

## INTRAMURAL TOMBS - A FUNERARY TRADITION OF THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES VALLEY DURING THE IIIrd MILLENNIUM BC.

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### Introduction

During the IIIrd millennium BC almost all the Near and Middle East areas (from the Aegean Sea to the Indus Valley), after the collapse of the Mesopotamian egemony during the so-called Late Uruk period (second half of the IVth millennium BC, Algaze 1993; Frangipane 1996), experienced an increase in social stratification and complexity and a growing consolidation of the interaction between distant social and economical environments. The regional fragmentation of the economical power, through the emergence of city-states, such as Kish, Ur, Mari, Ebla, Carchemish, Kazane, allowed local cultures and societies to a better use of their environments and natural resources, distinguishing this period from the preceding one (Late Uruk), when Mesopotamian sites (Uruk and Susa) settled colonial outposts in the whole Near East for a better control on the peripheral resources, and from the following one as well (Liverani 1988; Matney and Algaze 1995; Postgate 1992). Several factors contribute to the significant transformation in the complexity of burial methods, and especially in the extraordinary richness of grave assemblages and in the practice of burial in cist graves, built within private or public buildings. These two seem to be the defining features of this archaeological period.

In analyzing the tombs uncovered in the site of Carchemish, Sir Leonard Woolley, who rightly attributes the site to the Early Bronze Age (*Early Bronze Age* - IIIrd millennium B.C., Woolley 1952), misunderstood the practice of burying the dead inside houses as a sign of primitivism of the inhabitants of the mound, and concluded that, with the "*transformation of the mound from primitive village to a fortress or a palace or temple people should be compelled to abandon the ancient practice of burying their dead under the floor of their houses and to begin using regular cemeteries outside the inhabited area*" (Woolley 1952: 223).

Contrary to Woolley's hypothesis, recent archeological discoveries point to a cultural practice of intramural burials during the IIIrd millennium B.C.<sup>2</sup> that kept increasing propor

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<sup>2</sup>This funerary practice first appeared in the Near East during the Neolithic Age (VIth millennium B.C.), when the skulls of the dead would be buried under the calcareous slabs that made up the floors of the homes (the most important example of this practice being that of the level VIB in the Anatolian site of Çatal Höyük, Wason 1994:

tionally with the territorial expansion of the settlements. At the beginning of the 80's, the German archeological expedition directed by Behm Blanke (1984) discovered a cemetery, of the Early Bronze Age I/II (ca.3000-2700 BC), presenting cist tombs and ceramic jars of considerable size. In this cemetery, the tomb shape and size, the orientation of the bodies and of the assemblages resemble very closely those of the tombs excavated in Carchemish. The cemetery wasn't very far from the center of Hassek Höyük (along the valley of the Euphrates, some 70 km north of Carchemish). The Birecik Dam rescue excavation conducted in 1997 under the direction of the Turkish Department of Antiquities, to investigate the area of the Birecik dam, near the Euphrates valley (approximately 25 km north of Carchemish) discovered a large necropolis area, where more than 200 tombs were excavated. These tombs also presented features very similar to those discussed before (Mustafa Kemal Sertok, personal communication)<sup>3</sup>, and so demonstrated that the lack of data is to be attributed, more often than not, to the poor archaeological investigation of the area, and that during the first part of the IIIrd millennium B.C. the valley of the Euphrates saw the development of three different burial practices: a) intramural tombs, extramural cemeteries, and necropolis far from the settlement (another example is the Necropolis of the Early Bronze III-IV, ca. 2700-2400 BC, found in Tawi by a German equipe, Kampschulte and Orthmann 1984).

One discovery has to be credited to Woolley, specifically the existence of a well defined funerary culture, very much interested in the relationship between the dead and the living. This tendency, that Woolley (1952) thought would come to an end as "civilization" would take over in the Near East, instead as shown itself to grow proportionally with the expansion of those elements (such as palaces, cuneiform writing, demographic and settlement growth and social and economical stratification) that will come to exemplify the cultural koiné in the Near East in the following period, the Early Bronze Age (IIIrd millennium B.C.). Two factors lead us to believe that this funerary practice was restricted to a small percentage of the total population, which would have still used the more common practice of burial outside of the inhabited area: on one hand, the scant number of skeletons recovered inside any particular home (no more than ten in the same dwelling, considering a period of occupancy probably longer than 100 years); on the other hand, the percentage that this number must have represented compared to the total inhabitants of a particular building.

#### Distribution of "intramural tombs" along the syro-anatolian Euphrates valley

From the lowlands of Mesopotamia to the slopes of the Taurus, the highlands of Luristan and still farther north the region of western Turkmenistan, a consistent number of funerary chambers (mostly consisting of multiple burials) has been uncovered. These burials

153-179).

<sup>3</sup> Archaeological research in this area is in progress and it is now possible that an undiscovered number of tombs are still to be found within an area of approximately 1,5 Km in length, possibly to be attributed to a much longer period than previously inferred (maybe including the second half of the IIIrd millennium B.C.). Furthermore, oral tradition points to a sacred area along the right bank of the river, where the ancient would lay to rest their dead (Gil Stein -personal communication).



were placed under the floor in domestic structures (Forest 1983; Orthmann 1980; Sürenhagen 1986; Jean-Marie 1990; Peltenburg 1995; Carter & Parker 1996). In Mesopotamia, the rich tombs of Ur, Kish, Abu Salabikh, and other city-states of the Protodynastic II and IIIrd (ca. 2650-2350 B.C.) have always been noted for their rich funerary goods (gold, silver and semiprecious stone objects) and not for the importance of their planning within the domestic structure as an ancestral temple inside the private dwelling as well as in the public (for example palaces) buildings (Woolley 1934; Moorey 1980; Postgate 1980; Forest 1983).

The hypogaeum tomb, discovered by Thureau-Dangin (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936) at Tell Ahmar in the 20's (approximately 25 km south of Carchemish, on the left bank of the river) is to be considered the first example of "intramural burial" dating back to the second half of the IIIrd millennium B.C. in the Syrian-Anatolian valley of the Euphrates. The Australian archeological expedition from the University of Melbourne, which is conducting an excavation of the Neo-Assyrian levels of the same site, has reviewed the journal of their French predecessor, and in doing so, has discovered a possible relation between the Hypogaeum and the building structure, contemporaneous of the tomb, which rests on top of it (Bunnens 1990). Thanks to the intensification of the archeological investigation, due in part to the need to proceed to salvage excavation of sites that will be under water after the construction of several dams planned by the Turkish and Syrian governments in the Euphrates valley, an area that has always been considered at the periphery of the Mesopotamian cultural milieu, has revealed a concentration of intramural tombs, chronologically attributed to the second half of the IIIrd millennium B.C.

The area object of this study extends from Mari/Tell Hariri in the south (near the Syro-Iraqi border), near the interface that in the IIIrd millennium B. C. separated Mesopotamia from the Proto-Syrian cultural *facies* (where, in the 30's, André Parrot discovered three funerary chambers connected to the temple of Ishtar, Parrot 1974)<sup>4</sup>, to the slopes of the Taurus to the north. The funerary practice of "intramural burial" is attested in numerous sites along the Syro-Anatolian Euphrates valley, most farther north of the area that separates the semiarid region (in which Mari is located) from the continental climate region (the city of Raqqa being the ideal border town between these two ecosystems).

