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DEFINING RESIDENTIAL GRAVES

The case of Titriş Höyük in southeastern Anatolia during the late IIIrd millennium BC

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Abstract

Since prehistoric times, the use of graves built within private houses has been a common burial custom of both Old and New World societies. Although efforts have been made by scholars to interpret the role these graves had in constructing the social, cultural and economic organization of ancient societies, there has been no attempt to clearly define the use of basic terminology, such as ‘intramural’, for this category of funerary depositions.

The paper here presented will thus aim at defining a more coherent typology of ‘residential graves’ (i.e., a built tomb embedded within a dwelling and contemporary with it) and distinguish it from other types of funerary depositions that were part of the settlement (i.e. cists, pits, *pithoi*), but that are difficult to connect with the collective memory of the community. Such an epistemological exercise will facilitate interpretations carried out by scholars interested in mortuary archaeology and will also define the socio-economic value of residential graves as part of the construction of the familial memory. Moreover, to further elucidate the definition of residential graves I will also present a specific case study (i.e., Titriş Höyük during the late IIIrd millennium BC) in which the use of such funerary depositions was pivotal for framing the emergence of a new social class.

Introduction

Historically speaking, the study of intramural funerary depositions has not been a popular subject of research in the field of archaeology. During the last five years, however, the topic has been the subject of some long-overdue

attention in the form of conferences and other research that explores various aspects of intramural funerary depositions in ancient societies, as with, for example, the 2006 symposium *Sepolti tra i vivi* held in Rome, and the recently released volume on residential burials edited by Ron Adams and Stacey King¹. However, as correctly pointed out by Edgar Peltenburg at the ICAANE conference in London², much confusion still remains regarding the definitions of the different types of intramural funerary depositions and especially the differentiation between residential graves and other types of intramural funerary depositions. For example, the term ‘intramural’ has sometimes been used to describe funerary depositions located both ‘within the city walls’ and ‘within the walls of a building’³. This has created confusion in distinguishing between graves located within the city walls (as is the case of the mausolea) and those embedded within the architecture of a specific building (as is the case of sub-adult inhumations in pottery vessels underneath walls or floors; depositions in pits, jars, *pithoi* under the floor; tombs in abandoned houses; and residential graves). It now appears important to determine specific terminology in order to define the type of relationship that occurs between graves, architecture and the overall settlement topography when investigating tombs that are located in an urban context. For example, the establishment of clear parameters can be useful when dealing with tombs that have the purpose of becoming funerary crypts embedded within residential architecture.

In particular, we should consider residential graves as funerary depositions that were planned as part of the domestic architecture and, thus, could have functioned as a clear point of reference for the living family in the process of revising the memory of their ancestors. This phenomenon served the purpose of emphasizing the socio-economic role played by the ancestors in strengthening familial lineages and reinforcing a sense of belonging among the family’s members

during the performance of their daily activities as well as in the process of confrontation with groups that present a different social, religious or ethnic identity. Thus, the identification of residential graves appears as a fundamental step in understanding the rules governing the social organization of the investigated groups. More specifically, the different burial locations can also be indicative of a diverse way of conceiving social links among group members; for example, while extramural funerary depositions in large cemeteries can indicate a centralized control on how the living interact with the ‘world of the dead’, the use of residential graves built within the private dwellings can signify a desire by emerging groups to differentiate their position from central authorities.

Thus, it appears of fundamental importance to clearly distinguish residential graves when analyzing funerary customs of ancient societies; and, thus, in order to better identify this type of funerary deposition when confronting archaeological contexts, we should look at the following elements:

- tombs that are embedded in the architecture,
- tombs that have a high visibility within the house,
- tombs that have a direct and continuous relationship with residential architecture (e.g. through the use of altars or drains located in other rooms).

After outlining these preliminary elements on the identification of residential graves in the archaeological record, I would like now to turn my attention to the main aim of this paper: the investigation of the social value of the appearance of residential funerary chambers at the site of Tiriş Höyük in southeastern Anatolia during the late IIIrd millennium BC.

