet: the supposed trenches for the slabs of the enclosures seem to have been, more likely, a system of channels. They lead to the hole, which was supposed to have been used for the so-called “tree of Ashera”, but which was probably nothing more than a drainage pit. The so-called *masseboth*-stelae consisted of baked bricks held together with lime plaster. The two base bricks were inserted into the floor at a short distance from each other. These two brick sockets could have been the base for a seat or a similar installation that probably functioned as a toilet. The sacred “ablution basin” should have been consequently a bathing basin.

¹⁵⁷ For a detailed plan of the room with its installations, cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pls. XXVIII and XXIX.

¹⁵⁸ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pl. XXXIII.

¹⁵⁹ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 105, fig. 31 and pls. XXXI and XXXII.

¹⁶⁰ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pl. XXVII.2.

¹⁶¹ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pl. XXVII.1.



Fig. 75 Overview of Room F (Haut-Lieu).
الشكل 75 منظر عام للغرفة F "الهيكل المرتفع" (Haut-Lieu).



Fig. 76 Installations in Room F with the drainage pit ("Holy Tree of Ashera") and socket bricks ("masseboth-stelae").
الشكل 76 منشآت في الغرفة F مع حفرة التصريف ("شجرة أشيرا المقدسة") والأجرات المنغرزة ("مسلة-ماسبوث").



Fig. 77 Lime basin ("Ablution Basin") in the western part of Room F.
الشكل 77 حوض كلسي ("حوض الوضوء") في الجزء الغربي للغرفة F.

Rooms F and G were bordered by massive foundation walls approximately 9 m thick to the North. The walls served as substruction for the two Rooms S and V, both situated directly on top of them. The reason for this massive and enormous construction may have been the fact that a natural slope existed near the edge of the so-called *Falaise*, a high vertical step of the terrain at the northern edge of the palace. This slope may have necessitated strong terracing works in connection with the erection of the building.

In **Corridor V**, like in the neighbouring **Room Q** (*Parvis du Nord*) to the East, parts of the lime mortar floors are preserved (Fig. 78).



Fig. 78 Corridor V and Room Q with floors.
الشكل 78 الممر V والغرفة Q مع الأرضيات.

In **Room O** (*Salle de l'Escalier*) North of Corridor V a Middle Bronze Age grave (Phase G 9) containing two vessels and covered by bricks was discovered. South of it and below Corridor V, a large subterranean chamber was partly excavated (Fig. 79). Although no traces of a burial have so far been recognised it may be identified as a tomb.

The eastern limit of a long and deep trench of Du Mesnil du Buisson underneath the old church of the modern village¹⁶² was rediscovered in the western part of Room F as well as in the neighbouring **Room K** to the West. It had been refilled and used as a street by the modern villagers. The trench was re-opened in order to expose a section through all occupation levels below Phase G 8¹⁶³. Since the old deep sounding turned out to lie more to the West than calculated, this goal could not be reached during the field season 2000.

Room S is situated on top of the massive foundation walls North of Room F and is adjoining Corridor V to the West. A water channel plastered with lime on its inside was integrated into the foundation wall (Fig. 80). It runs down from south-east to north-west and gradually broadens in its lower part. Inside, three big stones were found that probably stabilised the channel. They could have served as a means to slow down the flowing water and thus to protect the mud-brick walls. The channel most likely drained the bathing basin in Room F and led down into a basement underneath Room S.



Fig. 79 Entrance to chamber below Rooms O and V.
الشكل 79 مدخل الحجرة تحت الغرفتين O و V.

¹⁶² DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1930: pl. XXVI.4.

¹⁶³ Since the modern structures in this area consisted mostly of concrete it was necessary to remove them with a machine at the beginning of the field season 2000. A trench of 3 m width and 35 m length was emptied. The archaeological excavation was undertaken within this trench.

The floor of Room S was not preserved. A staircase that consisted of mud-brick steps plastered with gypsum leads down into the basement **Room U** (Fig. 81). Its lower end has not yet been discovered. The staircase turns at a right angle in its lower part. This part was filled with masses of mud brick collapse (Fig. 82). Since only limited parts of it have been investigated and the floor of Basement U has not yet been reached, very little can be said so far about the character of the destruction debris.

The size and complexity of the debris is astonishing and it gives the impression of collapsed vaults, a technique that is known to have existed in the Middle Bronze Age¹⁶⁴. We plan to investigate the collapse in detail during the coming field seasons.

Room S borders **Room N** to the North (Fig. 83). The lime mortar floor of this room was found broken into pieces and collapsed into the basement, probably as the result of a fire. The fragments of the floor were mingled with stones from the southern *couloir* of the room, along with mud-bricks of the walls and ashes of wooden beams that originally must have carried the floor. The steep sloping of the debris may have been caused by the probable continuation of the brick collapse in the basement Room U.

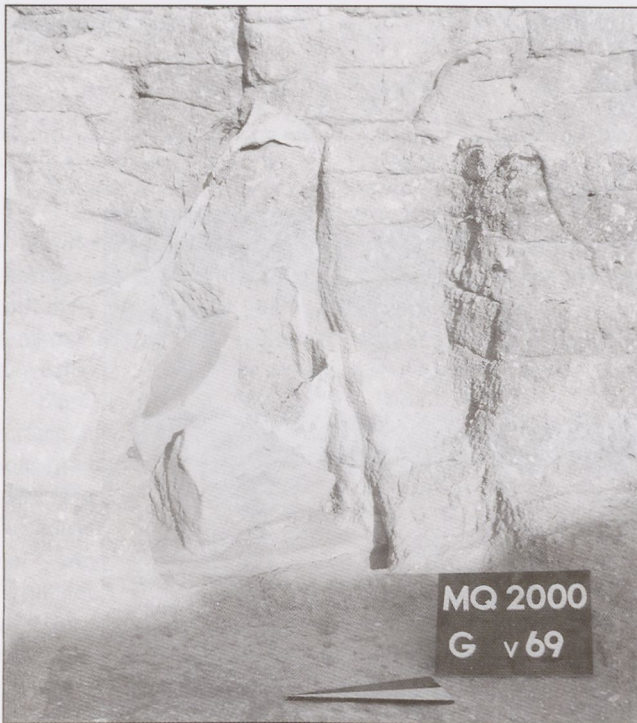


Fig. 80 Water channel within the foundation walls between Room F and Room S.

الشكل 80 قناة مياه داخل جدران الأساسات بين الغرفة F والغرفة S.

Close to the southern wall of Room N, marked by a *coulloir*, many pieces of wall paintings on gypsum plaster were found within the debris of the floor. The plaster is about 15 cm thick and consisted of a number of layers. The surface of the plaster is painted with figurative and floral designs in various colours (see below).



Fig. 81 Staircase leading from Room S down into Basement U.

الشكل 81 درج يقود من الغرفة S نزولا إلى القبو U



Fig. 82 Mud-brick collapse in Basement U.

الشكل 82 ركام من اللبن في القبو U.

¹⁶⁴ On the vaulting techniques in Ancient Near Eastern architecture cf. HEINRICH 1971 and BESEVAL 1984.



Fig. 83 Overview of Rooms N, S and U.
الشكل 83 منظر عام للغرف N و S و U.

2.6. The Late Bronze Age occupation of the palace (Phase G 7)

Room G, Du Mesnil du Buisson's *Salle des Jarres*, contained something unexpected: the storage jars that had been excavated by the French archaeologist in the 1920s were still there, broken into hundreds of pieces.

In 1999 a narrow trench was dug through the room. The ancient mud floor was discovered directly below a modern floor belonging to a house of Phase G 2. A huge amount of ceramic sherds covered the surface. In 2000 the whole room was re-excavated (Fig. 84). It became apparent that not only sherds were lying on the floor but also a number of better preserved storage jars and pots remained *in situ* (Fig. 85).



Fig. 84 Room G (*Salle des Jarres*).

الشكل 84 الغرفة G "قاعة
الجرار" (*Salle des Jarres*)



Fig. 85 Storage pots in situ in Room G.
الشكل 85 قدور التخزين في موقعها الأصلي في الغرفة G.