Burying practices vary according to the sites and the cultural-ecological niche, but as a common denominator there is the desire to express the ties with the ancestors by burying them within the domestic, palatial or temple structures.

### Architectural structure

<sup>4</sup> In a recent study, the French archaeologist M. Jean-Marie, after a review of the journals of A. Parrot, attempted an interpretation of the relationship between the temple and the funerary chambers, and established a possible connection between the tomb T 300 and the temple dedicated to Ishtar; for the other two tombs of the group - T241 and T242 - the scant information available about their stratigraphy doesn't allow any hypothesis to be advanced regarding their structure. However, the pictures originally taken during their excavation seem to show that the walls of the temple had been cut, to allow for the construction of the tombs; if this were the case, the tombs would undoubtedly be later than the temple (Jean-Marie 1990).

The hypogeum of Til Barsip (Thureau-Dangin and Durand 1936) and its rich assemblage (1045 vessels, from different periods, destined exclusively to the two interred bodies) exemplifies the classic architectural typology, both for the intramural tombs and the cist tombs of the period (Carter and Parker 1995) which features:

A) A single cist chamber, usually cut into the virgin soil, with walls built of squared blocks of limestone, set up as a pseudo-ogive (only in the funerary chambers in Mari, where the Mesopotamian influence is stronger, do we see an actual ogive, Jean-Marie 1990); in most cases, one or more of the walls are directly connected to the walls of the house built on top of it (a list of the *intramural tombs* in the area includes: *tomb 302* at Tell Jerablus Tahtani<sup>5</sup>, Syria- Peltenburg et alii 1995: 7-15, figs. 8-9; tombs B 91.76, B 93.77, B 94.55, B94.56, B 95.58, B 95.60, B 96.64, B 96.75, B96.76 at Titris Höyük – Turkey, Algaze and Matney 1995, Algaze et alii 1995, Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997; tomb L I at Tell Hadidi – Syria, Dornemann 1979: 117-132; *Tomb 7* at Tell Banat, McClellan in press; intramural tombs at Tell Selenkahiye- Syria- van Loon 1968 and 1973; and with all probability the monumental tomb discovered at Hayaz Höyük – Turkey, even if, due to frequent flooding of the Euphrates, the upper levels have been completely destroyed, Roodenberg 1979-80)<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 4).

B) A *dromos*, also cut into sterile soil, usually of a circular shape (as at Titris Höyük and Tell Hadidi, Algaze et alii 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997; Dornemann 1988) or a square shape (as at Hayaz Höyük, Tell Jerablus Tahtani and in the Hypogeum of Til Barsip, Roodenberg 1979-80; Peltenburg et alii 1995; Thureau Dangin and Durand 1936), with a couple of steps, usually cut directly in the ground (only rarely do they have a covering of stone), which lead to the tomb, by means of a narrow and low passage, separated from the funerary chamber by a single stone slab.

C) A chamber ceiling, usually made of large rectangular slabs of stone, fitted into the walls and sometimes protruding from the floors of the room on top of it, forming a *dolmen*-like stone (Carter and Parker 1995; Matney and Algaze 1995) (Fig. 4, 6).

The funerary chamber dimensions may vary (e.g. the ones in Titris Höyük have an average length of about. 2,50 m for a width of 1,50 m, while the *tomb 302* in Tell Jerablus Tahtani has a size of 6 m x 3 m, Algaze et alii 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997; Peltenburg et alii 1995), in relation with the socio-cultural and symbolic function of the funerary structure. It is still not completely clear though if the size of the chamber is proportionally bigger in relation with the richness of the assemblage it contains or if it represents, on

<sup>5</sup> The relation between the T302 and the settlement of the IIIrd millennium BC in Jerablus Tahtani is going to be established by the excavators in the following publications; anyway the Director of the excavation, Prof. E. Peltenburg, has inferred a location of the tomb as a monumental tumulus, outside of the private buildings but inside the settlement, becoming a sort of ancestral temple used also in the following period, the same as in Til Barsip (Peltenburg 1996 and personal communication). Because of this explanation, in this study, the tomb is to be considered an "intramural tomb", in the sense of the cultural relationship, inside the settlement, between the living and the death.

<sup>6</sup> Tombs with identical typology are also present in the necropolis (Carter and Parker 1995); examples are M 1-2, M4, M5-6 at Gedikli - Turkey- (Alkim ve Alkim 1966: fig 40), or at Oylum Höyük - Turkey- (Özgen and Carter 1990), and at Lidar - Turkey- (Hauptmann 1993).



a symbolic level, the social status of the individuals.

The basic structure of the funerary chambers can present some variations (such as a dome ceiling made of bricks, like in the descriptions given of the tombs of Selenkahiye given by M. van Loon 1973); such variations don't modify the basic function of the tumulus itself. In the case of the monumental *tomb 7*, recently uncovered by T. McClellan at Tell Banat (on the Syrian left bank of the Euphrates, approximately 30 Km south of Carchemish): the tomb contained an extremely rich assemblage (including precious and rare, for the period to which they belong, gold jewels), and the typology presents some important variations, including a higher number of rooms (six rectangular rooms, 3 x 2 m each, in three rows of two rooms each, built under a palatial structure, whose function has not been positively determined yet - McClellan, in press)<sup>7</sup>. The basic structure of the tomb was nonetheless maintained with the circular *dromos*, representing well constructed, bitumen-mortared stone-cut walls and chamber ceiling (nine slabs at Banat, McClellan in press) that were encased in sterile soil. At Banat, the floor is covered with tiles and bitumen. The entire structure is connected with *Level 2 of Building 7* (McClellan, in press).

The niches, along the walls of the chamber (at Titris Höyük as well as at Tell Banat) represent another variation on a well established architectural typology.

### Physical Anthropology

The last decades have witnessed an increase in the analysis of human remains discovered in the region of interest of this study. Thanks to this, it has been possible for the first time to study in depth issues related to paleo-demography and paleo-pathology, such as the demographics of secondary burials.

