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The First Temples *in antis*

The Sanctuary of Tell Al-Rawda in the Context of 3rd Millennium Syria

Corinne Castel, Lyon

While Jan-Waalke Meyer and his team, at the present time, successfully pursue the excavation of *Steinbau VI*, a superb temple *in antis* situated at the centre of the tell of Chuera, it is with great pleasure that I offer him the lines which follow. They are intended to be a modest tribute to the excavator of one of the principal Early Bronze Age cities of Syria, whose parallels with the site of Al-Rawda are striking: these two cities, founded in the Early Bronze Age, are new cities with preconceived urban plans. They are both organised around a network of streets in which concentric streets and radial arteries arranged in a star pattern cross each other, and they have both produced temples *in antis*. Apart from our common research on similar themes, this article provides a new link between our two sites and our two teams, whose encounters have always been a source of enrichment and pleasure.

Introduction

Temples *in antis*, a widespread architectural form in Syria during the Bronze Age, are generally defined as buildings where the lateral walls of the main hall of worship are continued on the façade on either side of a vestibule. The discovery during the last ten years of a series of temples of this type dated to the 3rd millennium (at Tell Al-Rawda, Tell Chuera, Ebla and Tell Qara Qûzâq in particular) provides an opportunity to re-examine all the existing evidence in the light of these new data. In particular, the excavation of Al-Rawda, in the interior of Syria, offers us the exceptional opportunity of studying an entire sanctuary of the end of the 3rd millennium, with its sacred enclosure and its dependences (several rooms and their installations: basins, fire places, betyl, ...). This discovery reveals the importance of the study of the spaces which surround the temples themselves (including the open spaces), some of which can be included in the sacred precinct. It clarifies the religious practices of the Early Bronze Age more widely for us.

A comparison of Syrian temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium enables us to shed light on the major characteristics of these buildings from the point of view of their form, their installations, their environment and their situation in the cities. Moreover, this enables us to place the chronology of these buildings in perspective, and to reconsider the origin of this architectural form, which has a very long history in Syria and the Levant. Indeed, it appeared around the middle of the 3rd millennium and was still in use during the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze Age; it persisted into the Iron Age – examples being the temple discovered at Tell Taynat (8th century BC)¹ and the famous temple of Solomon at Jerusalem – before spreading throughout the Mediterranean world in the classical period.

The sanctuary of Al-Rawda

In 2002, when our work began on the site of Tell Al-Rawda², the presence of solid walls and a block 1.5 m long in the north-east of the tell led us to choose this zone (designated Sector 1) to dig our first trial trenches. The shallowness of the architectural remains made possible the discovery, over the first seven excavation campaigns, of an entire religious complex of the Early Bronze IVB, contemporary to the last occupation of the site³ (*fig. 1*).

This sanctuary brings together several elements: a well-preserved temple *in antis*, probably dedicated to the tutelary god of the city (*fig. 5*); another smaller temple, built on another plan and adjoined to the larger temple; and a large enclosure, which includes structures within and extends for some sixty meters in front of the temples⁴ (*fig. 2 and 6*). The whole complex in its final state occupies a surface area of 2316 m² (surface area of the large temple *in antis*: 192 m²; of the small temple: 64 m²; of the sacred enclosure: 2060 m²).

Fifteen rooms and courtyards were excavated in the north-east extremity of the sanctuary, in the sector of the principal entrance, which opens onto the

1 Haines 1971.

2 The Franco-Syrian mission of Tell Al-Rawda is directed by the author of this article and Nazir Awad, attached to the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of Syria at Damascus.

3 The chronology used in this article refers to that used for the different sites studied. For Tell Al-Rawda, we follow here, for convenience's sake, the distinction between Early Bronze IVA and Early Bronze IVB inherited from the chronology used at Ebla and in the northern Levant: Early Bronze IVA (Mardikh II B1), *ca.* 2500/2400–2300 BC and Early Bronze IVB (Mardikh II B2), *ca.* 2300–2000 BC.

4 For a more detailed description of the large temple *in antis* (final state) *cf.* Castel *et al.* 2005, 62–66, for a presentation of the small nearby temple and the rooms discovered in the sacred enclosure *cf.* Castel *et al.* 2008.

sacred enclosure (*fig. 6*). They are well enough preserved that it is possible to propose an analysis of the circulation between the spaces and their function (*fig. 3*).

The entrance to the sacred enclosure is particularly elaborate. It is accessible through a semi-elliptical chamber, 37 m² in size, from which the doorway itself (1491) is entered, shut off by double doors. Imposing steps confirm the monumental character of the passage, which is located exactly in line with the cult room of the main temple, some 60 m farther to the south-west. This doorway 1491 opens onto another space (E120), which serves as a buffer zone between the entrance sector and the courtyard itself.

This courtyard is divided into three distinct sectors: in the north, a zone probably devoted to rituals and especially libations, in the east a sector reserved for the storage and preparation of food, while in the south-west the courtyard extends to the front of the temples.

Several features were cleared inside the temples (podiums in mud brick, hearths), in the vast courtyard in front of the temples (a well, a paved alley and a drain) and in the many spaces discovered in immediate proximity to the entrance sector, within the sacred enclosure (*betyl in situ* 3.20 m high in space E112⁵ (*fig. 4*), plaster basins, half-buried jars, benches, hearths, work platforms, corbelled dome granary). They are evidence of the importance of religious rites outside the temples themselves and of the possibility of providing for the upkeep of the gods and of the sanctuary personnel within the sacred area itself.

The excavations, without dismantling the walls of the final state of the temples at Al-Rawda, revealed the existence of two other earlier buildings under the Early Bronze IVB temple *in antis* and under the Small Temple. The buildings under the Latest Temple *in antis* are called here “Second Temple” and “First Temple”.

The corpus of temples *in antis* of the Early Bronze Age in Syria

Recent excavations carried out in Syria have enriched the corpus of temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium. Besides the buildings at Al-Rawda, this corpus includes the famous buildings at Tell Chuera: the North Temple excavated in 1960 in sector N (northern periphery of the upper city) (*fig. 11*), north *Aussenbau* (sector L) outside the tell and near the alley of the standing stones (the *Stelenstraße*)⁶ (*fig. 10*) and “Small Temple *in antis*” of phases 1 to 3 in

5 For a detailed description of the *betyl* and the space which contains it and an interpretation of this religious installation, *cf.* Castel forthcoming.

6 For a general synthesis of the religious architecture of Tell Chuera in the 3rd millennium, *cf.* Orthmann 1990a and 1990b. However it is to be noted that

sector K, near the centre of the site⁷ (*fig. 12*). That which the excavators have called “the Small Temple of layers 3 to 1” could be three superimposed buildings of nearly identical plan but without the successive constructions being clearly discernible, particularly between “layers” 2 and 3. It is possible that there are “three phases of the same construction”⁸ and that the different “layers” only correspond, in fact, to different episodes of renewing the floors⁹. Also, we consider here that the three “phases” belong to a single building in order to facilitate the comparison. Moreover, we have also included in our study *Steinbau VI*, discovered in 1998 in sector S, at the centre of the tell¹⁰. However, we have chosen to exclude *Steinbau II* from the series of temples *in antis* of Tell Chuera, because, after having long been considered as such¹¹, the continuation of the excavations makes it possible to henceforth interpret it as part of a monumental door giving access to a large sacred enclosure in front of *Steinbau I*, in the south-east of the central depression which crosses the upper city¹².

At Ebla, two temples *in antis* have been under excavation since 2004, near the south-east sector of the lower city and the south-eastern city gate: Temple HH4 (*fig. 8*) and the “Temple of the Rock” or Temple HH1 (*fig. 9*). Another temple *in antis*, the “Red Temple”, has just been discovered in the autumn of 2008 under temple D of Ishtar, on the acropolis of Ebla. This building, called “temple D3” by the excavators, dates to Early Bronze IVA. It is characterised by an almost square cult room, whose roof was supported by four posts (four bases were found, two *in situ*) and a relatively deep porch faced with two columns¹³. We do not include it in our corpus.

At Tell Qara Qûzâq, two temples *in antis* have recently been identified: Temple L.23, level IV (phase 3)¹⁴ (*fig. 14*) and Temple L.10 level III (phase 4)¹⁵ (*fig. 15*).

Elsewhere, temples *in antis* have been found at Halawa Tell A level 3 (building I) (*fig. 16*), Tell Kabir near Tell Banat (a partially cleared temple)

Steinbau II presented in these works as a temple *in antis* is no longer considered as such (*cf. infra*).

7 Moortgat 1965.

8 Orthmann 1990a, 11.

9 For the whole of this question, *cf.* Tunca 1984, 81 and note 17.

10 Orthmann 2002, 3–9 and Abb 1.

11 Especially in the works of Winfried Orthmann.

12 Orthmann *et al.* 1995, 73–78 *fig. 32 pl. 14* and Pruss 1998, 1433.

13 Personal communication from Paolo Matthiae, whom I warmly thank here.

14 Del Olmo Lete and Montero Fenollos 1998, 296.

15 Valdès Perreiro 1999, 119.

(*fig. 17*) and Tell Matin¹⁶ (only on the surface). The mono-cellular buildings 309, 312, and 313 found at Halawa Tell B (period I, level 3)¹⁷ are not included in our corpus because their sacred character is not certain and only room 313 possesses *antae*, which are very short in any case. We have chosen to exclude Building II, discovered at Halawa Tell B for period II and on level 2, from our corpus in spite of many similarities with the temples studied, because a door opens at the back of what could be the cult room and appears to open onto other rooms¹⁸. Also to be noted is the very beautiful courtyard temple being excavated at Tell Munbaqat¹⁹. This one is accessible by a flight of stairs. It is mono-cellular and contains a betyl in front of the entrance vestibule²⁰. We will not discuss it here, as we do not have enough information.

Finally, two temples have been discovered recently at Tell Mabtuh esh-Sharqi by Antoine Souleiman, under the direction of Michel Al-Maqdissi²¹. In spite of striking parallels with the series under study, we have not included it in our corpus as it does not present *antae*. At Mari, the “Temple aux Lions” looks like a temple *in antis* but the cult room opens onto two small rooms at the back and the temple is associated with a high terrace.

It emerges from this preliminary study that the Syrian temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium are all situated in northern Syria, from Ebla in the north-west to Tell Chuera between Balikh and Khabur, and in west central Syria (*fig. 7*). So far, this architectural form has not been discovered for the 3rd millennium in the south.