When Du Mesnil du Buisson excavated this room he exposed the whole inventory¹⁶⁵. It was the only case in which he noticed a mud floor due to the pottery connected with it. He decided to take off only a few vessels, which were then brought to several museums. The rest remained in place. In the time of the re-occupation of the area by the inhabitants of the modern village, no one saw any use for these pots. For that reason the upper parts of the vessels were broken and the sherds distributed all over the room to create a level surface. The new houses were constructed on top of the deposition. This helped to conserve the inventory until recent excavations re-exposed them.

Since the pottery dates to the Late Bronze Age I (see below), the mud floor in Room G is, so far, the only evidence attesting to the later phase of the palace during the modern excavations. It marks Phase G 7. The floor lies about 20 cm above the floor of Phase G 8. The layout of the room was the same as before.

Some of the jars were partly deepened into the floor and partly put upside down on the floor. Some smaller bowls and cups were found beside the storage jars.

2.7. The Iron Age activities (Phases G 6 and 5)

Du Mesnil du Buisson found some architectural structures covering the Bronze Age palace. On the basis of the ceramics, he could date them to the Iron Age¹⁶⁶. Remains of this period were uncovered in the French excavations as well as in the modern excavations nearly in all parts of the ancient site of Tell Mishrifeh. This proves that the town of the first millennium B.C. must have covered a substantial

¹⁶⁵ A detailed plan of the room with its inventory is published in DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 95, fig. 26.

¹⁶⁶ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 123ff.

area. Nevertheless, nothing is known so far about its history according to written sources. Even the ancient name of the Iron Age town is still unknown.

Since Du Mesnil du Buisson had removed nearly all Iron Age structures above the Bronze Age palace, almost no Iron Age remains are preserved.

During the field season 2000, a huge rectangular pit measuring 12 m in width and 40 m in length was partly excavated. It is responsible for the destruction of the lime mortar floors in the southern part of Room D and the central part of Hall C¹⁶⁷. The fill of the pit consisted of alternating layers of grey ash and reddish mud.

The precise date of the pit is still obscure. But, from a stratigraphical perspective, it must have been dug after the abandonment of the palace (Phase G 7, Late Bronze Age) and before the start of the French excavations in 1924, since some trenches of Du Mesnil du Buisson cut through its filling.

Some Iron Age pots and bowls found in the fill are the only indication for dating the pit to the Iron Age II (ninth or eighth century B.C.).

2.8. The modern village (Phases G 4 to G 1)

The modern village of Mishrifeh was founded around AD 1850 in the western part of the ruined site¹⁶⁸. The name of the village *al-Mušrifa* derives from the root *šrf*, the verb is: *ašrafa*, meaning “the overlooking (village)”, due to its setting on top of the high ruin mounds. The first settlers were Christian families. The old church was built in the north-western corner of the central mound (*Acropole*). When the French started their excavations, the church was removed. Its position gave the name to the excavation area opened below the building: *Butte de l'Église*. As a substitute, the French erected a new church further to the South. The ruins of this Orthodox church are still well preserved. A second, Maronite (Catholic) church was founded much later at the slope of the western ramparts.

The former owner of the entire land in the vicinity of the ancient site of Qatna was the Christian family Tabet. Their villa was situated outside the archaeological site, near its south-western corner. Today it belongs to the Farmers' Society of Mishrifeh. The Tabet family had the right to mint their own coins, which were used even by the French to pay their workmen. These coins were only accepted in shops belonging to the Tabet family so that the workmen had to spend their wages there. A number of these coins were found in the excavations of 1999 and 2000¹⁶⁹.

After the end of the French excavations in 1929 the village started to extend over nearly all of the western half of the ancient settlement site. The palace area was occupied as well; the upstanding walls of the palace were removed by the inhabitants and

¹⁶⁷ The pit is visible in the general plan of the palace as a disturbance of the palace floor; cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935.

¹⁶⁸ For the extension of the village in the 1920s, cf. the general plan in DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. NOVÁK / PFÄLZNER 2000.

the material was used for the production of new bricks. The hard floors of the Bronze Age palace were partly re-used as floors for the newly erected houses (Fig. 60).

In 1982, the resettlement of the inhabitants to the modern town of Mishrifeh was initiated by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums. It was a very ambitious initiative for the sake of modern archaeological research at Qatna. The modern town was founded to the West of the ancient site. It is today a rapidly growing middle-sized town of nearly 25,000 inhabitants.

The stratigraphy in the palace area was established in respect to the settlement history of the village. Those parts, which were founded in 1850 and continued until 1924, form Phase G 4. The only remains of this Phase that have been rediscovered so far are some burials.

Since the French excavations mark a break in the development of the settlement, they are defined as Phase G 3. This Phase is mostly represented by trenches and deep soundings that cut into the ancient structures.

The floors and walls of the houses built after 1929 belong to Phase G 2. Nearly all of the houses were built of mud-brick or *pisé*. Only a few buildings were made of concrete, which came in use just shortly before the abandonment of the village.

The recent surface that covers the architecture of the abandoned village and its debris is referred to as Phase G 1.

3. OBJECTS AND CERAMICS

The results of the preparatory 1999 field season seemed to indicate that the palace had been completely emptied during the French excavations and during the following occupation of the palace area by the modern village. This led to the assumption that almost no inventory of the palace would still be found. On the contrary, a relevant amount of objects was discovered during the 2000 field season. Since many objects are datable, they help to establish the chronology of the palace, particularly with respect to the time of its foundation (Phase G 9) and main use (Phase G 8). Objects and pottery sherds found in the fill of Phase G 9 provide evidence that the palace was constructed in the Middle Bronze Age, a conclusion put forward on the basis of typological considerations (see above, Section 1.2.).

The most important objects belonging to Phase G 8 were discovered in the debris of the collapsed floor of Room N and within two rectangular pits below the entrance to Room L. They are wall paintings and seal impressions. Also clay figurines, stone tools and other objects were found.



Fig. 86 Wall painting with two turtles, found in Room N (see envelope of this book).

الشكل 86 لوحة جدارية تظهر سلحفتين، عثر عليها في الغرفة N.
(انظر خلف الكتاب)

3.1. Wall paintings

Many pieces of 15 cm thick gypsum plaster of different sizes were found within the debris of the floor close to the southern wall of Room N and in the line of the southern *couloir* of this room. They were painted in *secco*-technique with figurative and floral designs in various colours, i.e., red, black, white, grey, blue and brown. It is still unclear how and at which height the plaster had been fixed at the walls.

The best preserved wall painting shows two turtles in naturalistic style, the frontal part of the second animal overlapping the back part of the first one (Fig. 86). Of the first turtle the biggest part of the shell and the hind legs are preserved. The other turtle has a nicely elaborated head with eye and mouth, the front part of the shell and the front legs. Since the second turtle overlaps the first one, a kind of perspective is created or, to be more precise, imitated.

The head and the legs of the turtles are grey coloured while the shells are red with a net of black lines and grey spots.

The turtles walk on an uneven line, which is the edge of a red field with brown spots. The same red field continues above the animals and is also visible on other pieces of the wall paintings. On another fragment, a crab or spider is visible standing on such a field. It seems as if this red field was part of an illustration of a hilly landscape.

Overlapping and the application of uneven base lines are relatively unusual stylistic features of Bronze Age art of Syria. It is as yet unclear if the wall paintings of Qatna must be seen in relation to the Minoan art of Crete. Even their exact dating is still obscure; they can either date to the Middle Bronze or to the Late Bronze Age. Perhaps the discovery of more pieces in the still unexcavated part of Room N will help to gain a better understanding of the wall paintings.

3.2. Cylinder seals and seal impressions

In the 2000 field season a number of seal impressions and an original cylinder seal were found within the palace. They represent the first evidence of glyptic art in Qatna on a broader scale¹⁷⁰, allowing for the further investigation of the artistic style of this important political centre¹⁷¹.