While in some cemeteries of the first half of the IIIrd Millennium B.C. (the Early Bronze Age I-II such as Hassek Höyük, Behm-Blanke 1984) the bodies of the deceased would be laid singularly or in a group (Carchemish, Woolley 1952), in fetal position, oriented east-west and inside cist tombs (in some cases, inside jars), this phase, the second half of the IIIrd millennium BC (ca. 2600-2100 BC), sees the building of tombs inside domestic buildings, which become a sort of necropolis inside the city, with multiple burials, for groups of people presumably belonging to the same extended family. The bodies are often unarticulated, but some of the bones seem to be regularly present (in particular the cranium

<sup>7</sup> The German archaeological expedition at Tell B'ia (on the left bank of the Euphrates, south of Raqqa in Syria), directed by E. Strommenger (1994: 11-21), has recently discovered a monumental tomb, with two wings, and six rooms (in rows of three, divided by a corridor) built of mudbricks and with stone floors in some of the rooms. The tomb had been built under the akkadian *Alteren Palast*, structurally very similar to Royal Palace G in Ebla. In the Ebla building, a funerary structure of considerable size has recently been uncovered, (two monumental chambers and a great *dromos*) which had been completely plundered, both of the assemblage and of the skeletons (Strommenger 1994; Matthiae 1993). Not much information has been published regarding the tomb in Tell B'ia, but the assemblage, as shown by the pictures published so far, and the relationship with the palace, suggest a typology close to that of the *intramural tomb*, with particular resemblance to *tomb 7* at Tell Banat.

and the limb bones). It is still unclear if we are here witnessing secondary burials (this seems to be the most likely hypothesis, based up on similar contexts) where the selection of the bones would have been made consciously, or if the usage over time of the chambers for multiple burials would have in itself caused the poor state of conservation of the integrity of the bodies or caused some of the bones to be thrown away as trash, to make space for the newer burials. There seems to be no distinction within the tombs on the basis of age and/or sex of the individuals, but a prevalence of adult males and females has to be noted. In specific "frontier sites" (such as Gedikli and Tilmen Höyük – Turkey –, Alkim and Alkim 1966) traces of cremation are found, which can be related to the influence coming from the central part of the Anatolian plain (Cilicia?), the practice of cremation being totally foreign to the Near Eastern culture in the Period we are considering; the practice will spread in the Syro-Anatolian area in the II<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. (Alkim and Alkim 1966). In some tombs it is to be observed the total absence of human remains, that has been imputed to river flooding by a lot of archaeologists and paleoanthropologists.

The last element to consider is the presence, in some of the tombs, of animal bones (at Tell Banat, Jerablus Tahtani, Tell Selenkahiye, on the Syrian bank of the Euphrates, Titris Höyük along the Turkish side, and at Hayaz Höyük, on the slopes of the Taurus)<sup>8</sup> which point to rituals similar to those found in Mesopotamia, where animal and possibly human sacrifices accompanied funerary rites (Woolley 1934; Forrest 1983). In some instances, animal remains were found in the *dromos* (e.g., at Titris Höyük, Algaze et alii 1995: 25, figs. 23-24).

### Funerary goods

Pottery vessels, placed along the walls of the funerary chambers without a specific pattern, are by far the most common item in the assemblages, as demonstrated by the rich furnishing of the *Hypogaeum* in Til Barsip (Thureau-Dangin and Durand, 1936) where, inside a room 6 x 2.5 m, a considerable number of vessels (1045) have been discovered. Several ceramic classes were represented and they were deposited (in the west quadrant of the funerary chamber, not far from the heads of the individuals) at different times, spanning a long period of time (three or four centuries during the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.; Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936; Bunnens 1990). In cases such as this, when a burial is used overtime, in rituals connected with "rites of passage" and the function of the ancestors in the community, the use of ceramic typology as a tool of analysis, both for the chronology and for the comparison of different funerary practices and realities (Carter and Parker 1995) could be misleading, inasmuch it would only generate a list of object, in itself a poor heuristic tool for the understanding of the funerary culture of that specific geographic area.

It seems more interesting to investigate a possible connection between the pre-

<sup>8</sup> The data for Tell Selenkahiye it is not conclusive, van Loon 1968 and 1973; in Hayaz Höyük, on the other hand, capridae and ovines bones have been found near the human remains, Roodenberg 1979-80; in Jerablus Tahtani, bones belonging to several different species have been found (2,2 Kg total, Peltenburg et al 1995: 24), including a dog and some doves - rock dove and turtle dove- and finally, inside Chamber F of the monumental Tomb 7 in Tell Banat, equid bones have been found (McClellan, in press).



ence/absence of specific vessel classes (e.g. bowls, as compared to jars) and the burying methods or if, percentage-wise, the ceramic typologies uncovered in the tombs reflect those used in the domestic and living areas in the same sites. Research on this topic has been undertaken at the site of Titris Höyük and will be shortly published by the author. It is worth noting that the pottery vessels associated with the footed cup, the first examples of which have been called "champagne cups" (Woolley 1952; Peltenburg et al 1995; Carter and Parker 1995) that evolve, during the latter part of the IIIrd millennium, into a different, more closed shape (high footed goblet), skillfully decorated (with incision and painting techniques), has been constantly found in high numbers inside the tombs, so much so as to characterize the cultural facies to which they belong (Carter and Parker 1995: 100), while is comparatively rare in domestic contexts.

Ceramic vessels are also to be found (sometimes in great numbers, as is the case in tomb T 300 in Mari, Jean Marie 1990) near the entrance, inside the dromos; this presence has to be connected in all likelihood with some kind of funerary ritual (see previous paragraph).

The burial assemblages (Fig. 3, 5) often include the classic smaller typologies (such as, simple bowls, thin ware, especially cups – these last ones typical of the period, when the so-called "metallic ware" abounds –, bottles, with or without base, jars, medium and small ones, with lid), miniature vessels (reproduction, in miniature proportions, of simple wares), a great number of the so called "syrian bottle" (egg-shaped bottles of fine ware, typical of the ceramic production of a wide geographical area, encompassing the Syro-Anatolian region from the Syrian desert to the Taurus range and from the Mediterranean sea to the Tigris river – characterized by black/gray color, three different sizes – small, medium and large – well defined grooves on the body and a rounded base) and, finally, some tripods, both open and closed shape (Carter and Parker 1995). There are also to be found some unique pieces, which seem to appear exclusively in funerary contexts. Such specimens represent usually variations on well established typologies (e.g. the double jar with taurine protome uncovered at Titris Höyük, Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997), or testify to contacts with neighboring regions, being considered luxury goods (as in the example of the *depas* – double handle jug –, clearly of western Anatolian origin – Cilicia – found at Titris Höyük and Tell Selenkahiye, van Loon 1968 and 1973; Algaze et alii 1995; Carter and Parker 1995).

Paleo-botanical studies, conducted on the contents of the vessels of funerary provenance demonstrate that these vessels did contain remains of what should be interpreted as offerings (Peltenburg et alii 1995: 24-25); in the site of Titris Höyük the mineralized remains of a flower have been found on the rim of a bottle, near the body of one of the individuals buried (Algaze et alii 1995).

Jewels, when found, are usually deposited in close proximity to the individual, as his or her personal belongings. Bronze pins appear in the highest percentage, surely to be connected with clothing or textiles worn by the individual (Peltenburg et alii 1995), (at Titris Höyük, in tomb B 96.75, 13 bronze pins were counted, on a total of 18 non ceramic objects, Matney, Algaze and Pittmann 1997). On the other hand weapons, (such as arrow heads and daggers), which are a sure indicator of the social role of the individual (and usually to be found in male burials), are found in scant numbers (Peltenburg et alii 1995; Matney, Algaze and Pittmann

1997).

Silver objects are rare and only used for very specific objects (earrings or rings, toggle pins, Peltenburg et alii 1995) which were intended to show the differences between the individuals within the funerary goods, as were necklaces and pendants of semi-precious stones, shell (examples found both in Mari and in Jerablus Tahtani, Jean-Marie 1990: 308 and Peltenburg et al 1995: 12) or ivory, (like the plaque found in Jerablus Tahtani, Peltenburg et alii 1995: 10, fig.13). Gold is difficult to find out in these area and appears only in monumental tombs (Tell Banat, Jerablus Tahtani, Mari; McClellan, in press; Peltenburg et al. 1995; Parrot 1974, Jean-Marie 1990).