The transformation of funerary practices at Tiriş Höyük during the Late IIIrd Millennium BC

During the IIIrd millennium BC, Mesopotamia is marked by an impressive increase in archaeological data directly connected to the practice of ancient funerary rituals. The abundance of this type of material culture emphasizes the importance of funerary ritual enactments for these ancient societies, who used them as tools for strengthening societal structure at a moment in which social,

1 Adams/King 2010; Bartoloni/Benedettini 2007/2008.

2 Peltenburg personal communication.

3 According to the English dictionary, the adjective ‘intramural’ means ‘situated or done within the walls of the buildings’. In Italian, the conundrum has been solved through the use of the term ‘intra muros’ for the tombs built within the walls of the building and ‘intra moenia’ for those built in a more generic position within the city walls.

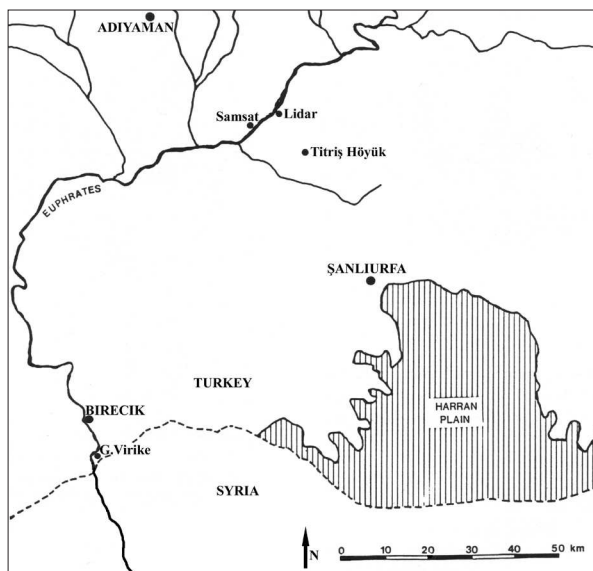


Fig. 1: Map of southeastern Anatolia showing the location of Tiriş Höyük.

cultural, and economic habits were experiencing a transformative shift.

As part of this socio-economic and political landscape, the ancient settlement of Tiriş Höyük serves as an excellent case study for understanding the important role played by funerary practices in establishing forms of societal organization within a northern Mesopotamian medium-sized urban center in this specific historical period⁴. The site is located in the Urfa region (southeastern Turkey) near a tributary of the Euphrates River (fig. 1). Its geographical location was suited to both pastoral and agricultural activities, and from a strategic point of view also enabled control over long-distance commercial networks from the Urfa-Harran (South and East) and the Lidar-Samsat (North and West) areas. The connection between Lidar and Samsat was in fact one of the only available fords for crossing the Euphrates River in ancient times⁵.

The earliest documented occupation at Tiriş Höyük is during the Early Early Bronze Age (ca. 3100-2600 BC) when probably only the acropolis and part of the Lower Town were occupied⁶. In terms of evidence for burial practices during this specific period, archaeologists discovered three cist graves

in the Lower Town that probably belonged to a larger extramural cemetery⁷.

Even though the Early Early Bronze Age represents the first period of occupation at the site, it is during the Middle Early Bronze Age (ca. 2600/2500-2400 BC) and the Late Early Bronze Age (ca. 2400/2300-2100 BC)⁸ that Tiriş Höyük acquired an important status in the political landscape of northern Mesopotamia. It is during this phase that the settlement grew in extension both in the Lower and Outer sections of the town⁹.

More specifically, during the Middle EBA the main settlement occupied an area of ca. 32 hectares and had nine extramural suburban settlements, adding another 11 hectares to the total occupation of the site at this time¹⁰. These extramural settlement areas were probably used for specialized craft production, as demonstrated by the discovery of a flint workshop situated in one of these areas located approximately 400 m east of the Outer Town limits¹¹. At this time, the total area occupied by the main site and the nine suburban areas should have thus totaled about 43 hectares, as recognizable from both excavation and survey data¹². In terms of the urban fabric, massive foundation walls associated with a ritual deposit (i.e., a decapitated dog) were partially uncovered in the Outer Town¹³, leading the archaeologists to interpret these structures as possible public buildings. Instead the architecture uncovered in the Lower Town suggests the presence of elite private dwellings in this part of the Middle EBA town¹⁴.