It is striking that temples *in antis* have been found in large regional capitals of the period (Ebla and Chuera) as well as in small settlements (Qara Qûzâq and Kabir for example). Thus, there exists no direct relation between the size of the towns and the presence of a monumental temple. There is not a simple hierarchy of sites according to which the larger centres would have coordinated the political, economic and religious activities of the smaller satellite towns which surrounded them²².

16 Einwag 1993, 35.

17 Orthmann 1989, Beilage 12.

18 Orthmann 1989, fig. 59.

19 Excavations of the University of Halle under the direction of Dittmar Machule and Felix Blocher.

20 I warmly thank Taos Babour here for having given me this information and for having shown me a photograph.

21 I sincerely thank Philippe Quenet here for having informed me of this discovery and Antoine Souleiman for having shown me the plans of these buildings.

22 Cooper 2006, 162.

In the Levant, the temples dating to the 3rd millennium²³ at Byblos (“Eastern Chapel” and temples *in antis* in the complex of the L-shaped Temple, dating to the second half of the 3rd millennium)²⁴, Megiddo (Temples 5269, 5192 and 4040 dating to the early Bronze IIIB according to Palestinian chronology, about 2500–2300 BC²⁵) and Khirbet ez-Zeraqon (Temples B0.5 and B0.4 dating to the early Bronze III according to Palestinian chronology²⁶) show a clear relation to the Syrian temples *in antis*. However, we have chosen to exclude them from the series under study in this article for geographical reasons. But we do retain the disconcerting similarity of these buildings to the Syrian temples, even concerning the little return angle of the *antae* of the temples of Khirbet ez-Zeraqon, which is reminiscent of the one of the temple *in antis* at Al-Rawda. Moreover, Temple B0.5 at Khirbet ez-Zeraqon shows, like that of Al-Rawda, column bases between the *antae*, while column bases have been identified in the cult room of the Megiddo temples as they probably have in the temple *in antis* at Al-Rawda²⁷. These different parallels clarify perhaps the link which exists between these religious buildings of the northern Levant and those of west central Syria. But they are more certainly evidence of the “cultural community” which includes, in spite of regional variations, the whole of the Near East in the 3rd millennium, and of the internationalization of cultural models in this period.

Dimensions and forms of the buildings

Not all the Syrian temples of the Early Bronze Age possess *antae*²⁸. Indeed, the existence of *antae* is a characteristic reserved for certain temples.

23 Maura Sala (2008) places the introduction of temples *in antis* in Palestinian sacred architecture in an advanced (*matura*) phase of the 3rd millennium. We will not enter here into a discussion of the problems posed by the stratigraphies of Megiddo and Byblos, which have been regularly revised. For information on this subject, see Sala 2008.

24 Dunand 1950–1958, fig. 1007.

25 Sala 2008, 191.

26 *Ibid.*

27 At Tell Al-Rawda a wedge for a post was identified in the cult room of the temple *in antis*, a second is probable. (Castel *et al.* 2005, 64–65).

28 To take just one example, Temple 1.247 of level V at Tell Qara Qûzâq, whose religious function is certain, is not a temple *in antis*. It consists of a single “broad room”. A podium is located against the east wall, in a position not in line with the door of the building.

SITES	Exterior dimensions and surface area at floor level (with vestibule <i>in antis</i>)	Dimensions Holy Place of cult rooms	Length / width ratio	Form of the building
Al-Rawda				
– Latest Temple	15 x 12.80 = 192 m ²	9 x 9.5–9.8 (≈ square)	1.17	Massive temple
– Second Temple	15 x 12.80 = 192 m ²	9 x 9.5–9.8 (≈ square)	1.17	Massive temple
– First Temple	?	9.25 x 4 ("broad room")	?	Broad temple
Ebla				
– Temple HH4	17.30 x 10.90 = 188.57m ²	9.10 x 6.50	1.58	Long temple
– Temple HH1 (Temple of the Rock)	28.20 x 21.80 = 614.76m ²	10.50 x 7.80 ("broad room")	1.29	Massive temple-tower
Tell Chuera				
– North <i>Aussenbau</i>	13 x 6.60 = 85.80 m ²	8.80 x 4,40	1.96	Long Temple
– North Temple	15.50 x 8.80 = 136.40 m ²	9.70 x 5.50	1.76	Long temple
– "Small Temple <i>in antis</i> " (phases 1–3)	6.80 x 4.70 = 31.96 m ²	4.50 x 3.80	1.44	Long temple
– <i>Steinbau</i> VI	16.80 x 10.30 = 173 m ²	11 x 7.8	1.41	Long temple
Tell Qara Qūzāq				
– Temple L.23, level IV (phase 3)	7 x 5 = 35 m ²	4 x 2.50	1.40	Long temple
– Temple L.10 level III-2 (phase 4)	16 x 7 = 112 m ²	14 x 6	2.28	Long temple
Halawa Tell A				
– Building I (level 3)	20 x 13 = 260 m ²	11 x 7	1.54	Long temple
Tell Kabir				
(– Building I, level 8)	22 x 13 = 286 m ²	15 x 10	1.50	Long temple
Tell Matin	At least 7 x 4 ²⁹ = 28 m ² at least ³⁰	?	?	Probably long temple

29 Einwag 1993, 35 and pl. 3: d.

30 The temple has only been examined on the surface, during a survey. The long walls were observed for a length of 7 m, but may have been longer.

The domestic architecture in this region follows different architectural models, while there even exist houses with *antae* in western Anatolia in the Early Bronze Age³¹. This architectural formula is thus not specific in 3rd millennium Syria, except for certain buildings considered to be temples.

Temples *in antis* share many common features. Apart from the *antae* which characterize and define the entrance vestibule, these buildings are simple in plan. They are composed of a quadrangular hall of worship, designated here as the cult room³², and sometimes a Holy of Holies, situated at the back of the building. In the latter case, the temples may be considered to be tripartite. The last two temples *in antis* at Al-Rawda prove that the partition into three parts of temples *in antis*, as part of the architecture itself, existed from the Early Bronze IV on³³. At Tell Chuera, the north *Aussenbau* (fig. 10), where the start of cross-walls against the long walls were identified, could also be evidence for a tripartition of the space, beginning in the 3rd millennium.

It is possible that the presence of a Holy of Holies in the other temples *in antis* under study is simply not perceptible. It is possible that wooden partitions, which have left no traces on the floor, or simple curtains separated the holiest place from the rest of the temple. When it does exist, this tripartition of the space corresponds to a more and more marked progression from the profane to the sacred, from the vestibule *in antis* to the Holy of Holies which was probably accessible to only a few people.

Circulation in the buildings is always organised according to a single, relatively straight line from the entrance door to the back of the building where the podium, considered to be the most sacred place, is usually situated. The successive doors of tripartite temples, as far as can be judged (for the last two temples of Al-Rawda), are not perfectly aligned. Moreover, the doors of the temples which do not have a Holy of Holies marked in the architecture seem to not always be aligned with the podium situated at the back of the building. Pivot holes for the doors are usually present at the passages. All these features appear to indicate that the most sacred place of the buildings was hidden from the view of those who approached the temples, preserving the religious mystery.

31 Perello 2008.

32 The term *cella*, frequently employed, seems inappropriate to us as it refers to the Greek world.

33 In much later periods, this tripartition was observed in the northern temple of Emar (sector E) which dates to the Late Bronze Age. It was found also in the temple of Taynat, in the plain of Antioch (Iron Age).

The floor plans of the different temples are similar to the point that a common architectural conception may be envisaged. The stereotyped character of the architectural model certainly reflects well-established religious traditions³⁴. These were widely diffused over a vast region which covered at least northern Syria from Ebla in the west and Tell Chuera in the east to Tell Al-Rawda in west central Syria. All the temples under study were constructed of mud bricks on a foundation of rubble-stones and stone blocks. But it is possible that this constant in the construction techniques could be related to the availability of stones in the region rather than to the existence of common architectural traditions.

However, behind the apparent uniformity of these buildings realities are hidden, which are probably very different, as in all likelihood the Temple of the Rock at Ebla is a temple-tower, which does not seem to be the case with the other buildings.

Indeed, the unique and considerable thickness of the exterior walls of the Temple of the Rock (about 6 m) proves that these walls were exceptionally high (fig. 9). While the architectural type of the temple-tower is a well-known form in the Levant and in Syria in the Middle and Late Bronze Age, the Temple of the Rock at Ebla could be the oldest known temple of this type, whose origin appears to lie deep in the past. With a surface area of more than 600 m², this temple is also distinguished by its large dimensions in relation to the other buildings in the series. Indeed, most of the temples at Tell Chuera, those of Qara Qûzâq (fig. 14 and 15) and probably Tell Matin are modest buildings with surface areas ranging from 32 to 136 m². *Steinbau VI* (fig. 13) which covers 173 m² is the largest temple *in antis* discovered at the site of Tell Chuera. Temple HH4 at Ebla (fig. 8) and those at Al-Rawda (fig. 5) approach 190 m², while the buildings at Halawa A (fig. 16) and Tell Kabir (fig. 17) cover surfaces of 260 m² and 286 m² respectively³⁵.

The principal element generally used to class the temples *in antis* is the form of the cult room. The term used here is “broad room” (“*barlong*”, “*Breitraum*”) to designate the cult rooms which have a rectangular plan with an entrance situated on the long side and in the median line of the building. The long rooms which develop in length and which are accessible through a short side are designated with the term “long room” (“*oblong*”, “*Langraum*”).

34 Cooper 2006, 142.

35 With a length of about 23 m and a width of about 17 m, the new temple *in antis* discovered at Ebla (Temple D3) is one of the largest buildings of the series as its surface area is close to 391 m² (Paolo Matthiae, personal communication).

The general shape of the temple is based on the relation between its length and its width. It is related to that of the cult room: the temples whose hall of worship is a “long room” are long; those of which the cult room is a “broad room” are themselves wide or massive, according to how close they are to being square. Indeed, although most of the Syrian temples are long in shape with a “long” cult room not all conform to this model, contrary to what had previously been thought³⁶. The cult rooms of the two last temples *in antis* at Al-Rawda are “broad room” types, nearly square, as they are 9 m long by 9.5 to 9.8 m wide³⁷. The very shape of the buildings classes the last two temples *in antis* at Al-Rawda in the series of “solid temples”³⁸. Similarly, the cult room of the Temple of the Rock at Ebla is a “broad room” type (7.80 x 10.50 m), whereas the building could be classed in the category of solid temple-towers³⁹.