Particularly relevant are ritual objects, such as human and animal figurines (clay or stone) and stone vessels (Peltenburg et alii 1995). The figurines could have absolved the function of ex-voto, or votive offering to the divine world for having a better life in the underworld.

In numerous funerary chambers, not directly included in the assemblage, but inside the niches of the chamber itself (in the main room -room F- of the monumental tomb of Tell Banat, McClellan, in press) or in the fill (Titris Höyük, Matney, Algaze and Pittmann 1997), is often to be found a pear-shaped lead bar not longer than 10 cm and 2 cm in width, with a hook in the upper edge. It seems possible to infer that the bars were supposed to hang from the wall, given the circumstances of recovery (Guillermo Algaze – personal communication) but their function is still unclear.

#### The assemblage of “Tomb 7” in Tell Banat (Syria)

The incredibly rich assemblage of the monumental tomb (*Tomb 7*) in Tell Banat deserves to be examined in full, as the richest assemblage ever to be found in this area for the IIIrd millennium B.C. In the first three rooms (A, B and C) the objects usually associated with this typology of burial (ceramic vessels, bronze pins) are found, with the significant difference of the presence, inside rooms A and B of *pieces of wooden furniture* (McClellan, in press) and one “syrian bottle”, with a special superficial treatment of stone beads and shell fragments, attached probably with bitumen to the surface of the bottle.

To enter room D, where a low alabaster table, some golden medallions of exquisite manufacture and lapis-lazuli were uncovered (McClellan in press: fig. 9), one had to go past a wooden door, while access to room F, on the north side, was through a short hall (E). The assemblage present in room F, the largest of the funerary complex, is by far the most impressive (stone eyes and hair pieces, of the kind found in Ebla, Tell Brak and Mari, stone figurines, bronze pins with bird-shaped heads, ceramic vessels with gold, lapis and shell decoration, a vase *made of ostrich egg*, and an abundance of beads and pendants made of lapis, gold, and bronze, McClellan in press). The presence in this room of *pieces of furniture* and of a wooden coffin (the condition of the wood was very poor, nevertheless it was possible to obtain samples for C14 dating), which contained some of the aforementioned objects, make this find an unique case in the funerary culture of the Ancient Near East (from Mesopotamia to Eastern Anatolia) of this period (Woolley 1952; Carter and Parker 1995).



### The example of Titris Höyük (Turkey)

Private dwellings of the second half of the IIIrd millennium B.C. are very poorly attested in this area, which makes all the more important the archaeological investigation at the site of Titris Höyük, which is located 45 km north of the town of Sanliurfa (Fig. 1). The site is situated a few kilometers from the Euphrates River along the banks Tavuk Çay tributary of the Euphrates River. Started in 1991 by a group of north-american archaeologists directed by Algaze (University of San Diego) and by Matney (Whitman College), this investigation was focused on the retrieval of architectural structures in the *lower and outer town* around the main mound, where one would expect to find the palaces and temples.

During the course of the IIIrd millennium B.C., the site was occupied for at least 300-400 years (from 2600/2500 to 2200/2100 B.C., Algaze and Matney 1995: 33), when it experienced a significant expansion (from a small size, still not recognizable from the archaeological investigation, to approximately 45 ha. during the last Phase, *Late Early Bronze Age*), becoming, for a short period of time, the regional capital, involved in the commercial exchanges between the area lying to its south and the Taurus region, where it got most of the raw material, such as metals (copper, silver, tin) and wood, and other it needed (Algaze 1993; Algaze and Matney 1995). In the first period (2600-2400/2350 B.C., *Mid-late Early Bronze Age*), when Titris Höyük was a small size site (with occupation both on the acropolis and in the *outer town* and the *lower town*), the funerary practice consisting of burying individuals in multiple burials in cist tombs located outside the city, in a necropolis approximately 400 m West of the town itself; data on the distribution of the tombs are scarce, but it seems possible to infer a cluster type pattern<sup>9</sup>.

The first phase of the *Late Early Bronze Age*, sees the first expansion of the site (probably starting from the *outer town*) and the increase of the practice of burying the dead closer to the city (in tombs built much the same way of the intramural tombs dealt with in the present study).

During the following phase (*Late Early Bronze Age*, Matney and Algaze 1995), which witnesses the greatest territorial expansion and the starting of professional specialization (evident in the clearly planned city layout and in the presence of diverse domestic structures, where one can find plastered basins, probably used for wine production, weights for weaving, "cananean blades", and tools for metal working – stamps, some with impressions of god figures – Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997), the practice of burial in "intramural tombs" becomes increasingly common, as testified by the presence, in almost every domestic structure, of a cist tomb<sup>10</sup>, in areas of development where the previous intermediate phase had seen the construction of tombs (Fig. 2, 4). This circumstance seems to point to a strong cultural

<sup>9</sup> The tombs excavated so far (Algaze et alii 1995; Matney & Algaze 1995) were in very poor conditions, because of modern destruction; the final report of the excavation previously conducted in the necropolis by the German mission, conducted by Prof. H. Hauptmann, is of imminent publication, and will hopefully widen our knowledge of the area.

<sup>10</sup> So far, nine tombs of this kind have been discovered, the highest number ever found in the Near East for this period.

clear distinction between the tombs<sup>12</sup>. It is evident that the low number of burials, compared to the long period of occupation, points to the possibility of the existence of an extra-mural necropolis, contemporaneous with the practice of intramural burials.

Inside (Fig. 3, 5) the funerary chambers of the nine excavated tombs, the assemblages mostly consist of ceramic vessels (bowls, cups with superficial grooves, "syrian bottle", globular vases, miniature vessels, globular bottles with long and short neck, jars, goblet with tall stem, with incised and painted decoration on the shoulder – as we have seen, the evolution of the "champagne cups"–, small *ollae* with rope decoration and in the majority of cases, with painted or incised decoration on the body – the evolution of the previous "four lagged jar"– and lid), representing up to 80-90 % of the total assemblage. We also find unique pottery objects (tomb B96.75 presents a two small jars with rope decoration, of the type already mentioned, joined by a taurine figure, similar to another one found, out of context, near tomb B96.64, in very poor conditions of preservation, Fig. 7; in tomb B96.64 a trilobal jug with a rope handle was found; tomb 95.60 had a *depas* with two large handles, certainly of anatolian origin – another example was found, out of context, outside tomb B96.64 – a jug with handle and animal-shaped spout and two vases joined along the sides). A chalice of basaltic stone, with cylindrical stem, is to be ascribed to the same category of unique objects (chalice found inside tomb B96.75).

The rest of the assemblage is usually made up of plain shape bronze pins, placed near the body. Some objects seem to be indicative of the sex and the social role of the individuals to whom they belonged; to this category probably we must ascribe the necklaces and the pendants (made of shell and semiprecious stones), as the weapons that are surely indicators of the burial of a male, because a bronze dagger has been found under the cranium of the only partially complete skeleton – of an adult male – in the funerary chamber of tomb B96.75; a large spear-point was found in tomb B96.65, Fig. 8). Also gender indicators are the earrings (in one case silver earrings) and rings made of bronze. In two funerary chambers (B94.56 and B96.75) some lead objects have been found, of unknown function; they were found in the fill of the funerary room, and their shape (with a hook-shaped end) should point to a function connected to the walls, possibly as hanging fixtures of some kind.