Extramural cemeteries were also in use outside of the town and on the fringes of both the Outer and Lower Towns. Among these, the largest one was located 400 m west of the ancient settlement¹⁵. At this locale, a total of 41 cist graves and 3 *pithoi* have been excavated by both the German and American expeditions¹⁶. Although the tombs of this large burial ground were poorly preserved due to

4 Algaze/Matney 2011.

5 Algaze/Pournelle 2003, 103-28.

6 Matney/Algaze 1995, 46.

7 Algaze et al. 2001, 46, fig.17.

8 A total of 750 sqm. of Middle EBA architecture and 3000 sqm. of Late EBA architecture have been uncovered, Algaze/Matney 2011, 995.

9 Algaze et al. 2001.

10 Algaze/Matney 2011, 997-99.

11 *ibid.* 2001, 37-40.

12 Algaze/Pournelle 2003, 106.

13 Algaze/Matney 2011, 998.

14 Algaze et al. 1992, 37-38.

15 Honça/Algaze 1998, 104-106.

16 Hauptmann 1993, 10-15; Honça/Algaze 1998, 104-106, figs. 3-5.

modern plowing activities and looting, a comparison with the contemporaneous 205 graves found at the nearby site of Lidar Höyük can help in reconstructing the overall extension of the cemetery. The tombs of this period are mostly rectangular cists constructed from limestone with single and/or multiple depositions of articulated skeletons¹⁷. The presence of an entrance dromos additionally characterizes the largest tombs around which smaller cist graves were clustered. In terms of the funerary goods recovered inside the graves, these are composed of pottery vessels typical of a mid-IIIrd millennium Syro-Anatolian repertoire as well as jewelry, bronze pins, and a few ‘violin-shaped’ stone figurines that recall those found in the Aegean, western Anatolia, and Cilicia, thus testifying to a cultural and probably commercial link between Titriş Höyük and the western regions¹⁸.

At Titriş Höyük during the following archaeological phase (Late EBA) instead experiences a complete transformation of the settlement and the whole region surrounding it, where numerous villages and hamlets of the Middle EBA were abandoned¹⁹. The site also undergoes a contraction in settlement size, now totaling about 33 hectares after the abandonment of the suburban areas. It is also during this phase that a fortification system was built surrounding the Lower and Outer Towns. This consisted of thick, mud-brick fortification walls over a stone foundation and an external moat system ‘built of sloping layers of densely packed clay, earth and crushed limestone’²⁰. The construction of the wall was intended to better protect the city from external enemies, reflected in an increase in perimortem trauma during this phase as compared to the Middle EBA²¹. Moreover, the construction of fortification walls appears to be a typical marker of mid-to-late IIIrd millennium city-states, likely linked to the extensive increase in warfare between regional powers also testified by written sources²².

However, the major changes are visible in the urban fabric of the city, which is now characterized by the presence of private dwellings connected and separated by a complex road system in both the

Outer and Lower Towns²³. Due to the fact that the whole city shows a precise and impressive urban regularity, comprised of wide streets and alleyways to connect the different neighborhoods in the Outer and Lower Towns, it can be assumed that the Late EBA town was planned by a centralized authority who allotted land for the construction of large private dwellings in the neighborhoods of both sectors of the city²⁴. These domestic structures were built following standardized measurements and an architectural style typical of a second half of the IIIrd millennium BC Mesopotamian tradition, in which the main courtyard was linked to both the residential rooms and the cooking, storage, and craft production areas²⁵. As mentioned before, during this Late EBA phase the suburbs dedicated to specialized production in the earlier period were abandoned²⁶, while other specialized activities were probably transferred from the outer area to the main site and, more specifically, within private dwellings²⁷. It is in this specific household context that the archaeologists also found important working features and tools related to specialized production still *in situ*, such as plastered basins for processing grapes, looms and spindle whorls for making textiles, a stone ‘trinket’ mold for casting metal objects, stone tools for procuring and processing food, and large storage jars for storing food products²⁸. Within this scenario (i.e., a transformation of both urban fabric and craft production between the Middle and Late EBA), it is also important to highlight the abandonment of the Middle EBA ‘public’ architecture in the Outer Town, marked by massive stone foundations, that, during the following Late EBA phase, was substituted by private dwellings built on top of it.