Thus, the distinction thought to be very clear between the Syrian temples and the temples with “broad” cult rooms in Palestine (Byblos in Lebanon and Megiddo and Khirbet ez-Zeraqon in Palestine) becomes blurred.

Moreover, at Ebla a development has been suggested of the temple with a “broad” cult room to the temple with a “long” cult room in a late phase of Early Bronze IVA–B⁴⁰. In fact, the “broad” *cella* still exists in the Middle Bronze Age in this region as probably demonstrated by Temple G3⁴¹ at Ebla and certainly by the temple of level XIV at Alalakh. This shape is thus still

36 See for example Werner 1994, 15 or Sala 2008, 197 who use this criterion to distinguish the Syrian temples *in antis* from those in Palestine whose cult room is a “broad room”.

37 Posts were most probably used to divide the large spaces of these rooms. Indeed, a heap of rubble-stones belonging to the last stage was discovered which could be interpreted as wedging for a post and a second one in the same transverse line could be reconstructed at the location of a pit.

38 According to the typology established by Jean-Claude Margueron for a series of temples in northern Syria belonging to different periods of the Bronze Age (Margueron 1985, 19), these are temples whose length/width ratio lies always between 1 and 1.33. At Tell Al-Rawda, this ratio is 1.17, at Ebla it is 1.29 in the Temple of the Rock. All the other temples studied here are clearly longer with a ratio equal or higher than 1.40.

39 The “Red Temple” (Temple D3) recently discovered below the Temple D in Ebla has a nearly square cult room (personal communication, Paolo Matthiae).

40 Matthiae 2007b, 54.

41 Matthiae 1985, pl. 53. It is not certain that this building should be included in our series, as the “*antae*” are placed far towards the interior of the building in relation to the lateral walls of the cult room.

in use during the 2nd millennium, at least in north-western Syria and the Amuq valley.

Thus, the “broad” cult room is in use in the centre and north-west of Syria in quite a large region from the Early Bronze IVA to the Middle Bronze Age⁴². We do not know whether this geographic distribution corresponds to a particular cultural area (interior north-western Syria) or whether this distribution of types must be attributed to the chances of excavation. The first hypothesis is perhaps the correct one in that the temples discovered at Tell Chuera and in Upper Mesopotamia follow a “long room” model. An indication that could point in the same direction is the fact that the type of temple *in antis* largely in evidence in the 3rd millennium at Tell Chuera was abandoned in the 2nd millennium, which does not seem to be the case farther west. In the Middle Bronze Age at this site the temples are always long buildings but without a vestibule *in antis* and with an access on the long side. Thus, the two regions, northern Syria on the one hand and north-western Syria on the other, provide evidence for the existence of regional variations in spite of a common architectural tradition.

Finally, there are on the site of Al-Rawda limestone bases between the *antae* of the last temple *in antis*. These would have supported columns, giving a monumental aspect to the building⁴³. The façade of the vestibule of Temple HH4 at Ebla would also have shown a portico with two columns, as two circular flat slabs of basalt 1.10 m in diameter were found nearby⁴⁴. This is also the case of Temple D3 (or “Red Temple”) recently discovered on the Acropolis of Ebla. It is possible that other temples in the series also had porches with columns in front which have not been found or identified.

42 This calls into question the hypothesis proposed by Jean-Claude Margueron according to which the “broad” cult rooms do not appear until the Middle Bronze Age (Margueron 1991a, fig. 4).

43 The only other certain parallel is at Tell Taynat whose temple dates to the 8th century (R. Haines 1971, 53–55 and pl. 80–82 and 103).

44 Communication from Paolo Matthiae at the Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres in 2007.

Temples	Existence of a Holy of Holies	Columns between the <i>antae</i>	Orientation⁴⁵
Al-Rawda – Latest Temple – Second Temple – First Temple	X X –	X ? ?	NE NE NE
Ebla – HH4 – Temple of the Rock	– –	? –	SE E
Tell Chuera – North <i>Aussenbau</i> – North Temple – “Small Temple <i>in antis</i> ” (phases 1–3) – <i>Steinbau</i> VI	? (begin. ⁴⁶) – –	– – – –	NE E E SE
Tell Qara Qûzâq – Temple L.23, level IV (phase 3) – Temple L.10, level III-2 (phase 4)	– –	– –	NE SW ?
Halawa Tell A Building I (level 3)	–	–	E
Tell Kabir	–	?	SE
Tell Matin	?	?	E

Orientation

Placing these temples *in antis* in a series enables us to observe that they all open towards the east, the north-east or the south-east. Only Temple L.10

45 The general orientation of the building is given in relation to the axis which links the cult room to the entrance of the temples. The orientation indicated corresponds to the direction towards which the buildings open.

46 The existence of a subdivision of the interior space is suggested by the existence of “two projections of the north and south walls” (Orthmann 1990a, 4).

level III-2 at Tell Qara Qûzâq appears to open to the south-west⁴⁷. At Halawa on Tell A, the temple *in antis* is fully oriented west-east even though the houses around it, which were adapted to the local topography, follow a north-west/south-east axis⁴⁸.

In addition, at the site of Tell Al-Rawda the other temple *in antis* discovered during a geophysical survey before any excavation had taken place to the south-east of the tell also opens towards the south-east⁴⁹. Finally, a third sanctuary with another temple *in antis* seems to appear on the same geophysical map to the north-east of the site⁵⁰. It also appears to open towards the south-east.

Thus, it appears that the opening of the temples *in antis* of the Early Bronze Age towards the rising sun or to the north-east or south-east was almost invariably chosen on purpose. Although it is difficult to interpret this constant in the absence of an explicit text, it is probable that this characteristic was related to the religions practiced in these buildings.

Installations

In most of the temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium a podium, a simple quadrangular platform in mud bricks⁵¹ (the equivalent of the Mesopotamian BARA₂/*parakku*)⁵², was discovered, either in the cult room or in the Holy of Holies, when it exists. This installation, identified in general as serving to support the divine image or symbol, appears to have been considered essential for religious practice. These podiums are usually placed in the median line of the temple, against the back wall of the building. Other platforms in mud bricks or baked bricks have been identified in the cult room of the “Small Temple *in antis*” and *Steinbau* VI at Tell Chuera, at Tell Qara Qûzâq in Temple L.10, level III and in Building I at Halawa Tell A (level 3). These are placed away from the walls in the main cult room or in the line of the building, or on the sides. They would have served to receive offerings or objects, like the benches discovered in the “Small Temple *in antis*” and the *Steinbau* VI at Tell Chuera and at Tell Qara Qûzâq in Temple L.10, level III. In *Steinbau* VI the recent discovery of a wooden statuette

47 I thank Carmen Valdés-Pereiro for having given me this information.

48 Orthmann 1989, 63.

49 Gondet and Castel 2004, 105, fig. 8.

50 *Ibid.*

51 The podium of the “Small Tempel *in antis*” (level 3–1) at Tell Chuera also shows a small step on top of itself.

52 Castel and Joannès 2001, 840.

covered in copper leaf (TCH07:S43)⁵³ provides an idea of the offerings which could have been placed on these benches.

Other installations have been recognized in the vestibule *in antis* in *Steinbau* VI at Tell Chuera, at Tell Al-Rawda and at Tell Qara Qûzâq, which prove that rituals took place in front of the temples. Moreover, at these last two sites rich deposits in jars were brought to light. In Temple L.10 (level III-2) at Tell Qara Qûzâq there was a jar buried under the floor of the vestibule; at the last temple *in antis* at Tell Al-Rawda the jar rested on a low bench made of mud bricks in a small room attached to the last temple. The nature and diversity of the material which they contained as well as the exogenous character of the materials used to fabricate the many objects show that in both cases these were deposits of offerings⁵⁴. At Qara Qûzâq the jar was probably buried at the moment of the foundation of the temple; at Al-Rawda it was deposited when the sanctuary was in use.

Finally, the many installations found in the sanctuary of the last stage of Tell Al-Rawda indicate that the religious services took place not only inside the temples themselves but also outside, within the sacred enclosures. The dimension of the *temenos* of the sanctuary of Al-Rawda and the many installations clearly related to worship which have been found (plastered basins, betyl, platform...) indicate the importance of the religious practices in which a large number of believers could have taken part. Indeed, although it is probable that the temples were reserved for the priests in charge and probably for the dignitaries, like the *erib-bitî* of Mesopotamia, the very arrangement of the premises (several doors opening onto the *temenos*) and their proportions in the sanctuary of Al-Rawda tend to prove that a large number of people could have entered the sacred precinct to take part at least in certain ceremonies.

53 Ralph Hempelmann, 2008, personal communication.

54 For a brief description of the material discovered at Tell Al-Rawda, *cf.* Castel *et al.* 2005, 66. For Tell Qara Qûzâq, *cf.* del Olmo Lete and Montero Fenollos 1998, 297 and Valdés Pereiro 1999, 121.

SITES	Installations in the vestibule	Installations in the cult room	Installations in the Holy of Holies
Al-Rawda – Latest Temple – Second Temple – First Temple	2 limestone slabs (1 circular) ⁵⁵ + deposit of offerings in annexe + mudbrick podium + 2 to 3 hearths ? –	– ? Mud brick podium against back wall	Mud brick podium against back wall Mud brick podium against back wall –
Ebla – Temple HH4 – Temple of the Rock	– –	– Outcropping rock + wells	– –
Tell Chuera – North <i>Aussenbau</i> – North Temple – “Small Temple <i>in antis</i> ” (phases 1–3) – <i>Steinbau</i> VI (Phase 2 ^d of cult room)	– – Access stairway level 2 ⁵⁶ Access stairway + benches + buried jar in the south	– Niche back wall ? ⁵⁷ Bench, podium back wall + podium south wall on level 2 Mud brick podium back wall + buttresses on exterior wall + coated “podium” E. wall + mud brick “table” in the centre + benches ⁵⁸	– – – –

55 Two other circular limestone slabs arranged in alignment with the door stiles, thus linking the vestibule and the cult room, clearly served as column bases.

56 Four steps were discovered which lead from the exterior to the interior floor of level 2. We do not know whether there were two different phases of this stairway which could correspond to levels 2 and 3.