### Discussion

The evolution of funerary practices in the course of the IIIrd millennium B.C. in the Syro-Anatolian section of the Euphrates valley testifies to the transformation of the rituals, as indicated by the shifting in the location of the burials.

Following a first stage, when small communities would bury their dead in a necropolis located outside the settlement, which does not indicate a differentiation of social strata

<sup>12</sup> 3 individuals in B94.55, (?); 2 adult individuals in B94.56, (?); 5 individuals in B95.58; - 1 infant and 4 adults 4 individuals in B 95.60 (?); 1 adult individual in B96.64; 9 individuals in B96.65 - 1 infant, 8 adults (1 male); 7 adult individuals in B96.75 (4 males, 2 females, 2 undetermined); in B91.76 and in B93.77 the condition of the bones was too poor to warrant an analysis.



connection between the two phases, also proven by the fact that in the following phase of almost total abandonment of the site, this area is again used as burying grounds, in pits or *pithoi*, of numerous bodies. Still, it is not always easy to establish a relation between the tomb and the domestic structure; for example, in one case the tomb is contained within a courtyard (example from the *outer town*, B95.60, possibly also tombs B 91.76 and B93.77 are inside a courtyard, in the area 69/54), while in the majority of the cases the tomb itself is to be found under a small room, that covers it almost completely (B96.75, B96.65, B94.56 in the *lower town* and B94.55 in the *outer town*).

The architectural typology (Fig. 4) closely resembles the one previously described (with an orientation south-north), with the stone walls within a structure cut from sterile soil and a semi-circular *dromos*. All the funerary chambers lean against the walls of the domestic structure, with the ceiling, made of well cut stone slabs protruding from the floor, in the fashion of a tombstone (as in tomb B94.55 in the *outer town*, where the slab, part of the ceiling, has probably been removed during subsequent phases, Algaze et alii 1995).

The *dromos*, entry way to the funerary chamber, represents symbolically the last meeting place for the dead and the living, the place to deposit sacrificial offerings, in the form of animals offerings or ceramic vessels, (the *dromos* of tomb B94.56 includes a small step cut on the virgin soil, where some vessels and capridae bones were found)<sup>11</sup>. Entrance to the chamber is through a small-sized door (1.50 m high and 1 m wide), with a door lintel and a step threshold, both made out of stone. Inside the chamber, the different layers of deposition are easily recognizable, with the accumulation strata interspersed between one burial and the next. In one case, to allow for more space, a pit was excavated in the floor and directly in the sterile soil, to accommodate first the human remains, and later, even part of the assemblage (B96.75)

As a rule, the bodies and the burial goods were in different locations, with the bodies in the center of the chamber, and the goods along one side.

Only rarely are the bodies still whole; this circumstance is probably due to the practice of secondary burials and the accumulation of the bones of the different individuals (in B96.75 only the lower part of body, the longbones, was not unarticulated, while the majority of the bones of the individuals previously buried were located in a pit excavated in the south-western corner of the chamber, which also contained grave goods, Fig. 5; in B95.84, the crania were in the south-eastern corner of the chamber, together with the pottery, while the limb bones were scattered around, probably because of water infiltration). Of all the bones, cranial bones are constantly found, while for the rest of the body, we see a prevalence of leg and arm bones (femur) and pelvic bones, but there seems to be no specific recognizable pattern. A more detailed paleo-anthropological analysis is currently being conducted by Deidra Honca (of imminent publication) and will deal more in detail with such aspects. The number, sex and age of the individuals vary according to the tombs, and there seems to be no

<sup>11</sup> Outside some of the chambers (B96.65 and possibly B91.76) jars containing human remains have been found, seemingly an integral part of the funerary structure that included the *dromos* and the chamber.

(Behm-Blanke 1984), we meet a stage of greater development of the necropolis structure and complexity, reflecting a greater social stratification, as it is possible to see also in Titris Höyük and in Lidar Höyük in the Turkish area (Algaze et alii 1995; Hauptmann 1993). In this stage the necropolis is still extra-mural, and it is only in the third stage (2500/ 2300-2100 B.C.) that there is a radical change of the funerary rituals connected with the "rite of passage" of death. This change interests only the wealthiest members of the community and consists in the practice of burial inside the walls of the town, according to a ritual that had already sporadically been used in the area in previous times (as in the tombs found in Carchemish, Woolley 1952). The change does not affect the usual burial practices in the outside necropolis, where the majority of the population is still buried (Tawi and Tell Halawa, Orthmann 1980 and 1981; Kampshulte and Orthmann 1984). The main tombs, belonging to the most influential members of the community, were built inside the walls, to signify the right of property that these individuals exerted over the household (private dwellings and/or palaces), and consequently the control they had over its inhabitants.

Border regions are probably more heavily influenced by the new ethnic groups, as is proven by the practice of cremation, which is totally foreign to the Ancient Near East in this period, at the sites of Gedikli and Tilmen Höyük (Southern Anatolia, Alkim and Alkim 1966).

In this phase, the intramural tomb becomes:

- a copy of the domestic dwelling (with the *dromos*, the entrance door and the room itself) and in particular of that part of the home which is depository of the socio-economical and ideological-ritual values that are expressed through the archaeological material cultural specific to the region (Kristiansen 1984);
- a small ancestral temple, where to bury the individuals of the family of highest lineage (Kus and Roharijaana 1987);
- a place that testifies to an affiliation to the group and stands as a *social territorial marker* (following Kristiansen's theory on megalithic tombs, Kristiansen 1984: 80);
- a way to keep in contact with the dead, by enhancing, through spatial proximity, the feelings of separation and despair typical of the ritual moment of the "rite of passage" (Huntigton and Metcalf 1979; Morris 1987; Bloch 1989);
- the legitimation of the transfer of power (inheritance) within the group (Hodder 1984; Kristiansen 1984: 81; Bloch 1989);
- the attempt to reconstruct a family tree that includes the ancestors (Bloch 1989).

These hypotheses of interpretation can be reconstructed from the analysis of archaeological evidence and the comparison for funerary practices in different communities in the Near East (from the Aegean of the Early Elladic II and the Middle Elladic, Massimo Cultraro, personal communication - to the Trans-Caucasian region, Biscione and Bondioli 1989 - from the second half of the IIIrd millennium BC), with particular focus on the Syro-Anatolian section of the Euphrates valley, and those ancient communities (such as those that produced the monumental tombs in Neolithic Denmark and Northern Europe, Kristiansen 1984; Hodder



1984; Bradley 1998; the funerary cultures of Southern Spain of the IIIrd and IIInd millennium B.C., Chapman 1990: 169-210; Çatal Höyük, Wason 1994) and ethnographic realities (Huntigton & Metcalf 1979; Hodder 1982; Kus and Roharijaana 1987; Renfrew 1987; Bloch 1989; Wason 1994) that present similarities with the rituals connected with the "intramural tombs" of the Near East.