Of particular note within the urban fabric is the evidence related to burial customs, which highlight other major transformations in the Late EBA. This period is characterized by the presence of funerary depositions within private dwellings (in funerary chambers, *pithoi*, and cooking pots, fig. 2), an element that is directly related to an apparent lack of extramural cemeteries. Among these intramural

17 *Ibid.* 1998, 106.

18 Laneri 2004, 113-9.

19 Algaze/Matney 2011, 999.

20 *Ibid.* 2011, 1001.

21 Erdal 2012.

22 Archi/Biga 2003.

23 As pointed out by Algaze/Matney (2011, 999) the reorganization of the settlement during the Late EBA period “can be described as a massive and well-planned urban renewal program.”

24 Matney 2002, 24-27.

25 Algaze et al. 2001; Lebeau 1996; Matney et al. 1999; Pfalzner 2001.

26 Algaze et al. 2001, 41-44.

27 Algaze/Pournelle 2003, 105-108.

28 Matney et al. 1997, 61-84.



Fig. 2 : Map of a section of the Outer Town of the Late Early Bronze Age settlement of Tiriş Höyük highlighting three intramural tombs (A B95.60, B B94.55, and C B95.58).

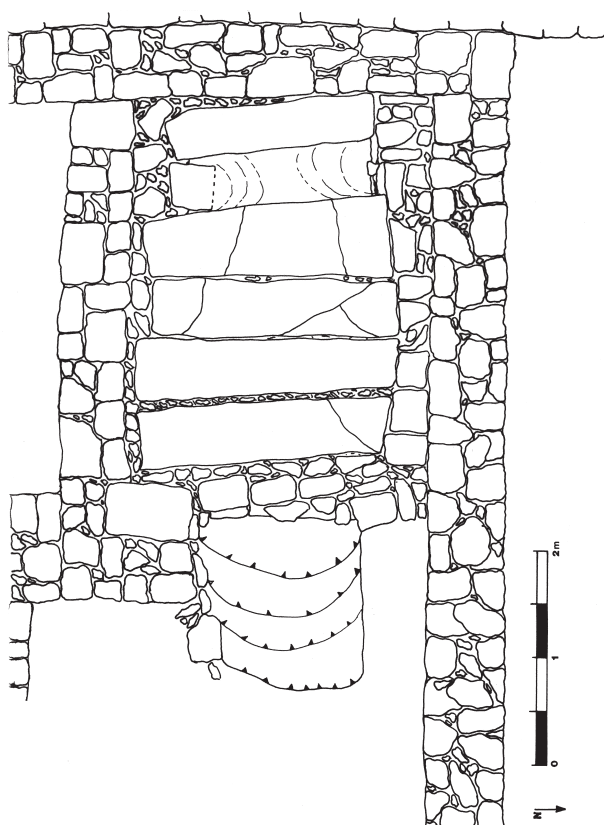


Fig. 3 : Plan of a residential grave (B94.56) of the Late Early Bronze Age showing the stone slabs used as roofing.

funerary depositions, the creation of funerary chambers embedded in the residential architecture appears as a distinguishing marker of the Late EBA societies at this site. These funerary chambers represent a clear example of what I considered at the beginning of this article to be a residential grave because they were directly connected to the dwellings. In fact, a stepped entrance-dromos served as a passageway from the dwelling into the underlying chamber, while several large stone slabs were used to cover each chamber²⁹. In some cases these slabs were visible on the floors of the rooms to clearly mark the presence of a residential grave within the daily life of the community. In particular, a typical private dwelling of this period usually contained at least one funerary chamber constructed in a single room located in the back of the house or inside the main courtyard (fig. 3). The residential graves were built using medium-sized stones for the walls, while the floor consists of the natural virgin soil. In terms of size, the main chamber ranges from 1.0 x 1.5 m for the smallest examples, to 2.9 x 3.5 m for the largest one, and recall the architectural features of the Middle EBA extramural funerary chambers.

Regarding the burial of the dead, most of Tiriş Höyük's residential graves show a multiple deposition custom. The skeletons were buried inside the funerary chamber, either in an articulated, primary deposition, and/or in the manner of a disarticulated, secondary deposition. Based on the archaeological data it appears that the practice of a secondary deposition is commonly used in the Outer Town tombs, where the remains of the buried are usually represented by skulls and a few other bones concentrated along the side or center of the chamber and/or in small pits dug into the main floor of the tomb³⁰. The Lower Town tombs instead present the last buried skeleton in an articulated and flexed position³¹. In such cases, the number of bones associated with each skull does not form a complete skeleton. This information provides an opportunity to formulate a funerary custom in which during the act of burying the last corpse inside the tomb, members of the living community removed many bones belonging to earlier buried corpses in order to enlarge the space inside the

²⁹ Laneri 1999, figs. 2-6.