The only original cylinder seal found in 2000 was discovered in the debris of Room N above Basement U (Fig. 87). The cylinder is made of diorite and has a biconical drill. The seal image covers the whole surface. On the left side of the image a suppliant goddess (^dLama) is visible, standing in front of an altar. The sun god Šamaš clothed with a long coat is situated opposite to her. His face is turned to the left. His right hand is stretched out and holds a tool or weapon, his left hand

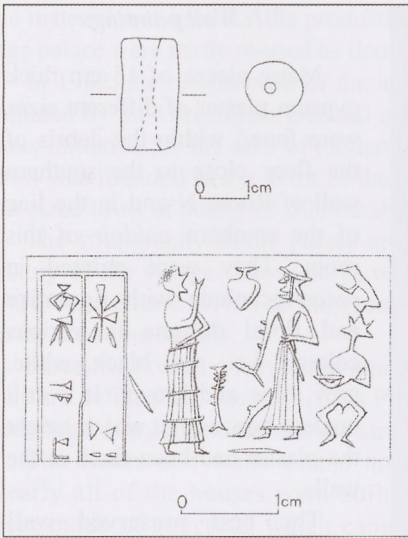


Fig. 87 Cylinder seal MSH 00G-i0203.
الشكل 87 الختم الأسطواني MSH 00G-i0203

holds a stick in front of the body. Three feet are visible. Another figure stands behind the god, and is in the form of a nude dancer. Above it, fragments of a fourth figure, probably an animal, are visible. To the left there are two lines with the inscription DINGIR.UTU and DINGIR.A(-x) (see below the contribution of Th. Richter).

Below the doorway that connected Room L, the so-called *Salle de la Pierre noire* of Du Mesnil du Buisson, with Room B, the *Salle du Grand Vase*, two small rectangular pits were excavated that contained a number of clay sealings with seal impressions (Fig. 73). A single sealing was found in the filling of a foundation pit to the West of wall M 65, close to the entrance to Room P (*Saint des Saints*).

All objects were made of a light brown clay. On the backside of some of them the impressions of strings are visible.

On the sealing MSH00G-i0088 a row of four figures walking to the right is illustrated (Fig. 88). Only the lower part of the bodies is preserved. The long robes reveal horizontal and vertical lines. Some applications are visible on the front of the robes, on the back long strings with pendants. A dotted scroll appears below the figures, a well-known element of the Old Syrian¹⁷² and Middle Syrian¹⁷³ glyptic.

¹⁷⁰ Three cylinders were found by the French excavators. Cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1927a: 24, fig. 61 and pl. XV.1, and 1928: pl. XXXVI.3.

¹⁷¹ An attempt to define an Old Syrian "Glyptic Style of Qatna" was undertaken by OTTO 2000.

¹⁷² OTTO 2000: 274f.

¹⁷³ Cf., e.g., a cylinder seal found in the "Ville Sud" in Ugarit (KOHLMAYER / STROMMINGER 1982: 127f., no. 107) and the impression of the seal of Ini-Teshub, governor of Karkamish, found in the palace of Ugarit (KOHLMAYER / STROMMINGER 1982: 153f., no. 148).

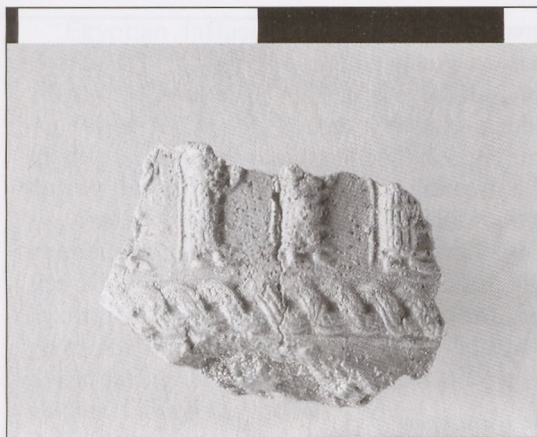


Fig. 88 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0088 with four persons on top of a dotted scroll.

الشكل 88 طابعة الختم MSH 00G-i0088 مع صورة أربعة أشخاص تعلو صفًا من النقاط البارزة.

The seal impression MSH00G-i0086 shows a slim figure turned to the left (Fig. 89). The figure is wearing a long open robe, the so-called “Syrian Coat”, with the right shank uncovered. The left arm is bent below the robe. The right arm and the head are not preserved.

The scene on impression MSH00G-i0180 consists of a similar figure, probably best identified as the king¹⁷⁴, with a suppliant goddess (^dLama) behind him (Fig. 90). Both are facing left. The space between both figures is filled with a small animal having bent legs, probably

a monkey or, more likely, a frog seen from above.

One impression (MSH00G-i0134) shows a scorpion beside several maces that may belong to the image of Ištar as the goddess of warfare (Fig. 91).

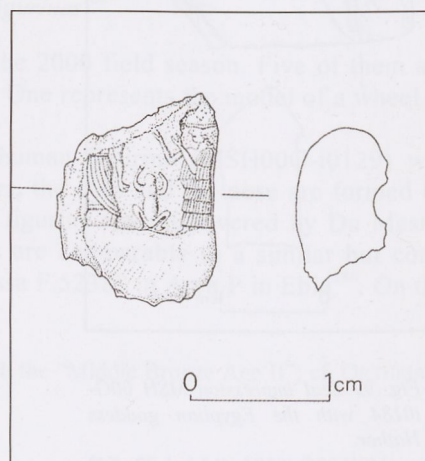
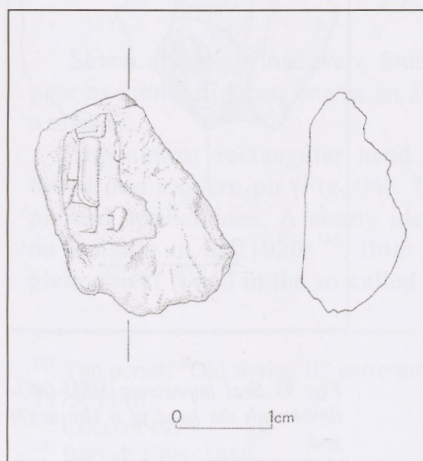


Fig. 89 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0086 with a king (?).

الشكل 89 طابعة الختم MSH 00G-i0086 مع صورة ملك (?).

Fig. 90 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0180 with a king (?) and Lama-goddess.

الشكل 90 طابعة الختم MSH 00G-i0180 مع صورة ملك (?) والهة-لاما.

¹⁷⁴ Matthiae in: ORTHMANN 1975: 491.

The scenes on two seal impressions bear Egyptian elements. The first one is an Ankh-cross¹⁷⁵. The second one (MSH00G-i0184) is identified as the image of the goddess Hathor with her typical hair-dress and crown (Fig. 92)¹⁷⁶. The figure with a very slim waist is wearing a long robe. She is turned to the left with the left arm extending down behind the body. The right arm is not preserved, but the right hand was probably situated in front of the face. The crown consists of a sun disk and two horns of a bull.

Fig. 91 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0134 with a scorpion and three maces

الشكل 91 طبعة الختم MSH 00G-i0134 تظهر عقربا وثلاثة صولجانات.

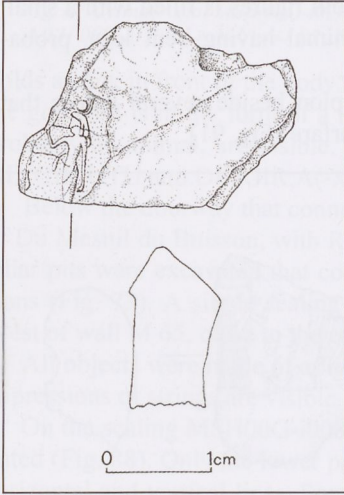
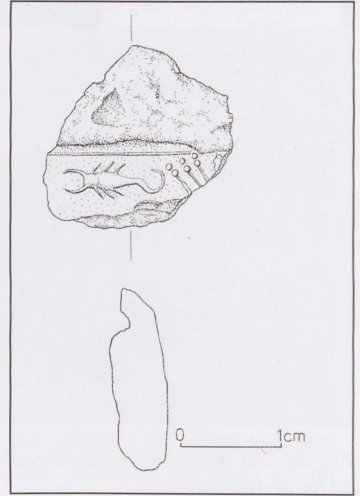


Fig. 92 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0184 with the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

الشكل 92 طبعة الختم MSH 00G-i0184 مع الإلهة المصرية هاتور.