57 Winfried Orthmann (1990a, 7) doubts the existence of this niche identified by Anton Moortgat (1962, 10).

58 Ralph Hempelmann, personal communication.

SITES	Installations in the vestibule	Installations in the cult room	Installations in the Holy of Holies
Tell Qara Qûzâq – Temple L.23, level IV – Temple L.10, level III-2	Flagging Paved platform + deposit in underground jar	– Mud brick podium plaster coating in the centre + bench along W. and N. walls	– –
Halawa Tell A – Building I (level 3)	–	Mud brick podium centre back wall + platform centre baked bricks + circular limestone base ⁵⁹ + mud brick bench NE angle	–
Tell Kabir	Bench ? ⁶⁰	?	–
Tell Matin	?	?	?

The sacred enclosure of the temple at Tell Halawa A includes structures within although we cannot clearly identify the edges of the rooms and the functions which may be attributed to the different spaces. But the discovery in the sanctuary of Al-Rawda of a number of rooms used for the storage⁶¹ and preparation of food confirms the importance, within the sacred area, of the material upkeep of the divinities, conceived as anthropomorphic figures, and that of the priests. The temples *in antis*, according to a well established tradition throughout the Near East in the Bronze Age, certainly functioned as religious institutions but also as actual units of production.

59 This slab cannot be mistaken for a post base because of its off-centre position in the room.

60 In spite of the impossibility of identifying a bench during the excavation, different indications suggest its existence, at least along the south and west walls (Porter 1995, 130).

61 To be noted in particular is the probable identification of a vaulted corbelled “granary” similar to the *gubba* which exist today (room E123) (*cf.* Castel *et al.* 2008).

Architectural environment and insertion in the town

The temples *in antis* of the Early Bronze Age were sometimes built in the centre of the towns (“Small Temple *in antis*” and *Steinbau VI* at Tell Chuera, temples at Qara Qûzâq), sometimes on the periphery (Al-Rawda, Ebla, North Temple at Tell Chuera and Tell Kabir if we consider Tell Banat to be the urban centre on which Tell Kabir depended, as do its excavators). In the latter case we observe that they could be located very close to the city gates (Al-Rawda, Ebla). The example of the *Aussenbau* at Tell Chuera proves that in certain cases the temples were built outside the urban centres, in the lower town.

The religious buildings occupied an important place in the urban space, evidence of the impact of institutional religion on the Syrian cities of the Early Bronze Age. The sanctuary at the site of Tell Al-Rawda, which occupied a surface area of more than 2300 m², especially marked the urban landscape. The geophysical map provides a vision of the whole of the ancient city, which was densely constructed⁶². It reveals that, on a surface area *intra muros* of about 11.5 hectares, nearly 4 hectares⁶³ were occupied by the religious complexes, that is, about a third of the constructed zone. The sanctuaries are dispersed in the city.

The architectural environment of the temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium is rarely known, as it is not always possible to excavate the earlier levels extensively. In some cases, it could be observed that the temples were associated with a sacred enclosure built of several rooms as at Halawa Tell A or the sanctuary of Al-Rawda of the Early Bronze IVB. The latter is the most explicit in this regard as it is the only one which has been entirely cleared, including the enclosure, which lies in front of the temples, as at Temple I at Halawa A. On the other hand, in the case of the other temple *in antis* which was – thanks to the geophysical survey – identified at Tell Al-Rawda in the south-eastern part of the site, the sacred enclosure encircles the sanctuary⁶⁴.

62 Gondet and Castel 2004.

63 According to the calculations carried out by GIS the surface area of the site *intra muros* is 11.35 ha while the space occupied by the sanctuaries is 3.8 ha.

64 Gondet and Castel 2004, 105 fig. 8.

SITES	Situation in the town	Construction on a terrace	Evidence sacred enclosure identified
Al-Rawda – Latest Temple – Second Temple – First Temple	Periphery Periphery Periphery	– – –	X ? ?
Ebla – Temple HH4 – Temple of the Rock	Periphery Periphery	– –	– –
Tell Chuera – North <i>Aussenbau</i> – North Temple – “Small Temple in antis” (phases 1–3) – <i>Steinbau</i> VI	Outside the city North of the upper city Near the centre of the tell Centre of the tell	? X ⁶⁵ X X	X – – ? ⁶⁶
Tell Qara Qûzâq – Temple L.23, level IV – Temple L.10, level III-2	Centre, high level Centre, south slope of tell	– X ⁶⁷	– –
Halawa Tell – Building I (level 3)	Centre of tell	–	X
Tell Kabir	Far urban centre of Banat ⁶⁸	–	?
Tell Matin	?	?	?

65 We have seen that the “base” identified under the North Temple was possibly part of an earlier building, probably a temple, which had been filled in. However, 0.50 m separates the exterior floor from the vestibule floor of the North Temple and the building would have been accessed by a ramp or stairway of which a few vestiges remain on the east side of the building.

66 It is possible that one of the walls just recently discovered to the south of *Steinbau* VI (phase ID) is a portion of the *temenos* wall, but this is not certain (Ralph Hempelmann, personal communication).

67 Olávarri and Valdès Pereiro 2001, 30.

68 According to the interpretation of T. McClellan 1999, 416.

The orientation and alignment of the sanctuary at Al-Rawda in relation to the neighbouring radial streets reveals the care taken to integrate as well as possible the monumental building into the urban fabric, organised around concentric streets cut by radial streets in a star pattern⁶⁹ (*fig. 6*). Thus, although the sanctuary is clearly separated from the urban fabric by a sacred enclosure, it nevertheless fully fits into the plan of the city. This is also true of the other sanctuary revealed by the geophysical survey, in the south-eastern part of the site.

On Tell A of Halawa the temple is also set into the urban fabric. It is simply separated by a sacred enclosure which isolates it at least on three sides. A street (3-S10) can be observed between the northern wall of the enclosure and the houses which are found north of the temple. But this separation is only relative in that a row of rooms are set directly against the external face of the enclosure wall⁷⁰.

At Tell Chuera, *Steinbau VI* could be associated with a *temenos* wall, as shown by the digging of a trench south of the building, but the excavated zone is too small to be sure of this⁷¹. Concerning the architectural environment of the “Small Temple *in antis*”, Öhnan Tunca⁷² has shown how great the uncertainty is, as it is not possible to know definitely what buildings surrounded the Small Temple *in antis* of levels 1, 2 and 3. However, it is probable the buildings of at least layers 2 and 3 were included in a quarter of private houses⁷³.

Thus, in all the cases where observation is possible, the temples *in antis* constructed *intra muros* fit into the urban fabric, even when they were constructed on the periphery of the sites. They are however symbolically separated by an enclosure wall. The very relative aspect of their isolation is underlined by the fact that at Tell Al-Rawda a concentric road leads to the sacred enclosure of the sanctuary at the end of the occupation of the site, in Early Bronze IVB. At the junction of the concentric road and the wall of the enclosure, in the north and in the south, a fairly wide open passage was

69 Gondet and Castel 2004.

70 Peter Pfälzner (2001, 353 and pl. 80) sees here spaces which could belong to houses (3-26 IIIa and 3-26 IIIb).

71 Ralph Hempelmann, personal communication (August 2008): “In the south of *Steinbau VI*, we dug (in 2007) a long trench to explore the surroundings. In period TCH ID *Steinbau VI* was surrounded mainly by open space, but at least one building was close to it. 20 m south of *Steinbau VI* we found a street – very likely the central axis – with parallel walls. One of them could have been a *temenos*, but the cleared space is too small to be sure”.

72 Tunca 1984, 81–83.

73 Orthmann 1990a, 11 and Pfälzner 2001.

created, independent of the main entrance of the sanctuary, which is complex and protected by doorways with double doors.

The juxtaposition, in the same group, of a large temple *in antis* and another small place of worship with a different plan was probably an architectural formula which was in fashion at the end of the Early Bronze Age. In fact, it is present not only at Tell Al-Rawda (*fig. 5*), but at Ebla (Temples HH4 and HH5) (*fig. 8*) in the Early Bronze IVB and possibly at Halawa Tell A⁷⁴ (*fig. 16*).

In the stratigraphy, it is striking to observe that a large number of temples *in antis* were built over other religious buildings. At Tell Al-Rawda, the Latest Temple *in antis* lies directly on top of two other buildings. The building in between is also a temple *in antis*, apparently tripartite as is the Latest Temple and with the same proportions. It consists of a vestibule *in antis*, a cult room and probably a Holy of Holies. Unfortunately, it is difficult to date this building, which had been largely robbed and which has yielded very few finds, precisely. A few portions of walls were identified, which could prove that there existed a small temple next to the large temple *in antis*.

The oldest building, situated below the two later temples, lies directly on the virgin soil. It probably goes back to the foundation of the planned “new town” about 2450 BC, that is in the Early Bronze IVA according to the chronology used in north-west Syria. It appears to possess only two “broad rooms”. A portion of wall identified in the continuation of the long south-east wall of the building could indicate that this wall already possessed *antae*. Moreover, the vestiges of a mud brick platform were identified against the wall situated at the back of the building. Thus, this building could belong to the well established Syrian tradition of temples *in antis*. From the beginning it fitted into the regular urban organisation of the urban fabric with its radial and concentric streets and contributed to structuring the city and the institutional space, as much from a functional as from an ideological point of view.

Similarly, two buildings exist under the neighbouring small Temple, which we have every reason to believe are also temples⁷⁵.

It is striking to observe that the same superimposition of religious buildings exists at Ebla. On this site the Temple *in antis* HH4 lies on top of the “Temple of the Rock” which is dated by Paolo Matthiae to Early Bronze IVA and fits into a succession of in total four temples *in antis*, up to Middle Bronze II with Temple HH2.

74 According to a proposition of Lisa Cooper (2006, 154).

75 For a description of the different buildings and their different phases, see Castel *et al.* 2008, 13 and *figs. 3a, 3b, 3c and 4a, 4b and 4c p. 10 and 11.*

Concerning the *Aussenbau* and the North Temple at Tell Chuera, Winfried Orthmann⁷⁶ questions the actual existence of a base or terrace under the temples, as the excavators presumed. The question is whether this “base” corresponds in reality to the presence of an underlying building, identical in plan, filled with mud bricks before the construction of each temple. It is highly plausible that these were also religious buildings. The fact that the walls of the “base” underneath the *Aussenbau* are narrower than the foundations of the temple argues in favour of this interpretation. It would appear more logical to build a terrace at least as wide as the temple which it is to support. Moreover, explicit mention is made in the preliminary report of a “plaster coating covering the “base” of mud bricks as well the stone walls surrounding it”. The fact that this coating presents traces of deterioration is interpreted by the excavator as evidence for the existence of a building anterior to the one excavated which probably had a similar plan⁷⁷. This interpretation appears to be a good one to us, particularly as we do not understand the necessity of coating the “interior” walls of the “base”, which the excavator seems to suggest. Finally, mention is made of two walls built against the “base”, unfortunately in an unclear stratigraphic context. In any case, as these walls apparently lie against the “base”, we do not understand their existence unless these are walls belonging to an annexe of a building anterior to the *Aussenbau*, that was later filled in.

