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EXCAVATIONS AT TİTRİŞ HÖYÜK, ŞANLIURFA
PROVINCE: PRELIMINARY REPORT FOR THE 1998
SEASON

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This report describes the results of the seventh season of archaeological fieldwork conducted in July and August of 1998 at Titriş Höyük, a 43-hectare multiperiod settlement situated some 45 km. north of modern Şanlıurfa, in southeastern Turkey. Earlier research at the site has shown that Titriş Höyük flourished as an urban center during the Mid- to Late Early Bronze Age (hereafter “EBA”), dated between ca. 2500 and 2200 BC (see Algaze et al. 1996: 132 for radiocarbon results). Urban settlement at Titriş Höyük collapsed in the Late EBA and its extensive lower city was never substantially reoccupied. As a result, Late EBA remains can be recovered immediately under the surface over large portions of the settlement.

The morphology of the site has been extensively discussed in previous reports (e.g., Algaze et al. 1996; Matney and Algaze 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997). At a minimum, Titriş Höyük consists of a high mound surrounded by a much more extensive lower city, which, in turn, can be divided into a Lower Town area extending to either side of the central high mound and following the course of the Tavuk Çay and a more extensive Outer Town area which extends due north of high mound and Lower Town (Fig. 1). At the eastern edge of the Outer Town, a north-south defensive wall created a fortified settlement and delineated the easternmost expansion of the city. Additionally, Titriş Höyük was also surrounded by a number of more ephemeral non-contiguous habitation and activity areas (“Suburbs”) during the Mid-Late EBA.

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Excavations were conducted between July 14 and August 26, 1998 under the direction of Guillermo Algaze (University of California, San Diego) and Timothy Matney (University of Akron). Field personnel for the 1998 season were: Sumru Aneantı (Museum of Natural History, N.Y.), Willy Becker (Whitman College), Gülay Dinçkan, Francesca Delillis (University of Rome), Britt Hartenberger (Boston University), Nicola Laneri (University of Rome), Shannon Murphy (Whitman College), Arlene Miller Rosen (Ben Gurion University), Steven Rosen (Ben Gurion University), Eric Rupley (University of Michigan) and Duncan Schlee as archaeologists, Jane Goddard (University of Nottingham) as illustrator, Karen Aberd (Brooklyn Museum), Katherine May (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) and Katharina Unich (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts) as conservators, Britt Hartenberger (Boston University) as first specialist, and Dilek Erdal (Ankara University) as physical anthropologist. Our sincerest thanks are due to Sayın Enver Üstündağ (Malatya Museum) who served as representative of the Ministry of Culture at the site and to Sayın Eyüp Buçak, director of Şanlıurfa Museum. Financial support for the 1998 season was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent agency of the United States Government, The National Geographic Society (Washington, DC), The Samuel H. Kress Foundation (New York), The Chancellor's Associates at UCSD, and Ben Gurion University (Israel) (specifically in support of Steven Rosen's work).
Taking advantage of the settlement history of the site noted above, our central research focus since 1994 has been the recovery and analysis of broad exposures of Late EBA domestic architecture. Over 2,500 square meters of non-elite urban building plans comprising nine complete or partial houses were recovered in two separate neighborhood areas at Titriş Höyük over the previous three field seasons. These excavations, coupled with an extensive remote sensing survey of the ancient city conducted between 1993 and 1995 (see Algaze et al. 1995; Matney and Algaze 1995), have provided the background for our 1998 season of work at the site during which we continued to clarify the overall structure of Titriş Höyük in three separate operations, discussed below.

**OPERATION 1: OUTER TOWN (Trenches 82/85, 82/86, 82/87, 82/88)**

The most extensive excavations in 1998 were concentrated in the Outer Town sector of the settlement and were aimed at examining the relationship between the previously-exposed domestic architecture in this sector of the city and the nearby fortification wall that protected the Outer Town. Portions of four trenches were opened, accounting for an exposure of 300 square meters (Fig. 2). Earlier work between 1994 and 1995 in this immediate area had exposed 1,175 square meters containing portions of four large residential houses aligned at either side of a street. These houses were situated just inside the fortification system noted above consisting of a wall and associated moat (Algaze et al. 1995; Algaze et al. 1996; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997). Magnetic field gradient survey (magnetometry) showed that the wall is preserved for a distance of about 140 meters along the entire eastern edge of the Outer Town (Matney and Algaze 1995: Fig. 3-4). In 1994, a two meter wide slit trench was excavated between the wall and the nearby Late EBA houses. This trench demonstrated that the two were stratigraphically contemporaneous and that both had been built as part of a major restructuring of space in the Outer Town (Algaze et al. 1995: 21-22).