³⁰ Honça/Algaze 1998, 108; Laneri 2004, 137-142.

³¹ A difference between the Outer and Lower Town is also visible in the layout of the urban settlement (Matney/Algaze 1995, 48-49).

chamber, but always and purposely leaving the skulls inside of the grave³². The analysis of the skeletal remains has not generally furnished any relevant sex and/or age distinctions among the dead placed within the intramural tombs. Only in one case, tomb B96.65, was it possible to identify 8 individuals (1 old female, 1 young adult male, 3 young adult females, and 3 other young adults of unclear sex) who were buried inside the funerary chamber and two pot graves with sub-adults (B96.66 and B96.67) placed within the chamber in which the residential grave was built³³. It is also interesting to notice that one residential funerary chamber (B99.91) discovered within a private dwelling in the Outer Town is distinguished by the presence of only the disarticulated bones of a child (3-4 years old) and an infant suggesting the possibility of an acquired hereditary system of lineal descent³⁴. In terms of paleo-demography, the changes that occurred between the Middle EBA and the Late EBA probably affected the life expectancy of the population, as demonstrated by an increase in the mortality rate of young adults during the Late EBA as compared to the data available from the Middle EBA extramural cemeteries³⁵.

For the funerary goods discovered within the residential graves of the Late EBA, the highest number of objects is represented by pottery vessels with standardized forms, with a predominance of bowls and cups, belonging to a Syro-Anatolian mid-to-late IIIrd millennium BC cultural horizon³⁶. It is also important to highlight the high number of metal objects found among the furnishing goods (i.e., bronze toggle-pins, earrings, rings, and weapons), some of which (e.g., rings) were made in silver, as well as beads in semiprecious stone necklaces³⁷. Individual bronze weapons such as a dagger and a large spearhead, both placed underneath male skulls, were found only in the tombs of the Lower Town that also contained richer funerary goods

as compared to those found in the Outer Town³⁸. All these elements testify to the direct access to precious commodities (e.g. silver) by the inhabitants of the private dwellings and, therefore to a higher social status of the members of the families inhabiting these houses.

In addition, among the funerary goods it is important to emphasize the presence of two distinctive vessels of the late IIIrd millennium BC cultural horizon. These are the Syrian bottles, that are *alabaster* of different sizes with ring-burnished surfaces, restricted necks and everted double-rims, and the *depa amphikypella*, that are tall double-handled cups with a red burnished decoration on the outer surface³⁹. Specimens of these groups of objects are distributed in a wide geographical area including the Aegean, western and central Anatolia as well as northern Mesopotamian contexts; their presence inside some of Tiriş Höyük's residential graves should thus further reinforce the pivotal role of commercial exchange enacted by emerging private families at this northern Mesopotamian site with western and central Anatolian communities⁴⁰. Both the 'Syrian bottles' and the *depa* have been correctly interpreted as vessels used for containing liquids that must have had important symbolic meanings when deposited inside the funerary chamber. In addition, the *depa* must have also had a double symbolic meaning related to both the liquid it contained (most probably wine)⁴¹ and the presence of two large handles that were not necessarily functional in the traditional way of drinking from a handled vessel, but rather supports the possibility that it was used by two people in the performance of ritual convivial acts. The symbolic and ritual elements embodied by the *depa* are further emphasized by its wide distribution (from the western Anatolian regions to sites in the upper Euphrates) as well as by the presence of similar double-handled vessels depicted as war booty in the hands of Akkadian soldiers in an Old Akkadian victory stele⁴².

32 It appears clear from the archaeological data that only selected dead were buried in the residential graves of the Late EBA. This assumption is based on the fact that the corpses and skulls found inside of the chambers, ranging from 1 to 8, do not correspond to the possible average population of the households during their use, a span of about 300 years (Honça/Algaze 1998, 108).

33 *Ibid.* 1998, 121, fig. 9.