In the case of the North Temple at Tell Chuera, it appears to us even more likely that the “base” corresponds to the vestiges of an earlier building that was filled in rather than a transverse wall which rests against the “base” directly above the cult room. This would tend to prove the existence of an earlier building, probably consisting of a cult room and, at the back, a Holy of Holies. Only excavation and removal of the fill, whose nature is unclear in the published report, will yield a definitive confirmation of this interpretation.

The existence of earlier buildings does not exclude, of course, that they were used as foundations for later buildings. According to the words of Frankfort, “this practice resulted in exceptionally deep and solid foundations so that experience and faith were in agreement in respecting the existing arrangement”⁷⁸.

There is also a question concerning what the excavators have called the “Small Temple *in antis*” at Tell Chuera. In this case, too, it seems that the temple of level 1 lays upon a “sort of base formed by the walls and the

76 Orthmann 1990a, 6.

77 Orthmann 1990a, 4.

78 Frankfort 1951, 352.

filled-in interior space of the earlier temples”⁷⁹, the “layers” 2 and 3. Thus, there would have been three buildings on top of each other like, for example, the temples at Al-Rawda.

Finally, *Steinbau* VI itself appears to rest on another monumental building of phase IC or an even earlier phase⁸⁰.

Thus the observed or presumed superimposition of temples in a number of cases suggests the permanence of the places of worship and the preservation of the plans, a tradition which was well established in the Oriental world⁸¹.

Chronology

The chronological attributions, which we propose here, are those advanced by the excavators of each site, sometimes after an extensive revision of the datings previously proposed (at Tell Chuera in particular). These chronological attributions should be taken with much caution. Indeed, the ¹⁴C dates to support them remain exceptional; well-stratified pottery and objects associated with the temples are absent in most of the cases, or poorly published; besides, certain excavations are already old and poorly documented (the excavations of the *Aussenbau* and the North Temple of Tell Chuera in particular).

Moreover, the correlation of the different phases of the Early Bronze Age and the absolute dates is difficult to establish as the sites belong to different regions, which have their own chronological terminologies and periodizations.

Finally, it is possible that the absolute dating of the temples of Tell Qara Qûzâq proposed by the excavators should be later, in spite of the presence of “metallic ware” in level IV and their attribution to level III of the same period. Indeed, Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Juan-Luis Montero Fenollos date the deposit of offerings found in Temple L.10 (level III), which occurred at the foundation of the sacred building, to the middle of the 3rd millennium (*ca.* 2600–2400 BC), but at the same time they believe that the jar which contained the deposit can be compared to the pottery of the *Mardikh* II B1 phase (EB IVA) of Ebla⁸². But the excavators of Ebla date the *Mardikh* II B1 phase to the period between 2500 and 2300 BC.

79 Orthmann 1990a, 9.

80 Ralph Hempelmann, personal communication (August 2008).

81 For this and concerning the temples of the Neo-Babylonian period for example, *cf.* especially C. Castel 1991.

82 Del Olmo Lete and Montero Fenollos 1998, 297.

Moreover, to support their chronological attribution, G. Del Olmo Lete and J.-L. Montero Fenollos depend especially on the parallelism of small objects in the form of a fish and a bull found in a jar from Temple L.10 (level III) with comparable objects found in the “Small Temple *in antis*” of Tell Chuera. However, the chronology of this temple has recently been brought forward by Jan-Waalke Meyer (2006 and 2008). We propose here that the foundation of Temple L.10 occurred around 2500–2300 BC with a very strong possibility that the temple was constructed between 2400 and 2300 BC. The excavators attribute the two temples of Qara Qûzâq studied here to the same phase; so we attribute to them the same period of construction.

Concerning Tell Al-Rawda, two ¹⁴C dates obtained for the sanctuary were sufficiently reliable to be taken into account. They relate to the sacred area which is stratigraphically connected to the Latest Temple *in antis*. These dates were obtained from charcoal taken from two locations. The sample Lyon-3471 (OxA) comes from a hearth (1448) dug into floor 1423 of room E118, which is situated immediately to the north-west of the main entrance of the sacred enclosure. It gives a range with a maximum probability between 2465 and 2202 BC (calibrated dating). The second one – Lyon-4853 (Sac-10396) – comes from a well (1320) dug into the sacred enclosure. It gives a range with maximum probability between 2464 and 2203 BC (calibrated dating). These two dates, which coincide perfectly, allow us to date the period of time when the Latest Temple was in use. This is early compared to the date generally accepted for the Early Bronze IVB. For this reason it is probable that the construction of the temple and the sacred enclosure dates to the latter part of the date range (2300–2200 BC) and that the sanctuary remained in use until approximately the end of the 3rd millennium.

It is more difficult to give a precise date for the construction of the two oldest temples where we have found only very few diagnostic sherds. But it seems that the First Temple dates back to the time of the foundation of the planned “new town” with its preconceived urban plan, about 2450 BC. The construction of the “Second Temple” dates back to between the end of the use of the oldest one (the “First Temple”) and the construction of the “Latest Temple”.

Temples	Dating construction	Approximate absolute dates of construction
Al-Rawda – Latest Temple – Second Temple – First Temple	EB IVB EB IVA or B ? EB IVA	2300–2200 BC about 2350–2300 BC about 2450 BC
Ebla – Temple HH4 – Temple of the Rock	Mardikh IIB2, EB IVB Mardikh IIB1, EB IVA	2200–2000 BC 2450–2300 BC
Tell Chuera – North <i>Aussenbau</i> – North Temple – “Small Temple <i>in antis</i> ” (phases 1–3) – <i>Steinbau</i> VI	Chuera ID or EB IVA ⁸³ Chuera ID or EB IVA ⁸⁴ Beginning Chuera ID or EB IVA ⁸⁵ Chuera ID or EB IVA ⁸⁶	2450–2300 BC 2450–2300 BC about 2450 BC ⁸⁷ 2450–2300 BC

83 Winfried Orthmann dated this building to phase IC of Tell Chuera, that is “to a relatively early phase of the Proto-Dynastic period” (1990a, 5), the beginning of Proto-Dynastic II (Orthmann 1990b, 10). We prefer to follow here the new chronological attributions proposed by Jan-Waalke Meyer (2006), based particularly on a synchronism with the levels of Kharab Sayyar, situated 12 km south of Tell Chuera, to reconsider and clarify the dating of the temples.

84 Phase ID is the one proposed by Jan-Waalke Meyer (2006, 329). According to Winfried Orthmann (1990a, 7), “Only a few photographs of terracotta figurines found at this location have been published; they could indicate that at least the last phase of the North Temple corresponds to the latest phase (phase IE) of the development of the culture of the 3rd millennium at Tell Chuera”. Peter Werner dates the temple to Early Bronze IV (Werner 1994, 44).

85 Meyer 2006, 329 and Hempelmann 2002. The “Small Temple *in antis*” of sector K is associated with level 3. Based on the pottery, Hartmut Kühne dates level 4 earlier than period TCH IC and level 3 to period TCH ID (Kühne 1976). Ralph Hempelmann states that the temple was certainly constructed at the beginning of period TCH ID (Hempelmann 2002).

86 I warmly thank Ralph Hempelmann here for having informed me of his recent research on this temple. According to him, the temple was created at the beginning of period ID and was in use until the end of phase IE.

87 For Tell Chuera, we adopt the chronology proposed by Jan-Waalke Meyer (2006 and 2008). Unlike the excavators working in north-western Syria and especially at Ebla, he dates the Early Bronze IVB to between 2300 and 2200 BC and attributes the period between 2200 and 2000 BC to Middle Bronze I. The Early Bronze IVA, though, he dates to the period between 2450–2300 BC like the excavators working in north-western Syria.

Temples	Dating construction	Approximate absolute dates of construction
Tell Qara Qûzâq – Temple L.23, level IV (phase 3) – Temple L.10, level III-2 (phase 4)	EB III–IV (ED III) EB III–IVA (ED III)	2500/2400–2300 BC 2500/2400–2300 BC
Halawa Tell A Building I (level 3)	EB IV ⁸⁸	around 2300 BC
Tell Kabir (phase 4)	EB IV	2450–2300 BC ⁸⁹
Tell Matin	EB ⁹⁰	3 rd millennium

As far as we can judge, according to the latest chronological revisions proposed by the excavators of Tell Chuera, all the temples *in antis* of the 3rd millennium which were found date to the phase Tell Chuera ID, that is to a phase corresponding to the Early Bronze IVA of north-western Syria. Although this cannot be completely ascertained regarding the *Aussenbau* and the North Temple, whose excavations are already outdated, we know at least that the North Temple was in use up to Chuera IE judging by the small objects which were found, that is during the Early Bronze IVB. Similarly, *Steinbau* VI was still in use up to this period.

The Temple of the Rock at Ebla and the First Temple *in antis* at Al-Rawda are dated by the excavators to Early Bronze IVA, which corresponds roughly, according to the chronology in use in the region, to the period between 2450 and 2300 BC.

Thus, as far as can be judged in the present state of the situation, the oldest known temples *in antis* date to Early Bronze IVA, around 2450 BC, or to the very end of Early Bronze III, about 2500–2450 BC. This takes us – in relation to the chronology of the Mesopotamian South – to the very beginning of the Akkad period or the end of the Early Dynastic III and to the *Early Jezira* IIIa or IIIb according to the terminology used henceforth in the Syrian Jezira.

88 According to Orthmann 1989, the temple dates to the Akkadian period to judge by the fragments of steles discovered in the cult room.

89 Porter 1995, 135.

90 No other information was provided in Einwag 1993, 35. This chronological attribution is based on pottery material discovered on the surface.

Conclusions

The temple *in antis* is a widely spread form in the second half of the 3rd millennium throughout northern and central Syria and in the northern Levant. The emergence of this architectural type appears to have occurred approximately at the same time throughout the region⁹¹, around 2500–2400 BC.