Unfortunately, the narrow slit trench did not allow us to understand how the city wall articulated with the neighboring houses or the nature of the wall itself.

The basic features of the area excavated in 1998 consist of a sherd-and-pebble paved street running in a SW-NE direction, representing a continuation of the street previously identified in 1994 and 1995 (Fig. 2: A). A length of about 46 meters of this street has now been exposed. The street was originally some two meters wide and served as a thoroughfare linking two parallel NW-SE running streets which are seen in the extreme southwest corner of the excavated area (Fig. 2: B) and adjacent to the city wall (Fig. 2: C). As noted above, to the north of the street lay a large domestic building (Fig. 2: Building Unit 2) mostly exposed in the 1994-1995 soundings. To the south of the street we uncovered the corner of another domestic building (Fig. 2: Building Unit 4). A small sounding cut into the street showed that the street itself was deliberately constructed of broken sherds and stones which were overlain by significant accumulations of trash.

One of the most important results of our 1998 work in the Outer Town was the clarification of how the site's defenses articulated with the nearby domestic quarter. At least within the exposed area, it has now become clear that the fortification wall (Fig. 2: D), between 3.0 and 3.5 meters thick, was flanked on its interior by a series of linearly-arranged rectangular rooms, built abutting the city wall and set into significant niches formed by piers on the inside of the wall itself. What is particularly important to note is that the plan of these rooms, of which three nearly complete examples were excavated in 1998, differs remarkably from the plan of the multi-roomed domestic structures that are more typical for the site in the Late EBA. These rooms are entered from the street system through a single doorway located at the street intersection (Fig. 2: E), but are connected to one another via a series of doorways, creating a long series of small rooms 2.5 m. to 3.5 m. wide and up to 5.0 m. long. Each of these rooms is further connected to another single room inset between the regularly spaced piers that abut the interior face of the city wall (Fig. 3).
The preservation of material from primary contexts in this area is very good and at least two of the three rooms immediately adjacent to the street show evidence of burning in an early phase. The presence of a typical range of ceramics found elsewhere at Titriş Höyük in domestic contexts and of a number of features such as hearths, storage pits and plastered "domestic preparation surfaces" suggests that, despite their unusual plan, these rooms may have served as houses. It is unclear whether these rooms served as two-room units or whether they are all part of a larger organizational scheme that is wider than our exposure.

Operation 1 Burials. As noted in earlier reports (e.g., Algaze et al. 1995; Matney and Algaze 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997), a common feature shared by many Late EBA houses across the site is their role as centers of mortuary ritual. Commonly this takes the form of associated intramural cist tombs of variable size and location, many of which were laid out and built at the time of the initial construction phase of the house. These burials are always communal and each contained the mostly disarticulated remains of individuals of various ages and of both sexes, more likely than not members of the extended family occupying the house in which the tomb was located (Honça and Algaze 1998).

An unusual mortuary feature of a type not previously documented at Titriş Höyük was uncovered in 1998. This burial (B98.87) was found in a room that had, in its initial phase of use been part of a much larger Late EBA house but, when the burial was installed, was an isolated room unconnected to any residential unit. During this latest use phase, the internal doorway that connected the room with the rest of the house had been blocked, and a new doorway communicating directly with an external street was built, in effect creating an isolated room at the intersection of two streets (Fig. 4).