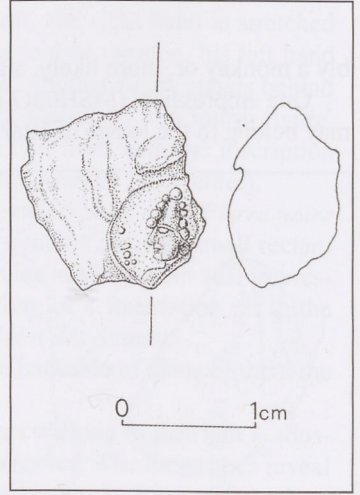


Fig. 93 Seal impression MSH 00G-i0064 with the head of a Hittite (?) god.

الشكل 93 طبعة الختم MSH 00G-i0064 مع رأس إله حثي (?).

¹⁷⁵ The "Ankh-cross" is found in the Near Eastern glyptic from the period of Karum Ib in Kanesh-Kültepe and later, in the reign of king Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria. Cf. EDER 1995: 145ff., TEISSIER 1984: 83ff. and 1996.

¹⁷⁶ TEISSIER 1996; EDER 1995: 97ff. From the 18th dynasty onwards this iconography can also be linked with the goddess Isis.

Egyptian influence on Syrian iconography begins with the period “Old Syrian II”¹⁷⁷, from the eighteenth or seventeenth century B.C., as attested in Alalakh (Level VII)¹⁷⁸. This provides a *terminus post quem* for our examples. As suggested by M. Bietak, the appearance of Egyptian motifs in the Syrian glyptic may have resulted from the return of Syrian craftsmen from Egypt during the 13th dynasty¹⁷⁹.

Another seal impression (MSH00G-i0064) shows a head with a pointed helmet reminiscent of the crown of Hittite gods as attested from the Old Hittite Kingdom onwards (Fig. 93)¹⁸⁰. This iconography appears in Syria at the latest during the fourteenth century B.C., as is shown on the seal of Ini-Tešub, governor of Karkamiš¹⁸¹. Since the Old Hittite Empire was in contact with Syria during the reign of Khattušili I¹⁸², it cannot be excluded that such Hittite elements may have been known in Syria as early as the sixteenth century B.C.¹⁸³.

A first glimpse at the glyptics of Qatna reveals that the sealings found in Room L were made at a much higher quality than that one on the cylinder seal found in Room N. The reason for this remains obscure. Chronological differences can be excluded. It can only be suggested that there may have been functional or workshop related differences.

The iconography and the style date all the seal impressions found in Room L to the later phase of the Old Syrian Period, the Middle Bronze Age II.

3.3. Clay figurines¹⁸⁴

Seven clay figurines were found in the 2000 field season. Five of them appear as human figures, one as an animal. One represents the model of a wheel of a chariot.

The almost rectangular head of a human figurine (MSH00G-i0129) was found in a modern pit (Fig. 94). The ears, the eyes and the nose are formed by pierced applications. A nearly identical figurine was discovered by Du Mesnil du Buisson in the 1920s¹⁸⁵. Both pieces are comparable to a similar but complete object found in the so-called “Favissa F.5238” in Area P in Ebla¹⁸⁶. On the

¹⁷⁷ The period “Old Syrian II” corresponds with the “Middle Bronze Age II”; cf. ORTHMANN 1975: 114ff.

¹⁷⁸ COLLON 1975.

¹⁷⁹ BIETAK 1998: 165ff.

¹⁸⁰ Cf., e.g., the illustration on a “Hammer Seal” from the seventeenth or early sixteenth century B.C. (Böhmer in: ORTHMANN 1975: 446f., fig. 375c).

¹⁸¹ KOHLMAYER / STROMMINGER 1982: 153f., no. 148.

¹⁸² Cf. STEINER 1999.

¹⁸³ For an example from the sixteenth century B.C., cf., e.g., MORA 1987: tabs. 1.3.c and 1.3.e.

¹⁸⁴ We would like to thank Dr. Alexander Pruss (Halle/Frankfurt) for his insightful comments on the clay figurines.

¹⁸⁵ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1928: pl. XXXVI.5.

¹⁸⁶ MARCHETTI / NIGRO 1999: 268, fig. 9 (TM.94.P.526).

basis of the pottery found within the same context, that piece can be dated to the transition period between Middle Bronze Age IB and IIA (or Old Syrian I and II), only slightly earlier than the Mari archives¹⁸⁷.

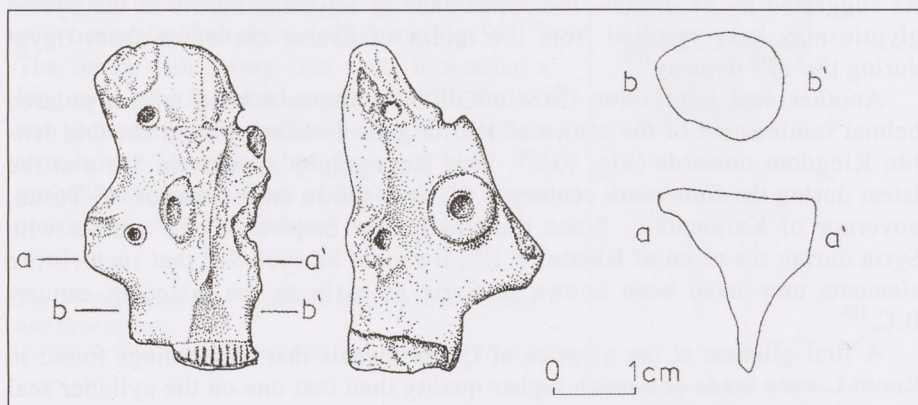


Fig. 94 Clay figurine MSH 00G-i0129.

الشكل 94 دمية طينية MSH 00G-i0129

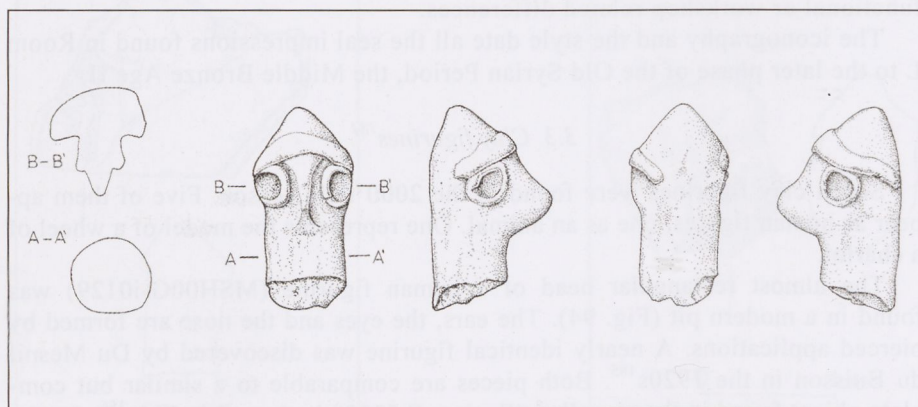


Fig. 95 Clay figurine MSH 00G-i0014.

الشكل 95 دمية طينية MSH 00G-i0014

The round head of another figurine (MSH00G-i0014) was also found in modern debris (Fig. 95). It wears a pointed helmet. As with a similar object discovered by Du Mesnil du Buisson¹⁸⁸, it dates to the Middle Bronze Age II (= Old Syrian II).

The figurine MSH00G-i0061 dates to the Early Bronze Age IVb (Fig. 96). Only the head, the neck and parts of the body are preserved. It shows an unusual painting: A dark red strip is painted on the right shoulder, another one runs from the left shoulder up to the nose and ends in a big spot. The left part of the nose is coloured in red.

¹⁸⁷ MARCHETTI / NIGRO 1999: 282, tab. 1.

¹⁸⁸ DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: pl. LI c246.