34 Laneri 2007.

35 Honça/Algaze 1998, 116-117, tab.3.

36 Akkermans/Schwartz 2003, 246-253; Algaze/Matney 2011, 1004-6; Carter/Parker 1995.

37 Laneri 2004, tav. 36-42.

38 Laneri 1999, fig. 8.

39 Matthews 1997, 51-2; Rahmstorf 2006.

40 As seen before with some of the artifacts found in the tombs of the Middle EBA, the cultural and commercial exchange between this area and western/central Anatolian regions appears as a sign of continuity during the second half of the IIIrd millennium BC.

41 This particular vessel has generally been associated with the distribution and consumption of wine throughout contemporary Anatolia and northern Syria (Korfmann 2001, 361-368, abb. 398-399).

42 Postgate 1992, fig.13:6.

As mentioned in previous works⁴³, it is important to emphasize the symbolic relationship between the production of wine, the performance of funerary rituals and the emergence of newly founded families at Tiriş Höyük during the late IIIrd millennium BC. It is in fact through the connection of these three elements (that also correspond to the economic, ritual and social dimensions) that we can envision the reasons behind the dramatic transformation that occurred between the Middle and Late EBA.

One element that can better support the intermingling of these three dimensions is the unique funerary deposition dated to the final phase of the Late EBA discovered inside a room of a private dwelling in Tiriş Höyük's Outer Town. This deposition consists of human bones placed on top of a circular-shaped plaster basin with a diameter of ca. 1.40 m⁴⁴. The deposition is located in a room that was accessible directly from the street leading towards the fortification walls. The position of this building as well as the clear visibility of this feature from the street makes an important point of reference for framing the ritual practices of the communities inhabiting the site in this specific chronological period⁴⁵. In relation to the above-mentioned issue of connecting the economic, ritual, and social dimensions of the communities inhabiting Tiriş Höyük during the Late EBA, it is important to mention that other plaster basins were found within the private dwellings, and, in one case, the chemical analysis enacted on the residues recognizable on the basin's surface suggest the use of these features for the purpose of processing grapes for the production of wine.

Regarding the funerary deposition found in the Outer Town plaster basin, the bones disposed on top of the basin correspond to 19 disarticulated individuals (i.e. a secondary interment). Of these bones, 17 are skulls placed around the perimeter of the basin. The skulls and bones are mostly of young adult males. In fact, only one skull belongs to an adult female, one to a young female, and a few bones represent two infants. According to the analysis performed by the physical anthropologist Dr. Dilek Erdal, of the 19 individuals: 12 are male adult (all with cranial trauma), 3 are female adult

(one with cranial trauma), 1 unspecified adult (with cranial trauma), 2 children (with no skull), and 1 infant (with no skull); 81.5 % of adult crania show clear signs of cranial trauma (a total of 26 unhealed perimortem trauma). Wounds were made by sharp-edged and projectile weapons (i.e. battle-axe and/or spear)⁴⁶. All these elements suggest the possible massacre of a group of people from the community of Tiriş Höyük (as demonstrated by a comparison of the DNA of the individuals buried on the plaster basin to those buried in the residential graves) by either local enemies or foreign groups that came with the purpose of destroying the settlement. The fact that the settlement was not destroyed and the remains of the dead 19 individuals were put on display on top of the plaster basin suggests the first possibility.

In any case, an increasing level of belligerency during the Late EBA period is recognizable in the construction of the thick fortification wall as well as in the transformation of the urban fabric between the Middle EBA and the Late EBA with the incorporation of the 9 suburban areas inside the city walls as well as the abandonment of the extramural cemetery and the use of residential graves as well as other forms of intramural funerary depositions.

Violent encounters between groups inhabiting the region might have been partially related to disputes over resources and commercial routes among new 'families' or social groups. The increasing power of families is clearly visible in the reorganization of the Late EBA urban fabric, the period in which the whole city was planned by a centralized authority but giving more importance to the construction of large multi-roomed private dwellings⁴⁷. Within this transforming socio-economic strategy, the production of wine and oil (as part of the so-called Mediterranean polyculture) might have increased the investment risk taken by these private families, since this crop would have required between five and six years of cultivation before yielding a return. Such a risky investment was justified by a corresponding increase in the returning benefits related to the exchange of secondary products connected with grape processing, as is the case of the production of wine that during the second half of the IIIrd and the beginning of the IInd millennia BC became a precious commodity among Mesopotamian elites and that,

⁴³ Laneri 2004, 145-155; Laneri 2007.