Associated with this final use phase of the room was a packed earth floor and a typical self-standing circular basin made of white plaster set over river cobbles. These basins, of which we have several excavated examples in both the Upper and Lower Towns at Titriş Höyük, are slightly concave in shape and between 1.5 m. and 2.0 m. in width. They were probably used for a variety of household domestic functions. As its final function, this particular basin was reused as a platform for a grisly mortuary display. This burial (B98.87) consisted of the skulls of seventeen individuals placed around the edge of the basin, facing outward, and long bones and other body parts heaped in the center (Fig. 5). The relatively good state of preservation of the bones suggest that the remains were covered soon after being placed in the basin.

There are a number of unusual features about this burial. The first is the fact that the skeletons were not placed in a reusable underground intramural cist, as was commonly done elsewhere at Titriş Höyük in the Late EBA. Instead, B98.87 represents a single mortuary event, unassociated with any domestic use-context, and it is not subterranean. The placement of this burial in a "public" room open to the street is undoubtedly important for understanding the social significance of the display. Another unusual feature is that the bodies were not accompanied by any funerary gifts, as is customary for Late EBA burials at Titriş Höyük. More surprising still are the preliminary results of the analysis of the skeletal material conducted by Dr. Derya Honça and Ms. Dilek Erdal. Their work indicates that the burials are secondary in nature; all of the remains involved were clearly disarticulated. A total of 19 individuals are represented in B98.87. Preliminary analysis shows that all of the skulls belong to adolescent and young adult individuals but two children (roughly dated at 6 and 12 years old) were also represented by post-cranial bones only. All identifiable crania belong to young males (i.e., about 18-30 years with a majority at the younger end), save for the skulls of two females — one adolescent and one adult. This is, obviously, an atypical population distribution for the site. Interestingly, an overwhelming number of the male skulls (80-85%) showed traces of trauma to the head. Six skulls showed healed traumas while others had wounds that had been allowed to heal. Some individuals showed both healed and unhealed traumas, suggesting an extended period of physical hardship. While there was no cut marks on the long bones, some showed signs of gnawing, perhaps by dogs or...
other scavengers immediately after death. Neither of the two female skulls shows signs of trauma. Noteworthy is the observation that the traumas are regularly located on the skulls. This appears atypical for what should be expected if the traumas were the result of active combat wounds, in which case we would expect a more random distribution in the location of the traumas. The significance of this unusual find and its placement within a self-standing room at the corner of two streets within the urban grid of the site in the Late EBA is likely to be the subject of much debate and speculation.

**OPERATION 2: SUBURBS (Trenches Core 1, Core 2, Core 3, Core 4)**

In 1994, an ad hoc survey around the Titriş Höyük field camp in the suburbs of the main site, some 300 meters east of the city wall, revealed a high density of large flint blade cores (Algaze et al. 1995). Subsequently some 80 of these cores were collected and their locations noted. This well-documented high density of cores, virtually unparalleled elsewhere in the Near East, suggested the presence of a lithic workshop for the production of Canaanese blades, the primary technology employed in the Early Bronze Age for the manufacture of sickle blades.

Excavations in this area were aimed at clarifying the nature, context, and extent of industrial production of chipped stone artifacts at the site. Our work revealed in situ evidence for the complete reduction of Canaanese blades, from the import of raw material, to the preparation and reduction of cores and their by-products, and to the export of the blades themselves. In addition to the technological aspects of the lithic reduction system, our excavations also provided an architectural, chronological, and cultural context for the blade production. To anticipate our conclusions, it appears that Canaanese blade production at Titriş Höyük was a specialized activity conducted by only a few flint knappers in a domestic context in a suburban area outside of the city wall.

In 1998, two 10 m. by 10 m. trenches and two adjacent half trenches (5 m. by 10 m.), a total of 300 square meters, were excavated down to the first cultural horizon, located 30 cm. to 40 cm. beneath the modern surface. The plow zone here was only 20 cm. to 30 cm. deep, so floors and wall stubs were preserved quite close to the surface. Robbed out and disturbed walls were also reasonably clear due to: (1) the preservation of cobble surfaces which abutted the walls, thus showing the original wall line; (2) the presence of limestone fragments in the basal clay beneath the walls and (3) the presence of occasional lines of upright sherds, apparently plastered against the walls. The goal of the excavation was the exposure of the lithic manufacture contexts. Associated ceramics from this occupation are uniformly of Mid-EBA date.