This set of data is difficult to interpret, as is common for archeological data, because of the almost total lack of specific information on the rituals connected to the use of these tombs, rituals that surely presented significant complexity, as is evident from some elements, such as the mixed use of primary and secondary burials even within the same tomb, or the continuous offerings, after the burial, in the form of sacrifices and offering of objects.

Such display of energy in the ritual of burial, in the construction and preparation of the funerary chamber and in the burying practices themselves, (Wason 1994: 71) points to a strong attachment to the group, as often happens in cases where we witness the presence of multiple or monumental burial sites (Tainter 1977; O'Shea 1980; Pader 1980 Kristiansen 1984; Parker-Pearson 1984; Chapman 1991; Wason 1994). This is not, though, a reliable indicator of a transformation in the social-rank (as Wason, who considers the transformation of burials from collective to individual as an indicator of the social stratification within the community, Wason 1994: 89-92), as the archeological data (specialized working areas, development of mass-production tools – such as the pottery wheel – delimitation of public areas – palaces and temples –) and the textual data (professional distribution in the economic texts) seem to point to a generalized increase in the social complexity and stratification at the very same time when the use of "intramural tombs" is particularly widespread, as a funerary practice. On the contrary, this seems to be a strong indicator of the importance of funerary practices in the definition of the ideology and the religious and secular aspects that influence any given society, in particular with regards to the development of a representation of the ultimate "rite of passage" represented by death (Huntigton and Matclaf 1979; Hodder 1982, 1986; Morris 1987; Bloch 1989).

The funerary practices investigated so far rapidly and completely disappear during the course of the following phase (latter part of the IIIrd millennium/beginning of the IIInd millennium B.C.) when, due to a sudden collapse of the economic structure, still partially unexplainable (maybe due to a period of desertification, Weiss et alii 1993), we witness a radical transformation of the funerary practices, with a significant impoverishment of the assemblages and the typologies of tomb structures (the only remaining typologies left being the cist tombs, the pithoi and the pit tombs), still located, as a link to the past, inside the now unused city walls (Schwartz 1986; Carter and Parker 1995).

### Acknowledgments

My best due are to Prof. Guillermo Algaze (University of California, S. Diego - USA) and Dr. Timothy Matney (Whitman College, Walla Walla - USA) to the opportunity given to me to study the "intramural tombs" in Titrıs Höyük (Turkey); to Prof. Bruno D'Agostino for his help at the *Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*; to Alessandra Asteriti for her perfect

translation from the Italian version of the article; to Dr. Gil Stein and Massimo Vidale for their friendly help during the revision of the text.

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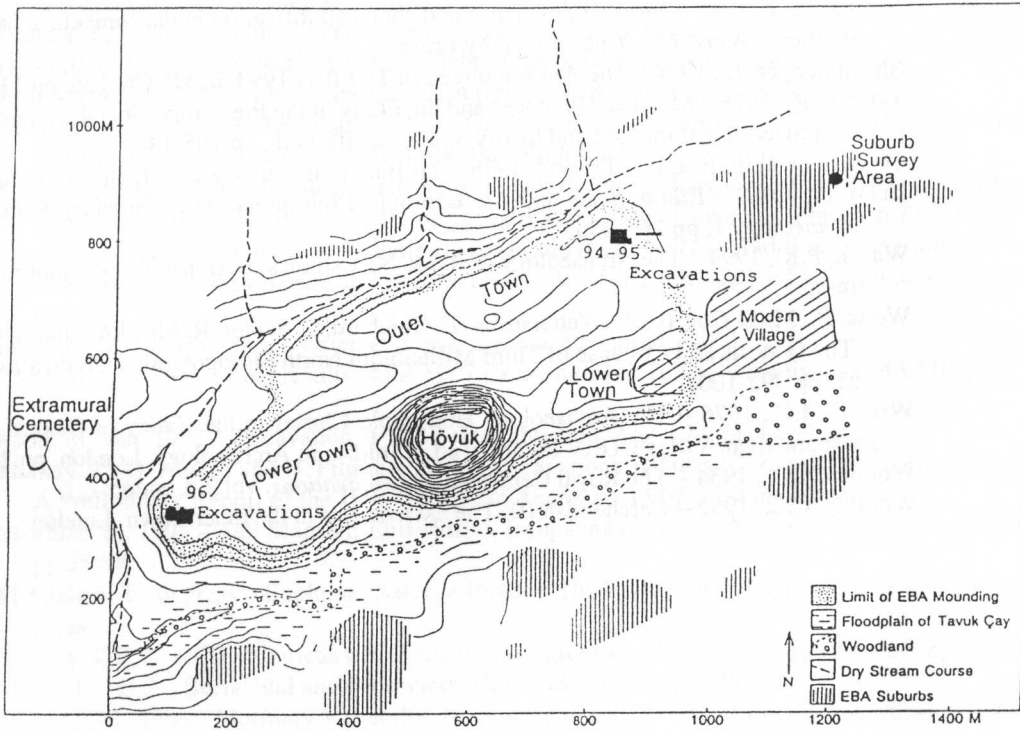


Fig. 1. Plan of Titris Höyük (Turkey) showing the morphology of the site and the 1994-96 excavations area (Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997)

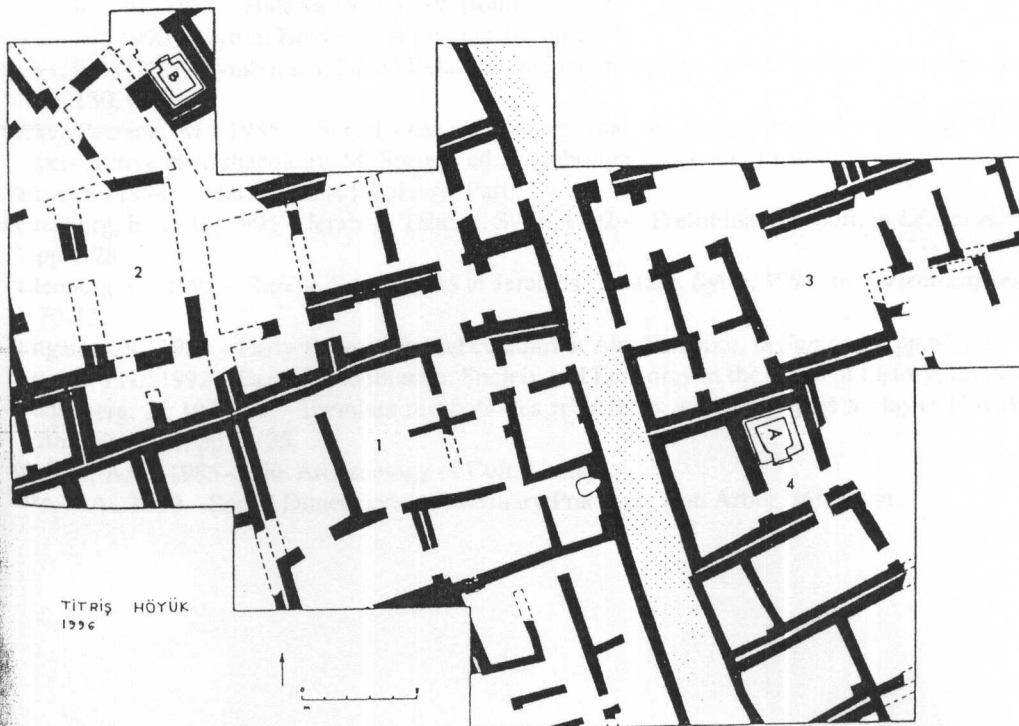


Fig. 2. Titris Höyük (Turkey). Lower Town. Plan of architecture (private dwellings and intramural tombs) of the Late Early Bronze Age phase, excavated in 1996 (Matney, Algaze and Pittman 1997).