All the temples inventoried except for one (Temple L.10, level III-2, phase 4 at Tell Qara Qûzâq) open towards the east, the north-east or the south-west. They conform to a basic scheme which serves as a model of reference for all the buildings of the series. In spite of important variations concerning the general proportions of the buildings, their bi- or tripartition and their religious installations, the model of the temple *in antis* appears to be an established and probably implicit type, given the absence of a theorist of space in this period. This architectural formula reflects a cultural homogeneity, which is remarkable in such a vast region, probably favoured by the development of trade networks beginning in the middle of the 3rd millennium. It seems to reflect a kind of consensus extending across central and northern Syria which was established in reference to common religious beliefs and ritual practices.

The characteristics of temples *in antis* demonstrate a remarkable architectural mastery beginning in the Early Bronze Age. The solidity and the probably impressive height of the Temple of the Rock at Ebla⁹² and the façade columns of the Latest Temple *in antis* at Al-Rawda (*fig. 6*) are evidence of the monumentality of the buildings, which are often integrated into a larger complex. The religious practices took place in the temples themselves but also in the courtyard and the neighbouring rooms of the religious complex. These buildings are in general well integrated into the urban fabric, but are nevertheless usually separated by an enclosure wall.

91 For the northern Levant, see Sala 2008.

92 Paolo Matthiae estimates the Temple of the Rock was about fifteen meters high (Matthiae 2007b, 51).

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Fig. 1 Aerial photograph of the religious complex at Tell Al-Rawda (sector 1, in the north-east of the site) (photograph: O. Barge, 2007)
©Archaeological mission of Al-Rawda

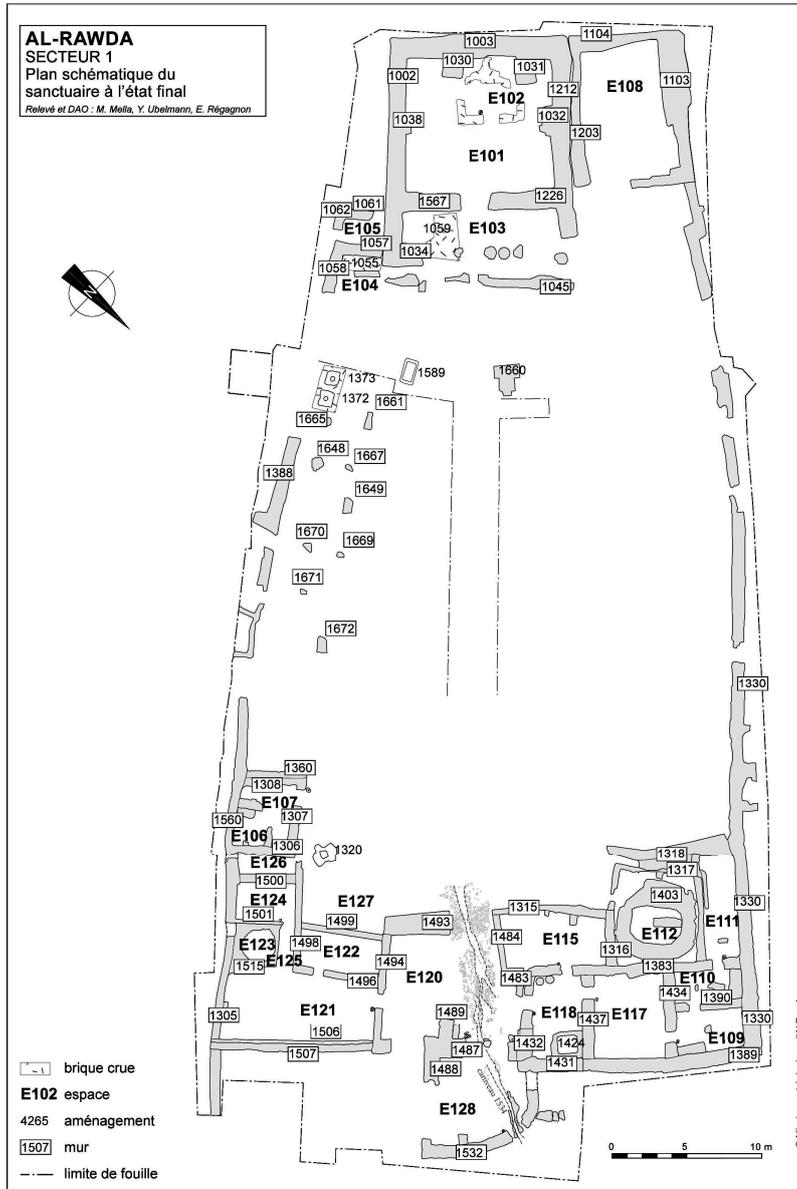


Fig. 2 Schematic plan of the religious complex at Tell Al-Rawda (sector 1, in the north-east of the site), 2007

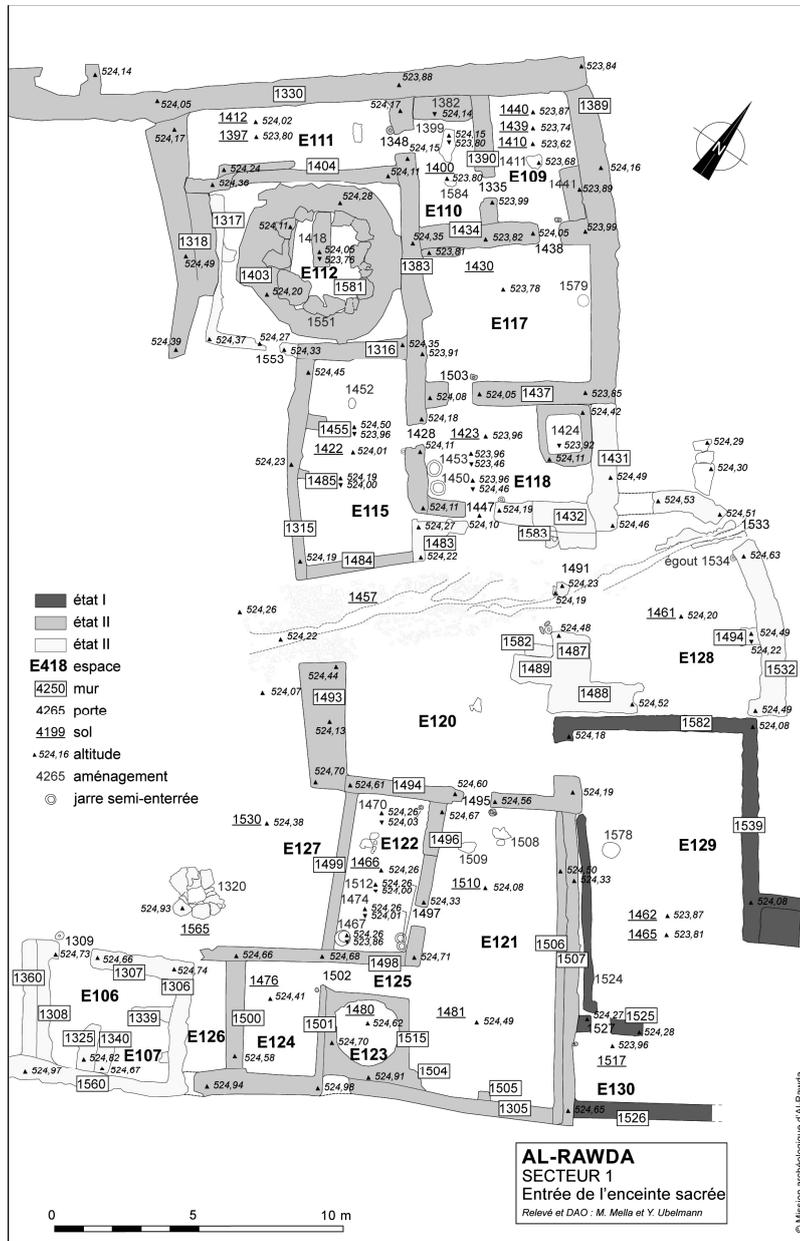


Fig. 3 Schematic plan of the entrance sector in the religious complex at Al-Rawda