The architectural plan presented in Fig. 6 can be interpreted as representing parts of two domestic complexes, with a narrow alley approximately 60 cm. wide separating them. The northern compound consists of at least five rooms associated with attached open cobbled surfaces. A large basalt mortar was dug into the floor of the northernmost room, and was stabilized with the use of small cobbles inserted around its circumference. The southern compound is separated from the northern compound by a double thick wall preserved only in the eastern section of the area. This southern compound shows a line of small attached rooms. The truncated cobbled surfaces in the northern parts of these rooms can best be interpreted as somewhat unusual interior installations. These cobbled floors are contemporary with the packed earth surfaces covering most of the room floors.

The southern complex is the blade production area. Some thirty or more Canaanese blade cores were found in situ, on surfaces or against robbed-out walls, or in some cases, incorporated into walls. In addition, and more importantly, a cobble-capped pit some 10 cm. to 12 cm. in depth and 1.1 m. across was found in clear stratigraphic association with the packed earth floor of the central southern room. This pit contained several thousand by-products of Canaanese core preparation and reduction: thinning flakes, decortication flakes, ridge blades, core tablets, chips. Not a single
A typical Canaanid blade was found, nor were any cores found in the pit. Presumably the blades were exported, and the cores set aside for further use. A virtually complete chaine d’opérations can be reconstructed at Titriş Höyük in the lithic workshop (described in detail elsewhere, see Matney, Alghaze and Rosen, forthcoming).

Characterizing the Core area as fundamentally domestic rests on three lines of evidence: architectural, ceramic, and lithic. Architecturally, the remains uncovered from this suburb area are similar in both general plan and in specific features to those found in undisputed domestic contexts over the rest of the site. The ceramic assemblage, although not fully studied, also closely resembles typical domestic configurations at Titriş Höyük. Finally, although the lithic assemblage as a whole is dominated by blade production, the tool assemblage is a typical ad hoc flake assemblage, associated with domestic contexts both at Titriş Höyük and all over the Near East (Rosen 1997).

The Titriş Höyük lithic workshop excavated in 1998 presents us with a first detailed view of a kind of specialized production that is unlikely to have been controlled by elites at the site. Unlike the elite goods usually associated with craft specialization, the sickle blades were mass-produced, required little special equipment, only rather common raw materials, and were for daily use. The knappers themselves supplied blades to a large number of people, but did so from a modest domestic situation. A possibly useful analogy would be the specialized knappers who produced threshing sledge teeth in this same area of Turkey only a generation ago (e.g., Bordaz 1969).

OPERATION 3: LOWER TOWN (Trench 40/34)

Excavation in the Lower Town directly west of the high mound at Titriş Höyük continued a 10 m. by 10 m. sounding (Trench 40/34) excavated between 1991 and 1994. In this trench, archaeological remains of the Medieval period and Late EBA had been removed in previous years to expose mudbrick structures dated via associated ceramics to the Mid-EBA (Alghaze, Misir and Wilkinson 1992: 37-38; Alghaze and Misir 1994; 1995; Alghaze et al. 1995). Cut into these structures were a number of large pits, also dated to the Mid-EBA, with plastered walls and a ledge or bench at the bottom, for which we noted parallels at Arslantepe (Frangipane 1992). The goal of work in the 1998 season in the Lower Town was to clarify the plan of the buildings partially destroyed by these pits and to expose the stratigraphic sequence of underlying early EBA levels which had been reached only in a small deep probe in 1993 (Alghaze and Misir 1995).

Previous work suggested that the mudbrick constructions in Trench 40/34 represented two structures with exterior walls running east-west and smaller interior walls running north-south with a narrow stone paved street or alleyway intervening between the two buildings (Fig. 7). Rather than representing the remains of two buildings, however, the results of the 1998 season suggest that the remains from Trench 40/34 represent a single large mudbrick building of Mid-EBA date, the limits of which extend beyond the confines of the 10 m. by 10 m. trench. Furthermore, it was possible in 1998 to delineate a number of architectural rebuildings and associated surfaces suggesting a later phase of use following roughly the same wall lines, but on a reduced scale. In general, there was very little artifactual debris found in primary contexts in these constructions.