A - Tomb B96.65    B - Tomb B96.75

Titris Höyük 1996  
B96.75

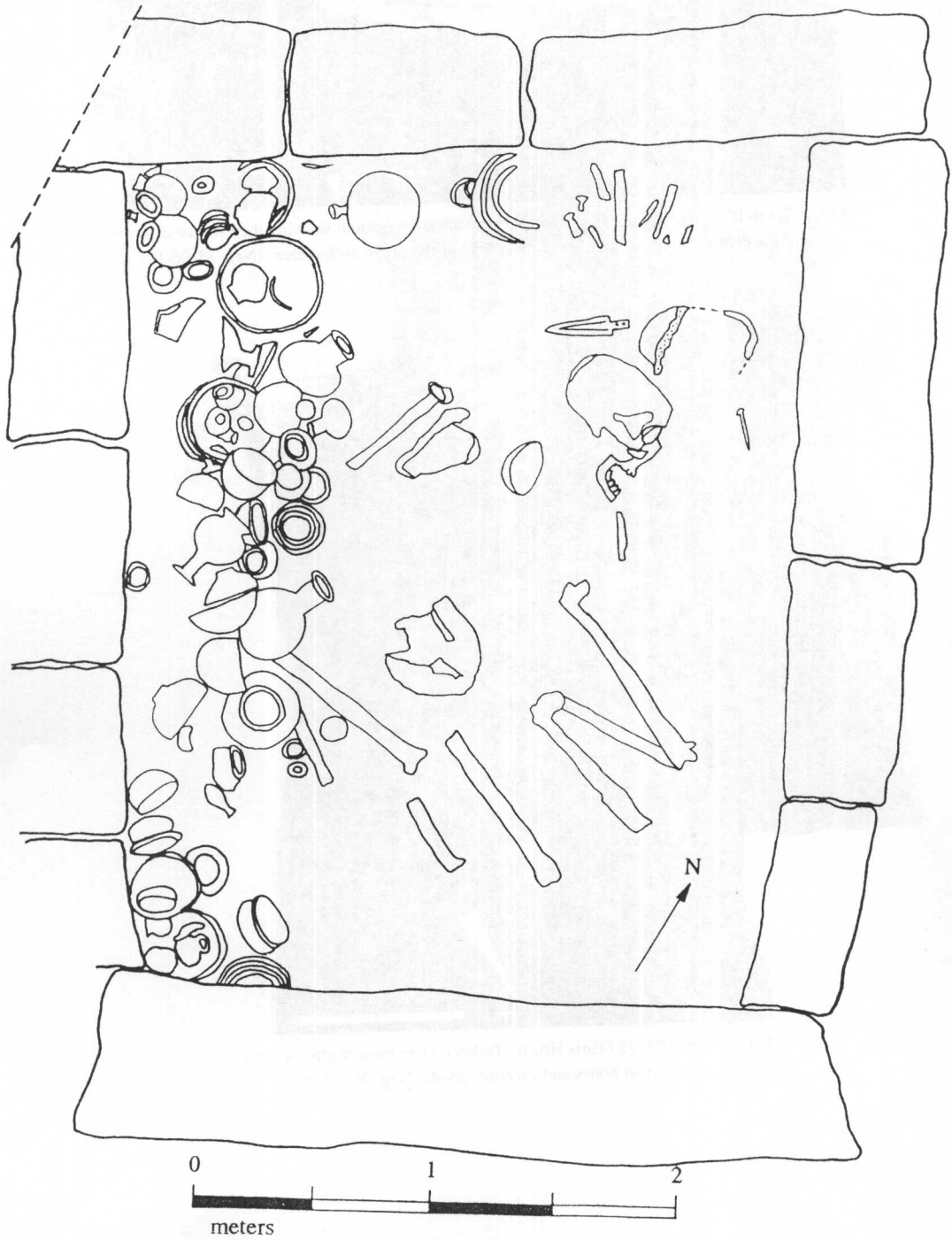


Fig. 3. Top plan of intramural tomb B96.75 in the Lower Town, Titris Höyük (Turkey).



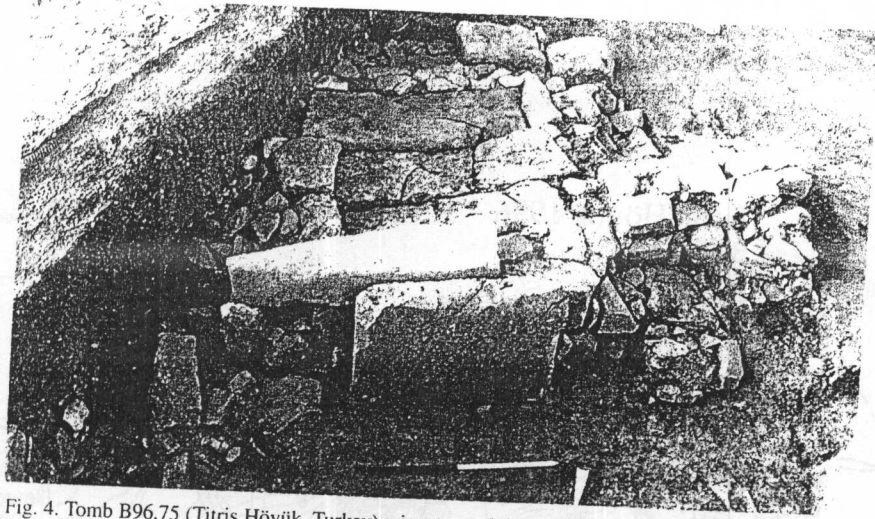


Fig. 4. Tomb B96.75 (Titris Höyük, Turkey), view toward the south showing the exterior capstones and the disturbed walls, running South-North, of the urban architecture (Neg. 85-06/18).