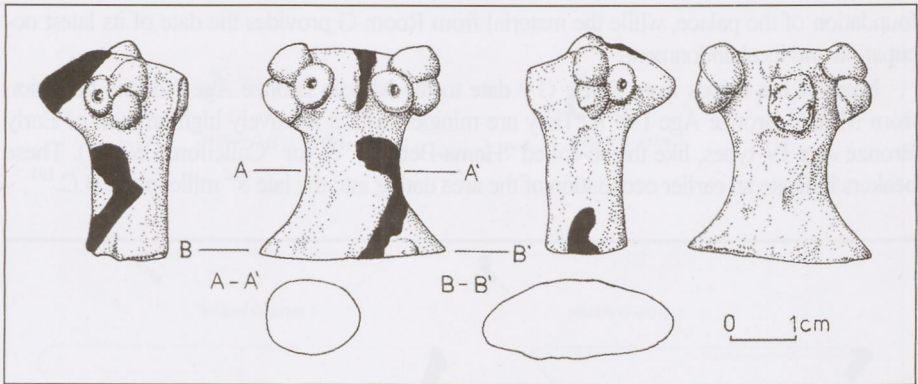


Fig. 96 Clay figurine MSH 00G-i0061.
الشكل 96 دمية طينية MSH 00G-i0061

3.4. Other objects

The other objects found during the 2000 field season were tools made of stone, a basalt bowl, and a bronze spearhead found in Room N.

In 1999 a scaraboid was found in modern debris covering the floor of Room F (Fig. 97)¹⁸⁹. Scaraboids were relatively rare during the 18th dynasty and became more common in the 19th dynasty. Three signs are visible; they were obviously a cryptographic writing of the name of the god Amun. A goose is illustrated, too. This animal is known to belong to Amun from the Ramesside period onward. Iconography and style date the scaraboid to the time between the 19th (1292–1070 B.C.) and the 26th (664–525 B.C.) dynasties.

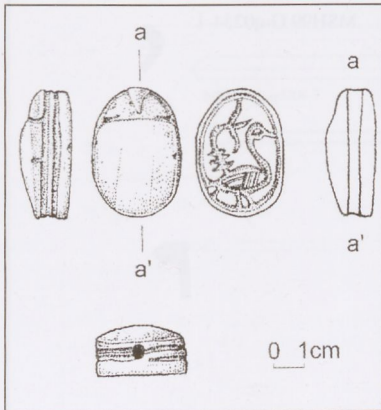


Fig. 97 Scaraboid MSH 99G-i0018.
الشكل 97 جعران MSH 99G-i0018

ace in Phase G 9 (Figs. 98 and 99). This material helps to establish the chronology of the

3.5. Ceramics

Almost no original inventory of pottery was found in the rooms of the palace. The only exception is Room G (*Salle des Jarres*) with its Late Bronze Age storage pots and other types (see below).

Middle Bronze Age

The majority of the well-stratified Middle Bronze Age pottery assemblages belongs to the fill layers below the floors of Phase G 8, and thus connected with the construction time of the palace in Phase G 9 (Figs. 98 and 99). This material helps to establish the chronology of the

¹⁸⁹ We would like to thank Marcus Müller MA (Tübingen) for his comments on this object.

foundation of the palace, while the material from Room G provides the date of its latest occupation and its abandonment.

Most of the sherds from Phase G 9 date to the Middle Bronze Age I or the transition from Middle Bronze Age I to II. They are mingled with a relatively high amount of Early Bronze Age IV types, like the so-called “Hama-Beakers”¹⁹⁰ (or “Caliciform Ware”). These beakers indicate an earlier occupation of the area dating into the late 3rd millennium B.C.¹⁹¹

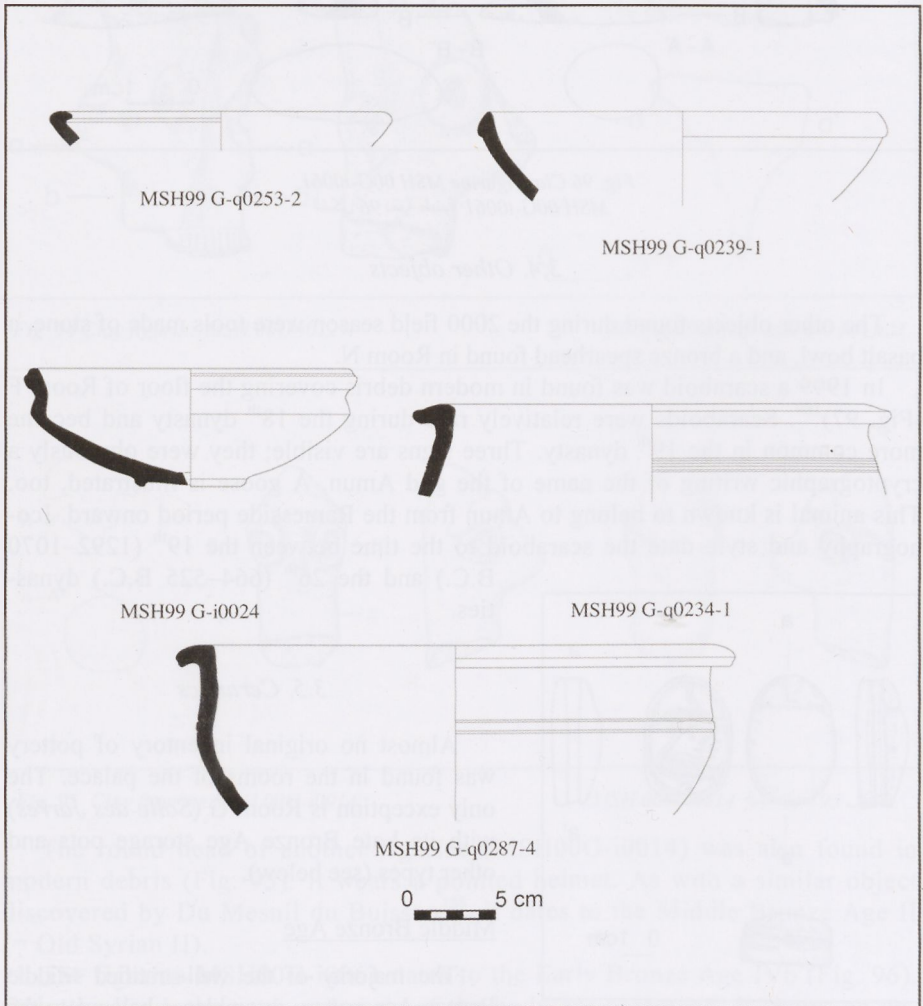


Fig. 98 Ceramics from Phase G 9.

الشكل 98 فخار من الحقبة G 9.

¹⁹⁰ For “Hama-Beakers” and the “Caliciform Ware”, cf. MAZZONI 1985: 1ff.; Rova in: ORTHMANN – ROVA 1991: 106ff., ROVA 1996: 24f.

¹⁹¹ As was already revealed by the excavations of Du Mesnil du Buisson.