The earlier building shows a series of thick mudbrick walls (c. 80 cm. to 110 cm. wide) which overlay stone foundations. The walls form part of a rectilinear plan with parts of eight rooms delineated. With one exception, it was not possible to discern the location of doorways, nor are we able, on present evidence, to articulate the function of the rooms or the circulation pattern of the building. The later builders have followed the lines of several of the earlier walls, but their structures are less massive, with walls averaging between 40 cm. to 60 cm. in width. Rooms are rectilinear and vary in overall size from a width of nearly 8.0 m. (southernmost room) to less than 3.0 m. (two rooms on east edge of trench). Hearths and other domestic installations suggest that these buildings served, in part at least, as residential units.
PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 1998 excavations in the eastern portion of the Outer Town of the settlement have further clarified how space within the city in the Late EBA was organized. In all of the areas of the site where Late EBA neighborhoods have been uncovered, they evince a regularity and a level of labor mobilization which clearly show supra-household organization, perhaps through centralized administrators in control of the allocation of both labor and space within the city. Comparable urban phenomena are attested at this time in the Balikh and Upper Khabur areas of Syria (Dohrn-Pfaltzner and Pfaltzner 1996; Pfaltzner 1997; and Lebeau 1996). Primary indicators for the centralized control of neighborhood creation and organization at Titris include: (1) the striking parallels in house plans in different neighborhoods across the site (Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997: Fig. 5), (2) long-lived streets that in some cases were laid down before neighboring structures were erected, (3) large-scale terracing and leveling operations prior to the construction of the neighborhoods, (4) terracing walls built perpendicular to the natural slope of the mound that are shared by several individual houses, (5) repeated uniform measures of land for house construction within the neighborhoods, (6) a symmetry in wall and entrance alignments that extends across individual houses and even across streets (Matney and Algaze 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997). Additionally, the 1998 excavations in the Outer Town clarify the magnitude and scope of the urban renewal program that transformed the site in the Late EBA. It is now clear that the domestic areas of the Outer Town and the nearby city wall are intricately articulated and form part of a single constructional event that was as massive as it was coherent.

Unfortunately, little can be said about the overall structure and organization of the settlement in the preceding Mid-EBA phase, when the site first emerged as an urban center because it has only been practicable to excavate limited exposures of the underlying Mid-EBA levels thus far at Titris Höyük. However, the new excavations in the eastern extramural suburb area do help flesh out our limited understanding of the site in this earlier, less well-documented phase. It is now clear that specialized production areas outside of the city wall were part of the urban configuration of Titris Höyük in the Mid-EBA.

Given the presence of Mid-EBA domestic areas, specialized production facilities and the presence of a Mid-EBA extramural cemetery (see Honça and Algaze 1998) to the west of the city, it appears that the lower city at Titris Höyük in the Mid-EBA comprised a spatially diffuse set of buildings and workshops ranging from substantial well-planned rectilinear buildings near the citadel to dwellings which were little more than a few rooms with intervening cobbled courtyards in the suburbs. The transition to the Late EBA, on the other hand, is marked by a significant increase in settlement density as the previously dispersed inhabitants are drawn into a more compact housing stock within the confines of the city wall. The erection of the fortification wall appears to suggest some measure of political and military instability in the later phase (Late EBA) that was not present at the time the site was first founded (Mid-EBA). Although further excavation work in the suburb areas surrounding the site is needed, there is no evidence to date of Late EBA occupation or construction outside of the fortified city proper. Rather, the highly structured urban environment noted above was imposed upon the inhabitants during a time of considerable social change as the populace moved into the city, perhaps as the result of a need for heightened security and protection. Interestingly, the erection of the fortification wall defending the Outer Town appears to correlate with a change in mortuary practice at the site as the practice of extramural burial in organized cemeteries surrounding the settlement that appears normative for the Mid-EBA is transformed into intramural burial within Late EBA houses. The Titris wall thus appears to have been built to protect both the living and the ancestors.
REFERENCES CITED


Fig. 1
Fig. 6