⁴⁴ Algaze et al. 2001, 69-70, fig. 29; Matney et al. 1999, 189-190, fig. 5.

⁴⁵ Laneri 2007.

⁴⁶ Erdal 2012.

⁴⁷ Algaze/Matney 2011; Matney/Algaze 1995.

according to the written sources, was produced exactly in this region⁴⁸.

Within this context, the use of residential graves and other forms of intramural funerary depositions (as is the case of the deposition in the plaster basin of the Outer Town) might have served as a point of reference for reinforcing both the collective memory of the family and its lineal descent⁴⁹.

Conclusions

To better understand the type of social transformation which occurred at Tiriş Höyük during the mid-to-late IIIrd millennium BC, we need to consider this event as directly linked to a change in the patterns of economic subsistence of the local communities, an increase in the economic power gained by powerful private households, and, consequently, a higher level of belligerency among the groups inhabiting this region⁵⁰.

The effects of the changes in the social fabric of the communities inhabiting the site during the Late EBA can be clearly understood through a detailed analysis of the available archaeological data that shows a modification of the city planning with a division between an outer city, dedicated to the habitation of private households, and an inner city, where the public buildings were located, as well as the construction of fortification systems, the shifting from an extramural to an intramural funerary custom, and the reorganization of the subsistence methods⁵¹. In particular, this transformation is clearly evident in the change in production and consumption patterns from the Middle EBA to the Late EBA, with an increase in the role of the private households in producing and trading specialized goods through the use of innovative productive techniques (e.g. the intensive use of the Mediterranean polyculture for cultivating vineyards and olive trees in association with a traditional agricultural production of cereals and legumes) during the Late EBA as compared to the previous Middle EBA period, when specialized craft production was clustered outside of the main city and probably controlled by central authorities⁵². Furthermore, this type of transformation could have

created tensions both within the settlement and between neighboring centers, due to the fact that the labor invested in innovative activities required protection from competing groups in the acquisition of these precious means of production⁵³.

With this perspective in mind, it is possible to interpret the shift of the burial practices from extramural in the Middle EBA to intramural deposition during the Late EBA at Tiriş Höyük as a way of reinforcing the status of specific segments of the society. In particular, the use of residential graves during the Late EBA was directly linked to the consolidation of the economic and social power gained by each private household through the use of an ancestral figure who would have helped to reinforce the lineage of the whole household⁵⁴. The important role played by the ancestors in framing the socio-economic organization of Mesopotamian societies during the IIIrd and IInd millennia BC is clearly demonstrated in both the archaeological data (as in the case of the use of residential graves) and written sources (as is evident from the Mesopotamian *kispu* ritual)⁵⁵. More specifically, the fact that the human depositions found in the residential graves at Tiriş Höyük do not show differences of age and sex, and in some circumstances are characterized by the presence of the skeletal remains of only infants and children, indicates the existence of an ascribed social status and, consequently, of a reinforcement of hereditary forms of leadership embedded in the familial lineage, probably founded by ancestral figures⁵⁶.

In conclusion, the importance of a clear definition of types of funerary depositions within a settlement appears pivotal for constructing stronger links between burial customs and systems of socio-economic organization among ancient societies. Such a distinction is fundamental in the process of analyzing the transformation that occurred at Tiriş Höyük between the mid and late IIIrd millennium BC and interpreting the role played by residential funerary crypts in strengthening the social structure of emerging powerful families in a transforming landscape that was marked by innovative forms of economic subsistence as well as an increasing level of belligerency.

48 Laneri 2010.

49 Laneri 2007.

50 Algaze/Matney 2011; Erdal 2012; Laneri 2007.

51 Laneri 2007.

52 Hartenberger in Algaze et al. 2001, 41-45.

53 Gilman 1981, 1-23.

54 Davies 2002, 1-23; Hertz 1960, 27-86.

55 Jonker 1995; Laneri 2010; Peltenburg 2007/2008; Van Der Toorn 1996.

56 Gilman 1981, 1-2.

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