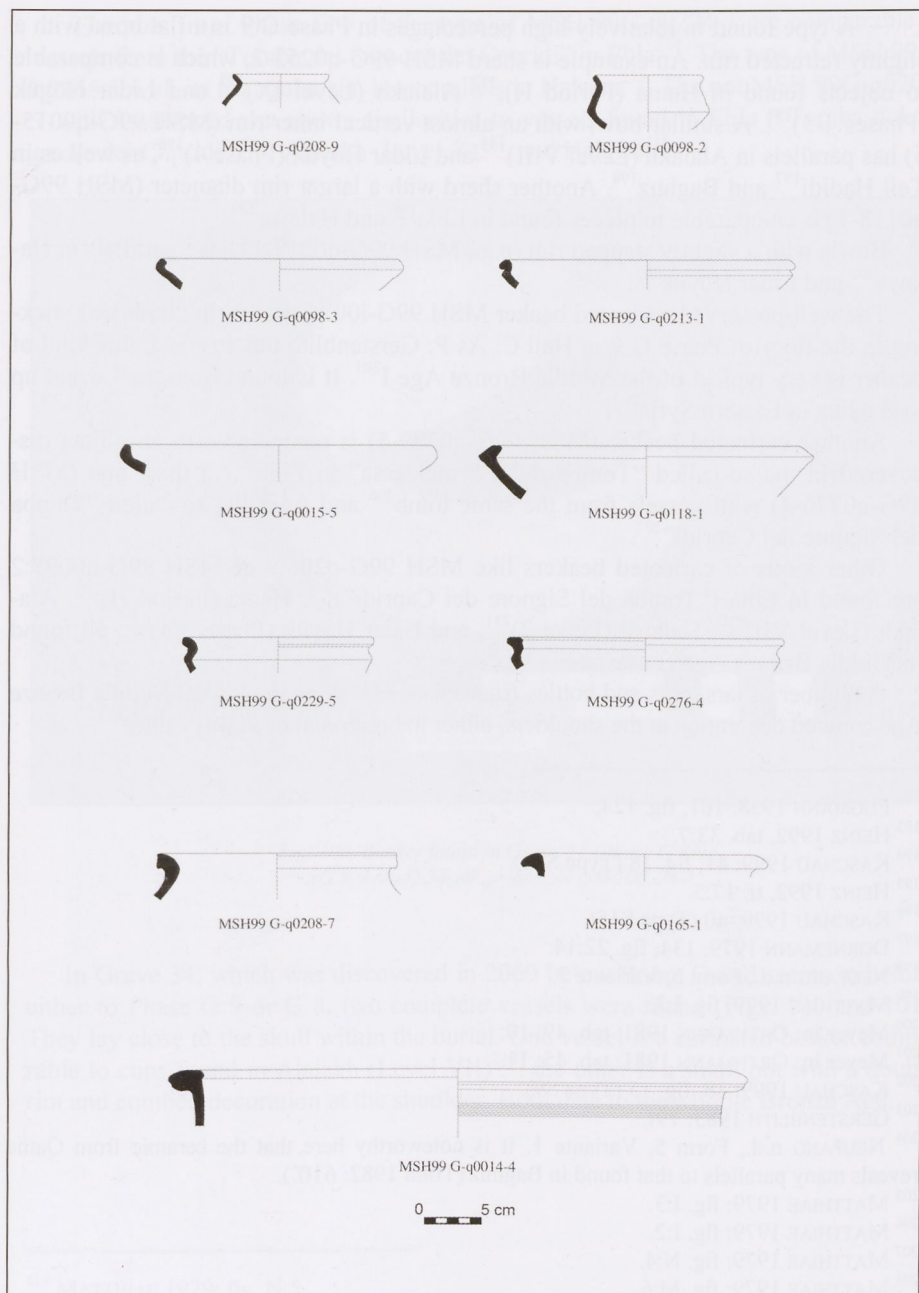


Fig. 99 Ceramics from Phase G 9.
الشكل 99 فخار من الحقبة G 9.

A type found in relatively high percentages in Phase G 9 is a flat bowl with a slightly retracted rim. An example is sherd MSH 99G-q0253-2, which is comparable to objects found in Hama (Period H),¹⁹² Alalakh (Level IX)¹⁹³ and Lidar Höyük (Phases 4-5)¹⁹⁴. A similar bowl with an almost vertical inner rim (MSH 99G-q0015-5) has parallels in Alalakh (Level VIII)¹⁹⁵ and Lidar Höyük (Phase 4)¹⁹⁶, as well as in Tell Hadidi¹⁹⁷ and Baghuz¹⁹⁸. Another sherd with a larger rim diameter (MSH 99G-q0118-1) is comparable to pieces found in Ebla¹⁹⁹ and Halawa²⁰⁰.

Bowls with a slightly stepped rim (e.g., MSH 99G-q0213-1) have parallels in Halawa²⁰¹ and Lidar Höyük²⁰².

The well-preserved carinated beaker MSH 99G-i0024 with a ring base was sticking in the floor of Phase G 9 in Hall C. As P. Gerstenblith has stressed, this kind of beaker is very typical of the Middle Bronze Age I²⁰³. It is found from the Levant up to Baghuz in Eastern Syria²⁰⁴.

Another carinated beaker (MSH 99G-q0229-5) is comparable to an object discovered in the so-called "Tomba della Principessa" in Ebla²⁰⁵, a third one (MSH 99G-q0276-4) with vessels from the same tomb²⁰⁶ and from the so-called "Tomba del Signore dei Capridi"²⁰⁷.

Other kinds of carinated beakers like MSH 99G-q208:9 or MSH 99G-q0098:2 are found in Ebla ("Tomba del Signore dei Capridi")²⁰⁸, Hama (Period H)²⁰⁹, Alalakh (Level VII)²¹⁰, Halawa (Level 2)²¹¹, and Lidar Höyük (Phase 3/4)²¹², all found in Middle Bronze Age contexts.

A number of jars, pots and bottles from Phase G 9 show the typical Middle Bronze Age combed decoration at the shoulders, either in horizontal or in wavy lines²¹³.

¹⁹² FUGMANN 1958: 101, fig. 124.

¹⁹³ HEINZ 1992, tab. 33:7.

¹⁹⁴ KASCHAU 1999: 41, fig. 18 (Type S16).

¹⁹⁵ HEINZ 1992, tf. 17:5.

¹⁹⁶ KASCHAU 1999: 40 (Type S15).

¹⁹⁷ DORNEMANN 1979: 134, fig. 22:14.

¹⁹⁸ NEUFANG n.d., Form 3, Variante 2.

¹⁹⁹ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. I:3.

²⁰⁰ Meyer in: ORTHMANN 1981: tab. 49: 10.

²⁰¹ Meyer in: ORTHMANN 1981: tab. 45: 11.

²⁰² KASCHAU 1999: 38, fig. 15 (Type S9).

²⁰³ GERSTENBLITH 1983: 79f.

²⁰⁴ NEUFANG n.d., Form 5, Variante 1. It is noteworthy here that the ceramic from Qatna reveals many parallels to that found in Baghuz (TUBB 1982: 61ff.).

²⁰⁵ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. I:3.

²⁰⁶ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. I:2.

²⁰⁷ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. N:4.

²⁰⁸ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. M:6.

²⁰⁹ FUGMANN 1958: 101, fig. 124.

²¹⁰ HEINZ 1992: tf. 4:17.

²¹¹ Meyer in: ORTHMANN 1981, tf. 45:1 and 49:8.

²¹² KASCHAU 1999: 46, fig. 23 (Type N9).

²¹³ On the combed decoration of Middle Bronze Age pottery, cf. now KASCHAU 1999: 101ff.

The pots from Phase G 9 of the type of MSH 99G-q0234-1 are comparable to vessels from the “Tomba del Signore dei Capridi” in Ebla²¹⁴. The type of MSH 99G-q0165-1 with its triangular rim has parallels in Halawa²¹⁵. The pot MSH 99G-q0208-7 with its stepped rim shows similarities to vessels found in Ebla (“Tomba del Signore dei Capridi”)²¹⁶, Alalakh (Level X)²¹⁷, and Halawa²¹⁸.

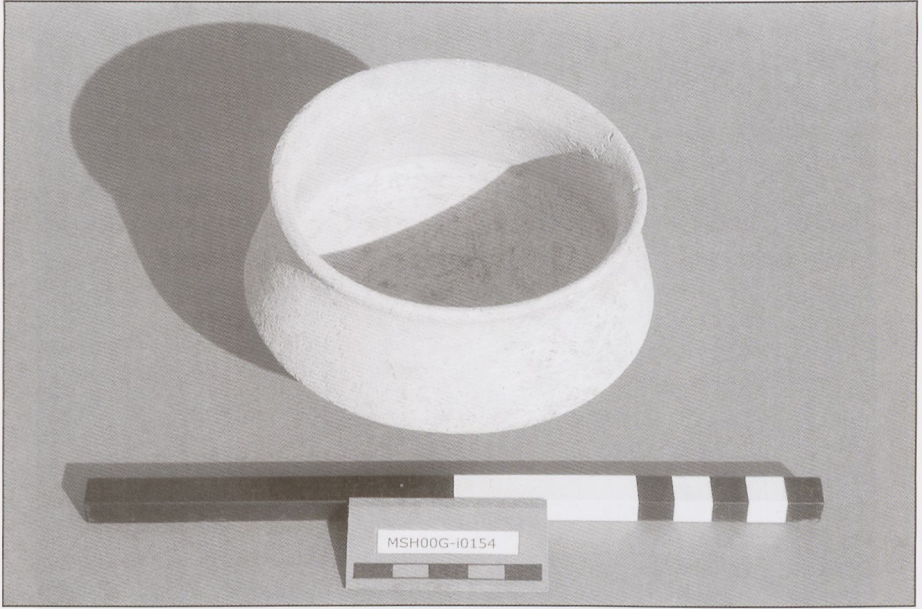


Fig. 100 Beaker found in Grave 34 (Phase G 8/9).
الشكل 100 كأس عثر عليها في القبر 34 (الحقبة 8/9).