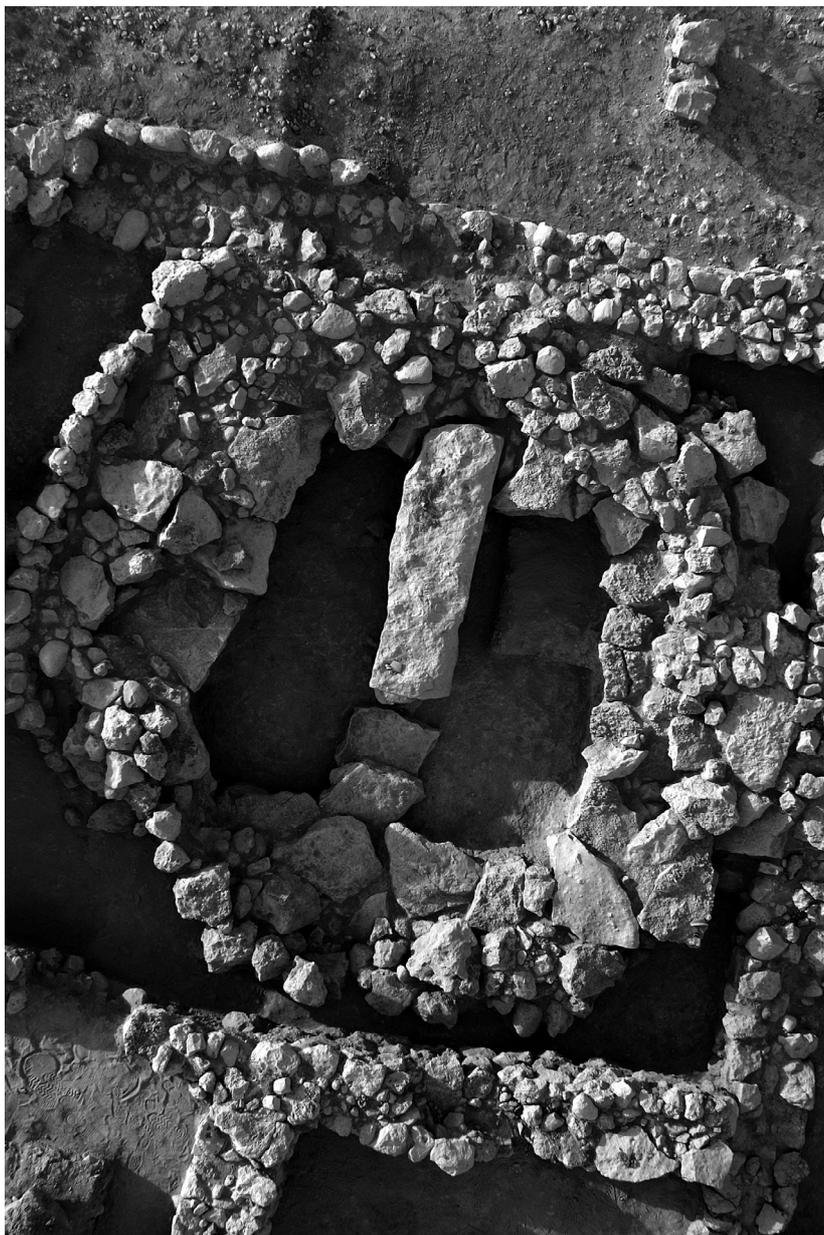


Fig. 4 Photograph taken by kite of the betyl space E112 in the religious complex at Al-Rawda
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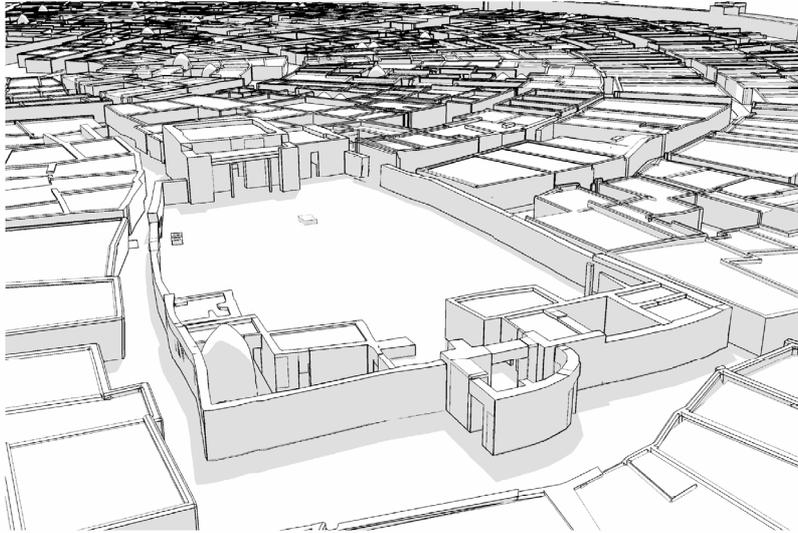


Fig. 6 Restitution of the principal sanctuary of Tell Al-Rawda with the two temples and the sacred enclosure (latest level of occupation) (drawing: Y. Ubelmann). ©Archaeological mission of Al-Rawda

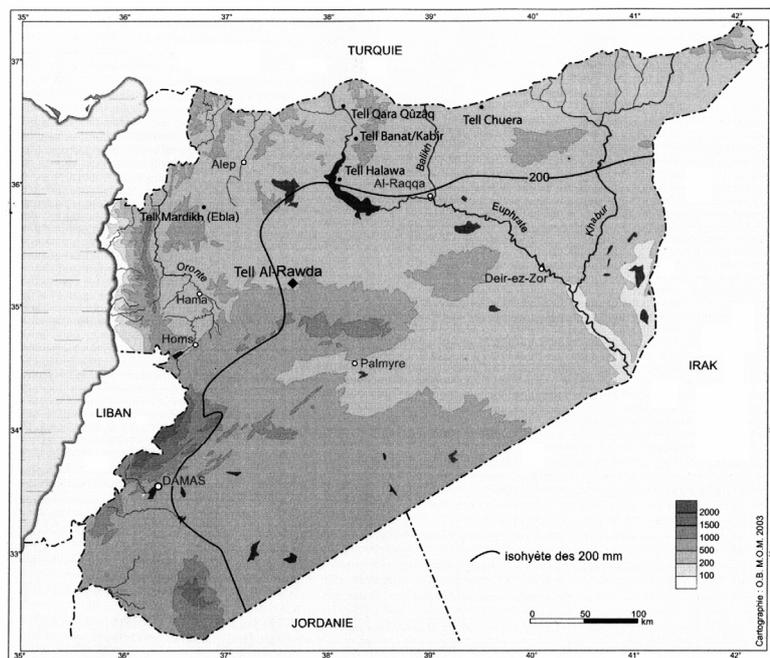


Fig. 7 Map of the sites on which early Bronze temples *in antis* have been identified

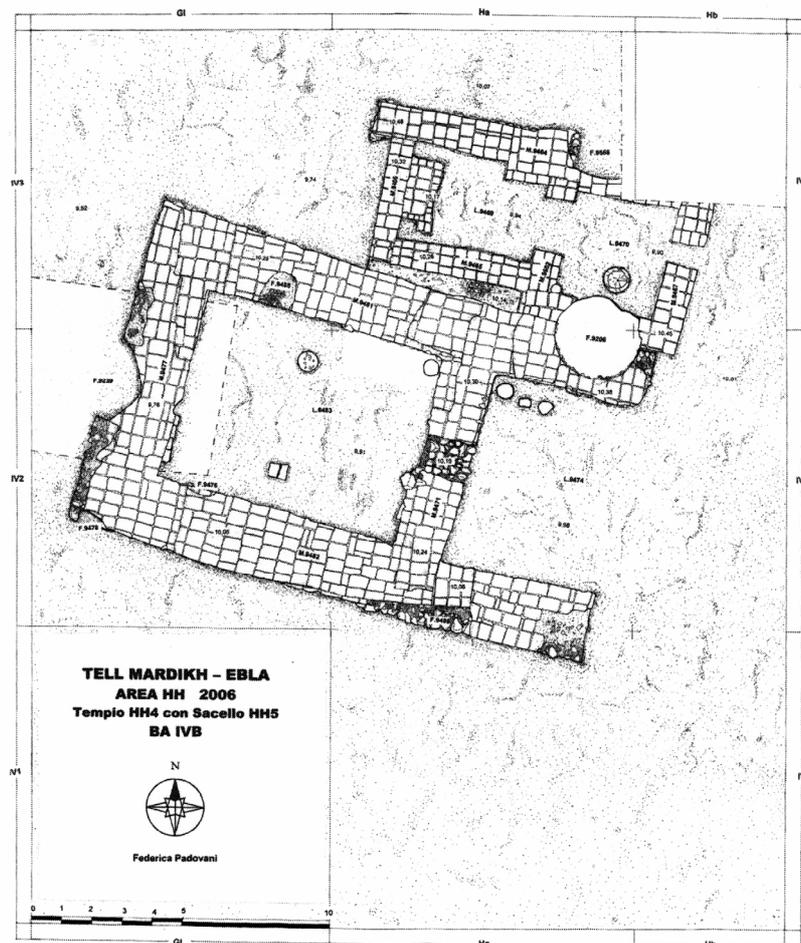


Fig. 8 Plans of Temples HH4 and HH5 at Ebla
(courtesy of Paolo Matthiae)

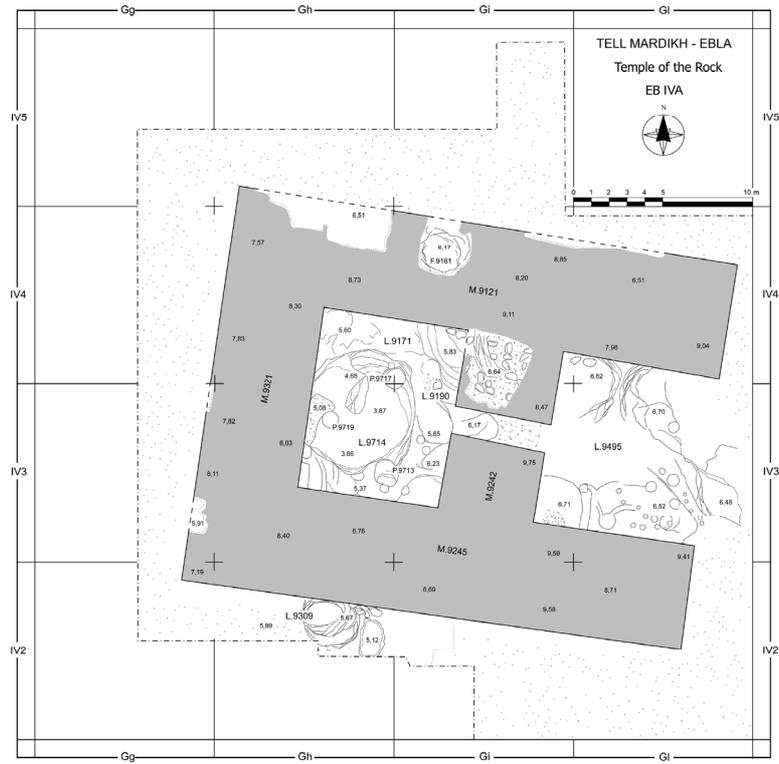


Fig. 9 Volumetric reconstruction of the “Temple of the Rock” at Ebla (courtesy of Paolo Matthiae)