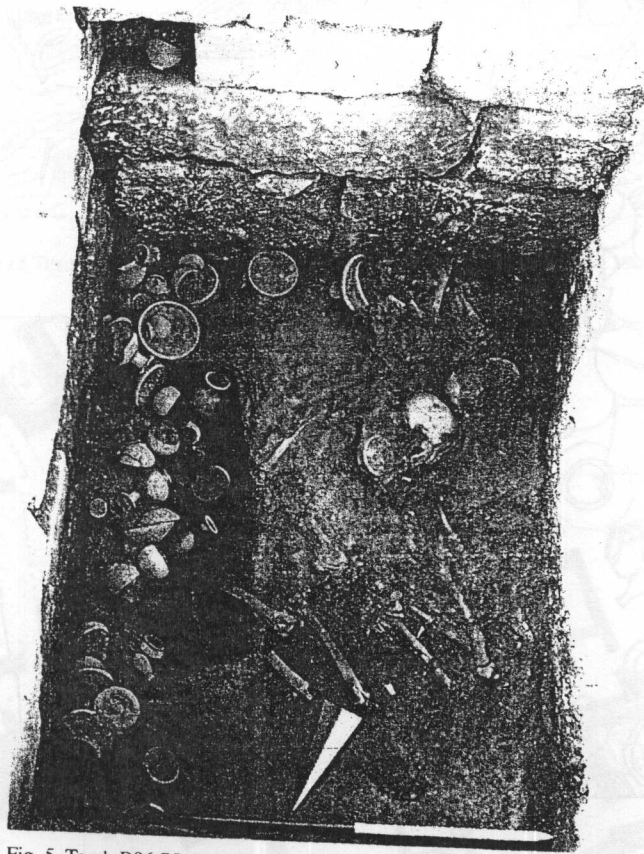


Fig. 5. Tomb B96.75 (Titris Höyük, Turkey), view from North showing in situ human bones and funerary goods (Neg. 96-09/19).

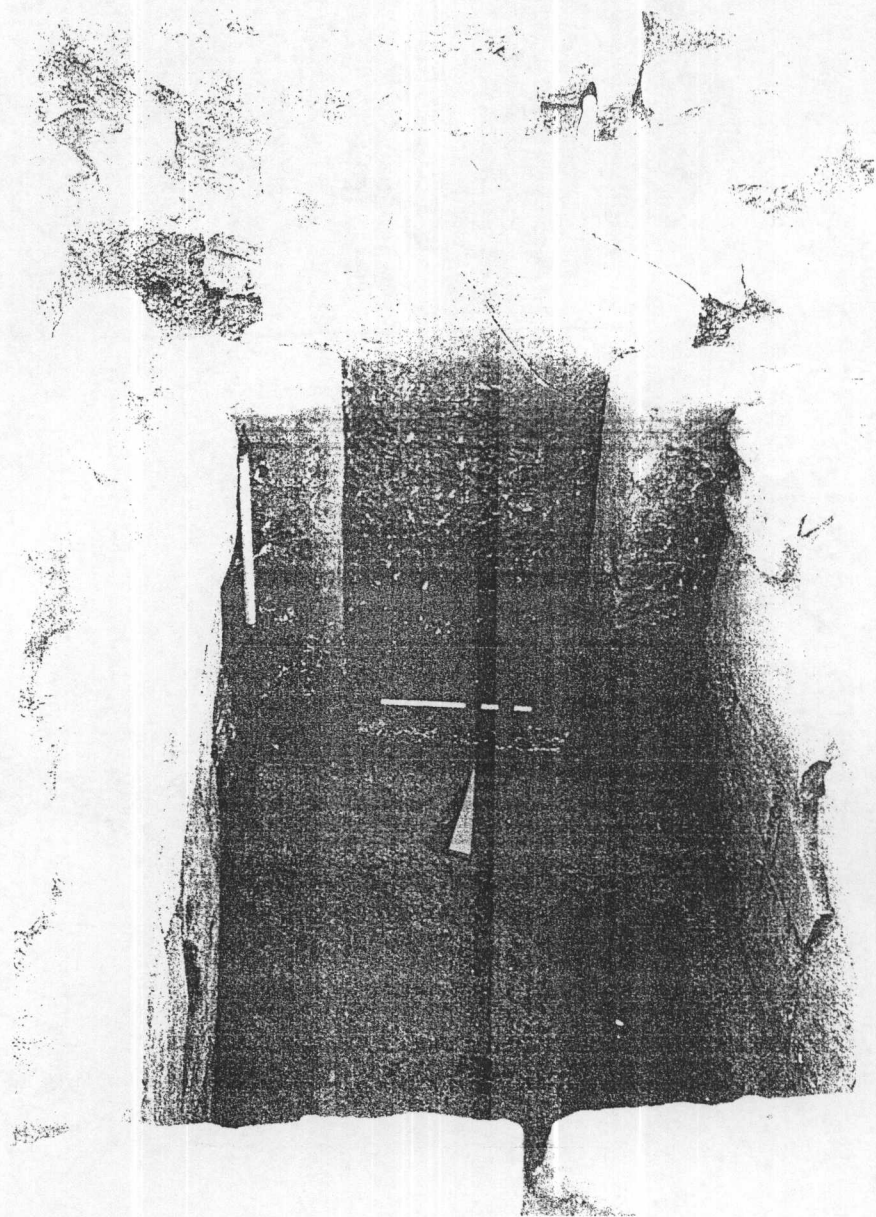


Fig. 6. Tomb B96.75 (Titris Höyük, Turkey), view from South showing the big capstone used as door and the entrance of the intramural tomb (Neg. 96-10/34).



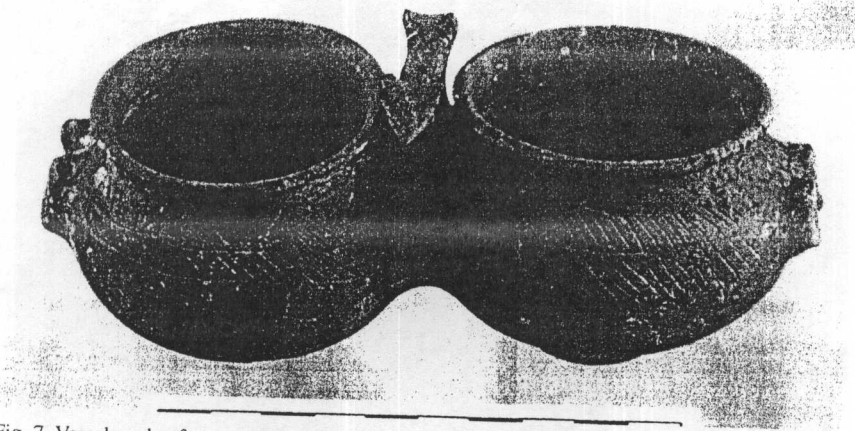


Fig. 7. Vessel made of two small jars with rope decoration joined by a taurine figure (TH 63170), part of the funerary remains in the intramural tomb B96.75 in Titris Höyük, Turkey (Neg. 97-01/09a).

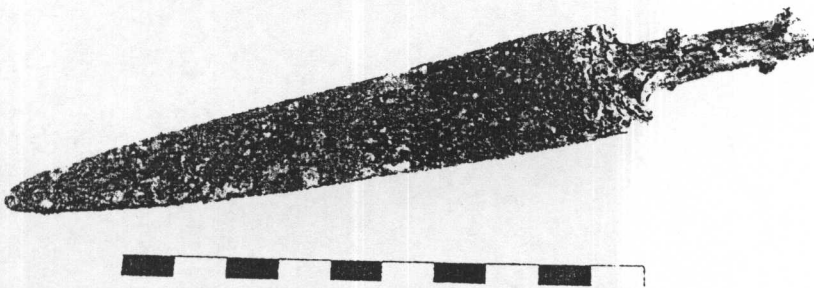


Fig. 8. Bronze dagger (TH 63201) found below the skull in tomb B96.75 in Titris Höyük, Turkey (Neg. 97-03/1a).