In Grave 34, which was discovered in 2000 below Room O and seems to belong either to Phase G 9 or G 8, two complete vessels were found (Figs. 100 and 101). They lay close to the skull within the burial. One vessel is a carinated beaker comparable to cups found in Alalakh (Level VII)²¹⁹, the other is a small pot with a double rim and combed decoration at the shoulder. Both date to the Middle Bronze Age.

²¹⁴ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. N:5.

²¹⁵ Meyer in: ORTHMANN 1981, tf. 46:12.

²¹⁶ MATTHIAE 1979: fig. N:6.

²¹⁷ HEINZ 1992: tab. 76:7.

²¹⁸ Meyer in: ORTHMANN 1981: tab. 44:9.

²¹⁹ HEINZ 1992: tab. 4, 17.

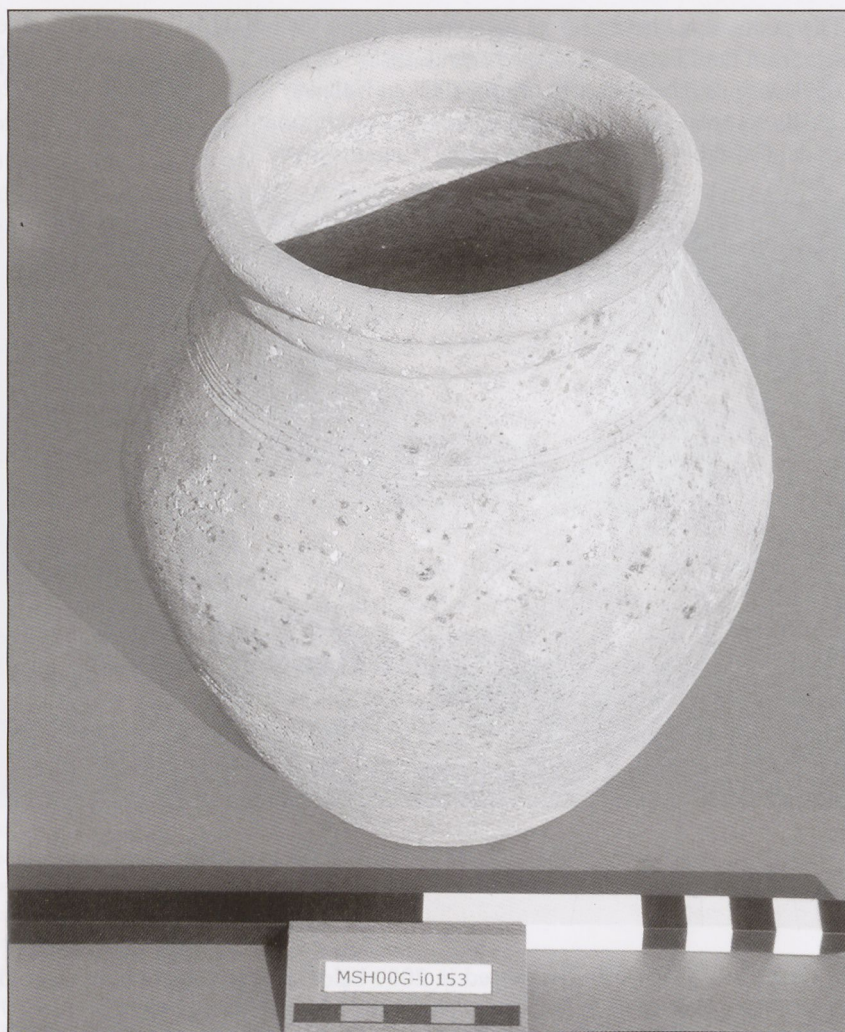


Fig. 101 Small pot found in Grave 34 (Phase G 8/9).
الشكل 101 إناء صغير عثر عليه في القبر 34 (الحقبة 8/9 G).

Late Bronze Age

Ceramics from Phase G 7 were exclusively found in Room G, the so-called *Salle des Jarres* (Fig. 102)²²⁰. The majority apparently dates to the Late Bronze Age I, but is mixed up with a number of Middle Bronze Age sherds.

²²⁰ For the ceramics found by the French archaeologist within the *Salle des Jarres*, cf. DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935: 95f.

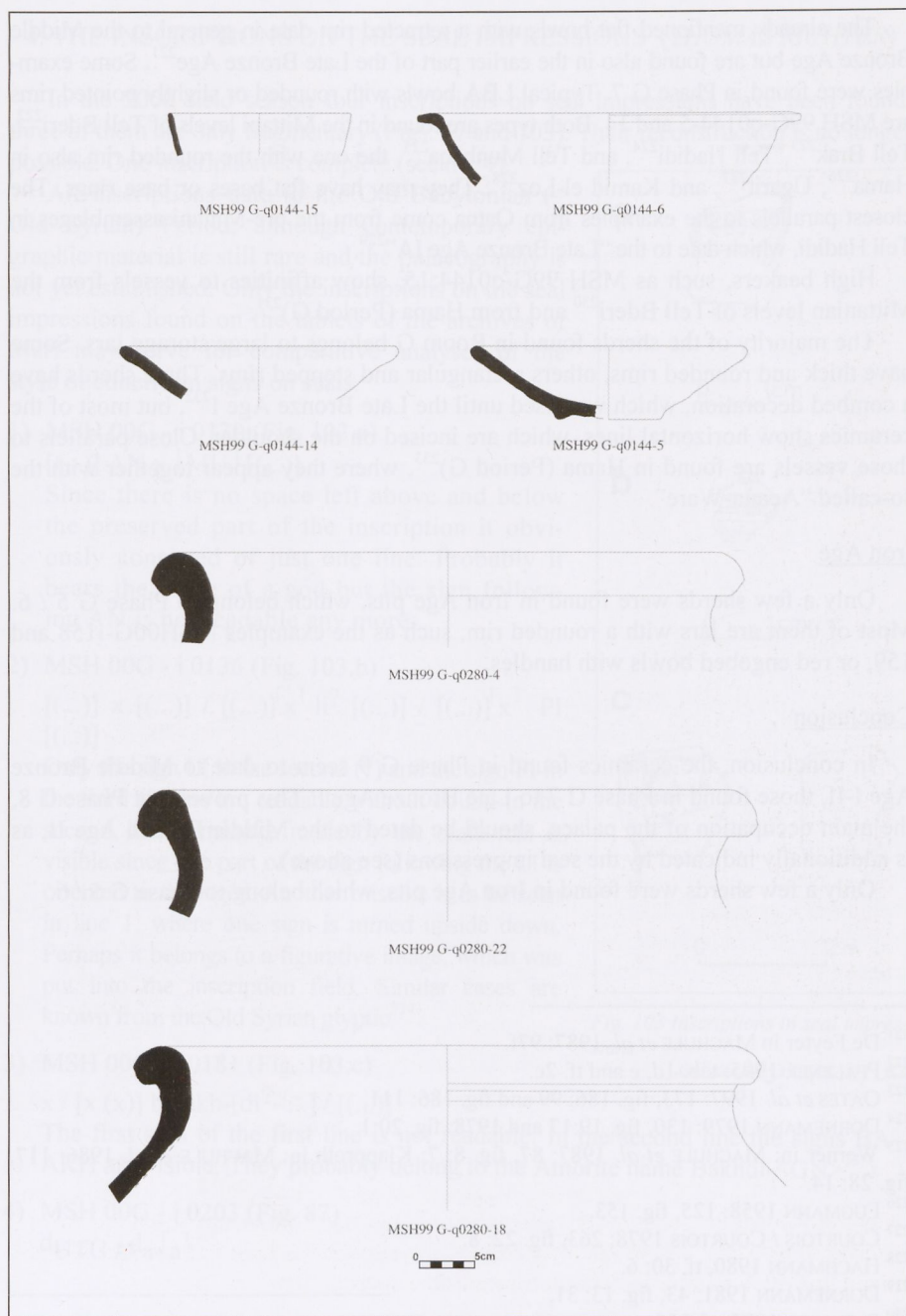


Fig. 102 Ceramics from Phase G 7.
الشكل 102 فخار من الحقبة G 7.