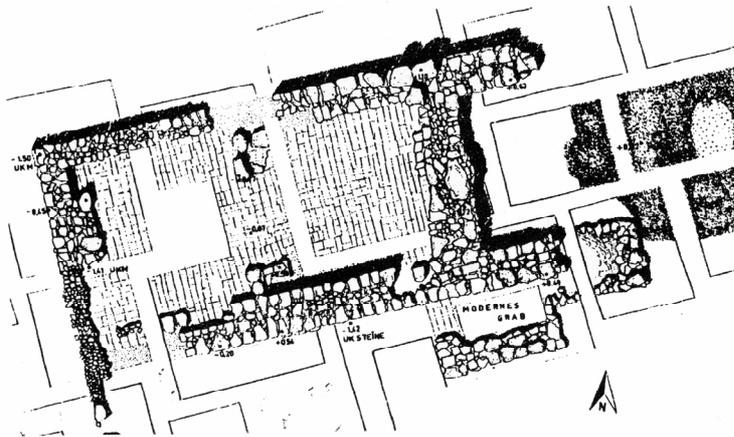


Fig. 10 Plan of the *Aussenbau* of Tell Chuera after P. Werner 1994, pl. 14

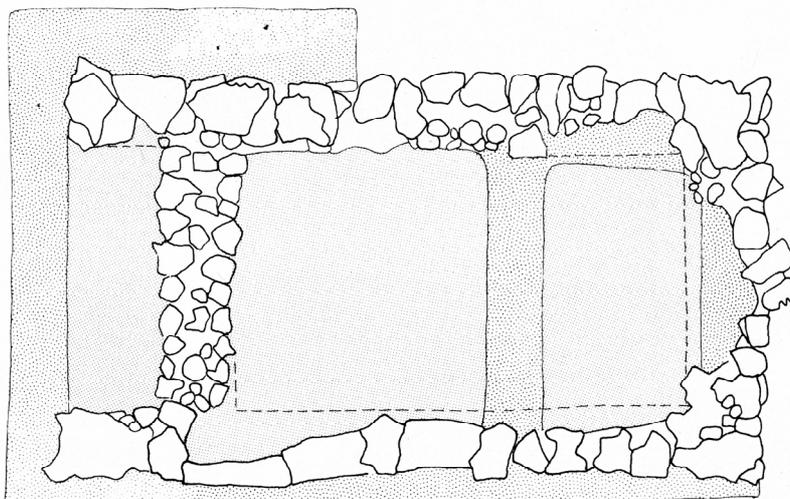


Fig. 11 Plan of the *North Temple* at Tell Chuera,
W. Orthmann 1990, 21 fig.14

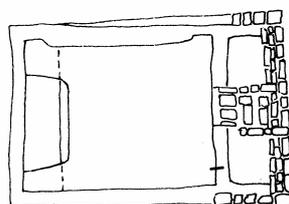
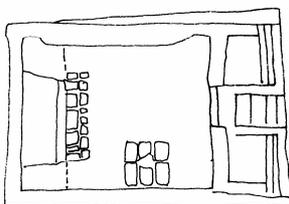
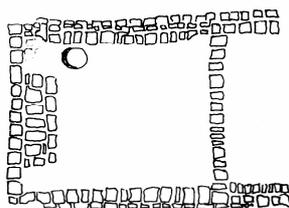


Fig. 12 Plan of the *Small Temple in antis* at Tell Chuera,
W. Orthmann 1990, 22 fig. 15

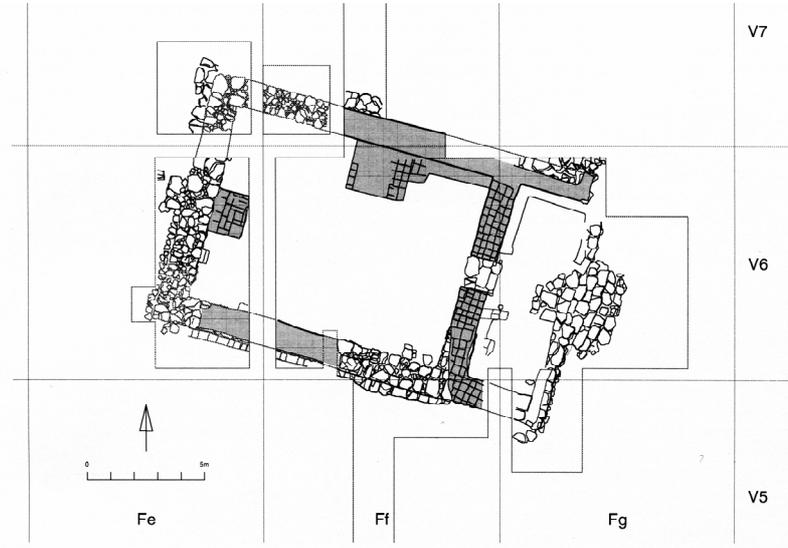


Fig. 13 Plan of *Steinbau VI* at Tell Chuera,
W. Orthmann 2002, fig. 1

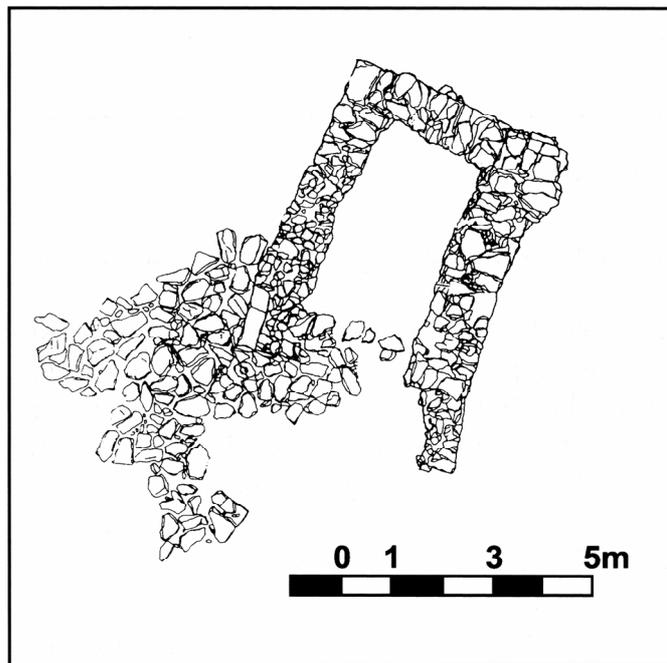


Fig. 14 Plan of Temple L.23 level IV (phase 3) at Tell Qara Qûzâq,
G. Del Olmo Lete and J.-L. Montero Fenollos 1998, 297 fig. 2

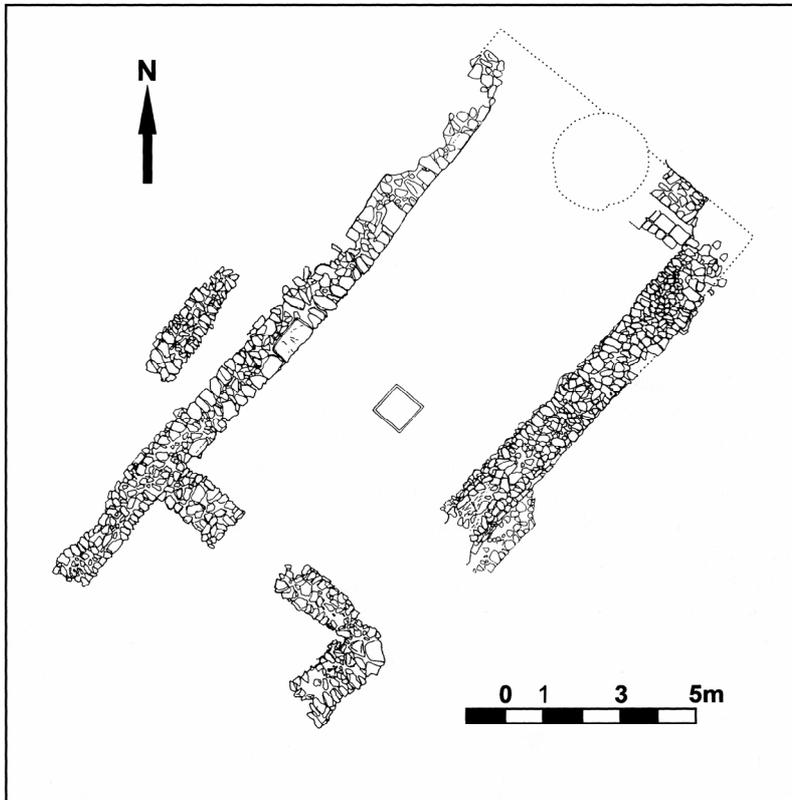


Fig. 15 Plan of Temple L.10 level III-2 at Tell Qara Qûzâq,
L. Cooper 2006, 159 fig. 7.9

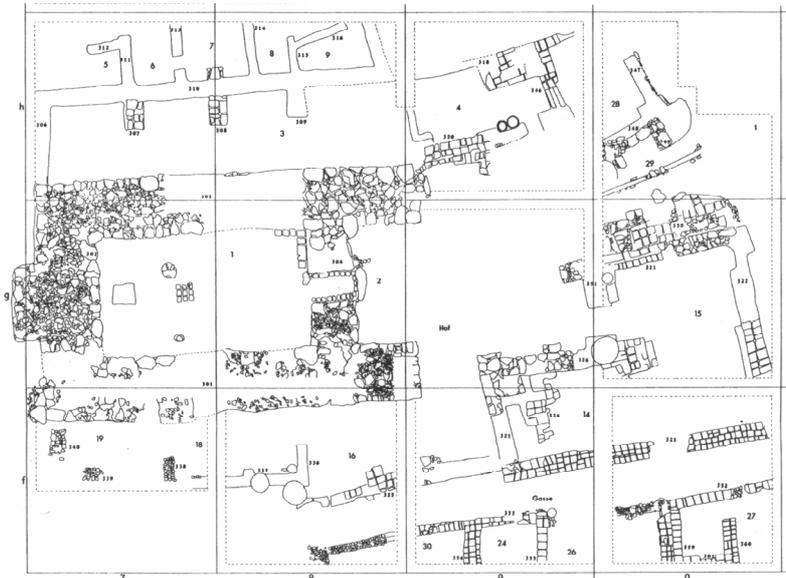


Fig. 16 Plan of Building I (level 3) at Halawa Tell A,
W. Orthmann 1989, pl. 10

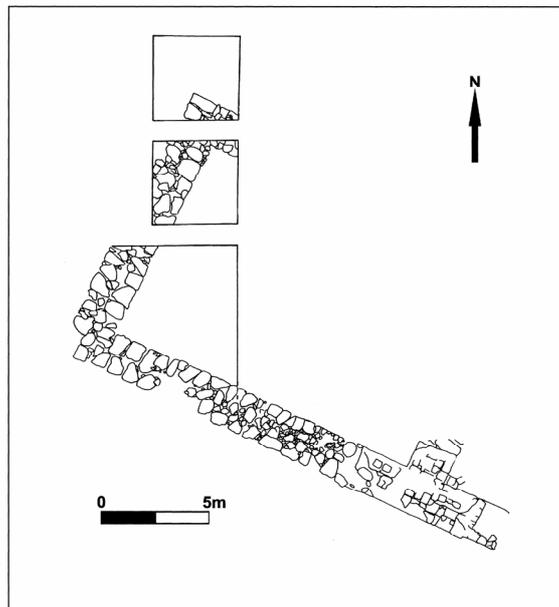


Fig. 17 Plan of the building at Tell Kabir, A. Porter 1995, fig. 3