The already mentioned flat bowls with a retracted rim date in general to the Middle Bronze Age but are found also in the earlier part of the Late Bronze Age²²¹. Some examples were found in Phase G 7. Typical LBA bowls with rounded or slightly pointed rims are MSH 99G-q0144-5 and 14. Both types are found in the Mittani levels of Tell Bderi²²², Tell Brak²²³, Tell Hadidi²²⁴, and Tell Munbaqa²²⁵, the one with the rounded rim also in Hama²²⁶, Ugarit²²⁷, and Kamid el-Loz²²⁸. They may have flat bases or base rings. The closest parallels to the examples from Qatna come from the pre-Mittani assemblages in Tell Hadidi, which date to the "Late Bronze Age IA"²²⁹.

High beakers, such as MSH 99G-q0144:15, show affinities to vessels from the Mittanian levels of Tell Bderi²³⁰ and from Hama (Period G)²³¹.

The majority of the sherds found in Room G belongs to large storage jars. Some have thick and rounded rims, others rectangular and stepped rims. Three sherds have a combed decoration, which was used until the Late Bronze Age I²³², but most of the ceramics show horizontal lines, which are incised on the shoulder. Close parallels to those vessels are found in Hama (Period G)²³³, where they appear together with the so-called "Açana-Ware".

Iron Age

Only a few sherds were found in Iron Age pits, which belong to Phase G 5 / 6. Most of them are jars with a rounded rim, such as the examples MSH00G-i158 and 159, or red engobed bowls with handles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ceramics found in Phase G 9 seem to date to Middle Bronze Age I-II, those found in Phase G 7 to Late Bronze Age I. This proves that Phase G 8, the main occupation of the palace, should be dated to the Middle Bronze Age II, as is additionally indicated by the seal impressions (see above).

Only a few sherds were found in Iron Age pits, which belong to Phase G 5 / 6.

²²¹ De Feyter in MACHULE *et al.* 1987: 97f.

²²² PFÄLZNER 1995: tab. 1d, e and tf. 2c.

²²³ OATES *et al.* 1997: 173, fig. 186: 99 and fig. 186: 111.

²²⁴ DORNEMANN 1979: 130, fig. 19:17 and 1978: fig. 20:1.

²²⁵ Werner in: MACHULE *et al.* 1987: 87, fig. 8: 7; Klapproth in: MACHULE *et al.* 1986: 117, fig. 28: 14.

²²⁶ FUGMANN 1958: 125, fig. 153.

²²⁷ COURTOIS / COURTOIS 1978: 263, fig. 22: 8.

²²⁸ HACHMANN 1980, tf. 30: 6.

²²⁹ DORNEMANN 1981: 43, fig. 13: 31.

²³⁰ PFÄLZNER 1995: tf. 35f.

²³¹ FUGMANN 1958: 120, fig. 143.

²³² Cf., e.g., in Tell Hadidi: DORNEMANN 1981: 31f.

²³³ FUGMANN 1958: 120, fig. 143.

4. THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE SEAL IMPRESSIONS (*THOMAS RICHTER*)

In the 2000 field season four inscriptions on seal impressions have been found, three of them are only fragmentary (Figs. 87 and 103). Their reconstruction is no longer possible. One inscription is complete (see no. 4).

All inscriptions date to the Old Babylonian (= Old Syrian) Period, although contemporary epigraphic material is still rare and the palaeography is not yet established. Only the inscriptions on the seal impressions found on the tablets of the archives of Mari may serve for comparative analyses of the style of cuneiform signs on seals.

1) MSH 00G - i 0130 (Fig. 103.a)

[(...)] AN x [MU] [(...)]

Since there is no space left above and below the preserved part of the inscription it obviously consisted of just one line. Probably it bears the name of a god but the sign following AN is not readable any more.

2) MSH 00G - i 0136 (Fig. 103.b)

[(...)] x [(...)] / [(...)]^[x] li? [(...)] / [(...)]^[x] PI [(...)]

Only the sign LI in the second (?) and the sign PI in the third (?) line are readable without doubt. In the second line a mistake made by the craftsman is visible since one part of the sign following the LI is oriented to the *right*. Another mistake is to be seen in line 1, where one sign is turned upside down. Perhaps it belongs to a figurative image, which was put into the inscription field. Similar cases are known from the Old Syrian glyptic²³⁴.

3) MSH 00G - i 0181 (Fig. 103.c)

x / [x (x)] ba-akh-[di²- ...] / [(...)]

The first sign of the first line is not readable. In the second line the signs BA-AKH are visible. They probably belong to the Amorite name Bakhdi-^{<GN>}²³⁵.

4) MSH 00G - i 0203 (Fig. 87)

d_{UTU} / d_a-^[a]

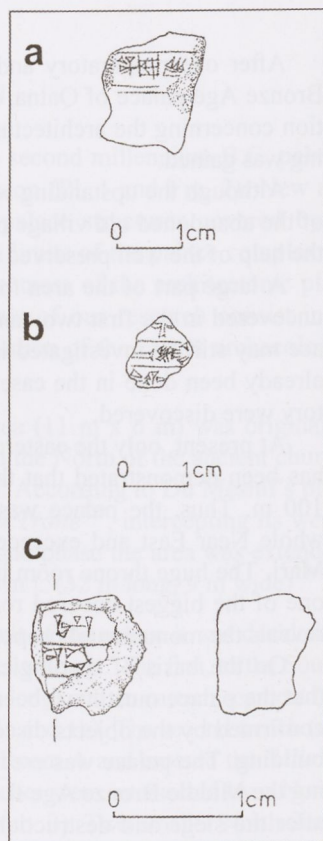


Fig. 103 Inscriptions in seal impressions.

الشكل 103 كتابات في طبعات الختام.

²³⁴ Cf. e.g. OTTO 2000: nos. 364 and 439.

²³⁵ Cf. e.g. HUFFMON 1965: 173f., BIROT 1979: 72 and STRECK 2000: 390, Index. The meaning of *bakhdū* is "behind, in favour of". M. STRECK (2000: § 5.75) translates Bakhdi-^o as „Mein Rückhalt (ist)“.

Inscriptions with the names of the deities Šamaš and Aya are well attested in Mesopotamia but quite rare in Syria²³⁶.

5. CONCLUSION

After one preparatory and one full field season of renewed excavations in the Bronze Age palace of Qatna, a great deal of new and sometimes surprising information concerning the architecture, chronology and historical significance of the building was gained.

Although the upstanding walls of the palace had been removed by the inhabitants of the abandoned old village of Mishrifeh, the whole layout can be re-evaluated with the help of the well preserved foundation walls.

A large part of the area formerly excavated by Du Mesnil du Buisson was again uncovered in the first two campaigns of the project. The untouched parts of the palace may still be investigated in the coming seasons in Operations G and H. This has already been done in the case of Rooms N and U where parts of the original inventory were discovered.

At present, only the eastern limit of the palace has been localised. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that the building extended over an area of at least 135 m x 100 m. Thus, the palace was one of the largest known to the Bronze Age of the whole Near East and exceeded in the dimensions even the palace of Zimri-Lim at Mari. The huge throne room in Qatna measured 40 m x 21 m, the square Hall C was one of the biggest covered rooms in Bronze Age architecture at 36 m x 36 m. This reveals the monumental proportions of this residence.

On the basis of typological considerations, the hypothesis has been developed that the palace must have been founded during the Middle Bronze Age. This is now confirmed by the objects discovered in the construction and occupation levels of the building. The palace was erected in the Middle Bronze Age I-II and was in use during the Middle Bronze Age II and the Late Bronze Age I. It was probably abandoned after the siege and destruction of the city by the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I in the second half of the fourteenth century B.C. A reoccupation took place during the Iron Age.

Contrary to the suspicion that the palace would have been completely emptied during the former excavations and the following occupation, a number of relevant objects have been found. They prove that more important objects may be discovered in the future even if complete room inventories would be an exception. However, the seal impressions and the wall paintings shed new light on the art of the important city of Qatna during the height of its political and economic influence.

The formal and functional structure of the building can be much better understood, although many questions still remain open and a number of problems unsolved. The future work will help in uncovering the vast importance of this remarkable palace.

²³⁶ Cf. two examples bought in Aleppo: COLLON 1986: nos. 400 and 540.